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An Exploration of the Meaning of Emotion in Organisational Contexts

ANNETTE CLANCY
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Acknowledgements

Vladimir: That passed the time.

Estragon: It would have passed in any case.

Vladimir: Yes, but not so rapidly.

Samuel Beckett, Waiting for Godot

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1 Abstract

This study is an exploration of the meaning of emotion in organisational contexts. Drawing on the literature available on organising and emotion it seeks to answer the following question:

What is the meaning of emotion in organisational contexts?

- What behaviours are characterised as emotional?

- What are the rules that guide emotional behaviours in organisations?

- What purpose does emotional behaviour serve in organisational contexts?

The research uses a grounded theory approach to data generation that includes research interviews, reflexive practice on the part of the researcher and informal methodology.
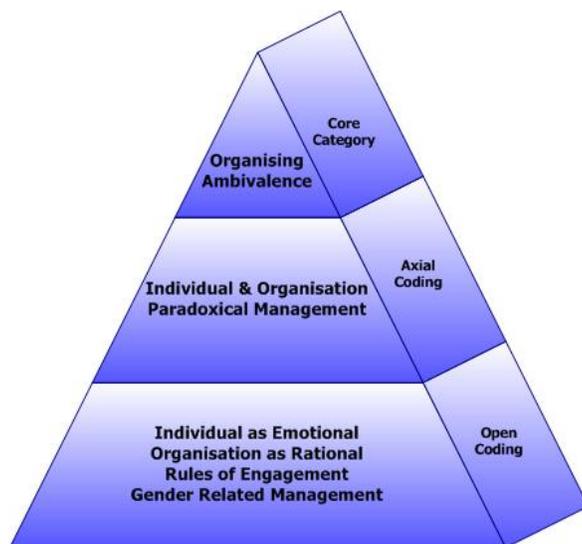
The data generated the following categories (*see figure 1*). The core category was that of "Organising Ambivalence".

Figure 1   Research Categories

The theory emerging from the data suggests that there are three different contexts in which emotion has meaning in organisational life: Socially Modified, Socially Accepted and Socially Excluded.

The study concludes with a discussion of the researcher's organisation of her own ambivalence, impact of the process on work practice and suggestions for further research.

2   Introduction & Rationale

This chapter outlines the rationale for undertaking this particular subject of research and locates the researcher within the various communities of interest relevant to the research process.   It also describes the reflexive practice engaged in by the researcher that determined the presentation of the research material.

2.1   Positions as Researcher

> "Organizational procedures and processes are shaped,
> negotiated, rejected, reformed, fought over or celebrated,
> because of feelings." (Fineman, 2003, p.1).

This Masters course has afforded an opportunity for me to review my work practice and to make some decisions about where I want to position myself in the professional landscape of consultancy.   One of the primary decisions I made in 2003 was to end my psychotherapy practice and find ways of integrating the learning and knowledge gained through that work in group and organisational contexts.

While the gaps between my therapeutic orientation (psychodynamic and humanistic) and my theoretical orientation as a student (social constructionist and systemic) originally seemed significant, I have found ways of looking at the similarities in approaches and orientations which have helped me take a coherent approach to my professional practice. I have found myself part of a number of distinct communities at times with the attendant privileging that each requires in differing contexts.

My practice as a management consultant has been informed by colleagues and clients particularly in assignments that have been languaged as "emotional" and "difficult". I subscribe to Egan's aspiration to work as a systemic practitioner from a power sensitive position (Egan, 1992, p.108) and have approached this assignment in a similar manner.

My work as a psychotherapist has also placed me within a community of practitioners that holds specific views on the value and placing of emotion and its languaging. The value that is attributed to emotion and its visibility is one that seemed incongruous at times with the values held by business practitioners. I have utilised the insights of Oliver and Brittain (2001) particularly as to how actions can be taken "with grace and morality" (p.18). My positioning within the learning environment of an academic course has afforded the opportunity of new ways of thinking and speaking about experience while exploring methodologies in practice.

I have found that challenge to familiar ways of seeing refreshing – in particular my assumptions that emotion is invisible in organisational contexts. As I moved through the interview process I became more curious about the ways in which emotion *is* visible and valued as distinct from assuming that it is not. My participation in my consultation group, made up of class colleagues, was a significant source of ongoing learning and reflexivity around this and other emergent stories.

Research Participant Reflections

"I can certainly attempt a perspective from a very profit motivated organisation!"

Research Participant 3 in email correspondence with the researcher

In inviting people into these conversations I have had to be aware of a range of relationships that inform and contribute to the research process. Two of the research participants were known to me personally and one of those on a professional

basis also. Two others were selected via a leadership network[1] that I am a participant in. I have a different relationship with each and their willingness to participate was informed by the fact that they had some contact with me prior to the invitation being extended, as well as their interest in the topic of research. Moving between positions of friend, colleague, collaborator, co-journeyperson etc. was informative, challenging and a significant part of the learning experience.

As these differing and distinct conversations unfolded I learned about my own curiosity, person positioning, relationship to the research process and topic, and together we generated new insights that some of the participants told me had been useful in their working and personal lives.

2.2   Paradoxes and Process

This moving between person positions and my curiosity about the person and profession of the researcher echoed a number of other paradoxes that have been characteristic of the research process; e.g. my hypotheses about the visibility or not of emotion in organisational life; the perceived split between what is rational and emotional; being "personal" as distinct from "professional" and the affordances and constraints of each.

In considering the dilemmas posed by the paradoxes I was challenged to think about whether this research document would be written in the first or third person.   The paralleling of the topic of research with my reflexive practice and the emergent data from

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[1] www.commonpurpose.ie

research participants was a significant factor in shaping how I embarked on this process and I made a decision to reflect "out loud" in the body of this document by placing some of that reflexive process in text boxes entitled "Reflexive Moments" throughout. (*See right*). They are colour coded blue for ease of reference.

Further consideration of the idea of paradoxes led me to wonder about the differences between the range of research data - the balance awarded to those who have a more "public" profile (i.e. published authors and respected theoreticians etc.) and those who are more "private" (research participants' stories of organisational life drawn from a vocational perspective). In reviewing the interview data I was curious about how many stories were told that elucidated the theoretical positions presented through the literature review.

(*on qualitative researchers*) "They are unafraid to draw on their own experiences when analyzing materials because they realise that these become the foundations for making comparisons and discovering properties and dimensions"

(Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p.5).

Grounded Theory appeared to offer a framework to present different kinds of data (content) and it was important that the document (context) was congruent in facilitating that process.

Quotes from research participants are therefore integrated into the body of the document and are also captured in text boxes entitled "Research Participant Reflections". They are colour coded red for ease of reference.

2.3   Rationale

Most of my work as a psychotherapist is in the arena of emotion, languaged in a psychodynamic framework as conscious, unconscious, projected, experienced, interpreted etc. Much of my work as a consultant concerns emotion and how it manifests itself in organisational settings through such behaviour as absenteeism, anger, and various kinds of resistances to change. In one arena I have felt very equipped and comfortable to talk about and work with emotion, in the second I have felt deskilled and awkward. This difference in contexts led me to wonder about how emotion is spoken about (or not) in organisational contexts and how social constructionism addresses the topic and makes meaning of it. There is often an assumption that emotion rests within us each individually and, as such, is personal as distinct from professional. I am curious to explore the various ways in which managers and consultants "make sense" of emotional behaviour in this context.

This study is an attempt to explore the realm of emotions in organisational contexts. I am interested in looking at the kinds of behaviours that are characterised as "emotional", the function of emotional behaviour in organisations, the system of rules by which certain emotional behaviours are welcome whilst others not, and the way in which people in organisational settings generate emotion as a useful way of making sense of those contexts.

3   Context

This chapter outlines the wider contexts for the research project.

3.1   Overview

> "The average big company used twelve of the twenty-five most common management tools in 1993; in 1994 they used thirteen; they expect to use fourteen tools in 1995. Seventy two per cent of managers believe that companies who use the right tools are more likely to succeed; 70 per cent say that the tools promise more than they deliver." (A survey of 787 companies around the world by Bain & Company, April 1995 in Micklethwait & Wooldridge, 1996, p.1).

New management trends appear with regularity promising the secret to leadership, management and organisational success.

> "The three most popular public-sector fads – downsizing, re-engineering and total quality management are, on many points of substance, mutually incompatible. Downsizing argues that workers are expendable; TQM[2] sees them as an invaluable resource. Re-engineering depends on ripping up the organisation and starting again; TQM is a doctrine of continuous, incremental improvement" (Micklethwait and Wooldridge, 1996, p.330).

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[2] Total Quality Management

In 1999 the Washington Post reported that 50,000 new titles are published each year in America with over 400,000 journals published annually around the world (Achenbach, 1999). In 2003 there were 2,460 new business management and economics books published in Ireland and the UK[3]. Add this to the emergence of publishing on the Internet and other formats for information and there are endless repositories of knowledge about what constitutes good management and how it might be done better.

> "Building a business, winning an election, reforming social security, changing schools, saving the environment: all are organizing activities, and in each a swarm of experts promotes the claims of specialized disciplines to supply indispensable secrets of success." (Albrow, 1997, p.1).

The sub text behind all great marketing is that we are imperfect and the particular product being marketed can resolve that imperfection. One arena that has proved challenging for organisations to embrace has been that of emotion, and management theorists have begun to turn their attention to this aspect of organisational life in the last ten years.

> "The idea that civilization rests on the ability to control our feelings…has been the "grand narrative" implicit in scholarly accounts of emotion…..Once, the story goes, people experienced the world with an almost childlike immediacy. Their emotions were strong, spontaneous, and fairly uncomplicated. But the rise of complex economies, state bureaucracies, and intellectual expertise intervened. People grew more self-conscious about what they felt, and even

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[3] Source: Book Data, Whitaker via Hodges Figgis, Dublin

more so about how they expressed it." (McLemee, 2003,

p.A14).

As we move from a mechanistic view of organisation that values the production of "objects" to one that sees intellectual and human capital as the currency of commerce (Covey, 1990) the investment in that capital takes on a more complex form.

"(*managers*) played .. vital roles in turning factories into

'smoothly running machines' (Micklethwait and Wooldridge,

on Frederick Taylor and scientific management 1996, p.74).

Today leadership, people management, relationship building etc. have become some of the primary criteria by which managers are evaluated and rewarded. Creating machines to produce more products is reasonably different from capacity building a workforce to increase productivity – hence the development of management theories; trends and interventions have become more sophisticated and more interested in our "personal" selves.

"We began to realize that if we wanted to change the

situation, we first had to change ourselves. And to change

ourselves effectively, we had to change our perceptions."

(Covey, 1990, p.18).

In 2001 Amárach Consulting carried out the first detailed study of quality of life in Ireland. The research was revisited and updated in 2003 providing interesting data on some of the key contributors to emotional well being on a national level. Four variables were identified that contribute significantly to peoples' perceived quality of life; Emotional, Family, Physical and Financial.

One of the key findings of the research was that emotional well being (happiness) was the largest contributing factor (33%) towards how Irish people felt about their quality of life.

> "it is encouraging to note that – despite the economic
> uncertainty since the first survey in 2001 – the Irish people
> have become more content with their quality of life…."
> (Diageo, 2003, p.4).

The issue of quality of life in organisational contexts has also been addressed by the Irish Government. In 1999 the then Minister for Labour, Trade and Consumer Affairs established a Task Force on the Prevention of Workplace Bullying. The terms of reference for the Task Force were to:

> "Identify the size of the problem and the sectors most at risk
> Develop practical programmes and strategies to prevent
> workplace bullying
> Produce a co-ordinated response from State Agencies and to
> report to the Minister."
> (Health and Safety Authority, Task Force Report, 2001, p.vi).

The Task Force recommendations led to the publication of a code of practice on the prevention of workplace bullying which came into practice in Ireland in March 2002. The definition of workplace bullying as described by the Task Force, and enshrined in legislation is:

"Repeated inappropriate behaviour, direct or indirect, whether verbal, physical or otherwise, conducted by one or more persons against another or others, at the place of work and/or in the course of employment, which could reasonably be regarded as undermining the individual's right to dignity at work. An isolated incident of the behaviour described in this definition may be an affront to dignity at work but as a once off incident is not considered to be bullying."

(Health and Safety Authority, Code of Practice on the Prevention of Workplace Bullying, p.4).

This legislation concerns itself with the physical and psychological welfare of employees in the work environment and has led to the adoption of workplace bullying procedures and dignity at work processes by many organisations. The issue of workplace stress is referenced in particular and different kinds of stress evident behaviours are named:

"Tearfulness, impulsiveness and out-of-character behaviour

Aggressive and irritable without apparent cause

Poor levels of concentration and focus

A variety of illness/conditions not medically explained"

The impact on organisational life is described as

"High absenteeism and staff turnover

Interdepartmental conflict

General dissatisfaction, low morale and poor work performance

Pervasive negativity

Sabotage"

(Code of Practice on the Prevention of Workplace Bullying, 2002, p.3).

Much of these behaviours are languaged as emotional concepts and have contributed in some way to (a) acknowledging that being at work can be a stressful experience and that work can generate stress and (b) creating structures for addressing "bad" behaviour in the workplace with a view to impacting on a better quality of life for all who work there.

4 Literature review

This chapter reviews the literature on social constructionism, systemic thinking, emotion and organisation as it relates to the research topic.

4.1 Social Constructionism and Systemic Thinking

This dissertation is created within and informed by social constructionism and systemic thinking. The central tenets of social constructionism according to Burr (1995) (*referencing Gergen, 1985*) are

1. "A critical stance towards taken for granted knowledge

2. Historical and cultural specificity

3. Knowledge is sustained by social processes

4. Knowledge and social action go together" (pp.3 – 5)

Social Constructionists concern themselves with how reality is made through language and specific attention is paid to how we language our stories. Particular emphasis is placed on "text" and acting in and out of particular "grammars". Meaning is constructed between people and in conversation.

> "Thus, the center of gravity, so to speak of what we talk of
> as our thinking is not deep within us at the center of our
> being, but at its boundaries. Where, the way in which we
> are a response addresser of others (actual or imagined)

'shapes' how we 'answer' for our own sense of our own position in our relations to those others" (Shotter, 1994, p.7).

Nightingale and Cromby offer another view of the Social constructionist approach

"Danzinger (1997) describes two strands of social constructionism psychology: a 'dark' version, which attends to issues of power and subjectivity and is rooted in the work of Foucault; and a 'light' version which attends to the minutiae of discourse and social processes and descends from speech act theory, ethnomethodology and deconstructionism."

(Nightingale & Cromby, 1999, p.3).

The centrality of language and text as meaning-making events and the understanding that

"social meanings are context dependent"

(Cronen, Johnson, Lannamann, 1999, p.1).

invites us to view the conversation "act" as the primary way of being in, and interpreting, the world.   Coordinating the way in which we manage that meaning cannot be done in isolation according to Pearce (1999) and we are

"always and necessarily coordinating the way in which we manage our meanings with other people." (Pearce, 1999, p.7).

Systemic approaches to thinking and organising emerged from within the family therapy school of psychotherapy and general systems theory. The work of the Milan team from the late 60s onwards was significant in orientating family therapy away from psychodynamic approaches and towards a systemic one (Kraemer in Safvestad Nolan and Nolan (Eds), 2002). Influenced by the work of Bateson, particularly *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (1972), the team began to see systems as evolving rather than fixed. Bateson was one of the founders of Cybernetics - a system that emphasised patterns of communication particularly in closed loops and networks leading to self-regulation, feedback and self-organisation.

The Milan Team created a number of tools for generating new approaches to feedback mechanisms including hypothesizing, circularity and neutrality (Selvini et al 1980) and an assumption that the therapist is part of the pattern of behaviour being observed (i.e. a second order cybernetic perspective).

> "..the structure of the family resides in the relationships
> among the members of the family, not in the attributes of
> each member"
> (Cronen & Pearce in Campbell & Draper (Eds) 1985, p.70).

This move, away from a dualistic approach of viewing knowledge as separate from those who generate it and towards the interconnectedness of both, highlighted the postmodernist view that all knowledge is emergent and contextually situated.

General systems theory developed in the late 50s as a response to the reductionism of the mechanistic view.

> "it was hoped that it would provide a general science of pattern and organisation which could unify differing ideas within general theoretical concepts."
>
> (Evans & Kearney, 1996, p.14).

The theory aims to

> "provide a working model for conceptualising phenomena which do not lend themselves to explanation by the mechanistic reductionism of classical science."
>
> (Walrond-Skinner, 1976 in Evans & Kearney, 1996, p.14).

The emergence of postmodernist thought, as a response/reaction to modernism, in the late twentieth century added another element to the move away from dualistic thinking.

> "The project of modernity formulated in the 18th century by the philosophers of the Enlightenment consisted in their efforts to develop objective science, universal morality and law, and autonomous art according to their inner logic"
>
> (Habermas in Foster (Ed), 1985, p.9).

Post modernism is based on the belief that there are no single truths about the world – each question has many possible answers, each of which are valid in their own right.

"…In postmodernist allegories Truth has been replaced by the twins 'Relativity' and 'Legitimation'." (Burgin, 1986, p.49).

Oliver & Brittain (2001) offer a helpful map of the differences between a modernist and postmodernist approach to knowledge generation.

Modernism	Post Modernism
Fixed rule language game	Emergent rule language game
Metaphor for organisation is machine	Metaphor for organisation is network of conversations
Emphasis on data acquisition and retrieval "the more you have the more you know"	Emphasis on narrative accounts and abilities – "the more you say/do the more you can create new knowledges"
Individualistic – not requiring relationship – knowledge is in the head/mind of the individual	Pluralistic – emphasising the relational – knowledges are relationally and culturally mediated
Objective truth and rational science prevails – science and scientific pursuit hold the key to all knowledge	Objective truth abandoned – reality is socially constructed in stories or truth claim possibilities – the "laws of science" reduced to the marketing of ideas
I think therefore I know	We live in communication
You need to know before you can act	You learn the rules of the game by playing it
Knowledge arises out of generalisability and consistency	Knowledge develops out of local, situated action
Management of complexity through control by fragmentation	Management of complexity through connecting fragments
Checklist and diagnostic practices	Methodologies and techniques of provisional story making, enquiry, reflection and reflexivity

Table 1   Modern and Post-modern Language Games of Knowledge
(Oliver and Brittain, p.4)

The key concepts highlighted by Oliver and Brittain pertain to the emergent and evolving nature of knowledge making, and the absence of fixed and singular understandings of how we interpret the world. They also highlight the central position of the communicative act.

