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**The importance of Being Fun:**

*A Classical Grounded Theory rethinking workplace fun*

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The importance of Being Fun:  
A Classical Grounded Theory  
rethinking workplace fun

By

Damian A. Stoupe

BA(Hons), MSc.

A dissertation submitted to the University of Bristol  
in accordance with the requirements of the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in the Faculty of Social Sciences and Law

School of Education

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Above all, to my wife Jane, without whose support, encouragement, and cajoling, none of this would have even got started let alone finished.

Thank you all!

## Abstract

Encouraging employees to have fun at work improves staff morale and productivity; happy workers are said to be productive workers. However, dissenting voices argue that fun distracts employees from increased demands to work longer hours and increased levels of covert control. Fun has become little more than an opiate for the worker. In this Classical Grounded Theory (CGT), I will contribute to those dissenting voices, not by rejecting the need for employees to have fun but, by exploring the different dimensions of fun; rethinking the concept of fun itself.

Much of the discussion surrounding fun at work is positive, focusing on pleasure and entertainment; however, fun as resistance has received less attention. This analysis of 21 unstructured interviews with UK-based employees explored the relationship between fun and workplace behaviour; uncovering the transformative process of Automatonising. The analysis revealed how employees weaponise fun in an ongoing duel for personal power and control with employers and colleagues. Having-Fun, with its focus on shallow fun (instant gratification and harmful competition), harms organisations. In contrast, the process of Being-Fun, which emphasises deep fun (learning, wonderment, and serendipity) offers a means of escaping the duel by focusing on personal, emotional, intellectual and professional growth.

A symbiotic study to understand how to use the CGT method, an analysis of 22 primary CGT texts supported the theory of Being-Fun. CGT itself emerged as a subversive research method that promotes the personal and professional development of researchers over the proletarianisation and Automatonising process. The method privileges serendipity and fun, providing a template to use in developing an orientation towards Being-Fun at work, and in broader social contexts.

By uncovering the distinct processes of Having-Fun and Being-Fun, this study clarifies, elaborates and extends our understanding of how fun can encourage productive behaviours in our workplaces.

## Authors Declaration

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the University's *Regulations and Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes* and that it has not been submitted for any other academic award. Except where indicated by specific reference in the text, the work is the candidate's own work. Work done in collaboration with, or with the assistance of, others, is indicated as such. Any views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author.

Signed: ..... Date: .....

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## Abbreviations and Acronyms

### Abbreviations for Books:

Three core texts are referred to throughout this thesis and have been abbreviated for ease of reading:

<i>Discovery</i>	The Discovery of Grounded Theory	(Glaser and Strauss, 1967)
<i>Doing</i>	Doing Grounded Theory: Issues and Discussions	(Glaser 1998)
<i>Basics</i>	Basics of Grounded Theory Analysis	(Glaser, 1992)

### Acronyms:

GT	Grounded Theory
CGT	Classical Grounded Theory
PGT	Personal Grounded Theory
PWE	Protestant Work Ethic

## Preface

The intent behind a Classical Grounded Theory (CGT) study deviates from those of other research methods, including other forms of grounded theory (GT). Where more traditional studies might begin with the recognition that something is missing, a gap in the literature or our knowledge, a CGT study begins with a humble wondering about ‘what is’ or ‘what might be’ happening in a field of interest. By entering the study with an openness to what might be, to be led by the data wherever it takes us, it is not unknown for a CGT study to end in a different place than initially anticipated. It was never imagined that this current study would focus on rethinking our understanding and use of fun in the workplace, and yet fun affords a fitting place to explore what happens in our daily lives at work.

The final product is not a verified theory but rather a modifiable, suggested hypothesis (Glaser, 1992, p. 145) which, if the theory ‘fits’ and ‘works’, is considered a provisional theory to be verified at a later date. It is best to think of a CGT study as the first step in a longer, hierarchical research process.

To read this CGT dissertation is to read not only about the growing awareness of a new concept, Having-Fun/Being-Fun, but also to witness the development of a researcher. I was at the centre of an autopoietic relationship; data informed the understanding of the research method while the research method informed the analysis of the data leading to a hypothesis that ‘fits’ and ‘works’ for people in work. Meanwhile, data, method and hypothesis informed my development as a researcher and more widely, as a human being.

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Area of interest

There has probably never been a time when employers have not sought to encourage employees to work harder or do more work. Employers, consultants, politicians, and academics all seem to believe that employees can and should be more productive (Jackson and Carter, 2011). In the search for improved productivity, managers and academics have explored the relationship between happy workers and productivity; even describing it as a quest for the 'holy grail' of management (Wright and Cropanzano, 2004, p. 47).

Underpinning the calls for increased fun and happiness at work is a century-old slogan: 'a happy worker is a productive worker'. Despite its intuitive appeal (Wright and Cropanzano, 2004; Christian and Slaughter, 2007; Fisher, 2010; Haveman and Wetts, 2019), the slogan has had a controversial history (Ledford, 1999; Quick and Quick, 2004; Warren, 2008; Balas-Timar and Lile, 2015). Emerging from the Hawthorne studies in the 1920s and 1930s,<sup>1</sup> the slogan was widely accepted despite empirical studies delivering contentious and ambiguous results (Ledford, 1999; Wright and Cropanzano, 2004; Zelenski *et al.*, 2008; Fisher, 2010; Balas-Timar and Lile, 2015; Peiró *et al.*, 2019).

By the late 1990s, the maxim had been relegated to the status of unsubstantiated management folklore (Wright and Staw, 1999, p. 274). And yet, by 2018, '[m]ost...researchers now believe that a happy worker is a productive worker and a happy workforce leads to so many positive outcomes' (Singh *et al.*, 2018, p. 98). Outcomes which include increased job satisfaction, superior performance, better employee engagement, improved organisational citizenship

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<sup>1</sup> The Hawthorne studies refers to a series of experiments conducted at the Western Electric Company site in Cicero, Illinois, USA. The original experiments explored the relationship between lighting and productivity, to the researchers surprise they found that when employees received increased attention from managers, morale, they were more productive increased leading to the maxim 'a happy worker is a productive worker.'

behaviours, reduced staff turnover, improved wellbeing, and fewer sickness absences (Deal and Kennedy, 1982; Karl and Peluchette, 2006; Zelenski *et al.*, 2008; Singh *et al.*, 2018; Yang *et al.*, 2018; Kools *et al.*, 2019; Michel *et al.*, 2019).

The rehabilitation of the happy-productive worker theory began with Wright and Cropanzano (2000; 2004, 2007; Cropanzano and Wright, 2001) who supported by others in the positive psychology movement, replaced job satisfaction with subjective wellbeing as the principal measure of happiness in the workplace. In an increasingly competitive marketplace, creating a positive working environment and promoting the wellbeing of employees became not just a source of competitive advantage (Wright and Cropanzano, 2004; Luthans and Youssef, 2007; Čančer and Šarotar Žižek, 2015) but crucial to the survival of the organisation (van Meel and Vos, 2001; Silvestro, 2002; Tung *et al.*, 2011; Michel *et al.*, 2019).

It seems appropriate to revise Foucault's words (1988, p. 158) and suggest that happiness and fun have become instruments to ensure the survival and development of organisations.

However, we might extend this thought further and wonder whether employees have also become little more than 'tools' to achieve the objectives of management (Haveman and Wetts, 2019, p. 14), particularly when employers are encouraged to offer 'enjoyable and pleasurable activities...*that positively impact the attitude and productivity*' of employees (Ford *et al.*, 2003, p. 22, my emphasis). Are fun, happiness and employees just utilitarian instruments furthering the aims or even survival of the organisation? If they are, do employees resist, and if so, how? These questions concern this thesis.

It is strange to think that definitions of fun or happiness appear to be elusive (Ford *et al.*, 2003; Fisher, 2010; McManus and Furnham, 2010; Plester *et al.*, 2015; Tasci and Ko, 2016; Blythe and Hassenzahl, 2018). Maybe we have just accepted that fun creates happiness and that we only need to measure how we encourage fun; or, maybe we are just not used to thinking about fun (Fincham, 2016). If fun does indeed lead to happiness (McManus and Furnham, 2010), it seems



we should be thinking much more about fun as a concept. After all ‘the first question the scientific investigator must ask is not “How can I measure it?” but rather “What *is* it?” (Locke, 1969, p. 334, original emphasis). What is fun? How fun is (ab)used in work is the axis on which this thesis pivots.

This dissertation aims to offer a radical rethinking of what we understand fun to be in a work context, where *radical* means returning to the roots of the word and revealing a fissure at the core of our understanding of *fun*. It is a fissure that uncovers two different approaches to encountering and using fun; *Having-Fun* and *Being-Fun*, both of which reflect a different philosophy of life and historical approach to happiness.

*Having-Fun* is grounded in individual, transient, experiences of pleasure stimulated by external factors; distractions that cloaked fundamental unhappiness. I will argue that it is this unhappiness that is masked at work where in recent years, employers have encouraged employees to have fun at work or where employees have engaged in destructive acts of fun. Like joy, fun must have a purpose.

In contrast, *Being-Fun* delights in ethical action; it is a creative activity in which employees develop professionally and personally through meaningful work, enabling them to contribute to the common good. The addition of the common good to this process reflects the importance of the belief that inborn human talents, qualities, and potentialities must be fostered and even protected (Pieper, 1989).

That the central argument of this thesis is in favour of rethinking our understanding of fun at work was not planned, intended or hypothesised at the start of this study; it is serendipitous, but not unusual in a CGT study (Glaser, 1992). Before explaining how this changed focus arose,

it may be beneficial to provide a brief explanation of the scope of the study and an overview of the CGT process for those unfamiliar with the method.<sup>2</sup>

## **1.2. Scope of the study**

This study focused on the substantive population of UK employees, to understand their concerns about workplace behaviour and how they resolve those concerns, thereby informing individuals and organisations about future practice.

In a CGT study the central interest of the analyst<sup>3</sup> is not to answer a specific question but rather to identify the primary concern of a population (Alammar *et al.*, 2018, p. 11): 'to discover the core variable as it resolves the main concern' (Glaser, 1998, p. 115). For this reason, in a CGT study, the initial research questions are deliberately evasive and broad in scope (Kelle, 2007; Ng and Hase, 2008; Loy Johnben Teik-Cheok, 2011), and best summarised by asking 'what is going on here?' (Morse, 2001, p. 13).

Approaching the study in such a state of wonderment means that any research question must be broad and used as an 'initial tool' with which to start the study (Abdellah, 2016, p. 21). In this study, two wide-ranging research questions guided the early stages:

- What is the main concern of employees in UK workplaces?
- How do employees resolve or process that concern?

As the study progressed and the participants' concerns were uncovered, research questions became more focused on developing ideas and concepts from

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<sup>2</sup> The reasons why CGT was elected as the research method for this study will be explained in Chapter 2 (p. 18)

<sup>3</sup> Throughout this thesis I will use the term 'analyst' when referring to researchers using the CGT research method.

within the data. In presenting this CGT dissertation, the follow-on questions focused upon developing a conceptual explanation of how participants used two different approaches to fun at work—Being-Fun and Having-Fun (the core variables)—to resolve the dehumanising impact of the automatonising process (their main concern).

### **1.3. An overview of the Classical Grounded Theory method**

CGT begins with an uncomplicated affirmation; that what is known is not all there is to know; that there is a difference between actual knowledge and potential knowledge. Recognising the fallibility of observation and the need to revise theory as new information becomes available (Markey *et al.*, 2014) establishes a coherence between the philosophically neutral CGT (Annells, 1996) and the realist ontological and interpretive epistemological foundations offered by critical realism (Edwards *et al.*, 2014). Both CGT and critical realism unite to help answer the question of 'what works for whom in a *given* set of circumstances' (Pawson and Tilley, 1997, p. 86, original emphasis).

In common with the aims of critical realism, the CGT method helps analysts to consciously experience, understand and judge the processes and relationships at work in social systems. The word 'consciously' is important. An argument will be made in this dissertation that CGT seeks to provide novice researchers with the tools to develop their intuition by raising awareness of:

- their experiences (senses, feelings, movements),
- their understanding (how they inquire and formulate ideas),
- their judgment (reflections, marshalling evidence, determining between truth and falsity),
- their decision making (deliberating, evaluating, and deciding)

while developing and asserting their academic and personal autonomy.

Privileging the emergence of knowledge and self-awareness differentiates CGT from other research methods. Analysts enter their field of research in a state of conscious unknowing described as 'abstract wonderment' (Glaser, 1992, P. 22), to generate a probable hypothesis about a substantive topic. This approach is an inversion of the traditional deductive-logic research approach that begins with a hypothesis. Instead, CGT ends with a hypothesis, a data-based theoretical framework (Luckerhoff and Guillemette, 2011) or theoretical statement (Mitchell, 20007). It is a statement of what might be happening; a potential explanation of a situation instead of a declaration of truth or claim to represent reality (Glaser, 1978, p. 20). Thus, as I will demonstrate, a general interest in what people understand by workplace behaviour has over many cycles of coding, categorising and thematising, led to a rethinking of what fun means and in doing so, suggested a different explanation of what it means to be a happy and productive worker.

### **1.3.1. The basic process**

The basic iterative process of a CGT study is as follows:

1. **Identify an area of interest** (the substantive area). It is best to find an area, not a single topic, that is of personal passion to the analyst; this interest will help sustain the analysts when the study becomes difficult (Glaser, 1992).
2. **Data collection** – The analyst immediately begins to collect and analyse data. Glaser (1998) famously argued that 'all is data' (p. 8) meaning that an analyst faces no restrictions on the sources of data used in the study; interviews, chance conversations, photographs, company reports, social media, secondary sources.
3. **Open coding** – the coding process is integrated with data collection; as data is analysed, more data is generated. Coding represents the first level of thinking about

the substantive area. Each future stage represents a higher level of abstraction; constantly comparing data snippets and codes to develop categories and concepts.

4. **Memoing** – Clarke (2005, p. 85) likens memoing to depositing ‘intellectual capital in the bank’; analysts capture their thoughts about the research process as the theory and relationships between codes, categories and themes begin to emerge.
5. **Selective coding and Theoretical sampling** – when open coding is complete, and the core variable and main concern have been identified, analysts narrow the research focus by exploring different relationships between concepts until any additional data simply confirms what is already known (saturation). At this stage, memoing becomes more theoretical.
6. **Develop theoretical codes** – in the earlier stages, analysts identified and memoed about different relationships between codes and categories, now the focus changes to understanding how concepts relate to each other – developing a relationship of relationships.
7. **Integrate existing literature into the emerging theory** – For analysts, the existing literature only becomes ‘real’ through its empirical use (Simmons, 1994, p. 45); meaning that what we learn from the participants and data analysis guides the literature review. At this stage, analysts interweave the concerns and resolutions identified by the participants with existing knowledge from the literature.
8. **Write up the theory**

### 1.3.2. Using the CGT research method

CGT is a flexible research tool, often used in one of three ways:

1. as a simple unthinking formula, in which the researcher, uncritically follows the guidelines set out in Glaser’s monographs (especially: Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978; 1992)

2. following the guidelines of whichever approach to grounded theory suits your purpose (for example, Strauss and Corbin, 1990; Charmaz, 2006; Gibson and Hartman, 2014) or
3. the analyst develops a rich appreciation of the method and becomes imbued with it, making it an aspect of their life (Charmaz, 2011; Gynnild, 2011).

The third approach was taken in this study; to gain a deep understanding of the method to have the ability to critique it and understand how it differs from the plethora of other GT approaches. This understanding was achieved by conducting a Personal Grounded Theory (PGT) of CGT.<sup>4</sup>

### **1.3.3. Rigour in a CGT study**

A CGT is neither verified or proven; it has a different set of criteria: if the theory fits, works, is relevant and modifiable, then the study has been rigorous:

*If a grounded theory is carefully induced from the substantive area its categories and their properties will fit the realities under study in the eyes of the subjects, practitioners, and researchers in the area. If a grounded theory works, it will explain the major variations in behaviour in the areas with respect to the processing of the main concerns of the subjects. If it fits and works, the grounded theory has achieved relevance. The theory itself should not be written in stone or as a 'pet', it should be readily modifiable when new data present variation in emergent properties and categories. The theory is nether verified nor thrown out, it is modified to accommodate by integration the new concepts. (Glaser, 1992, p. 15)*

### **1.3.4. Uncovering a probable reality**

The central question of a CGT study— 'what's going on?' (Cutcliffe, 2000; Simmons, 2006)— reflects not just the practical desire to explain a problem situation but also a broader

---

<sup>4</sup> The approach taken to the Personal Grounded Theory and its outcomes are discussed in Chapter 4.

commitment to uncovering the reality of a situation. In a CGT study, the analysts do not **describe** reality; they are expected to **explain** what a probable reality is. By explaining what might be, as opposed to what has been verified and factual, readers are invited to enter a dialogue and share (or even develop) that view of reality.

In searching for a probable reality, analysts let go of their preconceptions and approach the study in openness and wonder. CGT studies do not, as some have claimed, begin with a blank slate (Seldén, 2005; Thomas and James, 2006; Poonamallee, 2009); this is a misconception (Gasson and Waters, 2013; Urquhart and Fernández, 2013; Lee, 2015b; Bruscaaglioni, 2016). Indeed Glaser and Strauss (1967) categorically reject the claims of *tabula rasa*, arguing that analysts ‘must have a perspective in order to see relevant data and abstract relevant categories from [the] scrutiny of the data’ (p. 3).

It is impractical to ask that I forget my experiences as a senior manager accountable for delivering a behavioural and cultural transformation programme within a multinational purchasing department, or my training, reading or experiences as a workplace counsellor and the stories about how people behave and the impact of those behaviours. Nor can I ignore my strategic work at a national level as part of the executive committee for the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy Workplace division (BACP Workplace) and encouraging employers to address issues of psychological health and wellbeing, or simply everyday conversations with friends and colleagues. Each role contributed to a sensitivity that, despite the awareness of the importance of developing positive working environments, something else was happening and that I did not know what that ‘something’ was.

Awareness is essential; it provides the analyst with a place to start but not something to prove (Weed, 2017); approaching data with an open mind rather than with an empty head (Bryant, 2009). Only when I committed to entering the study in wonderment, with an open mind, did I become aware that something different was happening at work than I had envisaged.

### **1.3.5. Engaging with idea-doubt**

The purpose of this dissertation is to present an ensemble of theses to encourage a different approach to thinking about fun as a researcher and an employee. Analysts are not guided by the thoughts of others: data guides them, the thoughts of others must struggle to become relevant. Nothing is automatically accepted because it is expected or sanctified through age and tradition. It seems that when Glaser and Strauss (1967) railed against the ‘great men’ of their day, they developed a process by which novice researchers emerged from their doctoral training, as analysts willing to confront the vested fictions (idols) that we, as individuals and organisations, create. From this stance, the analyst is free to encounter doubt: not self-doubt or even cynicism, these do not help develop scientific knowledge, but knowledge-generating idea-doubt.

Idea-doubt, grounded in critical realism, is a creative acceptance of unknowing, which demands a willingness to explore and develop a deep understanding of a phenomenon. Part of the process of developing an understanding of CGT, and any other research method, is to understand how that method generates, and supports, idea-doubt (Grant, 2016).

Idea-doubt is prominent in CGT; it is described as *abstract wonderment*. By adopting an attitude of abstract wonderment, we, as human persons, approach relationships in life with an openness to encountering the Other<sup>5</sup> and developing an orientation towards productiveness. It is only with abstract wonderment and by being creative that we can fulfil the demands of servant-leadership and support the common good.

### **1.4. Development of the study**

Abstract wonderment demands that analysts approach their study with a spirit of openness and awe; a willingness to be led into unexpected areas (Gynnild, 2011). In this dissertation, I

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<sup>5</sup> When using the capitalised form of ‘Other’, I am referring to someone or something else exterior to me.



demonstrate how a general interest in what people understand by workplace behaviour resulted in a rethinking of what fun means and in doing so, offer a different explanation of what it means to be a happy and productive worker.

This project was to be an extension of my previous research into accusations of workplace bullying. As I was writing up my MSc (Stoupe, 2011), Parzefall and Salin (2010) argued that despite the amount of research into workplace bullying, fundamental issues about it remained unresolved. First, what defines bullying and its characteristics were unclear. Second, there was still a lack of clarity about the mechanisms and processes through which bullying evolves and continues. Although we have a clear understanding of what happens during a bullying event and based upon that knowledge, the actions required to manage the phenomenon, we do not seem to have a clear understanding of the nature, processes or dynamics of workplace bullying. By extension, therefore, we do not know whether it is bullying itself that is the problem.

