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HOW CAN EMBODIED PRACTICES INFORM THE DEVELOPMENT OF SKILLED PERFORMANCE AS A LEADER?

by

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Acknowledgements

I dedicate this dissertation to my daughter, Ciara and my wife, Satu. My daughter is eight years old, and for most of her life, I have been working on this PhD. In a recent conversation, she expressed surprise and delight to discover that *Daddy's PhD* would end. She has been incredibly patient while I have done this work, and I hope that its outcomes inform her development. My wife has given me time, space, and support to complete this process, and it could not have been done without her. She has supported me practically and emotionally and this thesis is partly hers as a result.

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Author's Declaration

At no time during the registration for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy has the author been registered for any other University award without prior agreement of the Doctoral College Quality Sub-Committee.

Work submitted for this research degree at the University of Plymouth has not formed part of any other degree either at the University of Plymouth or at another establishment.

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Abstract

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Title: *How can embodied practices inform the development of skilled performance as a leader*

Whilst there has been writing in recent years regarding the practice turn in contemporary theory and its connection to leadership, much of this has remained abstract and lacks empirical inquiry. In addition, whilst practice-based theorists write about the embodied nature of practices, in defining their work, the body then often moves to the background. This study is designed to contribute to understanding the way in which embodied practices develop a shift in skilful performance in the domain of leadership practice within organisations, keeping the physical body in the foreground of the inquiry. This inquiry develops three original contributions through an action research study with six senior leaders from different organisations. Firstly, embodied practices enable emotional learning, which allows a more skilful interaction with the

social world. This occurs because an individual can have a depth of experience, an ability to understand a situation, and still be limited in their ability to act by their embodied history. Embodied practices can enable an individual to bring their experience and understanding to situations, taking new actions, and this learning may not even be noticed in the moment. Secondly, in developing a more skilful interaction with the social world, the power dynamics present in the field are shifted in ways that do not correspond with traditional hierarchical notions of power. Embodied practices appear to enable one to align in harmony with the power in the system. This can result in an assessment of greater power by others, and if done with balanced boundaries, can be generative; experienced as a 'power with' rather than 'power over'. Finally, embodied practices enabled observation of, and dis-identification with, thoughts, emotions, and sensations, which appears to have moved participants towards a dissolution of a fixed sense of self, something which is pointed to in many philosophic and spiritual traditions. In addition, context appears to play a role in highlighting development needs in relation to the commitments leaders hold, and the reflexive dialogue of the research process became a valuable practice, alongside the embodied practices. Together these may contribute to our understanding of developing leadership as skilful performance in the moment.

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Through which I will leave myself

And a gate

Through which I will enter myself.

A plumb line to the center of the earth

And a cosmic ship to Jupiter.

My body, you are an animal

For whom ambition

Is right.

Splendid possibilities

Are open to us.

Anna Swir (1996)

Translated by Czeslaw Milosz and Leonard Nathan

Introduction

This dissertation is concerned with understanding the way in which embodied

practices impact leaders' ability to enact skilful performance. It aims to understand

how embodied practices lead to learning, change and development for leaders in

enacting their leadership roles. Developing this understanding is important because

whilst embodied practices have come to the foreground in recent years, there has

been limited empirical research exploring how to work with these in the development

of leaders. In this chapter, I describe the rationale for this research, explain the

research aims and questions, describe the format of the inquiry and outline the

structure of this dissertation.

Rationale

The development of leadership is an area that absorbs considerable financial resources – Forbes suggested in 2019 that leadership development is a $366 Billion industry (Westfall, 2019) – and there are ongoing questions about the definitions of leadership (Jackson, Brad & Parry, 2011; Western, 2013), how to measure leadership development (Black and Earnest, 2009) and whether or not leadership development is effective (Day, 2001). After the financial crisis, which started in 2008, and some large financial institutions collapsed, much was made of what leadership development programmes and business schools had taught leaders in these firms (Parsons, 2009). Lehman Brothers, an investment bank that collapsed in this crisis, had been praised for its work on developing women's leadership (Hewlett, Luce and West, 2005) and its CEO was lauded in the financial press (Serwer, 2006). After other corporate scandals, similar questions have been asked (Heller, 2012). As we currently live in a world that has seen a political shift to right-wing populism in some countries, again, questions are asked about what we mean by leadership, what we want from leaders and what it means to be a leader (Ladkin, 2020).

Based on the above paragraph, it might be easy to condemn the leadership development industry and consign it to the scrap heap of history. Has it led to better leadership anywhere? Whilst there may be some elements of the industry where this would be appropriate, it fails to consider whether the situation would be worse if the industry did not exist. And, it does suggest the possibility for improvement.

Historically, leadership development has reflected a broader cultural orientation with cognitivist or behaviourist orientations (Day, 2001). This is a very particular set of interpretations about humans and their learning and development. It is only in more recent years that more relational (Uhl-Bien, 2006) and complexity-oriented (Uhl-Bien and Marion, 2009) views of leadership, which include environmental influences and relational dynamics, have come to the fore. However, my experience as a consultant and coach specialising in leadership development is that, in practice, there is a pressure to reduce such ideas to simplistic cognitive or behavioural models.

What is clear, however, is that the leadership development industry often neglects the body and has only begun to explore what an approach based on embodied practices may involve (Chia, 2004; Carroll, Levy and Richmond, 2008). In addition, practices are always defined as embodied in the practice literature, yet the body is often absent from the writing (Schatzki, 2001a; Nicolini, 2012). Its importance is acknowledged, but our engagement with the fleshy reality of bodies is limited in this literature. It is picked up elsewhere when writing about the physical body and leadership (Sinclair, 2011; Ladkin and Taylor, 2014), but rarely in the discussion of embodied practices.

This study sought to build upon our understanding of embodied practices and their impact by exploring how taking on new embodied practices informs the development of more skilful performance. In doing so, I aim to bring the physical body into the foreground of attention in the process of developing embodied practices, and I hope that this informs the development of more effective leadership.

This research takes place in the domain of leadership and with people whose concerns lie around their development as leaders. Yet it is not about the strategies and responses that individual research participants enact and the question of whether they constitute leadership. Instead, this research explores the process of change through taking on new embodied practices. My aim in this research is not to categorise or define specific actions as leadership – this is a reductive act that almost always strips us down to an intellectual debate about decontextualised actions. Rather, my exploration is about how change occurs when we engage with embodied practices, with the physical body at the centre of these practices, for senior managers, of whom leadership is expected given their roles. Do these embodied practices inform or develop their ability to act skilfully in the moment with others? What role does the physical body play in this process (practice theory literature defines practices as embodied (Schatzki, 2001a; Nicolini, 2012), but rarely discusses the physical body in-depth)?

Why embodied practices?

When we abandon purely cognitivist and behaviourist approaches, we step away from models and theories that attempt to generalise correct responses to complex contextual situations. We step away from the abstraction of what we could or should do in theory. In stepping away from these generalised notions and abstractions, our attention can come to focus on the present moment and our specific context. Leadership here may look more like the description given by Carroll et al. of a practice perspective (2008: 367):

> "A practice perspective in contrast reminds us that the overwhelming majority of action takes place 'on the hoof' (Chia & Holt, 2006: 643), involves 'skilled,

improvised in-situ coping' (Chia, 2004: 33) and 'takes place unreflectively, on-the-spot and in the twinkle-of-an-eye' (Chia & MacKay, 2007: 238). The radical nature of a practice perspective invites us into what de Certeau (1984) terms 'the everyday' and Whittington (1996: 734) terms 'the unheroic work of ordinary [strategic] practitioners in their day-to-day routines'."

Leadership in the moment, on the hoof, as practical coping is perhaps where we see a connection back to the debates on the leadership industry and various scandals and crises. A case study approach to leadership development, exploring what could or should happen, applying generalised rules to a specific case may not relate closely enough to the specific, in-the-moment coping that takes place in leadership, especially in pressured situations. A practice perspective may be a more helpful way to understand this; however, empirical research in this field is lacking (Schuyler, 2010).

Practices, according to Dreyfus, are more than just something we do; but are what we are. He states, drawing on Heidegger (Dreyfus, 1991b):

> "What is our relation to the practices? That is, in fact, the wrong way to ask the question, since it suggests that there is us, and then there are practices. Rather, we are the practices. They set up a spielraum of possibilities of action for us, and this space of possibilities is not something that we have a relation to, but something embodied in us."

In articulating it in this way, we can be understood to be the sum of our embodied practices, which we have integrated into our selves. They present the possibilities for the 'on the hoof' actions we take. Gibson refers to such possibilities as affordances, describing affordances as (Gibson, 2015:119):

> "The affordances of the environment are what it offers the animal, what it provides or furnishes, either for good or ill. The verb to afford is found in the dictionary, but the noun affordance is not. I have made it up. I mean by it something that refers to both the environment and the animal in a way that no existing term does. It implies a complementary of the animal and the environment."

In exploring taking on new embodied practices, based on Dreyfus and Gibson above, I am exploring how we change such that the world affords us different possibilities for action in our 'on the hoof', in-situ coping. By exploring how senior leaders change through such practices, I am exploring how they can engage with the world in a way where it affords them the possibility to take different actions, rather than engaging in abstract debates on the correct actions to take in case studies. This exploration may open new possibilities for the improvement in leadership development, which was noted earlier as a possibility.

Personal motivations for the research

I have worked with an embodied approach to leadership development for almost 20 years and have published a book on the subject (Hamill, 2013). I have found embodied practices to be transformational in my development. It has enabled me to change from someone who grew up in a time and place of conflict in Northern Ireland and habitually made myself small as a safety response to someone comfortable taking up space in the world and being visible. I remember a particular moment when I learnt how to take myself out of this place of smallness, in a moment of retreating from the world, through an embodied practice, and how powerfully I experienced this. From previous development work, I had an awareness of this habitual response, and I had developed a strategy of taking myself out of the situation and giving myself a 'good talking to' from my intellectual understanding. This had very mixed success and lacked compassion for how that adaptation, of making myself smaller, had perhaps, saved my life in a conflict zone.

Since 2002, as a consultant in leadership development, I have worked both in the traditional leadership development industry whilst also pursuing embodied leadership development. In doing so, I have felt the gaps where cognitive understanding of models and frameworks of leadership fail to support people in making the kind of change I was able to make. And, I have seen others make significant transitions when working in an embodied way. Over time this has led to a greater sense of dissatisfaction with the traditional leadership development industry. I have seen people with new awareness beating themselves up for historic patterns or who now know some good ideas about what they 'should' do in different situations but struggle with putting changes into practice. It strikes me that much of the industry entertains people with good ideas and psychometrics and then justifies itself through feedback scores on 'happy sheets', which we all acknowledge to be a poor measure of success, impact or learning. It seems to me that people who manage to make changes because of these programmes often do so through their own volition and deliberate process of putting learning into practice.

I lead embodied leadership programmes through a US-based leadership development institute (Strozzi Institute), where I did the bulk of my training and had the experience outlined above. In addition, I have a practice working as a coach and consultant with clients across the public, private and non-profit sectors, as well as working on some post-graduate education programmes in people and organisational development.

Benefits from the research

This research aims to understand the process of creating significant change through embodied practices more fully so that people can be supported in making significant changes in their leadership and lives. This should have benefits to the field of leadership development, but perhaps more importantly to those who earnestly desire to make changes to their leadership and experience the frustration with the challenges of applying abstract models in messy contexts.

My view of the current culture is that it is not 'common sense' to engage in embodied practices for leadership development. My commitment is to contribute to the developing literature on this subject so that it may become so.

Research aims and questions

My research question is: *How can embodied practices inform the development of skilled performance as a leader?* My aims in this research are to:

- Situate leadership as a phenomenon that occurs amid relational and environmental influences and explore how skilled performance develops in relation to these contextual factors

- Understand the existing embodied practices of senior leaders and how they generate a current level of performance

- Understand the process of change, learning and development that occurs when taking on new embodied practices in a complex environment

- Explore how these new practices can inform the development of more skilful performance in these individuals' leadership roles.

As acknowledged above, the description of leadership in the abstract can be reductionist in approach. My aim in addressing leadership in context is to explore how a contextual understanding may be relevant in developing leadership that is more responsive to our needs. I articulated above the idea that the environment affords us different possibilities, based on who we are and that our practices are embodied in us as who we are. It's important to note that these possibilities are always in relation to an environment, and so a contextual understanding is crucial for this research.

By bringing the body into practices, I aim to explore how leaders embody a particular set of responses, which afford (Gibson, 2015) them a set of possible actions in their environmental and relational contexts. In taking on new embodied practices, I aim to understand how this changes them and what new possibilities their environmental context will afford them.

Kupers (2013:347) captures my intention well when he recommends that developing embodied leadership research "requires shifting away from a theorizing about, or of bodies, in a disembodied, objectifying or subjectifying way, towards a mode of inquiry that is sensing and making sense while thinking *from* and *with* lived bodies and processual embodiment." (Author's emphasis)

Format of the inquiry

This research aims to inquire in an area where limited empirical research has taken place. A common folk saying in English is that *practise makes perfect*. Whilst perfection is a long way outside the scope of this inquiry, it does speak to the notion that practices are repeated over time, and so a longitudinal research design makes sense.

The notion of embodied practices draws from the work of Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, philosophers of the phenomenological tradition. Affordances, which I have previously referenced, also moves us in this direction. Gibson, when describing affordances, points out that they are neither subjective nor objective, or perhaps they are both, stating (Gibson, 2015:121):

> "An important fact about the affordances of the environment is that they are in a sense objective, real, and physical, unlike values and meanings, which are often supposed to be subjective phenomenal and mental. But, actually, an affordance is neither an objective property nor a subjective property; or it is both if you like. An affordance cuts across the dichotomy of subjective-objective and helps us to understand its inadequacy. It is equally a fact of the environment and a fact of behaviour. It is both physical and psychical, yet neither. An affordance points both ways, to the environment and to the observer."

This is quite in line with the phenomenological tradition in cutting across traditional notions of subjective and objective. Stolz (2014:478) draws on Merleau-Ponty to state:

> "there no longer exists a philosophical division between the object and subject because the world begins from the 'phenomenal body' and provides the means through which we can develop a sense of our own identity that is integral to coming to know the world through the experience of our embodiment"

Stolz argues that our engagement with the world provides the sense of who we are, and our body is how we engage with the world, which is of the world. If this is the case, then in learning or skills acquisition, our engagement with the world changes, which means that how we come to know ourselves in the world will change – we will

become a different actor – which we will experience in our bodies as we engage with the world.

As I am exploring the process through which embodied learning changes the way in which leaders are afforded possibilities for action, then my philosophical position is a phenomenological one, where there is no simplistic division between subject and object.

Heron & Reason define a research paradigm where the ontology is subjective-objective as participatory (Heron and Reason, 1997:281). This could also be easily termed as a phenomenological paradigm based on the arguments above, and indeed Ladkin argues that a phenomenological stance, with an ontology that is subjective-objective, is an advantageous position for action researchers (Ladkin, 2005). Action research is a more longitudinal approach, which aims to generate both change and knowledge through cycles of action and reflection, which makes sense for an inquiry based upon taking on new embodied practices and is the methodology I chose.

In my research, I facilitated a process of learning and reflecting on embodied practices with a group of 6 senior leaders across organisations in public, private and non-profit settings and in organisations of different sizes, using action research. (I started with 8 participants, but I delayed the start of the study when my Mum died and lost one participant. Another left after the first workshop, when her husband was taken seriously ill.) Through three day-long workshops and five two-hour interviews with each participant, over around ten months, I worked with them as they took on new embodied practices and inquired into how this was changing them and the actions

they were taking in the world (and therefore, the way the world was affording them possibilities to act).

I recorded and transcribed interviews with participants, as well as some segments of the workshops. I then went through the transcripts categorising the data in an analytic framework[1], which I had developed to make sense of the different types of information that research participants shared. From this, I developed case studies of each individual's journey through the research process. In the Participants' Findings chapter, I have included summarised versions of each case study.

Finally, I looked across the case studies for themes that emerged. I went through each case study multiple times, exploring the themes in each study, and very quickly patterns emerged across the case studies. At times this was very clear; for instance, each participant using the same or similar phrase to describe their experiences unprompted. At other times the themes emerged as participants described different situations, struggling to put their embodied experiences into words, but each giving a sense of meaning which overlapped and came together with an emerging sense of clarity. In exploring the emergent themes from the case studies, I was left with a list, and I chose those to explore the themes which came out most strongly from participants, both in the sense that they were mentioned repeatedly and in the sense of the emotional power surrounding those themes. This resulted in three core themes which I explored in detail, as well as reflections on the role context played in this research and the reflexive process that participants undertook.

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[1] A blank copy of the data analysis grid is available in Appendix A

Structure of this dissertation

The dissertation is organised along the following lines. In chapter 1, *Leading beautifully in a material world*, I seek to situate my inquiry in the field of leadership and give clarity on the problem that embodied practices needs to solve. I start by providing a position on leadership and justifying my treatment of the field in this inquiry. I then explore how in-situ coping in leadership needs to happen in an entangled flesh of relations between human and non-human actants and how an aesthetic sensibility may aid in such a process.

In chapter 2, *Embodied practices and how they're organised*, I go into greater depth on embodied practices, exploring their organisation through emotions and Bourdieu's notion of 'habitus' (1990), as well as exploring the role the physical body plays in the learning of embodied practices. I aim to justify my research question and give clarity about the potential unique contribution of this research.

Chapter 3, Methodology, outlines and justifies my research methodology and approach, exploring my philosophical paradigm. In addition, I outline my research design, data collection and analysis process, as well as addressing issues such as ethical research practice and quality and validity in action research.

In chapter 4, *Structure of workshops and practices,* I outline how I worked with my research participants with embodied practices and the content of the workshops they

undertook. I explore the practices they took on in the research process and give some information on the 'action part' of the action research process.

In chapter 5, *Participants' findings,* I outline the findings of my research participants. I begin by giving a summarised case study for each participant, starting with an introduction to them and their context. From there, I explore the themes which emerge from the case studies, describing and giving their evidence for these themes. In this chapter, I aim to provide space to the participants' voices to honour their vulnerability in the research process.

In chapter 6, *Discussion and conclusions,* I engage in a dialogue with the literature around three core themes that have emerged from this research. Firstly, participants describe an emergent learning process where they find themselves taking new actions, which were previously unavailable to them, without intention. Secondly, they describe a change in the power dynamics of their relationships, which external changes, such as promotions, cannot explain. Finally, they describe a developing lack of attachment to outcomes, emotions and thoughts, taking action in a flow of relational engagement, which I argue may represent a detachment from a fixed notion of self. In this chapter, I also explore the implications and limitations of this research, articulating its contribution to the field as well as what further research can be conducted.

A note on poetry

I was reminded recently that when we read, we construct meaning, as much as the writer does in writing. In reading and writing about embodiment and the body in an

academic thesis, there is a more formal and rational academic style that conveys well

the rational and the logical. T.S. Elliot[2] described poetry as "a raid on the inarticulate."

In poetry, something else is expressed, which prose struggles to reveal, and in my

view, a poem impacts our bodies – we feel an embodied response in our bodies. So, in

this process of construction of meaning, if chapters are bricks, poems are perhaps the

mortar around the bricks, providing interludes between each chapter. I have chosen a

selection which speak to me of the themes in each chapter and my hope is that they

assist in this shared construction of meaning.

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[2] "East Coker," from *The Four Quartets*

Interlude:

Working together

We shape our self

To fit this world

And by the world

Are shaped again.

The visible

And the invisible

Working together

 In common cause

To produce

The miraculous.

I am thinking of the way

The intangible air

Passed at speed

Round a shaped wing

Easily

Holds our weight.

So may we, in this life

Trust

To those elements

We have yet to see

Or imagine,

And look for the true

Shape of our own self,

By forming it well

To the great

Intangibles about us.

David Whyte (2012)

Chapter 1:

Beautiful leadership in a material world

My inquiry is to understand how embodied practices can inform the development of skilled performance as a leader. This chapter will set the scene for my inquiry and frame the territory into which I have inquired. I begin by defining what I mean by leadership for the purposes of this inquiry. As I stated in my introduction, leadership remains a concept about which there is disagreement and differing views, and it is not my intention to resolve these here. Leadership is the context inside of which this

research takes place, and so I will establish my position in the field, for this exploration of embodied practices.

As I am making the case for a view of leadership which takes account of embodiment and context, I will continue with an exploration of materiality, to understand how the material world impacts on leadership. If we are to engage with the body, as is explicit in my research question, we are starting to engage with the material world, so I will explore the implications of this for leadership and skilful performance. I will then continue by exploring how an aesthetic sensibility may be helpful in navigating through these implications. Together these themes paint a picture of the world in which leaders are seeking to lead and give an understanding of what may be involved in effectively making sense of that world.

1.1 A position on leadership

This dissertation both is and isn't about leadership. Their roles as leaders in their organisations is a frame for the research participants' inquiry (but it is interesting to note that they also reflect on home and personal contexts), and they seek to develop the capacity to respond more skilfully in those roles. However, my interest here is in the journey of development through embodied practices and how this impacts and informs their ability to respond skilfully within the roles they take up as organisational leaders. So, the process of embodied learning through practices is where the focus of this dissertation lies. That said, the context of leadership was explicit in my engagement with participants, so I will go on to explore the position on leadership that

I took in this research, and how this relates to the wider conversation of embodiment

and practices.

1.1.1 Attempting to define leadership

> "Decades of academic analysis have given us more than 850 definitions of leadership. Literally thousands of empirical investigations of leaders have been conducted in the last seventy-five years alone, but no clear an unequivocal understanding exists as to what distinguishes leaders from nonleaders, and perhaps more important, what distinguishes effective leaders from ineffective leaders and effective organizations from ineffective organizations.
> Never have so many labored to so long to say so little." (Bennis and Nanus, 1985, p. 4)

> "We know that leadership studies today resembles a bewildering diversity of theories, concepts, constructs and approaches, struggling in huge part for meaning relevance and impact. Much of the literature suffers from 'unrelenting triviality' and 'sterile preoccupations'." (Carroll, Firth and Wilson, 2019:2)

The field of leadership is confused and contradictory and, in the quotations above, we

see that this situation has persisted for some time. Bennis lamented the lack of

understanding of leadership in 1985, and in 2019, Carroll et al. quote Dennis Tourish in

labelling the field as suffering from 'unrelenting triviality' and having 'sterile

preoccupations'. Indeed, I find it hard to generate excitement or enthusiasm for much

of the literature in the field, for precisely these reasons, and find myself agreeing with

Sinclair (2005:388), when she states:

> "Immersing myself in the leadership literature over the last decade or so, I have grown disaffected. The bulk of books are righteous and banal, journal articles offer tediously empirical tests of little consequence. Much writing colludes with the lionization of leadership as a normative performance. Research behaves as if leadership was degendered and disembodied. The infatuation with transformational and inspiring leadership offers little consolation in its tired references to vision and charisma."

Overall, the literature in the field tends towards individualistic conceptualisations of

leadership. As Western (2013, p. 39) argues: "the main body of leadership literature

focuses on leadership as individuals, taking behaviours, traits and competencies approaches." This includes simplistic models of leadership styles, as well as more sophisticated theories such as transformational leadership (Bass, 1985), authentic leadership (George, 2003) or servant leadership (Greenleaf, 2002). What these theories have in common is that they focus on what it takes to be a leader and give much less attention to the wider issues of leader-follower relations, or a broader understanding of the context in which leadership occurs. The popularity of this way of looking at leadership that Western speaks of may be due to our tendency to attribute 'greatness' onto leaders, and therefore we search for how they are able to be 'great'. They also avoid, as acknowledged by Day et al. (2014), how one goes about actively developing leadership.

Most theorists will agree that leadership is enacted in a context and in relationship with others. In fact, *to lead* tends to imply the involvement of others who are led, yet this context and set of social relationships are often set aside in the literature and we focus on an individual leader in the abstract. As we increase the leadership research at the individual level, we then increase the demand on these individuals as leaders.

Avolio et al. (2009:428) point out that prior to Transformational Leadership arriving into the field, research focused mainly on transactional models of how leaders and followers exchanged with each other, how leaders provided direction and support, and how they used reinforcement behaviours. The more transactional forms of leadership were focused heavily on leadership behaviours (e.g. direction and support), whereas transformational leadership called upon the leader to also inspire others, set a vision, raise followers aspirations, and to get followers to perform beyond simple transactions

and basic expectations (ibid). It's important to note that Bass saw that Transformational Leadership was to be used in addition to more transactional forms of leadership (Jackson, Brad & Parry, 2011:32) so this increased the requirements of leaders.

Individualistic views of leadership led to heroic ideals of leadership, and more recent research has developed the idea of humble (or post-heroic) leadership, such as Collins' Level 5 Leadership (Collins, 2001). Here the humility of the leader is seen as key to their success. Western states (2013:46): "The post-heroic leader is a reaction to the noise and bells of the 'tub-thumping' evangelical style of the transformational leader. The leader is toned down and forceful, but with humility and a quiet focused influence." The challenge is that this takes nothing away from our expectations of leaders, and we now expect them to be skilled in transactional and transformational leadership, as well as being humble and modest, and managing their egos appropriately. The danger is that now leadership may feel further and further away from the abilities of mere mortals.

1.1.2 Grint's division of the field of leadership research

Grint presents a simple division of the field of leadership research suggesting that leadership can be understood in 4 different ways (2005):

- Leadership as Person – who the leader is

- Leadership as Results – what the leaders achieve

- Leadership as Position – where the leaders operate from (often positions in formal hierarchical systems)

- Leadership as Process: how the leaders get things done

Leadership as person drives us towards the kind of individualism as noted above, but so also does leadership as position. It becomes about those individuals in positions of hierarchical power and authority exercising, often all the aspects of leadership noted previously. The responsibility comes to those people and this may be foster the experience of imposter phenomenon[3].

Understanding leadership as results may appear to clarify the issue, but unfortunately does not. Senior managers in organisations during the boom years of 2002-2008 could take the credit for being great leaders, whilst those in charge during the global recession of 2008-2014 could be labelled as bad leaders, if we take a purely results based approach. As soon as context comes into the picture, what was a simple results-based measure of leadership, becomes a perspective, and context is either a real challenge that made the leadership even greater, or an excuse for poor leadership depending on your perspective.

A 1988 paper contrasted successful and effective managers – successful being the ones who get promoted and effective being the ones who have high performing business units. It stated that surprisingly these two groups had little in common (Luthans, 1988). So, those we promote into senior positions, where we would expect leadership to take place, are not those who achieve the greatest results. In addition, a paper from 2009, taking a computational approach, showed that the Peter Principle *('Every new member*

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[3] Often referred to as *imposter syndrome*, but not in the original research (Spinath, 2011).

in a hierarchical organization climbs the hierarchy until he/she reaches his/her level of maximum incompetence') held true, and reduced global efficiency in organisations, if the best people at each level (in terms of results) are promoted to the next level, which required competence in different tasks and responsibilities (Pluchino, Rapisarda and Garofalo, 2010). They recommended: "counterintuitively, that in order to avoid such an effect the best ways for improving the efficiency of a given organization are either to promote each time an agent at random or to promote randomly the best and the worst members in terms of competence." (ibid:467) So, it seems that we don't promote people into positions of authority based on results, and that actually doing so would be unhelpful, so results ends up, perhaps as a poor marker for understanding leadership.

The final category of leadership mentioned by Grint (2005) is that of process – how the leaders get things done. This, unfortunately, in much of the literature tends to be reduced to behaviours and actions, and the idea that the replication of these will result in leadership. As I have previously argued (Hamill, 2013) this has problems as a purely behaviourist approach will not address the questions of intention and attention, which are largely ignored, or assumed to be non-existent. The idea that I can copy the actions of great leaders and achieve the same outcomes, without addressing intention and attention seems overly simplistic.

1.1.3 A way forwards?

The fact that there are so many theories, that some appear to offer contradictory thoughts or advice for leadership at times, and that there is no agreement within the

field on a definition, may initially seem to be the death knell of a field of study. However, Ladkin rescues us from such negativity by arguing that the nature of the phenomenon of leadership is such that such disagreement is inevitable (Ladkin, 2010). Ladkin argues that leadership is a 'moment' of social relations, where 'moments' are things which are dependent on the things of which they are a part for their 'beingness'. For example, colour, weight and size are all things, which cannot exist independently of other things.

To explore this view let's take an example. If we had a concept called 'pink' which we didn't realise was a moment of materiality, then scholars of 'pink' would investigate this concept and have arguments about its definition based upon our experience of it, in certain material contexts. Now, of course we do understand pink to be a moment of materiality, but if leadership is a moment of social relations, then its varied forms and textures will be directly related to the social contexts in which it arises. Perhaps leadership scholars and experts are engaged in the same fruitless debate as our imaginary scholars of 'pink'.

If leadership is a moment of social relations, then it is always dependent on the context in which it takes place and cannot exist separately from a group of people, one of more of which is identified as leaders and others who are identified as people they will lead (ibid:26). Therefore, the reality of any piece of leadership can never be separated from the context in which arises, and leadership will always be subtly (or very) different depending on this context. Viewing leadership as a moment of social relations leaves the variety of definitions and views on leadership a natural result of the nature of the phenomenon that is being studied.

Ladkin (ibid: 27-28) goes on to define the leadership 'moment' as the interaction and

relationship of leaders and followers in a context to work towards an explicit or

implicit purpose. As a way of understanding the phenomenon of leadership, we have

something now which includes others in a non-individualistic way, addresses the

context inside of which the leadership is taking place and draws our attention to

purpose, which quite remarkably, is absent in much of the leadership literature.

Hawkins articulates a similar view on leadership stating (Hawkins 2015: 953):

> "Leadership is conceived not as belonging to an individual with specific
> capabilities or traits, but as a social process emerging from the collective
> interactions of groups as they work together to identify and pursue a shared
> goal."

This brings us to a view of leadership as a socially constructed and emergent

phenomenon. It focuses us on the momentary interactions of social processes, which

draws our attention away from theoretical notions towards lived experience. Earlier, I

cited Sinclair's dissatisfaction with leadership literature, which she acknowledges is in

contrast to the lived experience of leadership, stating (Sinclair, 2005:388):

> "The accomplishment of leadership is often highly dramatic and full-bodied;
> there is intimacy, titillation, sometimes mystique. The bodies of followers or
> audiences are central too in the accomplishment of leadership."

Sinclair draws our attention to the embodied aspects of leadership – the living bodies

of those involved – and includes these in our understanding of how leadership

emerges in a social context.

In this dissertation, I am therefore viewing leadership as socially constructed,

emergent and an embodied experience, in line with a number of scholars (Ladkin,

2010; Ladkin & Taylor, 2010; Sinclair, 2011; Kupers, 2013; Ropo, Sauer and Salovaara, 2013). This allows for leadership to be diverse; it takes us away from individualistic and heroic notions of leadership, and the traits required to be a leader, and instead focuses our attention on the moments of contextualised social relations from which leadership may emerge (or not), and the embodied practices of those involved in those social relations. This sets the scene for my inquiry.

1.2 What to make of the fleshy material world?

> "'Cause everybody's living in a material world
> And I am a material girl"
>
> Madonna, 1984

In taking the position on leadership described above, I am taking account of the material of the world, at least in taking account of bodies and contexts. This raises the question of how to conceive of matter – the material of the world – both human and non-human, and what is the impact of this materiality on leadership? This directs my inquiry into the materiality of leadership, which Ropo et al. define as (2013: 379): "the material conditions that affect the understanding, creation and maintaining of leadership as a social construction."

However, this is not the dominant way of seeing leadership – usually it is seen more as a product of individual agency, rather than a product of context or conditions. If we consider leadership as socially constructed, emergent and embodied, then the material of the context becomes, what Latour (1994) refers to as an 'actant': "any

entity that acts in a plot until the attribution of a figurative or non-figurative role."

(Latour 1994: 33)

Latour (ibid: 35) gives an example which may help to explain the role of seemingly inanimate objects in human agency, using a B-52 bomber:

> "It is by mistake, or unfairness, that our headlines read, "Man flies," "Woman goes into space." Flying is a property of the whole association of entities that includes airports and planes, launch pads and ticket counters. B-52s do not fly, the U.S. Air Force flies. Action is simply not a property of humans but of an association of actants…"

Neither the person, nor the plane flies individually, but together, with a series of surrounding actants (human and non-human) flight is a phenomenon that can occur. So, for the bomber to fly, there will need to be (to give a few examples) a flight crew, engineers, parts and equipment for the engineers (with their own supply chains), a runway, air traffic controllers and their systems, hangar, air bases, and a hierarchical system, with a range of people in different roles, through which orders are given for the bomber to fly. All these human and non-human actants are required, so what does this imply for individual human agency? Certainly the pilot of the plane will have the experience of some degree of agency, but how do we account for the role of the material world?

Traditionally non-human actants (and non-living actants) are things which we see ourselves as having mastery over, as being outside of ourselves, but in this example the non-human (and non-living) actants play an important role in the creation of flight. Does this mean we are assigning them agency and intentionality through this logic?

Latour (1994) has a symmetrical approach to agency in which both sides have agency, whereas Kaptelinin & Nardi (2006: 249), (cited in Hawkins 2015: 955), argue that human agency is delegated to non-human actants. They give the example of a mobile phone running low on battery which beeps until a human recharges it. They argue the phone does not choose to act, but is programmed as such, whereas the human chooses to act in response.

Hawkins (2015: 955) argues that this is a limited perspective as it does not consider the wider social, political and power relationships in which the phone sits – for example if the phone is a work phone, paid for by an employer, the range of options (such as turning the phone off, cancelling the contract, etc.) may not be available to the human in this example. Therefore, this context can invest the phone with a form of agency. Interestingly, such a perspective is also expressed in a recent Financial Times article, where Tim Harford articulates a commitment not be to bullied by his inbox (Harford, 2022).

So how does this relate to leadership? If we see leadership as a phenomenon that emerges inside a context, then just as a person doesn't fly, a leader does not lead – indeed it may be false to even conceive of an individual as a leader. Rather a context is required for the phenomenon of leadership to emerge, which is shaped by the 'agency' of human and non-human actants. Individuals wanting to effect leadership may need therefore to find a way to align with the material context to enable the emergence of leadership, just as a pilot needs to align themselves with the material context of an aircraft, airport, etc. For participants in my inquiry, their relationship with their material context may well, therefore, have relevance.

Dale and Latham argue that academic approaches to materiality have largely maintained a delineation between living beings and material things (Dale & Latham 2015: 168). In their writing they use Merleau-Ponty's philosophy to explore how to bring embodiment and materiality together, stating: "there is a particularity to human embodiment: although it is not separate or separable from the world, it senses the world." (ibid: 169) From this they argue that despite our common way of seeing these human and non-human actants as distinct entities, they are intertwined and cannot be easily disentangled.

Dale and Latham are particularly concerned with the ethical questions that emerge from this intertwining – it is more 'normal' to treat human and non-human entities ethically differently, but if they cannot be easily disentangled, how do we ethically relate to this intertwined whole? Whilst ethics is not my central concern in this dissertation (although it does have relevance to leadership), their arguments have parallels for leadership. They argue for the importance of the self recognising the particularity of the other (other non-human actants), and of recognising that the encounter with the other calls into question the idea of the self as an autonomous, self-contained agent (ibid: 171). In this recognition of the relationship and the difference (without indifference), there is the possibility of an ethical approach to entangled human and non-human actants which recognises "their different particularities" (ibid).

They go on to conclude (ibid: 179):

"Each possible ethical response co-constructs the entanglements in different

ways—and this is not to imply that a human 'subject' in the entanglements has therefore some autonomous control over those entanglements through their actions."

We could substitute the word *leadership* for *ethics* in the statement above. If we see leadership as emerging as a moment of social relationships from the context of human and non-human actants, then every leadership response co-constructs the entanglements in different ways. Therefore, just as they point to understanding the difference of actants and relationships between them as key for ethics, perhaps this is also key for leadership.

Ladkin uses Merleau-Ponty's notion of 'flesh' to explore the in-between space of these relationships in leadership and states (Ladkin 2013: 328):

> "as the notion of 'flesh' posits the complete inter-connectivity between perceiver, perceived and world, it emphasises the inseparability of leaders, followers and the context within which their relations are enacted."

This is entirely consistent with the views of Dale and Latham, described above. The inseparability of leaders, followers and context requires leaders to be able to see and sense the particularity of their context, their followers, in fact all human and non-human actants, and the relationships between them. This requires a high level of attention to the present moment, which is a theme to which I will return in addressing aesthetic sensibility.

If we return to the example of the mobile phone running low on battery, it is the relationships that the phone holds to the individual, their work, the expectations of their boss, the politics and power dynamics of the organisation which shape the range of possible responses. So, in leadership the range of possible responses that any individual has to a particular situation will also be shaped by the actants and their web

of interrelationships.

Ladkin describes flesh elsewhere in her writing as (Ladkin, 2012):

> "Perhaps a way of understanding the notion of "flesh" is that it is analogous to an "energetic field" that is both constituted by, and exists between, relating entities. Not actually "material" itself, it is experienced as a quality of relational engagement, a "feeling" which can transcend actual geographical distance."

Which brings us to how we can sense and experience this flesh of relationships. Ladkin articulates it as a feeling. Ropo et al. (2013: 379) argue that it is through our embodied, sensuous experiences that we make our judgement of places (a particular part of the context that they address).

Kupers, also draws on Merleau-Ponty in his rendering of leadership relations, and states (Kupers 2013: 337):

> "...involvement is mediated through various corporeal modalities like sensing, feeling, which are always already happening within dynamic materially, socio-culturally, historically, gendered, and technologically co-determined horizons as situated and impacting conditions and contexts."

In other words, our way of engaging and understanding the contexts in which we are operating is through our sensing and feeling bodies, and this is at the root of our ability to perceive and act in the flesh of the world.

1.2.1 Implications of materiality on leadership

From this perspective, leadership is not invested in an individual, but in the combination of human and non-human actants, and much in the same way that a person does not fly, so a person does not lead (acknowledging that this does make it more difficult to discuss leadership).

Seeking to effect leadership then involves a way of the self relating to all the human (traditionally called followers and leader) and non-human actants (context and situation) to effect leadership, in the same way the pilot needs to take account of these actants in flying a plane. This then forms the flesh of relations, from which leadership may emerge or not.

In seeing leadership this way, we are reconsidering notions of human agency, from a traditional view where humans have mastery over material things (Dale & Latham 2015: 169) to one where we are an embedded aspect of entangled relationships, where our actions will co-construct the entanglement. This calls for decision-making and action which is responsive to the context to be ethical and effective. It also changes our relationship to the material world, from an instrumental one to one which appreciates our interconnectedness.

To appreciate this flesh of inter-relationship requires our awareness of our felt sense and of our embodied experience, as argued by Ladkin and Ropo et al., above. It is through our senses that we become aware of the feelings of 'relational engagement' to which Ladkin (2012) refers.

Like a pilot responding to hitting a flock of birds, how do managers respond to the particularity of situations and context to contribute to the production of leadership that allows their teams or organisations to progress? This to me, requires an embodied awareness of the flesh of the entangled relationships between human and non-human actants. I will now proceed to explore how an aesthetic approach to leadership may

offer a means to understand the awareness that is required.

1.3 Aesthetic sensibility

1.3.1 Relevance of aesthetics

> "Artists, we presume, live on some faulty edge of reality, poets are essentially
> unrealistic, sensualists are not to be taken seriously, and, by the way, can't you
> make a little money?"
>
> (Selwall, 2000, p. 81)

What relevance does aesthetics have for leadership, given the difference in focus for those more usually associated with aesthetic sensibilities and the world of organisational leadership, as highlighted by the (tongue-in-cheek) comment above. Bathurst and Monin point out that the root of the word aesthetics is *aesthesis*, which can be translated as sense perception (Bathurst and Monin, 2010). Does aesthetics, and aesthetic leadership help us to understand how to become aware of the feelings of relational engagement in the flesh of entangled relationships between human and non-human actants?