Social Constructionism, a postmodernist theory that privileges the role of language in meaning making, is critiqued by Nightingale and Cromby (1999)

> "the discursive turn – constructionism's strong emphasis on the role of language in the constitution of both world and person – has produced a corresponding lack of attention to other significant elements of human life"

They go on to suggest that those absences include

> "the influences of embodied factors….the ways in which the possibilities and constraints inherent in the material world always already shape and inform the social constructions we live through and with ….the power of institutions, governments and multinational corporations…usually described under terms such as 'capitalism' or 'patriarchy' " (p.2).

Wang and Ahmed (2003) are critical of systems methodologies because it

"does not indicate a sufficient understanding of the role of emotion, which constitutes the subtle softness of human systems (and) Emotion is intrinsically linked to learning, creative thinking, human well-being, people's perception and value and therefore associated to effective systems methodologies"

(p.1283).

In each case the criticism posited focuses on that which cannot be languaged through a text based medium but must be created and experienced in a more symbolic way.

4.2   Emotion

Much has been written and researched about emotion. In the fourth century Aristotle coined the term Pathe. Its root – the word "Pathos" – meant "suffering", but Aristotle used its plural form to cover a multitude of feelings. We now use the word emotion to speak of the variety of feelings Aristotle tried to name and gather.

Historically emotion research has been "imbued with biological and psychological determinism" (Fineman, 2000, p.3). Fineman concludes that emotion perspectives are divided up into four distinct types: Emotion as biological; emotion as early experiences; emotion as cognitive appraisal and emotion as social (p.9).

4.2.1 Biological

Charles Darwin's *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*, published in 1872 concluded that we operate from a genetically and biologically determined past that is evolutionary based – the "fight or flight" response is probably the most commonly referred to evolutionary emotional response. Darwin was interested in the global nature of emotion in contrast to the contextual view that social constructionists hold and felt that the more an emotion was seen and available across cultural boundaries, the more it was likely to be part of our evolutionary heritage.

4.2.2 Early Experiences

Freud is probably the most significant exponent of the view that emotion is directly connected to unresolved trauma in our past. Freud (1990a) believed that most of our personality was hidden rather like an iceberg, and divided into three distinct areas: The id – the location for our most basic and instinctual drives; the ego – our rational and exposed side, and the superego – the location of our conscience and internalised parental voices.

Much has been written about the application of psychoanalytic theories in organisational contexts (e.g. Obholzer & Zagier-Roberts, 1994; Bion**,** 1959; Bollas, 1987; Seel 2001; Jarrett & Kellner, 1996; Antonacopoulou & Gabriel, 2001). Freud's *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (1912) is cited as the beginning of psychoanalytic study of groups. In it he claims that people in large groups follow a leader because the leader represents certain ideals of their own.

Much of the writing by psychoanalysts in the arena of organisations takes as its starting point a number of common psychodynamic "truths".

- How we relate in organisational contexts is directly related to our family of origin and our experiences of being part of that first group.

- Organisations are neurotic/anxious arenas and members use a variety of social defences to protect themselves from repressed thoughts, fantasies and desires that get played out in unconscious processes.

- Ideas and processes that have a valid meaning at a conscious level may also have a hidden meaning at a subconscious level.

- Ambivalence is important – hate is always balanced with love, anger by guilt etc.

In summary – our early childhood experiences are the lens through which psychodynamic theory approaches organisational life and our emotional experiences therein.   Emotion is seen as a motivating factor and one that is transformed in the process of naming and capturing it.

> "emotion work is not merely external…but also internal..that
> is in coping with conflicts, contradictions and ambivalence
> and keeping some sense of order in potentially chaotic
> emotional states" (Antonacopoulou E P & Gabriel Y, 2001,
> p.437).

4.2.3 Cognitive

In viewing emotion as a cognitive process, we are challenged to see emotion as not existing in an empirical sense but as something that follows an attempt to make meaning of a situation.

> "The observation that "headwork" precedes "heartwork" has
> been a popular perspective in the understanding of emotion"
> (Fineman, 2003, p.15).

This particular view of emotion separates thinking from feeling and privileges how we determine the meaning of a particular event prior to feeling emerging. Lazarus' (1991) work on the concept of appraisal

> "....showed how appraisal explains the meaning of a
> person's emotional behaviour; how a single response, like a
> smile, can be in the service of many different emotions; and
> how totally different responses, like retaliation or passive
> aggressiveness, can be in the service of the same emotion."
> (University of Berkeley, web site)[4]

Fineman critiques the cognitive approach as it pays little attention to the emotional elements of appraising and analysing a situation and does not address the contexts that are present in organisational environments.

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[4] http://www.berkeley.edu/news/media/releases/2002/12/04_lazarus.html

4.2.4 Social

Finally Fineman turns to emotion as social phenomena. A social constructionist perspective values the social and cultural contexts that inform and shape our interaction. It privileges meaning as a "cultural artefact" (Fineman, 2003, p.16) and eschews the notion that "there is something *there*" (Harré, 1986, p.4) to be named or analysed, as well as emphasising the centrality of stories in organisational life as that which constitutes experience as distinct from only describing it. Of importance in constructionist approaches to emotion are the following

- "Emotions are constituted in the act of description through language and enacted in the presence of audiences. Audience is paramount
- Emotions are learned aspects of behaviour and are situation-specific
- Emotions are not irrational but quite specific
- Emotion labour represents the psychological work expended in reconciling personal feelings with socially sanctioned displays of emotion" (Antonacopoulou E P & Gabriel Y, 2001, p.437).

The psychoanalytic approach (both in therapeutic and organisational contexts) has been critiqued from the perspective that it eschews the relevance of our cultural and social settings, preferring to view emotion as that which is self contained as distinct from contextually constructed. There is a sense that our feelings have "a life of their own" (Antonacopoulou E P & Gabriel Y, 2001, p.438). This "uncontrolled" and "uncontrollable" view of emotion is a popular understanding in organisational literature and contributes to a sense that feelings are dangerous and should be contained in our work lives.

A criticism of social constructionist approaches to emotion is that it emphasises too readily the social and not enough the intra-personal.

"Psychoanalysis is a theory 'of the internalisation of the social in the formation of the individual'." (Burgin, 1986, p.40).

The emergence of Object Relations Theory (Klein, 1975; Winnicot, 1960; Bowlby, 1969; Bollas, 1987 etc.) has gone some way to bridging the strengths of both approaches.

"while social constructionists view emotion as derivative of social scripts, signs and scenarios in which we become linguistically enmeshed, psychoanalytic approaches view emotions as generating scripts, signs and scenarios. Where, for instance the former will identify anger as consequent of a situation read as insult, the latter will view the experience of being insulted as derivative of a deeper anger and resentment"

(Gabriel, 1998 in Antonacopoulou E P & Gabriel Y, 2001, p.438).

4.3   Organisational Contexts

> "In the shadows it seems there "lurks" a perceived alternative or dichotomous "bad guy" called "emotion" or "emotionality".   Emotion and emotionality come to be portrayed as having to be avoided and rationality is to assume an incontestable and privileged status. Of course, the quintessential organisation, designed to install rationality and eliminate emotionality, is our most pervasive organisational form – bureaucracy."
>
> (Carr, 2001, p.421).

One way of seeing organisational life is to view it as a dichotomy – with rationality privileged over emotion. High value can be awarded to skills and tasks associated with the rational process of generating profit and less value attributed to "soft" skills i.e. those associated with relationship management.

When we come to work we bring our feelings, emotions, loves, hates, cares and excitements with us and our work contexts will feed into and generate more feeling. Our work contexts (as well as all of the other contexts in which we act in and out of) regulate, contribute to and inform our emotional lives. It is rare that we come home from work talking about our impact on the bottom line in a statistical sense – our stories of organisational life are imbued with emotion, feeling and a sense of making and re-making self.

Emotion in organisations became more visible as an area of management process with the publication of Daniel Goleman's *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More than IQ* in 1995.

"When the Harvard Business Review published an article on the topic two years ago, it attracted a higher percentage of readers than any other article published in that periodical in the last 40 years." (Cherniss, 2000, p.2).

Goleman was, at that time, a science journalist and drew together the work in existence on emotion and intelligence to produce a best seller and a new management trend. While Goleman popularised the concept, others were working in this arena prior to his publication (Bar-On, 2000; Mayer & Salovey, 1997 – the latter actually coined the term "Emotional Intelligence") focussing on social and emotional intelligence respectively. Goleman's work is specific to the work and organisational arena.

The 80s saw emotion enjoy a

"robust resurgence across a wide range of sub disciplines within psychology, neuroscience and the health sciences – especially the renewed focus on positive psychology, well-being and mind/body medicine" (Emmerling & Goleman, 2003, p.3).

Emotional Intelligence has been hailed as a panacea for a wide range of organisational performance problems.

"The experts say individuals with the highest emotional intelligence excel at four interrelated skills:

1. the ability to persist and stay motivated in the face of frustration;

2. the ability to control impulses;

3. the ability to control their emotions and

4. the ability to empathize with others"

(McGarvey R (1997) in Johnson and Indvik, 1999, p.84).

The rise of psychometric and occupational testing (e.g. 16PF, Myers Briggs Type Indicator etc.), must also be seen alongside the evolution of emotional intelligence. A common recruitment and evaluation tool in organisations, psychometrics offer the hope/certainty of predicting which potential candidate will be the best for the position on the basis of their predicted behaviour in certain circumstances. Not alone do organisations have access to our conscious intellectual and exhibited behaviour – they now want and are readily given, access to our unconscious and private feelings.

What both of these approaches have in common is that they are predicated on the principle of controlling and predicting emotional behaviour in organisational contexts. A sub text for both is that were behaviour of this kind not to be controlled or predicted then it could be less than helpful.

In bringing "emotion" out of the closet in a popular sense, Goleman has reinforced the stereotype that emotion is an out of control state that needs to be policed in order to be useful. Psychometric testing also assumes that we have within us a certain prescribed set of behaviours that are separate and distinct from the organisational context in which we work and act in and out of.

Hochschild's (1983) work in the area of emotional labour offers another view of emotion in organisations. Her work looks at the impact of maintaining a culturally dictated emotion in organisational contexts. Drawing on service industry stories (e.g. airlines) she talks about the negative impact on employees of having to maintain a "happy face" for the customer while masking what may be a very different internal feeling – balancing the incongruity and ambivalence takes its toll on workers, or emotional labourers as she names them.

> "Emotion and feelings are central parts of our social functioning and yet pose particular difficulties for organisational contexts. Organisations have been seen as "essentially rational instruments for the achievement of administrative, business and technical ends" (Gabriel, Griffiths, 2002, p.1).

One of the themes running through the literature reviewed is a sense that emotions are welcome in organisations so long as they are cognitised, controlled and understood intellectually. This policing of emotion once again places it further down the scale of valued information in business settings. It sits incongruously with our lived experience of work settings as social and emotion generating.

The way in which emotion is understood and actioned in organisations is summarised as follows

	Psychodynamic	Cognitive	Social Constructionist
Central beliefs	Emotion is a conscious & unconscious process. Early childhood is an important driver Emotion generates scripts	Emotion follows thinking – it can be controlled & managed	Emotion is socially generated – emphasis is on the system not the individual Emotion is derivative of scripts
Organisational Interventions	Psychometric Testing Organisational observation Coaching	Emotional Intelligence Psychometric Testing Coaching	Reflexivity 360 degree feedback processes Coaching

Table 2   How emotion is understood and actioned in organisations

5   Theoretical Framework

This chapter outlines a social constructionist theoretical framework for organisation and emotion.

5.1   On Organisation

A social constructionist view of organisation would suggest that organisations don't exist as a separate entity but are constructed in conversation and embodied in people. Traditional views of organisations are symbolised by a physical location, a uniform, a common set of goals and cultures (Schein, 1997).   A more contemporary view is

> "The organization never settles into an entity or a thing that can be labelled and described because it is constantly changing, or re-inventing itself, through the interactions going on within it." (Campbell, 2000, p.28).

Shotter (1993) talks about the essential core of management being to

> "give a shared or sharable significance to the already shared, but vague 'feelings of tendency' arising out of the circumstances in question shared amongst those in the organization, thus to restore a flow of action that had become unintelligible in some way" (p.157).

A social constructionist view of organisation sees it as fluid, ever changing and never static in contrast to traditional views of a tangible and fixed entity. Change processes viewed through a traditional lens can generate fear and anxiety about what is seen as a foreign process –

social constructionist views offer the possibility to embrace ongoing change as that which creates the very culture of organisational life.

Senge (1993) brought a systems perspective to organisational theory by suggesting that we are part of the structure we wish to influence.

> "The nature of structure in human systems is subtle because
>
> *we* are part of the structure. This means that we often have
>
> the power to alter structures within which we are operating"
>
> (p.44).

In *The Fifth Discipline* (1993) he outlines the theory of the Learning Organisation – one that embraces the "art of seeing the forest and the trees" (p.127) and one that builds in a reflexive awareness to embrace ongoing learning.

Morgan (1997) develops this systemic approach by offering another way of looking at the organisation through the lens of metaphor.   In suggesting that we can often be victims of the images we hold of ourselves, he offers the view that working imagistically or via metaphor can be a catalyst for more creative engagement with the idea and practice of managing.

> "Different images generate different insights. For example,
>
> if we learn to view organizations as cultures, we begin to
>
> understand how they are held together through patterns of
>
> shared meaning, shared values, ideologies, rituals and belief
>
> systems." (p.5).

He invites us to reject the notion of a tangible "object" that is organisation and to look at the ever evolving organism that is constantly created and re-created via the images we hold and contribute to. Each of these perspectives shifts the locus of power from an unnamed other to a personal locus - challenging each of us to question our own place in the changing landscape of organisation. But what of the external economic factors that shape and drive how organisations look and act in the 21st Century?

Tele-working, the Internet, entrepreneurs, solopreneurs, home offices and the extended nature of commuting to corporate offices all contribute to a radically different working culture than was present even 10 years ago. Handy (1994) writes about the changing face of work and how organisations are changing into smaller social units. The social nature of working will undergo considerable further change as cyberspace becomes a primary meeting place for workers from all over the globe. The unbounded nature of cyberspace means that social contexts will have to undergo newer kinds of negotiation that are not based on face to face or "real" contact but more on our perceived sense of who we are in relationship with. The development of social software and social networks allied with the psychoanalytic concepts of projection and transference will afford newer ways of engaging socially and emotionally and will change the socially negotiated spaces in which self and other are co-created. The public and private person positions we adopt in "real" life will become even more pronounced once the added complexity of cyberspace is added in.

Fineman (2003) talks about the "home page" being our permanent home in cyberspace and of "impression formation" – the creation of

> "a public perception of a three-dimensional, 'real', feeling
>
> people through a medium that has none of those qualities"
>
> (p.59).

One of the primary challenges that cyberspace offers is the alignment of the public and private selves that come into play in organisational life and the potential reduction in the

"primary and prototypical form of communication"

(Palmer, 1995, p.282 in Mann, Varey & Button, 2000, p.669).

It brings about its own challenges as users swap the "rich and emotionally charged domain" (p.282) of multi-channelled communication for the "cold and unsociable" (p.287) domain of CMC.[5]"

5.2   On Emotion

"Emotions cannot seriously be studied without attention to the local moral order" (Harré, 1986, p.6).

Taking a social constructionist perspective leads us to the view that context and moral order are what defines emotion as distinct from an empirical understanding of a tangible "object" in its own right. Moral order i.e. rights, obligations, understandings of permission given and sought are the backdrops against which a particular act or behaviour is languaged as emotional.

"Emotion", "feeling" and "mood" have become almost interchangeable in our daily parlance yet there are subtle and important differences to which, at this stage, it is useful to point.

---

[5] Computer Mediated Communication

Fineman (2000) talks about the subjective element of emotion i.e. that which we "feel" and the displayed element of emotion i.e. that which we "show". He also suggests that emotions are the public display of a private experience that he names as "feeling". He also suggests that emotion and feeling are attached to an "other" either person or object and are transient. Mood, on the other hand, is unattached to an other and is more prolonged. Fineman and Harré differ in their approach to the subject of emotion in that the former focuses on the embodied experience of emotion while the latter focuses on how that experience is languaged.

Harré (1986) describes a three-component theory of the "conditions for the use of emotion words" (p.8). Rather than talk "about" emotion he talks about the languaging of emotion and summarises the theory as follows:

- "Many emotion words are called for only if there is some bodily agitation. Many emotions are manifested in typical behaviour displays. Such displays are strongly influenced by cultural conventions.
- All emotions are intentional - that is they are "about" something
- Local systems of rights, obligations duties and conventions of evaluation" (p.8).

Harré also concludes that there are culturally diverse emotions – what works in one society will be eschewed by another. Both Fineman and Harré, postulate that emotion guides the individual

"in appraising social situations and responding to them"

(Antonacopoulou E P & Gabriel Y, 2001, p.437).

Inherent in this view of emotion is the notion of public and private. Are emotions only that if they are visible to others and displayed as such? What has social constructionism to say about the intrapersonal or private feeling arena that may be socially constructed but is not displayed in public for others to see?

6   Research Question

Much thinking and writing about emotion is prescriptive in that it "assumes" a particular behaviour set. As is evident from previous chapters, much research in the area of emotion focuses on that which is "negative" and obstructive to organisational life. Depending on which tradition one adopts, emotion is seen as something that we bring "into" work from "outside" work or something that is unconnected to the working environment at all, originating from our family of origin.   The emergence of legislation and formal mechanisms for addressing workplace stress, while positive in intent, can also contribute to a sense that there exists a set of behaviours which is unwelcome in the work place, must be removed from it, and which may or may not be related to relationships in that arena.