This study was initially conceived as a response to Parzefall and Salin, to understand whether bullying was the primary concern of UK employees, or were other issues of more concern.

Having worked as a specialist workplace counsellor for more than a decade, and with greater sensitivity of the phenomenon from personal experiences of being bullied, I had expected that bullying would emerge as the main concern. Additionally, it was hoped that the study would identify the socio-political and religious mechanisms that support workplace bullying.

As my understanding of the CGT method deepened, my narcissistic tendencies were set aside. No longer imprinting my desires and expectations on data, seeing only reflected ideas, provided a fertile ground for serendipity. Data elements interacted, changing each other, challenging each other: I let go of the desire to search for an answer to a specific question, looking to prove or disprove a hypothesis.

With a changed awareness, it became evident that bullying was of limited interest to the participants in this current study, compared to managerial demands for increased productivity and associated expectations of employee compliance. It was surprising that fun was used to challenge managers, an exercise in the soft power of resistance.

Resistance took two equally creative but different guises. An ultimately destructive approach, where fun is weaponised in an ongoing struggle for personal power and control. An approach driven by a self-centred desire for *ressentiment* (**Having-Fun**). The other non-conflictual approach, **Being-Fun**, offers a way of transcending the work-day issues by focussing on personal and professional growth. The employee embracing Being-Fun inhabits an open encountering space, looking at the world in wonderment rather than judgment; whereas Having-Fun is characterised by being closed, judgemental, distracted, and deceptive.

Additionally, an argument will be made that CGT, which emphasises the subversion current trends and practices, is a useful tool to support the Being-Fun process and gently question current working practices.

### **1.5. Developing the analyst**

Earlier in this Introduction, I highlighted the risk of employees being reduced to the status of 'tools' to further the aims and survival of the organisation. A primary aim of writing *Discovery* (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) was to help release students from the stifling impact of verification work demanded of them of the great men of the time (Legewie and Schervier-Legewie, 2004). It was, and still is, a subversive research method which seeks to challenge the vested fictions of the individuals and organisations by using creativity to generate theory.

CGT empowers analysts to engage with, and express, their creativity (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p. 8) releasing them from the 'dull and stultifying effects [of research methods] involving separate and routine data collection, coding and analysis' (*ibid.* p. 76). A CGT study is a work of art in which the creativity of the analyst collaborates with the data allowing the theory to

emerge (Glaser, 1992). By encouraging the analyst to use their creativity, imagination and intellect, CGT helps reveal the 'real truth of the social situation' (Stern, 1994, p. 217) and 'directs the researcher immediately to the core of the research process' (Turner, 1981, p. 227).

Glaser and Strauss sought to liberate researchers to think creatively for themselves, to help them develop the autonomous skills that will help them in their future careers; to move beyond being 'tools'. For Glaser, moving beyond generic scholarly skills by developing a core set of analytical skills is essential. Analytical skills include excelling at critical thinking, creativity, meaning-making, curiosity, logic, and being able to transcend disciplinary and other boundaries (Glaser, 1978, pp. 11–12).

In his list, Glaser neglected to mention developing those communication skills required to complete the study; assertiveness, negotiation, diplomacy, presencing (being able to put to one side our preconceptions) and patience; these are mainly left to the analyst to discover for themselves.

All these extra skills lead to the hardest competency to learn, but the most intrinsically rewarding, becoming a servant-analyst. Working on the periphery of the study, creating a space from where analysts are willing to encounter the data unencumbered by expectations, preconceptions, or prejudices.

### **1.5.1. The analyst-artist**

We can all be creative (Csikszentmihalyi, 2008), but it is only as persons that we can become 'artists of life' (Bauman, 2008). In the same way, there is an inherent recognition within the deeper understanding that analysts are, first and foremost, artists. This relationship is implicit in Mace and Ward's (2002) grounded theory of artmaking.

Mace and Ward furnish an example of the relationship between the different stages of creating art, crafting a GT and the continuous development of skills and awareness. By placing

skills development at the beginning **and** end of their process, they note that a work of art is not the most critical aspect of their work, it is their development and openness to their environment that influences their art.

By offering an insight into the continuous process involved in both art and GT creation, Mace and Ward emphasise the importance of abstract wonderment in the CGT process. They suggest that abstract wonderment is more than encouraging an attitude of openness; with its associated tools of communicating, encountering, and bracketing, abstract wonderment is a research tool in its own right. Indeed, it is this understanding of abstract wonderment that provided the support for the method used in this study.

Abstract wonderment is more than a tool; it is the foundation for developing a life orientated towards productiveness and Being-Fun. It is the development of a creative acceptance of unknowing (Grant, 2016, timestamp: 9:19). It is more than understanding a problem; it is the development of a whole human being as a researcher. While this may sound extreme, Glaser argues that CGT is about developing the autonomy, creativity and originality of the researcher which in turn supports them and their product (Gynnild, 2011, p. 252).

## **1.6. Thesis structure**

The subtitle to this dissertation identifies three key aims of this thesis built on the foundations of the data analysis: that it is appropriate to re-evaluate what we mean by fun in a workplace context; that it is beneficial to rethink how we engage with fun; and that CGT is an appropriate tool to achieve that objective.

The flow of this thesis follows that of a CGT study, the problem pre-exists the arrival of the researcher, who seeks to draw out the primary concern of the participants, and how they resolve that concern, through data analysis. At the same time, analysts change at a personal level, deepening their skills as researchers, their awareness of the method and themselves as human persons.

This chapter has provided an overview of the area of interest in this study and briefly explained the scope, aims and GT process. The CGT research method is learned experientially; the method must be used to understand it (Simmons, 2010). However, the process is not just about becoming an analyst it is about *becoming* more human (Gynnild, 2011), accepting that research is:

*not about creating correct pictures or theories of life but transforming life... not something we apply to life. By thinking differently, we create ourselves anew, no longer accepting already created and accepted values and assumptions. We destroy common sense and who we are in order to become.* (Colebrook, 2002, xvii, original emphasis)

It is this sense of *becoming* that weaves through this study; a belief that our knowledge is often provisional and contingent, and that we must be open to emerging insights, to *potentia*.

Objects exist outside of our knowledge, but they have the potential to be known.

Observation is required to convert potential knowledge into actual knowledge. Far from being a 'passive observer' (Charmaz, 2014, p. 13), this means that the observed object remains passive while the observer, the human mind, is active: 'it is the mind that changes an already existing but potential relationship between objective reality and subjective cognition into actual fact' (Pieper, 1989b, p. 55). This change requires a worldview which is 'stratified, open, dynamic and strikingly consonant with that implied by modern science...also open to the transcendent, in contrast to materialist and reductionist philosophies' (Walker, 2017, p. 122).

**Chapter 2** accepts the challenge from Miles and Huberman (1994) to offer readers information that may be pertinent to the study. The pertinent facts include personal experiences that have led to an interest in workplace behaviour. In this chapter, I also explain how using a critical realist approach supports the CGT research method.

**Chapter 3** introduces the Classical Grounded Theory method and explains the data collection/analysis methods used in this study. It is an introduction because I conducted a concurrent study, a Personal Grounded Theory (PGT), to develop a deeper and richer understanding of the CGT method which was influential in the way this study was conducted, the outcome of which is explained in **Chapter 4**.

Chapter 4 is an original contribution to the current understanding of the CGT research method. By introducing the original concept of *methodological sensitivity*, I propose a probable explanation of the foundations of CGT, especially the influence of the psychoanalytical method, Glaser's commitment to social justice, and his relationship with the broader academic community. Furthermore, I will argue that CGT is much more than a simple research method (Walsh *et al.*, 2015a); it has a robust, productive aspect (Glaser, 1978, p. 7). I will contend that CGT, through the meta-skills demanded of the analyst, is an effective means of developing an orientation towards productiveness and thus, Being-Fun.

In **Chapter 5**, the main concern of the participants is identified; it is a basic anti-social process of Automatonising by which one person, group or organisation enforces and maintains compliance with another person or group. It is a process in which the person—employee, spouse, customer, country—is dehumanised, reduced the state of being a resource/commodity/tool to be used for a specific purpose before being discarded when no longer functioning. I will demonstrate how the process of Automatonising progresses through a duelling process; where, in the context of this study, employees may respond by creatively weaponising Having-Fun as a way of reasserting control over their working lives.

In **Chapter 6**, I begin the task of integrating the existing literature on fun at work and the happy-productive worker theory into the emerging theory of Being-Fun/Having-Fun. While in **Chapter 7**, the focus turns towards explaining how the meta-skills of CGT can be used to develop an orientation towards productiveness; an orientation of **Being-Fun**. It is an

alignment which challenges the dominance of individualism and the hedonism present in Having-Fun.

A CGT study is a first step in the research process, the development of an empirically derived hypothesis, as such, the Conclusion in **Chapter 8** summarises the main contributions to knowledge suggested in this dissertation while recognising the limitations of the study and identifying future opportunities for research. As part of the concluding comments, a personal reflection on the impact of the PGT is offered. It is a reflection on the personal process of developing as a consciously experiencing, understanding, responsible and autonomous human being. It functions as an invitation to other researchers to explore, expand and critique the substantive.

### **1.7. Chapter summary**

This chapter has introduced the purpose of the study and located the starting point for rethinking fun in the context of developing happy-productive employees. I also explained that CGT is an experiential research method which helps form the novice analyst as a researcher, artist and human person and helps liberate them from those vested fictions that impact their ability to observe the data objectively.

The next chapter presents an explanation of my interest in the field of workplace behaviour, my philosophical foundations, and the reasons for selecting CGT as the research method in this study.

## 2. Locating the Analyst

**Summary:** The first step in any CGT study is to identify a research area that is of personal or professional interest. This chapter will focus on those personal and professional factors that affected the choice of workplace behaviours as a general research topic and CGT as a research method. I also explain that the study is grounded in the critical realist philosophy.

### 2.1. Introduction

*when one pushes [some grounded theorists] to describe their methods, ... many authors hold some serious misconceptions about grounded theory ... [and that] ... 'grounded theory' is often used as a rhetorical sleight of hand by authors who are unfamiliar with qualitative research and who wish to avoid close description or illumination of their methods. (Suddaby, 2006, p. 454)*

The epigraph to this section highlights a criticism often levelled at grounded theory. Given the plethora of approaches to grounded theory, the vagueness of Glaser's instructions, and the lack of any agreed philosophical position, it is understandable why some might hold to this criticism.

To address the criticism, analysts have two options. First, build personal contact with the reader by providing a personal narrative. This approach is supported by Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 221) who suggest that researchers must own their perspective; meaning that researchers should offer readers any information that is pertinent to the study to help build trust. Providing a personal narrative helps readers understand how researchers are located in the study, how the research question evolved and demonstrates relevant professional knowledge (Thomson, 2016). Suggested topic areas are theoretical or methodological assumptions, personal experiences or training, and initial or emerging beliefs about the phenomenon, or area, being investigated (Miles and Huberman, 1994).



The second option is to be transparent about how decisions were made over the life of the project. Two small sentences in *Theoretical Sensitivity* (Glaser, 1978) seem to be overlooked among the discussions on transparency in CGT. Having argued that researchers should enhance their scholarly skills by developing analytical skills, Glaser makes it clear that analysts are expected to be:

*quite clear to ...[the] reader just how [they] will play these themes [skills] according to the purpose of [...] research and theory generation. To not be clear is to befuddle and derail the generation process. (Glaser, 1978, p. 12)*

Analytical skills can be deployed differently according to specific research contexts. However, Glaser forcefully insists that analysts be clear about the tools and techniques used and offer explanations about how and why they were used, within the context of their study. At one level, this demand reflects a movement away from the mechanical re-presentation of Glaser's monographs about the process, supported by extensive data sets or quotes from participants. What Glaser, along with Miles and Huberman, is demanding is that researchers/analysts be accountable and responsible for the decisions they make.

At another level, the demand for transparency is not just an aid for the reader. CGT is an active research method that always demands the attention of the analyst. The method is not just about the product, it is about analysts themselves, and their development as autonomous, creative, and critically thinking human persons. The human person is as much a part of the CGT research method as is the final product be that an article, a book, lecture, or thesis.

Each CGT study is an exercise in developing those skills that help researchers engage deeply with their research; working towards developing knowledge and understanding, challenging received wisdom — cultivating 'critical curiosity' (Deakin Crick, 2007, p. 140). Those who develop critical curiosity are more willing to express their uncertainties in public because they know that knowledge is emergent and uncertain (*ibid.*).

Cultivating critical curiosity about ourselves, as well as our subject, is vital. Throughout his writings on CGT, Glaser, subtly, advises analysts to focus on their development, developing themselves not only as researchers and employees but also as human beings. He encourages mentees to become aware of the ways that society, and groups within society, seek to control behaviour and expectations. Analysts need to be aware of the different ways in which they might be affected by their hopes, expectations and fears which are formed by their environment, their past or their culture; otherwise, they risk succumbing to preconceptions:

*A cardinal rule for [researchers] is that whenever [they feel] most dubious about an important interpretation—or foresees that readers may well be dubious—then [they] should specify quite explicitly upon what kinds of data [their] interpretation rests.*

(Glaser and Strauss, 1965, p. 10)

Although analysts try to bracket their preconceptions when conducting the study, subconscious issues do surface. Providing a personal narrative goes some way to providing a context to understand the foundations that might influence interpretations being made by the analyst.

In the following sections, I offer an overview of the professional and personal motivations for conducting this study and provide a context for some of the early decisions that were made, specifically the reasons for choosing CGT and how my critical realist philosophical foundations align with the CGT method.

### **2.1.1. Professional motivations for the study**

Before I became a counsellor, I worked as a senior purchasing manager in several multinational defence companies. For much of my career, I specialised in fulfilling an internal purchasing consultant role focussed on developing awareness, skills and behaviours for customer support purchasing functions; writing policies procedures, training individuals and teams, working across functions to develop effective teams, sitting on red teams to develop

the negotiating skills of team members. In this role, understanding how and why individuals behaved was crucial.

The most fulfilling role I held was as a Procurement Resource Manager. My challenge was to define, assess, develop, and embed a set of core competencies and behaviours that would help the buyers face emerging supply chain challenges in the defence industry, across geographical locations, as we began the 21st century. It was part of a transformation programme, to change the function from little more than an isolated clerical department, responding to the dictates of other functions, to one that made a strategic contribution to the organisation. It was an exciting time, but it was also the time when I began to explore how behaviours could be managed, to the benefit of the organisation.

The impact of the 9/11 attacks on New York created a quite different working environment. The transformation programme was put on hold; the company had to focus on satisfying shareholder demands, and employee development was of secondary importance. The senior management team was dispersed to work on tactical priorities; I returned to my specialist area.

What struck me at the time was not just that a softer management style was replaced, within days, with a more muscular approach, but that behaviours of team-members also changed. A harsher, more conflict-driven set of behaviours emerged; claims and examples of non-violent aggression increased.

I have worked as a counsellor for the last 15 years with people struggling with conflict in their lives. Underpinning much of the work has been a desire to understand why adult bullying, especially workplace bullying, despite warm words, has been tacitly supported by organisations. Furthermore, I wondered whether wider society, through its socio-political and theological foundations, supported bullying. This search became the initial focus of the PhD project. Focusing on workplace behaviour defined a research space, but as stated in the

previous chapter, using the CGT method, unexpectedly, led to a broadening of the research field.

CGT is, for me, the method of surprises. Once we put our selfish desires to one side, serendipity can work. Data elements begin to interact, changing each other, challenging each other: we let go of the desire to search for an answer to a specific question or to find proof. We reconstruct data; creating new theories, concepts, or constructs; all the time being aware that they are the best we can do at a given point in time with the data available.

Doing a grounded theory study is hard work, with iterations of codes, categories and themes searching for the main concern, but it should also be fun (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Legewie and Schervier-Legewie, 2004).

## **2.2. An interest in workplace behaviour**

My main counselling work comes from those who are either suffering from, or accused of, various forms of psychological abuse; workplace bullying, neighbourly disputes and, occasionally, domestic abuse (male and female victims and abusers) as well as relationship breakdowns and anger management issues.

Primarily, my passion for this subject is driven by experiences of being bullied as an adult and a child; like many other victims, I wanted to understand why it happened and stop it happening again. It is hard to explain the pain and the shame of being bullied as an adult and as an adult male—the pain of being subjected to small acts of psychological abuse, which to others seem inconsequential. We discount the behaviours of others merely arguing that that is the way they are. We find excuses for those attacking us; find reasons why we should do nothing. It is easier to believe we are the problem and remain silent—shutting up and putting up. We become intentionally and defensively blind to what is happening.

This dissertation follows on from my MSc studies (Stoupe, 2011) into people's reactions to accusations of workplace bullying. In the MSc, I explored the impact of accusations of bullying on those working in small businesses; it was and still is an under-researched area. The investigation considered different factors that influenced the way someone would respond; based upon childhood and adult experiences of bullying (at home, school, or work), experiences of being both the recipient and accused of bullying behaviours, the impact of personal insecurity and the popular mythology that surrounds bullying.

In the light of my MSc studies and writing professional counselling articles (Stoupe, 2006; 2007; 2010; 2012); I felt that a new career was beckoning. The purpose of the PhD was not personal development *per se*, or to benefit clients, but rather to further my financial and career objectives. I wanted to finish the PhD as quickly as possible and develop my practice and consultancy work. To have the letters 'PhD' signified expertise and therefore increased credibility; a process known as *credentialising* (Glaser, 1999). The purpose was purely professional.

At the same time, through my counselling practice, I began questioning what was happening in cases of abuse. I was seeing an increasing number of male victims of domestic violence; some of whom had been accused of rape by their wives, arrested, processed, and freed without charge. The use of the rape claim as a weapon was new to me, but it did fall into a broader pattern of behaviour described as victim-bullying, defined as 'people who are aggrieved and trying to get their own way as recompense for their perceived mistreatment' (Gunsalus, 2006, p. 124).

### **2.2.1. A personal perspective**

I had personal counselling as part of my recovery from workplace bullying. Emerging from the sessions was an awareness of a professional and a private self, where the professional-self had become dominant; I was mentally torn in half. The professional-me displayed behaviours that

were contrary to the private-me. I had been conscious of the 'split' for years but separated work and private life easily. I could spend the day at work, haranguing a supplier, at times reducing them to tears. Afterwards, I would go to Mass, where the little old ladies thought I was an angel. I was merely doing my job; doing it well and being rewarded for it.

No one was ever allowed to get close enough to know the real me. Work and private life were compartmentalised, even different aspects of my private life were securely separated: I was an expert at playing to the audience. It was a pattern that I had adopted from a much earlier age, a pattern of compromise-surrender-adaptation. I repressed my anger, internalised it; and conformed. Adapting had been necessary to survive as a child in a military family; always being the new child in a school — easily identified as being different and targeted. To learn a new accent within a few weeks meant having a chance of surviving a few weeks without being beaten up. To adapt was to survive.

### **Early experiences of fun**

Fun was found outside of school; the family story is that I spent more time playing truant than I did going to school. However, in a school in Bury St. Edmunds, Friday afternoons were set aside for a wide range of club activities; I turned up and still enjoy engaging with the activities that I learned in those lessons.

It was fun; I was actively engaged, learning, and developing as a pupil but also as a human being. The school created an environment in which learning could be enjoyable and wide-ranging without being overly competitive or performance-focused. They emphasised choice, within boundaries; we were encouraged to take responsibility. This sense of agency seemed to be 'ripped' away when I moved schools; it was a culture shock. Looking back, once I arrived at my new school in Lytham, it felt as if I had stopped being equipped for life but instead was being prepared for work.

## Embracing exile

It was not until I reflected on the discussion between Paulo Freire and Antonio Faundez about their experiences of exile that I understood the source of my difficulty. Their description of the tensions between being uprooted, and putting down roots in a strange place, resonated strongly with my own experiences, but there was a section that sounded familiar:

*Antonio [Faundez]: It was, of course, an experience which left its mark on me and on my intellectual future. You will understand how difficult it is to go into exile when you don't want to.*

*Paulo [Freire]: Only too well! No one, in fact, ever chooses to go into exile!*

(Freire and Faundez, 1989, p. 9)

I recognised that much of my life had been spent in exile, living an alienated life. When asked 'where do you come from?' like many forces brats, I responded 'everywhere and nowhere'. Military children do not belong; we are part of the 'lost tribe' without a homeland (Cranston, 2009). 'Nomads' who have developed a 'kind of spunkiness that ... are the qualities that got them through the difficult times in their lives' (Hall, 2008, p. 103). The acronym BRAT has been given a positive twist to mean 'brave, resilient, adaptable and trustworthy' (Park, 2011, p. 67), reflecting the need for forces kids to have high levels of optimism, tolerance, and resourcefulness (Hall, 2008; Park, 2011). The downside is that friendships are neglected or superficial, an issue that continues into adulthood (Wertsch, 1991); creating problems developing and existing within social networks. It is a finding I can attest to personally; I neglect the 'social niceties' of small conversation—preferring to focus on the detail of what needs to be achieved.