Stephens suggests that this could be the case, stating that aesthetic experience is all about interconnectedness (2014, p. 19):

> "To begin with, aesthetic experience, and specifically beauty, is all about
> interconnectedness (Taylor & Hansen, 2005). Aesthetic experience was the
> term used by Dewey (1934/2005) to describe how we first and foremost
> ascribe meaning to events and encounters in terms of holistic qualities."

It is interesting to note the move towards holistic qualities of experience, which allow us to perceive relationships and interconnectedness, rather than moving towards the

Western tradition of reductionism and analysing just the component parts. This is perhaps the challenge with much of the literature on leadership noted earlier, in that it addresses individual component parts and ends up with individualistic conclusions, which vary rapidly across different studies in different social contexts. An aesthetic attention (a form of sense perception to use the original definition cited above), on the unfolding moment may be just what is essential for being able to navigate the flesh of entangled relationships successfully and produce what Stephens suggests could be beautiful leadership.

1.3.2 Aesthetic leadership

In reviewing aesthetic leadership in orchestras, Koivunen and Wennes (2011), address the leadership of conductors, and develop three characteristics of aesthetic leadership: relational listening, aesthetic judgement, and kinaesthetic empathy.

The first of these, relational listening, they state (ibid: 59) requires an intense presence in the moment, and appears to be analogous with Adler's concept of 'seeing reality as it is' (Adler, 2011), except highlighting a different sensory route, more appropriate for music. This also connects to the need I identified for an attention to the present moment to be able to navigate a fleshy entangled web of interrelationships, when discussing materiality. The second, aesthetic judgement, refers to the accumulated abilities of the musicians and the conductor, and appears analogous to Ladkin's concept of mastery, in her paper on beautiful leadership (Ladkin, 2008).

The final concept of kinaesthetic empathy (Koivunen and Wennes, 2011: 62-64) brings forth the co-ordination together in time and the way in which everyone responds to the movements of each other to produce music effectively and beautifully. These are often small and subtle gestures which assist in mutual co-ordination. Bathurst and Cain, reviewing a performance of Richard Strauss's song *Morgen!*, come to a similar conclusion, suggesting that effective leadership draws on the abilities of organisational members to offer and respond to gestures as they occur moment-by-moment, which they refer to as Reflexive Embodiment (Bathurst and Cain, 2013).

Ladkin provides a description of congruence as an aspect of leading beautifully that seems significant in relation to the small and subtle gestures noted as an aspect of kinaesthetic empathy. She states (Ladkin 2008: 40):

> "expressing the self through forms which are congruent with one's overall message and purpose. This requires attending not only to what one says but the way one says it. In this way, leading beautifully incorporates authenticity."

Here we see that an aspect of beautiful leadership is the right measure of action. The form of the action is part of what creates the beauty of the leadership. The action needs to be congruent with the message and purpose, but also with the person, relationships, and the context. Kinaesthetic empathy requires this congruence and an intense presence in the moment to listen, see and respond to the gestures of others, and the mastery of a craft to enable aesthetic judgement. In this way, kinaesthetic empathy seems to require presence, congruence, and mastery.

Kinaesthetic empathy (or reflexive embodiment) also brings the embodied component forward in this conversation. Bouilloud & Deslandes make the point that it is by re-engaging with the bodily dimension of leadership, that aesthetic leadership can be

understood (Bouilloud & Deslandes 2015: 1097). This bodily dimension is significant

for my inquiry on embodied practices. I will continue by exploring the aspects of

aesthetic leadership outlined above.

1.3.3 Presence

McGilchrist reviews the neuroscience research on the divided brain and concludes that

we have two ways of perceiving the world, through the two different hemispheres of

our brains. The right hemisphere is concerned with the experience of reality as it is,

and that the left hemisphere is concerned with the representation of reality which it

has created (McGilchrist, 2009). He states (ibid: 93):

> "I believe the essential difference between the right hemisphere and the left
> hemisphere, is that the right hemisphere pays attention to the Other, whatever
> it is that exists apart from ourselves, with which it sees itself in profound
> relation. It is deeply attracted to, and given life by, the relationship, the
> betweenness, that exists with this Other. By contrast, the left hemisphere pays
> attention to the virtual world that it has created, which is self-consistent, but
> self-contained, ultimately disconnected from the Other, making it powerful, but
> ultimately only able to operate on, and to know, itself."

Interestingly, McGilchrist (ibid: 66) also connects the body and the right hemisphere,

stating that the right hemisphere is "deeply connected to the self as *embodied*." He

states that it is only the right parietal lobe that has a whole-body image, and that this

is (ibid) "a living image, intimately linked to activity in the world – an essentially

affective experience." McGilchrist is saying that right hemisphere is where we

experience the world as it is, and it is through this hemisphere that we experience our

embodied selves as a part of the world. It is in the right hemisphere that the body is

more than an assemblage of parts which we have, like a possession – as it is

experienced in the left hemisphere – and it is here that we are embodied sensing

beings experiencing the world through relationship and betweenness. He also

describes this as an affective experience, which is notable as I will return to affect in the next chapter.

The present attention, which Adler refers to as seeing reality as it, or which Koivunen and Wennes refer to as relational listening requires therefore, an attention to the feeling, living body. It is through such attention that we can attend to the flesh of the entangled relationships between human and non-human actants, as previously discussed.

Ladkin, goes further and suggests that bodily knowing is primary, when looking at a phenomenological account of the felt experience of leadership. She draws on Merleau-Ponty to state (Ladkin 2013: 325): "the body's way of knowing the world is primary, prior to cognition's role in selecting and interpreting." This aligns well with McGilchrist's views, above, and seems to confirm the bodily role in being present to the world around us. Ladkin also quotes Merleau-Ponty as saying (ibid): "'the perceiver ranges round the subject in a world which speaks to him of himself, and gives his own thoughts their place in the world' (1945[2002]: 154)." This speaks to the interconnectedness of the perceiver and the world, which give the perceivers thoughts their place, speaking again to the fleshy entangled nature of beings in the world.

Presence therefore involves a bodily attention and awareness, which gives us greater access to knowing our relational-material context and its entangled relations. I will continue by addressing the aspects of mastery and congruence.

1.3.4 Mastery and congruence

Mastery is the first of the characteristics identified by Ladkin (2008) as an aspect of beautiful leadership. Mastery is something that is normally seen as crucial for artists and artisans to produce work of beauty. So perhaps it implies that leadership is a skill to be mastered akin to artistic or craft skills, certainly if it is to be done in a beautiful way. I will begin by exploring the concept of mastery, and then its connections to both presence and congruence.

Dreyfus, in writing about Heidegger's *Being and Time,* states that according to Heidegger when we have mastered something it becomes part of the background, something that we no longer see clearly and explicitly (Dreyfus 1991: 4). When we must consciously think about something and decide, it is because it is not mastered. In doing so he articulates how things become 'ready-to-hand' as we master them.

This is remarkably in line with research carried out much more recently by Gary Klein (Klein, 1998) on naturalistic decision-making, some independently conducted, and some with Daniel Kahneman (Kahneman 2011: 234-244). His research shows that chess masters who glimpse a chess board, and know the right moves to win the game, or fire-fighters who know that the building is about to collapse and get their teams out of the building, do not consider a myriad of options. The right action appears for them in the context or situation, and although they may pause and consider what to do, the answer appears first without such consideration. So, mastery seems to provide a way of knowing in the moment without the need for lengthy consideration. For example, a professional tennis player asked how they return a fast serve, may not be able to state

how they do so and how they respond to differences in the serve, but they are able to enact that knowledge in the moment.

This is analogous to Roman Ingarden's description of presencing as: "an active moment-by-moment creative engagement that allows the work of art to unfold within the contingencies imposed by the environment, and the skills of the artist." (Bathurst et al. 2010: 316) This connects to the role context plays; the contingencies imposed by the environment come from the entangled flesh of relations between human and non-human actants. In terms of leadership, this is the moment-by-moment creative engagement that allows leadership to unfold within the contingencies imposed by the environment and the skills of those engaging in the emergence of leadership.

Ladkin writes of mastery that it, "requires attention to the here-and-now possibilities inherent within any given moment." (Ladkin 2008: 40) This both echoes the creative engagement mentioned above, as well as bringing us back to the embodied presence required. So beautiful leadership requires a mastery that enables one to be in a creative engagement with the flesh of relations in a context, such that we take actions based upon the possibilities inherent in the moment. Mastery enables a particular quality of presence which gives a 'ready-to-hand' experience of the flesh of relations.

Mastery and congruence appear to be to be analogous with Chinese concepts emerging from the Confucian and Daoist traditions, of 'wu-wei' and 'de'. *Wu-wei* literally translates as 'no trying', but Slingerland gives a more precise definition as (Slingerland 2014: 7-8):

> "it refers to the dynamic, effortless and unselfconscious state of mind of a person who is optimally active and effective. People in *wu-wei* feel as if they are doing nothing while at the same time they might be creating a brilliant work of art… If we have to translate it, *wu-wei* is probably best rendered as something like 'effortless action' or 'spontaneous action'."

Slingerland goes on to define 'de' (ibid: 8):

> "People who are in *wu-wei* have *de*, typically translated as 'virtue', 'power', or 'charismatic power'. *De* is radiance that others detect, and it serves as an outward signal that one is in *wu-wei*."

Slingerland goes on to say (ibid: 11) that it feels good to be in *wu-wei*, because there are a whole series of tasks which our slower conscious processing would just be incapable of doing. Additionally, *de* occurs, at least in part, because we are attracted to people in *wu-wei*, because we "trust the automatic, unconscious mind. We have a very strong intuition, increasingly confirmed by work in cognitive science – that the conscious verbal mind is often a sneaky, conniving liar, whereas spontaneous, unselfconscious gestures are reliable indicators of what's really going on inside another person." He makes the point that spontaneous behaviour is hard to fake, which means that spontaneous, unselfconscious people are unlikely to be faking it or deceiving us in some way. This is reminiscent of the theme of authenticity, which is what Ladkin, above, cited as an aspect of congruence.

This also brings up the issue of charisma, one of the definitions of *de* and a term which is seen both positively and negatively. An aspect of the reason why it may be seen dualistically, is that it may be both a positive and negative experience. Ladkin reviews Webber's work on charisma and states (ibid: 175):

> "In later writings, Weber (1968) notices the alternation between opposing states of pleasure and unease arising from the charismatic encounter. He explains this by hypothesizing that, through engagement with charismatic authority, the individual concedes his or her sense of individual identity to the

leader. In doing so, the follower experiences a sense of annihilation. This sense of annihilation is subsequently (and rapidly) countered by a greater sense of identification with the leader. This identification produces an enlarged sense of the self and the concurrent pleasure which arises from that identification."

This connects to the writing of Bathurst & Cain, who draw on Merleau-Ponty when looking at the aesthetics of gesture, stating (Bathurst & Cain 2013: 370):

"Indeed, according to Merleau-Ponty, for the self to be fully present, there is paradoxically a negation of the self, a negation that implies being and invites the creation of spaces within which people sense, feel, think and act."

So, the embodied presence of the leader exhibiting mastery, may involve a negation of the self of the leader, and indeed, the annihilation of the individual identities of the followers.

So, in the space of mastery and congruence, we can lose a sense of individual identity and identify with a leader according to Weber but given that the leader could also be negating their own self, I would argue that identities perhaps become part of a larger collective identity, which is taking action.

So where does this leave my inquiry? In seeking to effect leadership amidst an entangled flesh of relations one needs a presence, through bodily attention and awareness, that enables a holistic sense perception of the context. This sense perception is a result of a ready-to-hand, creative engagement with the context, which derives from a level of mastery. This results in a negation of the self, creating a sense of authenticity which others find attractive. Leadership, then, perhaps emerges from a collective negation of individual identities through creative engagement with a shared purpose. This inquiry will explore how embodied practices impact such a presence,

attention, and awareness, and whether they contribute to a skilful performance in leadership

1.3.5 Contribution of aesthetics to this inquiry

An aesthetic view of leadership contributes a way to understand how to navigate in an entangled world of relationships. It draws our attention to the body to develop a present attention, it highlights the role of mastery in cultivating a creative engagement with the world, and it highlights congruence, authenticity, and purpose as aspects of kinaesthetic empathy. This provides a way of conceptualising the requirements for the emergence of leadership in such an entangled context.

My inquiry is to explore how embodied practices can inform the development of skilful performance as a leader. Can embodied practices enable someone to develop the presence, mastery, congruence, and authenticity mentioned, such that they develop the kinaesthetic empathy required to navigate the flesh of entangled relationships between human and non-human actants? This is the question I consider in the next chapter of this dissertation.

Interlude:

Practice

Be soft in your practice.

Think of the method as a fine silvery stream,

not a raging waterfall.

Follow the stream,

have faith in its course.

It will go its own way,

meandering here,

trickling there.

It will find the grooves,

the cracks,

the crevices.

Just follow it.

NEVER LET IT OUT OF YOUR SIGHT.

It will take you.

Sheng-Yen (Yaura, 2000)

Chapter 2:

Embodied practices and how they're organised

In the previous chapter, I have explored leadership as a moment of social relations

emerging from an entangled flesh of relationships, which an aesthetic sensibility may

help us to apprehend. In this chapter, I will explore how embodied practices constitute

a way in which we take skilful action in the world, and how we can develop using

embodied practices, with an exploration of embodied emotions and Bourdieu's (1990)

concept of habitus. Throughout, it is my intention to keep returning to the physical

body, as this can often be lost in the literature, and *embodied* practices is a key

element of my inquiry.

2.1 Embodied practices

So far, I have identified that the perspective I bring to understanding leadership is that of leadership as socially constructed, emergent and embodied, in line with a number of scholars (Ladkin, 2010; Ladkin, D. & Taylor, 2010; Sinclair, 2011; Kupers, 2013; Ropo, Sauer and Salovaara, 2013). In addition to this, when I reviewed the materiality of leadership, I concluded that leadership involved the self relating to all the human and non-human actants, to effect leadership, in the same way as a pilot needs to take account of a range of human and non-human actants in flying a plane. This forms a flesh of relations (using Merleau-Ponty's concept of flesh (Ladkin, 2012, 2013) as a way to understand the inter-connectivity between perceiver, perceived and the world) from which leadership may or may not emerge. This widens our discussion into consideration of not only the social processes but also the contextual and situational factors that influence the emergence of leadership.

Based on these themes, how would one seek to enable the emergence of leadership in any situation or context? The range of factors to account for, and the fact that it is a socially constructed phenomenon, means that in every situation the answer may be completely or subtly different. Additionally, the time taken to analyse these factors, means that any deliberate decision-making process may arrive at a suitable answer long after the moment has passed, and at a time in which the contextual factors may have changed significantly. How is it possible then for someone to effectively enable the emergence of leadership and how does one develop oneself to be an effective leader (the promise of many courses, programmes, and books)?

In reviewing aesthetic leadership, and notions of beautiful leadership, I came to a view that aesthetics can provide an understanding of what is required to respond effectively as a leader. Aspects of presence, mastery and kinaesthetic empathy were significant factors in understanding how to be responsive in the moment. In addition, I showed that a presence in the moment requires an attention on the feeling body and can be enabled through the development of mastery in a domain. However, regarding leadership, what is it we are mastering? My question concerns embodied practices, and I will start by comparing these to a more traditional approach, that of competency frameworks, for understanding what it is we must seek to master.

It is not common to think about practices in organisational leadership, but it is common 'practice' in organisations to use competencies as a way of framing leadership – the competencies define the skills or capabilities required for leading in a particular environment, which someone must develop to be an effective leader. Carroll et al. critique the focus on competencies stating that this approach has "surprisingly little empirical robustness" (Carroll et al. 2008: 365). They point out that competencies are individualistic and relate to that which is tangible, measurable and objective, which they argue may have relevance for management, but not for the complexity of leadership (ibid). They argue for considering a practice-based approach to leadership, stating that this could be positioned as directly opposite to a competency-based approach, and they present the following table showing the ontological, epistemological and methodological differences (ibid: 366).

Competency	Practice
Rooted in objectivism	Explicitly constructionist
Individual level of analysis	Inherently relational and collective
Quantifiable and measurable	Discourse, narrative and rhetoric
Unanchored in relationship and context	Situated and socially defined
Privileges reason	Privileges lived or day-to-day experience
Assumes intellect predominantly	Incorporates embodiment and emotion

Table 1: Competencies compared with practices

Based upon the perspective of leadership that I have outlined above, and my focus on the flesh of relations, a practice-based approach would appear to be a more appropriate way of looking at leadership given its underpinnings of relationality, constructionism, and embodiment. The question is whether the 'practice turn' in social theory, may allow a different way for us to think about the emergence of leadership in different entangled contexts and how leadership may be effectively developed.

2.1.1 What are practices?

Schatzki, in the introduction of the book he edited on the practice-turn in contemporary theory, states that there is no unified practice approach, but that most thinkers who theorise about practices conceive of them minimally as arrays of activities (Schatzki 2001: 2). He goes on to say, that (ibid): "A central core, moreover, of practice theorists conceives of practices as embodied, materially mediated arrays of

human activity centrally organised around shared practical understanding." This is in

line with Carroll et al. above.

Nicolini addresses the question of why practice-based theories should be of interest,

and states (Nicolini, 2012):

> "The attraction of the practice idiom stems in particular from its capacity to
> resonate with the contemporary experience that our world is increasingly in
> flux and interconnected, a world where social entities appear as the result of
> ongoing work and complex machinations, and in which boundaries around
> social entities are increasingly difficult to draw."

In other words, a practice-based view may allow us to understand the complex social

world that we exist within and give us a different view of how action and organisation

function in this world.

Nicolini goes on to list the five core differences of a practice approach as (ibid: 3-6):

1. It emphasises that behind all durable features of our world there is some form
   of productive and reproductive practice.
2. It brings forward the critical role of the body – "a practice is the routinized
   activity of the body." (ibid: 4)
3. It reconceives the nature of an individual agent – "*homo practicus* is conceived
   as a carrier of practices, a body/mind who 'carries', but also 'carries out', social
   practices." (ibid)
4. It focuses on knowledge as a form of mastery that is expressed in the ability to
   carry out particular activities. "Knowledge is thus always a way of knowing
   shared with others, a set of practical methods acquired through learning,
   inscribed in objects, embodied and only partially articulated in discourse." (ibid:
   5)
5. It reaffirms the centrality of interests, power and politics as constitutive
   elements in the social reality we experience. Practices are both reflective of
   these issues and maintain structures of power within social reality.

Dreyfus has a particular position on practices, informed by Heidegger, and defines

practices as socials skills, stating (Dreyfus 1991b: 27):

> "By skills I mean to capture two aspects of the practices. (1) Skills are not based
> on representations—that is, on beliefs or rules—nor can they be analyzed in

terms of, or generated by, formal structures. They are passed on by society through individuals without necessarily passing through consciousness (Foucault, Bourdieu). (2) Skills have rich interconnections so that modifications of any part of the system of skills will modify the others.

   By social skills, I mean that there is a convergence of skills, that is, everyone does things roughly the same way. If there are deviations, they are not coerced and coopted. People just naturally conform to what everyone does. Social practices are what one does. If you thematize that, you get the idea of norms, although the people who are acting them out do not think of their practices as norms. Modern norms have a special character Foucault calls normalization. Norms seem to be based on truth—there is a right way of doing things. Norms are not merely what one does, but what one ought to do. This is not a necessary aspect of the structure of social skills; it is an aspect of the structure of modern social skills."

Here we see that Dreyfus is articulating a conception of practices which avoids the necessity of mental processes.

Schatzki goes on to describe a practice as (Schatzki 2001b: 53): "a set of doings and sayings organized by a pool of understandings, a set of rules and a teleoaffective structure." In doing this he agrees with Dreyfus' comments above regarding norms (understandings and rules) and he brings in the domain of affect (emotions, moods and what matters to someone) and the teleological (for the sake of certain ends) which he reasons is tied to someone's beliefs, hopes and expectations (ibid).

The tying together of practices, affect and purpose (or ends) is a construction that I find appealing, and can accord with Dreyfus' position as it does not necessarily require mental processes. Whilst there are cognitivist accounts of emotions, there are also non-cognitivist accounts that "focus on the early occurrence of emotions such as fear, anger and joy, their presence in other animals, and their bodily foundations in panculturally present facial reactions, bodily postures, visceral responses and neural processes." (Hufendiek 2016: 2) Whilst this is not intended as a wider discussion of the

nature of emotions (I will explore these in depth later), it does show that emotions

may not involve mental process. Hufendiek goes on to explore emotions as action-

oriented – i.e. they prepare the organism for action (ibid: 14-15) – so whilst they may

not necessarily be a mental process, they may impact upon the practices employed in

a given moment.

Taking the other aspect of a teleoaffective structure, the purpose or ends, these could

be understood as either having a deliberate purpose in mind or acting purposively in

the moment, as defined by Chia and Holt (2006, p. 648):

> "To act purposively is to attend to resolving an immediate impediment at hand,
> to seek relief from an undesirable situation without any presumption that this
> is directed towards some overall, longer-term outcome. To act with a purpose
> in mind is to act according to a predefined desired outcome, whereas most
> everyday action takes place within the immediacy of ambiguous concerns
> confronting us (Von Mises 1949: 105)."

So purposive action is contrasted with having a purpose in mind, and it involves acting

to resolve an issue in the moment, non-reflectively. Therefore, Schatzki's model of

practices being organised by a teleoaffective structure, if we include purposive action,

aligns with Dreyfus' view that practices do not necessitate mental process. This is

significant if one is to be able to take actions to effect the emergence of leadership in

entangled contexts, where the time taken to analyse the situation and engage in such

mental processes, may result in actions that respond well to a context that has since

changed.

2.1.2 Two ways in which the world is experienced

Practices have two modes; they do not require mental processes and can be

purposive, but they can also be purposeful and intentional. Here it may be helpful to

introduce Heidegger's concept of two ways in which the world may show itself to a being, as available or occurrent, and explore the role of practices (and leadership) in each, as a way of understanding these two modes. Something which is available is also said to have a way of being which is ready-to-hand, which is representative of its availableness to me to use as a tool in my engagement with the world, whereas something which is occurrent is said to have a way of being which is present-at-hand, representing that it is present for abstract consideration (Dreyfus, 1991a).

Readiness-to-hand is how my computer currently appears to me, when I am not engaging with the computer itself, but rather with the purpose that I have in using the computer (writing this dissertation). The computer is at some level transparent as an object as I engage with my 'for sake of' in using the computer. Were there to be a problem with my computer the computer itself would become my focus, and the computer would be present-at-hand. Ready-to-hand is the mode that I discussed in the section on aesthetic sensibility, where this mode of being was a creative engagement given by mastery, which gives one presence.

2.1.2.1 Leadership where the world appears to a being as ready-to-hand

The distinction between purposive and purpose in mind begins to get us into these two modes of being. If we see practices, affect and purpose as three elements of acting, then each can be seen within the two modes. When ready-to-hand the practices are ones which are mastered/embodied, the affective state pre-disposes the practices, and we are engaging purposively to resolve the particular situation. This is what Chia & Holt refer to as practical coping (Chia and Holt, 2006). Leadership here may look like the description given by Carroll et al (2008: 367):

> "A practice perspective in contrast reminds us that the overwhelming majority of action takes place 'on the hoof' (Chia & Holt, 2006: 643), involves 'skilled, improvised in-situ coping' (Chia, 2004: 33) and 'takes place unreflectively, on-the-spot and in the twinkle-of-an-eye' (Chia & MacKay, 2007: 238). The radical nature of a practice perspective invites us into what de Certeau (1984) terms 'the everyday' and Whittington (1996: 734) terms 'the unheroic work of ordinary [strategic] practitioners in their day-to-day routines'."

This the story of leadership as practical coping, where our current practices guide us through the world, supported by a teleoaffective structure. Here we respond to the social processes of which we are a part and the wider contextual and situational forces (a range of human and non-human actants), guided by a teleoaffective structure and without conscious mental processes.

If there is no mental process involved, what is our relation to our practices? Dreyfus considers this question (Dreyfus 1991b: 28):

> "What is our relation to the practices? That is, in fact, the wrong way to ask the question, since it suggests that there is us, and then there are practices. Rather, we are the practices. They set up a spielraum of possibilities of action for us, and this space of possibilities is not something that we have a relation to, but something embodied in us."

So, our embodied practices are us. What we refer to as our personality is, therefore, made up of embodied practices – we don't wake up in the morning and wonder how to be us, it is something that we enact without requiring consideration and deliberation. We have mastered a particular way of being in the world and enact this unconsciously when the world appears as ready-to-hand. Bourdieu takes this further into the concept of Habitus, which he states is (Bourdieu 1990: 53):

> "systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them."

Bordieu takes the concept of embodied practices and looks back to what sits behind the practices – our Habitus, which is a series of dispositions that organise practices – whilst being clear that in doing so, he does not presuppose conscious intentions or mental processes.

Chia links Bourdieu's concept of habitus to Heidegger's background practices, stating (2004, p. 31):

> "In emphasizing the primacy of habitus as a modus operandi, a predisposed style of engagement that does not presume a means-ends logic or a prior need for mental representations, Bourdieu follows the lead of Heidegger's (1926/1962) in insisting that much of everyday human activities and practices take place without recourse to conscious planning and deliberate action. What habitus does is not to ensure the programmed repetition of prespecified behavioural routines, but to restrict the repertoire of coping strategies that can be deployed in any one situation."

Bourdieu makes clear that the habitus is our embodied history (1990: 56) and it produces our individual and collective practices, which subsequently generate more history – i.e., habitus is self-perpetuating. He states (ibid: 54):

> "This system of dispositions – a present past which tends to perpetuate itself into the future by reactivation of similarly structured practices… - is the principle of the continuity and regularity which objectivism sees in social practices without being able to account for it."

So, habitus organises our practices and perpetuates them, according to Bourdieu, which accounts for the overall stability in our personalities on a day-to-day basis. In this inquiry, I am exploring the process of taking on new embodied practices, which is therefore an exploration of how one changes their relationship to this embodied history, which self-perpetuates, so that one may be able to enact skilful performance in leadership.

However, as described above this notion of habitus could be seen as an individualistic notion, which was not Bourdieu's intention. For example, Chia & Holt show the social nature of habitus when they state (2006: 645):

> "When we observe a performance by an individual or a group, what unifies, and hence gives a certain stability of identity to, the individual or group is its habitus."

Chia & Holt (2006) and Ozbilgin & Tatli (2005) see Bourdieu's approach as trying to find a third way between individualism – social experience being explained through individual agency – and structuralist theories where it is explained by something outside of individuals and their practices. Therefore, it is important to see the relational nature of practices as Bourdieu describes them. Habitus is constituted in practice and is in "practical relation to the world" (Bourdieu 1990: 52) and as such is in relation to the social processes which are taking place and the human and non-human actants which influence that social process.

According to Bourdieu habitus leads to practices, in a way which is informed by the concepts of Capital and Field. Nicolini defines the concept Capital as (Nicolini 2012: 59):

> "Capital is in broad terms anything that can be exchanged, determining as a consequence a variation in legitimacy and power. Capital therefore includes material possessions (which can have symbolic value), non-material sources of value such as prestige, status and authority (referred to as symbolic capital), and anything rare and worthy of being sought after in particular social formations' Bourdieu 1977, P.178)."

This draws attention to how the capital of one's social position may influence one's practices. For example, it is not unusual, in my experience, to see different practices emerge from the same person in organisations, in the situations where they have greatest seniority and situations where they are lower ranking. So, when one is the

most senior person in the room this is a form of symbolic capital which will influence

one's practices, whereas when one is more junior, these may be different. Habitus, as

noted above (Chia, 2004) restricts the repertoire of coping strategies that can be

deployed in situations where there is significant power differentials. It will be

interesting to see if this plays out in my inquiry.

The concept of field is defined by Nicolini as (ibid: 60):

> "Fields (champs) are partially autonomous spaces characterized by 'fields of
> forces' determined by the distribution of social capital and objective relations
> between social positions."

This could refer to the organisational field (social space) in which symbolic capital is

distributed based on seniority.

At the beginning of this section, I asked how one could enable leadership to emerge in

entangled social processes taking account of situational and contextual factors

(actants). The time taken to analyse this complex situation and come to a considered

response would be too great, so a different mechanism is required, which is

responsive, less time intensive, and therefore involves less cognitive processes of

analysis. A practice-based approach to leadership, which does not necessitate mental

processes and the concepts of habitus, capital, and field, supported by a teleoaffective

structure appears to answer that question.

However, it is possible to see that the practice responses that emerge from this

process may or may not be successful in enabling leadership to emerge. So how can

one develop the habitus to be more effective in enabling the emergence of

leadership? To do this, we must look at the other mode of being that Heidegger distinguished, present-at-hand.

2.1.2.2 Leadership where the world appears to a being as present-at-hand

If we go back to the model of practices, purpose and affect, then in present-at-hand mode these will involve conscious mental processes. For whatever reason, the world is now appearing as present-at-hand for us, and our unconscious coping strategies are no longer sufficient. We have taken a detached view of some aspect of the world, and decontextualized it – Heidegger would say being "unworlds them" (Dreyfus 1991b: 28) – and in doing so we are making them: "independent of our for-the-sake-of's but not independent of our senses." (ibid)

So, if my computer stops working, or I do not know how to do something with my computer, the computer becomes visible as an object, rather than as the tool through which I achieve my ends of writing this dissertation. I engage with and see the computer as an independent object. At this moment, I am forced to consciously consider my action, I must decide. As Heidegger states (cited in Dreyfus 1991a: 4):

> "Every decision… bases itself on something not mastered, something concealed, confusing; else it would never be a decision."

Therefore, Heidegger is saying that our practical coping represents a level of mastery in our world, and when we are brought into a present-at-hand mode of being, it is because our background practices (or habitus) no longer give us the required level of mastery where we can practically cope with the world – we must see it anew and consciously think through our choices and actions.

If we go back to my example of the computer, I have a degree of mastery in using it to write documents, but my mastery in dealing with error messages, faults and other issues is much lower and so when these arise, I must look at the computer anew and engage with it as a computer, rather than as a means for me to write my paper. At this moment, I must think, consider and decide how to act. This could also be the point at which I engage in a series of new practices which would allow me to become masterful at dealing with computers, or not, but this shift is the opening for the possibility of such learning. It takes me out of the mode of practical coping to a mode where I can be reflective on my actions.

Winograd & Flores (1986: 78) use Heidegger's term of breakdowns to describe these moments and state that that new design is something that can only happen "in the space that emerges in the recurrent structure of a breakdown. A design constitutes an interpretation of a breakdown and a committed attempt to anticipate future breakdowns." This new design could include the design of new practices which enable a different level of mastery. So perhaps in this inquiry, aspects of their context, where participants are unsure about how to act, will be the breakdowns where the design of new embodied practices will be helpful in developing skilful performance.

Dreyfus further distinguishes three types of breakdown, which Heidegger mentions, but does not distinguish clearly (Dreyfus 1991a: 70-83). These are *conspicuousness*, *obtrusiveness,* and *obstinacy*. These three operate almost as a sliding scale with different degrees of breakdown.

Conspicuousness refers to a malfunction (ibid). For many normal forms of malfunction, we have a normal way of coping. Here the move to present-at-hand is temporary, and we then, after being startled for a moment, move to a new way of coping (ibid: 71). This new way of coping may not necessarily be an effective or successful one but is one which we can use to cope with the situation – e.g., being challenged in presentation and, after being startled, moving from a practical coping with presentations to a practical coping with being challenged, which could be defensive, or more helpfully perhaps, listening and inquiring. My new mode of practical coping will depend upon the practices which have been already mastered (or embodied) in the domain of being challenged.

Obtrusiveness refers to a temporary breakdown (ibid: 72). Here the move is from practical coping, to deliberate coping, to deliberation. Heidegger uses the example of a hammer which is too heavy for the task at hand. Here practical coping in the normal way described above will not work. To use the tool for the task at hand may require some very deliberate coping where our attention is used differently because of the inappropriateness of the tool for the job. Or indeed it may lead to deliberation, the conscious process of considering one's options to be able to achieve the task.

This, however, is not the hammer being fully "unworlded." Its property of being too heavy, or heaviness more generally, is not an independent property of the hammer; it is related to the purpose for which I wish to use it. Here we can see that in Obtrusiveness, we have not moved beyond the purposes one has, and so the world (or objects within it) are not appearing to being as completely present-at-hand.

So, to continue with my example of being challenged in presentation, rather than moving to a new mode of practical coping which was an embodied practice of defensiveness, here let's imagine that I had previously received feedback on this defensiveness and was working to engage differently. This may involve a more deliberate manner of coping as I try to respond to the challenge non-defensively and may involve deliberation as I try to reflect on how to achieve my purpose without being defensive. So, I have not moved beyond my purpose and I am more deliberately coping with the situation at hand.

Obstinacy refers to a total breakdown, where the move is from deliberation to theoretical reflection (ibid: 79). Here, taking the example of the hammer, we might still say that the hammer is heavy, but we are referring to its physical property of weight, independent of the task or purpose we have in mind. The interruption of our practical coping is so that we are no longer engaging from the aspect of practical purposes and here there is room for theoretical reflection. As Dreyfus states (ibid: 81):

> "Once characteristics are no longer related to one another in a concrete, everyday, meaningful way, as aspects of a thing in a particular context, the isolated properties that remain can be quantified and related by scientific covering laws and thus taken as evidence for theoretical entities."

Once again, continuing with the presentation example, here I would begin to reflect on my purpose and my very way of being – how and why I have developed a practice of being defensive when challenged. The reflection on purpose and way of being allows someone to clarify what matters in the historical context into which they are thrown and engage in deliberate practices with the aim of mastering those practices so that their purposive actions in practical coping align with that purpose.

So, what does this mode of being imply for leadership and the model of practices supported by a teleoaffective structure? What we see above are the varying degrees of disruption when our current practices don't allow us to achieve our purposive aims. The affective state creates a disposition to action, which is directed along purposive lines to resolve an immediate impediment at hand or to seek relief from an undesirable situation. It will also, as previously discussed, be strongly influenced by the relative symbolic capital of the people present and the construct of the wider social field. An example would be someone as the most senior person in a meeting, with a habitus which is conflict averse, and who purposively enacts practices to placate and cover-up a conflict, because of an affective discomfort with conflict. The power of being the most senior person in the room may mean that these practices are successful in covering up the conflict, and this may or may not be productive for the group in achieving their aims.

Therefore, the requirement for leadership to emerge is either that the purposive practical coping actions are aligned to a wider sense of purpose and therefore enable leadership, or that there is a breakdown inside of which deliberate thought could be given to the actions that are taken, and new practices developed. A conspicuous breakdown allows the movement to a new mode of coping, rather than to deliberate thought, so this would perhaps not be enough of a breakdown to enable new leadership moves.

A temporary breakdown (obstrusiveness) does allow a move towards purposeful action. These practices may be more carefully considered deliberate practices (or deliberate coping). In addition, this could also be a space for designing new practices

to enable the development of a different habitus, able to embody the ability to make different moves in future, which may more fruitfully allow the emergence of leadership. For example, to use the situation mentioned above, of a conflict averse person in a meeting, they may choose to develop new practices for being in conflict (e.g., empathising or taking a stand for one's beliefs), which is connected to a purpose they have for themselves, or their role in their organisation/team/community.

A total breakdown (obstinacy) is something which provokes a deeper reflection. This may involve a deeper reflection on the nature of the field in which someone is situated, the forms of capital which are distributed within it and may result in a change to the nature of the purpose being pursued.

These different levels of breakdown represent and require different degrees of self-reflection and design of new practices. My research will focus on taking on new practices and it will be interesting to explore, where in the entangled flesh of relations that research participants experience, breakdowns are occurring for them, and how new embodied practices inform their ability to take new actions.

2.1.3 Embodied Practices?

The argument to this point, has included a view of practices as embodied arrays of human activity, which are both individual and collective, held in place by habitus, organised by a teleoaffective structure and taking place without mental processes, in a ready-to-hand way of being in the world. In the presence of a breakdown there is the

room for deliberation and more deliberate ways of coping, and indeed for the reconsideration of purpose and the design of new practices.

To embody a purpose in leadership, therefore, could be an alignment of purpose with the ability to take purposive actions amid practical coping, which are likely to realise that purpose. Or, to put it another way, the development of a habitus, which can engage in practices that are aligned with our purpose. Returning to a comment from Chia (2004, p. 31), which I cited earlier, "what habitus does is not to ensure the programmed repetition of prespecified behavioural routines, but to restrict the repertoire of coping strategies that can be deployed in any one situation." If this is the case, then learning to embody new purposive responses and the development of habitus, should include the shedding of restrictions and inhibitions, such that one can act purposively.

This leaves a couple of questions to answer. How do we understand habitus and how does it (or indeed does it) change as we learn new practices? How do we understand emotions and affect and the role they play in this teloaffective structure? And, finally, what is the role of the physical, living body in this process? All the definitions of practices include the idea of them as embodied, but the literature on practices has limited discussion of the physical body.

To continue my exploration, I will move on to an exploration of emotions and affect, as an aspect of the teleoaffective structure, to understand the role they play. I will then move on to the exploration of habitus, the living body and how to develop the habitus.

2.2 Affect's organising of practices

Tosey & Gregory, in their dictionary of personal development, state (Tosey & Gregory 2002: 51): "There is no definitive view of what emotion is in psychological or physiological terms, although there is consensus that emotions play a very significant role in human and social functioning." From my initial review of this field, this lack of consensus does not appear to have changed in the intervening years since they published their dictionary. I will begin this section by exploring what we mean by emotions and affect more generally, as well as exploring the research on emotions and leadership, to see what light this sheds on the role emotions play in organising practices.

2.2.1 Defining terms

Gooty et al. state that (Gooty et al. 2010: 980): "it is important to note that affect, mood, emotions, and emotional competencies (e.g. emotional intelligence) have elicited considerable debate in the psychology literature with regard to basic definitions and components thereof". Therefore, trying to even come up with basic agreed definitions to guide the use of the terms, emotions, mood and affect is difficult.

Gooty et al. go on to draw the following definitions after reviewing a range of alternatives. Emotions they suggest are (ibid): "transient, intense reactions to an event, person or entity." Affect and mood are defined as follows (ibid: 981)

> "Affect refers to longer lasting positive or negative emotional experience and is classified as state affect (mood) and trait or dispositional affect. Moods are longer in duration than emotions yet shorter in duration than trait affect (Fisher, 2000; Frijda, 1993). Moods activate in an individual's cognitive

background, have no specific target, less intense than emotions and persist for a longer duration (Briner & Kiefer, 2005; Fisher, 2000). Trait affect is a stable, dispositional tendency in evaluating events as a positive or negative."

Emotions are short-term responses to the environment, but their mechanism is not discussed. Whilst Gooty et al. do draw almost entirely on cognitivist approaches to understanding emotions, in summing up their thinking in this way they do not commit themselves to any underlying mechanism for emotions (ibid).

Affect, is a longer-term phenomenon divided into moods, and personality traits. Moods are defined as aspects of the cognitive background, and as being longer-lived, less intense and having no target, but again their mechanism remains unexplored. Trait affect is seen as a dispositional tendency to evaluate something as positive or negative and is a personality trait in this model.

If we step back for a moment, and examine these distinctions, we can see that a separation has been introduced between a trait or dispositional tendency of the individual, and the mood they are experiencing. It is not uncommon in psychology to search for (or construct) traits which can then be measured, but I wonder about the validity of doing so here. It separates the person from their moods, which is merely one approach to this phenomenon.

Colombetti points out that Heidegger had a different view of this phenomenon, stating (Colombetti 2014: 12):

> "Heideggerian moods are not interruptions of an otherwise moodless mind but are constitutive of human existence. In this sense they are quite unlike the moods of affective science which are longer lasting than emotions, but nevertheless still contingent states of mind."