A postmodernist view of emotion must explore the taken for granted position that appears evident in relation to this concept, choosing instead to adopt a position of curiosity. The research question is therefore;

What are the meanings of emotion in organisational contexts?

- What behaviours are characterised as emotional?
- What are the rules that guide emotional behaviours in organisations?
- What purpose does emotional behaviour serve in organisational contexts?

7   Research Methodology

This chapter outlines the methodological approach to the research project.

7.1   Overview

Our curiosity requires that we ask questions and form hypotheses about how we are in and how we make the world. Using a CMM (Pearce, 1999) framework invites us to see ourselves as living in communication, as making meaning and guiding action, as seeing context as that which makes meaning. A social constructionist view of research assumes that we are all researchers and that the act of research is an ongoing way of engaging in conversation.

" (*a*) cluster of many overlapping but not identical conversations" (Pearce & Walters, 1996, p.7).

Research then is a "communicative act" (p.6).

There is no one "right" way to research. The context in which the question is asked, the participants invited to tell their stories and the hypotheses generated will inform to a greater extent the architecture and direction of a research approach i.e. what is it I am trying to find out? What is the best way of exploring that topic? Each approach brings affordances, constraints and moral positioning.

"Facts do not exist independently of the medium through which they are interpreted, whether that is an explicit theoretical model, a set of assumptions, or interests that have led to the date (sic) being collected in the first instance"

(May, 2002, p.28).

There is a traditional split in research methodologies between quantitative "hard, fixed, objective, value-free…hypotheses testing, abstract .." and qualitative "soft, flexible, subjective, political…speculative, grounded…" (Silverman, 2003, p.2) and an unspoken story that one may be "better" than the other. This polarisation mirrors, in many respects, the research topic I have chosen where there can be a bias towards valuing the rational over the emotional. Silverman cautions against this moral positioning;

"I view such dichotomies or polarities in social science as highly dangerous. At best, they are pedagogic devices for students to obtain a first grip on a difficult field: they help us to learn the jargon. At worst, they are excuses for not thinking, which assemble groups of sociologists into 'armed camps' unwilling to learn from one another." (p.11).

Bryman (2001, p.20) outlines the differences between a quantitative and qualitative approach to research.

	Quantitative	Qualitative
Principal orientation to the role of theory in relation to research	Deductive; testing of History	Inductive; generation of theory
Epistemological Orientation	Natural science model, in particular positivism	Interpretivism
Ontological Orientation	Objectivism	Constructionism

Table 3   Bryman's differences between a quantitative and qualitative approach to research

Oliver (2003) offers another way of looking at this issue by reframing it as a positivist/systemic relationship

	Positivist	Systemic
Aim	Seeks Truth	Understanding
Relationship to Data	Separate data and interpretation	Primacy of interpretation
Influence	Minimise	Reflexive
Social Contexts	Not Relevant	Relevant
Relationship to Knowledge	Prediction Objective	Rich Meaning Thick Description
Significance of Data	Reproducible and Generalisable	Practice and Wisdom

Table 4   Oliver's Positivist/Systemic Relationship
        (Oliver, 2003, class notes)

Research is a relational concept in the same way as any form of relationship building and the quantitative/qualitative dichotomy can only be seen against both a historical and contemporary background.

> "A science is often thought of as being a coherent body of thought about a topic over which there is a broad consensus among its practitioners" (Silverman, 2003, p.8).

> "if you want to know how people understand their world and their life why not talk with them?" (Kvale, 1996, p.1).

These two quotes placed side by side highlight a central concern in addressing the quantitative/qualitative dilemma – i.e. who is expert? The arena in which one chooses to work, and the kinds of questions one has curiosity about, will dictate who the experts are about a particular topic. In the social sciences, and particularly in a social constructionist arena, experts are those who co-construct experience and to that extent we are all experts about our own experiences and in telling our own stories.

What then of the position of researcher?

The consultant and therapist concern themselves with sharing stories of organisational and personal life. In many cases that contribution to the conversation is as active listener, in others it is as active questioner. Together new scenarios are created that offer possibilities of seeing in a different way. It is against this backdrop that the decision to embark on a qualitative research project can be viewed.

"(*a*)…type of research that produces findings not arrived at

by statistical procedures or other means of quantification"

(Strauss & Corbin, 1998, pp.10 – 11).

The decision had less to do with a qualitative/quantitative ideological split, than with discovering the most appropriate way of engaging in emergent storytelling with research participants.

"..qualitative methods can be used to obtain the intricate

details about phenomena such as feelings, thought

processes and emotions that are difficult to extract or learn

about through more conventional research methods."

(p.10).

A curiosity about personal stories and narratives as data and a desire to draw on informal conversations, previous experience and a range of data that might not lend themselves to quantitative production informed the decision about which approach to take. A primarily qualitative approach to the question seemed liked the most appropriate way to move forward, combined with the generation of some basic quantitative data about the research participants.

Embarking on a qualitative research process meant that there was an assumption of a particular research position. The assumption of that position offered the opportunity to embark on a reflexive process to actively engage with the questions and dilemmas posed.

"the "best" research projects involve a movement among

person-positions for both researchers and those being

studied" (Pearce & Walters, 1996, pp.11 - 12).

Oliver's comparison of positivist and systemic relationships (*table 4*) suggested another

comparison – that of the impact of taking up a qualitative positioning as a researcher and the

inherent challenges to the person position of researcher that this positioning implied. The

following table summarises the questions raised about the researcher position upon

embarking on a qualitative/systemic research process.

	Qualitative positioning as Researcher	Existing Researcher story challenged
Relationship to the Data	Primacy of interpretation	An existing body of knowledge about "emotion" and in particular its "value" How would the researcher's voice be privileged?
Significance of the Data	Facilitating hypothesising for practice wisdom	How "married" to my hypothesis and topic am I?
Relationship to Ethics	Reflexive relationship to own contexts acted out of and contexts created through research	Person position as consultant, therapist etc. and the "expert" positioning that comes with both – the movement towards "joint action" (Shotter, 1993, p.34) Interrogation of different person positions (friend, colleague, etc.) and the impact on selection of participants and ways of engaging in conversation.

Table 5   Challenges Raised by a Qualitative Position
(Adapted from Oliver, 2003)

These considerations have formed a background conversation to the research process as it has evolved.

7.2   Research Design

In approaching the research topic from a qualitative perspective, a number of points emerged that had a significant impact on the design of the process.

In adopting a social constructionist/systemic approach that sees information and learning as "emergent" I was faced with a dilemma of where to start. A number of diagrammatic interpretations of the research process were offered to assist and the fluidity of the Blaxter et al (2001) diagram seemed to speak to the inter-relatedness of each of the steps as well as the need for each to inform the other.

Choosing a topic

Writing up

Thinking about methods

Analysing data

Reading for research

Collecting data
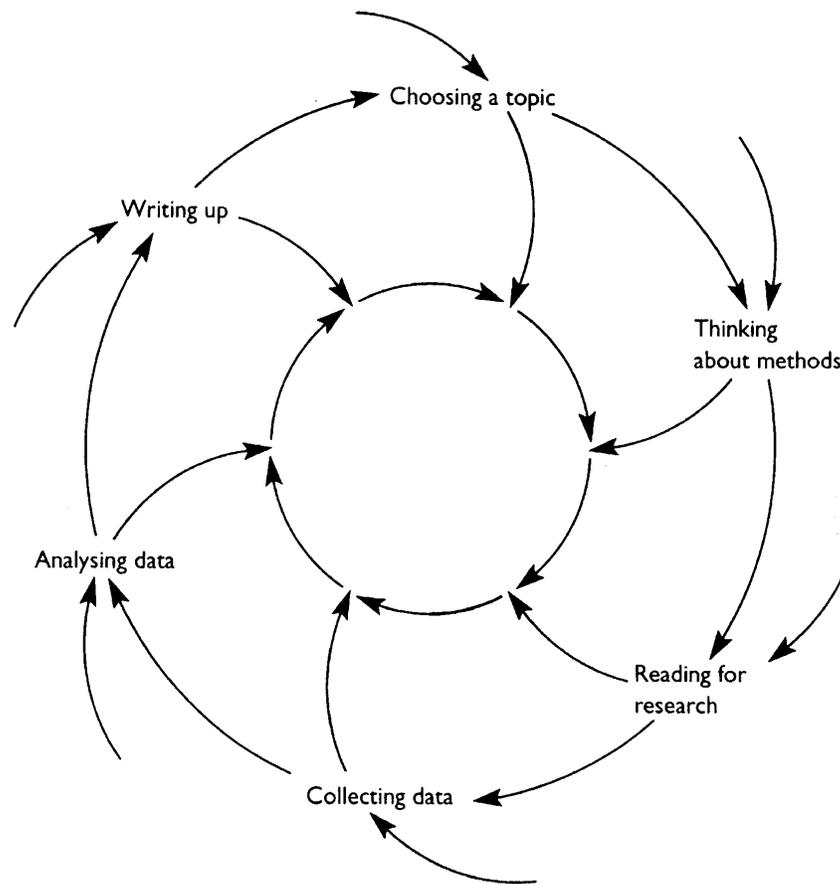
Figure 2   Research Spiral

(Blaxter et al 2001, p.10).

While I was aware of the topic I wished to research, I didn't have a fixed hypothesis or body of knowledge I wished to explore as the starting point for the research project. While realising that the shape of the project would have to be defined in terms of creating an appropriate academic context for the inquiry, I was also aware of wanting the process of researching to change, inform and generate new ways of conversing with my topic of interest.

Writing an academic dissertation is a modernist exercise; there are criteria to be met, a format for writing and an academic standard to be reached. Exploring a topic such as the meaning of emotion in organisational contexts from a postmodernist perspective required a different way of thinking and conversing. In exploring the variety of ways in which the topic might be researched from a qualitative perspective and in wishing to research from the perspective of those who

> "draw on their own experiences when analysing materials
> because they realise that these become the foundations for
> making comparisons and discovering properties and
> dimensions" (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p.5).

I chose to use a theoretical approach that seemed congruent - Grounded Theory.

7.2.1 Grounded Theory

Glaser and Strauss created grounded Theory in the 1960s. They were hired to help guide nursing students in their research and unveiled their theory in *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* in 1967.   It is a research method in which the theory is arrived at through the data as distinct from the other way around. The objective is to go from the general to the specific allowing the emergent data to shape and inform theory. In this respect, data from research participants carries the same "weight" as that generated from academic sources. The theory also supports the use of

> "nontechnical literature (*such as*) letters, biographies, diaries, reports, videotapes, newspapers, catalogs …. And a variety of other materials" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p.52).

Data and analysis are closely allied in this process and each piece of data informs how the next is secured. Glaser suggests that the literature closest to the research topic be avoided in case it contaminates the coding and memoing process.

The theory advocates a four-stage process

1. Generation of data via a variety of formats including; formal interviews, nontechnical literature (*see above*) and record keeping via notes and memos.

2. Categorising of data i.e. the generation of specific themes or variables that contextualise the participants' utterances.

3. Saturating categories – Through constant comparison of data emerging, you endeavour to saturate a category – i.e. reaching a point at which no new material emerges.

4. Theory building

(adapted from Strauss and Corbin, 1998 and Dick, 2002).
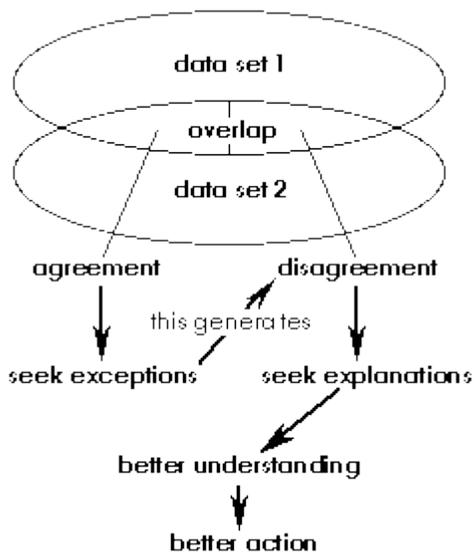
Figure 3   Generating Grounded Theory

(Dick, 2002, p.11)

One of the criticisms levelled against Grounded Theory posits that it is too time consuming and that the analysis becomes lost within the minutiae of the data. Glaser and Strauss parted professional company on this issue as Glaser considered this process one of "over-conceptualisation" (Glaser, 1992, p.40).

> "The central differences between Glaser's and Strauss' versions of grounded theory seem to hinge on both epistemological and methodological chasms between these approaches. Glaser may be more deeply committed to principles and practices ….with…..the qualitative paradigm. Strauss seems to be relatively more concerned with producing a detailed description of the cultural scene." (Babchuk, 1997, p.3).

8   Methods

> "..all systemic research – whatever else it might be – must
>
> be participatory" (Pearce & Walters, 1996, p.19).

This chapter gives an overview of the research method, research participants and how the research was undertaken.

8.1   Overview

The position of researcher is, and continues to be, socially constructed through the ongoing conversations in which one participates. The position is never fixed and is constantly evolving.   In inviting research participants to share their stories the researcher is participating in the re presentation of those stories.   The story we co-create is one of re-imagining and retelling, not re-experiencing.   Our time together creates a new set of experiences to be spoken of at a later point in time.   Pearce & Walter's (1996) description of movement between person positions is a helpful summary

> ""Objective" research methods valorize the third-person for
>
> the researcher, "interpretative" research methods valorize
>
> the second-person plural position for both researcher and
>
> those being studied, and "participation" research valorizes
>
> the first-person position for the researcher" (p.11).

The critical stance towards taken for granted knowledge informed how I approached the research topic in deciding not to offer formal definition to my research participants, relying

alternatively on the meaning that was made between us and between them in their stories of emotion in organisational contexts.

8.2   Research Participants

There are six research participants who each met with me for a recorded interview lasting between one hour and 75 minutes each. I am known in different ways to some of the research participants and not at all to others. Where relevant I have made the distinction in the notes that follow. Each biography was agreed with the research participants and the order here is the order in which each was interviewed.

Research Participant 1 (RP1)

Andrew Conlan Trant (40) is a business consultant in the private sector. He holds a Bachelor of Commerce from the National University of Ireland, Galway; a Higher Diploma in Education from the National University of Ireland, Galway and a Master of Science (Management) from Queens University, Belfast. Over the past three years he has established his own consultancy practice and at the time of interview was interim chief operations officer with a national charitable organisation. He engaged me to undertake some consultancy for that organisation during the autumn of 2003. He is known personally to me.

Research Participant 2 (RP2)

Is a 42 year old man and is the training and development officer with a Dublin University. He has been with the organisation for nearly 17 years. He holds a Bachelor of Arts and a Masters Degree in Training and Development.   He is responsible for contracting and designing training interventions for all staff within the University and works as part of a 12-member team in the Human Resources department. He is known personally to me.

Research Participant 3 (RP3)

Research participant 4 is a 39 year old man who holds a senior IT position with a large financial institution in Dublin. He is a "career banker" and attended university to Masters level while working at the bank. He worked for six months with another company after he left school before entering his current organisation where he has been for over 20 years. He is responsible for managing a large team and has been in his current role for two and a half years. He is a colleague on the Common Purpose Programme.

Research Participant 4 (RP4)

Is a 41 year old woman who is a Finance Manager with a national charitable organisation that is an advocate in the area of women's rights. She has been in her current role since September 2002. She studied Commerce and Accountancy and worked in the private sector until 1995 when she moved into the not for profit sector. She manages three people as part of her current role. She is a colleague on the Common Purpose Programme.

Research Participant 5 (RP5)

Bob Collins (57) was appointed Director General of RTÉ[6] in 1997 and retired from that post in October 2003. He joined RTÉ in 1975 as Secretary to the Authority, was appointed Deputy Controller of Programmes (Television) in 1980 and served as Director of Television Programmes for RTÉ's two national channels from 1986 to 1993. He was appointed Director of Corporate Affairs in 1993 which post he held until his appointment as Assistant Director-General in March 1995.

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[6] Radio Telefís Éireann – the National Broadcaster

Research participant 6 (RP6)

Is a 49-year-old woman who is a national broadcaster and television personality. She trained as a secondary school teacher before entering broadcasting.

My original intention was to select six people for interview drawn from consultancy and managerial contexts and from each of the three sectors (public, private and not for profit). My rationale was to gather stories from those inside and outside formal organisational contexts to compare and contrast. I was also aware that inviting people into a research process meant contextualising the research story in a set of parameters that would be defined initially by me (*see Appendix 2*). I deliberately chose not to define in any great detail my subject, preferring instead to open up the possibility of new stories and co-created understandings in the interview process. Drawing from a number of people who are known to me in different contexts offered a certain affordance as each of the people approached were happy to participate without wanting too much detail about the content and process. Our conversational relationships in a variety of contexts generated a greater degree of comfort with the invitation. I balanced this with interviews with people who were unknown to me personally but paradoxically very well known in Irish public life. My original list of interviewees was altered and changed as the data emerged and this is outlined in more detail in the following chapter.

I adopted a semi-structured approach to the interviews. My adoption of a grounded theory approach to this topic afforded the opportunity to change the questions on the basis of material arising from each previous interview.

8.3   Beginning the Interview Process

My initial research framework was predicated on a different topic – i.e. stories about difficult people in organisations and I undertook a pilot interview to explore the topic and interview framework.   The experience of piloting that first interview encouraged me to go back to a broader topic and to approach reflexivity in a different way i.e. as another question for consideration outside the boundary of the interview session.

My own curiosity about and experience of "emotion" as a central arena in which I work gave me a privileged position in the interview with participants.   I was aware of not making assumptions about the meaning of the word and concept and adopted a position of curiosity with regard to the stories the participants would tell about the topic and more importantly the meaning they would attribute to the subject matter, as Campbell says "allowing oneself to be influenced" (Campbell, 2000, p.54).