I rarely felt I belonged anywhere; indeed, much of my life was spent trying to 'fit in' and belong; adapting to the demands of the audience to make myself invisible, trying not to be different. As much as this study sought to explain why people behave as they do at work, it

was a search for answers to my insecurities about behaviour, fitting in and, leaving past experiences where they belonged.

### **Learning to belong**

Choosing workplace behaviour as a research subject added to my lack of sense of belonging; complications surrounding my professional identity surfaced. It is easy to forget that the doctoral researcher is also working and must develop a professional identity which is grounded in belonging. However, where did I belong?

The initial focus to understand the diverse socio-political and religious variables involved in non-violent aggression meant I could not be immersed or enculturated into a specific discipline. Operating in this vacuum demanded an awareness of the risk of conceptual confusion (Benson, 1982). It also meant developing a depth of knowledge of a variety of subjects 'to the extent that it is necessary, or appropriate, to grasp the essentials' (Frodeman and Mitcham, 2007, p. 512). A sense of belonging, and strangely stability, emerged from conceiving of myself as operating at the edge of disciplinary boundaries.

Moving between disciplines, I exist not on the margins of disciplines and departments but in the inter-spatial vacuum occupied solely by connections, belonging but not belonging—being everywhere and nowhere. This place can be thought of as the edge of chaos where only relationships and connections can be observed. Although this concept of working at the edge of chaos will be developed later, at this stage, it is essential to recognise that my experience was an emerging awareness that this is precisely the space CGT analysts work in. Unbridled by the certainties inherent within disciplinary boundaries, while bracketing our preconceptions and hypotheses, frees the analyst to explore different connectors and relationships creatively and without judgment.

What emerged from my wonderings and wanderings was a personal understanding of CGT. It is an understanding of CGT as a radically subversive approach to life, a political tool for



challenging societal and personal vested fictions. It seems the more willing the analyst is to risk an encounter with the method and the data, the more personally challenging the method becomes. The encounter demands we let go of those stories we tell ourselves and others that make life easier; for those who do not want to take that risk, the method can be applied without any creativity, and an adequate theory can be developed (Suddaby, 2006).

Analysts must trust the method to reveal the problem and the final theory, but they must also trust themselves (Glaser, 1992). Trusting the method is easy; follow the process. However, learning to trust myself was much more difficult. Self-trust requires the analyst to let go of the certainties that they hold; not just about the study but also about themselves as a human person.

The argument may sound dramatic, but the preconceptions that we hold about our philosophical alignment or our personal beliefs impact our ability to let go, or bracket, our concerns and our desires for the study and our future careers. It seems that for a novice analyst, at least, these concerns must be assessed and addressed, or the study could be affected.

Glaser states that he wants analysts to use the method to *become* themselves (Gynnild, 2011); I would suggest that the first CGT study the analyst embarks upon provides the perfect opportunity to do just that. If the researcher/ analyst is willing to take the risk and trust that the process will provide the safety net, they will encounter themselves.

### **2.3. Choosing a research method**

As I began this study, Parzefall and Salin (2010) had suggested that the definition, characteristics, and the processes and mechanisms that support workplace bullying lacked clarity. In contemplating this study, I wondered whether a movement away from the quantitative dominance of the workplace bullying research field would yield a more productive, contextual, understanding of the everyday issues faced by employees.

Hearing what was important to employees, as opposed to what was of interest to the researcher/myself, recommended the use of qualitative interviews, particularly unstructured interviews. From my experience as a counsellor, I was aware of the power of unstructured interviews to create a non-restrictive space to talk freely (Saunders *et al.*, 2006; Bryman and Bell, 2011) about personal and private concerns (Wimpenny and Gass, 2000, p. 1487). I am consistently amazed at the potential of a therapeutic conversation to surface both what is known and unknown, enriching our understanding of the problem.

While qualitative research methods have different philosophical influences, they share a purpose to 'contribute to a process of revision and enrichment of understanding, rather than to verify earlier conclusions or theories' (Elliott *et al.*, 1999, p. 216). Much of a counsellor's time is spent working with people who, initially at least, seek to confirm their view of the world; in reality, confirming their disappointment with the world. My clients are not alone in beginning their therapeutic journey in disappointment.

Simon Critchley (2008, p. 1) proposes that all philosophical research begins not in wonder (as Glaser argues) but in disappointment, a disappointment arising from a recognition that something is missing. I almost find myself agreeing with Critchley, that research does begin with a recognition that something is missing or rather that we are missing something. It seems as if there are two ways of escaping the disappointment; the first is to define what is missing (the gap in the literature) the difficulty with such an approach is that we would never really know whether we are describing the real world or 'mere ephemera of our theoretical imaginations' (Spates, 1983, p. 43).

The second option is to explore what else might be happening in the substantive area. Such an option requires a helical-like process of learning, rediscovering, and re-learning (Luckerhoff and Guillemette 2011). Revisiting the same data from different positions, constantly comparing data through a process of reflection (Glaser and Strauss 1967), similar to the process advocated

by Žižek (2009) for uncovering a parallax object. Everyone involved in the process is encouraged in transforming their expectations, values, beliefs, and ways of working in a process that Heifetz (1994) called ‘adaptive change’. With clients, I am sure they know what issues they face, but sometimes it is creating the connection that transforms the potential knowledge into actual knowledge and providing them with something they can work with.

The purpose of this study was to move beyond the dominant theoretical constructs and expose perceptions, feelings, experiences, behaviours, actions that are often hidden beneath the veneer of vested fictions and uncovered stories (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, pp. 75–76). To do this, we must find a way to encourage the emergence of what Lonergan (1973, 1992) describes as ‘insights’; those serendipitous Eureka! moments of knowledge creation that are enhanced through inductive research methods (Eisenhardt *et al.*, 2016).

### **2.3.1. The heart of CGT: Generating knowledge**

Of the inductive/abductive research processes, CGT (Glaser, 1978; 1992; 1998; 2001; 2002; 2005a; 2014b) was selected. Like Curtis (2017), I felt that unless I understood Glaser and Strauss’s original, innovative approach, it would be difficult to appreciate the changes others had made. My early reading was influenced by three ideas:

- Glaser and Strauss privileged wondering and wandering; a GT study is an exploration of potentialities.
- CGT privileged the stories of the participants over the interest of the researcher participants (Chiovitti and Piran, 2003).
- Glaser and Strauss argued that research should be fun; again, I had no idea how important this would become during my initial reading.

Almost as influential in the choice of method was Odis Simmons’s (1994) use of GT in his psychotherapeutic practice. His *Grounded Therapy* met all the criteria of a CGT study, fitting

my circumstance, working for me, modifiable within my context, and was meaningful; finally, it grabbed me.

Glaser has functioned as the guardian of the purity of the method over the last 50 years. He has rejected remodelled forms of GT despite the encouragement and recognition that *Discovery* represented ‘a beginning venture in the development of improved methods for discovering grounded theory’ (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p. 1). I wondered why Glaser was so dismissive of other forms of GT, even of his former students; what was missing from the remodelling that was so fundamental? More to the point, I wondered what it was that I was missing. I could see the logic in Charmaz’s constructivist approach, and I gave serious consideration to using Gibson and Hartman’s (2014) revised constructivist approach as a guide for this study.

Ultimately, it was the ‘guide’ aspect that remodelling provided that seems to influence Glaser’s rejection. Remodellings provide novice researchers with off-the-shelf solutions, reducing the input required from the researcher. Unlike, for example, Kathy Charmaz’s constructivist approach to GT, CGT does not provide the researcher with a research paradigm to align with. Initially, I felt Gibson and Hartman offered a coherent argument that I could find something that would fit my own beliefs, providing not just a research paradigm but a detailed explanation that could be followed mechanically. Reflecting on those early days, I was unaware that I was unconsciously adapting my beliefs to what had been written; forcing myself to fit the method.

### **2.3.2. Using unstructured interviews**

In contrast to phenomenological researchers, analysts are interested in social situations and relationships between actors (Tan, 2010) or ‘how social circumstances could account for the interactions, behaviours and experiences of the people being studied’ (Benoliel, 1996, p. 413). Annells (1997) suggests that social processes and social structures be added to social

circumstances to understand how people adapt to their conditions. However, those processes are 'too complex, too relative, too elusive, or too exotic' to use pre-structured designs (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 17) and unstructured interviews offer a useful way to progress (Minichiello, 1990).

Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 17) caution novice researchers to take care using an unstructured approach to research. Glaser, initially with Strauss in *Discovery* and his later monographs, provides novice analysts with a structure while encouraging maximum flexibility. Novice researchers enter a highly structured process of becoming fully formed researchers developing their skills and awareness in a safe, non-judgemental, space. A space in which issues such as philosophical alignment, the main area of research, interview, along with analytical skills, bracketing and making connections between participants experiences and the literature are appreciated, all develop and emerge while learning the method.

What is often neglected in the CGT literature by its critics is that the:

*research product constitutes a theoretical formulation or integrated set of conceptual hypotheses about the substantive area under study. **That is all The yield is just hypotheses!*** (Glaser, 1992, p. 16, emphasis in original)

The CGT predates finding a gap in the literature by transforming potential knowledge into actual knowledge, using empirical data and offering it for future verification through surveys or experiments (Glaser, 1992).

Each research study contains two intentions; the intention for conducting the study, and the intention which supports the research method itself. If listening to the voices of participants to **describe** their experiences had been the intent of the study, then a phenomenological or ethnographic research method would be appropriate. If the intention was to remain focused on the experiences of the participants alone and provide a philosophical description of what

was happening, again, phenomenology would be suitable (Wimpenny and Gass, 2000). Alternatively, had I wished to spend an extended period in a workplace setting (Roulston, 2006) describing workplace cultures, an ethnographic approach would have been appropriate (Goulding, 2005). None of these description-creating methods conveyed the intent of behind this study.

My concerns with description-based research methods extend to other forms of GT. While CGT focuses upon the generation of ideas (Annells, 1997); Strauss and Corbin (1998), for example, emphasise the **development** of a theory, while Charmaz (2006) prefers to **construct** a theory; both of which require pre-existing scaffolding in the form of preconceptions. Only CGT offered the combination of factors and aligned with my nascent philosophical foundations.

### **2.3.3. Establishing philosophical foundations**

In traditional research methods, one of three, mutually exclusive, metatheories—positivism, postmodernism or critical realism—are adopted by scholars and researchers (Fleetwood, 2005), which, which in turn guides, justifies and evaluates the research method (Carter and Little, 2007). Positivists regard the world as a closed system, objectively ‘given’, to be observed and experimented upon, whereas postmodernists take a diametrically opposite view, arguing that the world is socially and discursively constructed by humans (Sousa, 2010). Critical realists, on the other hand, regard the world as mostly mind-independent, an open system of structured and powerful entities and powerless, structureless events. in which the researcher joins in experiencing (describing), understanding, and judging (Lonergan, 1992; Sousa, 2010) asking not only ‘what is’ but also ‘what might be.’

Charmaz declares that CGT is ‘an objective, external reality, a neutral observer who discovers data, reductionist inquiry of manageable research problems, and objectivist rendering of data’ (Charmaz, 2000, p. 510) that holds to ‘outdated assumptions of an objective external reality, a

passive, neutral observer, or a detached narrow empiricism' (Charmaz, 2014, p. 13). It is a view shared by others (see, for example, Bryant, 2002; Kelle, 2005; Ralph *et al.*, 2014b; Matteucci and Gnoth, 2017). However, surrendering 'what we know' (actual knowledge) in favour of answering the questions 'what is' and 'what might be' (potential knowledge) are central to the CGT project and the reason why CGT has sought to maintain its philosophical neutrality (Glaser, 1978; 1992; 2005b; Holton, 2007; Glaser, 2012a; Urquhart, 2013; Walsh *et al.*, 2015a; Holton and Walsh, 2017).

Glaser is brusque in his rejection of those who seek to impose a philosophical stance on the method itself:

*for all the lofty academic talk, you can take [CGT] whichever way you choose [CGT] is just a set of steps that take you from walking in the data knowing nothing to emerging with a conceptual theory of knowing how the core variable is constantly resolved. (Walsh *et al.*, 2015, p. 594)*

Holton (2007) argues more gently that CGT 'can adopt any epistemological perspective appropriate to the data and the ontological stance of the researcher' (p. 269). Urquhart and Fernandez (see, for example, 2013, p. 8) add that CGT is orthogonal to the data and the researcher's philosophical stance. All three analysts agree with those who argue that the researcher's philosophical stance affects the research design, the interpretation of data (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994; Creswell, 2013) and how subsequent research is received by peers (Rolfe, 2006; Porter, 2007).

Those who criticise the philosophical neutrality of CGT (Babchuk, 1996; Birks and Mills, 2015) as an 'epistemological fairy tale' (Bryant, 2009, para. 13) seem to forget the intention behind a CGT study is to generate 'suggested hypotheses' (Glaser, 1992, p. 122) that fit, work and are relevant for the intended audience. Once generated, the claims are then subjected to

verification in future studies using surveys and/or experiments; at that stage, philosophical foundations' concerns come to the fore.

The lack of ontological and epistemological clarity and the bracketing of philosophical foundations in CGT may, in part, be explained by the tension that existed between Glaser and Strauss in their different aims and opinions of GT (McCreaddie and Payne, 2010, p. 787) with Glaser supporting philosophical neutrality while Strauss inclined towards pragmatism.<sup>6</sup>

Glaser and Strauss' solution was to develop a method as opposed to a methodology and put their differences to one side. However, they could not hold this tension and eventually their paths separated along philosophical grounds, primarily over the principle of emergence; a structural principle for CGT (Glaser, 1992; Walsh *et al.*, 2015a).

Breckenridge *et al.* (2012, p. 69) caution that being overly concerned about ontology and epistemology can overly complicate the simple purpose of a CGT study. However, that is different from suggesting that analysts should not understand their philosophical foundations.

To begin generating knowledge, analysts are expected to have a broad range of scholarly skills augmented by a set of creative, analytical skills (Glaser, 1978). Implicit in this expectation, and Holton's response referred to earlier, is that analysts will be aware of the philosophical basis to their study alongside a broad appreciation of other metatheories that inform the emerging theory. Far from a developing a 'fabricated story' (Gasson, 2004, p. 94), analysts are invited to be aware of the impact of their particular philosophical stance, and bracket it; allowing the theoretical lens to emerge during the cycles of data analysis (see, for example, Barrett and Walsham, 1999).

In Glaser's brusque response to critics, referred to earlier in this section, there is evidence to support claims that a coherent methodological approach emerges when CGT is paired with

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<sup>6</sup> It is worth noting that the philosophy of science is 'one of Barney Glaser's pet hates!' (Walsh *et al.*, 2015a, p. 622)



critical realist assumptions (Annells, 1997; Weed, 2009; Kempster and Parry, 2011; Oliver, 2012; Howard-Payne, 2016). By walking in the data, observing actual events with real causes, analysts reveal the potential knowledge that helps explain the real causes. Put another way, as we let go of our preconceptions (actual knowledge) and become open to what it is possible to know (potential knowledge), immersing ourselves in actual data, we access an objective reality through a subjective epistemology (Poonamallee, 2009).

### **CGT and Critical Realism**

I entered this study, philosophically naïve. I fluctuated between different positions, not sure where I belonged. Like Walsh (2015b, p. 621), I found the two extreme caricatures of positivism and social constructivism, while neat, tidy and reassuring, ultimately unrealistic. In working life, both in procurement and counselling, things are more complex and emergent than either extreme seemed to acknowledge.

The adversarial relationship between positivist empiricism and strong constructionism has been described as one of ‘dialectic twins, mutually supporting each other as they prey on the obvious weaknesses of the other party’ (McPartland, 2014, p. 61). Whereas critical realism extends ‘relief from the pressure of pursuing unrealistic levels of certainty in knowing while avoiding the pitfalls of relativism’ (Walker, 2017, p. 122): ‘we not only experience, we inquire; we understand; we try to frame our best case; we revise’ (McPartland, 2014, p. 61).

There is no cohesive framework that unites critical realists (Archer *et al.*, 2016). Roy Bhaskar has been influential in the development of critical realism (Sousa, 2010; Gorski, 2013), with his assertion of the ‘epistemic fallacy’ that ‘the nature of the world can only be known from [a study of] science, that its nature is determined by [the structure of] science’ (Bhaskar, 2008, p. 20). At an ontological level, critical realism argues for the existence of an externally, causally efficacious real world while recognising that there are limitations, both cultural and temporal, on our access to that world (Mingers, 2017). In effect, critical realism maintains that there is a

difference between what is knowable (potential knowledge) and what we know (actual knowledge).

The act of knowing is central to the work of a lesser-known critical realist, Bernard Lonergan (1972, 1992, 1993) whose work, with its similarity to that of Glaser and Erich Fromm, has been influential in this study. Although Kanaris (2005) wrote of Lonergan that his strategy was to ‘reform what has been deformed by oversight and bias’ (p. 337), the sentiment could have been shared by Glaser and Rogers. All three scholars sought to help people identify meaning in their lives and develop as fully autonomous human agents. Each one, in their writing, proposed a gradual development from experience (common-sense), through understanding (scientific inquiry/theory) and judgment (interiority/reflection) and to an ethically-based, socially shared knowledge (alterity/action) which challenges those vested fictions that control our lives.

#### Lonergan’s critical realism

Lonergan’s approach towards self-understanding, like Rogers’ person-centred counselling approach (Coghlan, 2008, p. 354), begins with the person participating in the process of knowing. However, where Rogers strives to develop awareness by differentiating between feelings, Lonergan explores the process of knowing and doing (*ibid.*); developing ‘an awareness immanent in cognitional acts’ (Marsh, 1995, p. 154). For example, we are not only aware of what we are reading, but we are also aware that we are engaged in the process of reading and ourselves performing the act for reading, and our senses as we read—as a unified subject.

Being a unified subject means to be:

*a conscious, reflexive, embodied, self-transcending centre of subjective experience, durable identity, moral commitment, and social communication who – as the efficient cause of his or her own responsible actions and interactions – exercise complex capacities for agency and intersubjectivity in order to develop and sustain his or her own*

*communicable self in loving relationships with other personal selves and with the nonpersonal world.* (Smith, 2010, p. 61)

Essentially, Smith (2010, p. 203) echoes the discussion we will have later in this dissertation (in section 7.40), arguing that ‘human beings are persons’ and that even though issues of morality, values and human dignity are non-tangible, they are nevertheless inescapably real (Murray, 2014). It is, as Lonergan maintains, a call for an openness to an encounter with others.

Lonergan emphasises the interdependent relationship between philosophy and education. He argues that ‘philosophy is the reflective component, and education the active component, at the ultimate level of reflection and action in human life’ (Lonergan, 1993, p. 5). The twin components of reflection and action are central in Lonergan’s critical realist approach and his process of self-appropriation, a method used to pursue self-knowledge ethically.

If appropriation means ‘the making of a thing private property, whether another's or (as now commonly) one's own; taking as one's own or to one's own use’ (OED Online, 2019a), self-appropriation means becoming aware of our intellectual activities. Identifying and distinguishing them, grasping their relationships and making the process explicit (Coghlan, 2008) and in so doing, developing intellectual and personal freedom based upon understanding, reflection and judgement.

In Lonergan’s model, we cannot be passive receivers of data, sense data or otherwise.

Whatever we experience spontaneously generates questions about that experience; each emergent layer builds on the previous one. As we start to understand that data, we have insights into whatever is under investigation, and these insights lead to understanding.

Lonergan (1992, p. 27) gave the example of Archimedes, leaping out of the baths in Syracuse shouting ‘Eureka!’ to explain this process. King Hiero had been given a crown of doubtful provenance; Archimedes was tasked to decide whether the crown was made of gold or a base metal. Lying in the baths, Archimedes realised that all he had to do was put the crown in water.

The principle of water displacement is not the main point, but the fact that Archimedes had an insight which others, sharing the bath, had not. Archimedes engaged in a process that moved from sensory experience to insight into idea conception and definition which require judgment.

The process undertaken by Archimedes is reflected in Lonergan's four stages of meaning: undifferentiated common sense, theory and interiority, alterity. Although he developed the first three levels of meaning in his writing (Lonergan, 1973), the final stage was discussed, but not fully developed (Dadosky, 2019). The stages reflect a structured refinement of common-sense (Teevan, 2002) which reflects the values and meanings of society and culture (Byrne, 1986) which inform how we sense, perceive and intuit information, which may or not reflect the vested fictions of society. Lonergan is really discussing how we use insight, which forms the foundation of the CGT research method.