She goes on to state (ibid):

> "For Heidegger, on the other hand, moods are fundamental, inescapable modes of being in the world that necessarily characterize our existence"

Here we see an alternative point of view where moods are presented as ways of being in the world, and therefore constitutive of our being. The separation above of moods and traits does not make sense under a Heideggerian worldview.

Without wanting to resolve this issue at this moment, whether we see that there are traits, or see moods as constitutive of being, either way they could be understood as a part of one's habitus – a series of dispositions that organise practices (Bourdieu, 1990). As I am most focused on exploring the teleoaffective structure which organises habitus or practices, I will leave further discussion of moods and traits. In moving forward, I will centre my discussion around emotions, which as I have previously discussed prepare the organism for action, to provide a focus for this section.

2.2.2 Emotions in the leadership literature

Gooty et al. state, in their review of the research on affect, emotions and leadership (Gooty et al. 2010: 980):

> "Briner and Kiefer (2005) noted that less than half (40%) of the papers they reviewed in organizational psychology research defined emotions in line with basic psychological theories. The remainder of the papers they reviewed either did not define emotions or confused emotions, affect and other affect-laden constructs such as job satisfaction. This criticism of affective scholarship (emotions in particular) is not new (see for example, Barsade et al., 2003; Barsade & Gibson, 2007; Brief & Weiss, 2002; Gooty et al., 2009)."

This to me is a telling starting point in understanding some of the literature in which emotions and leadership are considered together. Gooty et al. (ibid) go on to point out

that emotion is a dynamic construct and treating it as a stable inter-individual

difference would be a mistake, but that some research does treat emotion as stable in

this way. Therefore, the research design and the definition of the construct are not

aligned.

Gooty et al. look at research designs that do account for the dynamism of emotions

and state (ibid: 981):

> "Typically, the designs capable of accommodating such dynamism are event-based experimental or field designs, daily diary studies, experience sampling methods, qualitative studies and critical incident techniques. These designs measure moods and emotions very close to their occurrence thus reducing the probability of retrospective biases (see Robinson & Clore, 2002)."

However, this is also problematic in a way that they do not appear to acknowledge or

address. These methods involve finding out the emotional state of research

participants in a variety of ways close to their occurrence, but without acknowledging

that this process of someone becoming aware of their emotional state may change

outcomes and even the emotions themselves, as they go from ready-to-hand to

present-at-hand in a Heideggerian sense. As emotions in a teleoaffective structure

guiding purposive actions are not necessarily brought to consciousness, this may have

limited relevance for my study.

It is not our normal day-to-day experience that we are asked to bring our emotional

state to consciousness, and the process of doing this may elicit moments of reflection

and awareness which changes the actions we take, and indeed may change the nature

of the emotion as we experience it. Hufendiek states that our emotional feeling (our

experience of the emotion) is not only constituted by bodily arousal, but also by

altered attention (Hufendiek 2016: 156). If we follow this argument, then the altered

attention through the raising to consciousness of the emotion will have an impact in some way and would need to be accounted for, or at least acknowledged, in research design.

Of the articles which do define emotions, they seem to default to a cognitivist view of emotions, without considering the wider disagreements on the underlying nature of emotions (Johnson, 2009; Gooty *et al.*, 2010; Zineldin and Hytter, 2012). In many studies leaders or leadership is defined simplistically as the manager or boss (Seo *et al.*, 2012; Xenikou, 2012; Zineldin and Hytter, 2012; Rowold and Borgmann, 2014; Sommer, Howell and Hadley, 2015), and in some studies 'leaders' emotions are manipulated (e.g. Johnson 2009; Sy et al. 2013) through videos, but this does not seem to account for the fact that different individuals may respond to these inputs differently, and the same individual may respond differently at different times. In one laboratory study (Tee, Ashkanasy and Paulsen, 2013), team members were instructed to display emotions, which seems to rely heavily on their ability to fake emotional reactions. In another study (Johnson, 2009) research participants' moods were manipulated through videos, they were then videoed giving speeches on how to complete a hiring task and finally these were viewed by other participants to look at the contagion effect of emotions in leadership and its impact on followers. The idea that videos of this nature constitute leadership is somewhat questionable, never mind the effectiveness of the manipulation of mood through videos in the beginning.

In summary, whilst there were some interesting ideas and concepts in the leadership and emotions literature, I found it overall unimpressive, and the lack of questioning of the underlying definition and function of emotions to be disappointing. It does not

shed light on the role of emotions in organising practices, partially because there is a

lack of clarity on the definition of emotions, and research designs don't align with such

definitions. I will, therefore, continue my inquiry by seeking to explore an

understanding of the concept of emotions, to understand their role in embodied

practices.

2.2.3 What are emotions anyway?

If we go back to the first principles of understanding what emotion is then we need to

look at the cognitivist approach to understanding emotions and its limits, and then

review non-cognitivist approaches.

Cognitivism comes from the idea that emotions are a response to how we appraise

something in our environment. Fear comes from the appraisal of danger. Pride comes

from the appraisal that certain actions are worth of praise and that we have carried

out such actions. Under this view emotions are a set of judgements that we make

about ourselves and the environment. This way of looking at emotions focuses on

cognitive processes, and how we come to a particular view of the world and tends to

treat bodily experience as an arousal pattern which does not contribute to the

emotion itself, but to the intensity with which we experience the emotion. Hufendiek,

(2016, p. 2) defines the cognitivist approach as:

> "Cognitivist accounts focus on the cognitive abilities that seemingly underlie
> emotions such as guilt, shame and pride. Emotions according to these authors,
> are intentional and normatively assessable, which requires us to see them as
> involving complex representations or conceptual reasoning.

In other words, these approaches focus on the cognitive appraisals that are made, such as in the description of pride given above. Here emotions are seen as having intentional objects – I am angry about something, for example. Emotions are also normatively assessable, that is we speak of emotions as being justified, disproportionate, or unwarranted; one is remorseful about one's own actions, but it would seem unwarranted to be remorseful about someone else's actions.

In contrast non-cognitivist approaches to emotions are defined as (ibid: 2-3):

> "On the other hand there are non-cognitivist accounts that focus on the early occurrence of emotions such as fear, anger and joy, their presence in other animals and their bodily foundations in panculturally present facial reactions, bodily postures, visceral responses and neural processes. These accounts tend to give biological explanations of emotions that highlight the role of feelings, the motivating potential of emotions and their close connection to reflex-like behaviour. What is notoriously lacking in these non-cognitivist accounts is a comprehensive explanation of the normative dimension of emotions. This gives these accounts an unpleasant reductionist flavour, in the sense that they end up with poor and inadequate descriptions of the phenomenon."

Here Hufendiek gives a flavour of how non-cognitivist approaches define themselves, drawing on challenges to a cognitivist account and a biological, bodily oriented view of emotions. The presence of complex emotions in young children and animals gives some questions about a cognitivist approach, as the complex neural processes involved just may not be possible. Therefore, can cognitivist approaches account for emotions? Hufendiek also shows the challenges of non-cognitivist approaches, in that they struggle to account for some of the normative aspects of emotions, discussed above. Not being remorseful about someone else's actions suggests some role for norms, rules or cognitive processes, and a process based purely on bodily experience does not account for this.

In exploring practices, organised by a teleoaffective structure a cognitivist approach does not make sense. It returns us to the challenge of mental processes, which will be unable to deal with the entangled flesh of relations between human and non-human actants in a timely way. However, embodied approaches have the challenges acknowledged above in accounting for the normative aspects of emotions. Going forward I will look more closely at each of these approaches to understanding emotions and the develop an argument for an embodied approach to emotions which successfully addresses the normative aspects of emotions, and which can inform an understanding of a teleoaffective structure for this study.

2.2.3.1 Cognitivist approaches

Hufendiek breaks down the normative assessability of emotions into three categories: semantic norms, rational norms and social norms (Hufendiek 2016: 21-34). Semantic norms address the fact that emotions have an object – first we see an object, and then we get scared, for example. Emotions give a sense of what is important about the object, as well as highlighting the object in a 'particular way'.

Rational norms concern the fact that emotions have a way in which they make rational sense or not. For example, I could envy someone's car, and this does make sense. To envy my own car, or property, does not make sense, since it is already something which I possess. If emotions are just internal impressions there would be no such logical constraint on the emotion, but obviously such a logical constraint does exist. Therefore, cognitivists would argue, emotions are subject to a set of rational rules.

It is also logical, at times, that some emotions may follow others. If I fear something may happen, and it happens I would logically experience sadness or anger, whereas if it doesn't happen, I may experience relief. And inverting that situation, if what I fear happens, it would be illogical to then experience relief. In certain situations, there is a logical connection between the emotional states.

To account for this, cognitivists assume emotions are caused by a complex appraisal structure. Hufendiek (ibid: 29) gives an example of the appraisal structure for sadness, based on Lazarus' work:

> "the core relational theme of sadness is irrevocable loss. If there is a loss to any type of ego-involvement – esteem, moral value, ego ideal, meanings and ideas, persons and their well-being, or life goals – sadness is possible. If there is no blame, then sadness is likely, but if there is coping potential (i.e., something that can be done to undo the harm or restore the loss) the emotion will not be sadness, but ones that involve a struggle to change a goal-incongruent condition. Only if nothing can be done, sadness is the indicated emotion which is implied in the core relational theme for sadness, irrevocable loss."

Lazarus uses a tree logic structure to provide such an account for 12 different emotions. It is however a substantial logic process, in which we need to engage (and note this has not addressed social norms) and for me, it seems an overly elaborate attempt to explain emotions as a cognitive process, and something to which I cannot easily relate.

Social norms concern some emotions which appear to have a social dimension, such as pride, jealousy, guilt, and shame. Not all emotions have such a dimension to them – fear of danger may be exclusively concerned with my bodily wellbeing, whereas guilt is about having transgressed some moral imperative, and pride is about having done something worthy of praise.

So, to account for emotions as cognitive appraisals we end up with an elaborate and complex appraisal process designed to deal with objects of perception and come to a judgement as to their implications for us, through 3 categories of norms, which then gives us an emotional reaction. The feelings of the emotions – the phenomenal aspect of emotions – is not core to these theories in any way. Theorists will often develop an account of the role of feelings (such as indicating the intensity of the emotion), but the core of the theory is complete without the feelings – they are not an embedded and essential element of the emotional process.

The greatest strength of the cognitivist appraisal approach is that it enables us to account for the normative assessability of emotions. Yet it also has some problems. For example, how do we explain that emotions tend to be action-oriented, e.g., someone who is scared is tempted to flee, someone who is angry feels prepared for attack, etc. Hufendiek (ibid: 36) states that cognitivists attempt to explain this by either widening the definitions of judgements to be actions, or by explaining emotions as belief-desire pairs of two cognitive states. The first generalises judgements so widely as a term, that it becomes meaningless, and the second complicates further our cognitive processes by invoking a pair of two cognitive states.

A second problem is termed cognitive impenetrability. A judgement that I am in danger, could be overturned with evidence to the contrary. However, the people walking over a glass bridge above a chasm in China, in a recent viral video[4], who were

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[4] See: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rRIrs8hQNv0

overcome with fear, also had evidence to the contrary regarding their danger – they were walking (or crawling) on a solid surface. Yet this did not change or make their fear disappear. If emotions were guided by cognitive rules the evidence of safety should have changed the emotional response… but it didn't.

The final problem is the issue of infants and animals, which I have previously mentioned. Hufendiek states (ibid: 38):

> "While there may be doubt about whether non-human animals consciously experience emotions or whether they can show cognitively more complex emotions such as guilt or envy, the claim that such animals do not show any emotions appears to be rather implausible and in contradiction to current data…
> Again, there is disagreement over whether infants are able to consciously experience emotions and over which capacities account for their ability to show apparently complex emotions such as guilt and envy later on. But the claim that infants entertain no emotions until they are able to express themselves in well-formed beliefs and judgements is rare and hard to defend. However, when we try to describe the cognitive capacities underlying the emotions of infants and animals, it certainly makes no sense to say that they entertain judgements, at least not in terms of linguaform propositional attitudes."

This is a key issue. Whilst a cognitivist approach helps with understanding many aspects of emotions, the idea that infants and animals would be able to undertake the kind of cognitive judgements, taking account of semantic, rational and social norms as described above seems unlikely.

2.2.3.2 Non-cognitivist approaches

A non-cognitivist approach, if it is to be successful, must find a way to account for the normative assessability of emotions, as well as countering the problems faced by the cognitivist approach.

An embodied approach to emotions is the main thrust of the non-cognitivist view. To understand this, we may need to start by going back to William James' 1884 paper, *What is an Emotion?* (James, 1884). Whilst Cognitivists tend to downplay the role of the body in emotional processing (the "co-incidental by-product view" (Hufendiek, 2016, p. 49), James argues that the feeling of bodily arousal is, in fact, what constitutes an emotion (1884, p. 193). In fact, James makes two claims: one is that a mental state, devoid of bodily arousal, would not be an emotion, and second that different types of emotions owe their special character to the different kinds of bodily arousal that constitute them (ibid).

Neither the cognitive impenetrability of emotions, nor their action-orientation is a problem now. These were problematic when we viewed emotions as judgements, but if we no longer define emotions as judgements these problems disappear. And the lack of complex cognitive processing means that the presence of emotions in infants and animals is also not a problem. However, the normative assessability of emotions cannot easily be explained.

Basic emotions theory is one attempt to try and make all this work. This divides emotions into some basic ones which are 'innate', have panculturally displayed facial and bodily responses, are present in infants and animals, and may be understood as closer to this Jamesian definition. The theory would then suggest that other emotions are more cognitively complex, arrive later in life for humans and which are closer to a cognitive appraisal model.

Colombetti defines basic emotions as (2014: 26):

> "genetically determined sets of instructions called *affect programs* that, once activated, generate a series of distinctive changes in the brain, as well as in behaviour, expression (typically facial, but also vocal and bodily), and physiology or autonomic nervous system (ANS) activity."

Hufendiek adds (2016: 61) that these are evolutionarily acquired and triggered by automatic neural appraisal systems. Under this view we have a set of pre-installed emotional programmes which can be activated by the perception of danger, or loss, for example.

Much of this stems from the work of Ekman (2003), whose research focused on the pancultural consistency of facial expression in emotions. Colombetti challenges his work, firstly on the basis of the arbitrary nature of the choice of emotions to study (Colombetti 2014, 36-40). She highlights that Ekman's work focuses on 6 emotions (7 in later writings), which were chosen from a list of 9 drawn up by Ekman's mentor, Sylvan Tomkins. These were drawn from Darwin's classic work *The Expression of Emotions in Man and Animals* (Darwin 2009 (1872)). The challenge Colombetti makes is that Darwin never refers to some emotions as being basic, and he lists a long series of emotions that didn't make it into Tomkins' list (2014: 38). She states that she cannot find any justification for this choice (ibid).

In addition, the choice to study 6 of these 9 emotions in Ekman's research it seems came down to the ability to sample enough pictures for the facial expressions that could be used in the research (ibid: 39). On this basis she argues a whole construction of basic emotions has been developed, which seems to now be widely accepted by researchers, who then carry out research on these emotions as if they are basic, and on other emotions as if they are not. This means that we are likely to reinforce the

initial starting point without inquiring more deeply. It is also worth noting that Ekman,

who was instrumental to this view of emotions has now retreated from the idea of

basic emotions, stating that all emotions are basic (ibid: 37).

2.2.4 An alternative embodied understanding of emotions

Hufendiek outlines an alternative model of embodied emotions, which does allow for

the normative assessability of emotions. She proposes emotions as (2016: 19):

> "embodied action oriented representations that refer to certain kinds of
> affordances that we encounter in our environment. These action-oriented
> representations constitute a practical knowledge of the social world we are
> embedded in. Emotions are constituted by embodied homeostatic reactions,
> which become skilful in a process of interaction with the social world from early
> on."

To understand her model it makes sense to start with how she understands the

process of perception, drawing on the work of Gibson (2015), and his concept of

affordances.

Firstly, perception is a more complex process than is sometimes articulated. The

sandwich model of perception suggests that there is perception and action, as the

slices of bread, and in the middle sits cognition or the mind, which takes in the

perception and directs it towards action. Hufendiek points out the over simplicity of

this model (ibid: 153-156), drawing on the work of John Dewey. She points out while

the hand may depend on the vision to engage in the environment, that if the eye is not

fixed through attention, and there is no proprioceptive feedback, then the task cannot

be fulfilled. This model suggests an ongoing circuit of sensorimotor feedback, which is

involved in perception and action rather than a simple sandwich. It also brings up the

issue of attention and intention, and how this shapes what is perceived.

Hufendiek reviews evidence from neuroscience and psychophysiology and concludes

that the evidence from this is such that emotions cannot be adequately described

using a sandwich, or linear, model of perception. She states (ibid: 156):

> "The claim that emotional processing starts with a neural appraisal (e.g. in the
> amygdala) and triggers bodily arousal, which is then felt, ignores the multiple
> feedback sources in an emotional process. The sensory apparatus and the
> amygdala stimulate each other, bodily feedback can shape the appraisal, and
> an emotional feeling is not constituted by bodily arousal, but also by e.g.
> altered attention."

In other words, my bodily state, my attention and focus, can feedback to the amygdala

(in this case) and alter the way the emotion is perceived. It is a complex series of

feedback loops that shapes emotions. So whilst emotions may be triggered by the

external content of the environment, the way they are processed is simultaneously

shaped by proprioceptive feedback within the organism.

Hufendiek draws on the work of James Gibson to develop her model of emotions,

specifically his concept of affordances. Gibson defines affordances as (Gibson 2015:

119):

> "The *affordances* of the environment are what it *offers* the animal, what it
> *provides* or *furnishes*, either for good or ill. The verb *to afford* is found in the
> dictionary, but the noun *affordance* is not. I have made it up. I mean by it
> something that refers to both the environment and the animal in a way that no
> existing term does. It implies a complementarity of the animal and the
> environment."

Affordances need to be seen as relative to a specific animal. Certain things are

poisonous to some animals and not to others, for example. A decking structure may be

'stand-upon-able' for me, but perhaps not for a hippopotamus, etc. This has some

similarities to Lazarus' work, which was cited earlier on relational themes between the

environment and the animal, but there is an important distinction. Lazarus argued that

these relations involve a complex process of cognitive evaluation for the organism,

whereas Gibson sees affordances as things that are directly perceived in the

environment. He states (ibid: 121):

> "An important fact about the affordances of the environment is that they are in a sense objective, real, and physical, unlike values and meanings, which are often supposed to be subjective phenomenal and mental. But, actually, an affordance is neither an objective property nor a subjective property; or it is both if you like. An affordance cuts across the dichotomy of subjective-objective and helps us to understand its inadequacy. It is equally a fact of the environment and a fact of behaviour. It is both physical and psychical, yet neither. An affordance points both ways, to the environment and to the observer."

From this we can see that an affordance is the way that we perceive an environment

to be. When I perceive a decking structure, I perceive it as having the property of being

'stand-upon-able' as a quality of that environment, which sits alongside whatever

physical properties it may or may not have, and may in fact be true or not. Gibson goes

on to say (ibid: 131-132):

> "The perceiving of an affordance is not a process of perceiving a value-free physical object to which meaning is somehow added in a way that no-one has been able to agree upon; it is a process of perceiving a value-rich ecological object. Any substance, any surface, any layout has some affordance for benefit or injury to someone. Physics may be value-free, but ecology is not."

In this way, Hufendiek argues, we can see the relational themes, differently – a danger

is not just perceived as a danger, which then goes through a cognitive process of

adding meaning, but it is perceived as a 'danger to be avoided' (2016: 158). This model

of perception allows us to see the motivating and action-oriented aspects of emotion

more clearly.

In addition, such a model allows us to be able to experience emotions without a complex cognitive process. Hufendiek states (2016: 160): "Natural information is external; according to Gibson we can directly perceive it with no representations needed not even inner processing of information." Therefore, this model gives an explanation of emotions that allows for the existence of emotions in infants and animals, it explains the action-orientation of emotions, and also it explains their cognitive impenetrability. However, can it explain the normative assessability of emotions?

Earlier I noted that Hufendiek stated that emotions become skilful in interaction with the world. Hufendiek refers to emotion as a 'skilful ability' – it is not a skill in the proper sense in that it is present from birth, yet it is shaped by a process of learning and development, in ways which are fundamental to its functioning (ibid: 161-170).

So, just as for an infant, a decking structure is not stand-upon-able, because they are not yet able to stand, an anger reaction which represents the struggle against restrictions, can only be present at the moment where the infant is able to struggle against restrictions. For a young baby this may take the form of learning to struggle against being swaddled tightly, and for a toddler may represent the learning of how to say "no." The learning of how to struggle against in some way is required for experiencing anger as a restriction to be fought.

Hufendiek points out (ibid: 163) that only infants which have learnt to empathise and show recompensive behaviour can experience guilt, and that this happens before they have an explicit understanding of rules and norms. In this way infants can acquire the

skills of reacting to the world via emotions, in a way that is highly influenced by the culture and social environment they grow up in, without having any conceptual understanding of the rules and norms.

Bringing all of this together we see that emotions can be viewed as a process of perception of affordances that is influenced by many factors (e.g., bodily state and attention), and in which we develop a skilful ability through life. As a model of emotions, this is one which could enable someone to take action in an entangled context, in a timely way, and yet can account for the normative assessibility of emotions. This could provide a basis for a teleoaffective structure, which organises emotions, and raises some interesting questions. Emotions are defined here as a skilful ability, developing in interaction with the world, and we interact with the world through our embodied practices. What impact will new practices have on the emotional lives of research participants and will emotions become more skilful in this process?

2.2.5 Emotions, habitus and the teleoaffective structure

> *"Perhaps tragedies are only tragedies in the presence of love, which confers meaning to loss."*
> Elizabeth Alexander, The Light of the World

The poet, Elizabeth Alexander, expresses something important about the nature of emotions. They shape what is important to us. To quote Hufendiek once more (ibid: 171): "they do not constitute access to the world in the way that perception does. Emotions rather highlight what matters." Therefore, perceptions reveal the content of

the world, emotions reveal what is important inside of that. They combine to give us intelligent skilful coping, and they can work without significant conscious processing.

If emotions represent skilful responses, as articulated above, what is the process of learning involved in developing such skilful responses? If they organise our practices alongside purpose (or purposiveness) in a teleoaffective structure, how does this relate to habitus? And how does learning impact on this whole system, such that a person can develop their way of being in the world? Going forward I will explore how we can understand the habitus and the process of bodily and emotional learning which takes place through practices.

2.3 Bodily and emotional learning, and the habitus

If we understand emotions as embodied action-oriented representations that become skilful in interaction with the world, there is an emotional and embodied learning process taking place, which we need to understand in relation to the habitus, and as part of how we can develop skilful performance in leadership. Kupers (2008, p. 389) points out, that much of the research on organizational learning is currently: "primarily cognitive in orientation, often neglecting bodily and emotional aspects." It does not seem to address this as an emotional and embodied process. Stolz (2014: 475), reinforces this when writing about embodied learning, arguing that therefore questions about learning, "such as 'what learning is' and what is implied 'when someone has learnt something'" are not so much questions for the psychologist as the philosopher. And it is with this in mind, that I review the subject of the embodied and emotional learning, starting with a deeper exploration of the habitus.

2.3.1 Habitus and practical theory

Bourdieu's central argument, behind his theory of practice and habitus, is that rules

within a group or community, only exist in the mind of the anthropologist who studies

them and then abstracts these rules. They do not exist as a conscious set of rules

within the community, that people are consciously following. Bourdieu argues that

they are constructed by the anthropologist as a way to compensate for their lack of

practical mastery (Bourdieu, cited in King 2000: 419), but that the anthropologist takes

this as evidence for the existence of an objective set of rules.

A practice orientation would argue that the natives in this culture do not need or

require a set of rules, as they know the practices of their culture so well. King (2000:

419) goes on to state:

> "For Bourdieu, social agents are "virtuosos" (1977a: 79) who are not dominated
> by some abstract social principles but who know the script so well that they can
> elaborate and improvise upon the themes which it provides and in the light of
> their relations with others. Bourdieu describes social actors as having a "sense
> of the game," using football and tennis players as examples of this virtuosic
> sense. These players do not apply a priori principles to their play – only
> beginners need to do that – but rather, having an intimate understanding of
> the object of the game and the kinds of situations it can throw up, they have
> practical flexibility to know when and how they should run to the net or into
> space (19 19, 120-21; 1990b: 62; 1990a: 66-67, 81; 1988: 783)."

So, people are acting in a community according to a set of practices, which they

improvise around, but which are subject to approval by the group. For example, the

principles of honour within a community, or the practices of gift-giving are examples

which are subject to strong cultural practices, so whilst an individual is not constrained

by a set of rules to close action down, they are subject to the 'informal tribunal of the group'. King states (2000: 420-421):

> "Moreover, because individuals are from birth embedded in social relations with other individuals, any action they perform is inevitably social because it is derived from their socially created sense of practice learnt from other individuals… Individuals can never invent a purely individualistic and asocial act – unless they are actually insane. Under practical theory, individuals are constrained by being embedded in social relations with other individuals, whose opinions decide upon and inform the legitimacy of their actions but they are not determined by rules which exist prior to social agreement."

Chia & Holt (2006) and Ozbilgin & Tatli (2005) explain that Bourdieu's approach finds a third way between individualism – social experience being explained through individual agency – and structuralist theories where it is explained by something outside of individuals and their practices, such as a set of rules. Therefore, it is important to see the relational nature of practices as Bourdieu describes them. Habitus is constituted in practice and is in "practical relation to the world" (Bourdieu 1990: 52) and as such is in relation to the social processes which are taking place and the human and non-human actants which influence that social process. In this way we can see that Bourdieu intends to begin to dissolve the subject-object divide somewhat – practices provide a third way between individual subjective agency and an objective set of rules.

However, Habitus is not without its challenges. What exactly is this "system of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures" (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 53) and how and where are they held? King (2000) divides Bourdieu's work into Habitus and Practical Theory and argues that they contradict. In practical theory, King argues (ibid: 421): "individuals are in complex, constantly negotiated networks of relations with other individuals; isolated individuals

do not stand before objective structures and rules which determine their actions but in networks of relations which they virtuosically manipulate." But King argues that (ibid: 422), "The concept of the habitus constitutes the moment of regression into objectivism and, therefore, back into the very dualism of structure and agency which Bourdieu had already substantially superseded."

King goes back to the definition of habitus offered above as: "structuring structures" (Bourdieu 1990: 53), and argues that this replaces the complex negotiation of networks of relationships described in practical theory, with an objective structure to which an individual must respond, and in doing so returns to a list of cultural rules. He states (King, 2000, p. 423):

> "Not only does Bourdieu emphasize the existence of objective economic and conceptual structures (the habitus), but the interactional, intersubjective element of social life which was central to his "practical theory" is effaced by a solipsistic theory where the lone individual is now attached to an objective social structure. There are no "calls to order by the group" nor any subtle consideration of the reactions of others when Bourdieu discusses the habitus, nor does there need to be, for the habitus ensures that the individual will inevitably act according to the logic of the situation. The origin of individuals' actions lies not in their interaction with other individuals but in the objective structures which confront them. It is to those structures, the opus operatum, not others, to whom they must now defer."

King argues that by his own definition of habitus, Bourdieu is contradicting himself. Either we are governed by a series of social practices in a particular community or culture (practical theory), which natives are virtuosi in the implementation of, and through which they negotiate their relationships, or we have an internalised set of social rules and structures which guide our actions (habitus).

The essence of King's argument revolves around the notion of habitus as a 'structure' which he argues returns us to something akin to the set of rules that Bourdieu argued wasn't there. However, was this what Bourdieu was intending or meaning? I suspect not and instead will offer an alternative understanding of habitus. I am left wondering if this is just a misunderstanding born out of the limitations of language to express something new through the phrase 'structuring structures'.

Downey (2010) offers a different understanding of the habitus when he equates it with the body. Downey (ibid: 34-35) quotes Tim Ingold as stating: "[S]kills are literally embodied, in the sense that their development entails specific modifications in neurology, musculature, and even in basic features of anatomy' (2000: 375)." He goes on to state that what underlies the diversity of practices is (ibid: 35-36): "the culturally malleable biological structure that was there all along: the human body itself, including the complicated neural systems that turn experience into physiology and perception."

What if the body is the structuring structure to which Bourdieu refers? The body as a set of embodied practices, but also as something which is changeable, malleable and which learns. But does this body represent a move back into the dualism that King claims? This depends entirely upon our interpretation of the body. Stolz (Stolz 2014: 478) explores Merleau-Ponty's interpretation of the body and states:

> "such a position implies that there no longer exists a philosophical division between the object and subject because the world begins from the 'phenomenal body' and provides the means through which we can develop a sense of our own identity that is integral to coming to know the world through the experience of our embodiment that has serious ramifications concerning the act of learning (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, 2004)."

What Stolz is arguing is that the world begins from our phenomenal body and provides the means through which we can develop a sense of ourselves – our engagement with the world provides the sense of who we are, and our body is how we engage with the world, which is of the world. This is not a body, or habitus, as an entity, a fixed set of rules dictating our actions, but as an interrelational process with the world. Here the body is a habitus which provides no contradiction to practical theory.

If this is the case, then in learning, or skills acquisition[5], our engagement with the world changes, which means that how we come to know ourselves in the world will change – we will become a different actor – which we will experience in our bodies as we engage with the world. Here we see that the human body holds the skills or the habitus that we currently possess, and therefore the development of new skills must engage the body. We also see that we will come to know the world differently, and Standal & Moe (2011) make clear that as we learn a new skill we come to perceive the world differently. They state (ibid: 261): "to acquire and refine skills is to open up the world or perhaps even new worlds." This is strikingly similar to the concept of affordances (Gibson, 2015) discussed in the section on emotions, and to which I will return.

2.3.2 Learning habitus

Bourdieu addresses how the habitus is learnt (1990: 73):

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[5] Standal & Moe point out that (2011: 26): "Habit is the word used in the English translation of PhP, but some writers (Dreyfus, 2005; Ryle, 1949) are critical towards the use of this word, because habit is generally taken to imply simple and mechanical behaviours, and thus not what Merleau-Ponty intended with the original French word l'habitude'. Dreyfus favours the word skills, but as we see it, both habit (as understood by Merleau-Ponty, and not the corrupted form of habit often ascribed to it) and skill are useful as long as we know that it denotes a flexible, situational and adjustable ability to act." This is the sense in which I will be discussing skill acquisition or learning in this paper.

> "…the process of acquisition – a practical *mimesis* (or mimeticism) which implies an overall relation of identification and has nothing in common with an imitation that would presuppose a conscious effort to reproduce a gesture, an utterance or an object explicitly constituted as a model – and the process of reproduction – a practical reactivation which is opposed to both memory and knowledge – tend to take place below the level of consciousness, expression and the reflexive distance which these presuppose. The body believes in what it plays at: it weeps if it mimes grief. It does not represent what it performs, it does not memorize the past, it *enacts* the past, bringing it back to life. What is 'learned by body' is not something that one has, like knowledge that can be brandished, but something that one is." (Emphasis in original text)

This is tricky, as here Bourdieu defines the habitus as only acquired and learnt through an unconscious process of mimesis – the habitus cannot be learnt through an imitative conscious effort according to this statement. So how does one then learn embodied practices and change the habitus? Is an unconscious process of mimesis the only way? It seems from this that consciously, learned practices cannot be part of the habitus.

In addressing learning in this way, Bourdieu draws upon the idea that skill learning, often cannot easily be rendered in words – it is another form of knowing. However, Downey (2010: 26) asks: "why is he so emphatic that transmission must not be conscious when we can observe in many forms of bodily training that the body must be brought into and out of consciousness in order to focus upon a technique before it becomes automatized?"

Downey challenges these ideas, using his experience of the Brazilian martial art of Capoeira[6], which is taught imitatively (as are other martial arts). He describes how the process of learning the moves, will involve individuals coming to see some of their

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[6] Capoeira is a Brazilian martial art which combines martial techniques with dance, acrobatics and is performed to music. It was developed by African slaves in Brazil and combines the elements of dance and music, as they wished to disguise the fact that they were in fact training to fight.

currently embodied movement traits, postures, and tendencies, as they experience

these as obstacles to learning other movements. This is reminiscent of the previous

conversation from Chia (2004), regarding how habitus restricts our repertoire of

responses. Downey argues therefore, that through training a change in the habitus

occurs as the person learns how to move differently and unlearns previous patterns.

He states (Downey, 2010, p. 27):

> "When we examine the biological consequences of training, we can recognize
> other forms of embodied learning that may not involve passing subconscious
> cognitive structures; rather, training may demonstrably affect physiological
> change in the brain, nervous system, bones, joints, sensory organs, even
> endocrine and autonomic systems. Transformation of the habitus is not simply
> changing an underlying 'structure' but altering the organic architecture of the
> subject."

The change in the habitus happens unevenly in different people, and in fits and starts,

and results in a wide range of practices with different practitioners. He draws on

Bourdieu's concept of the 'sense of the game', and states (ibid: 33):

> "The 'sense of the game' in capoeira is diversified, slowly acquired. This 'sense',
> or, more accurately, 'senses', includes a range of abilities and tasks: learned
> reaction patterns to another's movements; visual attention, including during
> difficult tasks like acrobatic movements; joint mobility and muscular strength;
> heightened susceptibility to particular stimuli, such as musical rhythms, and the
> ability to deal with competing stimuli, such as feints or distractions; cardio-
> vascular endurance, including techniques for self-control, even the ability to
> surrender control of bodily pacing and tension to the orchestra; and a 'sense'
> for the dramatic or humour that takes various forms. Players learn in
> idiosyncratic fashions and fail to learn in equally idiosyncratic fashion. Teachers
> do things in diverse ways, some of them more effective for some students than
> others. Mestre Pastinha argued that cada qual é cada qual: 'each one is each
> one', capoeira skill was unique, peculiar to the practitioner."

Downey is suggesting that both processes may be ongoing – both conscious and

unconscious. He doesn't draw this out in his paper, but the movements and actions of

the process may be taught consciously and explicitly, and there may be other things,

such as *malici*a (a cunning that Downey mentions as part of the art, which is not taught

explicitly), the sense of the dramatic or humour (mentioned above), which are learnt implicitly through mimesis in community. Perhaps in some ways Bourdieu was right – that aspects of the habitus are learnt unconsciously, however, perhaps Downey is right as well, that this unconscious learning, takes place through or alongside the conscious learning of practices.

I recently watched a video of the late, highly skilful footballer, George Best, showing great skill in running into situations where he had multiple opponents and being able to take the ball around them and go on to score a goal[7]. It was interesting that in some situations, the observer that I am, saw no possibility to continue his progress, but the observer that was George Best saw different possibilities due to the skills that he possessed. The skills gave him different possibilities for action.

So going a step further than Downey, this may be the unconscious mimesis learning talked about by Bourdieu – the unconscious learning is the changed perception (and accompanying attitude) that is developed by the individual, which comes from the skills available to them and indeed which gives them the capacity to utilise those skills. So, if habitus is the physical body with its embodied practices, we can see this creates a perceptual field for someone due to the skills that they are. Because these new possibilities can never be seen by someone without the skills, they cannot be taught explicitly, and must be learnt by mimesis, rather than by imitation – but imitation and building the core skills makes this learning possible.

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[7] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uJWWA-h_-5g

We can see that skills that are embodied, afford different possibilities for action, drawing on Gibson's work on affordances, (2015). Skills embodied, create the perception of affordances and then our emotions relate to the affordances we encounter in our environment (Hufendiek, 2016). Emotions provide access to knowing what is important in the environment and they become skilful in interaction with the world. What the world affords me, therefore, changes through practices that reshape my embodied self (literally my body's organic architecture), my habitus, and this will change the way in which I experience my emotions. However, such emotional and embodied learning is a discussion largely absent from the literature and exploring how or the extent to which this works in the development of skilled performance in leadership, could be a contribution of this inquiry. How will embodied practices impact my participants' experience of their emotions?

2.3.3 The development of leadership through habitus

Earlier I asked about how we could think of a way of developing leadership given the challenges which were mentioned in responding effectively to an entangled flesh of relations. A practice-based approach could allow for this development to occur. According to the ideas outlined above, it is a process of practice to change the habitus so that behaviours are no longer restricted in specific situations. It develops new skills and as a result what the world affords an individual, changes. This develops emotions to become skilful in interaction with the world. It enables someone to embody their purpose through a set of purposive responses which enable them to achieve their purpose whilst engaging with the world as ready-to-hand. And, this engagement with

the world as ready-to-hand gives a presence where one can perceive the flesh of

entangled relations of human and non-human actants.

Dreyfus (2002) draws on Merleau-Ponty's concepts of the intentional arc and maximal

grip to show how the development, described in the paragraph above, could

potentially emerge. Dreyfus defines these as (ibid: 367-368):

> "The intentional arc names the tight connection between the agent and the
> world, viz. that, as the agent acquires skills, those skills are "stored", not as
> representations in the mind, but as dispositions to respond to the solicitations
> of situations in the world. Maximum grip names the body's tendency to
> respond to these solicitations in such a way as to bring the current situation
> closer to the agent's sense of an optimal gestalt. Neither of these abilities
> requires mental or brain representations."

What Dreyfus is articulating here is that the agent acquires skills as dispositions to

respond to the world, which is another way of saying that the acquisition of skills is a

change to the habitus. Our relation to the world is changed by the acquisition of a skill,

and then we respond to the world in such a way to bring the situation closer to an

'optimal gestalt' which equates with the purposive actions described above. It's worth

noting the 'optimal gestalt' could well be equivalent to the teleoaffective structure –

the optimal gestalt as the achievement of purposive aims alongside an emotional

action-orientation.

Dreyfus states (ibid):

> "according to Merleau-Ponty, what the learner acquires through experience is
> not *represented* in the mind at all but is *presented* to the learner as a more and
> more finely discriminated situation, which then solicits a more and more
> refined response. In so far as the situation does not clearly solicit a single
> response or the response does not produce a satisfactory result, the learner is
> led to further refine his discriminations."

Here Dreyfus is describing the way in which the world affords us different possibilities for action as we develop a skill – "as a more and more finely discriminated situation" – and he illustrates this example by describing both learning to drive a car (a more manual skill-based example of learning) and learning to play chess (a more cognitive example of learning). The lack of satisfactory response produces breakdowns inside of which further deliberate practice can take place.

A key element is how the skilled agent develops a disposition that allows him or her to see a more finely discriminated situation. This parallels Gary Klein's research on intuitive decision making where Chess masters can recognise an extremely wide range of positions and are able to generate a response to these in an extremely short period of time (around 6 seconds) without their abilities degrading (Klein 1998: 161-168). In fact, his research shows that they tend to generate one single response, and with more time consider a wider range of responses, of which they are most likely to return to the first one, and this is most likely to be the best move (ibid).

So, the practice of new skills generates a new habitus for the learner through which they can discriminate the world more effectively and therefore refine the response given. Therefore, effective leadership development may involve the design of practices that enable the development of a habitus that allows someone to respond more skilfully (in terms of achieving their purpose) to the social processes they are involved in, and thereby enable the emergence of leadership. This study will investigate how embodied practices impact on this ability to respond skilfully in the domain of leadership.

When discussing temporary breakdowns Dreyfus (Dreyfus 1991a: 72) describes

deliberate coping as one of the things that can happen. It is interesting to note, that

when studying the development expertise and expert performance, across many

domains, Ericsson uses the term 'deliberate practise' (Ericsson, Krampe and Tesch-

Römer, 1993; Ericsson, 2004, 2008; Ericsson and Ward, 2007; Ericsson, Prietula and

Cokely, 2007). For Ericsson a deliberate practice involves the focused attention on

consciously practising at the edge of one's ability. Interestingly, Ericsson states,

regarding high performers (Ericsson 2008: 991):

> "The key challenge for aspiring expert performers is to avoid the arrested
> development associated with automaticity. These individuals purposefully
> counteract tendencies toward automaticity by actively setting new goals and
> higher performance standards, which require them to increase speed,
> accuracy, and control over their actions..."