Reflexive Moments

In consultation with my class colleagues during a workshop day I reflected on the pilot interview and emerged with significant learning that would influence the direction of the interviewing process.

I recognised that during that first pilot interview I lost my researcher position by being curious about the process of the interview as a separate context. The interviewee remarked that he'd found the interview difficult. Instead of accepting this as "data" I wandered in the direction of processing that information "in" the interview.

8.4   Contracting

> "the end of the beginning – a contract" (Campbell, 2000, p.48).

Before each interview we took some time to review the contract we had agreed and to clarify any issues regarding content, purpose and process. Some of the research participants were somewhat reticent about their "expertise" in my subject area and we discussed the interview as a story generating process with their views and interpretations of the subject matter being my area of interest as distinct from an examination of a given fixed body of knowledge. This brought to the fore the essence of social constructionist thinking on the relevance and importance of a "linguistically constructed conversation" (Shotter, 1993, p.2) and the "anti essentialist" (Burr, 1995, p.4) and "anti realist" (Burr, 1995, p.5) positioning that affords new meanings that are generated between people. This conversation also afforded the opportunity to affirm the "knowing from within" (Shotter, 1993, p.33) in terms of the participants' expertise about their own experience that might not have been heard before.

"The notion of 'accuracy' assumes there to be a 'correct' and 'incorrect' accounts of what a person is really like" (Burr, 1995, p.28).

Reflexive Moments

A central part of our contracting was a discussion regarding confidentiality. It is often assumed that those interviewed should be "offered" confidentiality and not have their names attributed to specific quotes. I was, and continue to be, aware that theoreticians have a privileged position in a research document – they have a body of documented and published work that is referenced formally – what of the lived experience of research participants? How would it be possible to place that experience alongside that of the theoreticians?

The consent form was written before the research formally began and I decided to continue to use that form while also using it as a tool to engage people in a discussion about how they would be represented in the document both in terms of their biographical data and attribution of quotations. The discussions focussed on the desire of participants to speak of their own experience while not wanting to speak with authority for anybody else in their system.

The conversation regarding confidentiality happened at the beginning of the interview where it served to set up the boundaries for the conversation. The kinds of questions that emerged were ones regarding context – how will something that is said at this point in time look when placed in a different context? The conversation about confidentiality with research participants mirrored the conversations that were taking place in the interviews regarding authority, context, power and permission.

Two research participants gave their permission to be formally identified and to have their names attached to the quotations used in this document. Where participants expressed a preference for confidentiality, this has been observed.

8.5   Method of Analysis

Participants were interviewed individually at a location convenient for each. Each participant was given the information and a consent sheet and invited to speak

Research Participant Reflections

"I read the transcript and was struck once again by the incoherence of transcribed conversation. We have some highly developed mechanisms for divining the essence of meandering, hesitant, rapidly switching conversational speech, which work only when the conversation is taking place. The facility utterly deserts us when we read the transcribed words. What is this selective inattention that discards the irrelevant and discerns the essence?"

Collins, in an email to the researcher, on review of the transcript of our interview.

with the researcher in advance of the interview if they had any initial questions that required clarification.   An interview schedule was drawn up for the initial interviews (*see Appendix 3*) and altered as data emerged.

Each of the interviews was recorded and transcribed verbatim including all hesitations etc. Where relevant, any non-verbal gestures that informed the spoken dialogue were also included. The transcripts were sent to all interviewees for their comments and reflections – no participant felt that there was anything they wished to add or subtract from the material. A sample transcript is attached at Appendix 4.

The findings from the research were summarised and sent to research participants for any feedback they wished to contribute.   Members of my peer consultation group were invited to reflect on our time spent discussing the research topic and to contribute feedback or reflections on that process.

Using a grounded theory approach two interviewees were initially selected and interviews conducted.   Each interview was analysed and the emergent data used to inform the interview schedule for subsequent interviews.

As the research progressed the original intention of selecting six research participants on the basis of their experience and organisation quickly receded and new research participants were sought on the basis of the categories emerging.

Reflexive Moments

One of the striking insights that emerged at an early stage of interviewing was how similar the views held by the research participants appeared to be, in many respects it could be argued that the subject of emotion in organisational life was presented as a saturated topic before the interviews begun. The participants "assuming" that the research was only concerned with "negative" emotion and offering many examples of how this behaviour manifested in organisational life.

There are three processes of analysis using Grounded Theory; open coding, axial coding and selective coding. The first is designed to open up the data so that categories can emerge. Properties and dimensions are then explored.

> "properties are the general or specific characteristics or
> attributes of a category, dimensions represent the location
> of a property on a continuum or range"
> (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p.117).

The second is designed to relate categories to sub categories i.e. relating categories to each other so that depth and structure can be added. Selective coding is then employed to refine categories so that a core category emerges. This represents "the main theme of the research" (p.147).

A key concept in Grounded Theory is that of "saturation"

> "A category is considered saturated when no new
> information seems to emerge during coding" (p.136).

It is always possible to find "new" data in any research process and the challenge regarding this particular topic was to be creative in my interviewing of research participants so that I did not "close down" possibilities. Circular questioning (Tomm, 1988) was employed to revisit themes during each interview to generate different perspectives. The challenge for the researcher was to be continually reflexive both during the interviews and in coding to ensure that "assumptions" were not accepted as unchallengeable facts but used as a way of exploring difference and alternative perspectives.

9   Research Findings

This chapter presents the research findings emerging from the data.

9.1   Emotional Behaviour
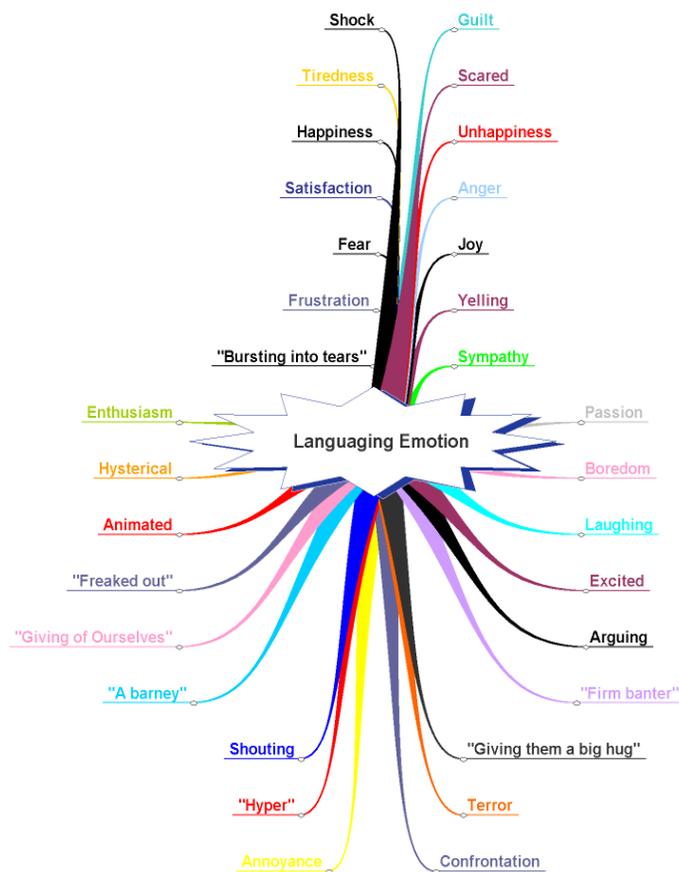
The starting point for each interview was an invitation to participants to reflect on the meaning of emotion and to offer examples and episodes of "emotional behaviour" in their working lives. The descriptions gave a rich picture of organisational life and were used to invite exploration of the ways in which emotional behaviour is languaged and seen in working environments.

Figure 4   Languaging Emotion

9.2 Open Coding

The initial process of open coding of the first four interviews generated a wide variety of categories including;
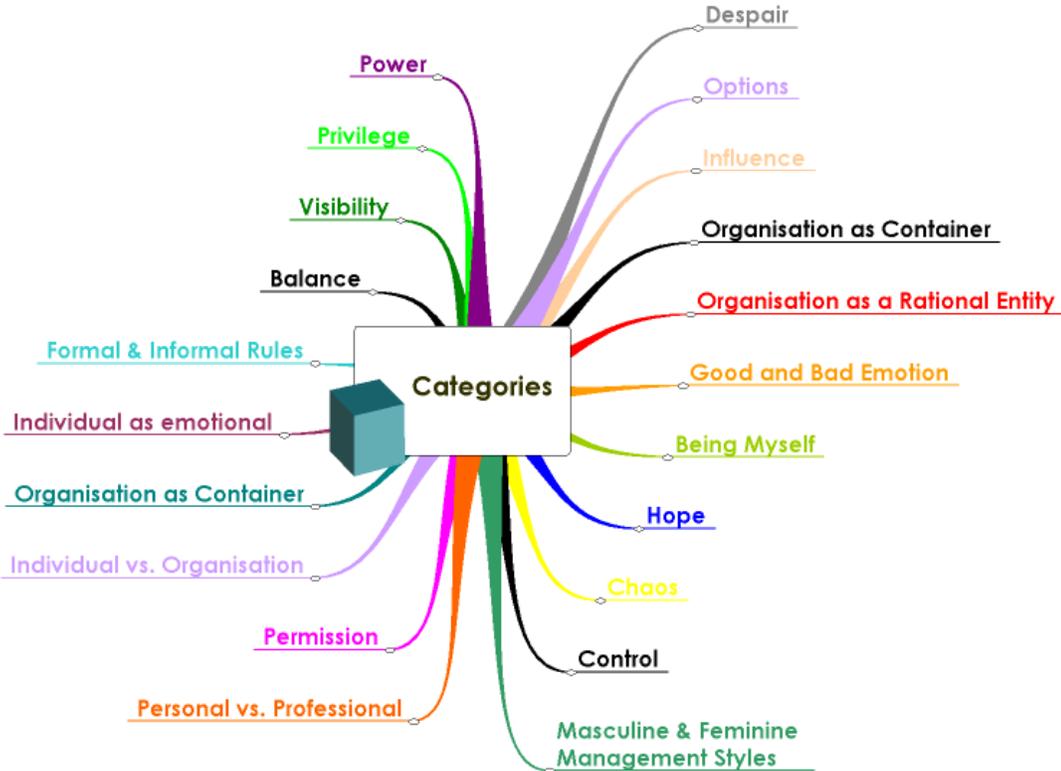
Figure 5   Open Coding Categories

Those which presented most frequently are described below:

Individual as Emotional – Organisation as Rational

> "..the emotional is in some sense a cuckoo in the rational
> nest"
> (Collins, in email correspondence with the author)

The idea and experience of "organisation" was presented primarily as a rational context that either controlled or contained emotional behaviour. The organisation was awarded a status and identity of its own, separate from the individuals "within" it.

One research participant described an organisation he worked in as

> "the accepted environment is quite rigid, planned, finance
> orientated, goal orientated and so on…but it was rarely if
> ever balanced or indeed the need to see the need for a
> balance was never there…." (Conlan Trant, RP1, Lines 104 –
> 106).

Another participant described his organisation in the following way

> "banks are rational organisations…when one thinks of a
> bank you don't tend to think of it in emotional terms…"
> (RP3, Lines 130 – 132).

"Organisation" was also viewed as being in a complex relationship with emotional behaviour in this example where the context of the working environment is seen to contribute to emotional responses from workers, but that emotional response is seen as that which belongs to the individual.

> "The dealing room…the front line of most capital market
> organisations, can be one of the most emotional places you
> can come across" (RP3, Lines 85 – 87).

Also

> "but if you go back to a dealing room environment…people
> move away from the rational institution in that case to being
> irrational themselves. So the institution has nothing to do
> with it, it comes down to their own personal traits" (RP3,
> Lines 134 – 138).

Each interviewee accepted that we exhibit emotional behaviour (as well as many other kinds of behaviours) and have an emotional life, many also saw that emotion as separate and distinct from the environment in which it might be expressed – as though our emotional lives take place outside the organisation and are physically brought into it.

> "It's so fundamental…..we come with ourselves into these
> organisations – of course we have emotions" (RP2, Lines
> 367 – 371).

Another research participant spoke of how

> "We deal with emotional people all the time. There are characters across the organisation that we all know and know how to manage" (RP3, Lines 384 – 385).

The relationship between individual and organisation was developed further in this interview as one research participant outlined how "being myself" is influenced and shaped by the organisational context.

> "we realised how little we revealed of ourselves …so we actually went back again to basics to reveal more about ourselves to understand why we took up certain positions" (RP2, Lines 311 - 313).

And

> "The success or failure (*of the organisation*) has depended on how acceptable it is to be yourself, no question about it and going back to that time in (*names another organisation*) it was not acceptable to be yourself unless being yourself was really arrogant and macho." (Conlan Trant, Lines 178 – 280).

Rules of Engagement

Certain kinds of emotion were named as allowable in organisational contexts – others not. In each interview there were formal and informal rules that contextualised the exhibition of particular emotional behaviours.

"Some emotions…are allowable and others are not and the one that was not allowable or the one that manifest itself through tears basically, or through upset, that wasn't allowed, or I felt that wasn't allowed and the reason I felt it wasn't allowed was because this, at the time, was a fairly macho organisation and it was macho type things that would get done – so it was banging on the table, walking over people and being forceful – it certainly wasn't being empathetic to other people" (Conlan Trant, Lines 28 – 33).

"people knew there was bullying going on but it was seen as part and parcel of the regime that was in place and nobody did anything about it. And that was tolerated here…. and nobody saw that as being anything unusual". (RP3, Lines 95 – 99)

"You are allowed to be annoyed but being angry would not be very acceptable depending on the circumstances"
(RP2, Lines 50 – 51).

The explicit and formal ways of managing emotional behaviour in organisations were named as follows:

> "There may have been unofficial rules in the past but there aren't any unofficial rules anymore" (RP3, Lines 120 - 121).

> "There's an acceptance that you celebrate achievement. We have formal structures in place whereby people nominate each other to say that I think this person has been doing a really good job for me…if we're successful at something, then as a group, people will celebrate….and you get judged on that as well."
> (RP3, Lines 179 – 188).

> "there's a grievance procedure, there's a disciplinary procedure, there's a negotiation procedure and now we actually have a respect and dignity policy …so there's a whole formal way of dealing with how people want to express their anger"
> (RP2, Lines 81 – 85).

While formal rules around emotional behaviour were referenced by some interviewees as having helped organisations define what was acceptable and not – others found the formal ways of addressing challenging emotional situations to be less helpful.

> "we are now trying to push it back, nearer the source instead of us having to advise on the so called "bad" emotion …it doesn't need to come to us, it doesn't necessarily need to go to the union…there's a whole paraphernalia of union and shop stewards and we have come to a realisation – it happens, you can deal with it, it is a range of human experience"
>
> (RP2, Lines 65 – 68).

Gender Related Management

One of the "rules" that emerges from the data is the concept of a particular set of behaviours that are seen to be either masculine or feminine.

"maybe there are a few rules in there around emotion and what was allowed and not allowed so if it was a good old manly macho emotion, grand...that was no problem, but if it was a girly wimpish one then not allowed". (Conlan Trant, Lines 34 – 36).

One interviewee who works in an all female organisation felt that gender had an impact on how emotion is managed in her company.

"I think women are a bit more considerate...if somebody is ill here or if they're off I think there is always a lot of sympathy and empathy for them whereas I don't think you would get that in a more predominantly male (*environment*)." (RP4, Lines 87 – 89).

Research Participant Reflections

"When someone is trying to settle a deal where a large amount of money has to be moved somewhere and there's a problem somewhere along the way and there's a financial penalty or financial consequence if the money isn't actually settled, then the person responsible....will start to get emotionally involved in that and in dealing with people in trying to move the thing along and may well start to become quite emotional if they think they are being frustrated."

Research Participant 3 Lines 144 – 150

Another described it as

> "There was a unit in the UK that was managed entirely by women and we used to have our private joke, and it was shared by males and females and it was 'oh that shower over there … they're all a bit touchy over there'…that unit was seen as being very sensitive and our perception was because it was female dominated. Turn that around and you've got the dealing room which is male dominated and they were extremely aggressive" (RP3, Lines 284 – 291).

Both of these interviewees spoke about the visibility of particular kinds of emotion that is attributed to a male and a female way of managing as distinct from being exhibited by men or women.

Speaking of some women managers..

> "you would comment on them that they had more balls than the men" (Conlan Trant, Lines 48 - 49).

Conlan Trant also remarked on the ways men have of talking about the "softer" emotions.

"it would be like rugby stories – I did this, I did that, I beat

a supplier down on price – it was still these macho types of

emotions that were spoken about but wrapped up in a

story…a story being told about an emotion they had.

Nobody ever told a story and said I had an awful time with

such and such a thing."

(Conlan Trant, Lines 76 – 79).

9.3 Axial Coding

After completing the coding of four interviews a central category of "paradoxes" appeared to be emerging from the data. Interviewees were making clear statements about the need for balance between the rational and emotional on one hand and, on the other, an apparent ideological split between the individual who appeared to be the generator of the emotion and the organisational, which was referenced as the container/controller of that emotion. I decided to look for a further two interviewees who might have something to say about managing what might appear to be opposing or complex work portfolios and contexts in order to explore these two issues further.

The fifth interview took place with Bob Collins, who, until the autumn of 2003 was Director General of RTÉ. He oversaw a significant organisational change programme at a time of increasing competition in the broadcasting market in Ireland. The sixth interviewee was a well-known public figure from broadcasting. She also published her autobiography in 2003 and I imagined she would have an interesting perspective to offer on the managing of a "personal" and "professional" persona.

In discussing the issue of confidentiality as it related to interview participants, Bob Collins and Andrew Conlan Trant chose to be public about their participation in this process and four other interviewees chose to remain anonymous. While the sixth research participant spoke with some degree of passion about being the same person in any location, but being careful about only speaking of her own experience, she also chose not to reveal her identity in this context and this led to some further reflection on the part of the researcher about issues of safety in organisational contexts in terms of revealing "who we are".