#### **2.4. Chapter summary**

Introducing this chapter, I explained that the aim was to provide a personal and professional explanation for the choices made in terms of the research topic and the research method.

Recognising, where I was located within a research paradigm was, probably, the most challenging aspect of the earlier stages of this study. Glaser's reluctance to engage in any philosophical debate in respect of CGT seems to mask an assumption that analysts are experienced researchers and knowledgeable of their philosophical alignment. For a novice researcher, there is a temptation to simply adapt to those methods that have a clear signpost, for example, Constructivist Grounded Theory.

Spending time exploring different philosophical perspectives during the PGT provided a good foundation for understanding not only CGT but how it differs from other forms of GT, and what my position is. The movement from experiences to knowledge to action, uncovering hidden aspects of knowledge, and making research fun connects Lonergan with Glaser. Over

the course, of the next two chapters, this connection will be made evident. As the PGT led to a richer appreciation of CGT, critical realism emerged as a natural home for me, but also for CGT as a research method and for the area of interest.

### 3. Classical Grounded Theory: A misunderstood research method

**Summary:** Building on the philosophical foundation identified in the previous chapter, in this chapter, I explain the basic shape of a CGT study, how the research was conducted, introduce the Participants, and explore the ethical concerns raised.

#### 3.1. Introduction

With so many different approaches to grounded theory available, it felt crucial to understand what made CGT unique and worthy of defending but also how to conduct a CGT study. While Simmons (2010) points out that most novice analysts learn how to conduct a CGT study ‘on the job,’ I felt my lack of knowledge would be a risk to the outcome of the study, so embarked on a Personal Grounded Theory (PGT) to develop an in-depth understanding of CGT while learning how to conduct a study at the same time.<sup>7</sup>

This chapter is presented in four parts, reflecting the two connected, grounded theories (the CGT and the PGT) that were performed in this project. The first part explains the basic shape of a CGT study, identifying the key stages, and why CGT studies should not be rushed. The second part explains how the main CGT study was conducted; introducing the participants, how data was collected and analysed. Although using the same core method, a PGT begins further along the research process as the problem is already known, so the third part explains how data was collected and analysed in the PGT. The final part of the chapter explains how the ethical issues that arise when researching with human participants were resolved.

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<sup>7</sup> The product of the PGT was a personal understanding of the foundations of CGT and the skills necessary to effectively complete a CGT study; an outcome I describe as developing *methodological sensitivity* which will be addressed in the next chapter.

### 3.2. Understanding CGT

For over 50 years, GT has been used across disciplines, contexts and research paradigms (Glaser, 1978; Schall, 1983; Matavire and Brown, 2013; Wolfswinkel *et al.*, 2013; Ullrich *et al.*, 2014; Walsh *et al.*, 2015a; Knigge and Cope, 2016). It has become ‘the most popular qualitative research method on the planet’ (Clarke *et al.*, 2015, p. 25), with as many different approaches as there are grounded theorists (Dey, 1999; Gibson and Hartman, 2014). However, the inherent flexibility of GT has led to misunderstandings and misuses of the method (Glaser, 1999; Suddaby, 2006; 2006; Walsh *et al.*, 2015a; Charmaz and Keller, 2016; Martin *et al.*, 2018).

Different scholars have offered step-by-step guides to help researchers develop a functional GT (Suddaby, 2006); often the guides expose a degree of forcing; for example, as we saw in the previous chapter, Strauss and Corbin (1997) focus on ‘developing’ theories while Charmaz (2006) along with Gibson and Hartman (2014) emphasise the ‘construction’ of theories; each providing a research paradigm from which to operate. Glaser in his monographs (for example, Glaser, 1968; 1978; 1992; 1996; 1998; 2014a) provides a simple process to follow but does not guide the research paradigm. With such a diverse range of opinion over what constitutes GT, it is not surprising that a novice researcher, like me, would be confused about what GT/CGT is and how to use it.

Walsh *et al.* (2015a), acknowledging the confusion inherent in studying GT, invited eminent GT specialists (including Barney Glaser and Kathy Charmaz) to a symposium to explore the characteristics of GT. Unfortunately, Walsh’s symposium added little to our understanding of GT; offering what seemed to be a diplomatic compromise. However, given the range of vested interests held by the attendees, it seemed unlikely that a genuinely united position would be forthcoming. The attendees agreed that: GT is philosophically neutral; it is a method, a methodology, a framework, and a paradigm; and that remodelling GT is inevitable.

Of note, was a forceful dismissal of the discussion and a rejection of the remodelling of GT by the method's co-originator, Barney Glaser. Glaser's curt contribution to the symposium began by rejecting what had gone on before: 'I take issue with a lot of this talk that you just heard because it's "heavy talk". But that's what academics do. So, it's their talk, a perspective' (Walsh *et al.*, 2015a, p. 593). He continued by reminding people that GT is a simple method, not only used by academics but by people in their everyday lives, providing an example of buying airline tickets and the need to engage in constant comparison and developing a theory of how to resolve the problem of arriving somewhere on time. For Glaser, the remodelling of GT by many of those in the room represented the transformation of a simple research method into a complicated jargonised, specialist process (Walsh *et al.*, 2015a, pp. 593-594).

Glaser's frustration was, perhaps predictable; for the last 30 years, he has challenged attempts to remodel his research method. Glaser's irritation with academic careerism has been evident for a much longer time and was one of the primary causes for the development of the GT method itself (Charmaz, 2000, S164), and the source of one of Glaser's few public personal attacks on another scholar.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, in the next two chapters, I will argue that the foundations of the CGT method lie in Glaser's exasperation with the constraints placed on early career academics by more senior academics.

There is, in Glaser's writing, an element of *ressentiment* a simmering, unfulfilled desire for revenge (Tomelleri, 2015). When Strauss and Corbin (1990) remodelled GT, Glaser ignored the advice of his colleagues and published a monograph attacking Strauss, his collaborator in developing GT. It was an act that led to his research funding drying up and people turning against him (Glaser, 1992). Shortly after writing *Basics*, he left his university job and assumed a

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<sup>8</sup> Glaser has never been reluctant to attacking the ideas of other academics (particularly Kathy Charmaz's concept of constructivist grounded theory), however, I found only two recorded instances where Glaser made a personal attack on someone. His most vindictive attack was launched against Juliet Corbin for her role in remodelling grounded theory with Anselm Strauss (Glaser, 1992, pp. 125-127) and the second was a feud he had with Robert Merton over Merton's treatment of doctoral candidates.



role as an academic nomad outside of university structures. Over the last 50 years, Glaser has used his independence to encourage new generations of academics to circumvent processes and procedures, or twist bureaucratic process to suit their purposes; disparaging processes which force conformity on novice researchers (see, for example, Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1998; 2015).

There is, however, an apparent paradox in Glaser's unstinting defence of his approach to GT. When writing *Discovery*, Glaser and Strauss encouraged new researchers to engage with the method creatively, adding and enhancing the method to their own needs and contexts.

Grounded theory was presented as a way to approach research differently; a method that encouraged researchers to theorise instead of replicating and testing the thoughts of hallowed scholars who had gone before.

Glaser's position can be explained by his rejection of what he describes as 'theoretical capitalism' which blocks the creative process by relying on other people's concepts, thus limiting the scope (Glaser, 2002, p. 28). For example, Strauss and Corbin suggest conducting a preliminary literature review to help guide the study, while Kathy Charmaz advocates a constructivist epistemology, which itself guides the researcher. Such a benevolent use of pre-existing literature is anathema to Glaser as a) it provides status to pre-existing literature that may not be justified in terms of the data collected for the study and b) it privileges previous authors over the analyst as they struggle to develop their own research identity.

Although CGT can be applied mechanically, simply following each stage; it can only be understood experientially (Glaser, 1978; Suddaby, 2006; Simmons, 2010); it is a subtle but essential difference, and seems to account for the reasons why the method has been misunderstood. In CGT, novice researchers are required to develop themselves as analysts, to move through the cycle of knowledge from experience to understanding to action. Analysts

are expected to experience both development and transformation, as well as highs and lows, as they work with the method (Glaser, 1992).

The analyst is to enter their study with a sense of wonderment, bracketing their own beliefs and career aspirations. Such an approach is reminiscent of advice from both Marx and Nietzsche to privilege the source of the data (the participant's experiences) as well as the difficulties of searching for the truth:

*We do not set out from what men imagine, conceive, nor from men as narrated, thought of, or imagined, conceived, in order to arrive at men in the flesh. We set out from real, active men and on the basis of their real-life processes. (Marx, 2004, p. 656)*

*Here the ways of men (sic) part: if you wish to strive for peace of soul and pleasure, then believe; if you wish to be a devotee of truth, then inquire. (Nietzsche, 1976, p. 30)*

Analysts are expected to productively immerse themselves in society, to experience it as it is, not through their own, or even society's broader, preconceptions. In accord with the critical realist Lonergan, and the radical humanist Fromm, being productive means generating new knowledge (not recycling attractive old ideas), caring for and respecting our co-workers while helping them to grow; these are the core values that underpin the concept of productiveness.

Identifying and explaining the primary concern of the Participants is the aim of the analysts, not by demonstrating the analyst's wisdom but by genuinely helping those experiencing problems find a solution. The participants are the final arbiters of a CGT; they are those experiencing the problem; the theory must grab their attention, fit their situation and be modifiable if necessary; most of all the theory must work for them (Glaser, 1978, pp. 4-6). How to achieve this aim is the focus of the next section.

### 3.3. The basic shape of a CGT study

There is a tendency in the literature to begin explaining CGT by referencing Glaser and Strauss' (1967) seminal text *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* (see, for example, Boychuk Duchscher and Morgan, 2004; Mavetera and Kroeze, 2009; Butler and O'Reilly, 2010; Zarif, 2012; Birks and Mills, 2015). However, beginning with *Discovery* ignores the fact that GT emerged over time; it was not founded or invented (Zarif, 2012). There was a minimum three years development period, with the original concept proposed in *Awareness Contexts and Social Interaction* (Glaser and Strauss, 1964), and later in a more developed form by Glaser alone, in *The Constant Comparative Method* (1965). When *Discovery* was published in 1967, the name of the method had changed, presumably to ensure it had more 'grab'. As shall be discussed later, the actual gestation period was much longer and a product of Glaser's experiences of academia.

Birks and Mills (2015) justifiably argue that scholarly intentions motivated the creation of the CGT method; however, there is a radical spirit entrenched in the method. CGT is subversive;<sup>9</sup> a proverbial 'iron fist hidden inside a velvet glove'. The velvet glove signifies a veneer of pacifism that pervades the method, reflected in a rejection of confrontation and a demand to recognise and work with the patterns of people (Glaser, 1998; Gynnild, 2011). By uncovering the patterns other people deploy, understanding that there is a reason for every action taken—even if the person is unaware of it themselves—analysts can maintain their objectivity, avoiding potential conflict.

Maintaining objectivity is the source of the power, the iron fist of CGT. Reflecting on what is happening presents a mirror to others, through which their behaviours are reflected. Glaser argues that the reflection encourages (rather than mandates) people to 'structure bust' and

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<sup>9</sup> The justification for this argument will be presented in more detail in the next chapter.

challenge 'vested fictions' from whatever source they emerge, be that society, organisation, family, religion or personal (Glaser, 1998, pp. 247–250).

Although Glaser refers to the subversive impact of GT on society, organisations, and careers, he is more circumspect about the personal impact of the method on analysts. The seemingly simple advice to enter the research field (substantive area) with abstract wonderment (Glaser, 1992, p. 22) conceals the necessity for analysts to challenge their vested fictions. Analysts chase down their motivations and preconceptions, and subject them to the constant comparative process, to understand how their beliefs affect their experiences and openness to explore (encounter) and understand data.

In challenging vested fictions, the constant comparative process helps 'gain the trust of the people in the situation or, if necessary, to accomplish clandestine research' (Glaser, 1965, p. 436). Glaser does not explain what he means by 'clandestine' research, but building on the psychoanalytical foundations of CGT (Gynnild, 2011), I believe his intention is for the analyst to develop a rapport with participants. Developing enough trust for participants to feel comfortable enough to allow the analyst to glimpse their world as they see it. Trust, in this sense, is built upon actively listening, without judgement or a hidden agenda, to participants' stories.

### **3.3.1. The key stages of a CGT study**

The basic process of a CGT study is simple. The study begins by listening to participants; understanding what is offered, and the concerns presented. Unlike other forms of research, there is no initial literature review in a CGT study; allowing the analyst to address what is said and not have their own, or other scholars, ideas influencing what they hear. From the first interview, the analyst begins data analysis; coding and categorising data and writing memos, documenting ideas as they emerge and highlighting gaps in the emerging theory (Glaser, 1978; 1992). While each stage in the process is separate and linear, the analysis is more involved with

each step interlinked with feedback loops; the analyst is continually moving to and fro between stages to ensure that the emerging theory is genuinely grounded in the data.

Two different types of coding are used in the method, substantive and theoretical: reflecting different linear phases of the project. Substantive coding is itself divided into two sub-processes: open coding and selective coding. Open coding is the first phase of data analysis in which data is fragmented and coded to identify comparable incidents. From these codes, and the associated memos, the analyst begins identifying patterns of behaviour or categories. This demand to develop categories helps prevent the analyst from cherry-picking single instances of data; a category must contain more than one incident of data. A category is only another data incident, the naming of the category during open coding stage is only provisional, categories are reviewed continuously as the study progresses and as more codes and categories emerge (Glaser, 1978).

Once a provisional set of codes has emerged, attention moves towards establishing the boundaries for the categories and exploring the gaps between categories. This process is known as theoretical sampling. Up to this point, the analyst has used abductive logic to guide the study; as the theoretical purpose of the study materialises, deductive logic is used to guide the next stages of the study. It is essential to recognise that the use of deductive logic is to engage with further abductive coding and categorising; comparing and contrasting similarities and differences up to the point at which no more benefit is gained—the category is saturated, and new data does not provide any new information. The analyst is searching for the core category; a frequently occurring category that connects with other categories and helps to build the conceptual framework (Glaser and Strauss, 1967).<sup>10</sup> Having identified the core

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<sup>10</sup> Although the core category is related to the other categories, it does not explain the relationships that exists between the other categories (Glaser, 1978, 1998).

category, the analyst steps into the selective coding phase; narrowing down the research focus, still using the constant comparison method to saturate the core category.

Once the core category is saturated, the analyst embarks on the next stage, theoretical coding, integrating memos with the emerging theory. Once again, memos are subjected to the comparison process; looking for emerging relationships between memos and the core category to help develop an abstract model. It is only when the core model, often a mix of several theoretical codes, has emerged that the analyst seeks to integrate the existing literature with the evolving theory.

A CGT study is not a quick research method; in some cases, it can take several years before the theory emerges (Artinian *et al.*, 2009b, p. 50); a CGT study is an example of ‘slow research’ in action (Mountz *et al.*, 2015; Bozalek and Zembylas, 2017).

### **3.3.2. Grounded Theory and ‘slow research’**

It might be tempting to think of Slow Research in respect of pace (Adams *et al.*, 2014); however, the movement reflects a deeper ontological and epistemological approach (Ulmer, 2017) where the ‘power of serendipity challenges the dominance of certainty, as demonstrated by the importance of “numbers”’ (Global Health Committee of the Japan Medical Association, 2016). The use of the word serendipity is important; it draws attention to chance as opposed to the amount of preparatory work for the happy discovery to occur (Grandia, 2015, p. 312). Slow Research requires skill, patience, and awareness to be able to facilitate those moments of serendipity; in other words, the key to slow research is emergence. It is through the concept of emergence that the link between slow research and CGT can be explored.

The Slow Food Movement began in 1968, as a response to McDonald’s opening a fast-food restaurant close to the Spanish Steps in Rome. The restaurant is still bustling, but the ‘Slow Movement’ has grown to include Slow Fashion (Pookulangara and Shephard, 2013), Slow

Education (Alhadeff-Jones, 2016; Smith, 2017) and Slow Counselling (Astramovich and Hoskins, 2012).

I first encountered the ‘Slow Movement’ while on holiday in Bologna several years ago and remember being impressed by the high quality of food in ‘Slow Food’ restaurants. With its emphasis on defending ‘against the universal madness of “the fast life” with tranquil material pleasure’, the movement emphasises the importance of ‘rediscover[ing] the rich varieties and aromas of local cuisines’ (Slow Food, 1989). In Slow Food restaurants, customers are encouraged to engage all their senses over a lingering meal. Both my wife and I remarked on the behaviour of the chefs whose performance was expressed through their food—style and substance merged. Our conversation changed to reflect on how substance is often sacrificed in favour of style and speed in our workplaces. Where people are always:

*being asked to be productive in ways that create a sense of having to do more and to do it faster, to multi-task for survival in a global workplace, always to be thinking of the next big thing, to scale up and implement, often even before we have completed our tasks at hand.* (Adams *et al.*, 2014, p. 180)

To rush the different phases of a CGT study is to engage in forcing, which is anathema (Glaser, 1992). A CGT study must emerge, like the different layers of flavour found in a good meal or fine wine. Emergence is not a passive act; it is active, seeking to harness the creative power of potential, awakening our awareness of probabilities, what Lonergan (1992) described as ‘insight’. Embracing abstract wonderment helps develop awareness, placing the analyst in that central point of reality between the experiences of the past and the expectations of the future. It is the point at which we are encouraged to let go, or at least bracket our expectations, to be able to see what is, not what was or can be; to encounter the data as it is by entering a creative space.

CGT demands that analysts slow down; nevertheless, it is the choice of the researcher if they heed that advice. By slowing down, analysts develop an understanding of both the process and skills but also the personal awareness, helping them become effective researchers. The emphasis on personal development reflects the underpinning logic of a CGT study; the theory is not the end-product it is a starting point for future work.

### **3.4. Data collection in the main CGT study**

In a CGT study, relationships and connections are more significant than observations. The analyst's role is to creatively identify new connectors between codes that have emerged between data; focussing on the movement that occurs between the incidents of data. The pre-eminence of movement is through Glaser's advice to use gerunds as codes; placing movement at the heart of the CGT method; a flow toward transcendence—transcendence of data but also of the Self.

When Glaser argues that 'all is data', he means that:

*the briefest of comment to the lengthiest interview, written words in magazines, books and newspapers, documents, observations, biases of self and others, spurious variables, or wherever else may come the researcher's way in his substantive area of research is data for grounded theory. (Glaser, 1998, p. 8)*

Glaser's core argument is not for analysts to gorge themselves on data but to recognise emerging patterns that connect different data incidents; remaining open to useful information emerging serendipitously, from a diverse range of sources (Ralph *et al.*, 2014a). In this approach, even data that is 'vague, objective-subjective conceptual, biased or even appears irrelevant' has a value if it helps [analysts] with the abstraction of data' (Abdellah, 2016, p. 95). As data is not 'sanctified, objective or valid' (Glaser, 1998, p. 8) everything, including the lived experience of the analyst (Strübing, 2010) becomes data, as long as it is pertinent to the substantive area. In this study, lived experiences included TV shows, lectures/seminars, blogs,



snippets of overheard conversations, reading across disciplines, in my casework with different organisations, or even homilies at Mass.

A simple example of how these connections are made may be helpful. I read Jan Needle's children's novel *The Bully* (1995) as a brief respite from the academic literature. Needle draws us into the world of Peter, who is accused of bullying a group of girls. The girls' accusations were heard above Peter's denials because they were said to be 'normal' and from 'good families' while Peter was described as being 'different'. What began as having fun for the girls ultimately led to Peter, being chased and falling off a cliff, but as in scapegoating, Peter was eventually blamed for his own accident. As the story progressed, I recognised codes and themes emerging from the primary study; audiencing, performing, duelling, having-fun, victim-bullying, mimetic contagion, scapegoating, silencing, expelling. These themes were not imposed on the Needle's story, but the connections were made to the emergent themes from the main CGT study alongside other areas of the academic literature.

It seems that the crucial gerund, underpinning the CGT process is *encountering*, which reflects a willingness to stray from our preconceptions and desires, transcending the Self. Even when codes seem to fit and provide a solution to the problems faced by the participants, and indicate that the study might be finished quickly, analysts must be willing to set them aside to be examined (compared and contrasted) thoroughly. To do anything less means forcing the data.