Putting this into the language of this discussion, expert performers are avoiding the

automaticity of habitus, by actively changing their purposive ends, through setting new

goals for performance. They, or a teacher or coach who assists them, are constantly

drawing attention to the small gaps and errors in their performance, as well as

constantly setting higher and higher goals, to create a temporary breakdown so that

they can continue practicing deliberately. This process of reflection on purpose and

moving into deliberate practise through breakdowns, seems to be significant in the

process of learning to embody skilful abilities.

2.4 Conclusions and direction of this dissertation

An exploration of embodied practices allows an understanding of how we can act in a

way where being experiences the world as ready-to-hand or present-at-hand

(Heidegger, 1962), and how when experiencing the world as ready-to-hand we take action purposively and in response to our emotions, without mental representation. This showed how one could act amid the flesh of entangled relationships, but this action may or may not be conducive to the emergence of leadership. Breakdowns, a place where the world appears as present-at-hand provided a way of understanding how more deliberate coping could potentially result in the design of new practices.

An embodied view of emotions allows them to be understood as "embodied action-oriented representations that refer to certain kinds of affordances we encounter in our environment," which become skilful in a process of interaction with the world (Hufendiek, 2016, p. 19). Understanding emotions in this way raises the question of understanding the learning process which takes place as our emotions become skilful.

Understanding habitus and learning more deeply led to a view that habitus is the body, the organic architecture which changes in response to embodied practices. Learning through imitation and mimesis enables a change in the habitus where once again the world affords different possibilities to the self. As the world affords us different possibilities, our emotions, which relate to these affordances, also develop, and change, perhaps becoming skilful in interaction with the world.

Skilful performance in leadership could therefore be understood as being able to embody the purposive responses, informed by skilful emotions, which enable the achievement of a purpose. Embodied practices may enable the reshaping of the habitus which could develop such leadership.

My inquiry, therefore, is to explore the way in which embodied practices impact the skilful performance of a group of senior leaders, from across different organisations. As such I am interested to understand:

- Their current embodied practices

- The way in which they take on new practices

- How they take new actions in the world

- How the world is perceived differently by them as they practise

- The way in which they experience their emotions as they go through the research

- Whether their relationships and the social fields in which they sit, change in this process.

I will continue by exploring the methodology I used for this research.

Interlude:

In broken images

He is quick, thinking in clear images;

I am slow, thinking in broken images.

He becomes dull, trusting to his clear images;

I become sharp, mistrusting my broken images,

Trusting his images, he assumes their relevance;

Mistrusting my images, I question their relevance.

Assuming their relevance, he assumes the fact,

Questioning their relevance, I question the fact.

When the fact fails him, he questions his senses;

When the fact fails me, I approve my senses.

He continues quick and dull in his clear images;

I continue slow and sharp in my broken images.

He in a new confusion of his understanding;

I in a new understanding of my confusion.

Robert Graves (1982)

Chapter 3:

Methodology

"If this is an awful mess… then would something less messy make a mess of describing it?"
(Law, 2004, p. 1)

In my reviewing the literature I have made the case for understanding an entangled

flesh of human relations between human and non-human actants, through our

embodied sensibility. I further argued that we can develop our ability to take

purposive actions while practically coping with this entangled flesh, through embodied

practices that change the habitus (the physical body) giving us different affordances in

the world. In this way of looking at taking actions to enable the emergence of leadership, I have argued that perhaps it is inappropriate to talk of leaders, as leadership is a moment of social relations, which is a product of this flesh, whilst acknowledging that this does make the subject trickier to talk about. In addition, I have argued for an understanding of emotions as embodied action-oriented representations which refer to affordances we encounter in our environment, rather than simply accepting a cognitive appraisal view of emotions. Finally, I have leaned heavily on an understanding offered by Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty and Gibson, where there are no simple divisions between subject and object. In other words, to use the phrase from Law, above, what an 'awful mess'.

It would have been simpler to have taken a more individualistic notion of leadership (and talk simplistically and clearly about 'leaders'), to have abandoned the context in which leadership occurs, to perhaps have not even clarified an understanding of emotions (as I noted much of the literature on leadership and emotions does), to have ignored the material world in which leadership occurs and have retreated to a simpler understanding of subject and object. This would have led me smoothly to a positivist paradigm, the scientific method, perhaps some questionnaires and structured interviews with people undertaking some embodied practices, leading to some quantitative data with a search for statistical significance

It would have been simpler, and it would have forced clarity on the entangled mess, but would this clarity have been useful? Law suggests that perhaps forcing such clarity would have made a mess of describing what I was aiming to describe, and so it was

with this in mind that I entered into my inquiry. How could my methodology in some

way appropriately match the messy world I sought to understand?

I chose therefore to undertake this inquiry as a piece of action research in a

participatory paradigm. In this chapter I will seek to justify this choice, beginning by

detailing my philosophical position in undertaking this research and the methodology

that I used. I will then explore the methods in further detail, before commenting on

quality and validity issues in research and research ethics.

3.1 Philosophy of knowing

I have entitled this section a philosophy of knowing, rather than a philosophy of

knowledge, as this is central to the orientation that I took to this research. Knowledge

suggests a fixed entity, a final place to arrive, whereas knowing suggests a process of

coming to understand. Law (2004, p. 7) argues for understanding the 'messiness'

described above as, "an unformed but generative flux of forces and relations that work

to produce particular realities." In this 'generative flux' a static sense of knowledge is

perhaps impossible, but a process of knowing, of understanding more deeply, is

possible and this was my aim in this research.

3.1.1 Paradigms of inquiry
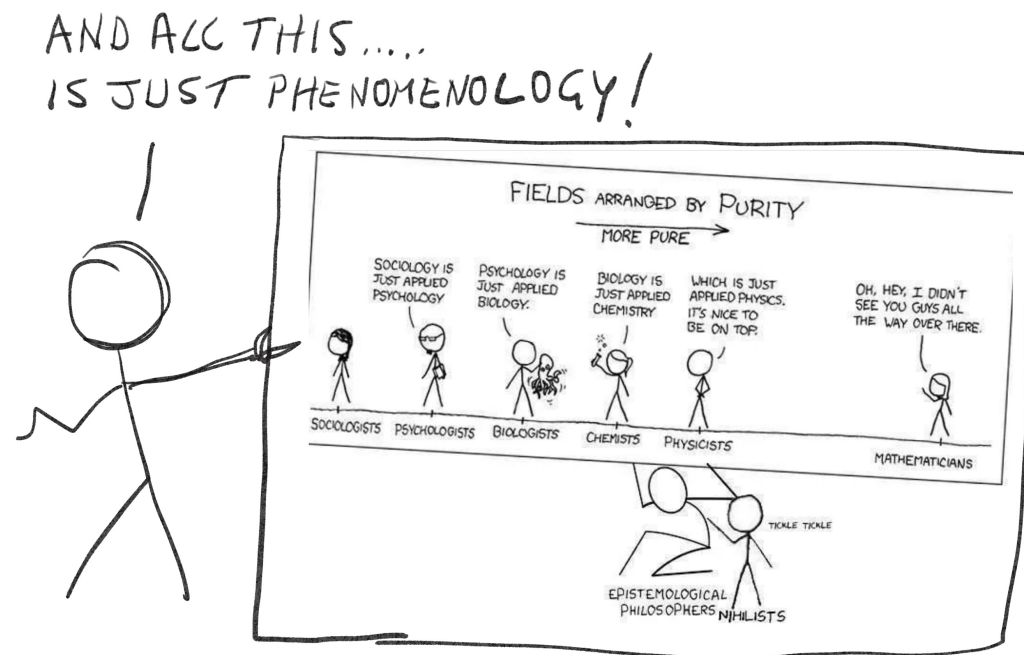
Figure 1: Claims to knowledge

(Burton and Taylor, 2021) (Permission to reproduce this image has been granted by Julian Burton)

The cartoon above speaks to the challenge of claims to knowing. Whilst one may challenge some of the statements represented, the overall suggestion that knowledge rests on philosophy and our ability to perceive the world, is one that is hard to challenge.

The challenge we face in staking a claim to knowing is that our experience of 'reality' is mediated through our perception, and everything and everyone therefore could be my private fantasy. This is solipsism and as Gergen points out (1999), one can neither prove nor disprove this idea – except perhaps, as Watts suggests, by imagining a

conference of solipsists gathered together arguing about which one of them is really

there (Watts, no date).

This means that we must begin with an assumption about reality, on which our

knowledge stands. If we assume a reality beyond my imagination, then what is the

nature of that reality, and what is the relationship between myself as the subject, and

the reality as an object? As I have already articulated, the perspectives I am taking

from the literature review suggest a more blurred understanding of the subject-object

divide.

Guba & Lincoln (2004) map this out as a range of ontological positions along a

spectrum of objectivist to subjectivist. Objectivism, at the extreme, is a naïve realist

viewpoint. Here reality is real and observable, and can be understood and measured.

This is the traditional scientific viewpoint, often referred to as positivism, where reality

is objectively apprehensible, and 'truth' can be discovered. On the other extreme,

reality is constructed and relative, and we are engaged in understanding locally co-

constructed realities. This leads to a spectrum of positions on which we can place

paradigms of inquiry, but it is important to remember that this is a spectrum rather

than neatly delineated categories which are non-overlapping. There are many nuanced

positions and perspectives, and any categorisation is always an attempt to simplify.

Kuhn was the first to use the term paradigm in relation to scientific research, to

describe changes where a major shift of worldview occurred. He described a paradigm

in the postscript of the second edition of his book as (Kuhn 1996:174)

"the entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques, and so on shared by the members of a given community."

Paradigms are worldviews, which contain positions regarding the nature of reality – ontology, an understanding of how we come to have knowledge of this reality (or the nature of the relationship between the reality and the understanding self) – epistemology, and within which certain methodologies (strategies which guide our choice of empirical methods), make sense.

Guba & Lincoln mapped four paradigms of inquiry (positivism, post-positivism, critical theory and constructivism) onto the objective-subjective spectrum in the first edition of the Handbook of Qualitative Research (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Positivism they equate with naïve realism, whilst constructivism they see as relativistic and subjective (ibid). They revised this based on critique from Heron & Reason (1997), who argue for the inclusion of a further paradigm, 'participatory', which they include in the fourth edition of the handbook (Lincoln, Lynham and Guba, 2011).

The participatory paradigm does not however fit neatly onto the spectrum defined above. The participatory paradigm is a place where subjective and objective come together into an ontological position, which Heron & Reason describe as (1997:281):

> "This encounter is transactional, interactive; to touch, see or hear something or someone does not tell us either about our self all on its own, nor about a being out there all on its own. It tells us about a being in a state of interrelation and co-presence with us. Our subjectivity feels the participation of what is there, and is illuminated by it. Knowing a world is in this felt relation at the interactive interface between a subject and what is encountered. In the relation of meeting, my subjectivity becomes a perspectival window filled with a world which also transcends it. This ontology is thus subjective-objective:
> > It is subjective because it is only known through the form the mind gives it; and it is objective because the mind interpenetrates the given cosmos which is shapes (Heron, 1996:11)"

So, we have a spectrum of ontological positions, on which the paradigms can be mapped, from positivism to constructivism, as well as a participatory paradigm, based upon a subjective-objective ontology. In my research I was inquiring from a participatory paradigm, and below I will outline the different paradigms to give the reasons for my choice.

3.1.2 Positivism & Post-Positivism

Positivism is the traditional scientific paradigm. It involves an objective stance and a search for truth. Denzin & Lincoln (1998:13) describe the qualitative researcher's concerns in this paradigm as, "offering valid, reliable, and objective interpretations of their writings." The language here is telling – the assumption of positivism is that one can stand back and have an objective stance on reality.

Post-positivism is a critical realist perspective and is close to positivism. Its difference lies regarding the degree to which one can take an objective stance. Lincoln et al. (2011:100) state that the ontological position for post-positivism is that there is a 'real' reality, but that it is "only imperfectly and probabilistically apprehendible." Here rather than a search for truth, researchers try to falsify their hypotheses, as (influenced by Karl Popper) they believe that one can never prove that something is true, because further measurements may prove it false. One can only try to prove it false and fail.

Reason and Rowan (1981:xiv) critique the use of positivist inquiry for research into people, stating that:

> "It assumes that people can be reduced to a set of variables which are somehow equivalent across person and across situations."

They acknowledge their (ibid: xii): "hatred and horror about what traditional research does to those it studies," and argue for new paradigms of research whose roots (ibid: xvi) "lie widely within the behavioural sciences." In addition, Kupers (2013:347), as I have already noted, recommends that developing embodied leadership research:

> "requires shifting away from a theorizing *about,* or of bodies, in a disembodied, objectifying or subjectifying way, towards a mode of inquiry that is sensing and making sense while thinking *from* and *with* lived bodies and processual embodiment." (Author's emphasis)

Kupers, therefore, highlights the inappropriateness of the positivist paradigm for this research, and orients towards a process of 'research with', rather than 'research on'.

For my research the positivist and post-positivist paradigms would be inappropriate as a way of exploring the territory I have previously outlined when reviewing the literature. The challenge articulated by Law (2004, p. 16) is that while positivism is now seen negatively in much of social sciences, the basic intuitions underlying it are "widespread in Euro-American common-sense thinking." Therefore, separating from it to engage with such a process of knowing is challenging, and it was imperative that I entered into this research with clarity on orientation and philosophical approach, more so than a clear linear process for the research, in order not to carry positivist assumptions into my inquiry.

3.1.3 Critical Theory

Critical theory moves us along the spectrum and is sometimes referred to as historical realism. Here reality is determined by history and power relations within society.

Lincoln et al. (2011:102) describe the ontological position as: "Human nature operates in a world that is based on a struggle for power. This leads to interactions of privilege and oppression that can be based on race or ethnicity, socioeconomic class, gender, mental or physical abilities, or sexual preference." Here we see that the subjective is gaining more influence, specifically in the way history and power shape truth.

Habermas is a key figure in this movement and he argued that natural sciences were monologic – based on a one-way process of understanding – but that social sciences need to be two-way or dialogic (Easterby-Smith et al. 2012:30). He also argued that knowledge and truth are determined by interests and that those who have more power within society, have more ability to shape truth. Therefore research, in this paradigm, is "valuable as a means to social transformation, which is an end in itself." (Heron & Reason 1997: table 1)

There is learning to take from this paradigm, particularly about the way in which knowledge and truth are determined by interests and those who have power. However, the underlying position of history and power relations within society has less direct relevance for my inquiry.

3.1.4 Constructivism

Constructivism brings us to the subjective end of the spectrum. Here we are exploring the way in which we "construct knowledge through our lived experiences and through our interactions with other members of society. As such, as researchers, we must

participate in the research process with our subjects to ensure that we are producing

knowledge which is reflective of their reality." (Lincoln et al. 2011:103)

In constructivism, the focus of researchers is not measuring an objective reality, but

rather on understanding and appreciating the different constructions and meanings

that individuals and groups place upon their experience. Easterby-Smith et al.

(2012:23-24) state that the:

> "focus should be on what people, individually and collectively, are thinking and
> feeling, and attention should be paid to the ways in which they communicate
> with each other verbally and non-verbally. We should therefore try to
> understand and appreciate the different experiences that people have, rather
> than search for external causes and fundamental laws to explain behaviour."

Here we are paying attention to the particular, rather than the general; the observer

or researcher is part of the process, rather than a value-free independent observer in

positivism; and we are looking at the complexity of whole situations, rather than

reducing situations to component parts. Moving along the spectrum from objective to

subjective, has transformed the research and the role of the researcher.

Heron & Reason critique the constructivist paradigm, saying that it (1997:280):

"reduces reality to an intersubjective social construction generated by collective

language use and other social practices." They go on to state that (ibid): "such social

constructions have no independently identifiable real-world referents," and that

constructivists "are so busy rejecting the idea of an independent, objective world as

the absolute ground of conceptual knowledge claims, that they overlook the idea of an

experiential subjective-objective world as the relative ground of such claims." So, the

constructivist tradition rejects the objective, and there is a need for a paradigm which draws subject and object together.

In my inquiry, I am exploring an entangled flesh of relations between human and non-human actants. In this, I need to include the objective material world as well as the intersubjective social constructions, exploring how they come together into such an entangled flesh of relations and how we can take skilful action inside of such a context. In my inquiry, therefore, I need a paradigm that includes and draws together subject and object, rather than one which rejects the objective.

3.1.5 Participatory

The participatory paradigm is where subject and object come together. Reason and Bradbury (2001:6-7) state that the participatory paradigm, draws on and integrates both the positivist and the constructionist paradigms:

> "We participate in our world, so that the 'reality' we experience is a co-creation that involves the primal givenness of the cosmos and human feeling and construing…
>
> …it follows positivism in arguing that there is a 'real' reality, a primeval givenness of being (of which we partake) and draws on the constructionist perspective in acknowledging that as soon as we attempt to articulate this, we enter a world of human language and cultural expression."

Ladkin (2005) sees this perspective as one shared by the phenomenological tradition. She cites Moran's Introduction to Phenomenology, stating (ibid:122): "Indeed the whole point of phenomenology is that we cannot split off the subjective domain from the domain of the natural world as scientific naturalism has done. Subjectivity must be understood as inextricably involved in the process of constituting objectivity."

In his lectures on Heidegger, Dreyfus, rejects the use of the terms subject and object, because they are Cartesian terms which suggest the very dualism that Heidegger was trying to overcome. Dreyfus states (1991:5):

> "Heidegger does not deny that we sometimes experience ourselves as conscious subjects relating to objects by way of intentional states such as desires, beliefs, perceptions, etc., but he thinks of this as a more derivative and intermittent condition that presupposes a more fundamental way of being-in-the-world that cannot be understood in subject/object terms."

Heidegger explains 'being-in-the-world', stating (1962:78): "The compound expression 'being-in-the-world' indicates in the very way we have coined it, that it stands for a *unitary* phenomenon. This primary datum must be seen as a whole." That is, to divide into a being and a world, a subject and an object, is to misunderstand what he is trying to express. This way of being in the world seems analogous to Heron & Reason's statement, when describing the participatory paradigm, that (1997:280):

> "Mind and the given cosmos are engaged in a co-creative dance, so that what emerges as reality is the fruit of an interaction of the given cosmos and the way mind engages with it."

My inquiry is to explore the way in which embodied practices inform the development of skilled performance in leadership. As already noted, my theory base draws on ideas from the philosophy of Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, Bourdieu's concept of 'habitus' (1990), and Gibson's concept of 'affordances' (2015), all of which attempt to cross the subject-object divide. The participatory paradigm was therefore the basis for my inquiry.

Heron & Reason layout the structure of this paradigm as follows (1997: Table 1):

Ontology	participative reality - subjective-objective reality, co-created by mind and given cosmos
Epistemology	critical subjectivity in participatory transaction with cosmos; extended epistemology of experiential, propositional and practical knowing; co- created findings
Methodology	Political participation in collaborative action inquiry; primacy of the practical; use of language grounded in shared experiential context

Table 2: The structure of the participatory paradigm

3.2 Epistemology

Epistemologically, this paradigm involves critical subjectivity and a willingness to engage with an extended epistemology. These two concepts are linked, and indeed, the extended epistemology is a part of how we are critically subjective. Heron & Reason (ibid) draw out four ways of knowing, experiential knowing (from direct encounter), presentational knowing (metaphorical, intuitive knowing that is grounded in experiential knowing), propositional knowing (concepts and theories) and practical knowing (know-how, or knowledge demonstrated in skills or competence).

Heron and Reason believe that practical knowing is primary, and state (ibid:282):

> "As Macmurray (1957) pointed out, while you can divorce thought from action, you cannot divorce action in the world from thought. And we believe that what we learn about our world will be richer and deeper, if this descriptive knowledge is incidental to a primary intention to develop practical skills to change the world."

Knowing through our actions or practices is therefore given primacy by an extended epistemology. My inquiry is an inquiry into practical knowing – the process of taking on new embodied practices and how this informs the ability to take skilful action is an inquiry into the development of practical skills. What is learnt from this inquiry is therefore, learning which is grounded in a primary intention to develop practical knowing.

Heron & Reason state (1997:282): "It is equally important that action not only consummates the prior forms of knowing but is also grounded in them. It is in this congruence of the four aspects of the extended epistemology that lie claims to validity." They go on to describe critical subjectivity as meaning: "that we attend both to the grounding relations between the forms of knowing, and also to their consummating relations." They demonstrate this through the following diagram (ibid):
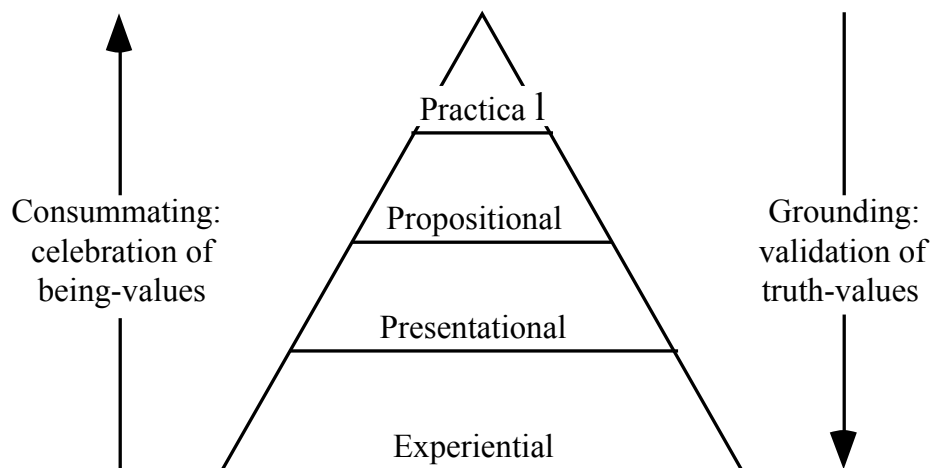
Figure 2: The extended epistemology

So, in this paradigm, we participate in co-creating reality where subject and object merge, and our claims to knowledge in this paradigm must lie through a congruence between these ways of knowing, so that action is consummated and grounded through the prior forms.

As previously mentioned, my inquiry concerned the development of practical knowing through embodied practices. The practical knowing that was developed was deeply grounded in the experiential knowing of participants as they undertook new practices and made sense of their experience through presentational and propositional knowing. Drawing on these different forms of knowing gives the basis for the practical knowing, which was developed, as well as the understanding of embodied practices that emerged from the inquiry.

3.3 Methodology

Paradigms are worldviews within which certain methodologies (strategies which guide our choice of empirical methods), make sense. Methods are then the means of data collection and analysis used and are guided by the methodology. Any methodology only makes sense because of the paradigm within which it sits.

The methodology provides a set of guiding strategies about how to conduct research in that paradigm. However, once we move beyond post-positivism on the previously described spectrum, we move into the shifting sands of fine distinctions between

ontological positions on the spectrum and a range of potential methodologies that we can use.

This means that there is no clear statement of how methodologies align themselves to paradigms. Instead, when using a methodology, we must be clear about our ontological and epistemological positions and, because of these, which methodologies may be suitable, and how these methodologies should be approached. It is through creating alignment between these elements that we ensure rigour in our research process.

3.3.1 Methodology of this inquiry: Action Research

As I have already indicated, I chose to undertake my inquiry in the participatory paradigm. As I indicated earlier, Heron & Reason argued for the inclusion of this paradigm in the Handbook of Qualitative Research, as they felt that that the existing paradigms did not capture the worldview they used when undertaking action research. Therefore, the participatory paradigm immediately draws us towards the various forms of action research, which is the methodology I used in this inquiry.

Heron & Reason (1997:275) state: "The case for a participative worldview has underpinned our work on co-operative inquiry and other participative forms of action research over the past twenty years and more." Ladkin concurs with Heron and Reason stating that a phenomenological stance, with an ontology which is subjective-objective, is a helpful position for action researchers (Ladkin, 2005).

Although action research is often classed as a methodology, it is in fact a school of methodological approaches, within which there are choices such as cooperative inquiry, action inquiry, action science, participatory action research and systemic action research. Some of the distinctions between these approaches are minor and nuanced, and all the approaches share some common values. However, this means that in designing a research study there are different ways of approaching the study – this has an advantage of flexibility, but the disadvantage of giving more choices which need to be justified and thought through. There is no straight forward approach to fall back on, as with the scientific method, but my hope was that this would provide enough messiness to be able to describe the messy reality I hoped to understand (Law, 2004).

The basic structure of action research is to engage in cycles of action and reflection, with dual aims – to create both change within the area of study, and in doing so to create a new understanding of the phenomenon. Indeed action research is predicated on the ideas that it is through changing something that we come to a deeper understanding of it (Coghlan and Brannick, 2005, p. 4). The cyclical process of action research is shown in the figure below. Action research often takes place in inquiry groups which come together to explore issues of mutual concern through repeated cycles of action and reflection.
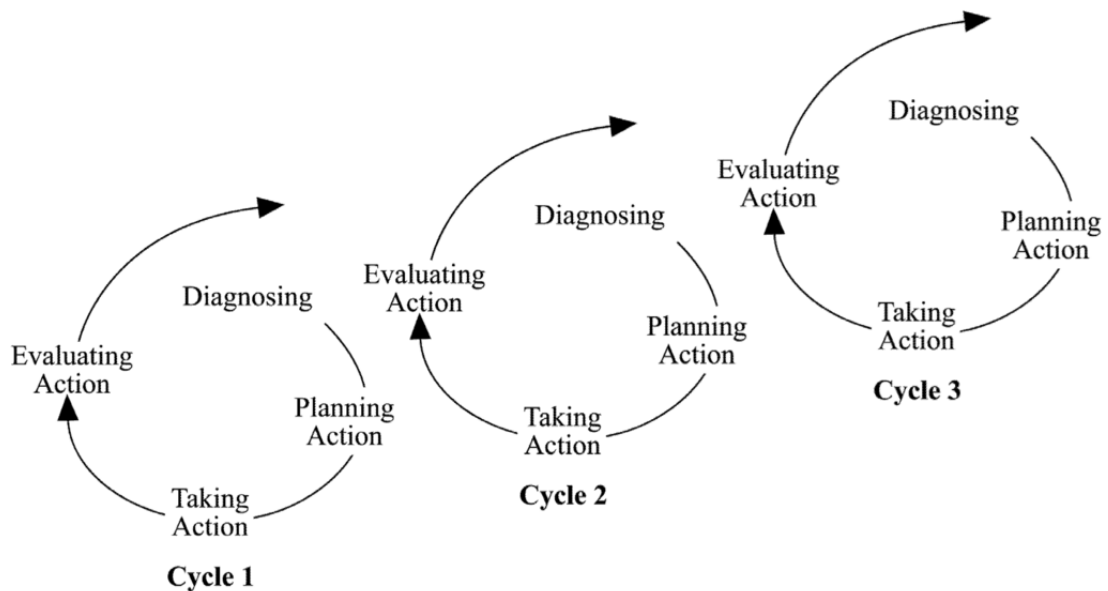
Figure 3: The spiral of action research cycles

(Coghlan and Brannick, 2005, p. 24)

Cooperative inquiry is one of the methodologies included within the realm of action research, and Heron & Reason (2001, p. 179) describe this as, "a way of working with other people who have similar concerns and interest to yourself, in order to: (1) understand your world, make sense of your life and develop new and creative ways of looking at things; and (2) learn how to act to change things you may want to change and find out how to do things better." Cooperative inquiry therefore involves groups who work on issues of shared concern to develop practical knowing. They go on to state that (ibid: 180):

> "Primacy is given to transformative inquiries that involve action where people change their way of being and doing and relating in their world - in the direction of greater flourishing."

My inquiry was a form of cooperative inquiry with a group exploring how embodied practices inform their ability to take skilful action in the domain of leadership.

Heron & Reason (2001:181-183) provide some distinctions for cooperative inquiry, which outline some of the methodological choices which are available to the action researcher. In the table below I outline these options and way in which my inquiry was constructed.

Distinction	This inquiry
Groups can be formed by an initiating researcher and invite others to join, or by pre-existing groups who draw on the methodology for their purposes.	In my research I was an initiating researcher and external to the group, in that I did not occupy a similar leadership role in an organization. So, I was not "a full co-subject" however there were "important areas of overlapping interest and practice," which enable me to be analogous or a partial co-subject (ibid:181).
Groups can be same role inquiries, where participants have the same role, mixed role inquiries, where participants have different roles, and counterpartal role inquiries, which would be counterparts in an existing dynamic, e.g., doctor and patient.	This was a 'same-role inquiry' where co-researchers have the same social role (leadership within an organisation) and are researching their practice within that role. Interestingly, their roles in their personal lives also came up in the inquiry – their roles as parents and partners. This wasn't an intended part of the

	inquiry but emerged based upon what participants shared.
Inquiries can be inside or outside inquiries. Inside inquiries are where the action phase of action research takes place within the group. An outside inquiry "is about what goes on in group members' working and/or personal lives, or in some special project, outside of the group meetings." (ibid: 182)	This was an 'outside inquiry' where the inquiry was about what went on in the group members' working lives (albeit that group members also discussed their personal lives), and the group came together for: "the reflection phases to share data, make sense of it, revise their thinking and, in light of all this, plan the next action phase. Group members disperse for each action phase which is undertaken on an individual basis out there in the world." (ibid: 182)
Open boundary inquiries include interactions with others as part of the action phase, whereas closed boundary inquiries focus on what in going on within and between co-researchers.	This was an open boundary inquiry with a focus on what was occurring in interactions in day-to-day working life.
Research can be either informative or transformative. Informative research	This research aimed to be transformative and practical, in that it intended to

aims to be explanatory of some domain of experience whereas transformative research aims to explore practice within a domain and be transformative of it.	address practices in developing skilful performance in leadership and pursue new practical knowing. That said, because this is also PhD research, it must also be informative, but Heron and Reason argue that (ibid: 183), "if your primary intent is to be transformative within a domain, you will get richer descriptions of the domain than you will if you pursue descriptions directly."

Table 3: Choices made in this inquiry

3.4 Methods and research design

Methods, as mentioned above, are the ways in which we go out and gather data. Methodologies guide the choice of methods. Cooperative inquiries will often use facilitated group work to gather and make sense of data, as well as using techniques such as photo-elicitation, artistic expression, journaling, metaphor, and poetry. Here, working with an extended epistemology (Heron, J. & Reason, 2001), many forms of data are included in the inquiry.

3.4.1 Design of this inquiry

For my research, I recruited 8 participants who were senior executives across a range of organisations and sectors. I recruited participants through my connections with clients and colleagues seeking people who were interested in their development and who were open to working with embodied practices. I suspended my studies in August 2018 when my mum was diagnosed with terminal cancer and lost one participant due to this delay. Another participant dropped out after the first workshop when her husband was diagnosed with liver cancer. The other 6 participants completed the research process between Jan 2019 and Nov 2019. There were three workshops which took place in January, April, and August of that year, and surrounding these were interviews. Below is the timeline for the research process. It's important to note that not every participant stuck to the timetable as shown. Whilst the timetable has the final interview in Sep/Oct, one of these took place in Nov for someone who had to undergo an operation and took time off work to recover. For others, scheduling and rescheduling meant that the order was slightly different.

Original intended start date - September 2018	
Delayed until Jan 2019	

Workshop 1 - January 2019	
Interview 1 - Feb 2019	Interview 2 - Mar 2019

Workshop 2 - April 2019	
Interview 3 - May/Jun 2019	Interview 4 - Jun/Jul 2019

Workshop 3 - August 2019	
Interview 5 - Sep/Oct 2019	
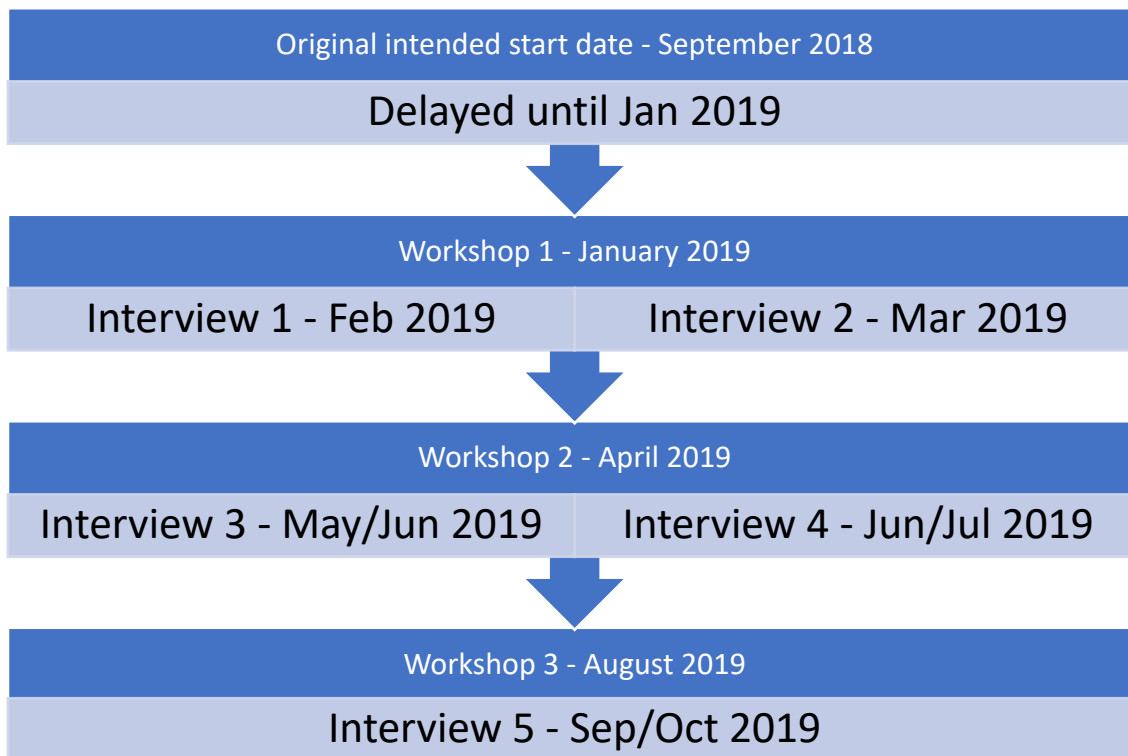
Figure 4: The research timetable

Research participants worked as an inquiry group, cycling through an inquiry process using all parts of the extended epistemology. Participants each undertook first-person inquiries into their experience of working with embodied practices. These inquiries were then shared with me and with other group members in processes of meaning-making, from which new cycles of inquiry began. In this way they were co-researchers, rather than just participants, although I will use these terms interchangeably.

The design of this research was partly guided by pragmatic concerns. The group that I chose to work with were all senior executives in different organisations. They had significant work and organisation pressures which they were attending to and so scheduling was inevitably challenging. In ideal world, I would have worked with this group solely through workshops, but each group workshop added to the scheduling

(and rescheduling) complexity. Therefore, the research structure was based around three 1-day workshops with the participants as a whole group, alongside five individual interviews, each of which was around two hours in duration (a few interviews were reduced to 90 mins because of time pressures). Even with this more pragmatic structure, there were times when I wondered if I was conducting a PhD in scheduling and calendar management!

The design was informed by a prior pilot study that I conducted with a group of senior executives from across the National Health Service. This was a group I had worked with as part of a development programme they attended, and they wished to continue working together after the programme. This pilot study was shorter in duration and highlighted some of the challenges around calendar management, showed the need for a longer duration of the study, as well as informing the approach to data analysis, to which I will return.

The workshops and interviews were spread over a period of 10 months, although for one participant this ended up being 11 months, as they recovered from an operation. Therefore, the research took place between January and November 2019, and I was fortunate to complete it before the spread of Covid. This spread of time enabled two important things: firstly, it managed the time commitment of participants over a time frame where that was more manageable with their wider commitments; and secondly, it gave time for the ongoing practising of the embodied practices, to give a better understanding of their impact over time.

The workshops were a place to introduce embodied practices and to engage in some collective sensemaking of their experiences. The interviews gave space for an in-depth exploration with each participant on how the enacting of these practices was informing their leadership, as well as providing the opportunity to refine and develop the practices. Co-researchers then engaged in undertaking these embodied practices between workshops and interviews and I also asked them to be in reflective practice about the impact of the practices (noting that reflective practice is also a practice). For all of the participants, journaling was the process they chose to engage with, although some did this electronically and others in written form. Whilst I discussed the possibility of taking photographs as they engaged with the world and then using the images to elicit meaning-making (Prosser, 2011), none of them chose to do this, preferring to reflect after the event in written form.

As noted above there was a significant amount of rescheduling through this process and so, whilst I started with a clear rhythm of interviews and workshops, some individuals had their interviews in a slightly different rhythm and there were some additional 'interviews' which essentially served as catch-ups when someone missed a workshop. Two participants missed the first workshop, one because of a death and the other because of an early birth. One missed the final workshop due to an operation.

One challenge with inquiry groups as an approach is group dynamics. Ladkin states (2003: 543): "groups have to reach a certain level of maturity before they are able to engage in certain levels of collaboration and responsibility." In some ways the research design side-stepped some aspects of this problem. Participants were able to explore in significant depth during the interviews their experiences, and I'm not sure the same

depth would have been available in a group situation, without spending significant time together, which would not have been possible due to the time constraints. It did however reduce the degree to which the group was able to engage in collective sensemaking, which is a limitation of this approach. However, it did enable working with a senior audience who, in my experience, more rarely participate in action research processes.

3.4.2 Data collection

The majority of my data was collected in interviews with participants. In the first interview, I asked participants to reflect on their current practices of leadership through an Interview to the Double (ITTD) (Nicolini, 2009). ITTD interviews are semi-structured interviews that ask participants to reflect on the practices which they use to get their work done. Participants imagine that the interviewer will take their place at work the following day (disguised to have the same appearance as the participant), and then they describe how the interviewer would do so without detection.

The other interviews used techniques from Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009; Shinebourne, 2011). This allowed an exploration of the lived experience of participants and the meaning that experience had for them (Smith & Osborn 2008: 53). Participants also shared reflections from their journaling during this process. These conversations were scheduled for two hours in duration, and although a few were shortened to 90 minutes, responding to specific times pressures, the length of the conversations facilitated a move beyond what participants came into the interview intending to share, into a process of reflecting

together on their experience and noticing what was different. Through this we refined

the practices to make them more personal and specific to each individual

The interviews were recorded and transcribed, and this forms the bulk of the data for

each participant. I also recorded some elements of the workshops where participants

engaged in shared meaning making, which was a smaller part of the research data.

In action research meaning emerges from the holistic sense of the data collected.

Ladkin (2003: 543-544) states:

> "'Emergence' is one of the most slippery ideas with which the action researcher
> needs to grapple in practice. In theory, the action researcher is working with
> less deterministic hypotheses than those experimenting within a more
> positivist frame. She or he is invited to begin with an intention and some idea
> of method, and enable a process to unfold (Cook, 1998). In reality, however it is
> more difficult to be free of these predetermined views of what an outcome
> should be, or how the process should 'go'."

Ladkin goes on to state (ibid:545) that this process requires an openness of mind in the

action researcher, and that it is a process which is "subject to its own workings and

time-frames. Sometimes a part of the pattern cannot emerge until all the necessary

parts of the 'puzzle' are present." Therefore, it is only through the process of seeing all

the data together and understanding the patterns that have emerged, that we can

develop the understanding that my inquiry sought to achieve.

3.4.3 Data analysis

Some research methodologies, contain within themselves clear approaches for data

analysis. Action research does not. The fact that action research is a school of

methodological approaches, which include knowing from an extended epistemology,

means that forms of data and means of accessing knowing are broad and in an ongoing evolution. Therefore, a fixed process of data analysis would not make sense.

What this does mean, however, is that a process of data analysis needs to be constructed for the research. In doing so I drew on thematic analysis approaches from Interpretative Phenomenological Inquiry (Smith and Osborn, 2008), and developed a grid for categorising the data[8], through undertaking a small-scale pilot study. This evolved slightly through the research as noted below.