These discussions regarding confidentiality also linked with the emerging themes in the coding process of positions (i.e. personal and professional) and the relationship between that theme and the person position of the researcher as outlined in the beginning of the research document.

The first four interviewees spoke about the differences they experienced between the value awarded to the rational and the emotional in organisational contexts. Bob Collins approached this from a different perspective and spoke of balance.

"There is always the question, can people express themselves fully in a formal setting no matter how many reassurances they have?"

Research Participant 4 Lines 125 – 126

"I was there for 30 years, probably the most significant period of intense uncertainty, demoralisation, anxiety that the organisation as an entity and for the people who work within it…So for an organisation that's going through that period, it's operating on both levels in terms of a rational analysis and the emotional reality for individuals. And one of the real difficulties is affecting a balance between those two and being able to recognise and respect the emotional dimension as being a normal part of life as opposed to something that is self indulgent".

(Collins, Lines 25 – 33).

In speaking about the different and sometimes competing portfolios of work he remarked

"It's very simple in that we have two sources of funding, one's the licence fee – you battle as hard as you can to have that as realistic as it can be and the second is that we need to sell commercial advertising and to do that effectively is the key to being able to do all the other stuff as you want

to. Unless both of these are in balance and in equilibrium we have major difficulties." (Collins, Lines 212 – 217).

This latter point from Collins highlights the tension that managers are often asked to hold regarding all kinds of ambivalences, but more importantly those regarding emotional situations. Collins is clear that the tension remains, one does not win out over the other and it is the balance of that tension that allows the work to be commissioned and completed. The generation of rules and formal contexts while helpful for some areas of organisational life may not always answer the need to maintain a tension between two (or more) competing ideologies it appears that the relationship *between* them is what is central – not keeping them apart.

Collins' position on the balance between rational and emotional appeared to have a different quality to much of the material generated in the first four interviews. The either/or positioning regarding emotion and rationale, evident in the first round of interview data, was here evident as a relational concept in an environment in which the manager was being asked to manage very different portfolios of work. This contrasted with the sense of certainty of purpose that the previous managers had described in their organisations. Each was clear about the mission and function of their organisations – emotion appeared to be the uncertain principle.

This theme was explored further with research participant 6.

Individual and Organisation

While recognising that she has a public profile, Research participant 6 did not see a difference between who she is at work and at home.

> "there isn't a difference between being public and private. I
> don't do things at home that I wouldn't do on TV. The only
> difference is I'm at work or I'm at home"
> (RP6, Lines 35 - 39).

She saw herself as moving between a number of worlds but having a clear sense of her own identity that is informed by the contexts in which she is working but not controlled by it. She also talked about "knowing herself" very well.

> "I know what I am doing, I know that after 25 years that if
> I'm still here that I must be doing it well and I don't feel I
> have to prove myself."
> (RP6, Lines 121 - 124).

In exploring this sense of "self" the interviewee commented on the uncertainty of the broadcasting environment;

> "If there's nothing next year I could go back to teaching.
> I've always felt that I have a job, a real job to go back to.
> So I never, ever worry. I am very philosophical about it –
> there's no point in worrying about that kind of thing. It
> probably gives you a certain kind of nonchalance. In a way,

the insecurity of working in broadcasting offers the opportunity not to become too attached to it." (RP6, Lines 200 – 209).

In each of these interviews the participants were clear about the differences in the contexts into which they acted in and out of while also being aware that there was both a congruent "fit" between who they were and the work they were expected to do. They also suggested that "who they were" included all aspects of their personalities including the emotional.

"It must be what they want, that must be what's working or

else I would be gone"

(RP6, Lines 195 – 196).

9.4   Core Category

Organising Ambivalence

The data from the interviews seem to suggest that an ability to organise different kinds of ambivalence is a necessary competency of organisational life.   The concept of ambivalence is a central part of psychodynamic theory (Freud, 1950) and according to Fineman (2000) "our understanding of ambivalence in organizations is limited" (p.205).

In the first four interviews the participants spoke of an expectation (languaged as "rules" or "culture" etc.) generated by the system in which they worked about particular kinds of behaviour and how that should be exhibited.   Much of this was formally regulated and the challenge for the individuals in that system was to manage the expectation of the organisation in relation to their own sense of self.   In the first four interviews this was seen as the responsibility of the individual to regulate.

It also occurred to me in reviewing the transcripts, and in reflecting on the material as my colleague interviewed me, that the first four interviewees were working in, or had worked in, commercial organisations where the culture was more clearly defined in a formal way.

The 5th and 6th Interviewees came from a public sector organisation that had re-structured to adapt to a more commercial environment, thereby drawing on two different organisational styles.

I wondered if the formality of the commercial environment and the clarity of purpose (i.e. the profit motive) had an impact on the firmer boundaries between the emotional and rational?

"You live with the ambivalence of it but you assert the principles" (Collins, Line 230).

"If a presenter is too preoccupied with pleasing the boss

then the audience won't be pleased which means the boss

won't be pleased but that comes from insecurity and anxiety

and nervousness, lack of confidence."

(RP6, Lines 250 – 152).

Collins and Research Participant 6 offered a different perspective on the systemic conditions for organisational life by seeing the core issue as that of accepting difference as distinct from controlling it, while recognising that certain behaviours and processes would be privileged depending on the systemic conditions and the intended audiences.

In summary, the coding process was as follows

Figure 6   **Generating Categories**

10   Discussion

In psychodynamic theory, "splitting" is seen as a "defense" mechanism – an unconscious process of protection from unpleasant emotions (Freud, 1990b). Splitting is always seen as a relational concept and one of the measures of maturation according to that theory is the move away from fixed positions in relation to splits towards the ability to accept ambivalence with its attending disappointment that nothing is truly controllable or perfect. Social constructionism also favours a "both/and" relationship with paradoxical situations, inviting us to see difference as a relational concept that is contextually situated. In this case splitting might be re-languaged as a way of making sense out of environments that are "too" different.

"the preference for a both-and position invites practitioners to avoid the true/false, real/not real dichotomy of choice proposed by taking an either/or position in relation to different views" (Burnham, 1992, p.17).

In both theories a move towards "both/and", as distinct from "either/or", is privileged. However, a criticism of moving in this direction is that ambivalence also allows us to eschew fixed positions and in doing so can be seen as an avoidance mechanism. Burnham (1992) goes on to suggest that adopting a "both/and" *and* an "either/or" position can offer the possibility of more choice informed by the context in which choice and direction is made. Ambivalence is then one of a number of

I invited my peer consultation group to reflect on their experience of working with me on my research topic...

"listening to you discuss your research findings reminded me of the position I held in my previous company - I held the "emotion". Interestingly, when I left the company - three women left after me..."

"I was reminded of your topic as I was reading through the transcripts of my own interviews - the issue of "emotion" seemed to be all over the place."

"There was a point in our discussions when "emotion in organisations" took on a life of its own – it was no longer a topic but a process you were engaged in. It began to develop into a theory and not a point of view – that mirrored my experience with my own research topic".

choices that may be contextually appropriate; taking a more essentialist position may be another.

The negotiation regarding fixed and fluid boundaries takes place in family contexts (i.e. we don't expect a family organisation to operate as a rational-only enterprise). In organisational contexts this negotiation appears to be less fluid and more fixed, offering a degree of expectation regarding behaviour that can offer certainty and safety – particularly regarding behaviours that are perceived to be "bad". However, relationships at work are also private as well as public – private conversations with staff regarding behaviour or routine management issues may take place in a private office but are also contextualised within the public arena of the organisation.

Much of the literature reviewed takes as its starting point the acceptance of a division between what is rational and emotional in organisational contexts. This was also clear from some of the research data generated through interviews. Being "emotional" can sometimes be seen as an out of control condition with the attending implication that an emotional person is therefore "irrational" and potentially "irresponsible".

> "We transfer the patterns of childhood or of child management to organisation management and the idea of tantrums – they're always emotional, outbursts are always emotional. Nobody has a rational crisis, they have an emotional crisis"
>
> (Collins, Lines 300 – 305).

Organisational entities privilege the rational but as many of the research participants demonstrated, we are more than rational and that "more than" includes what is useful and productive as well as what is perceived to be damaging. If organisational life is languaged as rational and personal life as emotional (irrational), then inviting irrational people to be only rational is an irrational request. A fixed position regarding organisational life that sees it only in rational terms can only fail to meet the standards set for rational behaviour and outcomes.

If we view "rational" as a context in which a certain set of behaviours and relationships are co-constructed, then it offers another way of viewing organisational invitations to privilege this way of being. A "rational" context implies that there is a formality and visibility to a set of behaviours and these ways of being together can be facilitated by an explicit set of guidelines. Formal rules are required in all aspects of life – not only the organisational. Human systems and their attending emotional generating processes are not so fixed and transparent but, if the organisational system has been established using primarily a rational lens, then it makes sense that this is the way in which the rules of engagement are negotiated around all activity within what is called "organisation".

It is clear from the data that emotion *is* both visible and managed in organisational contexts. Whether through formal or informal processes, individuals do not leave their emotional selves at the front door and enter into a rational state during working hours. It is also clear from the data that organisations are emotion generating environments and it can be argued that the emphasis on rules of engagement around emotion and its control is evidence of the power that emotion is perceived to have in organisational life.

What is the Meaning of Emotion in Organisational Contexts?

Emotion has variable meanings in organisational contexts depending on which level of context is privileged. The research data would seem to suggest that there are three levels of context that influence the exhibition and meaning of emotional behaviour.

Socially Modified Emotion

> "We have become so used to living in a society with a bewildering number of organizations that we tend to forget that there was a time when free organization was either not possible or at least highly suspect" (Albrow, 1997 p.95).

Emotion has always been an organising methodology. Organisations that are associated with "controlling" emotion e.g. Church, political parties etc. have contributed to establishing a cultural norm about what is permissible to feel and express.

The existence of formal mechanisms for managing particular kinds of behaviour also invites specific kinds of responses. One research participant described how behaviour is modified in order to fit with the formal mechanisms, many of which are imposed from outside organisations e.g. Health and Safety regulations, Insurance requirements, labour laws etc.

"There's a whole formal way of dealing with how people want to express their anger … but it's disappointment over I wasn't appointed but they haven't been able to communicate so they will go to the grievance procedure and bring in a shop steward etc."

(RP2, Lines 82 – 86).

Where socially sanctioned mechanisms for expressing particular kinds of emotion appear to be absent, emotional behaviour is expressed in a way that meets organisational norms for rationality.

This concurs with Harré's concept of "local moral order" (1986) as one of the key characteristics that defines how we talk about emotion. The language that is used to describe how we feel in organisational contexts is becoming "formalised" and as a result is impacting on how we language what we feel.   It supports Harré's view that emotions are always "about" something (p.8). When emotion has been modified to meet socially accepted norms, it presents a challenge in terms of its visibility.

Socially Accepted Emotion

A possible outcome of the formal mechanisms for addressing behaviour is that particular kinds of behaviour are then deemed to be both socially acceptable and a requirement of the organising authority.

> "people who accord significance and substance to these situations, they do the kinds of things that will appease the institutions which are then subsequently perceived as being directed by the institutions and that's not the same thing."
> (Collins, Lines 671 – 674).

This further exaggerates the concept that emotion is personal and regulation is organisational, while at the same time affirming particular kinds of behaviour as "good" and others as "bad". The separation of what is emotional and rational only further serves to isolate the individual from their role in *contributing to* the emotional climate of organisational life.

In a review of textbooks on organisational behaviour, Fineman (2000) remarks that

> "We learn little or nothing from these texts about the emotional complexity of life in organizations, of emotion work, or of the emotional naivety of rationalistic formulations" (p.277).

Management schools are a context in which organisational behaviour is interrogated, intellectualised and realised. Managers emerge from these contexts with views on what is deemed to be acceptable business practice and what is not. If discussion and understanding

of emotion is absent, then can emotional behaviour ever become socially acceptable? I concur with Fineman that the integration of emotion into the language, practice and reality of organisational life is essential if richer understandings of how we relate, and how that affects what we do, in those environments are to emerge.

Socially Excluded Emotion

Both processes outlined above form a context in which certain kinds of emotional behaviour can be accommodated. In the first case disappointed is modified as anger, in the second anger is legitimised in a rational framework. What happens to emotional behaviour that can't be accommodated within these frameworks?

"I don't think I ever heard of or saw anything happening to anybody who had cried…but the expectation I had from the environment in which I was working was that it was unacceptable and it would potentially damage my career" (Conlan Trant, Lines 49 – 51).

"people go out and celebrate when they get a research grant, there's great exuberance and that's reinforced – the president of the University will send an email saying "Mary X has got a research scholarship of X, let's rejoice, somebody has their PhD" so there'll be a celebration, but because I'm in the position I'm in (*HR Manager*) the ones I get to see are the ones that people don't like – anger, sadness, disappointment.." (RP2, Lines 71 – 75).

Despair, loneliness, disappointment, sadness, fear, depression; each evoke a "helping" response from an "other". Many of these emotions are those that encourage individuals to enter into a therapeutic relationship. In organisational life they present particular challenges as their exhibition may be ongoing, at a low level and not dramatic enough to warrant the kind of attention and processes that many other kinds of behaviour can attract. These kinds of behaviours may also evoke the expectation that an "other" is responsible for "doing something" thereby reaffirming a story that to be emotional is to be "unable".

If some kinds of emotional behaviour cannot be modified then they remain outside of a formal mechanism for expression thereby becoming excluded from the lived story of organisational life contributing to the told story that emotion is not acceptable unless it can be rationalised.

Psychoanalytic practitioners have much to offer in the arena of socially excluded emotions and the literature abounds with references to that which is unconscious and unspoken. The "pathological" orientation of some of this thinking has seeped into organisational life and perhaps it is time to review our relationship with the unconscious from a more appreciative perspective – seeing what is "unacceptable" as a useful repository of knowledge about what may be unsayable in organisational contexts.

Research Participant Reflections

"the issues are all there…the findings sit perfectly with my understanding of the issues from a HR perspective"

RP2, in email correspondence with the author, on review of the research findings

What purpose does emotional behaviour serve in organisational contexts?

Emotional behaviour serves many purposes in organisational contexts and is always relational.

"You should always listen …this "emotional person" who is outside .. the norm has usually got some interesting insights into what's going on"

(RP2, Lines 171 – 172).

Socially modified emotional behaviour allows the emotional life of the organisation to be visible and managed in a boundaried and transparent way. The presenting behaviour is of itself an organising activity in that it is a response and reaction to the act of being part of a social group.

Socially accepted emotion serves to offer a way of making meaning of the organisational norms regarding the socially constructed environments that are organisations. Emotion also serves as organisational intelligence – an "other" way of sense making and responding to the spoken and unspoken stories of organisational life. Emotional behaviour challenges the formal rules of organisation to hear the Unheard and Untold Stories (Pearce, 1999) by presenting experience in a "non rational" form.

"many of the most important aspects of how we feel are fundamentally non-verbal, extra-linguistic, and "irrational" in the sense that these feelings do not follow dichotomous yes/no, true/false binaries, they are intrinsically fuzzier and more amorphous - it may be that people are inevitably handicapped when attempting to talk about their feelings: even the most "emotionally intelligent" amongst us might be relatively inarticulate in comparison to the flow of embodied sensation within which we actually live?" (Cromby, 2004).[7]

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[7] John Cromby, in private correspondence with the author

What might be different?

"We do not find it incongruous if the manager says his target is to achieve an output of 3,300 production units a month. That output is the collective product of the organization, his goal, the organization's goal. Are his feelings of excitement when the target is beaten his only, or his dismay when they fall short purely private and personal? If feelings are appropriate and required by the organization, just as goals and activities are, can they not equally belong to the organization?"

(Albrow, 1997, p.125).

In reviewing the kinds of interventions made in organisational life to manage emotional behaviour one is struck by how many are individual and personal interventions. Individuals are sent on anti-bullying training courses, managers have executive coaches and individual surveys are carried out. Most of these interventions are predicated on emotion residing within the person as distinct from being socially constructed.

I met RP3 and had an informal conversation with him about my research findings and his experience of being part of the interview process. In the past three weeks there has been a very public inquiry into questionable management practice at the institution in which he works. During our conversation he remarked on the anguish and despair of staff who feel betrayed and distrustful of senior management – the requirement that "business as usual" be continued feels incongruous with the emotional climate of the organisation right now.

In reflecting on our interview he remarked that he had revised his view of organisations as (only) rational entities and individuals as emotional – "what people are feeling right now is as a direct result of their relationship with the company – if this current very public and humiliating episode hadn't happened then people wouldn't feel as they do. There is no attention being paid in any structured way to the range of feeling and emotion being generated in the company…..as a manager, I need to do some thinking about this"

Human Resources departments are the repositories and managers of many of the emotional stories of organisational life and, while some organisations endeavour to re-distribute those stories, some others become a library of untold and untellable scenarios.

Processes might be created whereby the emotional behaviour that is socially modified in order to be heard might be languaged and listened to in different ways. How can organisations listen to the disappointment inherent in not reaching an organisational target or a job promotion? How can organisations celebrate the one person who achieves while running the risk of alienating the many who were unsuccessful? It is in the area of socially excluded emotion that we have much to learn and much to research. It is my belief, from my experience as a consultant and psychotherapist, that much of this emotion can not and should not be languaged – the important skill in an organisational context is to "listen" for it and respond to these circumstances in a way that recognises its value, rather than encouraging people to turn it into something that is more "palatable".

"How do you construct the shape of an organisation which would achieve what it needs to achieve, would sustain the people and support and encourage

them, would take account of the totality of their existence, but as opposed to having mindless, control type structures imposed as a protection against the essential deviant nature of the human personality, because a lot of control or structure is that..a parental attitude has been transferred from the home to the school to the workplace"

(Collins, Lines 698 – 707).