### **3.4.1. The Participants**

When I began this study, the intention was to research within a specific context. I had discussed access to participants within a large multinational UK-based defence company; this had to be abandoned for medical reasons which prevented travel. The lack of a specific workplace context could be regarded as a weakness in this study were it not for two crucial aspects explicitly relating to the primary aim of a CGT study. First, Simmons and Gregory

(2004) argued that it is useful to utilise a researcher's broad network of contacts to identify the core variable before entering a specific organisational context. Second, as I have already discussed, a CGT study does not aim to produce findings but rather a set of hypotheses which can be used to launch future research projects.

My extended network of contacts comprised a mix of friends, colleagues, and extended LinkedIn network. Early indications led me to believe that the primary risk of using LinkedIn would be that too many people would wish to take part. The opposite was true; only six people responded to the initial request. In brief discussions outside of the interviews, I expressed my concern at the lack of replies; the response to this question was enlightening. Three of the early respondents on LinkedIn suggested that they had assumed the interview would explore their own experiences of workplace bullying as my LinkedIn profile explicitly addressed my interest in workplace bullying. This feedback was valuable; it was an issue I had not considered and led me to change my profile to reflect a broader interest in workplace behavioural issues. However, with thanks to the referrals, I gained a diverse group of participants (N=21) across a varied range of employment sectors, ages, and hierarchical positions.

### **Humanising the Participants**

To understand what is happening in workplaces we, as researchers, should be aware of and reinforce, the participants' humanity, not treating them as subjects but human beings. To misquote Marx and Engels, my starting point for this study was 'real active, working people', and their real-life processes, I sought to demonstrate the development of their behavioural reflexes and echoes of their life-process.

Table 3-1: The Study's Participants

Name	Sector	Role	Age	Recruited from:
Alfred	Telecoms	Director	62	Friend
Sophie	Defence	Senior Manager	56	Friend
John	Telecoms	Engineer	29	LinkedIn
Kay	Architecture	Partner	31	LinkedIn
Leslie	Defence	Manager	30	LinkedIn
Louise	Retail	Assistant	28	Friend
George	NHS	Nurse	54	Friend
Colin	NHS	Nurse	51	LinkedIn
Dominic	NHS	Paramedic	28	LinkedIn - referral
Jorgos	Hospitality	Owner	34	LinkedIn - referral
Sue	Hospitality	Owner	38	LinkedIn - referral
Tom	Prison Service	Officer	43	LinkedIn
Robert	Prison Service	Officer	56	LinkedIn - referral
Maria	NHS	Matron	56	LinkedIn - referral
Peter	Manufacturing	Engineer	45	LinkedIn - referral
Shirley	NHS	Office manager	53	LinkedIn - referral
Mary	Education	Lecturer	62	LinkedIn - referral
Tracy	Education	Lecturer	49	Friend
James	NHS	Care assistant	28	LinkedIn - referral
Margaret	County Council	Librarian	63	LinkedIn - referral
Paul	Manufacturing	Manager	57	LinkedIn - referral

The people who took part in this study are not anonymous resources; they have names; they are human beings, to reduce them to codes/numbers would have been disrespectful. I have,

therefore, used alternative names that, where possible, were agreed with them. Table 3-1 provides an overview of the Participants in respect of age, workplace sector and role.

### **3.4.2. Using unstructured interviews**

The purpose of the unstructured, interactive interview (Corbin and Morse, 2003) is to identify what Participants understood by the term 'workplace behaviour', my role was to help them fully explore their understanding.

By exploring the broader issue of workplace behaviour, it was left to the Participants to introduce the topics of workplace bullying or non-violent aggression, if they thought it was relevant. Providing the space and, using brief, unambiguous, sensitive and responsive questions (Donalek, 2005, p. 124) offered the Participants an opportunity to explore their inner world more fully (Morse, 2015), and thereby gain trust and consequently, encourage a richer data set to emerge.

#### **The grand-tour question**

As a counsellor, I am aware that it is in the interest of clients not to lead them in their responses. I often use a deliberately wide-ranging 'grand-tour' starter question to understand what issues they have; the same approach is taken in CGT (Simmons, 2010).

In my MSc study, participants were asked what they understood by 'workplace bullying'; I intended to use a similar exploratory question in this study. However, in conversations with Helen Scott (2013) from the Grounded Theory Institute, it was suggested that framing the grand-tour question in such a way would limit the responses of participants and would not reflect a CGT approach. I needed to abstract myself from the specific to a broader question, which meant exploring what people understood by the term 'workplace behaviour' within a UK context. The geographical boundary was significant as it recognised that workplace behaviours could change across international borders; however, this did not prevent interviewing people of different nationalities working in the UK.

It was agreed that the most appropriate non-leading 'grand-tour' question would be:

**What do you understand by the expression 'workplace behaviour'?**

Corbin and Morse (2003) suggest that unstructured interviews are best suited to long-term fieldwork so that the researcher and the Participant can build up a relationship. To conduct a non-directive, informal conversational interview requires experience and skill. Being able to listen to the responses actively, determine relevancy and where new avenues are being opened up by the participant (Gray, 2016, pp. 408–409) ensures that the researcher is flexible and responsive (Legard *et al.*, 2003). I suggest that alongside these skills, the researcher should also establish rapport and trust with Participants quickly. Having these skills and experience mitigated Corbin and Morse's advice but also reduced the possibility that the unstructured interview would be chaotic (Gill *et al.*, 2008).

Of equal significance, to have used a survey, or even semi-structured interviews, for this study would have been ethically wrong. The Participants were not being listened to in their workplaces; their choices were being limited. Not allowing them the choice of where to take the interview, within the boundary set by the grand-tour question, would have meant that I was not actively listening and responding to them; I would have been behaving in the same way as their employers; placing my interest before theirs.

As the study progressed, the nature of the discussions with the Participants changed from unstructured to semi-structured. This change of interview-style reflects a need to explore the relationships between codes, categories, and themes as they emerge during data analysis, especially during the theoretical sampling stage. Far from challenging the privileging of the participant, this reflects the 'shuttling between the domain of observations and the domain of ideas' (Atkinson *et al.*, 2003, p. 129); to gain a greater appreciation of the participants' concerns.

The 'shuttling between domains' introduces a procedure, where a new hypothesis is developed to connect two theoretical codes or innovative categories; described in the context of GT as 'creative abduction' (Bruscaglioni, 2016). While this creative and pragmatic approach originates with the analyst, it is still subjected to the constant comparison process ensuring that the categories are grounded in the expressed stories (interview data) from, and continuing discussions with, the participants (Suddaby, 2006, p. 639).<sup>11</sup> The approach is no different to what happens in a counselling session; as we come closer to understanding the underlying issues the client is facing, the questions become more directed while remaining open and responsive to emerging issues.

### **Interview length**

Using unstructured interviews requires the analyst to manage the interviews; to maintain direction but also to be aware of the length. As a counsellor, I did not consider this to be an issue. However, two factors had to be considered carefully concerning the length of the interviews. I was taking up the time of people who were freely offering their time, and due to health issues, which emerged as the study commenced, working over 90 minutes would become difficult.

At the beginning of each interview, Participants were advised that the interview would last 'about 60 minutes' providing flexibility if saturation occurred earlier. Recognising the point of saturation, where the conversation begins to wander, the interview becomes repetitive, and no new data is emerging, is an essential feature of respecting the Participants. Two interviews were, by agreement, extended due to the richness of the data. In all cases, permission was gained to ask further questions or for clarification. Interviews were held either face-to-face or over Skype.

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<sup>11</sup> A debate has been on-going among GT scholars as to whether GT uses induction or deduction; a consensus appears to have formed that it uses a process of abduction; see, for example, Haig (1995); Suddaby (2006); Bryant (2009); Thornberg (2012); Bruscaglioni (2016).

### **3.5. Data collection in the Personal Grounded Theory (PGT)**

Unlike the main CGT, data collection in the PGT is a purposeful activity. Already knowing what the probable as-is problem is, the analyst immediately starts looking for data that explains and resolves the problem; equating to the theoretical sampling stage in the main study. In this case, it meant collecting data to help understand different note-taking approaches, comparing, and assessing different methods to develop a coherent theory that helped resolve my problem.

Being responsive to changes in the as-is problem itself is essential. The analyst must accept the principle of modifiability: the scope and nature of the problem may change, as more data about the problem emerges; to include the problem as the connections, meanings and relationships arise as opposed to isolating and analysing a preconceived problem. For example, I started using the Cornell note-taking system, which answered the as-is problem of 'how do I take notes?' The system did not satisfy my requirements; requirements that only emerged as I engaged with the note-taking system. I realised that as well as identifying an effective note-taking system that worked for me, I also wanted to find a technological solution that would help me save, search and make connections between notes, a wiki-type solution, from within which I could see a holistic view of the memos and therefore the study itself.

Having a holistic view is essential. The analyst recognises a variable in each context but works (wondering and wandering) with the variable to identify any connections and relationships, inside or outside of the original context. Agar (1991) describes this process as focusing on 'a little bit of data, massive amounts of thinking about that data, and slippery things like intuition and serendipity' (p. 193). Agar's process involves reading, listening, and trying out his own opinions to identify patterns and relationships; asking questions of a single focus to see what other connections exist and follow the leads.

What was stimulating in Agar's account is his practice of 'research deviance' (p. 192); immersing himself in the bigger picture — writing about thoughts and relationships, not data: a practice that resonates with CGT. Like Glaser (2014b), Agar suggests that collecting thoughts, which are immediately grounded in the data, is arguably more important than empirically analysing the data. Agar converses with his thoughts by writing on the wall, using those thoughts as a form of grounded data from which he continues his exploration of the new connections. Although the medium Agar uses (boards on a wall) is different from the Glaser's index cards, the immediacy of recording thoughts is reminiscent of the CGT memoing process.

### **3.5.1. Pre-determined or genuine-original data**

Two areas of Agar's work were particularly influential in this study. First, how he captures a holistic view of a problem; not imposing hierarchies on the data but instead developing an Archimedean platform from which he surveyed the totality of the subject. Second, the prominence given to serendipity; his use of insights, arising from the data, to direct future research. Parallels can be drawn with the critical role of serendipity in the CGT process (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1998; Gasson, 2004; Konecki, 2008a; Makri *et al.*, 2014; Alvinus *et al.*, 2016b; Brusciaglioni, 2016) but also Lonergan's approach to critical realism. However, serendipity must not be mistaken for embarking on flights of fancy:

*the ability to build new nodes from old offers serendipity — feeling through and freely exploring patterns. Asking further questions of an interesting result takes moments, so further questions get asked. These flights of theoretical fancy are grounded in data since, at any stage, text can be put to the conceptual structure being explored, and theories of exploration retraced. (Richards and Richards, 1991, p. 52)*

The process of building new nodes from old, along with Agar's privileging of thought relationships, reflects an argument made by Christiansen (2006, p. 114) about two different dimensions of collected data in CGT. Christiansen suggests that information gaining (data



collection) begins with a predetermined search which, when supported using serendipity, leads to genuinely new data surfacing. His point is less about the ‘how’ of collecting data but rather the form of data collected; predetermined and genuine-original are typologies of data.<sup>12</sup> Serendipity serves a purpose in identifying, exploring and uncovering new relationships between data; contrasting, for example, the results of the data analysis (codes, categories and themes) with those serendipitous moments of inspiration, that emerge during the memoing process—new connections, grounded in pre-existing data.

Serendipity, when allied with slow research, helps to reconfigure the research; often leading the study in new directions which may include forays across disciplinary boundaries, where similar discussions are taking place in different contexts (Bozalek, 2017).

By way of example, in the PGT study, the predetermined data included reading Glaser’s writings to understand how his experiences and personal philosophy influenced the development of the CGT process. Glaser’s writings are fixed; they cannot be changed— they are predetermined. My first reading notes were predetermined by the data (monographs and articles), in the form of quotes and commentaries. Reviewing these notes, understanding the connections between them led to new ideas emerging and new avenues to be investigated— genuine-original data—captured by writing memos.

### **3.5.2. Data collection: Reading**

Glaser advised would-be analysts to read his core works to understand the problem that was resolved by developing CGT.<sup>13</sup> I selected the primary texts for the PGT based upon Glaser’s recommendation and for their originality (Glaser and Strauss, 1964; Glaser, 1965; Glaser and Strauss, 1965; 1967; Glaser, 1968; 1978; 1992; 1996; 1998; 2004; Glaser and Holton, 2004; Glaser,

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<sup>12</sup> Christiansen’s use of ‘predetermined’ is a little misleading; it reflects the pre-existing nature of the data (for example the interview transcript) rather than data that is forced using the researcher’s preconceptions.

<sup>13</sup> Although Glaser and Strauss were said to have developed GT together, Glaser (1992) claimed that he had the greatest input to the method, an argument substantiated by his 1965 article on the Constant Comparative Method.

2005a; 2005b; 2007a; 2007b; Glaser and Tarozzi, 2007; Glaser, 2009; 2012a; 2012b; 2014a; 2014b; 2015).<sup>14</sup> Alongside the printed literature, several videos are available on a YouTube channel taken from a CGT training seminar hosted by Glaser (2011). Also, a volume of collected essays, including a rare in-depth interview with Glaser, proved to be a valuable resource about the man and his ideas from the experience of his collaborators and former students (Martin and Gynnild, 2011). The emphasis on Glaser's writings was calculated; I wanted to engage with Glaser as a human being not with the method alone, nor did I want to filter his texts through the lens of other scholars

Developing my reading (and note-taking) skills was an essential task. With predetermined data, the analyst knows what they are looking for. To help develop my reading and note-taking ability, I engaged with articles, forums, training courses and videos. I took part in several specialist training courses relating to mind-mapping, effective note-taking, speed-reading, improving memory recall. From a productivity perspective, I could point to the completed courses; however, I was no more effective as the resultant techniques did not fit or work in my context. I was adapting to other people's patterns, which, in the context of the emerging variables in this study, especially Automatonising, offered a stimulating reflective experience.

A conversation with an academic friend pinpointed three older texts, which were instrumental in developing an understanding of the practical aspects of being an academic:

- Adler & van Doren's *How to Read a Book* (1972)
- Eco's *How to Write a Thesis* (1985)
- Sertillanges' *Intellectual Life* (1960)

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<sup>14</sup> This is not a complete list of Glaser's writing; he has an annoying habit of publishing articles that are extracts or summaries of his previous works.

These authors explain how to engage in effective research—as opposed to the consumption-based research that had driven my workflow.

While, as a counsellor, my skills as an active listener are fine-tuned, through Adler and van Doren’s work, I began to develop the skill of active reading. Adler and van Doren suggest that active reading comprises of two dimensions and four levels: reading for information (elementary and inspectional reading) and reading for understanding (analytical and synoptical):

- **Elementary** — where we gain a basic level of information about a text
- **Inspectional** — a skimming of the text to gain a broad overview; for example, reading the contexts, the book cover, looking at the figures and tables
- **Analytical** — wherein the reader seeks to develop understanding; asking questions of the text to uncover layers of meaning
- **Synoptical** — reading multiple texts and developing new connections between texts across disciplines that cannot be gained by reading a single book

No single approach is superior to any other, and care should be taken to use them in their given contexts. For example, a senior manager consulted during this study, received over 300 emails each day. To read all her emails would have taken up her whole day. She developed a hierarchy: first based on whether she was the addressee or copied; second, by the sender; third, by topic, at each stage reducing the number of emails to be read. Missing critical information in an email was a manageable risk; any missed information would be brought to her attention. Similar processes are recommended to postgraduate students if they wish to survive their courses; the ‘brutal reality [is] that not all readings require close reading for academic success’ (Wohl and Fine, 2017, p. 226). While such a view is pertinent, especially when gaining an overview of a broad, or new, field of research, it is also essential to achieve a balance.

When focussing on productivity, it is tempting to read quickly and widely, grabbing snippets of ideas, and moulding them into a coherent whole. Having read Glaser's works and understood the internal congruency between the texts, it does seem that many critics have skimmed his work.<sup>15</sup> A justification given for the skimming and commenting approach has been that it is possible to respect the 'inherent depth and richness [of the skimmed texts] without getting lost in the details' (Bayard, 2009, p. 14). However, the critic should at least read the texts to understand the points the author is making to make a coherent, and consistent, argument against the text.

Skimmed information epitomises the distinction between the different phases of research, reading for information or understanding. These two information approaches equate to the opening stages of a CGT study where the predetermined data is coded as is, mainly as *in-vivo* codes; the analyst is primarily interested in uncovering relationships between incidents. However, as the study progresses, the emphasis moves towards understanding relationships between relationships; this is where the new genuine-original theory begins to emerge. It is a phased process of moving between the consumption of existing, predetermined data towards the production of genuine-original data, chiefly through the memoing process.

### **3.5.3. Data collection: Memoing**

The purpose of memoing is 'to theoretically develop ideas, (codes) with complete freedom into a memo fund that is highly sortable' (Glaser, 1978, p. 83). A memo is another form of predetermined or genuine-original data; with the latter being preferred by Glaser, who recommended that analysts should stop what they are doing and write memos as soon as they are sparked (*ibid.*). From personal experience, the early days of a study are dominated by predetermined memos, reflecting the nature of the data being worked with; mechanically

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<sup>15</sup> I have previously addressed this in issue in detail (Stoupe, 2016), using the criticism levelled at Glaser's demand for abstract wonderment by Thomas (2007).

capturing information — codes, events, thoughts. However, as the study progresses and relationships emerge, the form of the memo changes to produce genuine-original data. The memo becomes a research partner helping shape understanding and thus the whole study, becoming a source of inspiration and surprise.

The role of memoing is understated in Adler and van Doren but addressed in detail by Sertillanges (1960) and Eco (1985). Eco, Sertillanges, and for that matter Glaser, reject the opinion that note-taking is a secondary task relative to active reading (see, for example, Walny *et al.*, 2018). Notes can be annotations about a text, such as underlining key sentences or words or coding incidents of data, but any action should be purposeful. The memo should, therefore, reflect our understanding of a text; we should not collect texts (or codes) haphazardly or copiously—our work must be purposeful.

Like Adler and Doren, Sertillanges and Eco provide practical guidance in the arts of reading, note-taking and memoing. Their guidance combines the use of note-taking for information and understanding. Sertillanges develops the discussion further, arguing that understanding must move beyond generating knowledge about a subject but also help form the person, arguing that memos be written:

*after vigorous mental work with a sense of our personal needs. The aim is to complete oneself, to furnish one's own mind, to provide oneself with armour suited to one's own person, and to the requirements of the battle to be fought.* (Sertillanges, 1960, p. 189)

Both Sertillanges and Eco suggest that notes be structured to help us see, and benefit from, the connections that emerge between notes — which in turn generate new notes/memos. In this way, memos provide another valid source of data for the study.

## **The memoing process**

In this brief section, the mechanics behind the three-phase method used for writing memos; note-taking, memo writing, and connecting memos are explained.<sup>16</sup>

### Note-taking

The first stage was a non-analytical exercise in note-taking; recording what was happening at a given point in time, capturing the object; be that a thought or an observation. It might be as simple as making a note in a page of a book, or about a code, as a reminder to think about it more deeply later. At this stage, the note is recording information. Initial data was captured in different forms from index-cards, post-it notes, Mass sheets, receipts and bills, newspapers, menus, even the back of my hand. If I had the luxury of time, I used electronic devices such as a smartphone, iPad, and note-taking software on a laptop.

Developing structure at this stage is not necessary (Webb, 1926); I used shoe boxes as interim storage devices for paper notes. Notes were clustered, not following the outline of a book, for example, but following concepts and ideas across the book; working in such a way helped to avoid forcing a structure on the data.

### Memo writing

Note-taking and memoing are different; note-taking is an act of consumption (creating predetermined data) while memoing is an 'indispensable...instrument of discovery' (Webb, 1926, 426-427). The memo emerges from an unhurried examination of notes, codes and categories; helping the analyst engage with serendipity to generate genuine-original data and make sense of the data (Glaser, 2014b).

When I began this study, Glaser had not written his monograph on memoing (Glaser, 2014b); instead, Beatrice Webb (1926) and Niklas Luhmann (1992a, 1992b, 1995) inspired my approach.

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<sup>16</sup> I will return to a discuss the subtler nuances of the memoing process (section 4.5); drawing into the discussion the importance of serendipity and reframing communication as a means of developing an understanding as opposed to a simple process of informing others.

Both authors challenge our understanding of communication, moving from communicating-information to communicating-understanding. In this movement, analysts abstract themselves from the original text; recording the information about an incident of data and then recording the understanding of that data. This simple formula not only unlocked my understanding and approach to memoing but helped in my understanding of communication in general; codes and categories became information while memos recorded a new understanding. However, the simplicity masked the intricate and complex theoretical foundations that support it.