Once I had the recordings transcribed, I began to categorise the data. For each interview, I categorised the data according to two dimensions. The first concerned where the data came from:

- The participant themselves

- Feedback the participant received from others outside the research group

- Reflections from other group members towards that participant

- Observations or reflections from me

The second dimension concerned the nature of what the data revealed. There were also four categories:

- Diagnostic data – i.e., data about areas where the participant wanted to make an improvement in their performance in some way

- Practice data – i.e., data about the experience of engaging in embodied practices and what this revealed for participants.

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[8] A blank version of the grid is shown in Appendix A

- Data about changes – i.e., data which suggested changes, learning and new ways of being that the participant was experiencing during the research

- Insights – i.e., data regarding new insights or realisations that participants experienced as they went through the process.

The categorisation grid initially was without the aspects of 'feedback from outside the group' and 'insights' however, in engaging with the data that came from participants I soon saw the need for these additional categories.

The data were then written up as long form case studies for each participant, from which overall themes and uniqueness's were drawn out. A shortened version of these case studies is shown in the Participants' Findings chapter, along with some themes which I selected based on their strength in the research.

3.5 Quality & validity criteria

In action research, there has been a debate regarding the need for validity criteria, with some arguing that this is a positivist concept, and there have been considerable efforts to conceptualise what this might mean in a participatory paradigm (Bradbury and Reason, 2001). Bradbury and Reason discuss (ibid: p. 447), "shifting the dialogue about validity from a concern with idealist questions in search of 'Truth' to concerns for engagement, dialogue, pragmatic outcomes and an emergent, reflexive sense of what is important."

Bradbury and Reason (2001, pp. 450–454), state the following issues and choice-points as important to quality and validity in action research, whilst acknowledging that there is overlap between them:

1. Quality as relational praxis

2. Quality as reflexive-practical outcome

3. Quality as plurality of knowing

    a. Quality through conceptual-theoretical integrity

    b. Quality through extending our ways of knowing

    c. Quality through methodological appropriateness

4. Quality as engaging in significant work

5. Emergent inquiry towards enduring consequence

3.5.1 Quality as relational praxis

The first of these, quality as relational praxis, questions how well the action research develops a relational cooperation between the action researcher, and the co-researchers. Core to action research is the idea that people are not researched on but are co-researchers participating fully in the research process.

In my inquiry I was engaging with senior executives for whom time was a limited resource. There is an ideal version of action research where participants engage fully in the research, sense making and data analysis process, taking full co-ownership of the research from start to end. Bradbury and Reason (ibid: 450) challenge whether the research group is set up for maximal participation, but there is almost an assumption in their writing that the group will want to be involved in all the decisions from the

(ibid) "mundane activities, such as deciding about snacks," to a larger engagement in the writing of the final product of the research.

In my situation, my research group were committed to their own engagement in the research, and over time became engaged on behalf of each other. Whilst it may be that the research could be improved through their wider engagement, and whilst some do have some interest in the wider issues this research raises, the practicalities of their situations meant that they were unwilling to give significantly more time to the research process. I would argue, however, that working with such pragmatic and practical boundaries is a part of effective relational cooperation when working with participants who are senior executives.

Is this therefore good action research? On one hand, the participants were less interested in the wider academic question that I asked in this research, however, on the other hand, they were very interested and engaged in the question of how embodied practices could enable them to be more skilful in their leadership. Their interest was on transforming their leadership practices, rather than on the wider knowledge pursued. In this way, the research represented Heron & Reason's statement that (2001, p. 180): "Primacy is given to transformative inquiries that involve action, where people change their way of being and doing and relating in the world." The co-researchers were focused on practical knowing within the domain of their leadership. My role as initiating researcher was to take the richer descriptions that Heron & Reason (ibid: 183) promise follow a focus on practical knowing and write them up in this dissertation. Perhaps this qualifies, therefore, as 'pragmatic' action research, due to the time constraints of the research group.

3.5.2 Quality as reflexive-practical outcome

The second of these criteria, quality as reflexive-practical outcome concerns the achievement of practical outcomes. Here the focus is on the pragmatic and the achievement of "commonsense practical knowledge" (ibid: 451) which is relevant to people and their concerns.

In this research process participants were engaged in inquiries which were at the heart of their concerns. Whilst I held a context for leadership in initiating this inquiry, participants drew on the embodied practices in both their work and personal lives and made changes which were relevant and significant for them.

3.5.3 Quality as plurality of knowing

The third criterion, quality as plurality of knowing, is split into three sub-themes, and in many ways addresses the extended epistemology which is embedded within action research.

The first sub-theme relates to the conceptual-theoretical integrity of the research, which I hope to have shown through my review of the literature. Bradbury & Reason remind us of Kurt Lewin statement that theory is practical, stating that without theory (ibid: p. 451) "one's practice is impoverished."

The second sub-theme concerns the furthering of our ways of knowing. This research is grounded in experiential and embodied knowing, due to the very nature of the work

and it led to transformations at a personal level for research participants, something which Bradbury & Reason cite (ibid: p. 452) as the "fulfilment and consummation of the knowledge quest."

The final sub-theme is of methodological appropriateness. I hope I have shown in this chapter my methodological choices and reasons for them. There were pragmatic concerns which drove the research design and I believe my approach to have been participatory in a cooperative relationship with the participants. The flexibility of action research enabled me to develop this pragmatic approach, to meet the entangled flesh of relations with which participants were engaged and which drew on the full range of participants' sensibilities to inquire into the impact of embodied practices.

3.5.4 Quality as engaging in significant work

The fourth criterion concerns the significance of the work and the worthiness of this as an issue of direct attention. This is something that I hope I have addressed in both the literature review and in this chapter. The literature review has, I hope, shown the potential for contribution to the issue of developing skilful performance in leadership. The work is also significant in that it addresses the concerns of the group of research participants, on how they act skilfully in their lives. The judgement of significance in the end, is perhaps one which should rest with them. Finally, the outputs of this research show transformation for the participants, with a sense of emancipation from parts of their personal histories showing up in their findings. These emancipatory and

transformative aspects of the research are among those cited as significant by

Bradbury & Reason (ibid: pp. 452-452).

3.5.5 Emergent inquiry towards enduring consequence

The fifth and final criterion concerns the emergent nature over time of the change that

emerges through the action research process as well as the sustainability of that

change. This research process took place over almost one year where participants

engaged in new embodied practices. The process was an emergent one which

developed through our joint engagement. The outcomes were ones in which

participants found themselves able to step away from habitual responses and choose

new, more effective ways of responding amid entangled contexts.

Coghlan and Brannick (2005, p. 28) also address rigour in action research. This refers

to: "how data are generated, gathered, explored and evaluated, how events are

questioned and interpreted, through multiple action research cycles." They go on to

list the following as key criteria for rigorous action research, drawing attention to some

different issues:

1. "How you engaged in the steps of multiple and repetitious action research cycles (how diagnosing, planning, taking action and evaluating were done), and how these were recorded to reflect that they are a true representation of what was studied.
2. How you challenged and tested your own assumptions and interpretations of what was happening continuously through the project, by means of content, process and premise reflection, so that your familiarity with and closeness to the issues are exposed to critique.
3. How you accessed different views of what was happening which probably produced both confirming and contradictory interpretations.
4. How your interpretations and diagnoses are grounded in scholarly theory, rigorously applied, and how project outcomes and challenged, supported or disconfirmed in terms of the theories underpinning those interpretations and diagnoses."

The quality of representation of the participants' data, and the reflexivity of the researcher are two aspects which come through from their criteria. In working with my data, I have striven to be as true to the participants' stories as I can be. The findings in this research are theirs because they are grounded in their embodied experiences. I have gone through many hours of transcripts and listened to each recording multiple times, to try to ensure that I represent their findings accurately.

In undertaking this research, I have tried to be reflexive on my own experience at each stage. This was especially important in this inquiry because as initiating researcher, I arrived with experience of working with embodied practices, and indeed was teaching the group these practices during our workshops and exploring their responses to them.

Alongside the participants, I also journaled my thoughts and concerns as I went through this process. At times I worried if the research was making any difference to the participants, and then would be surprised at some of their revelations. A particular challenge for me was finding a balance of being in my role as a researcher than in my 'day job' of a developer. The differences are nuanced, since action research seeks a similar transformation as development, however as a developer I have a clear contract with the individual and (usually) their organisation for the development they are pursuing and the changes they wish to make. I therefore act and intervene with clients to fulfil that contract. As an action researcher, no such contract exists, and we are in a process of exploration and understanding a process of change and making sense of that process together. As a researcher, my interventions are to notice and explore

emerging data rather than diagnose and act. This was something that I noticed both during the research process and in data analysis. As a result, I held back from pursuing issues with participants as I might from a development perspective, and in doing so some rich insights came into the findings.

3.6 Research Ethics

> "Asserting a belief in social justice does not insure that our actions will reflect this same high moral stance, for as Boser has noted, 'democratic intentions do not obviate the need for thoughtful examination of the ethical implications of the research' (2006: 14)." (Brydon-Miller, 2008, p. 200)

As noted above, whilst action research in a participatory paradigm, does have within it a clear moral stance, this does not negate the need for careful reflection on research ethics. In addition, whilst the research went through ethical approval through the university's Research Ethics Committee, it is important to engage with this not as a tick-box exercise, but as a genuine process of seeking to uphold ethical principles in research practice.

3.6.1 Informed consent

I sought to uphold the principle of informed consent through engaging with each participant individually, to ensure they understood the nature and process of the research and to make sure their questions were answered. In addition, they each received an information sheet covering this information and had time to consider before signing a consent form.

3.6.2 Anonymity

An aspect of respect for research participants is how their identities are managed and the way in which we provide anonymity. I committed to not identifying the individuals or their organisations and instead have represented their identities with pseudonyms. In addition, the raw data which does contain identifying information is stored on drives that are encrypted. Participants in the research also identified individuals around them in their environment, and that anonymity has also been extended to those individuals.

Some participants shared information about their personal lives, and we had discussions about whether such conversations would be recorded, and the recording was stopped at times. Such information was not included in the findings.

Participants in the research undertook reflective journaling, and whilst they reported insights from their journaling, the journals remained their property and remained private. They shared with me what they chose, and the rest was their own learning and reflection.

3.6.3 Participation and agency

Part of a participatory principle must be the ongoing agency of the participants. As noted above, they had the right to turn off the recorder, but they also had the right to withdraw from the research, to withdraw their data from the research, to decline to answer questions, and to manage their involvement in the research process.

In addition, within a participatory paradigm openness and honesty is key. The deceit of participants in any way would go against the fundamentals of this paradigm, and I was open and honest with them throughout.

3.6.4 Harm

It is easy to say that participants were not subject to testing or procedures which had the potential to cause harm, at least at the physical level. However, the embodied practices we engaged in can bring up past traumas and other historical issues. I would argue however, that these are historical harms which have already been perpetrated, and which still linger in the current habitus of the individual. For one individual such historic trauma did arise, and they were able to take this to a pre-existing therapeutic relationship to address. Working with the embodied practices was reported to be freeing for that individual rather than damaging.

3.7 Summary

In this chapter I have presented the methodology I used to conduct this study. In doing so I have attempted to justify my philosophical and methodological choices, whilst also reflecting on the challenges of engaging in participatory research with senior executives. My hope is that I have shown a methodological approach, which is at least able to attempt to meet the messiness Law (2004) described at the start of this chapter.

In moving through my research as an emergent process my ongoing process of reflection and reflexivity accompanied me in making sense of my and the participants'

experiences. In the next chapter, I will continue by giving details of the workshops and

practices with which participants engaged. This gives more information on the 'action'

part of the action research cycle and is useful in understanding the findings.

Interlude:

The Journey

One day you finally knew

what you had to do, and began,

though the voices around you

kept shouting

their bad advice --

though the whole house

began to tremble

and you felt the old tug

at your ankles.

"Mend my life!"

each voice cried.

But you didn't stop.

You knew what you had to do,

though the wind pried

with its stiff fingers

at the very foundations,

though their melancholy

was terrible.

It was already late

enough, and a wild night,

and the road full of fallen

branches and stones.

But little by little,

as you left their voice behind,

the stars began to burn

through the sheets of clouds,

and there was a new voice

which you slowly

recognized as your own,

that kept you company

as you strode deeper and deeper

into the world,

determined to do

the only thing you could do --

determined to save

the only life that you could save.

Mary Oliver (1963)

Chapter 4:

Structure of workshops and practices

"As neuroscientists have shown in recent years, movement with attention is core to the learning of children and can change the brain of adults… However, little or no research has been conducted yet on the extent to which it can impact adults' mindsets and actions in such areas as life choices and leadership." (Schuyler, 2010, p. 32)

In this chapter, I will outline the process of embodied practices that research participants engaged in as part of this inquiry. It sits outside the research methodology, as it is not technically part of the design of the research process, but it sits alongside it, as the design of the practices and workshops that participants engaged in during the research. It is also I believe helpful to understand in making sense of the research findings.

4.1 Workshop 1

The first workshop had the following structure:

- Get to know each other

  - o Who, what they do, where they're from

  - o What would they like to get from being part of the research

- Re-introduce the research project – I had spoken to all participants in depth about
  it, but as the research was postponed when my mum died, I spent some time
  recapping this.

- Introduction to embodiment

- Centering practice

- Understanding the experiential distinction between being centered and off-centre
  through practices

- Commitments as a leader and learning goals – exploring what we are committed to
  as leaders and what we need to learn to be successful with those commitments

- Reflective practices – introduction to doing these through the programme

- Close and requests – centering and reflective practice

Whilst I had met and engaged with all the participants, they had not met each other,
so it was important to spend time building relationships in support of the kind of group
maturity, mentioned by Ladkin (2003) previously. In addition, the delay in time
between recruiting participants and conducting the research, caused by my personal
situation, meant that there was a need to recap on the research process and
methodology, the concept of embodiment and what was being asked of them as
participants.

4.1.1 Centering

As a core practice of this work, I taught the participants a centering practice. Centering is a process of aligning the physical body in length, width and depth, a process of relaxing the horizontal bands in which we hold muscular tension in the body, using long out breaths to stimulate the vagus nerve and bring the nervous system from any 'fight or flight' response (sympathetic nervous system), to the 'rest and digest' response (parasympathetic nervous system) (Porges, 2011), and bringing attention to the sensate life of the body, through the body's physical center of gravity.

In my embodied work, we often refer to the length as the domain of dignity. Someone with perfect posture (think of a dancer on stage) will often be assessed as having dignity, and when someone's dignity is diminished, they tend to collapse in their length. Width is often referred to as the social domain, and we see a narrowing in with connected with holding boundaries very close and giving others space. Many people (often women, who are trained to do this in many societies) will hold their body in tightly, using their muscles to narrow and constrict their body and take up less space in the world. They give up this space and this can serve as an invitation to take this space for others. Others (often men, who are trained to do this in many societies) will take up more space than they are physically due, often invading the space of others with legs spread overly wide and arms hanging beyond the frame of the body. Finding balance in how we hold our physical boundaries, is the same as finding balance in social and emotional boundaries. Depth is often associated with time, with the future ahead of us and the past behind us. Some people lean into the future, impatient to

move onto the next thing. Others hang out in the past, at times giving the impression they experience the world as moving too fast. Balance in depth is associated with being in the present.

That we hold tension in horizontal bands, is an idea which has its roots in the work of Wilhelm Reich, a student of Freud. He referred to them as armouring bands. The image below from Keleman (1985, p. 69) shows this process of tightening through the visual metaphor of belts.
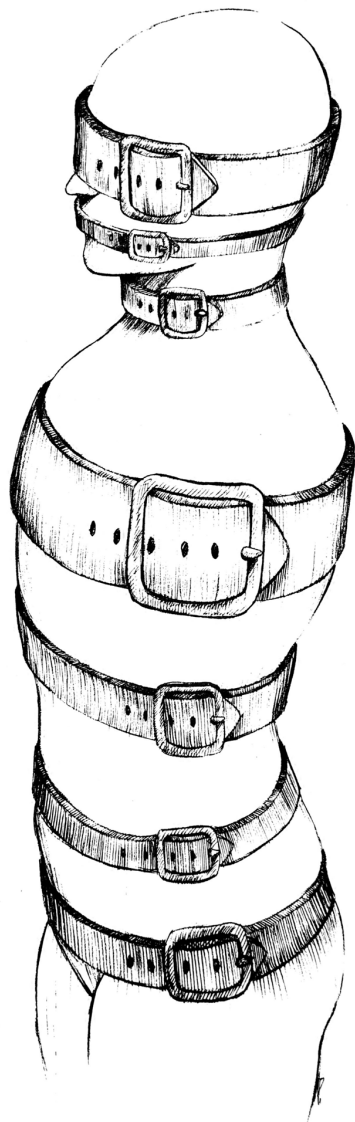
Figure 5: Belts as horizontal bands of tension

The combination of bands and patterns of how we hold ourselves in length, width and depth express our learned practices. Keleman expresses this as (ibid: 57):

> "The study of the human shape reveals its genetic and emotional history. Shape reflects the nature of individual challenges and how they affect the human organism. Have we stiffened with pride, or shrunk with shame? Are we hardened because of deprivation, or have we kept safe by collapsing? Does our form indicate a failure to convert feelings into action?"

This series of learned practices forms a personality and evokes assessments in others shaping how they subsequently respond to us. In my literature review, I came to see this as Bourdieu's habitus, which serves to constrain actions. By centering, participants are practicing taking themselves outside of this set of learned practices and, in doing so, have the possibility of enacting different practices than those habitually enacted.

As noted, this process also settles the nervous system and brings attention to the sensate life of the body, which I discussed in the literature review as being essential for making sense of the fleshy entangled world in which we are acting. I asked people to practise centering themselves 5-6 times per day.

4.2 Workshop 2

In workshop 2, there were two participants who were new to the group. Both had cancelled their attendance at workshop 1 at short notice: one due to an early birth of his daughter, and the other due to a death in his family. Therefore, part of this session was spent re-forming the group and establishing introductions. Working with practices implies ongoing practise, and part of our time was to deepen the previous work

through the repetition of practices. In addition, I worked with participants on extending from center and on their conditioned tendency under pressure, and how they could center in response to this reaction to triggering events.

4.2.1 Extension from center

Being centered and extending towards others at the same time is an aspect of holding boundaries and being committed, but not attached. It was common for participants when extending towards something they wanted, to over-extend, sacrificing balance for power or reach. In the martial arts context this is always a false sacrifice – if we sacrifice balance for power, we will end up on the floor. The principles of embodied practice are the same – if we have a pattern of overreaching physically, then this is also an overreaching emotionally and psychologically, overattachment to the outcomes and a lack of balance within ourselves.

The practice for the group was around how they could physically and energetically extend towards something they cared about, but without sacrificing balance – in doing so we are practising commitment without attachment.

4.2.2 Conditioned Tendency

The conditioned tendency comes from the work of the psychoanalyst Karen Horney, who was a student of Freud. Horney developed a theory of neurotic needs, identifying ten needs, which she further condensed into three broad categories (Horney, 1950). These categories are labelled as:

- Move against – a need to feel that one is "master of his fate" (ibid: 215)

- Move towards – a need to "subordinate himself to others, to be dependent upon them, to appease them." (ibid: 215)

- Move away – a need to withdraw from the inner battlefield… resigning from active living." (ibid: 259)

These moves are ones that attend to the organism's need for safety, dignity and belonging. Moving against is a move to assert oneself to meet those needs; move towards prioritises relationship to meet those needs; and move away distances oneself to meet those needs. These are learnt in childhood as strategic adaptations to meet the organism's needs, and become, over time, habitual responses to pressure, with each of us defaulting to one predominantly, with perhaps a second as a backup response. (These are sometimes called fight, flight and please and appease, and correspond with the arousal of the sympathetic nervous system which centering can help to counter, as noted above.)

In this work, I view the conditioned tendency as not just an emotional or psychological response. These movements correspond to movements of the body as well as the emotional and psychological responses – indeed based on the literature review, we could see this as just one response experienced at three levels. Each movement will generate a pattern of response in the body, which may be somewhat unique to that individual, but will follow a broad pattern. Move against may involve leaning in with fists clenched and tight jaw, whereas move towards may also lean in, but often with appeasement gestures, such as tiling the head to expose the neck. When I worked a number of years ago with troubled youth, their conditioned tendencies were highly visible – move against involving chairs flying around the room and move away involving people running away – whereas with senior executives their responses are

often very subtle gestures.

In this workshop we worked with a 'grab' practice, which is a practice of grabbing someone's wrist whilst saying their name sharply. This stimulates the nervous system enough for someone to feel their conditioned tendency response without being taken by it in an unhelpful way. This is enough pressure to see their responses come through, so that they can work with them effectively. Rickson Gracie, a master of the martial art of Brazilian Jiu Jitsu, expresses something similar when he states (Gracie and Maguire, 2021, p. 58):

> "When I put physical pressure on students, I see their true personalities because they immediately show me things that they are able to hide when they're not on the mat: their state of emotional balance or ability to manage pressure, for example. Once I have this information, I use it to tailor a curriculum to the students' need that will benefit each of them in a profound way. I don't make them examine just how they fight, but also how they *feel* when they fight. If students do this honestly, they don't just get better at Jiu Jitsu; they rebuild themselves as stronger people. They learn how to be tougher, smarter, more resilient – not just in a fight, but also in everyday life."

The participants practised experiencing and feeling their conditioned tendency at the physical, emotional, and cognitive levels, as well as centering and turning to face the pressure in response to the grab. Learning to center in response to such triggers, as already discussed, returns the participant from the pattern of arousal and they practice returning to a shape where more embodied choices are available to them for action. In turning to face the pressure there is often a reactivation of the nervous system and a need for repeated re-centering. The question of what we need to face in life provided a rich conversation, and participants repeated the practise using this content.

4.3 Workshop 3

In workshop 3, there were no new participants in the group, but one participant had to miss the workshop to undergo an operation. I began with some repetition of practices again, based on the principle of repetition of practice, but with an aim to increase the depth of noticing and reflecting in the experience. Participants at this stage had taken on practices for quite some time, knew each other better, and were able to reflect together on the impact they were having. This was the workshop were most joint sense-making occurred.

We explored adding to the centering process, centering around their commitment as a leader. At the end of the centering process I asked participants to speak their commitment to themselves, and to notice its impact on their nervous systems. A great commitment usually generates some excitement, nervous energy and perhaps even a little fear. We explored doing this to bring themselves into conversations, meetings, and situations with clarity on their intentions. I asked them to bring this into their centering practice.

We then continued with the grab practice from the previous workshop, but this time focused on what it was to be a centered grabber. Previously we had focused on the impact of being grabbed, but here I discussed the necessity, at times, to 'grab' others, through feedback in the workplace, or perhaps having a conversation with someone about their alcohol consumption. These are actions which aim to impact on the other, to bring them out of a ready-to-hand mode of engagement with the world through creating a breakdown. This will likely stimulate the nervous system of the person being

grabbed, and so we explored what it was to grab from a centered place, and to then stay physically and energetically in the conversation, acknowledging that for some people this was more triggering than being grabbed. We explored together where we needed to 'grab' others in our lives to be successful in addressing what we cared about.

From there we went on to explore holding boundaries under pressure. I did this because boundaries was a theme all participants were exploring in my interviews with them. We appropriated an exercise from the Japanese martial arts called a randori. A randori (a Japanese term which loosely translates as chaotic movement or attack) in a black belt test involves the candidate being attacked by multiple opponents. Passing the test means being in charge in the situation – making active choices, moving into space, deciding who you will deal with next, and not being buffeted and controlled by the attackers. It presents a metaphor for daily life where finding how to hold boundaries, make active choices and not collapse or appease under pressure is helpful for success.

I taught the participants physical practices for accepting or declining requests, where other participants would model making a request and they would have to make choices. Exploring this together highlighted for some, difficulties in declining and holding boundaries. After some practice, we then explored doing this in a randori situation, where their fellow participants would come to them in 2s or 3s rather than one at a time, to explore how they could return to center and make choices.

Finally, we completed the research process together with a process of moving through

a barrier or obstacle, to explore their response to obstacles and how they could maintain a centered and grounded presence moving through challenge.

4.4 Reflexive dialogue

In between the workshops I met with participants for interviews which served both as a form of data collection and as a place of further intervention and action. In these interviews we would refine the practices based on their experiences in using them. By exploring the physical shapes their bodily habitually inhabited we were able to understand the history embodied in those shapes, due to the emotional response they evoked. In addition, the served as a place of reflexive exploration for participants as they made sense of their experience in working with practices. Therefore, each interview served to deepen the practices as well as collect data.

4.5 Conclusions

In this chapter I have sought to outline the action phase of the action research cycle. This alongside the research methodology I hope gives the reader a good understanding of the research process. Going forward, I will explore the research findings and make sense of these in dialogue with the extant literature.

Interlude:

Ship's Manifest

Allegedly the worst is behind us.

Still, we crouch before the lip of tomorrow,

Halting like a headless hant in our own house,

Waiting to remember exactly

What it is we're supposed to be doing.

& what exactly are we supposed to be doing?

Penning a letter to the world as a daughter of it.

We are writing with vanishing meaning,

Our words water dragging down a windshield.

The poet's diagnosis is that what we have lived

Has already warped itself into a fever dream,

The contours of its shape stripped from the murky mind.

To be accountable we must render an account:

Not what was said, but what was meant.

Not the fact, but what was felt.

What was known, even while unnamed.

Our greatest test will be

Our testimony.

This book is a message in a bottle.

This book is a letter.

This book does not let up.

This book is awake.

This book is a wake.

For what is a record but a reckoning?

The capsule captured?

A repository.

An ark articulated?

& the poet, the preserver

Of ghosts & gains,

Our demons & dreams,

Our haunts & hopes.

Here's to the preservation

Of a light so terrible.

Amanda Gorman (2021)

Chapter 5:

Participants' Findings

I have titled this chapter as the Participants' Findings, as this is the section where the output of their engagement with practices is represented. I will begin by allowing each research participant's story (in the form of summarised case studies), to take centre-stage before looking at the themes that came from their work and our joint exploration of their experience. These case studies include information about the challenges they brought to the research process, what they noticed about their changing patterns as they engaged in embodied practices and the sense they made of

these changes. In the following chapter, I will explore these emergent themes in dialogue with the extant literature, but here I wish to foreground the vulnerability and openness each showed in their engagement with this process.

Before addressing these, I would like to make a short comment on language. Participants expressed themselves with a physicality of language which was striking. For example, "I will make space, so I don't get hurt," or being willing to speak their minds, rather than "shrinking." In this work what was clear was that these descriptions were descriptions rather than metaphors. The making space or shrinking, was a physical description of what they were doing in their bodies, as well as something that was happening in the social or relational space. These physical descriptions show up throughout the narratives and many are mentioned in sections below.

5.1 Summarised case studies

The italicised section at the start is a description of each individual research participant, their organisational context, and what they told me at the start they hoped for in their development through this process. This serves to acquaint the reader with the participants and the particular contextual challenges that they came into the research intending to address. For some, aspects of this changed during the research, which took place over a period of 11 months.

5.1.1 Andrew

Andrew identified as male.

Organisational context: Andrew was a charity CEO who had changed jobs just before the research commenced to be the CEO of a newly founded charity set up to address issues of children's health. The new start-up charity was backed by a celebrity and some well-known businesspeople, who founded the organisation and hired him, and has been funded by hedge fund millionaires. The new charity is homed within the celebrity founder's organisation.

Concerns: Andrew's new role presented some challenges in being brought into the world of hedge fund millionaires and celebrities and finding his ground as he fundraised for the organisation. Additionally, he expected significant media attention. He wanted to remain grounded that as CEO he is ultimately responsible for what the charity does, but that celebrities and funders have lots of good ideas for him and he didn't want to lose his sense of himself and his judgement in this new world. The key thing for him was managing his need to be liked and to be nice to everyone.

Other: Andrew missed the first workshop, as his wife gave both to their second child earlier than expected.

Andrew's journey was all about dealing with the politics and relationship dynamics of setting up an independent charity, from within an existing organisation which was set up to fulfil the needs and desires of an idiosyncratic celebrity founder. Many of the personalities around him in that wider organisation were wholly focused on keeping the founder's anxiety levels low (Andrew described receiving regular lectures about the celebrity's needs/likes/wants), but Andrew had to navigate the fact that he had an independent organisation with a range of stakeholders and multiple founders and funders, who each had strong personalities.

Andrew had a habitual response under stress (conditioned tendency) which was to please and appease (move towards), which he enacted to those around him, until he reached stage where this was no longer possible. He stated:

> "it's situations where I've got lots of people telling me what they think I should do, or how to – basically, it's how do I please, or please somebody else? And I can't quite figure it out what the right thing is to do, because is there a way to keep everyone happy or do I have to make a choice? And I found myself going, like, hold on, if I do this, this'll make [celebrity founder's name] happy, but if I do this, it'll keep [two of the trustees] happy."

When facing such a situation, where it was impossible to keep everyone happy, either through the intervention of others, or through stepping away, he often found a sense of what he believed to be important. During the research Andrew practiced holding his physical boundaries differently and centering when he experienced his conditioned tendency response, to enable him to hold effective boundaries in the moment. This enabled him to act from his beliefs, rather than from needing to please and appease. In addition, he found a greater capacity to trust his own judgement.

Andrew got to a point where he set some boundaries, as he stated *"consciously uncoupling"* from the celebrity founder's organisation, which gave him greater clarity and space to move forward. This was a relief to him and gave him feelings of space and authority. However, he slipped back later in the process when he had invited them to a meeting to, *"hear how you're feeling about things and where you're confident, where you've got concerns, because we need to talk about these things…"* He realised that he wasn't entirely clear on what he wanted out of this meeting, that its whole existence as a meeting reflected his need to please and appease.

At the start of the process, Andrew described using busyness as a way of being able to

hold off others' so that he was not overwhelmed by needing to please them. At the

end of the process, he found it easier to engage with others; having boundaries, he

was no longer overwhelmed by their experience. He stated:

> "I'm trying to just, sort of, keep those boundaries, like, if I am trying to make
> their decision for them, or force them into making a decision, now I've
> probably overstepped the boundary, it's like I want it too much."

In my first interview with Andrew, he discussed feeling fear and anxiety, which he

related to his need to please others. In my final interview he shared an insight about

not living with this fear. He stated:

> "I think that the bit that's liberating and the bit where I've been weaker
> sometimes, is because I've been worried about losing something, so worried
> about losing my job or – and I've dec – I suppose I've decided not to live with
> that fear, because actually, it makes me less effective."

Andrew went on to describe having a new voice in his head which was telling him that

he did know what he was doing and that he was good enough, which was a

counterpoint to some of the experience he had been having in starting a new

organisation, in a new field, and having active and vocal stakeholders who told him he

didn't know what he was doing. He stated:

> "And [sighs] there's a bit which there's a voice in my head, which I don't often
> listen to, or that has, like, emerged a bit, which is actually, you know, you are
> good, you do know what you're doing, and I've spent the last six/seven months
> here being told by [celebrity founder's] Chief of Staff and his Head of
> Campaigns, so, like, I didn't know what I was doing."

In exploring what had changed for Andrew he shared that he realised emotionally

detaching had been helpful to him, and this is what the physical practice of centering

had provided him. He became aware that emotionally attachment led him to the

wrong decisions as he was trying too hard to make something happen. He went on to

state that:

> "I now am a bit like if I set the parameters of what will help us get to a good decision, it's then up to – I can't make that person make the right decision, right. I can try and stack the odds in my favour. But they have to look into their soul and decide if they want to do it or not."

My impression of Andrew was that he was someone who thought out loud and used

some of his time with me as his process of reflection. Much of what he spoke about

were thoughts which were formed in the speaking of them, and like others, there were

multiple incidents where he realised, he had taken a new action in the process of

telling me about an incident.

Andrew was in a process of transition and adaptation to a very different work

environment, one which triggered his conditioned response to please and appease.

Andrew found that the embodied practices enabled him to manage his "mood" more

effectively, and this was something that he found useful at work, but also in his

parenting. At the end of the research process, he noticed that he was being more

direct about what he needed and was less caught in worries about others' responses.

He felt that this improved the responses that he got from others, stating:

> "The response from the – whoever I'm meeting with, is more positive, collaborative, you know, we have a – more of a two-way dialogue, they're more relaxed. They – also I had a habit, before, of, if I was having a difficult conversation, making the other person to – just to feel attacked, or – and that was just, I think, merely me just not feeling comfortable, and, also, it would often quite come out of the blue. And now, I think they... Now, the feeling is more of a "Here's how it is, you know, what are we going to do about it?""

5.1.2 Brian

Brian identified as male.

Organisational context: Brian was a Director of Customer Services in a non-profit financial organisation. His employer was a community finance company, which had grown massively in pensions after the UK legislative changes that created auto-enrolment.

Concerns: The growth in the business had generated significant challenges in developing the business to cope, and his focus was on generating some sense of stability in the business.

Other: Brian in addition was a runner, running a regular schedule of marathons and half-marathons. He had a family and his relationship with his teenage son was of concern to him.

Brian's journey was dominated by some significant work issues which took him to a very low place. Changes in pensions legislation, growth in customer base and a lack of investment in his customer service operations led to a situation where he was missing his targets, struggling with morale and retention in the function (leading to more missed targets), and having daily emergency meetings with his team to manage workload and resources across the function. The impact this had on him was that he was struggling emotionally and mentally, and considering going to the doctor to get signed off with stress. He articulated the impact of this on him in terms of drinking more, comfort eating and neglecting his running, which as a regular marathon runner, was a significant shift for him. KM went on to say that this work was helping him to be more aware of this:

"So, I think part of the – and I think your work with me has helped make a bit of sense of it. It's part of that level of drinking on my own, instead of walking away to another place. So, yeah, I am conscious."

Brian missed the first workshop, due to a funeral. Whilst I met with him individually to catch up on the first workshop, he only spoke openly about his stress after the second workshop – this may have been due to increased trust in me, increased awareness of the bodily experience of stress, or both. Prior to that he would ask many questions to try and understand the ideas behind the research and appeared sceptical about embodied practices. He tested the practices through his running and some work events, and found them valuable, but even then, struggled to trust his senses when he didn't understand why it was working.

During the stressful situation, we explored Brian's tendency to retreat. He became less present and visible to others and would avoid looking at the boards showing the performance statistics of the call centre. He stated that people wouldn't want him to be visible; they would want him to be working on fixing the wider problems. He was able to see that this reasoning was part of his conditioned response to stress, which was to retreat and feel responsible for everything, a move away response. We explored the physical practices which underpinned this move away response, and practiced centering instead.

We worked on how he practiced being present and grounded with others and the situation, not avoiding the performance metrics or other people, and moving into action. Engaging in these practices helped Brian to handle things differently and he

expressed an insight that he could see how many of his reactions were some form of

escapism, connected to his conditioned tendency response of move away. He stated:

> "The times where I have felt anxious like, you know, the physical signs that I
> described to you the last time around, you know, heart racing and wanting to
> go for a walk, wanting to walk away on that, the binge drinking, all of those
> things, I think I recognise them as escapism. And in the cold light of day, it
> doesn't go away… You might temporarily get some time to switch off from it,
> but it doesn't go away, and that feeling of not wanting to become a victim is
> that I don't want it to consume me. I have a life outside of work. There's some
> things I want to do that were getting compromised by this work situation."

In addition, Brian was becoming more willing to be decisive and confronting in the

organisation:

> "And I think – and my tendency to perhaps move away, rather than confront.
> But I think in the last couple of months, I've been a lot more decisive. Been a bit
> of a pain in the arse to the rest of the organisation, actually."

By the end of the process Brian reported that his credibility had risen in the

organisation because of how he handled this situation. He had found himself being

more direct with the most senior people in the organisation. At one point he

challenged the Executive Committee of the organisation to support him and described

it as: *"for me personally, bravest thing I've done."* He described the resulting change

stating:

> "All of a sudden, it just changed. So, I got the support, the resources I needed, I
> was able to bring in people. I made some changes to the internal rules and
> procedures, where people could just move into – move away from areas of
> pressure within weeks of being trained. So, we managed to lock in staff and
> made some improvements on technology. So, from moving from that position
> with that black raincloud, I'm now likening it to everything is falling in my place,
> just the advert on telly with James Corden where he's driving along, and every
> traffic light is turning green for him, and that's how I'm feeling at the moment
> now. I feel like I'm at the absolute peak of both my credibility, organisation-
> wise, but my own standards that I measure my performance and decision-
> making and all those."

He also described an increased interpersonal sensitivity with others at the end, as well as being more at peace with what he could and could not control.

He felt that the turn-around he was able to enact in the organisation was one his finest achievements and I experienced his pride when he stated that. He stated:

> "And I would honestly say that it probably ranks among my finest achievements of 33 years, to turn it round to that extent…"

In addition, Brian used the centering practice in his running, stating that he found it made him less "ragged" when he was tired, which he found helpful and in his relationship with his teenage son in order to be less reactive. He found himself able to listen more in that relationship, as well as being more honest about some of his struggles, and said his relationship was now as strong as it had been for five years. He described the shift as:

> "…now he probably sees me as someone, perhaps, who he wants to grow up to be. And I think that's always what I've wanted, to be able to set that example, someone to aspire to, rather than someone to do the complete opposite."

5.1.3 Claire

Claire identified as female.

Organisational context: Claire was a Senior Civil Servant in central Government. She worked on complex cross-governmental projects, typically involving up to 14 government departments or agencies collaborating.

Concerns: Claire was committed to growth and flourishing, for herself, people she worked with, and for those for whom she was a role model. A big issue that she

experienced was holding herself back through fear, and she wanted to work on

stepping forward more, and doing so with joy.

<u>*Other:*</u> *Claire was the only female participant in the research and additionally, was the*

only one whose nationality was from outside the UK.

Claire had a journey towards what she described as 'wholeness'. At the start of the

research process she stated:

> "I think that I have probably-- I don't think I have probably-- I know that I have felt fragmented as-as a person. Um, and it has been a latent need for me for quite a long time to, um, to dev-- to become more coherent in myself as an individual and in my life."

This meant being fully herself (previously a sense of "who am I to be that? I don't

deserve it…"), holding boundaries and therefore having space, and learning that she

could be safe in showing up. The journey completed with a realisation that she

experienced one day, that a family guilt about her father's alcoholism was causing her

to feel undeserving. She stated:

> ""And suddenly, it-it hit me. I thought it's not my fault that my dad was an alcoholic. And I thought, the fact that my dad was an alcoholic, doesn't mean I can't do things. And if you'd have asked me up until yesterday, up until that thought came into my head, if you'd asked me, I would have said, "Of course, what are you talking about, of course.""

The journey was one of wrestling with finding safety and dignity for herself in being

able to be visible and take power in the world. Focusing on taking power for the sake

of what she cared about made the process easier than taking power just for the sake

of herself, which she found troubling. This was connected to a theme of not valuing

her needs, which shifted during this process. At the end she reported taking account of

her own needs in a new way, stating:

"Yeah. And it's about allowing myself to want things in the first place. For me. Just because not just me things. I have to do things, or would like things. But with some of it, just wanting things because I want them. Which is, again, about me having rights. And having the right to want something. And that was-- Was it last time we talked on a one-to-one basis, or the time before, where, I think we talked about it, that I was struggling with this whole idea that I could assert my will in the world. But the thing is, I can. I can. Um, and that's-that's quite a good feeling."