The ways in which we contract to work in organisational life are predicated on tangible elements – rates of pay, hours of work, processes for complaint and appraisal etc. Rights and responsibilities are apportioned to the relevant individuals and departments. What if the emotional climate of an organisation were also part of the contracting and review processes? Contracts and appraisals might explore the contribution staff would like (and be required) to make to the emotional climate of the organisation and could sit comfortably alongside and be integrated into the pragmatic discussions regarding holidays and overtime payments.

Review processes might ask teams to quantify the emotional climate of their working environment and

Research Participant Reflections (contd)

"The third, and related, thought is that to posit such a dichotomy is not only a failure to recognise the inherent character of people as individuals and a refusal to respect that intrinsic composition and personality but is also a disturbingly shortsighted understanding of the nature of the beings who are delivering (or expected to deliver) the productivity on which the enterprise or organisation depends. Not to understand these aspects of peoples' lives is as illogical as not understanding how snow can delay people getting to work .... but there is a long tradition of giving greater recognition to transport needs than to human needs; most organisations had car parks long before they had crèches.

… thank you for having prompted some interesting reflection"

Collins, in email correspondence with the author, on review of the research findings

draw from it examples of excellence that could be disseminated widely within the organisation.

A "before" process could be created to inquire into emotional episodes in organisational life that might privilege the personal and systemic contexts in which these incidents are generated. The "before" process might be a considered and appreciative way of empowering people to view emotional behaviour as originating in and informed by relational interaction – and as a sometimes very "normal" way of making meaning of those relationships.

Executive coaching models might be created whereby "reflective meetings" (Campbell 2000, p.88) of coaching practitioners could generate conversations in public about the private and public emotional stories of organisational life.

But a primary difference might be in the way in which we speak of organisational life along the modernist framework of either/or. If organisations are emotional arenas then how can they be seen to be so if the language around emotion is disabling? Reframing organisations as networks of social relationships with a specific set of tasks and objectives might be an alternative way of having what is rational and emotional in relationship with each other.

11   Organising my own ambivalence

Organising exists at one level in order to put a shape around a task or function. Organisations become the "tangible" manifestation of that organising. In discussing the emotional and rational aspects of organisational life it is important to keep the task in hand as a context marker for how we see these areas of interpersonal behaviour relate.

The primary task in which I have been involved over the past months has been the research and presentation of this dissertation. I have had to organise very ambivalent feelings about that process as the weeks and months have gone by.

My initial curiosity about the topic emerged from my frustration at the apparent absence from social constructionist and systemic literature about the symbolic, the non-verbal and the emotional aspects of relating, which seemed to be incongruent with my lived experience as a consultant and psychotherapist. I wanted to find a "home" for that frustration in a constructive way as it was only being expressed at that time in what I felt to be a "negative" reaction.

Intellectual curiosity and the shaping of that frustration into a "task" became the focus for my energy for some time. I did not experience that process as "controlling" or "managing" my emotional response to my studies.

The process of researching did contribute to a wide range of emotional responses on my part. I felt inquisitive, challenged, happy and satisfied as I read the literature. I was absorbed by the conversations with research participants. I felt despairing at times with the research methodology I had chosen because I felt so deskilled in approaching research from this perspective. I got lost in trying to understand the "rules of engagement" regarding

research and responded from an emotional place, eventually laying the theory aside to work with my "gut" feeling about the data that was emerging. On one level the "rules" got in my way but also helped in provoking a response that challenged me to come at the material from a more creative perspective.

I consulted with my class colleagues and we talked out our anxieties about not being "good enough", our frustrations with the metaphorical walls that appeared over night – blocking our way from seeing what was just around the corner, and celebrating when "pennies dropped" and something so obvious presented itself for our delight. We spoke at length about the "tyranny of not doing" and the guilt that accompanied time off when we "should" have been working.

The meetings with my supervisor were instrumental in quieting the critical voice that threatened to send me off course with the structure of this material and in also giving me permission to bring "myself" back into the dialogue. I was encouraged to be both "personal" and "professional" in the generation of my task. I also became aware during these conversations that I revert to a more "essentialist" voice in an attempt to find my way through uncertainty – something my supervisor was attentive to in offering feedback.

A psychoanalytic perspective on all of the above would argue that my place as an eldest child in a family where I always felt "not good enough" and where I came into the world on someone else's schedule (caesarean birth) contributed in no small way to my anxiety about the rules and the task; that history informing how I related to the topic, my peers and the piece of work to be completed.

Social constructionist and systemic theory might suggest that the task itself, combined with

the relationships I entered into in order to complete it were the higher context markers for how I was behaving in an emotional sense.

In reviewing my own ambivalence and its organisation I realise that of course both are true. Perhaps had I been the youngest child, with an elder brother, born on time to my own schedule then things would have been different. Likewise, had I chosen a different topic to research - with a different supervisor and conversed with other people - then that might have been different also.

As a consultant and a therapist I can only work with who is in the room with me. I can attempt to understand the stories that are told in the room of others who are not. Some of those stories can be told out loud. Others have to be "heard" in creative and empathic ways. I am also affected emotionally and rationally by my work in both contexts. My experience as a therapist has given me a skill set to be able to "hear" the socially excluded emotion in organisations, my work as a consultant has offered opportunities to work with the socially modified and accepted emotions. Bringing both sets of skills together offers a richer engagement. Both processes are constructed as rational and analytic to some extent and both are also emotional and emotion generating. The process of undertaking this research has caused me to feel more competent in organisational contexts by helping me create a "map" or a context out of which to see, hear and be affected by emotion.

My organising task was to produce this research document. That task has been duly completed and brings with it new feelings and emotions – satisfaction, tiredness, joy and some sadness that the focus of my intellectual attention for the past months is now no longer.

12   Conclusion

All relationships have, and need, boundaries. Organisations have a wealth of experience in creating boundaries that enable the primary task of that organisation to be completed. However, boundaries do not look the same in every area of our life and the application of boundaries and rules to the emotional life of organisations may need to be approached from different and more creative perspectives. Appropriate and negotiable family boundaries offer a safe place from which to venture out into the world to challenge, contribute to and create our emotional and rational connections to the world. Organisational boundaries offer the same potential if they can be flexible enough to approach the emotional climate as something that may not necessarily need to be controlled.

Psychodynamic theory suggests that unacceptable feelings will always emerge in modified forms and if we only pay attention to the modification then we are addressing the "symptom" and not the real "cause" of the difficulty. A combination of psychodynamic and social constructionist approaches would appear to offer the best of both positions to "hear" the unacceptable/unspoken and work with the "modified" and "acceptable" spoken stories.

We are becoming more creative about inventing new ways of addressing symptoms – many of which involve isolating the individual and his/her "problem" outside of the system in which this emotion is being experienced. Exporting these difficulties "out" means that significant organisational learning is lost.

Organisations are social systems and the data generated in this study suggests that emotion is very present and very visible in organisational life. It is neither separate from, nor in competition with, that which is rational. The negotiation of these "rules of engagement" in a way that makes it possible for human systems to manage and organise their ambivalence -

and the discovery of new ways new ways to "hear" the socially excluded emotions that are generated in and about organisational life - would appear to be key areas for future study and consideration.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

UNIVERSITY of SUNDERLAND

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Study Title   An Exploration of the meaning of emotion in organisational

contexts

Researcher   Annette Clancy

Name...

Address...

....

I give consent to be a participant in this study and to have interviews audio taped. I

understand that the tapes and transcripts will be destroyed once the research project has

been completed. I also understand that the tapes and transcripts may be seen/heard by the

researcher's supervisor and external examiner to support the research data contained in the

dissertation.

I have been assured that any information imparted by me to the researcher may be referred

to and/or quoted but not attributed to me directly unless with my express permission.

I have received an information sheet about this study and had all my questions answered

and understand that I can withdraw from this study at any time. In the event that I decide

to withdraw I understand that information already imparted by me to the researcher can be

used as part of the study but I have been assured that my identity will be kept confidential

unless explicitly agreed to by me.

Date.........................Signed...(participant**)**

This study is approved by the University of Sunderland Ethics Committee

Appendix 2

Information Sheet

Title: An exploration of the meaning of emotion in organisational contexts

Researcher: Annette Clancy

Emotion is a vital part of individual and group learning. Organisations are full of emotion and managers have sought ways to harness learning about emotions through various processes like "Emotional Intelligence" etc. to leverage them for increased work motivation.

My experience as a manager and organisational consultant has led me to wonder about how emotions are generated, contained and managed in organisational contexts.   In my experience I have seen emotion characterised as something that may get "out of control" and as such is contained, controlled and policed. The traditional split between intellect and emotion is often played out in organisations with the former privileged over the latter i.e. many of the attempts to make sense of emotion in organisational contexts are in fact attempts to "understand" emotional behaviour – thereby using an intellectual lens with which to engage with it.

There is often an assumption that emotion rests within us each individually and as such, is personal as distinct from professional. I am curious to explore the various ways in which managers and consultants "make sense" of emotional behaviour in this context.

This study is an attempt to explore the realm of emotions in organisational contexts. I am interested in looking at the kinds of behaviours that are characterised as "emotional", the function of emotional behaviour in organisations, the system of rules by which certain emotional behaviours are welcome and others not and the way in which organisations generate emotion as a useful way of making sense of different contexts.

My study will use a psychodynamic and systemic lens to contextualise the stories I gather and to offer a useful interpretation of emotion with a view to increasing organisational learning and to create a more coherent framework for my interventions as an organisational consultant in the future.

Appendix 3

Research Schedule

An exploration of the meaning of emotion in organisational contexts

Initial biographical data to include:

Gender

Age

Educational background

Position in organisation

Length of tenure

Previous professional history

Number of people managed

Gender breakdown of staff

Sample questions/categories

What do you understand by the word/concept/idea of emotion? (seek examples in organisation)

What do you understand by the word/concept/idea of rationality? (seek examples in organisation)

Do you think one is valued more than the other in (your) organisation?'

What are the ways in which emotion and rationality are valued and visible in the organisation? (Contexts)

What are the formal and informal "rules" about emotion in the organisation?

What would "emotional people" say about how they are viewed/managed?

How common is emotional behaviour in the organisation?

What percentage of your time is spent managing emotional situations/people?

Is there a difference between the ways men and women react emotionally and/or manage emotional situations?

Final reflections on the interview..

Appendix 4   Sample Interview Transcript (Bob Collins)

Annette   I am interested in your own experience – my experience of you would be in 1

your role in RTE, and from the outside that looked like you had to manage 2

two very competing remits. And I'm wondering if it was in fact like that 3

from the inside?   4

Bob   Only two! Yes, it's a complex place by definition because it isn't a simple or 5

straightforward production environment, although it has a lot of production 6

processes going on within the place. But it's not like any manufacturing 7

entity. It's similar in some respects to a university, with a greater frequency 8

of deadlines and therefore a greater degree of pressure. It has a whole 9

bundle of creative people. It has a highly educated, intelligent workforce, in 10

general - and articulate - all positive assets for any organisation. But that in 11

itself, if there were no external environment, that in itself presents a whole 12

range of issues, in terms of how a place runs, how it operates on a day to 13

day basis, how decisions are taken. But then if you stir in two or three 14

other dimensions – one, as you mentioned, the fact that there are two 15

sources of funding, one from the licence fee, one from advertising. The 16

balance of those has been changing and the pressures relating to them 17

have been changing in recent years, say over the last decade. Add in 18

again, the fact that it is a highly competitive environment and an interesting 19

political one, to say the least, and that there has been the inevitability of a 20

financial crisis for as long as public funding was being allowed to wither on 21

the vine and commercial revenue was inevitably going to be affected by 22

competition, and then the inevitable consequences of that by the reduction 23

of the number of people who worked in the place, which was probably ever, 24

I think, I was there for 30 years, probably the most significant period of 25

intense uncertainty, demoralisation, anxiety that the organisation as an 26

entity and for the people who work within it – stir, add pepper and drink in 27

large quantities. So for an organisation that's going through that period, it's 28

operating on both levels in terms of a rational analysis and the emotional 29

reality for the individuals. And one of the real difficulties I think is affecting 30

a balance between those two - and is being able to recognise and respect 31

the emotional dimension as being a normal part of life as opposed to 32

something that is self indulgent. 33

A   Was there ever a particular episode that comes to mind during your time 34

that really encapsulated that for you? The rational and the emotional and 35

having to make decisions about which way to go with it? 36

B   There were lots. Two days, I think, after I was appointed - I hadn't taken 37

up the job. I woke in the middle of the night and the realisation, I was just 38

talking about this a couple of days ago to somebody, the realisation that I 39

was now responsible for 2000 people and the families of 2000 people was 40

blindingly intense. I always knew that this was the case, I rationally knew 41

that this was the case from the past – I'd lived in the place, I'd worked in 42

the place. But the dawning of that realisation, that that was now an 43

inescapable adjunct of this job was a very striking insight at what ever time 44

it was, at 3 o'clock in the morning, and certainly that came back to haunt 45

me when we had to do difficult things because I knew the consequences of 46

some of the decisions we took were going to be either wonderful or awful 47

for some of the people that were involved. Wonderful for some people to 48

leave an organisation with a reasonable package and with real prospects at 49

a time when the economy was up-swinging, was great, because it allowed 50

people to do completely different things – go to America, go to Australia, be 51

with their children, or do something completely different, start a new life 52

with a degree of – with a cushion of comfort that that kind of severance 53

arrangement gave – great! Really good opportunity. But for others, and 54

particularly at a later stage, when the economy was now not bouncing, this 55

was a disaster. They didn't want to go. There were no involuntary, there 56

were no redundancies but of course people didn't want to go, many of them 57

found it was very distressing for them, very problematic for them, people's 58

self esteem is often so bound up with what they do. People, in their own 59

lives, haven't a balance between their work and their lives – the rational 60

and their emotional, and they undervalue their personal and they overvalue 61

their formal, they undervalue home and overvalue work in terms of how 62

they see themselves or how they think other people see them. And for 63

somebody who was X in large organisation Y, somebody was able to make 64

a statement about themselves "what do you do?" "I am X in Y", what do 65

you do now? After a time you stop saying, I used to be X in Y and now I'm 66

doing nothing, or resting, or whatever it is. I was constantly aware of that 67

as a reality, we still made the decision because we were, there was, we 68

were confronted by this. I knew going into the job that the whole posture 69

was going to change because there had to be change. That was inevitable, 70

but more painful than anyone expected it to be at the time. 71

A   I was just wondering about your own role and your own identity and how 72

had changed or transformed as part of that. It's almost, the way you're 73

talking, that you were managing everybody else's identity, and I'm just 74

wondering what the impact on you was? On a professional level as well as 75

on an identity level. 76

B Well, I think one of the realities, and I think it's probably true everywhere, 77

you go into a position like the one I was in, there are subtle, sometimes 78

imperceptible real changes in a whole bundle of relationships and there is a 79

sense in which people relate to you differently, they see you differently, it's 80

inevitable. Because everybody knows that in the last analysis and in some 81

way this individual can make a decision or a set of decisions or influence 82

things in a way that will affect somebody, then that relationship will be 83

different. I felt that bothersome because I found that it slightly 84

depersonalised me in terms of having to get used to it. But it's inevitable, 85

I'm not sure that it's necessary and I tried to encourage people to be as 86

open as they would have been when I wasn't where I am, when we were 87

relating as colleagues and someone else was in this position. But with very, 88

very few exceptions, it didn't happen. 89

A Which is very interesting to compare that with the very personal response 90

you had when stepping in to the role. The almost overwhelming personal 91

responsibility that you felt. 92

B But that's I think, but that was to a certain extent the metaphor for 93

stepping across this river. There is a, maybe, an inevitable divide, and 94

maybe it's an illusion to think that somebody isn't in a particular role – they 95

are, that's a reality. And that person may have to, at some stage, make 96

decisions that may be difficult, on an interpersonal basis and therefore 97

there's a slight, not deference, that too but I think there's much less of that 98

than there used to be, maybe in society generally, but certainly in RTE. It 99

was always a democratic organisation but there was a deferential tone 100

about it, there's much less of that now. 101

A What did you draw on to allow you be able to move between those very 102

complex environments, those complex decisions that had to be made, 103

because they're quite extreme in a way – the survival of the organisation, 104

people's personal identities, they're very heightened realities, so what did 105

you draw on? 106

B   My adrenalin resources, I suppose. I mean, it was immensely stressful at 107

various stages. I suppose, fundamentally, I believed in the place, I do, I 108

believe in what it does, I'm completely committed to the notion of public 109

service broadcasting, not necessarily the entity of RTE, although that's a 110

good place. And I was absolutely committed to a range of values that go 111

with that, and tried to keep the perspective as up to date as possible, or at 112

least to reflect them or respect them or articulate them. And I think that 113

that was a resource. The fact that I believed in something, I believed in 114

what this place could be or could do in the life of this community and I 115

think that that was a significant plus. If I had been somebody who had 116

been sent in to run that place I mightn't have felt as intensely about it, as I 117

did, but that's because I'm me, I am what I am. But if I hadn't any 118

previous association with it and had just gone in, (a) I mightn't have had 119

that difficulty, but if I had, if I was that type of person, if I now moved into 120

a place that I had never known before and was confronted with a similar 121

range of problems and was sent in just as a problem solver, I would think 122

that would be more difficult to do, because unless you detach yourself 123

completely from these people, and it wasn't because you knew people, it 124

was the people, and I don't think that I could operate in an organisational 125

environment that simply sees people as units, and count their units, their 126

production units. 127

A   I think that's a very interesting point because one of the points that's been   128

made by a number of people I've interviewed, is this idea of being only in a   129

professional role, not that they see people as units but that they have one   130

or two functions, either to create a problem or to do a particular job. And   131

other people who feel that, no, we are social, we are a social organisation   132

and the welfare of people has to also be in there. You're talking about a   133

much richer kind of engagement within an organisation in seeing them very   134

much interlinked.   135

B   Well I think that if you don't do both, you do each a disservice. If you take   136