Despite almost 70 years separating the writers, Webb and Luhmann both used a similar 'pedantic' (Webb, 1926, p. 430) process to transform their memos into research partners albeit with subtle advances made by Luhmann (1992a, p. 3).<sup>17</sup> Webb advocates the use of 'an indefinite number of sheets of paper of identical shape and size' (Webb, 1926, p. 428), while Luhmann argues for the use of index cards; advice that I followed.

Each card comprises of 'only one subject or one category of facts, even only a single fact, should be recorded on each sheet ... [and] one sheet one event in time and space' (Webb, 1926, p. 427). Each memo, in this study, was limited to 500 words (to ensure that the memo was concise and targeted) and labelled with a unique identifier (date & time). Following Webb's rule ensured that each self-contained card could be 'shuffled and reshuffled' helping the:

*scientific worker to break up his [sic] subject matter, so as to isolate and examine at leisure its various component parts and to recombine them in new experimental groupings in order to discover which sequences of events, to put it paradoxically, by exercising your reason on the separate facts displayed, in an appropriate way, on hundreds, perhaps thousands, of separate pieces of paper, you may discover which of a*

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<sup>17</sup> While both Luhmann and Webb discuss how to make **notes**, the context of their discussion, and the emphasis on discovery and serendipity support the distinction I make between **notes** and **memos**.

*series of hypotheses best explains the processes underlying the rise, growth, change or decay of a given social institution, or the character of the actions and reactions of different elements of a given social environment.* (Webb, 1926, p. 428)

It is clear to see that Webb's recommendation is an essential aspect of the memoing process; a recommendation to use memos to transcend time and context and reveal different connections between data incidents. Adopting the advice of Webb and Luhmann meant that I found a way to write memos, but also a way to store, retrieve and organise those memos effectively, albeit using a specialist note-taking package called Tinderbox (Eastgate Systems Inc, 2018).

The third phase of the memoing process is to write memos about the memos and the connections that emerge.

#### Making connections

Glaser discusses how to sort memos in *Doing Grounded Theory* (1998, pp. 189–192). Like Webb and Luhmann, he promotes the use of a manual system for selecting a memo putting it on a table and picking another memo to compare with it and see how they are linked. Remarkably, Glaser found index cards to be of limited use in a GT study; arguing that such a system could not handle the complexity of a GT study (Glaser, 1998, p. 185). It is a false argument, Luhmann wrote over 40 books and 600 articles using his Zettelkästen method; and his paper-based research archive held over 90,000 index cards (Kluge, 2018).

Luhmann's Zettelkästen method was different from others I encountered on my travels across the internet;<sup>18</sup> his notes were intended to last a lifetime and not just support the latest lecture or article.<sup>19</sup> The Zettelkästen method relies on the 'branching' between notes to develop an

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<sup>18</sup> Umberto Eco used a similar system, but he seemed to use the system for both information and understanding unlike Luhmann who focussed almost exclusively on using the system to develop understanding (Christ, 2013).

<sup>19</sup> Luhmann had two archive systems reflecting different periods of his work: 1951- 1962 — 24,000 notes and 1963-1996 — 66,000 notes (Schmidt, 2016, p. 265)



idea or a topic. Hierarchical themes are discarded in favour of a unique reference number for each card; 1,2,3... Like Webb, each index card was self-contained, one-card—one fact, consisting of no more than 500 words; if he needed to continue a subject the card was labelled 1a, 1b, 1c .... As subjects develop, the numeric code is extended; for example, code 21/3d26g53 was the card label referring to his nemesis Jürgen Habermas (Debrebant, 2008). Each level refines the topic, creating an internal structure. The last part of the sentence is important; the lack of system structure provides the opportunity for serendipity to surprise the analyst as new connections are revealed.

The Zettelkästen system fosters emergence. If a new idea emerges and does not fit into an existing sequence, a new branch is started to record the associated topic. In simplistic terms, Luhmann's Zettelkästen supports the emergence of relationships between notes rather than of objects of data.

### **The Zettelkästen process**

There is an uncomplicated flow to memo writing and theorising (based upon Lüdecke, 2015):<sup>20</sup>

- Write down an idea\code
- Develop the idea through a sequence of notes (a relationship of notes)
- Add side/subtopics as the idea emerges (a different relationship between notes)
- Check if the topic has been started elsewhere and add manual links/references between notes (a relationship of relationships)
- Add keywords to the register (codes/categories) and identify starting points to function as entry points to the system notes.

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<sup>20</sup> A difficulty with exploring Luhmann's work is that although he is well known in Germany, little of his work has been translated into English; as such I was reliant upon Zettelkästen enthusiasts and their blogs/presentations to understand the subtler nuances of the system of particular note are Prof. Manfred Kuhn onTakingnotenow.blogspot.co.uk (Manfred, 2018); Sascha Fast and Christian Tietze at zettelksten.de (Fast and Tietze, 2018) and Dr Daniel Lüdecke at ZKN<sub>3</sub> (Lüdecke, 2018). All three have different ways of managing their Zettelkästen and different understandings of how the system worked.

Tinderbox was used to manage the notes and memos, relying on internal hyperlinks to link the different Zettels (see Figure 3-1 for an example).

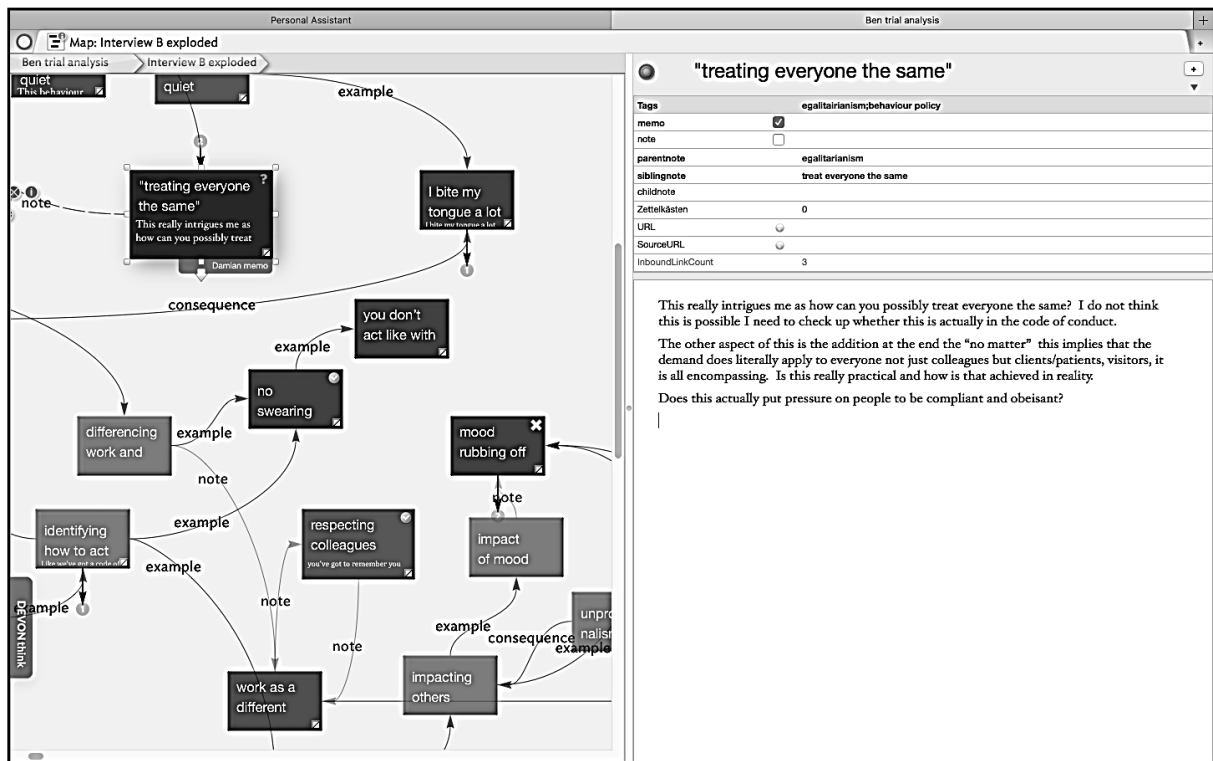


Figure 3-1: Sample memo using Tinderbox

The process is identical to that required by CGT, moving and comparing between codes, categories, and theories. It is a memoing system with a single central purpose: producing knowledge; founded upon a specific approach to communication: communicating-understanding.

### Analytical instruments

Glaser expresses concerns about the use of technology, whether for recording interviews (Glaser, 1978) or data analysis (Glaser, 2003). I initially ignored Glaser's advice; arguing that technology had advanced a great deal since the 1990s and that GT scholars were using software packages (such as NVivo, Atlas.ti, CAQDAS) to aid their research (Dainty *et al.*, 2000; Kauanui *et al.*, 2008; van Rensburg and Ukperere, 2014; Anthony, 2015; Nübold *et al.*, 2017).

The University of Bristol provided free access to NVivo, but I felt it would require too much of an investment in time to understand, so I looked for a more straightforward solution. Atlas.ti seemed a promising solution to the problem; having been used in successfully different studies (Fernandez, 2005; Atif *et al.*, 2012; Weber, 2013; Paulus and Lester, 2014; Paulsen, 2017). The articles offered an insight into a promised land in which the software ‘helped’ to code and, importantly for me as a visual person, ‘simply using the codes’ produce a network map (Atif *et al.*, 2012, p. 233). Furthermore, Atlas.ti promised to offer research transparency, or more honestly—evidence; codes are stored alongside memos and can be produced on demand.

I succumbed to the promises of the package and the promotional videos which claimed that the software was built by ‘information technology experts who as researchers themselves understand every aspect of your needs’ (Atlas.ti, 2018). I purchased a copy of Atlas.ti, read through manuals, watched the online tutorials, and began coding. The package did provide a sense of security; lines changed colour as I coded, multiple codes could be added to a single piece of data, and non-coded items were easily found and dutifully coded. The result was, in the first coded interview, I identified over 180 codes with an extra 85 in the second; I was tired and frustrated. Although I had read Glaser’s warnings of the impact of the coding process, I had not expected the ‘depression’ to manifest itself so quickly (Glaser, 1978, p. 23). As I completed the third transcript, I realised that what had initially provided a sense of security, was now becoming a tyrant. I had begun to fit the text to the codes.

Instead, using index cards on the following transcript provided a sense of control that had been lacking. With the software, it was too easy to highlight and code, with index cards I was more engaged in the process of coding, I did not feel any, admittedly self-imposed, pressure to code every detail of the interview; I managed to stop engaging with an internalised sense of ‘worrisome accuracy’. It also became easier to memo.

Glaser is strident in his advice that the analyst should stop whatever they are doing to capture any thoughts that emerge, at all stages of the research process. Moving away from the software package eased this process; sitting with index cards and post-its, any other scrap of paper, or indeed any available writing surface, became a natural extension of my work.

As a result of the understandings that emerged during the PGT, two primary, integrated, software packages were selected to help with the data management and creative production aspect of the study; DEVONthink Pro Office for knowledge management and Tinderbox as a visual-spatial hypertext, note-taking tool.

### **3.6. Judging a CGT study**

As the purpose of a CGT study is to generate a series of interrelated hypotheses (Glaser, 2003; Thulesius and Grahn, 2007; Simmons, 2010), it cannot be subjected to the same validity criteria as other forms of qualitative research, namely credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). The theory must satisfy the experiential criteria of fit, be relevant, work, and be modifiable. In other words, the audience is asked to use their judgment to assess whether they trust the research, whether they think the theory probably explains how people manage the problem.

The CGT criteria differ from other research methods of either quantitative or qualitative persuasions with their presentation of findings as a means of persuasion as the validity of their assertions. The final arbiters of a CGT are those who are struggling with the problem. Does the theory explain to them what is happening and does the new knowledge change how they relate to that situation?

#### **3.6.1. Avoiding a sleight of hand?**

Paley and Jipson (2000, p. 57) asked ‘can there be any thinking that is really “off-track?”’ in a GT study. The answer is ‘no’; if people are willing to actively seek to understand what is being

presented; however, this hope does not express the reality of the public spaces we inhabit. For some, the CGT process, inhabiting a space outside of qualitative and quantitative research, is 'wrong' and not understood (see, for example, Thomas and James, 2006).

There is a potential conflict between academic ritual and useable results; a conflict into which Glaser and Strauss readily jumped in the 1960s and which continues today. It is a conflict in which:

*the original idea of scientific work — to find the truth, acquire knowledge and wisdom, and make the earth a better place — have been devoured by a gargantuan bureaucratic, ritualistic, political and financial apparatus. (Gummesson, 2011, p. 234)*

This is an example of the duelling process to be discussed later in this thesis (section 5.3.3); a conflict encouraging each analyst to develop their voice within a community of equals, not to be silenced by the power of the distinguished voices of a discipline or those who have hierarchal, institutionally-derived, status over us. However, for both Gummesson and Glaser, analysts must not enter the duel; if they do their argument is lost as personalities become objectified and ideas ignored.

When writing-up their theory, analysts are expected to provide clarity in their statements of theory and detailed descriptions. Specifically:

*a cardinal rule for the researcher is that whenever [they feel] most dubious about an important interpretation-or foresees that readers may well be dubious-then [they] should specify quite explicitly upon what kinds of data [their] interpretation rests. (Glaser and Strauss, 1965, p. 10)*

CGT is a practical research method; working with what is known, and not trying to fill gaps in knowledge with conjecture. The strength of the argument presented and the reader's reaction to it is crucial. For some, these arguments lack evidence, hence the accusation of sleight of

hand; however, such an accusation does not recognise the difference in skills being used. The way Glaser (1978, p. 9) explains CGT is that it is not solely a scholarly method but an analytical method; such a distinction is likely to be lost in the nuanced difference. What was uncovered during the PGT study leads me to suggest that it would be more accurate to describe the CGT method as 'psychoanalytical'; an argument explored in the next chapter.

### **3.6.2. Mystical CGT?**

Glaser's intention was not to create pseudoscientific theories, but to offer a different perspective on research which challenges the 'hard' science that has dominated academic and work-life for many years; an approach described as 'scientism' (Morin, 2008). Equally, Glaser is adamant that he does not seek to dismiss hard science, it is simply that CGT represents a third approach to research that is unconstrained by the demands for 'worrisome accuracy' of qualitative or quantitative research methods (Glaser and Holton, 2004, para 3).

The issue for Glaser is not that qualitative or quantitative is wrong but that the purpose of the research is different (Glaser, 2001); like critical realism, CGT offers a probable explanation about an underlying pattern of behaviour in the form a set of integrated hypotheses (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). The credibility of a CGT study does not exist in the provision of accurate, trustworthy datasets or rigorous data analysis and the generalizability of the findings; or even providing lengthy participant narratives. A credible CGT offers the reader; an explanation which conforms to the four principal measures of credibility for a CGT study: fit, modifiability, relevance and work (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978), the product provides its own proof (Glaser, 2003).

While a GT study may not be replicable, the honesty and openness of the researcher, matched with the four tests of credibility of a CGT study provide the 'evidence' that substantive theory is not conjecture but the result of rigorous scientific exploration. In what I regard as a

hallmark action of CGT, Gummesson (2011), gently destroyed the vested fictions that surround 'hard' science, distinguishing between 'academic ritual' and 'usable results', observing that:

*the hallmark of science is the systematic application of approved methods. If you follow these you can't go wrong, nor can you be criticized and jeopardize your smooth road to academic tenure. You are safe; you are one of the boys and girls. (Gummesson, 2011, pp. 232-233)*

Gummesson's observations are like those offered by the Participants; where being safe in work was equated with avoiding blame and fitting in; anything for a comfortable life. Gummesson argues that being safe is an illusion; it may provide 'a smooth road to tenure', it could equally be 'the bureaucrat's dirt road to an academic pseudo-life' (Gummesson, 2011, p. 233). For Gummesson, Glaser and Strauss: 'true scientists are innovators and entrepreneurs [who] break the more-of-the-same and me-to deadlock in a discipline' (*ibid.*) and across disciplines. Innovators and entrepreneurs tend to live outside of formal structures, favouring their autonomy, the intellectual challenge, fun and enjoyment (Boudreau and Lakhani, 2009); characteristics that are intrinsic to CGT (Glaser, 1978; 1992).

### **3.7. Ethical considerations**

Today it is recognised that qualitative research of any kind involves ethical choices at every stage of the research process (Roulston, 2006), as the researcher makes choices about how to satisfy moral obligations to participants (Ballinger and Wiles, 2006, p. 56) and I suggest, to readers, while meeting study requirements. In this final section of the chapter, I will reflect on those ethical concerns as they related to this study.

Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 288) declare that only when they are asleep can researchers stop thinking about the ethical impact of their study. Nevertheless, the classical texts on GT are generally silent about ethical issues (Olesen, 2007, p. 425), even though the early grounded

theorists were taught about ethical issues in their seminars (Covan, 2007). Olesen (2007, p. 425) indicates that the silence does not imply that GT is either a-ethical or unethical.

Along with O'Connor (2018), Olesen states that the early texts are consistent with the era in which they were written; a time when participants were viewed as sources of data and researchers were not as sensitive to ethical considerations as we are today. There is evidence in Glaser's writing to support this view. For example, Glaser (2001) argues that CGT studies should not be subject to ethical review as the emphasis on conceptualising ensures that with the rounds of data coding and conceptualising, no personal information is revealed. He continues:

*there is no deception, betrayal or abandonment of participants when taking the data to the conceptual level because of leaving time, place and people behind... any formal approach to an interviewee tends to make them edit what they say. (Glaser, 2001, pp. 129-130)*

Such an approach might be what Fontana and Frey (1994) mean by 'most of traditional in-depth interviewing is unethical [they] are really ways of manipulating respondent's while treating them as objects or numbers rather than individual human beings' (p. 373)

The ethical dimensions of GT and qualitative research in general, are 'constantly emerging and shifting' (van den Hoonaard and van den Hoonaard, 2016, p. 7). However, reading Glaser's oeuvre, rather than rejecting professional ethics, his concern is with the increased impact of ethical governance; an issue of concern raised by other qualitative researchers (see, for example, Lincoln and Tierney, 2004; Dingwall, 2006).

Areas of professional ethics (Etherington, 2001; Bradbury-Jones, 2007; McCreaddie and Payne, 2010) to be addressed include:



- Autonomy/ self-determination (supported through informed consent and confidentiality/anonymity).
- Non-maleficence – a commitment to avoiding harm to the Participant.
- Beneficence – that all participants are treated fairly, and that the study seeks to do good.
- Justice - that the purposes are just.

Etherington (2001, p. 121), perhaps reflecting on her counselling background, adds the extra dimension of fidelity to the list to ensure that the researcher must honour the trust placed in them. Personally, this meant not only the trust of the participants but also a broader, more inclusive communal trust: to society, workplaces, readers, supervisors, and family (Aldred, 2008).

Professional ethics loom large in my work as a counsellor. My ethical approach is heavily influenced by the philosophies of Enrique Dussel (1981; 1988; 1997; 2003), Emmanuel Levinas (1985; 1996; 1998; 2013; 2006) and Knud Løgstrup (1997; 2007) with their emphasis on trust and the radical ethical demand inherent in the encounter with others. Their approach underpins not just the design of this study but also the conduct of the research.

Throughout this study, the aim has been to recognise and celebrate the innate humanity of the Participant. From ensuring, with their agreement, that they are not referred to by numbers but names, to how I encounter them as human beings. As the interviews progressed and stories of how the Participants did not feel heard by their employers increased, this openness to an encounter and willingness to privilege their voices became more important but also more effective in respect of building trust.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> A more detailed discussion on this issue will be presented in Chapter 5.

While the focus in this section is on the care of Participants, ethical considerations extend beyond the conduct of the study with participants to how the study is conducted. For example, manipulating coding or theoretical sampling, or writing up the study to suit the researchers own purposes is unethical (Olesen, 2007). The study passed the ethical approval gateway of the Graduate School of Education at the University of Bristol (Appendix 1).

Although the broad scope question remained the same, my expectation that non-violent aggressive behaviours would be the focus of responses had to be modified; however, at the outset of the study, this expectation had to be factored into the potential risks to Participants. It should also be noted that because of my engagement with Glaser's literature, it became evident that the grounded action approach referred to in the forms was little more than an unnecessary remodelling of the CGT process.

The spotlight in the following sections will be on four aspects of care identified by Bowen (2008): informed consent; confidentiality, and the provision of professional support if required.