Through practices of centering and allowing herself to be physically visible (i.e., not collapsing her length and narrowing her width) she found herself taking new actions that at times surprised her, and she found herself doing the practices at times without previous planning or conscious intent. Her relationship with her boss transformed through the process, without any plan or intention to focus on this relationship – in fact she was resigned to the relationship being dysfunctional. Her boss spontaneously gave her feedback commenting on how she had changed and how powerful she was now. She reported this feedback as:

"Um, so my manager said, um, "I'm seeing you step into, uh, a space of authority, not over people but with people." And she said when, um, a colleague in our team went off sick for several months, she said, I, she's-- my manager said to me today, "I didn't see the others step into that space, but you did. I saw you use your voice, I saw you step into that space, I saw you take up your authority with people." And she said that she thought it was, she said she could only describe it as a power move, not a power grab- but a move that was accelerated by having more power.
She said, um-- Well, I was talking to her about this new area that I'm responsible for now and she asked me to write an article about it because she said that she was so inspired by listening to me. Um, and she wants me to write something and that goes into a newsletter for Leaders of Learning as it's called across the civil service. She said that she saw me as incredibly insightful, um, creative, strong and powerful, that she sees me as very independent and absolutely inspiring. And that she kept saying to me, "You're-you're so inspiring to listen to. I'm just absolutely enjoying everything you're saying. I'm taking notes because it's so inspiring and I want you to share your thinking with more people, I want them to hear this too."
And she said that listening to me, she was thinking that some things have shifted for me and that the world of possibility that's open for me now is so vast, um, I can't remember what she said, but it was basically about how I wasn't bound- into something very small anymore, but- I had so much-- so

many possibilities… And she said to absolutely embrace my power and to grow it."

Claire also shared how the process impacted her personal life. She found herself addressing an issue with her son's behaviour which she was previously embarrassed to acknowledge, and her relationship with her partner changed as she acknowledged the validity of her wants and needs. She found herself going back to comic books, which she had enjoyed as a teenager, but which she hadn't given herself permission to buy, as she had been negating her needs/wants.

The valuing of her needs was accompanied by a change in her boundaries at work. At the beginning of the process Claire described a working life that involved being constantly open and available to others. At the end, Claire was able to make choices about where and when she made herself available and had lost touch with the degree to which she previously made herself available.

A strong theme of safety emerged in Claire's journey connected to boundaries, where being smaller and less visible was connected to safety and being visible was connected to vulnerability. Learning to hold her boundaries further from herself, produced an enhanced experience of safety which she describes as:

> "I wasn't going to get hurt or attacked because my boundaries were far enough out and strong enough- to enable me to relax inside myself is the best way I can describe it."

The process also brought up some past trauma that she continued working on with her therapist.

Claire described at times resisting enacting new practices from a sense of 'who would she become if she did that?' As she moved through the process and lived in the new practices for some time, she described new awareness and then described herself taking new actions. She stated that she was almost shocked by the response of people like her boss, where she had given up on the relationship, at the same time as living in a normalised story of her new actions – these had become the obvious actions to take. This is an interesting paradox where her actions are at times only seen as different through the change in response from others.

5.1.4 David

David identified as a male

Organisational context: David was an Executive Director of an NHS trust (HR responsible). David has worked a significant distance from his home for many years, commuting back every weekend and staying away during the week. David at the end of the process accepted a new job closer to home. His new role started around the time this process completed.

Concerns: There was a new CEO, and half of board are relatively new (including David), which had led to a new-old conflict at exec level. He had a commitment to stepping up to be a leader for the whole system, to collaborate across the trust and across wider health economy and to unlock the impasse in the exec team. This required him to better understand the clinical side of the organisation and be more authentic.

Other: David's father was unwell during this process and was being treated by the trust to which he moved. He was married with a teenage daughter.

David's was a journey of learning to relax. He started with the view that he was fairly

relaxed and early in the process realised that he wasn't and that he needed to be. It

seemed that going through a process of consciously relaxing, as part of centering, had

highlighted to him his tendency to be tense. David worked in a complex exec team

dynamic, where he perceived that another exec member was bullying him. This was

charged for him as he experienced "merciless" bullying at school and carried baggage

around this. Remaining relaxed and standing his ground with others became a part of

his journey.

David regularly had realisations in our conversations about things he was doing

differently, that he hadn't initially thought to tell me. He regularly, prompted by a

question, told a story of his experience, and then reflected that he hadn't realised that

he had done something so differently, or had been able to do something new. It is

almost as if, without the questions, he may not have realised that he had made such

significant changes. At one point, talking about such an example, David stated:

> "You're right. God, I can't believe... I'm just thinking it through, the enormity of
> that I would not have done that, um, 12 months ago and I did it without it
> really bothering me."

Later he stated:

> "No, I think- I think again, it's just a richness I didn't realize was there until I'm
> talking to you, has become- some of this has become quite normal, more
> normal than I thought, actually. I don't see it as something that sat outside of
> me that I'm doing differently. And it's getting quite normalized with me. I'm
> quite excited by that."

During the process David described different categories of triggers for his conditioned

tendency response. There were triggers in personal life, such as his dad getting ill. This

was the easiest for him to manage and address. Then there were triggers in work-life

where he wondered about the motivations of the other. This was more difficult.

Finally, there were internalised triggers driven by self-doubt or shame, which were the

most difficult for him to manage. One of the things he uncovered is that dealing with

the internalised triggers first through centering, helped him to deal with the external

triggers in the workplace.

Towards the end of the process David described an incident which had the potential to

be extremely triggering. The exec colleague, he felt had attempted to bully him, took

out a grievance against him without warning. David described how he handled this

without becoming triggered by it, remaining centered, saying he felt "invincible." He

went on to describe how the lack of his normal triggered process – *"that horrible*

feeling of heat and feeling you know, you're crumpled," left him feeling stronger. It's

interesting that he noticed the lack of response and felt stronger because of it. He also

described an incident where he delivered a message to someone which he knew would

be difficult, and how he chose to address this very directly, which was new. He became

aware that because he was less triggered, he was able to be concerned about the

other person and be more supportive to them, which he felt was a new way to be in

difficult conversations for him.

David described how at the last workshop he paid extra close attention to the

practices and work we did, stating that he had a sense of a prize that made this worth

doing. I asked him to describe what this prize was for him, and he stated:

> "Um, I-- it's like the veil lifted over my eyes, you see that all the time. And I feel
> quite privileged that I've had the opportunity to sort of at least to some extent,
> um, break that cycle although not 100%, and-and-- but-but have a technique

that gives me something to-to-to man-to-to manage my anxiety and uncertainty, and that learnt behaviour to-to give me an option not to-not to be beholden to it.

So that-that feels like a prize, and-- 'cause it's something—A), it's a better way of dealing with things and gives me the opportunity to be a better, more effective manager or more effective parent or a more effective person, that, than I might have been. And-And for those people around me and those people who are with me, if I can give them some stability and, you know, better decision making, then-then-then quids-in. So-So that's the prize. It's-It's almost broken a cycle that I-I hadn't realized I was in."

David ended the process taking a new job closer to home. He had worked a long way from home, commuting back and forth at weekends, while staying close to work during the week. He did this because of a lack of opportunity locally and the option to get more experience. This shifted at the end of the process, and he took a sideways move to prioritise his family. It's not to say that this was because of this process – it's at least partly opportunistic as the position became available – and there was a greater prioritisation of his needs at the end of the process, of which this was an example.

5.1.5 Edward

Edward identified as male.

Organisational context: Edward was a Partner in a 'Big 4' professional services firm.

Concerns: He worked for a part of the business, which for regulatory reasons was under threat of being lifted and moved to another part of business where he felt it could be lost. His aim was to ensure it could "stand on its own two feet." In addition, he was stepping up to a Client Lead Partner role, where his role is to coordinate bringing all the firm's services to a large global client. A tension for him, in his own view, was between vision and detail. He got sucked into details but needed to delegate and then hold his

team members to account. He wanted to be more entrepreneurial, and the balance for him was between risk and entrepreneurship.

<u>*Other*</u>: *Edward had a significant leadership role in his church and had concerns about how his home life was structured. He was married with four children.*

Edward's journey involved letting go of an accumulated set of responsibilities which had left a lack of balance in his life, which he described as "being in the red." The Interview to the Double (ITTD) at the start of the process provoked this realisation. His balance in family life was also not working for him. However, his personal values, combined with a firm culture which values people saying yes, alongside some previously diagnosed Be Perfect and Hurry Up drivers[9] left him holding too many commitments. In addition, he reflected after the first workshop that he his need for recognition was causing him to, *"overreach or to shout louder than I need to, to get attention that I'm already getting."*

Edward felt that the centering practice enabled him to be relaxed and have greater presence and authority. Over time this appeared to reduce his need to hurry up and be perfect, and towards the end of the process he took the decision to sign off on two audits late, to be kinder to himself and the team. This felt like quite a radical act in a firm, where going to clients and saying that audits would be late is not common practice and for Edward, I experienced this a significant shift from where he started

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[9] These drivers emerge from Transactional Analysis (a psychotherapeutic approach developed by Eric Berne (Stewart and Joines, 1987), aspects of which have found a place in leadership and management development), and were used in courses that Edward attended his work. He had done a questionnaire which had given him these as ways of understanding his personality.

this process. Interestingly, I'm not sure he experienced the degree of difference that I did, as this was part of his now normalised way of being.

Edward also described the current and aspired change in his working life, stating:

> "The work-life piece, I was the – I charged the most hours of any Partner in my part of the practice last year. My boss isn't quite sure whether that's just I'm better at charging my time or I'm working too hard. Probably both. There is a piece, I think, that, if you say, where do I want to get that to? You know, if I currently do somewhere between a 55 and 60-hour week most weeks, actually, for the last few weeks it's been between a 50 and a 55-hour week, so progress. I think longer-term I want to get that down to sub-50, and a sub-50 with more space to – more proper thinking time, rather than – so a – you know, is that a, you know, every second Friday, actually is a working day, but it's a working day not on, you know, it is thinking time? 'Cause I think that, in terms of my career step and development, is where I need to get to, 'cause currently I'm just running around on a hamster wheel. So, I think that's – but that, kind of, is in my – that's where I want to get that to. Some of that is about unlearning bad behaviours and bad habits, and saying, "Actually, I'm not going to do this, 'cause somebody else needs to do it properly." And fundamental to that, actually, is this conversation I need to have on where does the firm want me to focus? Where do I want to focus and where does the firm want me to focus?"

Early in the process Edward complained about some of the internal ways of working as a firm, stating he didn't really know how to change them. Later in the process he reported the actions he was now taking to change these things. This wasn't something we had conversations about in between, rather he was reporting to me the new 'obvious' actions that he now had time to take (he credited having more time). The creation of space was giving him room to see what was possible, it seemed to me.

Edward at the start of the process described a performance management issue with one of his team, which he stated he was 'slightly avoiding' addressing. In our last conversation he reported having had a straight conversation and that performance

had improved in the subsequent two weeks. The lack of addressing this issue previously had created increased pressure on his time.

Edward found that in centering and relaxing, others were giving him more space. He had a long-standing relationship with a couple of the most senior partners in the firm which originated from when he was junior, and they had been his managers. He found himself losing power in these relationships and being less eloquent. He found that the practices enabled him to engage with these individuals more as peers, which he found valuable.

Edward was very reflective and maintained a regular journaling practice throughout the process. The exercises, right from the first workshop provoked insights and realisations for him and he used this process to get a grip on his work-life balance. He found himself taking new actions and changing the way he thought about things, stating:

> "So how do I move from an Auditor view that you should never risk accept or a – you know, in an environment where everyone's press – you know, the external environment presses for perfectionism, as well. But actually, the reality of all of these choices I make, there will be choices, I've got to make choices, and some of those choices, just make them earlier and relax into those choices. Which I think again is an area I've probably changed the way – started to change the way that I think about things"

Overall, this process appeared to help him make more active choices, earlier.

5.1.6 Frank

Frank identified as male

Organisational context: Frank is a Partner in a 'Big 4' professional services firm. Previously he had run a large part of the UK firm, and now has a global market facing role. His role is in some way an elder statesman / ambassadorial role for firm, meeting clients, speaking publicly, etc.

Concerns: Frank's commitment is to the teams that work for him, ensuring that there is a clear vision for where they are going and that they know how to get there. Enabling his teams will require from him bravery and resilience to influence the most senior people in the firm. He will retire from the partnership in a few years (to be decided how many), and so he has a concern about legacy and some questions about what he will do in retirement, as he doesn't want to stop work.

Other: Frank has a counsellor he has been seeing for several years and has a coach within the firm. In his personal life, Frank had re-married and, although in his 60s had a young son, who was around 7 years old at the time of the research.

Frank's journey was one of learning to hold boundaries with the firm that he had worked in for over 30 years, as he began a process of separating from the firm. In addition, he had a conditioned tendency of defaulting to please and appease (a move towards response) or at times withdrawing (move away) and through this process he began to take a stand for things that were important to him. He recognised through the process, some of the cultural practices in which he was embedded and began to find his own voice, at times wrestling with pressure to take the 'corporate line' and doing what he believed to be right. There are several incidents where he made choices to act on his values independent of the corporate line, during this research process.

Early in the process Frank found that centering enabled him to feel grounded and focused, and he found himself dealing with issues that historically he would have brushed off. He realised that calling out someone's bad behaviour changed the power dynamics and took power away from someone who was acting as a bully. He realised early in the process that his seniority in the firm and how he was perceived, meant that he had permission to challenge and take a stand for issues, but that he previously hadn't done this. He would often sit in meetings disagreeing, but not stating it. He also noticed he got nervous in presentations, especially internal ones, and made himself physically smaller in reaction to this.

In his Interview to the Double, Frank expressed how he put on masks and personas in different environments, and towards the end of the process, at a large global partner conference, with the Global Chairman in attendance he chose to rewrite his presentation to show himself. He stated:

> "I thought, "Is – this is an opportunity to, kind of, show yourself, you know, be the real you, as opposed to, you know, restricting yourself to a script, which, okay, you wrote, but would just come across as a bit, kind of, wooden," you know. And it just – I just felt like almost that I'd be letting myself down a bit, it would be a missed opportunity, and even if it didn't go well, well, at least I've had a go, you know?"

There were a series of situations throughout the process, where Frank found himself 'intuitively' knowing that someone was not ok, and he then connected with them, and they shared what they were facing. Shortly after he started to experience this, he expressed concern that centering was enabling him to notice lots of stuff about how others were, and that this was 'distracting' for him. This concern dissipated as he moved through the process, and towards the end he helped someone in a train station

who appeared drunk, but was actually having a severe asthma attack, and whom

others were walking past.

Holding boundaries became a dominant theme as he started to decline more requests,

where he would have historically said yes, and where he got clearer about asking for

what he wanted. He realised that he often oriented to being one-down in the power

dynamics, rather than being peer-to-peer with others, and stated:

> "And that's quite novel for me, but it feels like, at this point in my career, at this point in my life, I should, sort of, try and do that more, almost like I've, kind of, earned it, you know?"

As one of the longest serving partners in the firm (around 23 years as a partner at that

point) he began to step fully into the power that his position gave him in peer-to-peer

relationships with others and became clearer about his legacy and what he wanted to

prioritise before moving on. He also set boundaries with the firm about what he was

prepared to do, rather than his historical pattern of saying yes. He was surprised by

how positively this move was received by others.

An aspect which came out of Frank's experience was how he managed his visibility.

Client work was something he really enjoyed and here he realised he didn't hold

himself back, as he did within the firm. As a result, he had clients who were friends

whereas came to his office to 'do business', holding a distance to colleagues in the

organisation. His conditioned response to stress was at times to 'move away', and he

did that within the organisation by holding this distance, perhaps partly driven by an

experience when having just been promoted to Partner, colleagues in the firm

withdrew from him. This research process, in part, enabled him to be less withdrawn

in his work environment, whilst holding clear boundaries with a negative morale in the organisation.

5.2 Themes emerging from participants' experiences

There are three themes emerging from these case studies, on which I have chosen to focus. This choice is driven by both the emotional strength and repetition of these themes across participants and the potential contribution to the literature that they represent. These are:

- Emergent processes of learning

- Power and boundaries

- Being unattached

These are described in more detail in the following sections.

5.2.1 Emergent processes of learning

There were times and places in the research where participants stated that they would like to get better at something and began to take on practices to improve in this area. Their learning proceeded in an expected pattern, with the application of new practices, at times successfully and at other times not, and over time they were able to see shifts and improvements. For example, participant Andrew acknowledged at the start of the research that he was a 'people pleaser'. He worked on holding boundaries through embodied practices and checking in with what he wanted, and he made some progress. Half-way through this process he invited some of the people he had identified he needed to hold boundaries with (rather than trying to please), to a

meeting to find out whether he was pleasing them. He saw in retrospect what he did and recommitted to the practices of holding boundaries. However, this kind of learning process was the smaller part of the learning which participants described in this study.

The larger part of the learning described was more emergent, and at times surprising for participants, where:

- Issues were addressed, which they had not set out to address

- New behaviours were seen in retrospect or catching themselves in the moment, rather than through intentional effort

- Their changes were reflected back to them by others

- They described a process of not holding themselves back, rather than a process of engaging effort to do something,

- At times they felt unable not to take a new action

- Participants lost perspective on the degree of change they had undergone

- They experienced new voices emerging from within

In this section I will focus on these emergent ways in which change was experienced before commenting on the learning processes which may be taking place.

5.2.1.1 Realisations from nowhere

One participant at the start had dismissed feedback she had received about a need to be more visible. Her life context (single mum) meant that she was unable to turn up to all the breakfast, dinners, and networking events, and so she couldn't be more visible. She stated:

> "So, the feedback I had from last year was kind of fine. Carry on what you're doing, but they want me to make myself more visible. And I've said, "Yeah, okay, that's fine. But I'm a single parent; I've got two kids, so I can't take on the prestige jobs of going to Newcastle and presenting or you know, breakfast meetings and that kind of thing." And they have, I think somewhat have heard that."

In the research she found that how she was, wherever she was, she could be more visible. In this way there was a reinterpretation of the feedback, and herself in relation to the feedback, which emerged in the research.

Another participant realised that he wasn't as relaxed as he thought. At the end of the research, he described having broken a cycle in which he was engaged, of which he had been unaware. One participant commented that she hadn't realised she had gotten used to being uncomfortable, commenting on the way she had habitually held herself. In this way there was a process of awareness emerging during the research.

Another research participant early in the process described a performance issue with a team member he had felt unable to address because that person might leave, and he couldn't replace them. At the end of the process, he found a way to address it. He also found a way to address some cultural issues in the firm which frustrated him, which at the start he expressed having no idea how to impact. In this way there was an emergent process of perceiving new possibilities taking place in the research.

There are many such examples which show up in the research. What is remarkable, to me as the researcher, is that at no point did we pursue insights around these specific issues or try to resolve them. We did not discuss how to give feedback to the person mentioned in the above paragraph, or how to address the frustrating cultural issue. In

the first example, I did not encourage or challenge her to accept or reinterpret the feedback she had received. In the process of engaging in practices the insights emerged for people – it's reminiscent of the idea of the fish realising it is in water when it leaves the water – leaving the water for participants involved taking on new practices. Realisations, reinterpretations, and insights then occurred. One participant described the insights as 'realisations from nowhere.'

I have in the past, in my coaching practice, challenged participants' perceptions that they cannot give feedback to someone, or challenged them to understand feedback they have received, which they dismiss. Sometimes they have been receptive to such challenges and at other times they have been unable to see a way through. Equally, at times, I have felt challenged to really help someone who has received feedback and can't find a way to respond to it because of the challenging context of their lives – as a coach I have perhaps at times taken too much ownership of their success and sought to find strategies and ways in which they can respond. In this research none of the above took place. The practices were simple and repeated, and in these practices new possibilities emerged, which were not sought, not rationally strategized and conceptualised – they appeared. This happened repeatedly over the course of the research.

5.2.1.2 Hindsight and mid-sight of learning

Not only did new realisations occur, but often participants only realised that they had taken new actions and found ways to address challenges in retrospect, exploring with me afterwards the new actions they had taken, rather than having the intention to act differently. Surprise accompanied the story telling, as in that moment they realised the

scale of the change that this new behaviour or new way of being represented for

them. One participant expressed his surprise, stating:

> "You're right. God, I can't believe… I'm just thinking it through, the enormity of that I would not have done that, um, 12 months ago and I did it without it really bothering me."

In our conversations new actions, new awareness and new insights merged together

as we explored these not-intentionally-enacted new behaviours. It seemed that new

insights arrived for participants because of taking on the new practices which gave the

possibilities for different actions in the world. The world started to show up differently

for the research participants over the course of the process, which made new actions

obvious. This left participants excited about what else may be possible for them.

As part of this process participants at times described catching themselves doing

something different or noticing a moment of enacting a new behaviour. One described

that they were finding themselves realising that they were doing something differently

in the moment, rather than being in the position of planning to do something different

in the future. He expressed this as centering and then thinking about it, stating:

> "I didn't flip into my usual reaction. I did pause and literally centered and then thought about it."

This realisation he found to be very powerful, stating:

> "I really will remember that moment… I remember that moment where I chose a different path-- I remember the moment, um, where I handled it and kept centering about it and it didn't bother me."

Part of the way in which learning occurred in this process seems to be an emergent

process of the appearance of new 'normalised' possibilities for acting, which may or

may not have been noticed by participants at the time of taking the new action. For

example, one participant described taking the initiative to deal with something which he knew would be highly conflictual, and which he could have waited for his CEO to address, on return from leave. In the moment it felt like the right thing to do for the people involved, to address it sooner, but only in retrospect did he realise that this was a very different way of him dealing with conflictual issues from which he would have historically withdrawn.

At times the change was experienced by participants in the different responses they received from others, as people responded to them and treated them differently than in the past. For example, one research participant described people looking to him for agreement when speaking in meetings, when he was not the most hierarchically powerful person in the room, and in a way in which they would not have done previously.

5.2.1.3 Learning as not-doing

Participants described learning at times as being about not doing something rather than doing something – *"I just need to stop holding myself back,"* or needing to loosen the grip they have on themselves. At other times they described things showing up in a way where they were unable not to say something or do something, which they would have previously struggled to say or enact. One participant described a sense that his body was making him stand taller, which is an interesting expression of lack of agency, in that the body had 'taken over' inside of this process of learning and change. One participant described a process of forgetting to doubt themselves, stating:

> "…from time to time, I forget to doubt myself and then show up more in the conversations."

With one participant I reminded her how available she used to make herself at the

beginning of the research and she had forgotten quite the degree she used to do this

until reminded. In addition, at the start of the research, in the Interview to the Double,

she spoke about this as almost a virtue, whereas at the end of the process her

perception of this behaviour had shifted. She stated:

> "Um, and because I'm not constantly sharing myself out, it means that-that
> whenever something important does come up, I have more energy and more
> focus to give. Even just like maybe the relationship with my manager as well,
> but also some work that she has suggested, uh, she has suggested with that we
> do. I'm thinking I actually have the space in my head, and I have the energetic
> space, I have-I have the-- I'm not too exhausted by a million other things."

She went on to describe not saying yes to helping everyone, a previous pattern and

that now she asked herself: *"Are they asking me because they want me and the*

expertise that I bring, or is it just because they're asking me?" And if they're just asking

me, then, no." In the past people came to her because she would say yes, rather than

because they needed her particular expertise. Her sense of 'normal' seemed to have

changed over the course of the research process.

5.2.1.4 Learning as a new emergent 'voice'

One participant described a new voice emerging inside himself, which was appreciative

and could see his value. He stated:

> "And [sighs] there's a bit which there's a voice in my head, which I don't often
> listen to, or that has, like, emerged a bit, which is actually, you know, you are
> good, you do know what you're doing…"

Another described reading an email he had written after centering himself and feeling

like it didn't read like it was written by him – a new style of communication was

emerging.

It is significant that this is not a planned an intentional process of change at the moment-to-moment level – intention existed at the level of the practices, and the practices were revealing new possibilities in the moment.

5.2.1.5 Two processes of learning

Participants described two processes of learning which they were experiencing. In one, they are engaging in a process of practising a new skill. This is a process of skill acquisition that they describe. The other process is a process where participants are enacting skills much more quickly and easily than a process of skill acquisition would suggest. Here they find themselves doing something without awareness, perhaps, as they describe, being unable to do anything else, or no longer restraining themselves from acting.

Two aspects of my findings stand out about this emergent process of learning. The first is that often it appeared in situations that the person historically would have experienced as triggering to some degree, and where they would have enacted their conditioned tendency response. By centering as an embodied practice, they were able to move out of a state of being triggered and respond differently. As the participants in this research were all senior leaders, they had a broad skill base they could draw on and were able to enact different responses in the moment as they had de-coupled themselves from their emotional response.

The second aspect which stands out is that some participants shared realisations that they had more permission to act, than they had historically used. For example, Frank

shared that as an elder statesman in his firm he realised he had permission to challenge and take a stand for issues, and that until working with these practices, he hadn't done so. Claire realised that she was one of the most senior people in the room at an event but was there in a mode where she was acting as if she was just grateful to be there and hold people's coats. In both these instances there was a way in which the world had already given them the permission to take power and they realised they were holding themselves back. This existing permission may have made the process of learning to enact something different, somewhat easier – a process of allowing rather than a process of learning new skills.

There is one other factor about the learning process which I think is important to highlight. My interviews with participants were reflection moments for participants and data gathering for me, however this also represents a false separation of the action research process. The interviews often began with participants bringing a list of things that they had noticed or journaled about in the intervening time period. However, because each interview was normally two-hours in length, the conversation then evolved into a wider process of reflexivity for participants where they were able to explore their actions and interactions with more space and time. This process was essential to getting to the realisations and reflections described above. What is noticeable is that this reflexive process, alongside the journaling reflective practice, became another practice in this research process, and is equally a part of the practices which produced the learning. Therefore, the interviews became a part of the 'action' as much as they were part of the 'reflection' in the action research process.

This reflexive process added rigour to the research process, as it enabled an enaction of the extended epistemology, which I discussed in the methodology chapter. The participants would seek to express their experiential knowing from enacting the embodied practices, in presentational and propositional knowing (often struggling for words). This grounded the embodied knowing, which was developing through the practices, as a consummation of this work. The reflexive practice was therefore also, an enaction of the extended epistemology in this research process.

5.2.2 Power and boundaries

Power is an interesting theme in this research, partially because it was unexpected, and additionally as it was mentioned by all participants. I knew I was studying a process of learning and would probably have something to say on that subject (although the emergent aspects described above were not something I could have predicted). Power however was not something I discussed in workshops or asked questions about. And yet, all research participants discussed power in our conversations. Power emerged in the research as strongly linked to the theme of boundaries, so I will begin by addressing power and then by addressing the intersection of power and boundaries.

5.2.2.1 Power

Power could perhaps be thought about as an aspect of the context in which participants sit – hierarchy and their relationships with people above and below them in that hierarchy. Early in the research participants discussed power in this way.

However, this would fail to capture the shifts in power relationships which took place during the research. One participant discovered that challenging a bully and naming poor behaviour, shifted the power dynamic in that relationship in a way, where the bully was then on the 'back foot' (interesting to note his use of a bodily description).

Another participant realised that through centering and relaxing, the power dynamic between himself and the managing partner (who has been above him in the hierarchy in the part of the firm he works in, since he joined as a new graduate) shifted. The Managing Partner treated him differently, more peer-to-peer, and a lack of articulateness he experienced around the managing partner went away. He initially described his experience of speaking to the Managing Partner as:

> "Defensive, and deliberately not taking the initiative, and for somebody who words come usually quite easy to and who usually has a clever play on words for most people at most times, actually that instinct deserts me."

In practising centering he described the shift in relationship, stating:

> "…it was a very different experience, which was quite interesting, you know, in terms of not getting drawn into some of his preconceived banter, and he seemed to react differently, as well, in more of a peer-to-peer way."

One participant, as described above, realises at an event that she was the powerful person in the room but had been acting as if she was just grateful to be there and hold people's coats. She went on to describe giving others the power to decide whether she belonged in social contexts, and that the others didn't know they had this power. As noted earlier another participant described how others started to look for his agreement in meetings, even when he wasn't the most hierarchically powerful person in the room.

All participants described experiences where the power relationships in which they are immersed change during this process, and the relational nature of power comes to the fore. Whilst positions in the hierarchy are important early in the conversations, their ability to build "peer-to-peer" power dynamics becomes a key theme, with many of them using that phrase. One participant reported meeting someone they had previously worked with, whom he had been intimidated by. He stated:

> "I used to think she towered over me and she was this big sort of presence. I stood next to her and she was this smaller lady next to me, I felt really, uh, confident and a different person and she reacted totally differently to me as well."

He noted a peer-to-peer relationship now as she responded differently to him, describing it as a relationship of equals.

The embodiment of giving power to others is expressed by one participant as a process of shaping herself around others and the world. This is both an emotional and physical shaping and she diminished herself physically to be less of a threat and used appeasement gestures (such as a tilted neck) to make others comfortable. I pointed these out to her and we explored these gestures which allowed her to see how they subtly asked for acceptance from the other. During the research she practised shaping herself differently through centering, allowing herself to take up the space her body was due, and keeping her head straight, to avoid appeasement gestures. She received feedback, from her boss, at the end of the research on her power as inspiring.

5.2.2.2 Power & Boundaries

For participants, finding a balanced connection to both themselves and others, seemed to be a factor in shifting the power dynamics in their relationships. For one

participant power and control was held in a more disconnected way with his team, and

at the end of the process he finds himself hearing more of their perspectives in

meetings. Another was told that her power at the end is inspiring, that it was not a

power over, but a power with; not a power grab, but a power move – a move that is

accelerated by power. The distinction of connection to self and other seems to shift

how power is experienced on both sides of the relational dynamic to a more

generative and creative engagement, rather than a one-up or one-down experience,

and this also connects it to boundaries.

A way in which this showed up, for instance, for Claire was at the start of this research,

her attention went habitually outwards as she shaped herself to the world. This

resulted in giving up her needs and wants as she responded to what she perceived

others with power wanted. She gave up power and held no relational boundaries in

the process. This was accompanied by a general tendency to narrow and make herself

physically smaller. She reported having limited connection to herself and held her

boundaries very close.

For David at the start, his attention went habitually inwards, directed into shame and

self-doubt. He was – at some level – connected to part of himself but connection with

others was unavailable as he responded through shame and doubt. He also made

himself smaller, driven perhaps by this sense of shame, and held his boundaries close

and did not step into visibility or power.

For Edward at the start, his attention went inwards to create distance and

'professionalism' at work. He held others away, focusing on maintaining control and

driving performance. He had reported experiencing connection to himself but had limited connection to others and physically (except in certain relationships with power dynamics) held himself in a way which took up space. His control needs were expressed as a power over others.

For Claire, her ability to be powerful came through taking more account of herself. For David, it involved being able to move beyond his internal experiences to see and connect with others and their experiences, and to empathise with them. For Edward he came to relax his grip on control and listen to others more, letting their views impact him. All three participants were able to find a balance of being able to pay attention both internally and externally, enabling them to experience themselves as more powerful and in peer-to-peer relationships with those around them. These shifts are shown through their comments in the table below.

	Start of research	End of research
Claire	At the start of the research Claire described not being visible, stating: *"and I think I have-I have as a matter of course disappeared so much of myself in the past and it is about not doing that anymore."* Claire went on to describe how her attention went out to meet others' needs, stating:	Claire described that she was holding her boundaries further out from herself in meetings with her boss (and others) and that she was able to see her as another person rather than a source of power she had to please. She also described taking up more space physically. She went on to express this holding

"Oh. Um, I think there's a process for me of going into a room and looking around and thinking-- it's a mix of how can I be useful and how can I make sure you-yeah. How can I make sure that people think I'm useful? And at a-at a deeper level that I actually find slightly embarrassing, there's something about how can I make sure that people like me? How can I make sure that people think I'm, uh, a good one, uh, whatever kind we're talking about? Um, how can I make su-if-if it's this, if it's a woman who's older than me or the more senior, uh, it's about how can I-how can I please her - if it's a man, then it's a kind of, - it's almost like a dutiful daughter kind of thing. How can I-- how can I be safe with her and how can I do what she wants me to do? And if- and if it's a man then I think there has sometimes been an element for

of boundaries in a conversational way:

"It has popped into my head in conversations at times when people have asked me things. And I've noticed that I've thought - I don't quite have to tell you all of that. And I thought I actually have a choice here. Where I think in the- in the past, I would just have answered people's question, or I might have answered but felt uncomfortable or resentful that I was doing it. Whereas now I'm thinking, "I don't really want to tell you all of that; I'll tell you some of it, but I don't want to tell you all of it. So, therefore, I'm going to tell you what I feel comfortable with. But nothing more." And- and- and previously, I felt like there wasn't a choice for me, I had to- give people what they asked for or tell them what they wanted to know. And I

	me of well, um, I need to make sure he-he will notice me because I'm pretty. I need to make sure he also notices that I'm right as well. And, kind of wanting to show up. In those, in those ways because I want to be sure that people notice me and that I'm included in the club."	*didn't like it. But I- I- there wasn't a choice for me around that."* I stated that it seemed like she had more choice now and Claire stated: *"Both more choices, and, and I just- I sense my boundaries better than I did before."*
David	David described an internal response of guilt and feeling of having done something wrong, stating: *"Tha-that's me Pete-- that's- um-- that's just my default setting that uh-uh-um that I'm conscious is there and I'm fe-- and I-I have to have had to overcome-- um, and it just leaks out now and again. We- uh- yeah I-I-- that's just me."* He described the emotions of this state as: *"Sense of, uh, like a worthlessness… a fraud"*	David described dealing with a challenging individual in a very different way, where he was able to get past his own guilt response and have empathy for the other. He stated: *"But it didn't bother me in a, "there's something I have done wrong. Um, and I'm going to get found out…" or feels like I'm in school or I feel defenceless, that type of feeling. I didn't have any of that. It was very detached, not detached, sort of separated the emotion from it – for me, and*

	When he allowed himself to go into this state, it brought back childhood memories of being bullied.	*allowed me to have a space where I could be – I was empathetic with her."*
Edward	Edward described how he experienced the current working environment, stating: "*Operating in an environment where there is zero tolerance for failure, where, sort of, the audit quality standards are ratcheting up and up and up. And I think the penalties – you know, there are some big things that have gone wrong, which rightly need to be looked at, but also, I think the whole audit profession is currently in this fervid, you know, zero tolerance for anything possibly going slightly wrong. And I think that is driving – that puts a huge amount of stress on people, and unfortunately that is a wave that couples with my natural inclination to be perfect."*	Edward stated that for him it was now about creating an environment where everyone could air their opinions. He contrasted work meetings with his bible study groups that he ran, and was attempting to bring the same principles to work meeting as the study groups. He stated: "*I think it is how do you – if my driver is to, kind of, go [knocks on table], actually it's to help push against that driver and enable me to be a little bit more balanced in my contribution... So, in bible study, I absolutely will enter it with a good – if I lead a good Bible study, I will learn something from it, and you know, there's a group of people and I don't have a monopoly on insight*"

He went on to describe his orientation to working with his team:

"One of the things I do need to work through and try and explore a bit more, one of the things we explored, is there are a few people who just almost need a rocket under them to get anything done, and how to do that without it turning into always having – you know, every two weeks needing to, you know, light the blue touchpaper."

or understanding of this particular Bible passage. But it's how do you create that space for your teams in team meetings? Where actually some of the teams are actually saying, "Actually, [Edward's name], I want you to take the lead and take all the decisions for me." Which is slightly different from Bible study, where everyone wants to go and explore their own little – but with internal teams, one of the things I have been exploring is how do I create an environment where everybody – or more people can air views, even if we then, sort of, say, "Well here are – this is where we're going to end up going"? Even if we end up going where we end up going is where I always thought we would end up going. It's how do you take people with you, but also, how do you make sure that there isn't something over here that you

	haven't thought about, that actually would be better?" Edward went on to acknowledge his historical way of acting, stating: *"And it probably reflects that too often I've spent time going, "No, this is the answer, and [laughs] do that.""*

Table 4: Shifts in relation to power

Whilst power was not something I set out to explore with participants, boundaries was a subject I did discuss with participants. Through the research all the participants explored what it was to hold healthy boundaries with others. For Frank this concerned a prevailing negative mood within the wider firm, so he didn't allow this to impact him. For Andrew this concerned being clear on what he wanted, rather than trying (and failing) to keep everyone else happy all the time, and for Brian this involved allowing others into his experience more and being supported during a crisis. Brian described this shift stating:

> "And I'm calling out some of that madness where before, perhaps, would've been a bit more silent in the past. So, whether that's down to centring, I don't know, but certainly, I think, psychologically, I made a pact with myself, I'm not going to be a victim anymore."

The way in which people held themselves physically, appeared to enable them to hold their boundaries differently in the relationships in which they were engaged. One participant, in a situation where he was trying to hold a boundary against the predominant negative mood of the organisation, found himself physically tensing his

bodily boundaries to maintain his sense of his own mood. This helped him to be less porous in his boundaries and maintain connection to his physicality and sense of his own independent state of mood.

The process of learning to hold boundaries included some questioning about whether they were holding them too tightly in an environment where this was not common practice. As mentioned previously, one participant after establishing boundaries invited people to a meeting to find out if he was pleasing them, which he realised in our conversation. In this way the journey around boundaries included backwards steps and was something where participants worked to find an appropriate balance of being too permeable or too rigid in their boundaries.

One participant noticed a habit to overly apologise – connected to his move towards conditioned tendency response – which showed up in moments of starting to hold boundaries. He stated that when holding his boundaries, he finds:

> "I nearly always start my emails with, "Sorry." So, I'm apologising immediately, when sometimes it's just a fact. Do you know what I mean, it – there's no need to apologise, it's just, you know, I can't do this because I'm doing this other thing, and I think that says something about my insight sometimes because that – for me, that's an overused word…"

This was something he reported as an insight based upon enacting the new behaviours and he was now seeking to shift this pattern. This is interesting as he can see how his historic patterns of not holding boundaries are playing out even in the act of holding them, and he was able to adjust his behaviour.

In these ways the embodied practices undertaken by participants seem to have shifted the power dynamics that participants sit in, revealing power as a more relational

process than a structural one. Having balanced boundaries enhanced the way in which

power was held, so that it was perceived as generative and creative, rather than a

'power over' others. However, a balanced position was tricky for participants to find,

perhaps because of their historic experiences of power dynamics around them.

5.2.3 Being unattached

Becoming unattached was the third theme arising from participants' findings and was

noticeable at several levels. They became less attached to, and more able to observe,

their emotions. They described being less attached to outcomes, and they were

observing their sensations and thoughts more as they went through the research

process, rather than being attached to them. Brian described this as:

> "So – and [sighs] I think I've been focusing on just paying attention to my
> reactions, my internal processing, my thought process, my feelings, my
> emotions on there, and just trying to evaluate them, really."

They describe a shift in their sense of self, and to varying degrees describe some level

of unattachment to a fixed notion of self, reminiscent of Buddhist notions of 'no self'. I

will address these aspects in turn below.

5.2.3.1 Emotions

Throughout the research a core theme for participants is the way in which the

embodied practices changed their relationship to their emotions. They described

themselves as being, 'Calmer, more focused, 'detached' and more distant from their

emotions, and yet also, having greater clarity on the core of their emotions, what they

feel and what they care about. They described more self-control and ability to operate

a brake on getting carried away, as well as greater levels of awareness and feeling of

their emotions. This is an interesting dialectic – more detached from emotions and at

the same time clearer on their emotions, what they feel and care about.

Whatever this detachment is, it does not appear to be a disconnection from or

repression of emotions. They can see and experience their emotions more clearly –

they can observe them. Edward described this as:

> "So I've noticed that [pause] – I've noticed more what my emotions are, so
> when I'm enjoying things or when I'm just exhausted, or when I'm frustrated."

Many spiritual or philosophical traditions talk about the cultivation of the observer

who can observe our thoughts, emotions, and sensations, and this does seem to be an

aspect of what the participants experienced.

With this greater connection to emotions participants start to be more expressive

about what they want (rather than just what they don't want) and begin to take

actions which are designed to further their needs – actions which are less driven by

context, power relationships, or the social expectations of others. David described the

following when dealing with someone who was expressing anger:

> "It was very detached, not detached, sort of separated the emotion from it –
> for me and allowed me to have a space where I could be – I was empathetic
> with her."