the view that, not that they robots or automatons or workers from Willy   137

Wonka's chocolate factory, but if you take the view that these are people   138

who simply, that their primary purpose is do that job, to deliver the goods,   139

whatever it is. I think if you fail to understand that a whole set of   140

dimensions and influences, which actually have an effect on how they do,   141

what they do, because the people are not exempt from their own   142

personalities, they don't come to work and leave everything outside the   143

door, they bring home with them, they bring their family problems, they   144

bring their child's sickness, they bring their overdraft, whatever it is, which   145

has an effect, of course, on how they work. Now, if you don't recognise   146

that in people, or if you don't at least try to recognise that, I'm not sure to   147

what extent anyone can, but I think you're missing out on a huge element   148

of how an organisation works. And there's a difference between that and   149

working in a patronising or paternalistic way because how people live their   150

lives within the law, nothing to do with RTE, if people want to spend all   151

their money on the horses that's their choice. But not to recognise that   152

	there's a family bereavement or that there's a sick child is a reality.	153
A	So how did those boundaries about what's appropriate and what to bring	154
	and what's not, how did they get negotiated during your time in RTE?	155
	What was it that allowed that conversation to take place?	156
B	I'm not even sure that there's an answer to that question. I think that	157
	being aware of it is partly the way towards dealing with it. And I am quite	158
	strongly of the view that you've got to take account of the reality, we had a	159
	welfare officer who was available to people, who was brilliant, and there	160
	was a caring environment in RTE. That's mainly because it was an	161
	organisation of its age, of its time there was a kind of family sense about it,	162
	without romanticising it. If anybody is ill or if anybody dies, the outpouring	163
	of support is always very impressive to see. And I think that we, it often	164
	struck me and we often talked about it, that the people who worked in RTE,	165
	all of them lived in their own communities and had lives which were entirely	166
	different, had roles which were entirely different and the people who might	167
	have been doing a nondescript job, they would not, their whole day might	168
	not have anything to do with their own life, where they might be chairman	169
	of the board of management of a school, or a residents association or they	170
	might run whatever it is. They had a whole range of talents,	171
	responsibilities, potentials that they were able to give expression to in their	172
	home environment but were never recognised in the work environment,	173
	because they were doing job A, time B in box C. And this I think is true of	174
	our organisation, there is a bundle of talent, which is rarely explored and is	175
	lost within an organisation because of this box notion. We try to develop a	176
	thing that the only barrier to a person in what they do should be their	177
	capacity, not what their job was they applied for, not what the unions or	178

	demarcation or the organisation deems appropriate, but their ability. That's	179
	what's needed to break down as many barriers as possible, lateral	180
	movement, moving away from the idea that within a company you move	181
	from there to there.	182
	You don't train in anything overnight.	183
A	That would have been a very unusual approach in a public sector	184
	organisation, ability as that which decided where you could work and how	185
	you might express yourself.	186
B	It hadn't been traditional I suppose, because RTE had been civil service so	187
	there was a lot of those highly complex, structured and utterly bizarre	188
	grading systems in places which were completely – nobody did it to the	189
	organisation, it did it to itself. And then Byzantine negotiations were taking	190
	place between unions and staff relations people, in a public enterprise, it	191
	was because it had the luxury of being a public enterprise, particularly in	192
	the 60s and 70s and into the middle of the 80s, that it could have all these	193
	bizarreness, they were ludicrous and highly structured, some of them were	194
	borrowed from the British experience, some of them self generated. The	195
	real impact of which, in many instances, was to restrict people, not to	196
	reward them and maybe deliberately so, I don't know. And certainly it was	197
	a long time before women in a whole range of areas were seen to be able	198
	to make the contribution that they already did, and that began at the end of	199
	the 1970s, and develop not fully there by any means but a lot better than it	200
	used to. But I think an organisation that doesn't recognise that the people	201
	coming to work and bringing their home lives with them is missing out on a	202
	number of fundamental realities, one being the range of talents that nobody	203
	has ever seen before, two, that there be realities that people are unaware	204

	of which would impact on their lives and thirdly that nobody can separate	205
	one part of themselves from the other. You can try to, you can pretend to,	206
	but you can't.	207
A	And moving on to, obviously you were reporting above you as well to	208
	various task-masters, depending on where the financing was coming from	209
	and everything else. How did you manage those competing remits we	210
	talked about at the beginning? How did you make sense of that?	211
B	I think it's actually very simple in that we have two sources of funding,	212
	one's the licence fee, you battle as hard as you can to have that as realistic	213
	as it can be and the second is that we need to sell commercial advertising	214
	and to do that effectively is the key to being able to do all the other stuff	215
	you want to do. Unless both of those are in balance, and in equilibrium we	216
	have major difficulties. This was less of a problem in previous times when	217
	competition didn't have such an impact on how the schedule was	218
	constructed. But as competition grows and you need to hold on to an	219
	audience a) to justify your existence, b) to justify the licence fee and c) to	220
	attract the advertising revenue then it does, this balance becomes much	221
	more acute. That's one of the most difficult issues to manage, where to	222
	draw the line, holding a balance between retaining the integrity of the	223
	public service broadcast while recognising at the same time that we have to	224
	bring in advertising revenue. They're not mutually exclusive but it becomes	225
	increasingly more difficult to retain these two things in balance. And that	226
	was absolutely one of the major issues that confronted us and there's just	227
	no way of, you just plough through it and …	228
A	You live with the ambivalence of it?	229
B	You live with the ambivalence of it but you assert the principals – I asserted	230

the principle that we were a public service broadcaster… purely commercial 231
judgements or intuitions or responses are inadequate, and if what we do is 232
judged purely on a commercial instinct, it's less effective and possibly less 233
good than it could otherwise be. Because there is another dimension, there 234
is another part of our remit. We would try to – not say that as often as 235
possible, we enforce that as often as possible. And to give the people who 236
work in the organisation a sense of that that is a) valid, b) in some 237
respects, the only key to the future, while at the same time in the 238
circumstances we had, giving them some sense that the rain would stop 239
and the sun would eventually shine again, because that was one of the 240
things to prevent, the internal collapse of people's belief in themselves and 241
the future of the place.

A   I would have been very aware myself, just as somebody hearing you on the 242
radio or on TV or whatever else, of the sense of not making it easy for 243
people to go one route or the other, of you handing out that complexity, 244
and the relationship between them as a tangible reality. And one of the 245
things I've been very struck with by some of the other people I've been 246
talking to is their sense of, no, it must be one or the other, but very often I 247
would have heard you talking in that way of - This is a changing 248
environment, it's a reality, we need both, they may not sit comfortably with 249
each other but that is the current reality in which we sit and live. 250

B   Yeah. 251

A   And I'm wondering would that have been, or how might that have been 252
heard internally by both staff and indeed the commercial advertisers you 253
had been working with and the other people within the organisation. 254

B   I think very often that people will take the bit that appeals most directly to 255

them, this is a generalisation so therefore it's incomplete but I think the 256

people internally will take the bit about commitment to public service 257

broadcasting and obviously there is a secure future, what they won't hear is 258

the bit that the path to this is rocky and it will require great change. And 259

the commercial people will hear the bit that we are committed to 260

addressing the audience for a whole variety of reasons which will deliver a 261

strong audience to you and we need your money, but they won't hear the 262

bit about but we have a public service remit as well and we will discharge 263

that and we won't be influenced by the fact that you advertise with us if we 264

have to deal with an issue that affects you and we won't make ourselves 265

completely dependent on your money, we will respect other things as well, 266

and I think people took, as we all do, we take the bit that is immediately 267

the most palatable and reassuring and you hear but you may not notice 268

that much of the other side. 269

A   How important do you think that ability to mediate or bridge, you've used a 270

couple of metaphors around it, is, for a manager at the top of an 271

organisation? Is that one of the key skills? 272

B   Even organisations that are purely commercial – like most businesses, they 273

make the product, they sell it, they make a profit, they sell as many of their 274

shares as they can and they do it again tomorrow. I've often thought that 275

this would be far easier to run a broadcasting organisation, it would be 276

much easier to run TV3, much easier to run Today FM, no question, 277

because you take much more simpler decisions and you think along a much 278

narrower range… but you still have to deal with all the issues of the fact of 279

the people, in terms of the emotional life of the organisation and I think 280

entities have existences independent of the individuals who live in them, the 281

one's part of the other, but they have, there are emotional environments 282
anyway, or atmospheres in organisations and unless they're positive, or 283
they're creative if that's possible then it's less effective or less efficient or 284
less beneficial. I don't understand how, I think it's a very outmoded 19th or 285
18th century view of organisational management - it is you take a cold, 286
cynical, calculating resolve, plus minus 01 approach, I think it's 287
meaningless, I think it's self-disadvantaging for organisations. 288

A Many people I've spoken to have expressed a view that emotion is, and 289
indeed much of the literature as well, that emotion is something that needs 290
to be policed or controlled because if it gets out of hand it's destructive and 291
there's really no way of battening down the hatches once you've allowed 292
people be emotional within organisations. I don't get the impression from 293
you that that may have been the atmosphere in RTE or indeed your attitude 294
towards it 295

B There are times when one wishes it were, batten down the hatches. I don't 296
know, I suppose you could say the same is true of reason and reason 297
control is worse maybe because you can commercialise anything. I think 298
it's a balance y'know. We transfer the, they're not metaphors, they're 299
patterns, we transfer the patterns of childhood or of child management to 300
organisation management and the notion of tantrums, they're always 301
emotional, outbursts are always emotional, there's never a rational outburst 302
but there very frequently are, and we have set ourselves, think of certain 303
activities, we have been afraid of emotion, the words are usually – nobody 304
has a rational crisis, they have an emotional crisis and you can go on and 305
on and partly, it's related to but separate from conflict. People generally 306
are conflict averse, there are some who love it and revel in it, you can see 307

that in all sorts of organisations, people are never more happy than when   308

they're in the middle of a row.   But I think the emotional dimension of   309

people's lives is an essential part of what they are and I think people should   310

remember that. And I think proportion is the word, not control, proportion.   311

If there's a sense of proportion then everything is fine.   312

A   How does that get negotiated, formally or informally?   Or how did it get   313

negotiated in your organisation at that time?   314

B   I think that part of it – I tend to be collegial by nature, that could be a cop   315

out as well because you can get comfort from the crowd but with the   316

willingness that as long as you're willing to make decisions at the end of the   317

day, but nobody has a patent on wisdom or a monopoly on it and therefore   318

I think that if you have a collegial approach I think that a group of people, if   319

they are reasonably mature can develop a degree of tolerance of each   320

other's outbursts, idiosyncrasies and can recognise when it's meaningful   321

and when it's off the wall, and I think it's to allow a certain space for that.   322

And I was given the occasional indulgence myself in that respect, and so   323

were some of my colleagues male and female, and that's fair, that's fine.   324

You can disagree with people you can say that's a load of rubbish but if   325

things are so rigidly structured that people can't say what they feel then I   326

think you're missing something.   327

A   There's also another interesting thing that you mentioned earlier, the whole   328

unionisation issue. I've become quite interested in talking to people about   329

how we set up structures to deal with what is called emotional behaviour, I   330

suppose workplace bullying is a classic example, where it goes into a formal   331

process and then heads off in a direction all of its own, and I'm wondering   332

how you balanced the formalities around a particular kind of behaviour,   333

along with this permissive society also that you're talking about in RTE.   334

335

B   I think that specifically, just to touch on it for a moment, that we've   336

restructured that completely, not just RTE but in general, this is not to say   337

that it's not an issue, but I think that the construction of quasi legal   338

mechanisms is – the horse has galloped way off down the field while you're   339

busy getting people together to build a gate and it's an utterly inadequate   340

solution, it's not a solution at all.   341

A   What function does it serve?   342

B   It serves, I think, two or three functions, One, it conveys the message that   343

there's a structure to deal with these matters which is kind of reassuring, it   344

shows that we're aware that they exist, secondly, it provides a forum for   345

people who feel victimised or bullied in the workplace and thirdly, it   346

provides an opportunity for vindication for the person against whom the   347

complaint is being made, if that's what happens. But, it misses out on the   348

most fundamental issues, regulates our structure, the behaviour of   349

individuals who are working in close proximity, so that they don't become   350

involved in these behaviours, how do you train managers to recognise what   351

their roles and responsibilities are? How do you train everybody to work   352

with people because you can't choose, you can't choose your parents, you   353

can't choose your boss, there's no point in complaining about it.   354

A   Would you have noticed a difference in the amount of discussion about   355

bullying, just to use that expression, after you brought in formal   356

procedures?   357

B   There was less of it, I think. I think there was more talk about it in the   358

absence of the procedures, I think that for a very brief period, the presence   359

	of the procedures highlighted the awareness of it and it was as if there was	360
	nothing else happening. But I think in the longer term, the fact that there	361
	was a process there, we had appointed this group of designated contact	362
	persons, to try to provide a filter, like for people who had a difficult time in	363
	the workplace, they could talk to this person.	364
A	So this was a process before .?	365
B	Yeah, to try to avoid any of those, this was before anything, before you	366
	went to personnel, before you went to your own boss, before you went to	367
	anybody you talked to one of these people who had received a certain	368
	amount, adequate or not of formal training and then they could bring	369
	people together on a formal basis to try to moderate or arbitrate the way of	370
	these difficulties. And I think that was a useful device because it de-	371
	dramatised the issue. But there is a real – people aren't trained to live in a	372
	working environment, there's no mechanism, it's on the job training and I	373
	think there are useful things that people can learn about what it means to	374
	share the same space with people who you might have profound	375
	disagreement – be it personal or political or whatever, and there may be	376
	personality clashes simply by nature of the people concerned, A can't stand	377
	B, and all manner of things. And certainly managers are a) inadequately	378
	trained - that they hopelessly inadequately trained in terms of how to deal	379
	with the personness – the human-ness of the people – their relations to the	380
	people who work to them or relations between other people and there's a	381
	whole lot to be done in relation to that, not a big deal, not IMI, highly	382
	structured stuff but some sensible mechanism.	383
A	Do you have any sense of what that might look like?	384
B	I don't think that anybody should be put in charge of people and managers,	385

to use that word, or supervisors can have a very significant impact on the 386

people that work for them and I don't think anybody should be put in that 387

position without having been given some clues, I don't know - to try to 388

explain some of the realities that might arise. And again as I was saying 389

earlier in my own context, something of a gap opens between people in 390

those circumstances and to recognise that and to recognise that casual 391

contact is not the same as consultation or an informal word on the way to 392

the canteen is not a substitute for talking to the people involved in the 393

problem, but also to recognise, and to have a degree of sensitivity to what's 394

happening in people's lives. I think that middle management is probably the 395

area in all organisations, in all kinds of organisation that most needs 396

change, that most needs fixing. 397

A   So they're getting it from above and below? 398

B   Yeah, or maybe more than most, their sense of their own worth derives 399

from their position and they can be very protective and very defensive of 400

that. 401

A   What do see as the function of middle management? 402

B   I think there should be as little of it as possible, there should be as few 403

layers as possible, although I argued the other way in RTE, when people 404

were saying there were too many layers and I said, no, inserting the 405

programme making areas, I wanted layers because I wanted a range of 406

people to have editorial input. I just thought it was impossible for 407

somebody to manage all of the issues, the financial, the commercial, the 408

editorial, without help. I think the role of middle management is an 409

organisational one to secure the delivery whatever the particular project 410

needs to be but to motivate and encourage people and to inform them as 411

much as possible and to transfer understanding. If middle managers don't 412
have an understanding of the overall organisation what the issues are, what 413
the contexts are, what the policies are, well then I think there are problems 414
from day one, and there has been a tradition in this country, perhaps in all 415
organisations, of unnecessary concealment of information, maybe not 416
concealment but withholding of information, of secrecy, because 417
information is power. We, from the beginning, gave the trade unions 418
everything, before and after we established the partnership process. They 419
never, ever leaked or disclosed any of the pay details, ever. There was one 420
leak and it was from management source, I think unwitting but problematic 421
at the time – but they never did. They didn't get individuals salaries or 422
anything like that but there was no financial fact that they didn't get, there 423
were no accounts that they couldn't get access to, if they have no 424
understanding of what the realities are how are you going to sit across the 425
table and get some sort of idea of how we're going to move on. And I think 426
that decoupling management from power, influence yes but power no, is 427
one of the key issues in organisational management. 428

A   Can you say a bit more about the relationship between influence and 429
         power, as you see it? 430