### **3.7.1. Informed consent**

For CGT, with its privileging of emergence and lack of a hypothesis, the process of gaining informed consent can be problematic (Morse, 2008; Thulesius *et al.*, 2013). It is not possible to say how many people will be interviewed because the point of saturation is unknown, neither is it possible to say what questions are going to be asked as the questions change during the process. However, far from being 'an unavoidable "moral obligation" that needs to be accommodated and worked around' (Breckenridge, 2010, p. 68), I would suggest informed consent is an essential aspect of the research process. If the researcher uses Kent's (2000) four criteria of information, understanding, voluntariness and actual consent, then informed consent will be achieved, and valid data generated.

All Participants were provided with an informed consent form (Appendix 2) which provided information about the study including the 'grand-tour' question and participants were advised that the interview would proceed on the basis of their answer to the question "What do you understand by the term 'workplace behaviour'?" Guided by Morse (2008), at the start of each interview, a brief conversation helped to put the study and interview into context for the Participants to help broaden the discussion. This was a useful approach to adopt where one Participant advised that they had been concerned that they did not know what they were expected to say. It was possible to alleviate concerns and help them relax into the interview by advising them that there were no right or wrong answers, I was interested in their experiences, and we had a fruitful and wide-ranging discussion.

All Participants were encouraged to seek clarification of the process and aims, or even the purpose of questions; they were advised that questions would be answered, but not necessarily when the questions were asked in case the answer directed the Participant towards a specific response. This was to ensure that the epistemological integrity of this study was maintained, in that participants are in control of what they say and do, and that there is no coercion or leading from the analyst.

### **3.7.2. Confidentiality and anonymity**

Due to the potentially sensitive nature of the discussions (disclosing personal and potentially emotional information about workplace experiences and previous childhood experiences), the Participants were assured of anonymity and confidentiality in the publication of data.

All Participants are identified by a pseudonym and apart from necessary personal information, provided for context, and with the agreement of the Participants, any specific identifiable information was intentionally removed. This action was important because of the fear of sanctions by colleagues and their employers if they were to be identified. By providing this assurance, I believe it fostered a higher degree of openness from the Participants.

Each participant was provided with a transcript of their interview and offered an opportunity to edit any aspects that they were uncomfortable with.

Data were managed under the Data Protection Act 1998, with separate password-controlled, archives for the interview transcripts and data analysis, and signed consent forms.

### **3.7.3. Access to professional support**

It was essential to ensure that the ethical foundations of this study were adhered to and that participants were treated with respect; this study was not to become an example of workplace bullying, or 'hit and run' research (Timmermans and Tavory, 2007). The participants were encouraged to take responsibility for their levels of discomfort by taking appropriate action, which could have included withdrawing from the study.

As a professional counsellor, the management of the interviews and the risk of potential harm to the participants was not deemed to be a significant risk. However, given the possible topics to be discussed, as suggested above, it felt ethically responsible for helping access professional mental health support through professional counselling bodies, if required.

It should also be noted that as well as having an academic supervisor, I also had access to counselling supervision and a support network, which ensured my own emotional wellbeing. It was a supportive environment, that meant that I was able, and challenged, to be 'open, authentic, honest, deeply interested in the experiences of one's research participants, and committed to accurately representing their experiences' (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009, p. 59).

## **3.8. Chapter summary**

In this chapter, I have suggested that although CGT is a widely used research method, it has been misunderstood by researchers and critics, who have misconstrued the simple intention that underpins what is essentially a slow research method, that it is the first step in a longer research process.

This intention is embedded in the basic shape of the study, with its privileging of data and the thoughts of the analyst. I have explained how this study conforms to the basic structure of a CGT study; detailing how the data was collected, introduced the participants explained how the ethical concerns of working with human subjects were addressed in this study, and described how the data was analysed. In the next chapter, the focus changes from how the study was conducted to the product of PGT; how to build methodological sensitivity.

## 4. Building Methodological Sensitivity

**Summary:** In this chapter, an original contribution to our understanding of the Classical Grounded Theory research method is offered. Drawing on the psychoanalytical, social and academic influences and experiences of Barney Glaser, the concept of methodological sensitivity is advanced. Methodological sensitivity is a subversive activity that prepares the researcher for entering into the CGT study in a spirit of abstract wonderment, providing the foundations for Being-Fun.

### 4.1. Introduction

As already highlighted, this dissertation is the result of two overlapping studies: the first, involving the Participants and the study into workplace behaviour (the main study) and the second, a Personal Grounded Theory study into CGT itself (the PGT study). The connection between the main study and the PGT surfaced when I read of the 'disdain' Glaser and Strauss had for 'careerists who masked paltry ideas with political manoeuvres' (Charmaz, 2000, S164). This recognition was quickly linked to codes emerging in the main study of performing, acting, and playing games; but also confirms that political manoeuvring of people in workplaces is not a recent phenomenon. However, the recognition also raised a question about how that disdain is expressed in the CGT method.

The argument presented in this chapter is that the tools and techniques which privilege data over preconceptions, honour ideas over personalities, and promote the development of the analyst over the needs of the organisation provide the source of the disdain. CGT is a rejection of any attempt at proletarianising the research process, encouraging an inclusive extension of the liberal arts that seeks to develop the researcher as an analyst.

In much of Glaser's work, there is an apparent expectation that the analyst comes fully formed, with all the skills necessary to be able to conduct the study, to set aside their preconceptions in order to compare, contrast, and conceptualise effectively. When most

people encounter a CGT study for the first time in their first use of the method (Simmons, 2010), this is not an assumption that can be made.

There is a tendency by Glaser, in the secondary literature on CGT and GT in general, to continue to use keyword and phrases without explaining their meaning. The instruction to enter the field in *abstract wonderment* (Glaser, 1992, p. 22) is a case in point. Nowhere in any of his texts does Glaser explain what is meant by abstract wonderment, nor do many of the scholars that replicate this instruction (see, for example, Boychuk Duchscher and Morgan, 2004; Kelle, 2005; Dunican, 2006; Jantunen and Gause, 2014; Alammar *et al.*, 2018).

It must be accepted that Glaser '[put] a lot of different ideas into one package' (Gynnild, 2011, p. 241); many of which are not explicitly highlighted. The difficulty, and it must be admitted fun, in trying to understand CGT is identifying not just the ideas but the sources that inspired those ideas.

It was discussed briefly in the Introduction how fun, as an object, is used to promote workplace productivity; the importance of fun in productive research was emphasised by Glaser and Straus in *Discovery*. However, for Glaser and Strauss, fun reflects a process of being free to fail without blame, to explore without fear, to become independent thinkers creatively and critically engaging with data. Far from encouraging deskilling, disengagement, and process-adherence common in many workplaces, CGT demands up-skilling, deep engagement, and a certain degree of anarchy. Where an organisation may manufacture and attempt to enforce fun, in a CGT study, fun must be allowed to emerge.

Almost all aspects of CGT offer a counterpoint to the control and dehumanising effects of modern workplaces. Such an understanding of CGT is not a remodelling of the method, but a deep appreciation and awareness of the complex network of inspirations and ideas that underpin the method. Developing such awareness is important as it helps address the need for

analysts to enhance their skills beyond those of a scholar; developing autonomy, confidence, and creativity (Glaser, 1978).

Nonetheless, Glaser and other CGT scholars have neglected to address the development of the analyst's preparatory skills; a process I describe as becoming *methodologically sensitive*.

Although not an official CGT expression, the process seeks to develop a deep awareness of the tools, orientations, and foundations of the research method, for example, memoing, letting-go of preconceptions, embracing serendipity, understanding, reading, and communicating ideas. These are all skills and behaviours that can, with proper contextual adjustment, be a suitable foundation for developing alternative workplace behaviours that cater to those who are not careerists.

From the preliminary skills development work on memoing and note-taking; a network of connections emerged that was not foreseen. A network that transgressed disciplinary boundaries but was united by the aims and purpose of the different authors in challenging the status quo. For example, the reading of preparatory works on quantum physics by Carlo Rovelli (for example, Rovelli, 2011; 2015; 2017a; 2017b), not as quantum physics, but because his ideas traverse disciplinary boundaries and made sense within the context of CGT.

While developing methodological sensitivity, it is essential not to look for scholars who have similar perspectives but to uncover a network of connections, sometimes between disciplines, which reveal a pattern worth exploring. For example, Rovelli's (2017a, Preface) encouragement to embrace doubt as a way to develop an awareness of the range of probabilities in each action we take, created a network connection with Glaser dictum that a CGT is purely an expression of a probability. That single connection is further developed if we consider Niklas Luhmann's (1995) observation that we communicate by selecting one probability at the expense of others. When that small network is expanded to explore the broader issue of communication, we begin to encounter scholars from a diverse range of disciplines such as Zygmunt Baumann,



Paulo Freire, Edgar Morin, Heinz Leymann, and doing so we move beyond disciplinary boundaries to uncover a unifying theme. As far as I am aware, this is the first time anyone has presented a synoptic reading of Glaser's work in this way, explaining how his formative experiences provide a means of understanding CGT as a cohesive whole.

CGT reflects Glaser's keen sense of social justice; a desire to challenge the educational system of the 1960s. The PGT analysis explains how Glaser's original intention seems to have been to subvert existing (academic) structures. However, as will be explained, CGT is also a response to Glaser's experiences with certain great men of the time, especially Robert Merton.

Before discussing the meta-skills themselves and how they can help address the Being-Fun/Having-Fun dichotomy, I will explore how uncovering the foundations affected my understanding of the CGT method. It is an understanding that supports Glaser's claims that CGT is merely a research tool; it is not allied to any particular research paradigm other than that of the analyst using the tool. However, what Glaser has not adequately addressed, is the intrinsic subversiveness of the method. It is a method that challenges the vested fictions of the field of study, people, organisations or even society, while at the same time also challenging those vested fictions held by analysts. CGT demands that the analyst embrace change in their life.

#### **4.1.1. Early Influences on the CGT method**

*Anselm loved me, but he never understood me or my roots in sociology and my thoughts and idea input into grounded theory, which shaped it as we know it today. Nor did he ever try to understand my background.* (Glaser, 1992, pp. 124–125, my emphasis)

What was Glaser's background, and how did it influence the research method? The dispute between Glaser and Strauss over the publication of *Basics of Qualitative Research* (Strauss and Corbin, 1990) is often the limit of the historical discussions of the GT method. However,

during the PGT, a different history emerged, which substantiated Glaser's claim that grounded theory was his research method (Glaser, 1992). Glaser's personal history, the impact of his academic and personal relationships shaped grounded theory, as much as his sociological training.

It is doubtful if anyone would suggest that Glaser is an anarchist. However, moving away from a naïve understanding of anarchy which supports 'mindless violence [and] an ethics of anything goes' (Swann and Stoborod, 2014, p. 595), or a 'rejection of law' (Stone, 2011, p. 91) towards a more nuanced understanding; an ethical foundation for CGT can be found.

It is a foundation built upon the ethics of Otherness, proposed by the French philosopher, Emmanuel Levinas, who challenged the rejection of others, which is implicit in anarchism, in favour of a radical disturbing, openness towards others. In Levinasian ethics, the human person is asked not to suspend judgment but to risk an unexpected encounter with the Other. It is a form of anarchy which is easily found in Glaser's rejection of theoretical capitalists, those professors who exploited their students to promote their own careers and ideas (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p. 11), in favour of theory building.

CGT is founded upon the subversion of the authority of the researcher. The analyst in a CGT study does not privilege their status as a researcher — to do so would make them an authority figure. The analyst is required to let go of their preconceptions — their hopes, fears, expectations, and pre-formed ideas — and approach the study in openness and awe; letting-go of authority over the subject matter.<sup>22</sup> The authority of the participant is constrained by the recognition that the CGT is not a collaborative effort; it remains the creative work of the analyst. Data is placed in the central position. Even the theory presented at the end of the

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<sup>22</sup> This does not mean that they are not skilled professionals in their role, just that they can rely on their skill in encouraging the emergence of ideas rather than their authority.

study lacks authority, if it is not grounded in the data and, importantly, modifiable to new, emerging data.

### **Glaser's formative experiences**

Following his own advice to promote ideas and not himself (Gynnild, 2011), Barney Glaser is something of an enigma. There is little publicly available information about Glaser and his life; his Wikipedia entry is limited to four small paragraphs (Wikipedia, 2019). Glimpses of Glaser, the man and his motivations, emerge from his texts when they are synoptically read as data incidents, identifying categories and themes as opposed to reading an instruction manual.<sup>23</sup> The influences of his parents' parenting style, his experiences of studying with the great men of his day and the three cycles of psychoanalysis he had in his early twenties, are all represented in CGT and his pedagogical approach.

### **Parental influences**

The impact of Glaser's parents infuses both the method and how Glaser works with students.

His parents:

*never evaluated, they never requested I do this, do that. I was always left to myself ... And I was very intelligent, so I read constantly. If there was anything, I talked with the staff.*

(Gynnild, 2011, p. 240)

Reading the interview with Gynnild for the first time, I found myself disliking Glaser. His dismissal of the impact of other people in his life, asserting that he made himself, sounded arrogant. Certainly, Glaser's reflections imply a privileged upbringing in which parental responsibility seemed neglected; he had to remind his mother that he should go to school, so

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<sup>23</sup> A major source of information however was the collection of essays in *Grounded theory: The philosophy, method, and work of Barney Glaser*, (Martin and Gynnild, 2011); the reflections and thoughts of those who had studied and worked with Glaser. Included in the book was a rare, transcribed, interview with Glaser (Gynnild, 2011) which explored his life and influences and when read with his text provided some insights into his motivations.

she sent him to school with the chauffeur to find out (*ibid.* pp. 239-240). However, this initial impression proved to be incorrect.

Glaser's parents encouraged his emotional and intellectual growth. He was rarely chastised but asked to explain the thought process that led to an action; encouraged to recognise what went right or wrong, learning how to change the approach in the future. He was helped to become himself — developing confidence, self-reliance, and freedom to explore, to experiment and make mistakes without fear of judgement. How appropriate this parental approach was for a five-year-old child may have been of its social class and era and may be questioned, however, the influence on the development of CGT and his pedagogical approach is evident. Arising from his parent's approach is the central assertion of CGT — 'just do it' (Glaser, 1998, p. 1). Nothing is right or wrong in CGT; all that happens is that a strong or a weak theory emerges which can be modified as more information comes to light. Of more import, the analyst must be able to account how they arrived at the hypothesis (Glaser, 1978).

#### Ideas not personalities

In a way, CGT is a strange research method; the analyst must develop the confidence in themselves and their skills to be willing to let go of any theories or codes that they have spent time developing if they do not fit or work. Such a demand requires discipline but also a willingness to let go of selfish interests—our emerging theories, codes, categories or even career—to allow the data to speak, to allow a genuine understanding of a problem being faced by real people to emerge. This approach to research, or work in general, is important in the broader context of this current study.

In the main study, the analysis suggested that openness to alternative ideas or approaches is limited; senior managers are unwilling to take advice. For example:

*There was a definite inner circle, even though this new MD that came in didn't want to create that, he ended up creating it by his pulling all these yes men around him, and*

*people were scared to say no. The few of us that did disagree, we'd meet in corridors or have various sorts of chats ... I think we had very good ideas, but it was shouted down.*

(Peter)

The data analysis in the main study revealed a tendency in organisations for personalities (face-fitting) to be privileged over skill, leading to the creation of an inner circle of trusted advisors, offering unquestioning support for managing director's decision. However, more concerning is the privileging of personalities. When we focus on personalities, we adapt our behaviour, beliefs, and thoughts to those of the 'personality/celebrity' and begin to lose ourselves in the process. We imitate their behaviours and actions, both positive and negative; in doing so, we begin to lose ourselves. Glaser does not want people to imitate him; he wants people to engage with his ideas because 'ideas are far more powerful than positions' (Gynnild, 2011, p. 238).

#### Egalitarian CGT

The rejection of personalities is a pillar of the CGT process. However, Glaser's commitment to egalitarianism is refreshing. Interestingly, Glaser's understanding of a meritocracy is all-encompassing if subversive. To complete a CGT, one must have earned the right to; to have experienced the highs and lows intrinsic in the method. Every aspect of the emerging theory is subjected to constant comparison; nothing is accepted at face value. Even the arguments of venerable scholars cannot expect to be included as a matter of course; they too are subjected to forensic examination for suitability: if they are not suitable, they are not included.

#### Working with Glaser

Working with Glaser might have been challenging. There is no doubt that those who have collaborated with him acknowledge his supportive approach. Both Glaser and Strauss sought to equalise the relationship between themselves and their students; encouraging informality; dressing down and open discussion. Glaser tried to 'binary deconstruct to the max... to take the professor-student edge off' (Gynnild, 2011, p. 238). However, Glaser and Strauss did not

demand specific behaviours of their students, preferring to allow the students to arrive at the best practice, they could, however, generate a sense of guilt among non-performing students (Charmaz, 2000).

In the context of this study looking at workplace behaviour, the pedagogical approach of Glaser and Strauss is interesting. They rejected the Automatonising process, refusing to regard their students as numbers, preferring to develop personal and meaningful relationships with them. Support was offered, so long as the student was willing to help themselves. Glaser and Strauss provided frameworks, for example, telling students how vital memoing was in GT, but the student had to work out the details and how that framework might work for them (Charmaz, 2011, p. 182). Glaser did this to encourage deep learning; so, when he did explain an issue later, the student had already spent time themselves trying to understand it. If a student was unwilling to engage in the self-learning, Charmaz added, they were encouraged to leave the course.

### **Impact of 'great men'**

Glaser and Strauss were held in high regard by their students, embodying the GT ethos by incorporating it into their daily lives; encouraging their students to do the same (Charmaz, 2000; 2011; Gynnild, 2011). This supportive approach is in direct contrast to Glaser's doctoral and early career experiences (Gynnild, 2011; Holton, 2011) of working with and observing 'great men', particularly Paul Lazarsfeld and Robert Merton.

Glaser contrasts his approach with that of other academics:

*I live with ideas, not status or identity ... my identity is someone with ideas, not someone with position or power ... I never monopolized. I never used stature and position in approach on how I dealt with people. (Gynnild, 2011, p. 238)*

It is a slightly disingenuous argument; he has both position and power because of his ideas. However, he is providing an insight into his career-length battle between forcing and emergence. Glaser differentiated between power derived from generating ideas (a power and position that emerges from respect, and acceptance, of ideas) and the hierarchically imposed, status-led power that is forced on others, independent of ability. It is the latter group Glaser regards as careerists.

Glaser may have been a difficult work colleague. At a personal level, he seems to have been supportive of his colleagues, but working in a hierarchal structure seems to have been problematic for him. Glaser demanded high standards of his students and colleagues, appeared to be rebellious, challenging the academic establishments of his time. When he wrote *Basics* in response to Strauss and Corbin's remodelling of GT, it appears as if he reached a point of no return. He engaged in a very public dispute with a senior colleague (Anselm Strauss) and attacked a junior faculty member (Juliet Corbin). It was a dispute that 'turned a lot of people against me' (Gynnild, 2011, p. 238). After *Basics*, Glaser lost his research funding, and he moved to the periphery of academia—or was he expelled?

#### Glaser's egalitarian elite

Despite Glaser's commitment to egalitarianism and disdain for some of his colleagues, he was not shy of advocating analysts as forming an elite corps in academic circles. Glaser argued that CGT 'is only for people who are very intelligent and can conceptualize' (Gynnild, 2011, p. 249) and who have 'rejected ... competition and jealousy' (*ibid.* p.252). If a researcher is 'low on conceptual ability, then he/she should not try grounded theory' (Glaser, 1992, p. 12). It could be insinuated that Glaser is being arrogant about his research method and those he wishes to entice into using it; however, to do so misses the main point he was making.

The difficulty for many researchers, and more broadly, people generally, is that they do not address their fears (Glaser, 1978). By addressing their fears, analysts develop autonomy and

freedom to make mistakes as they learn. Importantly, as analysts develop autonomy, they take responsibility and accept accountability for their decisions; this seems to be a unique selling point of CGT.

By challenging analysts to face their fears and 'become' themselves, the analyst must encounter themselves, releasing themselves from their vested fictions that inhibit their progress as an academic and a human being. Although explicitly discussing those who shy away from developing their creativity, the following statement summarises Glaser's approach to all those who refuse to face their fears and adapt to the demands of their environment:

*thank the Lord for all those sociologists whose fear has conquered them. They are the ones who turn exclusively to teaching and administering and leave the field open to the analyst. And when his [sic] theory is finished, they will teach it and use it. Their work easily becomes the haven from confronting their own fear. (Glaser, 1978, p. 20)*

For Glaser 'people who do grounded theory is [sic] an elite group' (Gynnild, 2011, p. 252), however, as I read Glaser at a deeper level, and being introduced to the writings of Paulo Freire, it became clear that his egalitarianism and elitism are equally valid. Glaser's target was the 'average researcher' (Glaser, 1992, p. 7) who is willing to learn how to conceptualise (Glaser, 1992, p. 12).