This unattachment to their emotions seems to be freeing for participants in many

respects and may be linked to the previously discussed changes in power dynamics.

Claire described her experience of feeling her own desires, stating:

> "So that's-- They're just, I think, signs of me feeling, um, noticing more what I
> want. And giving myself permission to have rights and needs and wants that
> might compete and clash and may be inconvenient, but still have the right to
> have them."

I asked her how it felt to know she could assert her will, noting that her face had lit up when she had stated this. Her response was that it was a good feeling, and she gave another example of noticing and acting on her desires with regards to comic books, something she had enjoyed growing up, but which she had stopped allowing herself. Claire stated:

> "I think I just discounted lots and lots and lots of things. And now I'm thinking I don't have to. I want to, I can. And I actually I want to, so therefore I will."

A specific emotion mentioned by participants was fear. This is notable, firstly, as not a regular subject of conversation with senior business leaders, yet their use of the word fear is consistent and repeated across the participant group. One participant described, as an example, wanting to be a leader who is less scared and another talks about fear as an underlying emotional state in their life. Another described choosing not to live with fear, which is also interesting for the sense of agency accompanying it.

As part of this several participants shared a realisation of discovering they had a 'backbone'. The embodied nature of this metaphor is significant, as participants discovered they could take a stand for what they cared about and step into conversations courageously. One described a moment where they took a stand for themselves, describing the feeling of a metal rod along their spine and out through their head, giving them a strength in the challenging situation, stating:

> "I can only describe it, as you know, when you-when we- when we started learning centering and you talked about the height bit and that you imagine that a line going up- through you out your head for me, that felt like a rod of steel and on that day, really strong feeling of height."

The lack of attachment to the emotion of fear did seem to lead to a greater expression of courage from participants.

5.2.3.2 Outcomes

The changed relationship to their emotions seems to lead to, or perhaps be connected to an unattachment to outcomes. Participants express a greater sense of clarity about what they want, are taking actions to move this forward, but are also willing to let others make decisions as they want. This parallels the enhanced awareness of, and less attachment to emotions. This seems to be connected to boundaries and power – they are not trying to control, and are no longer emotionally holding on, but are committed to what they want to achieve. The embodied practices and relaxation may be contributing to less physical holding and therefore less emotional holding on (attachment). I have attempted to show this visually in the diagram below.
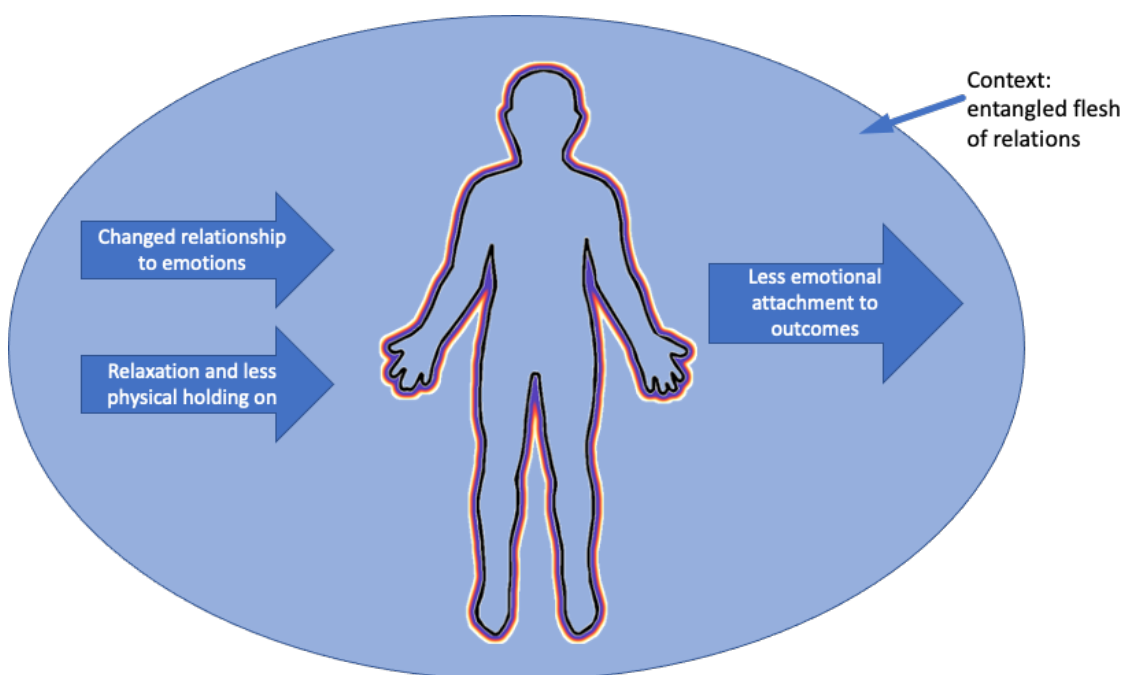

Figure 6: Detachment from outcomes

One participant expressed this change in relationship to the outcomes, stating:

> "I now am a bit like if I set the parameters of what will help us get to a good decision, it's then up to – I can't make that person make the right decision, right. I can try and stack the odds in my favour. But they have to look into their soul and decide if they want to do it or not."

He went on to say:

> "I'm trying to just, sort of, keep those boundaries, like, if I am trying to make their decision for them, or force them into making a decision, now I've probably overstepped the boundary, it's like I want it too much."

Here this participant connects this shift to holding his boundaries in relationships.

Other participants expressed being able to let go of control more and trust others to a greater extent. One described how he was being more accepting of how others were, whereas he had historically taken these things personally, stating: *"I just accept him, that's his way."*

In our workshops we had worked with the principle of centered extension – extending towards what we care about from a centered and balanced place. The principle involves the clarity of concerns and cares, which had already been mentioned, plus the idea of extending towards them from a centered and balanced place. In a martial arts context, one should never sacrifice balance for power, as then you will end up on the floor, and a similar principle is at play here – how to extend towards our concerns without overreaching. The practice of not overreaching seemed to be helping participants to be committed, but not attached.

5.2.3.3 Sensations

Participants, later in the research process, shared many unprompted physical descriptions of their experiences, where they began to show an enhanced level of

awareness of the physicality of their engagement with the world. At the early stages of

the process this is very limited, but they develop a capacity to observe the physicality

of their somatic experience of their interactions with others and the environment.

For one participant this was very noticeable. He began the process with quite a

cognitive process to centering, using the mental imagery of his first experience of

centering as their means of engagement with the practice. The mental imagery was

based upon the feeling of solidity he experienced in his first introduction to the

practice, and he was bringing that back to mind as a state, rather than practicing

through his body. He stated:

> "I found the mental imagery more effective than the actual physical
> embodiment. So, by that, I meant, if I have had a difficult phone call or
> something that I'm tense or uptight about, I'll visualize that when we're in that
> room and how strong and solid what that was. That has, uh, I guess shifted my
> thoughts from being tense and uptight to being a bit calmer."

It is interesting that he states that this has shifted *his thoughts* from tense and uptight

to calmer and is representative of an overall cognitive orientation to the world. In the

early part of the process this participant quizzed me on the reasons why this process

was working for him, stating that it worked but he didn't understand why, and he

wanted to understand. When we got to about halfway through the process, he shared

that he was stressed, and I asked about how this was impacting him. He stated:

> "A tightness. Probably shallow breathing. Uncomfortable feeling… Pissed-off-
> ness. "When is this ever going to end?" "When can we see a position of
> calmness." And I think, if I'm honest with you, Pete, probably March, early
> April-time fear of absolute panic. I can't do this anymore. Am I the right
> person? Is this what I need at my time of my life?"

It's significant that he begins the answer to a question, which could have been

answered in a cognitive manner, with the physical experience of his stress. The

increased awareness of the physical dimensions of experience is mirrored across the

group, with people realising that their habitual postures were uncomfortable, realising

that they could stand taller and feeling their confidence or lack of confidence in

different contexts, as sensations of anxiety or solidity in their bodies. Claire described

an awareness of body, towards the of the process, describing her historic posture,

stating:

> "when I was in that state, I realized that I was actually- it was painful, I was
> hurting myself. As much as the feeling of-of of safety and of being very
> protected by being that-that compressed was it—I mean, it was really
> powerful. It felt very, very safe. But I also realized that I was—But I was hurting
> part of my-parts of my body, I was hurting my head on one side, I was hurting
> my shoulder. My shoulder blade was twisted. So that and that's the really
> interesting illustration for me of the fact that some- to hold that position was
> actually damaging in other ways."

Claire highlights that the physical act of making herself smaller was connected to a felt

sense of safety, historically, and that it was also damaging to her. Being able to

observe her emotional and physical state more clearly, and with less attachment, was

an outcome of this process.

5.2.3.4 Thoughts

At a cognitive level participants experienced an increased awareness of historical

patterns and the memories associated with them. For one individual a traumatic

memory they rarely thought about became figural and they took this forward through

psychotherapy. Historical narratives about themselves came forward in this process,

with participants sharing narratives of being 'naughty' or 'too much' which came up for

them as they took new actions. These internal narratives appear to be associated with

them not taking these actions historically.

What is interesting about this, is that participants were able to report these not just as thoughts, but as experiences of noticing aspects of their own thinking. These were moments not just of reporting what they thought in an attached way – e.g., "I think that…" – but rather moments of noticing thought patterns in an unattached way.

For one participant a dramatic insight arose where she realised that she had carried a pattern of thinking that she couldn't ask for too much because of a family shame about her father's alcoholism. Interestingly when she was young, she didn't know that her father had been an alcoholic and only discovered this later in life, after her father had stopped drinking. She described this moment of realisation, stating:

> "And suddenly, it-it hit me. I thought it's not my fault that my dad was an alcoholic. And I thought, the fact that my dad was an alcoholic, doesn't mean I can't do things. And if you'd have asked me up until yesterday, up until that thought came into my head, if you'd asked me, I would have said, "Of course, what are you talking about, of course." But I was out for a run and I was listening to the podcast, this podcast, and I thought, "Wow, those two thoughts 'it wasn't my fault', and 'the fact that he was, doesn't mean I can't do things'." And I felt so free. And I had no idea-- I had no idea, and I think, I mean, it was only yesterday, so I haven't done much processing on it, of it, but there was certainly that in terms of me thinking well, I, to some extent, I have to be ashamed of all of, I don't know, my family, or I have to be ashamed because my family has a secret. And I kind of thought everything I achieve or reach for will be despite that, and I thought that I couldn't aspire, I couldn't reach for too much- because that would be rude, because, well, that would be, given the shame I was carrying, I had no right to ask for that much. But I had no idea. So, yeah, all of this is coming together."

Here an awareness of an historical narrative, inside which she had been living, with limited awareness, comes forward in the process as something she can see and observe. It seems that she is no longer living through that narrative in the same way and has detached from it. Perhaps the new practices, which involved her living in a way in which she was visible and asserted herself, brought to the foreground this internalised narrative of shame.

5.2.3.5 Shift in sense of self

If participants are less attached to their emotions and outcomes and have greater capacity to observe their sensations, emotions, and thoughts, we might expect to see that this process is shifting their sense of self. Indeed, from early in the research process participants express concerns at this level. One participant asked who they would be if they were to take on these practices and another found centering to be something in which he struggled to feel his normal sense of himself, having a habitual stylised way of appearing relaxed, as an attempt to relax others.

One participant realised early on that he had a habit of shouting louder for the recognition he was already getting, showing an insight about their way of being. Another (this is also an example of emergence of learning), realised that he had stopped liking himself and these new actions were stimulating him to appreciate himself, which allowed him to see that he hadn't liked himself. He realised that doing things he thought others wanted had become a habit and that this shut down bits of himself. 'Who am I as a result?' he asked.

In these examples there is a commentary on a shift in the sense of self. At times there was some resistance to practicing, or through rationalising an attempt to hold things at a distance, but over time the practices impacted on participants' sense of their identity. A self-described people pleaser learnt to hold his boundaries and be clear on his needs and wants. Someone who hid herself for safety, learnt to become a visible powerful presence and in doing so built a different relationship with those around her. Someone who collected responsibilities, never let go and had high control needs,

began to let go, cut his working hours, and started to hear more back from his teams about their views and perspectives. He realised towards the end that his pattern of arriving late to meetings was a way in which he exerted control over the conversation.

These shifts are more than just behavioural ones, I would contend. They are not just about the new actions that are taken, but the new senses of self that emerge for each participant which enable a new range of actions.

Moments of self-consciousness could easily disturb someone's process of change. Catching themselves in the process of being different, could evoke a critical internal response – "who are you to do that?" This left one participant in a challenging conundrum. The moment of awareness would evoke an embarrassment at the historic pattern of behaviour as well as a critical response to the new behaviours (in her case, relating to taking up space in the world and being powerful). This left her in a state of significant discomfort, at times, with both ways of being. However, interestingly at the end of the research the participant was unable to remember the last time the thought, "who do you think you are?" had gone through her head.

5.2.3.6 Detachment from a fixed sense of self

There is perhaps, therefore, a wider theme of detachment here, rather than just one of emotions and outcomes and observation of sensation and thoughts. Perhaps there is a detachment from a historic, fixed sense of self into a more fluid way of understanding themselves through the new practices.

One participant brought up the "fixed versus growth mindset" work of Carol Dweck (Dweck, 2006) which was influencing the schooling of his son. He saw a connection between that and the work that we were doing, in that he was moving from a more fixed view of himself to one which was changing and developing. Participants also acknowledged an increased facility to change their mindset as circumstances changed around them – not holding onto emotions or perceptions but shifting as external aspects shifted. One participant described this stating:

> "I surprised myself in the sense that it's difficult for me to flip out of the mindset if I'm prepared for something. And- and I think I flipped out without anybody noticing. Um, and- and again, being centered gave me that manoeuvrability."

One participant discussed how there were choices available at every moment and he needed to make them earlier and relax into them, rather than his pattern of worrying about them too long.

It seemed to me that through the research that participants were letting go of some of the historically developed ways of responding to the world, which their contexts were highlighting for them as being somewhat dysfunctional in relation to the things they cared about. In doing so they were detaching from a fixed historic sense of themselves – for example as a people pleaser, or someone who didn't deserve to take up space in the world – and were able to step into being in the present and respond in the moment in a more functional way, corresponding to their needs and cares. I have attempted to represent this in the diagram below.
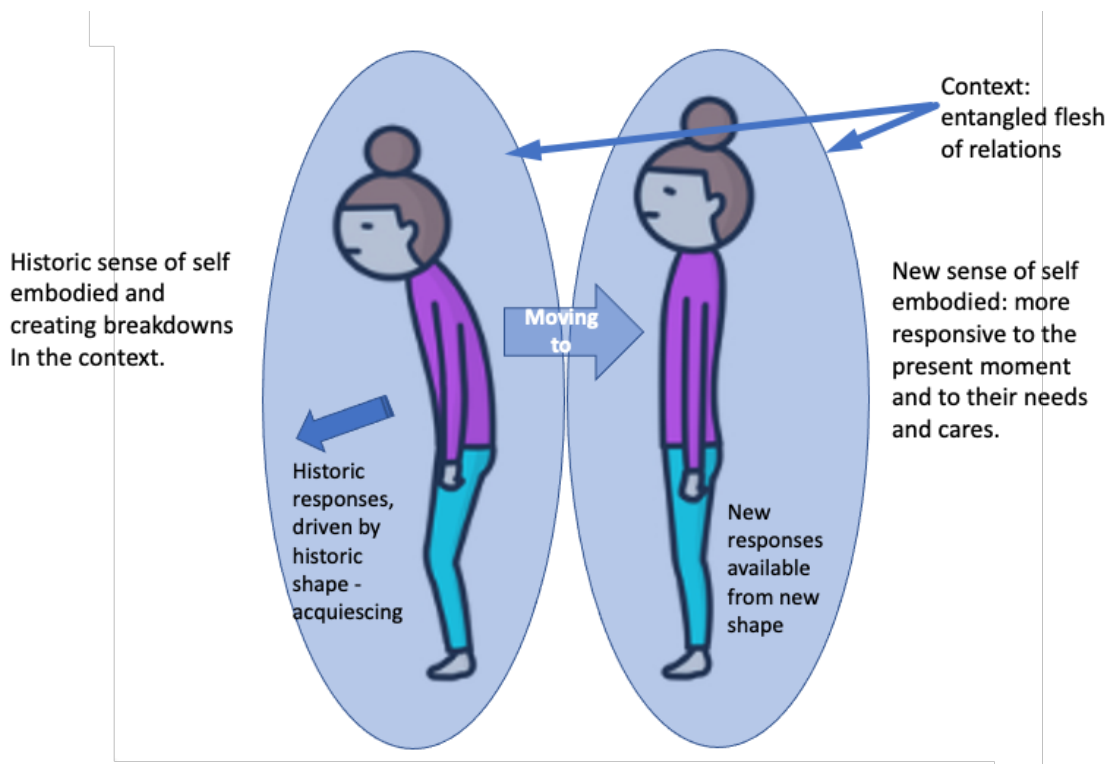
Figure 7: A new embodied sense of self emerges

In shifting to respond more functionally, I think they are moving towards taking part in a process of becoming, in relationship to others and an ever-changing context, rather than as a fixed entity with a fixed pattern of response. This could be the reason that participants find themselves taking new actions without prior planning or intention, and that sometimes they only recognise these actions in retrospect – they are taking the new actions in the flow of relational engagement, rather than taking actions from a historic set of habitual behaviours. These new actions emerge, precisely because participants have shaken off historic practices and the accompanying stories of their own identity and are therefore able to respond more functionally in the present moment.

One participant commented that in centering he recognised that, "the image of me is now an image, not me." This corresponds to Buddhist notions of 'no fixed self', and a processual view on reality. I'm not seeking to claim that they have achieved a Buddhist sense of enlightenment and have an ongoing lived experience of 'no self'. Rather this process seems to have contributed to a development of this capacity in certain critical areas relating to their contexts, and this has enabled them to engage in those contexts in a more functional manner.

5.3 A note on context

A shared piece of context across participants was the way their working lives revolved around meetings. All the participants described spending most of their working life in meetings (perhaps around 75-80% based on their self-reports). Conversation is therefore the means through which most of their work takes place – through in the moment responses and interactions, rather than through pre-thought and pre-planned communication or even emails. This implies an ongoing, on the fly, ability to respond to the context and other people, which is what this research inevitably focused on. At times, earlier in the research, participants reported seeing in retrospect what they should have said in a particular meeting, but in the main they reported an enhanced ability to hold boundaries and take care of what they cared about, in these conversations.

In all the case studies I almost came to see the context as equivalent to another actor in the story. Each participant is facing something in the environment which brings out a certain aspect of the historic personality practices they have developed. It is like

another person in the story, whom they are finding ways to cope with, from within their currently developed ways of responding.

The person who self-identified as a people pleaser had just changed jobs into an environment of celebrities and hedge fund billionaires – some big personalities – and who knows if in a different context the same aspects of personality would have come to the fore and would have been a part of this story. Another was responding to a crisis in his work environment that caused him extreme stress, and this caused him to face a pattern of holding everything inside and over-containing. A different context may have led to different conversations and development taking place.

There was, therefore, no individual in abstract, who was engaging in embodied practices in this research. There were only individuals in entangled contexts, who were coping using their historic practices and experiencing breakdowns in their ability to achieve their purposes. The practices seemed to enable more effective coping in areas where the combination of their current practices and the context were highlighting for them to pay attention.

5.3.1 Home life context

All the participants brought in their home life context as another actor in the conversation. Interestingly, I did not ask participants about their home life, and yet all felt the need to explore this with me in the interviews. A number found the practices helpful in engaging with their children, one ending the research saying his relationship with his teenage son had never been better. Holding boundaries showed up with

children and partners, and triggered responses to pressure brought up conversations about relationship dynamics. The home context was another actor against which they saw parts of themselves show up and again shaped the conversation of development.

I was left with the reflection that work that impacts at the level of self-identity, probably cannot avoid the context of home life, as the practices taken up will have consequences across contexts. This raises some questions about the appropriateness of this approach to organisational leadership development, where the cross-over into the personal realm may be taboo for some people. That said, this is based on an idea of separation between a work self and a personal self, which is becoming less prevalent in my experience.

5.4 Moving forwards

In the next chapter I will take each of these core themes and engage with in a dialogue with the literature as part of making sense of my findings.

Interlude:

The Guest House

This being human is a guest house.

Every morning a new arrival.

A joy, a depression, a meanness,

Some momentary awareness comes

As an unexpected visitor.

Welcome and entertain them all!

Even if they're a crowd of sorrows,

Who violently sweep your house

Empty of its furniture,

Still, treat each guest honorably.

He may be clearing you out

For some new delight.

The dark thought, the shame, the malice,

Meet them at the door laughing,

And invite them in.

Be grateful for whoever comes,

Because each has been sent

As a guide from beyond.

Rumi (2011)

Chapter 6:

Discussion and Conclusions

The question I sought to explore through this research was, *how can embodied*

practices inform the development of skilled performance as a leader? As I discussed in

the literature review, in many ways the study isn't about leadership, but rather about

the way in which embodied practices inform the development of skilled performance.

However, it's important that I re-situate my findings within the framework of

leadership. In this chapter, I will start by engaging in a dialogue between the three core

themes which emerged from my research and the existing literature, before

continuing by exploring the implications for leadership.

Finally, I will explore the role that I played as a researcher in this process, discuss the limitations of the study and areas for future research, before drawing conclusions from this study.

6.1 An emotional process of learning

In the findings chapter I explored an emergent process of learning, whereby participants, rather than portraying a process of skills development, were able to enact skills they already possessed, in contexts or situations where they were previously unable to enact these skills. This is a process that led to surprises for participants and realisations of new actions after the fact.

In my literature review I discussed that emotions could become skilful in interaction with the world, based on the work of Hufendiek (2016), but I also noted that there did not appear to be a clear understanding of how this process of emotional learning takes place. I also discussed how the 'habitus', serves to restrict our behaviours, drawing on Chia's commentary on Bourdieu (2004), and then, drawing on Downey (2010), equated the habitus with the body.

In my research participants did indeed seem to experience reduced restrictions with regards to areas where they had previously been inhibited because of historic emotions and emotional responses. Their conditioned tendencies (Horney, 1950) represent learned responses to particular sets of stressors, which then limited them

from taking action. Their purposive responses in practical coping, are ones which seek to resolve the stressful situation through moving towards, moving away, or moving against, rather than ones which takes care of their wider concerns and overall sense of purpose.

As I explained earlier, conditioned tendencies represent childhood strategies to meet basic needs and manage anxieties. Horney (1950, pp. 18–19) describes how the child, in response to the environment will experience a range of feelings and emotions but that:

> "He must (unconsciously) deal with them in ways which do not arouse or increase, but rather allay his basic anxiety. The particular attitudes resulting from such unconscious strategical necessities are determined both by the child's given temperament and by the contingencies of the environment. Briefly, he may try to cling to the most powerful person around him; he may try to rebel and fight; he may try to shut others out of his inner life and withdraw emotionally from them. In principle, this means that he can move toward, against or away from others."

The child is coping with a range of emotional responses to environmental stressors which are overwhelming and thus develops strategies to manage and contain the resulting anxiety, which leads to conditioned tendencies. These become habitual over time, and Horney notes lead to rigidity (ibid). Whilst she is unclear as to whether this is a physical or psychological rigidity she is referring to, I hope that I have shown in this dissertation so far, that we can treat these as one in the same. Indeed, a physical contraction can be helpful to numb pain, both physical and emotional, and so the rigidity she mentions is a way in which the armouring mentioned earlier, develops in the physical body. In this way these conditioned tendencies develop a skilfulness in protecting the developing child from overwhelming emotion, but in doing so, rigidify a series of conditioned responses to stress, and bodily armouring, which can limit the

range of actions available to the individual. This is reminiscent of the discussion of habitus earlier in this dissertation, as something which acts to limit behaviour. Indeed, Horney is clear that these responses drive the child to act (ibid: p.19): "without reference to his real feelings and regardless of the inappropriateness of his attitude in a particular situation." In time Horney notes, that the child will make one of these moves a "prevailing attitude" or dominant response.

Engaging in the practice of centering in the face of a conditioned tendency response, both reshaped my research participants' bodies (habitus') as well as reducing arousal of their sympathetic nervous systems, and this seemed to enable participants to take different actions which may have been more appropriate to the situation. I have already shared the example given by one participant where he stated:

> "I didn't flip into my usual reaction. I did pause and literally centered and then thought about it... I really will remember that moment... I remember that moment where I chose a different path- I remember the moment, um, where I handled it and kept centering about it and it didn't bother me."

The experience of being able to face their stressors and reshape themselves in this way, appeared to allow the development of greater emotional skill. Hufendiek (2016, p. 19), as I have already noted in the literature review, states that emotions are, "constituted by embodied homeostatic reactions, which become skilful in a process of interaction with the social world from early on." These embodied practices seem to have enabled such a process of interaction, developing more skilful responses under pressure. For example, Brian was under significant work pressure and was responding through escapism, but the practice helped him to face into the situation and take courageous actions.

Their conditioned tendencies, as defined above, created for participants a predominant attitude which defended against experiencing their 'real feelings' in situations. In such a way they were therefore disconnected from their sense perception (the original root of aesthetics (Bathurst and Monin, 2010)), were unable to aesthetically appreciate their contextual relations, and were taking actions based on historic strategies created to meet childhood basic needs. As I argued in the literature review, an aesthetic sensibility forms a basis for our ability to understand the entangled flesh of relationships between human and non-human actants, and conditioned tendencies act to disable this ability. If, as Hufendiek (2016, p. 19) argues, emotions are "embodied action oriented representations that refer to certain kinds of affordances that we encounter in our environment," then the conditioned tendency will block the experience of the emotions and, therefore, of the affordances in the environment. Whilst perception gives access to the world, emotions highlight what matters in what we perceive (ibid: p.171), so conditioned tendencies serve to inhibit our ability to understand the significance or importance of what the context affords us impoverishing our resultant actions. Participants in the study reported breaking this cycle, for example, Claire realised that she had power in an environment where she was acting as if she was here to hold others' coats, and so had a moment of seeing the context anew. Through the research process, she realised that her response defended against feelings of unworthiness and she learnt to be able to take up space in the world, generating the assessment of being powerful in her boss.

Willems (2018) reviews the process of learning to be a train dispatcher on the Dutch railways, describing an attunement between the dispatchers and their environment. He states (ibid: p.30):

"When probed, dispatchers explained that monitoring entails 'reading the screens,' and this involves some sort of visual translation where the outside (the physical trains, signs, and switches) is brought inside. This happens through their attunement, the coupling between their actions and what they perceive in the environment, and is based on experience; the outside world is disclosed to dispatchers, who are in a practical and relevant situation. Dispatchers do not, as I did, see planning lines, numbers, or dots on their computer screen; monitoring consists of seeing a situation as a meaningful totality (trains, tracks, drivers, switches, signs, the environment, (clock)-time, schedules, passengers, (hi)stories of specific parts of the railways, etc.). In other words, dispatchers perceive, through their monitoring, the railway world as a totality, that is, perspectival while simultaneously disclosing all the other 'sides' of a situation like a past experience brought in the here- and-now. Whereas I saw their different equipment as present-at-hand, dispatchers see a coherent and ready-at-hand system of equipment."

Skilled dispatchers experience an attunement with their environment such that the equipment they use becomes ready-to-hand, transparent and invisible, as they engage with the reality represented for them in the context. Drawing on the work of Merleau-Ponty, Willems suggests three orientations in learning such attunement, which will be helpful in exploring the experiences of my research participants (ibid p.35):

"The perspectival orientation of learning deals with skills to perceive a situation from all sides at once, its temporal orientation with drawing past and imagined situations into the here-and-now, and its intentional orientation with getting a grasp on practical goals to anticipate perturbations in the blink of an eye."

The perspectival orientation, Willems (ibid: 26) explains as the fact that, "we do not perceive objects scattered arbitrarily in the world but we see a coherent system." In Willems' research he notes the difference between his own experience of seeing the screens and instruments as a mass of information without clear meaning, whereas the dispatchers in his research perceive a coherent whole which gives a holistic sense of meaning with which they can engage. This is a learned skill which comes from experience within a domain, and in my research, participants often had such skill due to their years of experience in their contexts. This is a requirement for attunement and

one my research participants were often able to meet. For example, having significant

experience as a Chief Exec of charities, Andrew was able to analyse the celebrity

founder's organisation and problems therein, making sense of a mass of information.

David discussed issues of patient flows across departments in the hospital, waiting

lists, elective and non-elective surgeries, outpatients, and the impact of all of these on

government funding (hospitals can earn money through more elective surgeries but

then are penalised if waiting times rise) sharing spreadsheets worth of information in a

single conversation in a way which was bewildering to the uninitiated but clearly made

complete sense to him.

The temporal orientation concerns how in the present moment we draw on our past

experiences and future anticipations. Willems states (ibid):

> "To say that perception has a past should not be confused with the idea that
> we have a mental representation of previous experiences stored in our minds
> and nor that 'memory lays a previous experience out before us like a painting'
> (Merleau-Ponty, 2012 [1945]: 85); the past is not of a different temporal
> dimension than the present but, rather, is a previous present (p. 87). Thus,
> perceiving something already seen or sensed before, my body experiences this
> past in the present."

In this way Willems is exploring how the ability to see a coherent system in the

moment (perspectival orientation), combined with the ability to draw on past

experience and anticipation of the future, combines to give an ability to respond

skilfully in the moment. He also locates the learning in the body, and so we see that

the body expresses the past in the present through the habitus – we live our embodied

histories. This is aligned with the experience of my research participants, who had

significant experience and could often see a coherent system in the moment. For

example, Claire discussed governmental and legislative changes from the perspective

of a long civil service career, identifying the minister's priorities, the political party's

needs drawing on previous legislative changes and anticipating future political shifts in direction.

The final orientation, the intentional orientation, concerns the way in which the world becomes ready-to-hand and actions are taken in the moment to achieve purposive aims. Willems describes this as (ibid: 27):

> In order to show how perception is intentional, Merleau-Ponty makes a distinction between bodily movements as 'grasping' or 'abstract'; the former takes place pre-reflectively while immersed in practical situations (e.g. raising my hand to my mouth to sip from my coffee), whereas the latter is a conscious movement of the body (e.g. raising my hand to my mouth on command). This is not to say that grasping movements are not conscious, but it entails not an 'I think that' but rather an 'I can' (Merleau-Ponty, 2012 [1945]: 139). Grasping is not mental but understood as the body 'being toward the thing' (Merleau-Ponty, 2012 [1945]: 140), anticipating a situation to attain certain goals. It happens against the background of practical situations or the background of 'the given world' (Merleau-Ponty, 2012 [1945]: 113). This background is transparent: becoming a skill-ful practitioner implies to learn and 'forget' it (Dreyfus and Dreyfus, 2005).

Here we see that the ready-to-hand engagement with the world involves pre-reflective action whilst immersed in engagement with a context. It draws on the perspectival orientation which enables seeing a complete whole picture, and the temporal orientation which enabled drawing on experience and anticipating the future, and engages us in purposive actions to achieve our aims.

A parallel can be seen the accounts from my research participants. The research participants in this study, were all significantly experienced in their careers. Whilst one was taking on the CEO role in a newly formed charity, and had significant learning to do in that role, he was also an experienced charity CEO. The others had spent significant times inside their organisations (although one within several NHS trusts, in a career within that institution) and had significant experience to inform their

perspectival and temporal orientations. However, their skill in these orientations was not enough to give them the capacity to take skilful action inside of their contexts. Their conditioned tendencies impacted on their intentional orientations when under pressure, with a purposive move to disconnect from the felt sense of their experience in the moment and enact historically developed responses. In doing so their aims were reduced from any wider sense of purpose they carried to a more basic survival-based strategy from childhoods. In the practice of centering they were able to be more attuned to the context and take more appropriate and effective action. For example, David, who was a director in the NHS, but was non-clinical, had spent his entire career feeling out of place when he visited wards, and so avoided doing so. Quite early in the research he found that centering enabled him to be present in a different way, stating:

> "As I've been going on to a ward lately, I centered as a walked on to wards and it's made me feel much more comfortable in being me being there because I'm there as board director and can-- I want to know what's going on and actually not being clinical gives me a different perspective than, than a clinician walking into a clinical area. So, I've used that as a bit of that's my space, I can question, I can support, I can do things differently to my clinical exec colleagues and that's valuable. And I've found that, having spent all of my professional life in the NHS struggling with that one a little bit, last few weeks, I've found it much easier and I've been on a ward this morning celebrating our CQC[10] results and I didn't even think about me not being there actually."

Willems described how, once one becomes attuned to the environment, one can 'forget' what is present. He states (ibid: p.36):

> "Forgetting is not a matter of deliberately discarding knowledge from memory. Dispatchers were able to 'forget' something only after truly inhabiting it, having perceived it from all different sides, and carefully considering that what 'has been' and that what 'may come.' Forgetting means to be attuned to something to such an extent that it can retreat to a more transparent, practical background. In Heidegger's words, forgetting an object means it has become ready-at-hand, and it is in this sense that experts forget that what made them

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[10] CQC – Care Quality Commission – a body which inspects and rates NHS Trusts in the UK

experts in the first place (Dreyfus and Dreyfus, 2005). Attunement means we synchronize our bodies with the world in a temporal sense; we bring, non-cognitively, the past in the present through our sensible experience as the world discloses itself to us. Although this happens pre-reflectively, it involves 'intense concentration ... that is not confined within the head of the practitioner but reaches out into the environment along multiple pathways of sensory participation' (Ingold, 2011: 18). It is in this sense that the body is a central site of knowing."

This mirrors the experience of my research participants in multiple ways. They described 'forgetting' to doubt themselves, taking new actions in the moment without pre-reflective intention, sensing themselves and others more clearly, and having new voices emerging within themselves and their communication. It seems that through centering, in the face of their conditioned tendency, they were able to attune to their environment so that their perspectival understanding and temporal experience was able to come to the context in a way that served their purpose. As noted in chapter one, this expression of their mastery (from perspectival and temporal orientations) will have moved them to a ready-to-hand experience of the world, which will have enabled a presence in the moment, which will further enable them to sense into the flesh of relations. I have attempted to represent this in the diagram below.

Bringing mastery from perspectival and temporal orientations to bear in ready-to-hand engagement with the world

Feeling and sensing into the entangled context

Perspectival, temporal and intentional orientations
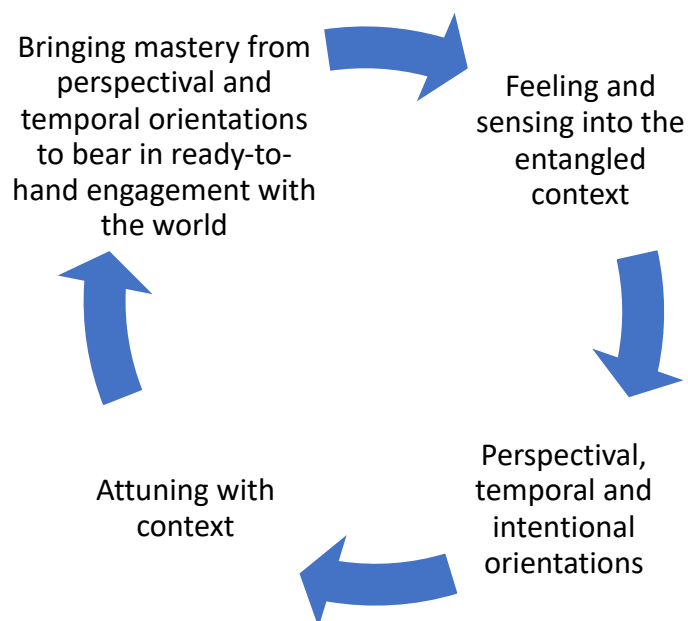
Attuning with context

Figure 8: Attunement with the context

Centering in the space of a conditioned tendency response was enabling participants to feel their emotional experience, which meant that the affordances in the context were experienced differently, and they were able to take different actions. Already existing expertise was able to come forward in their contexts and in this process many aspects of the situation were experienced as ready-to-hand. Expertise which was 'forgotten' came forward and they found themselves taking actions, without conscious intention, which they wouldn't have previously taken. Then because of what was reflected back to them by others, or through exploration with me, they came to see these new behaviours in retrospect. This is shown for example when David states:

> "You're right. God, I can't believe… I'm just thinking it through, the enormity of that I would not have done that, um, 12 months ago and I did it without it really bothering me."

There emerge two significant aspects regarding learning from this research, therefore. Firstly, that one can have significant expertise and ability to read and understand a situation, and still be unable to take skilful action, without paying attention to one's embodied and emotional state. Embodied practices can enable the enaction of such experience in the moment of complex dynamics, and as a result give a process through which emotions become more skilful, as discussed by Hufendiek.

Secondly, that such learning can be invisible to us in the moment, because our experience combined with a centered presence, allows us to enter into a ready-to-hand experience of the world in which new actions can be taken without conscious intention. Learning in this way could be significant for those who have high levels of

experience in their domains. That is not to say that reflecting on and noticing such learning has no value; I would argue that it does and will comment on this when discussing the relational nature of power.

6.2 The relational nature of power and boundaries

In my findings I explored how participants experienced a change in the power dynamics of their relationships during the research process, with many describing the development of 'peer-to-peer' relationships (implying a relationship of equals) where there had previously been an asymmetrical power relationship. In addition, boundaries showed up as a connected theme impacting the way in which power was experienced. The development of balanced boundaries – a balanced connection to themselves and others – appeared to be significant in developing what participants described as a 'power with' rather than 'power over' others. I will explore first the relational nature of power before exploring the relationship between power and boundaries.

6.2.1 The relational nature of power

In my literature review, I discussed Bourdieu's concepts of capital and field, which informed the way in which habitus led to practices. It's worth once again defining these terms because of their relations to power (Nicolini, 2012, p. 59-60):

> "Capital is in broad terms anything that can be exchanged, determining as a consequence a variation in legitimacy and power. Capital therefore includes material possessions (which can have symbolic value), non-material sources of value such as prestige, status and authority (referred to as symbolic capital), and anything rare and worthy of being sought after in particular social formations' Bourdieu 1977, P.178)."

"Fields (champs) are partially autonomous spaces characterized by 'fields of forces' determined by the distribution of social capital and objective relations between social positions."

Here we see an interpretation where capital is something which can be exchanged, and therefore possessed, and which can create a variation in legitimacy and power. This variation creates a field of forces. So, for example, a promotion or a lottery win could confer a variation in legitimacy and power, changing the nature of the field in which we are situated. What is interesting is that in this research participants did not describe such exchange of value in their conversations with me. Nowhere can I find evidence of such an exchange, yet participants uniformly describe a shift in the power dynamics they experience.

As I have previously noted in earlier chapters, King (2000, p. 425) critiqued Bourdieu's notion of habitus as returning to an objective structure. He also makes the same critique of the concept of field. However, this depends on how we make sense of the field. Standal & Moe (2011, pp. 259–260) offer a perspective on the idea of a 'field' using Merleau-Ponty, which may be helpful here, stating:

> "The way in which a gestalt has meaning as a "lived reality" rather than "a true object of our knowledge" (SB, 168) is exemplified by the football player's relation to the pitch, his team-mates and the opponents. For the player, the football field is not an object, says Merleau-Ponty. This means that the measures the player takes of the field are not those of objective, geometrical space. A player does not locate his opponent to be 5 meters in front himself, 25 degrees to the left and running at a speed of 5 mins/sec, say. Rather, the phenomenal football field is expressed as lines of forces that "initiate and guide the action as if the player were unaware of it. The field itself is not given to him, but present as the immanent term of his practical intentions" (SB, 168). Thus, the phenomenal (football) field is internal to the player's practical intentions.
>
> There is a dialectic between the field and the actions of the player, so that "each manoeuvre undertaken by the player modifies the character of the field and establishes in it new lines of forces which in turn unfold and are accomplished, again altering the phenomenal field" (SB, 169). There is thus an

interdependence between the player's intentions and actual movements on the one hand and the gestalt of the phenomenal field on the other. We can therefore see that the perceptual gestalt is not imposed solely by the bodily intentions of the player, because the field – by virtue of its set limits – is already partly configured. Neither is the configuration of the field exhausted by the demarcations. Rather, the lines of forces, the possibilities opened for play, are continually changed as moves are made."