B   I think that, well, influence is exercised over free people power is exercised 431
         over slaves. I think that power, too many people associate responsibility 432
         with power, the capacity, unilaterally, to determine what people's lives or 433
         existences should be or what they should do and I think that it's 434
         inappropriate in a work environment. That doesn't mean that person X 435
         doesn't give you instruction and person Y doesn't follow it but that's simply 436
         an understanding of the respective roles that people have. The Guard 437

	waves you forward and you move forward, the Guard raises his right hand	438
	and you stop. I think influence is one where, that's influence, that's	439
	appropriate where you have real responsibility, where you effect delivery	440
	where you have the right to influence people so they can deliver – but	441
	influence recognises that there are two parties in the arrangement, power	442
	recognises only one of them and I think it's an issue in terms of how people	443
	interact or relate.	444
A	Do you feel it's a hierarchical thing?	445
B	Oh sure, I think it can operate – power knows no boundaries and like	446
	water, it seeps everywhere and where power plays take place that's not	447
	hierarchy, it operates with people on the same level but in terms of shaping	448
	an organisation's structure you've got to recognise that really. But I think	449
	hierarchies, which are not intended to be, hierarchies were devised as a	450
	means of effective organisation but have been transliterated into power	451
	structures – and they are quite different – the concept of hierarchy is, is	452
	responsibility, sharing and dispersal it is not power and oppression but	453
	that's where it came from.	454
A	Where did the influence live during your time in RTE? Where did you see	455
	the influential pockets within the organisation?	456
B	I think the most striking thing about a place like RTE is that it's influences	457
	come from a whole variety of areas, there are key influencers who are not	458
	in positions of power, partly because there is a real interdisciplinary sense in	459
	the way RTE works, like the group of people sitting over there *(points to a*	460
	group of RTE personnel who are sitting in the same area as us) or the	461
	people that work with them, who come together to put a programme	462
	together, they'd often work in different areas and they come together and	463

do what needs to be done. Sometimes they disperse - sometimes they stay 464

together as a team. There is an element of hierarchy and structure in a 465

group like that in that there is a producer in charge and somebody has to 466

carry the responsibility, but individuals within all organisations, certainly 467

within RTE, there were a number of individuals who were very powerful 468

people, in the sense that they were strong influencers, people whose 469

opinions were greatly valued because of their integrity, their intelligence, 470

the fact that people were willing to look to them for guidance or valued 471

their point of view, would see them maybe, in the best sense of the word, 472

as totems. And, frequently, if you wanted to do something the last place 473

you would go was to the person who was directly responsible, not because 474

that person is not good or inadequate but it might be far more effective to 475

go to two or three other people who might throw the ball in and things 476

would happen more effectively perhaps and less problematically. And I'm 477

sure the same is true in every organisation, particularly in an organisation 478

where a wider range of people have some degree of autonomy as to how 479

they work within the organisation and it is less, it's not a question perhaps, 480

it's not a production chief. I think that in organisations like that that are 481

highly structured, there would still be people with influence who are not in 482

the hierarchical arrangement, but when a greater number of people have a 483

greater or lesser degree of autonomy that gives rise to a situation where 484

you have influencers, people to come to, as you have everywhere, but they 485

can be really significant. 486

A   You say a bit about audiences, licence payers, the relationship between 487

inside and outside? 488

B   Yes. Well the key is to put the audience first. The place exists, we are there 489

for the audience and I think that there are a number of things, One; All   490

broadcasting developed on the basis of being top down that we were giving   491

to them is there from the very beginning. And in 1963 or 4 (*names a*   492

producer) made a program in the discovery series about RTE television and   493

it was unwittingly absolutely fantastic, a visualisation of that power   494

relationship – these low angle shots of these wonderful buildings in   495

Donnybrook, wonderful temples for which there was this anointed   496

priesthood who were allowed in and who then come and give of their   497

wisdom to the masses, who would gratefully and gleefully receive it. And   498

some people fell for it and it was profoundly bad for them and it was some   499

time before there was some degree of democratisation in the way that   500

people were perceived or conceived of as being intelligent, discriminating   501

people who could exercise choice when choice was offered to them. In the   502

circumstances in which we were, we needed to secure the audience support   503

in three ways, one, that they would value the role of RTE in this community,   504

secondly that they would reflect that valuation by supporting the place by   505

looking and listening and thirdly that they would step up to attest to that   506

fact by paying for it. And we did a series of public meetings over a period   507

of 7 or 8 years, which were fantastic experiences. They weren't, the object   508

wasn't to beat the drum about getting more money, although it was a   509

subtext, but it was genuinely to try to say to ourselves and to them, there's   510

a connection between us that nobody should dislocate and it shouldn't be   511

mediated through politicians or government or the department or anybody   512

else because we take the kind of decisions that determine what you can   513

see, we want to know what you think of that, we want to tell you why that's   514

what we do and we want to hear your views on what we should be doing   515

otherwise. And they were fantastic experiences I felt and I was at all but   516
one of them. The public were brilliant, clear, articulate, a very clear sense   517
of what they wanted from RTE and distinguished between RTE and   518
commercial stations. A very highly developed sense of what a public   519
broadcaster should be doing and very different from place to place around   520
the country, striking. And all of them, spontaneously said, we're willing to   521
pay for this, we're wiling to pay more for this. And they volunteered this as   522
opposed to being beaten over the head with it. I think that part of the shit   523
that has to take place, and I think a lot of it has happened, but there's   524
always more to do, is to command more from RTE. The only reason for our   525
existence is the audience it has nothing to do with us. If what we do   526
doesn't resonate with the audience, forget about it. That doesn't mean all   527
the audience, all the time, but if we are making programs for ourselves, for   528
our colleagues, or if the only yardstick we have to determine whether   529
they're good or bad is what the opinion of the canteen is, forget it.   530

A   The thing that struck me when you were talking was that when there was   531
no competition and there were no British channels and there was no TV3,   532
that relationship between RTE and audience was clear in a way, or clearer.   533
Now that the environment has changed very drastically it's triangulated   534
between audience, competitors and RTE.   535

B   Yeah   536

A   I'm just wondering how discussions around programming have changed,   537
how you manage that complexity?   538

B   I think it might have been clearer, or non-existent, in the sense that they   539
weren't really thought about. I know when I was Director of Television in   540
the 1980s, the liberties we took with the schedule, they'd be published in   541

the RTE Guide but we'd change it at a moments notice because we thought   542

this is the right thing to do. We'd think it's wonderful Today Tonight   543

program, lets give them another 20 minutes, but there were people sitting   544

at home at ten past ten waiting for Dallas or a documentary and we just   545

said well tough, stay up 20 minutes, and sometimes we were right but   546

sometimes we weren't right. And I think that there's a far greater   547

awareness now of the fact that the audience are partners in this and that   548

there is a triangulation, you're right, because now it's not just RTE, there's   549

all the other choices. And if you give people choice they avail of it and the   550

audience knows how to exercise choice, they know what they want, they're   551

mature, it's their decision what they want to view or listen to. And I think   552

that there has been a key change, a key learning and we talked about it a   553

lot, endlessly, about how do you do that, and at the same time, how do you   554

ensure… it can't be just give them what they want because then - open a   555

video store and walk away. So how do you still maintain this balance   556

between what we think are the kind of things that a public service   557

broadcaster should be doing and what the audience think they want.   558

Sometimes they would overlap 20%, sometimes 80%. We cover Northern   559

Ireland a great deal in news and always have done, and a lot of our   560

audience are sick to their back teeth of Northern Ireland and they never   561

cease to tell us. In all the surveys we do people say we do too much   562

coverage on Northern Ireland, but we would be completely wrong if we   563

didn't cover it because it certainly was, it was the biggest story for any   564

broadcaster on these islands, we had to do it even though it was bad news,   565

terrible news, distressing news, if you didn't do it you weren't being true to   566

… And if it is the 'give them what they want' well then you won't touch it.   567

A   Which I think is true of any public subsidised artistic endeavour, or creative   569

endeavour. The same argument would arise in the arts.   570

The interview was interrupted for a few moments by a well known radio   571

broadcaster who came over to talk to Bob Collins and compliment him on   572

his time at RTE.   573

A   I was just saying that it's the same discussion and I'm just wondering,   574

because I don't think there's any resolution to that discussion between give   575

them what they want but also being a leader in terms of offering a whole   576

range of choices and also just how the competing environment must have   577

complicated that because there are so many channels.   578

B   Of course, but I think it is a far healthier arrangement now than it was   579

before.   580

A   What's healthier about it in your opinion?   581

B   I think the single healthier thing is that it emphasises that we are there for   582

them and not for ourselves and that they're not there for us. The purpose   583

of the audience is not to view the things that we think they should view, nor   584

is it ours to say Jesus that was great last night, nobody saw it, but we   585

thought it was great. Of course, our own judgement of what we do and our   586

own evaluation is important and so is that of our peers, it's not a question   587

of dropping your values but it's a question of recognising that public service   588

means first and foremost, service, and unless we are providing a service   589

and are at the service in some way of the audience of this community, at   590

this time, then we're missing out on a key part of what we're supposed to   591

be doing.   592

A   Do you think that that notion of public service also permeates the   593

	management of the organisation? I was very struck when you were talking	594
	about – almost the service you were offering to the employees in terms of	595
	creating a good enough emotional environment for people to work in as	596
	well. Just that notion of service, in whatever shape or form it comes.	597
B	I think it is - I think it's changing inevitably, and that's a good thing, "to live	598
	is to change" Cardinal Newman said and he was right. I think, I think,	599
	there's no question in my mind that, I think it was too paternalistic at times	600
	in the past which is not to say that it met all of the needs of the people who	601
	worked there or recognised them, but I think there's a genuine commitment	602
	to public service, I think there's a real sense and there always has been that	603
	this is a good thing to be in public service broadcasting. I think the	604
	downside to that is there's probably a whole range of people who could	605
	never exist in the private sector or enterprise– I may be one of those myself	606
	- and that is not necessarily a good thing. One thing we tried to do and	607
	certainly I tried to do was to bring in a range of people, another life,	608
	another world, another set of values, not so that they could turn RTE upside	609
	down but that they would be a levelling and a balance and of course people	610
	who knew RTE think it's terrible, it's gone to hell because things aren't	611
	precisely as they used to be…having to break the ice in the barrel every	612
	morning to wash myself.	613
A	That would have been, just in terms of socially and context, that notion of	614
	paternalistic, you know, that would have permeated right across the public	615
	sector, wouldn't have been you in RTE.	616
B	Oh absolutely not, and in fact there probably would have been less of it in	617
	RTE because I mean, I think that it became very clear, very soon after RTE	618
	was established that the traditions of the civil service are not designed for	619

the most effective management of broadcast organisations or control of 620

that type of organisations. Once you let people off making programs and 621

give them the kind of freedom that that implies, it is a high degree of 622

autonomy. A camera crew that goes off to Kerry to make a programme– 623

they are gone off to Kerry, they're not in Dublin, you don't see them, 624

economically, stupidly you send someone to watch over them. And they 625

come back and they edit the programme and maybe after the first year 626

people stop looking over their shoulders. They have to live with the 627

consequences and *(looks over to the broadcaster referred to earlier)* he's 628

live 3 hours a day, 5 days a week, that's huge scope for a great deal of 629

wonder or awfulness and when you have to have that kind of confidence in 630

people and trust is a huge part of it. And I had, I didn't, I was the Editor in 631

Chief as is my successor and theoretically yes, true I didn't intervene on 632

that kind of a basis, I had very strong views but I've never, ever had to stop 633

them in the middle of their programme and say, I didn't like this or you 634

made that mistake or whatever. If you work on that basis, they often got 635

out of there and the people with the relevant responsibilities said you 636

should have kept that rubbish off the air. 637

A   But I think it's a cliché at the moment to say that all these structures that 638

we used to rely on, be it politics, religion or whatever are now all gone and 639

we're wandering around the place parentless almost. I mean there were 640

good things about those paternalistic structures in that they created very 641

solid environments in which people grew. I'm wondering what, in your 642

estimation, what's replacing it? A maturation process that needs to happen. 643

When those very firm structures are there they can keep organisations and 644

individuals very young, but I'm just wondering do you see any maturation 645

	happening around taking responsibility?	646
B	I think they are. I actually do think the people are taking more	647
	responsibility for themselves than they were. I think that they're, it's	648
	always a mistake to generalise in particular, especially when they're your	649
	own children but just looking at my own, but they're no longer children, and	650
	their age, their foibles, I think that they're much more self confident, much	651
	more together, much more mature than I was at comparable stages, I	652
	mean they're 20, 27 and despite the fact that they were there when I was	653
	their age, I think that they are more balanced, more grounded than I was	654
	at that stage.	655
A	Are they more aware?	566
B	Oh sure, sure. A whole range of things, absolutely.	657
A	One word you used quite frequently earlier on about awareness in	658
	organisations about relationships.	659
B	But I think at an earlier stage they were more aware of a whole range of	660
	things and I think that that unawareness was one of things you could say	661
	about those who grew up in the 1950s there was a complete lack of	662
	awareness and I think what you said was absolutely apt, that the parents	663
	went away, there hadn't been a maturation process and all of these	664
	organisations are highly visible crutches and support systems, I don't know	665
	whether they were ever as controlling as we – to a certain extent they	666
	were, but they set visible, tangible parameters and boundaries within which	667
	people lived their lives. That can be very comforting, it's like having the	668
	stabilizers wheels on the bicycle – you don't fall off or if you do it's because	669
	you've gone over a cliff. And people adjust their behaviour accordingly,	670
	people who accord significance and substance to these situations, they do	671

the kinds of things that will appease the institutions which are then 672

subsequently perceived as being directed by the institutions and it's not the 673

same thing. And I think when a place changes as rapidly as this society has 674

in 30 years and 30 years is nothing in the context of the human experience, 675

it raises a whole range of questions like what was there, what was it about 676

religion, if anything or faith that kept people, that attracted people for such 677

a very long time and then suddenly was gone like last years snow. What 678

was it about family structures that were so central to our lives and now not 679

quite, in many instances, as they were known? What was it about these 680

organisations that are gone, had they any value, were they mirages, were 681

they myths that we created for ourselves until somebody said, the Emperor 682

has no clothes? 683

A   How much did we need them? 684

B   Or how much did we believe in them? I mean, can you be so weathered to 685

faith and then simply walk away from it, like the crash never happened – I 686

never drove the car your honour! I was never in it, I was just passing by 687

and saw the wreck at the side of the road, I didn't do it! 688

A   Which kind of leads me back in a way to the notion that the value of 689

structures or the control around emotional organisations, I mean what value 690

does that have by saying a particular kinds of behaviour are acceptable and 691

particular kinds aren't? 692

B   I think structures can help. Structures are not neutral and in terms of 693

organisation, for me anyway, they're one of the most fundamental. They're 694

not determinate but they're not neutral and I think they're very important. 695

I think structureless is a tyranny, and should be avoided, structures can be 696

positive and supportive but they can be negative and oppressive and again 697

it's balance, where do you draw the line, how do you compose, how do you 698
construct the shape of an organisation which would achieve what it needs 699
to achieve, would sustain the people and support and encourage them, 700
would take account of the totality of their existence, but as opposed to 701
having mindless, control type structures imposed as a protection against the 702
essential deviant nature of the human personality, because a lot of control 703
or structure is that, is the essential boldness of children in that sense 704
paternalistic, a different sense of the word, a parental attitude is a better 705
word I think has been transferred from the home to the school, to the 706
workplace. 707

A   So perhaps the more interesting questions might be asked about the kinds 708
of boundaries that are used within organisation as distinct from the controls 709
that aren't. 710

B   Yes, yes and the boundaries can be transferred as well and they can be 711
permeable. The worst thing about structures in the past is that they were 712
rigid, impermeable, opaque and therefore unhealthy. In many ways, all 713
manner of things just were not open and I think that you can have flexible 714
but effective structures, strong structures – a geodesic dome is made of 715
nothing but a spiders web. Nature has provided all these examples for us 716
of light but powerful structures and I think that you can have those kinds of 717
structures. I think that most healthy family environments recognise the 718
complexities of the individuals that live with them, if there's a sick child, 719
everyone recognises that, account is taken and people can be very good at 720
understanding the complex nature of the people they live with and we lose 721
that capacity the minute we walk out of our parents, the minute we leave 722
the learning zone. And when you go into education, colleges have rigid 723

	structures and if you haven't done your homework etc. And that's better,	724
	maybe that was always a bit better because certainly in small communities	725
	there was great awareness of what your domestic circumstances were	726
	actually like and there's a greater degree of sensitivity now among teachers	727
	than there was in the past. But it doesn't operate in the same way in the	728
	workplace and it's perceived either to be a sign of weakness or an	729
	indulgence that you can't afford or we can't afford. I think they're missing a	730
	basic trick that they knew when they were growing up. As children they	731
	had the ability to read human situations much more.	732
A	But isn't there also an unspoken assumption that if we are aware of	733
	somebody else's emotional state then we have to do something about it?	734
B	That's a very good point, yeah	735
A	That we can't acknowledge and then move on.	736
B	That's a very good point, whether or not that is a real deterrent to people, I	737
	don't know. Of course there are things that people would prefer not to	738
	know, that's why they didn't want to hear anything about Northern Ireland	739
	because it was bad news about which they could do nothing, it just	740
	reinforced their sense of powerlessness – good point.	741
A	Which I would imagine makes some sense of the catholic church because it	741
	was assumed that they would look after it, if we went to confession and did	742
	what we were told to do, the bad news would take care of itself – it was a	743
	way of processing it in some way – and when you remove all of that what	744
	we're left with is our bit and what we contribute and what we have to do to	745
	resolve those complexities.	746
B	Yeah, but they actually did do something for people with problems…	747
A	Socially sanctioned solutions…	748

B	Leaving aside the awfulness that happened in some of the repositories at	749
	the time	750
A	Some of those physical abuses had been socially sanctioned at the time	751
	anyway…	752
B	Of course they were, of course they were - And they were completely under	753
	recorded and reported, the reality of what domestic life was like and still	754
	pretend that all this stuff that happened was an aberration in a society	755
	which was absolutely glowing – the light of love shining out through every	756
	window. But it wasn't like that. But even, but people work together in close	757
	proximity can't be immune to, nor become inured to the kind of realities of	758
	their lives, because people talk to each other. And when that kind of	759
	positive interaction is taking place among people who work in an	760
	organisation, the organisation itself or the people who manage it, to seek to	761
	abstract themselves by saying this doesn't concern me is doubly stupid	762
	because a) it does and b) other people have taken account of it already and	763
	are going to the union. And there's a negative side to that because every	764
	organisation, particularly in the public sectors there are places where people	765
	covered up all the time, all the time, for people who wouldn't show up for	766
	work, for people who weren't there, were physically there but weren't	777
	capable and that was unhealthy where what was needed was confrontation	778
	at this point – it was destroying not only the individual but a whole range of	779
	other people who were associated with them, and of course we developed	780
	our skills and abilities to deal with situations like that. But then, is that	781
	irrelevant in the life of an organisation? Because I don't think you can have	782
	an a la carte approach, that the only issues of importance are the one	783
	immediately beneficial to the organisation.	784

A   Or that have a label?   785

B   Yeah, or that are manifestly not good for the image, or the output of the   786

         entity concerned. It is taking a very short sighted or narrow focused view   787

         of human beings.   788

A   Bob, this is really great, I'm just conscious of time as well but this is really,   789

         really helpful and really interesting. Thank you so much for your time, I   790

         appreciate it.   791