Here we see a different interpretation of the field, from the idea of 'objective, prior economic realities' which King takes from Bourdieu's work. The field is instead the space in which possibilities are available, and continually changes in response to moves made by self and others. Combining this with the habitus as embodied skills, along with the affordances they enable, we can see that it is the embodied engagement with the field that gives the individual the affordances which are available to him as an 'immanent term of his practical intentions'.

The question is how we make sense of capital and power in such a phenomenal field. Ladkin and Probert (2021, p. 2) review power in leadership through Foucault's conceptualisation of power, stating:

> "This article addresses the disconnection between common assumptions about how power works and its indeterminacy in practice by proposing an alternative conceptualization of power itself. Instead of thinking about it as a commodity that someone can own, what if we think about it as an outcome of a way of relating? What happens if we think of it as something that locates itself not just in people or the positions they hold, but also in history, in social customs, in the very language we use? What if we imagine that the way to use it is to align with the way it is working amidst networks and systems, rather than to try to accumulate it for ourselves, individually? The French philosopher Michel Foucault conceptualizes power in just these ways; as a relationally based phenomenon which arises through social and structural interactions."

This locates power not just in individuals, but in relationships, arising in social and structural interactions. This aligns well with the understanding of field outlined above,

with structural pre-set limits on action, combined with the possibilities which open as social interactions take place.

This is not a dominant way of considering power dynamics in organisations. As Ladkin and Probert acknowledge (ibid), power is more usually considered as a personal or positional phenomenon. They provide the following table to contrast these views (ibid: table 1, p.8):

Conventional view of power	Foucauldian view of power Power
Power is a possession (e.g., Dahl, 1957; French & Raven, 1959; Hobbes, 1962)	Power works through relationships (Foucault, 1994)
Power can be accumulated (e.g., Finkelstein, 1992)	Power cannot be accumulated, but emerges in interactions between people
Power is located within individuals (e.g., Dahl, 1957; Sturm & Antonakis, 2015)	as well as between people and their contexts (Foucault, 1994)
Leaders have power by virtue of individual characteristics or structural position (e.g., Ragins & Sundstrom, 1989)	Power is everywhere – not just among humans but also as a result of institutions, history, discourse, and society (Foucault, 1988)
Leaders rise above the context and create it (e.g., Zehnder, Herz, & Bonardi, 2017)	The role of leader itself is constituted by the social field and leaders are subject to that field (Foucault, 1977)

If one has enough power, one can determine the behaviours of another (e.g., French & Raven, 1959) Power is associated with one's position in a hierarchy and has stability associated with that position (e.g., Finkelstein, 1992)	Leaders are part of the context and are affected by it (Foucault, 1977) Those affected by power are always free, therefore power's effects are always indeterminate (Foucault, 1994) Power is fluid and unstable (Foucault, 1994)

Table 5: Key differences between the conventional and the Foucauldian views of power.

What is key, for my research, in this view of power is that power is not accumulated but is everywhere in a social context and is something that we must align with rather than seek to own. Such an alignment requires the capacity to feel into the social context in which power exists. We feel powerful or empowered, rather than think it, and the experience is often more noticeable in its absence (Mindell, 1995, p. 49). As I mentioned when I introduced Karen Horney's model of Conditioned Tendency, she framed it as a model of ten neurotic needs, which she grouped into three conditioned tendencies. Fromm (2019), links neurosis and powerlessness stating:

> "The feeling of powerlessness is so regularly present in neurotic people, and represents such a central part of their personality structure, that there is much to be said for defining neurosis precisely on the basis of this feeling of powerlessness."

So, if we accept Fromm's statement, in facing into their conditioned tendencies participants were able to overcome some of the experience of powerlessness. Research participants did so through sensing and attuning themselves to this social context (or flesh of relations) when they centered themselves. Centering enabled a

moving out of their conditioned tendencies, and they were able to take actions aligned

with the power in the systems, for example Frank stepped into the power that was

already afforded him as an 'elder statesman' in his firm. In doing so their relationship

dynamics shifted. In essence, participants were learning to move in harmony with the

system they were a part of, aligning with the way in which power was expressed in the

system, which was only possible through engaging with their feeling selves. This idea is

reflected in the thoughts of Morihei Ueshiba, who was the founder of the Japanese

martial art of Aikido. Speaking about his art, he stated (Ueshiba, 1974, p. 177):

> "The secret of aikido is to harmonize ourselves with the movement of the
> universe itself. He who has gained the secret of aikido has the universe in
> himself and can say, "I am the universe."
>   Aiki is not a technique to fight with or defeat the enemy. It is the way to
> reconcile the world and make human beings one family."

This has relevance because centering is a technique used in the art of Aikido, and in

that art the practitioner always feels into the situation to find the way to blend with

the energy of the attack, in such way to move in harmony with it, and protect

themselves and the attacker. In my research, participants were not responding to

strikes or kicks, but they were learning to center and feel into the way in which others

engaged with them. The change in power dynamics was in many ways a result of

learning to harmonise with the dynamics in their context, aligning with power in the

system. The nature of how the power is expressed is different than in martial arts, but

the principle is the same.

In his later work Foucault considered how a person could live inside of structures of

power and domination and live an ethical life, and came to consider what he referred

to as self-constitution (Ladkin, 2018). He saw that this required a freedom from such

power structures which started with their recognition (ibid: 310):

"Becoming a subject, that is, an individual who has won freedom, is critical to the ability to act ethically. Freedom is achieved through recognizing the institutional dynamics, normalizing forces, historical trajectories, and fields of power which limit one's choices in subtle and often unrecognised ways."

He then explores classical Greek philosophy to understand practices of the self, through which freedom could be expressed. Ladkin (ibid: 311) describes this as:

The writers from antiquity who Foucault studied offered practices in order to constitute the self. These were "operations on [one's] own body and soul, thoughts, conduct, and ways of being so as to transform [oneself] in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality" (Foucault, 1994a: 225).

There are some interesting parallels between what Foucault offers here and my research. The ability to be able to align with power dynamics that my research participants experienced was enabled through "operations on" their bodies through embodied practices, in order that they were able to experience different power dynamics in their relationships.

The first practice which Foucault addressed was care of the self. This isn't the modern notion of self-care, much written about in the popular press, but a notion of taking care, which includes an attitude of self-critique, which we could see as reflexivity. Ladkin described this as (ibid: 312-313):

"The Foucauldian scholar Richard Lynch identifies three levels of such critique essential to fostering the freedom at the heart of Foucault's ethics. Firstly, one must recognise and challenge the codes and norms which are unreflectively adopted. These are the invisible cages which hold expectations in place and which can limit manoeuvrability. Secondly, one must challenge one's own motivations, the ends and positions one seeks, and how one behaves towards others. Finally, one must challenge the networks of power relations which exist between vying interested agents (Lynch, 2016: 181). In deliberately unearthing these assumptions, "things begin to lose their self-evidence" (Foucault, 2000: 447). Losing a sense of self-evidence is vital, as doing so "opens up spaces of freedom on the frontier, when gestalt shifts become possible" (Lynch, 2016: 184). This is the space where the freedom necessary for ethics can arise."

This sense of critical reflection on the self and actions was embedded in my research process, through the reflexive nature of the research process, as mentioned in the findings chapter. Participants were asked to engage in reflective practice, and all took on some form of journaling practice. However, above and beyond this, our conversations were a space of reflexivity and realisation about the process of change that participants were undergoing. One participant, Frank, had conversations that parallel the process described above by Foucault, where he explored situations where he found himself experiencing a 'corporate line' which he didn't agree with, having historically 'toed the line' in such situations. Embodied practices seemed to bring a heightened awareness of the way in which power was operating in his firm, as well as an awareness of his discomfort with the position in which he found himself. Our conversations, and his journaling, provided some additional reflexive practices that gave him space to explore this and take care of his actions in the way in which Foucault describes.

The reflexive practices I would suggest played two important roles in this learning process. Firstly, participants expressed surprise, and enthusiasm when they realised, they had taken different actions. I am left wondering, if without such realisations, the motivation to continue practising would have been present. One participant described having a clear sense of the prize available to them, and excitement at seeing the changes they had made, but I wonder if that would have been visible without the reflexive conversations.

Secondly, the process of realisation was also a place for the critical reflection described by Foucault. Here they were able to reflect more on their intentional purpose in

action, which they were then seeking to translate into purposive responses in the moment. The cycling between the moments of reflexivity and in the moment purposive action took place throughout this research, and it's hard to 'measure' in any way the impact one had on the other. However, Foucault's work would suggest that this process played an important role in critically reflecting on the self. This critical reflection will have played a role to reduce the distance between purposeful aims and purposive action in the moment.

The second practice that Foucault describes is that of courageous speech, or *parrhesia*. Ladkin describes this as (ibid: 314):

> "Foucault explains that etymologically, *parrhesiazesthai* means to "say everything ... the *parrhesiastes* ... does not hide anything, but opens his heart and mind completely to other people through his discourse" (2001: 12). Importantly, through parrhesia the speaker emphasises freedom in the act of speaking because in speaking the truth, individuals puts themselves at risk (Foucault, 2008a: 65). It is this element of riskiness which emphasises the freedom of the speaker."

In this research participants did indeed begin to speak more openly their truths. They were able to find ways to align with power in the system to address difficult issues and in doing so reshaped the power dynamics that in the social field. They were experienced as more powerful and took stands on issues that they found to be significant and important. For instance, Claire expressed at times being unable to '*not speak her truth*' in certain situations.

One of the aspects focused on in this research was the commitments for each participant's leadership. These were stands that they wanted to take in their organisations, or for themselves, as an expression of their purpose. The first of

Foucault's practices of self-critical reflection enabled reflection on these

commitments, and the second involved embodying these commitments.

It's worth noting that all my participants were white, able-bodied, cis-gendered,

heterosexual, only one was female, they were middle-class, and they were in senior

positions of their organisations. Their ability to align with power will have been shaped

by their personal histories and our collective histories of racism, sexism, homophobia,

etc. in ways where it may have been significantly easier for them to do so than for

others. Their reference framing was not that of aligning with power at a societal level

and taking actions and speaking truths at that level, but in operating at the level of

their organisations, where they had status conferred by positions. There are therefore

limits to what this research shows, and a group of participants who were more diverse,

from lower in (or outside of) organisational hierarchies, and who had different

concerns would be interesting to explore. I will come back to this in my discussion of

the limitations of this research.

6.2.2 Power and boundaries

Power can be the focus of a conditioned tendency response and can play a role in

evoking it. If we are experiencing pressure in a particular moment this can be due to

social, structural or pressure applied by others in the environment, as others align with

the power in the context, or as we experience society's normalisations impacting us.

The conditioned tendency is our response under such pressure and will often be

directed at the source of power in the context. So, moving against can be an assertion

against authority figures, moving towards a "blind adoration" (Horney, 1950, p. 20) of such figures, and moving away can be a distancing from such authority.

In speaking their truths in ways which aligned with power in their contexts, it is interesting to note that participants did not appear to speak truths in ways which damaged their relationships. Given that power can evoke such a conditioned response, and that this can lead to conflict, such damage was a possibility. So, how was it that participants were able to do this without a pattern of such responses? This may connect to the aspect which emerged in this research as highly connected to power, that of boundaries.

In the research participants developed boundaries where they were able to have balanced attention on both themselves and others. For some history had left them with an internal focus, such as David with a sense of guilt leading to withdrawal, or an external focus, such as Claire or Edward, with senses of needing to please others or assert themselves with others respectively. The imbalance of boundaries is reflective of their conditioned tendencies (move away, move towards, and move against, respectively). The embodied practices enabled a more balanced attention on both themselves and others, with new moves that were then possible. This showed up, for example, in David's ability to give someone a message which did trigger that person's conditioned tendency (something he would have avoided doing historically) and in his ability to empathise with the other, rather than reacting to that individual's move against conditioned tendency response.

This led to a rebalancing of power relationships to being peer-to-peer, and the feedback that they had 'power with' others rather than 'power over' others. Balanced boundaries, therefore, enabled aligning with the power that was available in the relational context. This balance changed the experience of how that power was enacted for others, such that it was not experienced as an oppressive 'power over'.

Aligning with the power in the context and having power with others, also suggest a level of unattachment to the outcomes, with perhaps less of a need to push self and others to force a particular result. This unattachment is the third theme and I will continue with an exploration of that theme.

6.3 Unattachment

In my findings I explored how participants became more able to observe at the physical, emotional, and cognitive levels and showed less identification with those phenomena. They also described being less attached to outcomes, and overall, a movement towards less attachment to a fixed notion of self, with one participant stating: "the image of me is now an image, not me." I will begin by exploring this theme in relation to adult development theory before going on to explore it using Heidegger's conception of authenticity.

6.3.1 Adult development theory

The move towards less attachment to self, is a shift paralleled in descriptions from adult development theory, which suggest that adults also go through distinct and

common stages of ego-development. Constructive-development theory is a subset of

the field of adult development theory, which builds on Piaget's ideas that we develop

in response to the complexity of the world around us, reconstructing our

understandings on that basis (McCauley *et al.*, 2006). Whilst there are other theories

of adult development, it is these which have been most widely applied to leadership,

and thus provide an underpinning for this exploration (ibid).

McCauley et al. synthesise three models of development, Torbert's Stages of

Development, Kegan's orders of consciousness and Kohlberg's Stages of Cognitive

Moral Development, which they divide into three broad stages: Dependent,

Independent and Inter-dependent (McCauley et al. 2006: 637). Of most relevance here

is the inter-dependent stage which they define as (ibid 637-638):

> "The third adult order of development transcends and includes the
> Independent order, which means that the individual takes his or her unique
> identity itself as an object of reflection. Individuals operating from this order
> experience multiple possibilities of the self as a product both of interaction
> with others and self-assertion; instead of being a unique pre-existing and pre-
> determined entity, the self is now understood as an ongoing revisable design
> capable of taking any number of forms in response to life's contingencies. We
> will therefore call this the Inter-independent order for the way it makes the self
> at once independent (capable of being created by the person) and dependent
> for its form on life's contingencies. Thus the self is experienced as a work in
> progress. Self-exploration and on-going development of self and others is a
> central concern. Conflict is experienced as inevitable and an opportunity to
> engage in mutual transformation with others. The world is viewed less in terms
> of dichotomies or polarities and more in terms of dynamic, mutually-
> transforming systems."

The third stage does seem to include some of the aspects which are showing up for

research participants, for example the self as an object of reflection, with multiple

possibilities for self and something which is changeable and somewhat fluid. Torbert

(2004, p. 182) defines one of his later stages of development, alchemist, as a stage

where there is a "disintegration of ego-identity," which is a way perhaps of understanding a part of what took place in this research.

However, there are significant challenges with constructive-development theory as the evidence so far is fairly weak, largely because of the limits of the research that has been conducted. Some had small sample sizes, and one relied on comparing the effects on 360-degree feedback (Strang and Kuhnert, 2009), which has its own limitations. In addition, a critique of the wider leadership development field can also be made of adult development theory – that it has under-utilised longitudinal research designs, which is ironic for a field which focuses on development. Also, the research has almost all been completed in the US, so it lacks cross-cultural validity (McCauley et al. 2006: 648). It is not that the research has been done and the theory has been found wanting; it just has not yet been done.

Despite this, Day argues that (2014, p. 75): "constructive-developmental theory provides a unique contribution to our current understanding of leadership and represents a fruitful avenue for future leadership development research." So, it may be that this research shows a role for embodied practices in developing later orders of development. It's also worth noting that constructive-development theory does suggest that growth happens through facing greater complexity in the environment, in a way which is similar to the role that the context in my research played in highlighting areas for participants' development. However, I am tentative in situating my findings in this field because of the lack of evidence, so I will go on to explore Heidegger's notion of authenticity as an alternative means of making sense of the findings.

6.3.2 Authenticity

> "Man, sometimes it takes you a long time to sound like yourself."
> Miles Davis

An alternative way of situating this finding is through Heidegger's notion of

authenticity. For Heidegger authentic means:

> "The German word translated as "authentic" in *Being and Time* (the word
> *eigentlich*) comes from a stem meaning "own" (*eigen*) and carries with it a
> connotation of owning oneself, owning up to what one is becoming, and taking
> responsibility for being one's own. To "become who you are," as Heidegger
> sees it, is to identify with what really matters in the historical situation in which
> you find yourself and to take a resolute stand on pursuing those ends…
> Moreover, since the projects you can take over are all inherited from the
> historical culture into which you are thrown, to take a stand on what matters is
> always at the same time to be engaged in the shared undertakings (Heidegger
> calls it the *destiny*) of a larger community." (Guignon, 2004, p. 134)

There are three significant aspects to this definition. The first is that being authentic is

a *becoming* who you are, implying development or evolution of the self. The second is

that this involved an *identification with* what really matters in our context. And the

third is that this is always contextualised inside of a community or culture, i.e., it is not

an individualistic notion. I will go on to relate each of these ideas to my research.

6.3.2.1 Becoming

Participants, after engaging with the practices in this research, could dis-identify with

themselves as their thoughts, emotions, or sensations, having an enhanced ability to

observe and report these phenomena. Heidegger labels authenticity as *becoming* who

you are, which suggests a process rather than an entity. Wood explores process

metaphysics and leadership stating (2005, p. 1104):

> "The guiding idea is that 'process *is* the concrete reality of things' (Griffin, 1986,
> p. 6, original emphasis). Process metaphysics, in general, seeks to emphasise
> emergence and *becoming* rather than sheer existence or *being*…

> The key insight of process studies, therefore, is that the reality of something existing 'concretely in itself without transition' (Whitehead, 1967a, p. 49) is a matter of abstractive thinking and not a property of the underlying thing itself. Concrete things – for example, leaders, followers, and organisations – are surface effects. They are simple appearances we employ to give substantiality to our experience, but under whose supposed 'naturalness' the fundamentally processual nature of the real is neglected."

Here we see a processual perspective rather than entity perspective – we are engaged in a process of becoming, and the engagement with the world as entities is merely a mode of abstract thinking. This aspect of processual becoming is perhaps made real for participants due to their increased awareness of the changing nature of their thought processes, emotional processes, and bodily processes. As previously mentioned, participants reported bodily sensations, unprompted, and were able to see that habitual postures were uncomfortable. They reported a noticing of patterns of thought, including historic labelling such as being 'naughty' or 'too much'. They were able to experience their emotions differently and let go of reactions they experienced, for example, Brian stated:

> "And the trigger points that maybe would involve me losing my temper or withdrawing or retreating are fewer and fewer. I'm still human. I'm still human still. I still have that one point where just something just pushes you beyond that, but it's rarer and much more infrequent, significantly."

So, perhaps the increased awareness of the processual nature of their thoughts, emotions, and sensations gives them an experience of the processual nature of reality. In this experience they are observing their processes rather than identifying with them, which moves them away from a fixed notion of self. This develops their connection to the 'observer' – that part of themselves which can observe their thoughts, emotions, and sensations and is often seen as the transpersonal ground of awareness in spiritual and philosophic traditions. It is also seen in the therapeutic

modality, psychosynthesis, as the higher self and a connection to the collective

unconscious (Hardy, 1996, p. 30).

6.3.2.2 Identification

The identification with what really matters in our context is an interesting phrase. To

become who we are requires this identification according to Heidegger, but this seems

greater than just being concerned with something or achieving corporate goals, and

how does this identification with something outside ourselves, help us become who

we are? In this research process participants engaged with an exploration of their

commitments as leaders, which for Frank led to a rich conversation about his legacy

after retirement. For Claire, at the end of the research she articulated a desire to make

a difference to something, which others around her felt would not work. She stated:

> "It's not about our ambition to be able to send more tweets every day saying,
> we are amazing. It's not that. It is about the fact that we have got something
> that needs to go out in the world. And that's a completely different way of
> thinking about it. And, I mean, I don't know because everybody has said to me
> that it's not gonna work, but I just have a feeling that it will. It might take a year
> to build the case. But I just-- I think there'll be ways of doing it."

Embodied practices enabled participants to move away from taking habitual purposive

actions in practical coping which, at times, caused breakdowns within their context,

towards being able to take new and different purposive actions in practical coping.

These new actions were more aligned to the achievement of their purposes, in other

words, their commitments as leaders. In this way they moved from an embodiment

which was unable to achieve a purpose to one which embodied that purpose through

consistent purposive actions. If personalities are in fact habitual embodied practices,

then this new embodiment is a new expression of themselves – they are literally an

embodiment of their purposes. This may be the identification that Heidegger suggests in his definition of authenticity.

6.3.2.3 Context or community

The context was the space where the commitments as leaders showed up – it was always in service of the wider community and what could be achieved. It was also this context which created the breakdowns which showed participants where their practical coping was unable to succeed – a conditioned tendency response could achieve purposive aims of creating safety but was at times unable to move forward a purposeful action in this community. As an example, For the people pleaser in a community of celebrities and millionaires, his conditioned tendency blocked him from acting and achieving results in that community and context.

In summary, engaging in the embodied practices does seem to have enabled a shift for participants into a more processual experience of themselves. They seem to have identified with something which mattered to them and were able to embody the capacity to realise their commitments in their context. Perhaps this shift represents a later order of development, as constructive-development theory would suggest, but I suspect that new contexts and new commitments will raise new challenges and the need for the embodiment of different purposive responses in practical coping.

The changes in embodied practices, towards ones which embody a purpose (as previously described) do represent a change in the way participants express themselves and experience themselves in the world. Rather than moving from one fixed notion of self to another fixed notion, the participants do seem to have

developed a more fluid understanding of themselves. Of course, it is entirely possible

that this will now rigidify after the research completion, and that is an area where

further longitudinal research would be valuable, however it is still notable that

participants reported that embodied practices enabled this shift.

6.4 So, what for leadership?

For the research participants this journey of learning was one of learning to embody a

purpose in a complex context. Learning to do this was in many ways a journey of

letting go of inhibitions driven by conditioned tendency responses to pressures in their

context, so that their purposive actions in practical coping enabled the realisation of

their purpose. What does this mean for leadership and its development?

Firstly, the importance of context comes through strongly in my research. I started

with an understanding of leadership that gave importance to the context and I used a

methodology which takes account of that context. It is therefore perhaps unsurprising

that I find context to be important in leadership. However, what may be significant in

this research is the role that context plays in the findings and in leadership more

generally. The context here played a role in highlighting development needs in relation

to the research participants' purpose. For participants to achieve their intended

outcomes inside of their contexts required the ability to take purposive actions which

were aligned with their purpose. The places where the context triggered their

conditioned tendencies were places where the participants were unable to take such

actions. In the relationship between context and purpose, the individual development

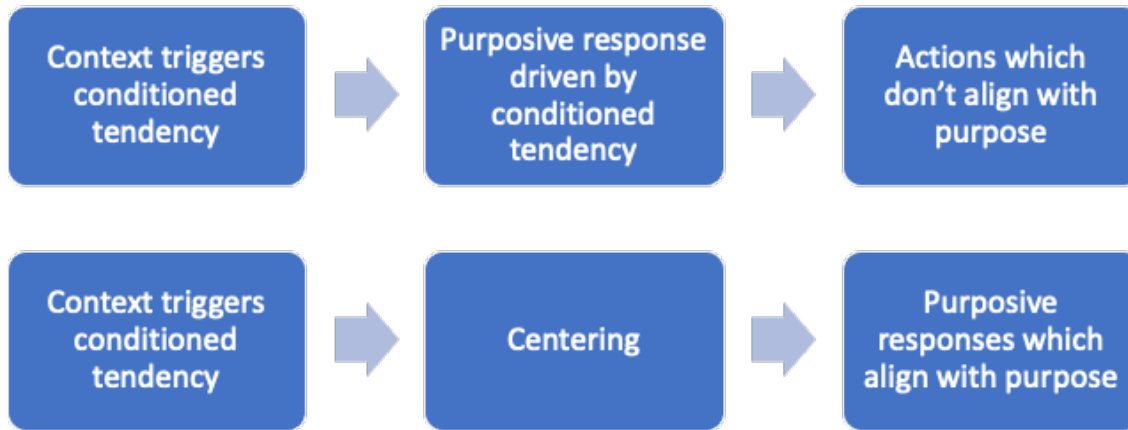needs arose as blockages to skilful performance in the moment.

Figure 9: Relationship to the context in leadership development

In addition, the research suggests that power is a relational phenomenon in the

contextual field, and it is by attuning to this field and aligning with power that one can

be perceived as more powerful. This is not to say that there are no aspects of power

which are external – being put into a higher position in the hierarchy or winning a

lottery jackpot could well have increased their capital in the field and changed the

power dynamics. What is key, is that in this research this didn't happen, and yet power

dynamics were consistently reshaped. This points to Foucault's conceptualisation of

power, and for leadership development gives a new way of thinking about power,

which is more aligned to the recent literature on complexity in organisations (e.g.,

(Stacey, Griffin and Shaw, 2000; Stacey, 2003; Varney, 2021).

This research also points to a process of emotional learning which is significant in

leadership development. The fact that experience and skills may not be brought to

bear in a situation, because of purposive responses in practical coping, suggests that

the development of skills and knowledge is insufficient for leadership. There could

always be situations which arise, in which the individual is unable to enact those skills

and that knowledge effectively. This points to a process of embodied and emotional

learning, where engaging in embodied practices to enabled them to center in the face

of a conditioned tendency so that their knowledge and skills can be enacted. However,

there is also an important role for a reflexive process of noticing changes, to ensure

motivation for the change, and to ensure that the purposes of leadership are

considered so that purposive actions and thoughtful purposes align.

Returning to a quote from Carroll et al. at the start of this dissertation, regarding a

practice perspective on leadership (2008, p. 367):

> "A practice perspective in contrast reminds us that the overwhelming majority of action takes place 'on the hoof' (Chia & Holt, 2006: 643), involves 'skilled, improvised in-situ coping' (Chia, 2004: 33) and 'takes place unreflectively, on-the-spot and in the twinkle-of-an-eye' (Chia & MacKay, 2007: 238). The radical nature of a practice perspective invites us into what de Certeau (1984) terms 'the everyday' and Whittington (1996: 734) terms 'the unheroic work of ordinary [strategic] practitioners in their day-to-day routines'."

This 'on the hoof' improvisation described by Carroll et al., if it to be skilful, requires

the ability to enact skills in the moment, and the emotional learning described above

may be an important component in developing such skilful leadership.

Adult development theory suggests that later levels of development are useful for

leadership, especially in more complex contexts. Whilst the research in this field is

lacking, one of the areas in which it is lacking is understanding what may enable these

developmental transitions between levels. This research tentatively suggests that

embodied practices may play a valuable role in enabling these transitions, due to the

increased awareness of the processual nature of the mind, body, and emotions, and

leaving the individual in increased contact with a transpersonal ground of awareness,

the 'observer'.

6.5 A reflexive researcher

> "What is real is almost always, to begin with, hidden, and does not want to be
> understood by the part of our mind that mistakenly thinks it knows what is
> happening. What is precious inside us does not care to be known by the mind
> in ways that diminish its presence."
>
> From *Hiding,* by David Whyte (2015)

Research participants often struggled to put their experiences into words. The

essences of what they were experiencing were communicated in language, gestures,

metaphors, postures, welcomes, goodbyes, and emotions. As researcher I then sat

with these concepts which did their best to elude language and I mirrored the

participants' process when trying to analyse, make sense of, and write up this

research. It often felt like the 'real' of this research did not want to be understood, as

articulated by Whyte above, or perhaps it just did not want to be understood lightly.

I have been humbled by the openness and willingness of my research participants and

have sought to do justice to that in writing up this research. I have come to an

understanding of it but recognise that it will show itself anew many times as I move

forward with my work.

In the early days of this research my focus was on being an action researcher, rather than a coach or developer. It's a subtle difference – in both we are aiming for transformation and change, but as a researcher my role was to sit back and allow the embodied practices to inform participants, rather than perhaps chasing after their development more actively as I might have done as their coach. Holding myself in this role evoked anxiety at times: *"What if nothing happens? Will I have a PhD at the end?"* And, holding myself back has transformed my practice. I deeply realise that it is not about me as the practitioner and what I do, but it is about the practices and how they inform and shape my clients. I play a role to assist with practices and in the reflexive conversation of noticing, but I don't have to *do* something – the practices take care of that, which is a significant learning from this research. I have settled as a practitioner, efforting less in my work, and holding a space for practice and noticing. I realise that as participants have been able to let go of their historic narratives and take new actions, so have I. An historic narrative from my childhood in a family of teachers, of the essentiality of hard work, effort, gravity, and getting it right, has softened, and in its place, in the context of my client work, there are new possibilities and more levity in my practice.

Action research, I now realise, has very little that is absolute as a methodology. The school of methodologies in some ways resembles more a set of enacted values and principles in research, and methodological choices are wide and varied – the question is whether you can justify your choices inside of the values and principles of the methodology.

I worked with a pilot group to test my methods and along the way I realised that I was so grateful for their participation that I wasn't clear enough about what I needed from them. This was valuable learning as I was able to be clearer with my research group that *they* were doing an inquiry, rather than getting some free development (to exaggerate for effect). The choices that I then made, were from the starting point that participants were engaging in their own first-person inquiries, and how to do that in a way which was sensitive to their contexts.

In working with the group, I made compromises and, at times, questioned whether they were valid. The research group did not meet as a group in every research cycle, for the pragmatic reasons of calendar management; as it was there was significant rescheduling and reorganisation with the PAs of the various participants. This limited the amount of shared meaning making which took place between group members, which Bradbury and Reason (Bradbury and Reason, 2001) would argue is important for action research. However, it did increase the amount of one-to-one time I had with each participant to explore their experience of the practices and how this was informing their leadership. It also made the research pragmatically possible, and pragmatism is highly valued in action research (ibid). Engaging in further workshops would have added some value, but as research participants were in different contexts and were less interested in the wider question, the structure used did support them in carrying out their own inquiries.

Making sense of the data collected involved a careful balance between representing the participants' voices and at the same time making meaning and interpreting from

the learning they shared. I have tried to give an empathetic treatment of the data as

described below (Larkin, Watts and Clifton, 2006, p. 108).

> "In this Heideggerian sense, the central goal of phenomenology is to approach
> and deal with any object of our attention in just such a way that it is allowed
> maximal opportunity to show itself 'as itself'. Another way of putting this is that
> the phenomenologist aims to reveal any subject-matter on its own terms (ie,
> not according to the imposition of any preconceived set of assumptions and
> expectations). It is, nonetheless, inevitable that we will fall short of this target,
> for being a 'person-in-context' (and hence an observer, indelibly situated within
> the meaningful world that we observe) we can never fully escape the
> 'preconceptions' that our world brings with it. But this should not discourage us
> from making the attempt. If the empathetic treatment of our subject-matter is
> central to our approach, and we are prepared to adjust our ideas and
> assumptions in response to the promptings of that subject-matter, then we are
> on the way to developing a Heideggerian phenomenology. The important point
> is that our success as phenomenologists will not ultimately be dependent upon
> our revealing the 'pure' experience of a participant; it will be dependent upon
> our being prepared to do the most sensitive and responsive job we can, given
> our inherent epistemological and methodological limitations."

As noted by Larkin et al above, giving the pure experience of the participant is

impossible, but through repeated returns to the core data, I have aimed to give an

account which is sensitive and responsive, and which honours their openness and

willingness to trust in me as the researcher.

At the end of the process, I now see that a final workshop, not to learn any new

practices or engage in new processes, but to share together and engage in a process of

shared meaning making would have been helpful for the research process, and I can

feel content that the process used served participants in their individual inquiries.

6.6 Limitations and areas for future research

As noted earlier the group that I chose to engage for this research were senior leaders who had high degrees of social privilege, in terms of race, sexuality, levels of ability, etc. and had senior positions in their organisational contexts. This will inevitably have impacted their ability to align themselves with power during the research process, and so this needs to be considered when understanding the research findings. Working with a group of different characteristics is an area for future study, and such a group may be one which is more interested to engage with the wider research question and able to engage in more workshops, enabling greater cross-group shared meaning making.

The group was also a self-selecting one. That is, they arrived into the research open and curious about themselves and about embodied practices. They came through my network of clients and colleagues, and in general were individuals who already had some interest in their development. All except one, had done several development programmes, many had previously been coached, and two were in ongoing counselling or psychotherapeutic relationships. Whilst being a group of senior leaders in organisations, they all had an interest in development, which is perhaps above average in my experience. That said, in recent years, the level of interest at senior levels has increased, in my experience, speeded along by issues such as Black Lives Matter and the Covid pandemic.

In addition, the group all had significant career experience. This may have impacted their experience of learning, as I postulate, they were able to apply their existing

expertise in the moment, when they stepped out of their conditioned tendency response. Working with a group with lower experience levels would be an interesting contrast to this research and may highlight new or similar patterns.

While this research took place over the duration of almost a year, development is a process which benefits from longitudinal studies, and further work over longer time periods would also be highly valuable. This would be especially true, as noted above, to understand how the sense of self evolved over a longer period of time, and whether it rigidified in any way. In addition, it should be noted, that this study has not sought universal rules or 'truths', and as a small-scale study is heavily influenced by the individuals and their contexts which came into the research. Whilst there were a range of contexts present, more research would help to strengthen the wider applicability themes developed here.

Action research as a methodology also has limitations. I made compromises to do this research pragmatically with this group. Doing a more purist version of action research with senior leaders feels to me currently out of reach as a possibility. I'm not sure I can argue that my use of the methodology was 'right' in any clear sense of that word, but I think it was perhaps right for this research group. Given the constraints of working at this level, it may need to be complemented by other approaches in future, perhaps using mixed methodologies to deepen our understanding.

Finally, whilst I can make connections between my findings and adult development theory, the lack of research in that field leaves those connections tentative. Research which brings together embodied practices and adult development theory is pointed to

as a fruitful area of exploration by my study, and this would be an area for further study.

6.7 Conclusions and contribution of this inquiry

There are three main areas I have focused on in the findings.

A leader can have a depth of experience, an ability to understand the whole picture of a situation, and still be limited in their ability to act by their conditioned tendency. Embodied practices of centering in response to a conditioned tendency, represent a process of development of emotional skill. This can enable a leader to bring to bear their experience and understanding to situations, allowing the situation to appear as ready-to-hand for the individual and this learning may not even be noticed in the moment.

Being able to feel more, countering the conditioned tendency, also allows a greater ability to align oneself in harmony with the power in the system. This can result in an assessment of greater power by others, and if done with balanced boundaries can be generative; experienced as a 'power with' rather than 'power over'.

Finally, the engagement in embodied practices, builds the capacity to observe one's thoughts, emotions, and sensations, in a way which builds our connection to 'the observer', which can be understood in transpersonal terms, and may also be part of what enables us to harmonise with the context we are occupying. This finding

connects to the realm of metaphysics, and I am duly cautious about what claims I wish to make here about what is essentially mystery. I note that many spiritual and philosophic traditions point to this dissolution of a fixed sense of self as 'truth', or enlightenment, and that it also appears in the later stages of adult development theory. It was also pointed to by Weber and Merleau-Ponty, as I described when reviewing the literature. However, I am not seeking to claim that research participants achieved enlightenment in this research, rather that some aspects of what these traditions report was observed in participants, in relation to their contexts, towards the end of the research process.

In addition, a contribution of this research is also to understand how someone embedded in a context, is in relationship with that context and their purpose, in way which creates breakdowns for them, as the context triggers their conditioned tendency. It is by attending to these breakdowns, engaging in embodied practices, that someone can center in the face of their conditioned tendency and take purposive actions in the moment which are aligned with their purpose, and in so doing they can embody their purpose. This may be the way in which greater complexity in the context leads to movement in the levels of adult development theory.

6.7.1 Conclusions about the process

As well as the output of his inquiry there was also a process of development through a facilitatory space in which we engaged in embodied practices and a reflexive dialogue of noticing what took place. As I noted in chapter 5, the nature of this process was one in which the personal and the organisational merged – embodied awareness brought

the full human being with all the facets of their lives included. I noted that for some this may be a taboo, given the dualism between work and life which exists in some parts of our culture.

This dualism and separation is, in my view, at the heart of managerial practices which dehumanise, discriminate and diminish others and then argue that 'it's not personal; it's just business'. It may also be at the root of our willingness to trash our planet in the pursuit of operational efficiency and endless growth, driven by a rational and reductionist mindset. This mindset is well illustrated by a quote from the New York Times on January 30th, 1910 (Cook, 2017):

> "An eight-pound baby is worth, at birth, $362 a pound… That is a child's value as a potential wealth-producer. If he lives out the normal term of years, he can produce $2900 more wealth than it costs to rear him and maintain him as an adult."

This is after all, the logical end point of measuring, quantifying, and rationalising everything, and perhaps we maintain such a separation between work and home, not to keep emotions out of work but to keep such harmful rationalisations out of our homes. However, this may not serve us at work, and may result in cutting off from our feeling, sensual self and the intelligence and skill which comes with it.

Perhaps, whilst being a taboo, such a process of embodied learning is important not just for skilful performance in leadership, but also for more human and humane leadership in our organisations and for our world. So, whilst some may see such the personal nature of this approach as a limitation, I argue that it may be a strength.

Cunliffe (Cunliffe, 2002) argues for the importance of reflexive dialogical practice in management education, as a way of developing more critical and responsive practitioners. This research has shown the value of such a reflexive dialogue as an exploration of how embodied practices change the way in which we experience our sensations, our emotions and our thoughts as we engage in embodied practices. Whilst at one level these conversations served the purpose of collecting data for this research, they also became a practice in and of themselves.

The creation of a facilitatory space in which leaders can engage with embodied and reflexive practices may well be an important contribution to the development of leaders who can respond effectively and humanely in the 'on the hoof' practical coping of leadership. The on the hoof nature of leadership, as explored in this research, is such that deeper reflection on action may not occur in the ongoing stream of activity. Theoretical reflection in models and strategies may have limited value, due to the challenge of putting these models into action in the moment, as shown here. A combination of embodied practices which enable on the hoof action aligned with purpose, along with reflexive practice to explore more deeply our purposes may enable the development of more effective leadership and is notably similar to the response to a total breakdown (obstinacy) described by Heidegger and explored in chapter 2. So perhaps leadership development, as explored here, could be seen as the reflexive exploration of the gap between purposive actions in a context and the deeper underlying purpose and concerns of the individual in that context and developing embodied practices to help to close that gap.

Closing:

How To ~~Belong~~ Be Alone

It all begins with knowing

nothing lasts forever,

so you might as well start packing now.

In the meantime,

practice being alive.

There will be a party

where you'll feel like

nobody's paying you attention.

And there will be a party

where attention's all you'll get.

What you need to do

is to remember

to talk to yourself

between these parties.

And,

again,

there will be a day,

— a decade —

where you won't

fit in with your body

even though you're in

the only body you're in.

You need to control

your habit of forgetting

to breathe.

Remember when you were younger

and you practiced kissing on your arm?

You were on to something then.

Sometimes harm knows its own healing

Comfort knows its own intelligence.

Kindness too.

It needs no reason.

There is a you

telling you another story of you.

Listen to her.

Where do you feel

anxiety in your body?

The chest? The fist? The dream before waking?

The head that feels like it's at the top of the swing

or the clutch of gut like falling

& falling & falling and falling

It knows something: you're dying.

Try to stay alive.

For now, touch yourself.

I'm serious.

Touch your

self.

Take your hand

and place your hand

some place

upon your body.

And listen

to the community of madness

that

you are.

You are

such an

interesting conversation.

You belong

here.

Pádraig Ó Tuama (2020)

Appendix A:

Blank data analysis grid

	Diagnostic evidence	Practice evidence	Evidence of impact/change	Insights
Researcher				
Individual				
Group				
Feedback from others				

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