The power that Glaser's elite holds is not structural but personal. It is a liberation from having to adapt and conform to the demands of others (supervisors, employers, parents, priests) and to gain a 'sense of being themselves ... [giving] their creativity, their independence, their autonomy, their contribution, their self-satisfaction and their motivational joy' (Gynnild, 2011, pp. 251–252). It is a call for novice researchers to 'be whoever [they] are ... classic grounded theory gives them more of themselves' as Glaser succinctly states 'I don't want yourself. I want you to have it' (*ibid.* p. 252). In other words, analysts must engage in a continual process of



emotional and intellectual development that I have termed Being-Fun. It is an elite that all are called to join, whether they are analysts or not.

### Developing social value

GT was created as a way of helping novice academics establish their social value. Glaser went as far as describing GT as 'life producing by advancing careers' by increasing the 'social value' of the students (Gynnild, 2011, p. 253). The term social value is used in a specific way by Glaser and Strauss. Social value explains the perceived worth of someone in society and how that perception impacts the way they are treated in different contexts. The higher the social value, the more respect and better treatment a person receives (Glaser, 1965). It is a concept they agreed with, while at the same time, they subverted it by developing the social value of their students (see, for example, Fisher, 1991). The connection between raising the social value of students, challenging the careerists in academia, and developing the core skills of CGT should not be missed; they unite to subvert the proletarianisation of academia.

For the analyst, social value is increased further by developing analytical skills and *becoming* autonomous human beings. If we accept Glaser and Strauss's concern about proletarianisation of students, the prevalence of proletarianisation in modern society (Dearlove, 1997; Stiegler, 2015), and the erosion of social value through deskilling jobs, we must explore ways in which we reinvigorate a commitment to social value. The anti-social process of Automatonising reflects the concerns raised about proletarianisation, while Being-Fun offers a way of revitalising social value.

The core variables involved in challenging Automatonising and developing social value are generating, integrating, and communicating — all underpinned by an insistence on promoting the core skills of autonomy, creativity, and critical thinking skills of the

researcher/employee.<sup>24</sup> However, social value does not emerge on its own, a point recognised by Glaser and Strauss; we need to have developed the core skills but also an appreciation of our self-worth is crucial.

While offering direction, Glaser is reluctant to advise people to automatically follow his ideas. He wants people to ‘become’ and ‘disbecome’ and improve their social value. What does Glaser mean by *becoming* and *disbecoming* (Gynnild, 2011, p. 239)? Glaser explains it as follows:

*I want to give people their sense of being themselves ... GT is a wonderful way to help people getting themselves. It gives them creativity, their independence, their autonomy, their contribution, their self-satisfaction and their motivational joy. (Gynnild, 2011, pp. 251–252)*

Crucial to this action is the researcher discovering who they are outside of the social identities provided by society. Glaser asks a crucial question: ‘how do people disbecome themselves — as opposed to positions, jargon, expects or whatever?’ (Gynnild, 2011, p. 239). It is a social process uncovered in this current study as participants were continually living in a state of adaptation, existing in a fluid movement between becoming and disbecoming themselves and the other determined by another.

Asking people to be themselves is Glaser being his most subversive. He is challenging analysts to transcend their imposed social identity (*ibid.* p. 239) and learn to like themselves (*op. cit.* p. 247); a demand which creates a positive double-bind: Let go of your fears and have some fun (motivational joy). This self-identification is not a move into individualism or selfishness; it is a challenge to engage in authentic relationships and getting to know people without participating in conflict (Gynnild, 2011, p. 242).

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<sup>24</sup> A fuller explanation of these issues, grounded in the data analysis of the PGT and the Participants, is presented in the second part of this chapter.

### Finding a voice

Glaser's recommendation to build social value is an invitation to explore the method and our relationships with others and ourselves more intently. In nurturing an understanding of CGT, analysts are expected to become autonomous; to respect the work of others, to learn from them, but 'not to be cloned by them' (Gummesson, 2011, p. 235). They are encouraged to develop their voice within a community of equals and not be fearful of, or silenced by, the power of great men and women of a discipline or those who have institutionally derived status.

The CGT method is designed to help people theorise without fear (the worst that can happen is that the theory changes over time with more data) or being overly concerned with criticism, (which is only another form of data). In CGT, pragmatic concerns of usefulness and understanding are privileged over findings, data and methodological adherence (Åge, 2011); analysts should be wary of demands for 'worrisome accuracy' (Glaser, 2002; Glaser and Holton, 2004; Glaser, 2007a). Glaser's stance is not so much a rejection of demands for worrisome accuracy as Martin (2006) suggests, but rather a downplaying of its importance; accuracy is required, but that accuracy should not create anxiety in the researcher or be forced (Glaser, 2007a; 2015). Glaser appreciated that we inhabit a world of multiple realities, in which demands for epistemological or ontological purity limit the speed that actions follow theory, resulting in a risk that 'the baby will be thrown out with the bathwater' (Simmons, 2011, p. 27).

It is commonplace in theses and articles to find descriptions of varying lengths about the CGT process; providing evidence, to examiners or readers, that the method was accurately followed. Glaser (2012b) rejected such an approach; advising researchers to refer the reader to his many monographs on the topic and focus on developing the concept and arguments in the limited space available. Such advice, while technically correct, is unhelpful to novice researchers who must demonstrate their ability to conduct research and satisfy the

expectations of a panel of examiners. I do not think that Glaser is naïve enough to think that his recommendations would satisfy examiners, especially those who have limited experiences of CGT and who expect to see some explanation of 'how' the theory emerged.

The importance of identifying 'how' a theory emerged was re-emphasised to me at the end of a seminar delivered to the Graduate School of Education Doctoral Conference at the University of Bristol, in 2017. I had delivered a paper on an emerging understanding of CGT as a subversive research method, providing a technical explanation drawing upon the analysis of Glaser's work and life. I felt the presentation had been well received, several questions were asked and answered, however, one question has remained with me; helpfully asked by a supervisor: 'How did you develop the theory?'

My initial, slightly flustered, thought was 'what sort of question is that? I followed the grounded theory process!' However, upon reflection, repeating the CGT process mantra does not enlighten people as to how the theory was developed. Furthermore, it leaves the analyst open to accusations of a lack of transparency at best or, at worst, having practised either sleight of hand (Barbour, 2001), mysticism (Melia, 1997; Johnson, 1999), or pseudoscience (Johnson, 1999) as we saw in the previous chapter.

### Challenging vested fictions

Glaser's CGT is 'political' with a small 'p' referring to a grassroots approach to resolving conflicts in people's daily lives (Jones and Kavanagh, 2003). It is an approach which is 'subversive and potentially dangerous to careers and organizational stability' (Glaser, 1998, p. 248). It is subversive and dangerous as analysts are advised to use their voice and 'take apart the story' (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p. 108), challenging 'socially structured vested fictions' (Glaser, 1998, p. 247). Martín-Baró (1996) described these fictions variously as 'social lies', 'collective lies' and 'official discourses' whose purpose is merely to maintain the structural

orders for the benefit of the dominant classes. In other words, challenging vested fictions is intrinsically linked with destabilising preconceptions.

The Participants were aware of differences between the reality of their experiences and the 'reality' of dominant discourses. However, they felt unable to develop a real understanding when 'the behaviours of leadership are attributed to their personal peculiarities, or when the reality of what is happening is denied, plain and simple' (Martín-Baró, 1996, p. 188). The issue was that Participants had been robbed of their voice, an act of silencing, and were 'handicapped in building realistic personal and collective identity that would foster growth and progress' (*ibid.*).

It seems that when Glaser and Strauss developed GT, they were not only challenging social lies that occur at a collective level but were also challenging researchers to reflect on the personal impact of social lies. This challenge is clearly expressed in Glaser's desire for analysts to become themselves (Gynnild, 2011); letting go of their preconceptions or attachments. The silence maintained by Participants was supported by their attachments, especially the genuine fear of losing their job, thus limiting their sense of autonomy, or just being seen to be different. Recognising those attachments, and assessing them for their validity, helps us to find and use our voice. Analysts must be willing to speak truth to power, wherever and however that power is manifested, without engaging in conflict (Glaser, 1998).

By focusing on the secondary benefit of CGT, gaining social value through learning how to become ourselves, clarity about the psychoanalytical influence on the development of GT emerged. To be clear, Glaser rejects psychological approaches which 'put all the pressure on people; it's all their fault' (Gynnild, 2011, p. 251). Instead, analysts should increase their awareness of the socio-cultural and historical aspects that create an identity: 'I saw people as cultural beings. It's not their fault; it's their roles, status passages, status sets' (*ibid.*).

### **The psychoanalytical influence**

Glaser underwent three periods of psychoanalysis when he was 22, 24 and 26 after a relationship failed. He indicates that the significant benefit arising from his therapy was to be able to '[get] the exact data to see what it is' (Gynnild, 2011, p. 241). Being able to view an object, event, or a person's behaviour without preconception, accepting it for what it is, without judgment, is a liberating action; it offers a way to 'circumvent a defensive reaction to life's challenging moments' (Charmaz, 2000, S165).

The ability to observe data, without prejudice, without engaging in Manichean dualism, labelling data good or bad, observing whether it works and how it works, facilitates creative engagement with the data. An analogy that I use with clients is that the weather is the same for everyone; it is our interaction with the weather that leaves us complaining or smiling. If we can see the parallax view, free from the obstructions of emotional expectations and preconceptions, we become open to engaging with the reality of what is in front of us as opposed to the fantasy offered by our ego or the superego. Such an approach explains Glaser's unwavering argument to approach the study without preconceptions, drawing on the psychoanalytical tool of presence. There is an autopoietic effect from being able to learn to look at what is, and the injunction 'be yourself'; this is, after all, what happens in a therapeutic setting.

While there are apparent similarities between CGT and psychoanalysis as a process of uncovering, by rejecting adjustment CGT aligns well with the psychoanalytical work of Erich Fromm (1942; 1976; 1992; 2010). Fromm is, among other things, credited with developing the field of political psychology, which challenges how states and elites use psychology to exert power over, and enslave, their populations for political ends (Horowitz, 1979). At a fundamental level, Fromm's approach supports the basic tenets of the therapeutic alliance generated between analyst and analysand; namely, the attitudes of non-judgment, focussing

on the problem not the people involved; confidentiality, congruence, and reflection. These also reflect the core conditions associated with the CGT project.

Working with both Glaser and Fromm helped me recognise the importance of a value-based philosophical approach (critical realism) which encourages morphogenesis, a constructive dialogue to consciously encourage social change (Bagley *et al.*, 2018). It is a perspective that challenges the dominance of positivism, mimicry, ahistoricism, hedonism and the homeostatic vision of the world, by embracing the complexity inherent in everyday life and expressing concern for the common good as opposed to individual careers.

#### **4.2. A Marxist influence?**

I think it is right to turn to Marx at this point; after all the experiences that the Participants faced in their workplace contexts were not so different from what he wrote about nearly 200 years ago. However, Marx is also present in the depths of the CGT method; in Glaser's arguments that the analyst should escape proletarianisation of academic life.

Despite Glaser's clear injunction not to accept without question the theories of lauded scholars, Dey (2007, p. 83) points out the influence of Marx in the development of CGT. The Marx present in CGT is author of the 1844 *Manuscripts*; a man more concerned with the dehumanising impact of work, and the alienation labourers suffer due to the deskilling of their roles than overthrowing capitalism. He is a Marx concerned about the social value and autonomy of labour.

Reading Marx's advice that:

*we do not set out from what [people] imagine, conceive, nor from [people] as narrated, thought of, or imagined, conceived, in order to arrive at [people] in the flesh. We set out from real, active [people] and on the basis of their real-life process, we demonstrate the*

*development of the ideological reflexes and echoes of this life process.* (Marx and Engels, 2010, p. 165)

is to hear the refrain of Glaser to let go of our preconceptions and ground the analysis in data, and trust that the theory will emerge; the theory does not need to be forced. Through CGT, even the analyst develops as a self-creation. By conceptualising and building theories, analysts come alive, expressing themselves, their human powers of creative thought, not through the grace of others but by their own productivity.

Glaser's emphasis on helping people become themselves is resonant of Marx's assertion that autonomy is only possible when people can stand on their own two feet. The warning that people should not 'live by the grace of another nor [be] created by another' (Marx and Engels, 1844, p. 112) is evocative of Glaser and Strauss' rejection of theoretical capitalism. Analysts must engage with the thinkers of the past and present, developing a relationship with them, but not be dependent upon them (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). It is a relationship of equals; driven by a serendipitous encounter rather than a response to an implicit or explicit demand.

By proposing the concept of theoretical capitalism, Glaser and Strauss adapted Marx's argument about the principle thesis of capitalism being:

*the renunciation of life and human needs ... the less you are, the less you express your life, the more you have, the greater your alienated life and the greater is the saving of your alienated being.* (Marx and Engels, 1844, p. 119)

Adopting the works of the great scholars of the past, applying processes and procedures mechanically, ticking the right boxes, may provide a route into an academic career. However, by renouncing autonomy, creativity, critical thinking, and critical curiosity for personal security, researchers become alienated beings, albeit wealthier. What you can no longer do for yourself (for example, conceptualising) you can consume from others. This argument returns



us to the previous dismissal by Glaser of those who cannot think creatively and spend their lives testing or teaching the theories of others.

In rejecting theoretical capitalism, a further link with Marx is found in the idea that the present is dominated by the past (Marx and Engels, 1844, p. 224). Glaser and Strauss, drawing on the psychoanalytical process, privilege the present over the past; the past is a reference point not to be relied upon until thoroughly analysed and incorporated into the developing theory.

Any existing literature or theories struggle to be included; they must be compared and contrasted with data, the emerging codes, and memos. If the existing literature meets the criteria of CGT, in other words, if it fits, is relevant, works and can be adapted, the literature may be used in the study, if not it must be rejected. Moreover, the living person is privileged over the theoretical capital. It is the labour of the analyst that is privileged, the process of combining their awareness, skills, and values, into a research activity through which they learn to become themselves that is important (Gynnild, 2011). By a:

*process of genuine activity [people develop themselves], become [themselves]; work is not only a means to an end — the product — but an end in itself, the meaningful expression of human energy; hence work is enjoyable. (Fromm, 1966, pp. 41-42)*

Fromm's quote explains the matter at the heart of this thesis that fun is derived from a productive movement of personal growth; work is meant to be fun.

### **4.3. Developing CGT skills**

Two aims of the PGT were, first to understand how to be a CGT analyst, and second to understand what influenced the development of the CGT method; the depth of the connection between the two was not appreciated at the time. So far, in this chapter, it has been argued that CGT encourages analysts to embrace research (and work) as fun and develop their social

value by becoming themselves. In this section, we explore the intricate relationship between serendipity, methodological sensitivity and CGT.

I will argue that it is essential to embrace serendipity as a way of life to develop methodological sensitivity. It is a demand that requires the analyst to inhabit a space of openness and trust. It is a life of perpetual transformation; exploring alternative views, understanding them, judging them, and adapting them as needed—embodying Lonergan's theory of knowledge discussed in Chapter 2. Such an approach requires a change in mindset whereby communication for understanding is privileged over communication for information.

Serendipity, however, demands that the analyst trusts the method and is willing to risk relinquishing control. Embracing serendipity recognises the damage that the Automatonising process does to employees, and wider society, where people accept what they are told, without engaging in their lives, out of habit or out of fear. To embrace serendipity, we have little choice but to let go of those fears; serendipity which not only leads to new knowledge but which provides the foundation from which fun emerges. As the data analysis reveals, relinquishing control and risking serendipity is the antithesis of the demands for statistical control from liberation management.

#### **4.4. Glaser's appropriation of serendipity**

To develop methodological sensitivity, it seemed sensible to engage in some methodological archaeology. It may be the counsellor in me, but I was interested in Glaser as a person; why does he not work in a university, why does he hold the university apparatus in low esteem? What emerged was the recognition that, despite Glaser's assertion that he could let grudges go because other people have their patterns of behaviour (Gynnild, 2011); he could hold a grudge. In the following pages, it will become clear that a younger and less conciliatory Glaser harboured *ressentiment* and had fun in exercising revenge on those he felt worthy of his ire.

Glaser found a specific place in his inferno for Robert Merton. He particularly disliked Merton's behaviour to his students, accusing him of '[controlling] everyone, undermining their confidence and straight-jacketing creativity'; behaviours which led to six students failing their PhD (Holton, 2011, p. 208). Glaser, while still a student at Columbia University, had fun in the creative ways in which he gained vengeance:

- writing a paper challenging Merton's views and sending over 2,000 reprints around the world (Holton, 2011, p. 205) and
- submitting his notes from one of Merton's lectures for peer review in the *American Sociological Review* and receiving the anonymous feedback that they were 'reified gibberish' (Holton, 2011, p. 209).

Glaser's aim seems to have been to tarnish Merton's reputation; Glaser would no doubt argue that justice motivated him. Glaser's approach offers a good example of Having-Fun-Decaying in action.<sup>25</sup>

Glaser's motivation for developing grounded theory seems to have been to gain revenge by developing and maturing Merton's intellectual baby—serendipity. Serendipity, as a word, had grabbed Merton's attention as a graduate student around 1945; it was a word he was passionate about and which underpinned much of his later work (Merton and Barber, 2006). Together with Elinor Barber, sometime in the 1950s, Merton wrote a guide to serendipity — *The Travels and Adventures of Serendipity* — which despite hints, in articles and discussions to its existence, was not published in English until 2006.<sup>26</sup> To read the *Travels* is to encounter a text that is locked in time; it is a fantastic book which plots the development of how a single

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<sup>25</sup> Having-Fun-Decaying is a negative aspect of the process of Having-Fun in which one person's fun damages other people and relationships (see section 5.6.3).

<sup>26</sup> Merton and Barber's principle work on serendipity, *The Travels and Adventures of Serendipity* was written in the late 1950's but not published until 2006. Thus, some of the references used below, for example Liestman (1992) were written without the benefit of reading the text. The manuscript had been published in Italian in 2002 but Merton died before he could edit the English version.

word captivated a scholar's attention, how it has been explored and used, as well as abused, over the last 250 years.

#### **4.4.1. Defining serendipity**

Like fun or happiness, serendipity is a problematic word to define (Liestman, 1992; McCay-Peet and Toms, 2015; Kefalidou and Sharples, 2016). Definitions vary from a 'pleasant surprise' (Tolson, 2004, p. 51) through to more nuanced and scholarly definitions such as an unexpected uncovering of associations, connections, and meanings (Alvinius *et al.*, 2016a); 'the interactive outcome of unique and contingent 'mixes' of insight coupled with chance' (Fine and Deegan, 1996, p. 436); or the deliberate use of heuristics to encourage and develop theory building (Klag and Langley, 2013).

When he coined the word in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, Horace Walpole referred to 'making discoveries, by accident and sagacity, of things which [people] were not in quest of ... you must observe that no discovery of a thing you are looking for comes under this description' (quoted in Merton and Barber, 2006, p. 2). It seems as if Walpole was not so much defining serendipity as identifying the environmental (accidental) and personal (sagacity) prerequisites necessary for the emergence of serendipity.

Fine and Deegan (1996) identified three environmental contexts which facilitated the advent of serendipity:

- *temporal serendipity*: being in the right place at the right time);
- *relational serendipity*: being open to new, unexpected relationships with others through, for example, chance remarks or unplanned meetings);
- *analytical serendipity*: the use of inductive or abductive research methods which apply insight to identify different conclusions using the same data).

Previously, Liestman (1992) had proposed six conditions under which serendipity emerges:

- *coincidence* — serendipity emerges because of luck. If searches continue long enough, eventually something useful will emerge.
- *prevenient grace* — researchers are unwittingly led to discoveries through the work of others, for example, the work of librarians in cataloguing and categorising collections.
- *synchronicity* — although like coincidence, this approach relies upon hidden and unknown forces as the explanation.
- *perseverance* — the researcher uses determination and persistence to force useful data to emerge; however, the researcher must understand the law of diminishing returns (or saturation in CGT) to recognise when to stop persevering.
- *altamirage* — serendipity is encountered by a mixture of individualised traits (habits, knowledge, or character) that emerge at a fortuitous moment
- *sagacity* — the researcher develops their skills of intuition, discernment, and sound judgement to build connections and meanings from unconnected data

These first three factors do not reflect the positions taken by either Merton and Barber or Fine and Deegan, as they imply that serendipity is the result of a lucky chance happened upon by an alert researcher (Amabile, 1988, p. 162). However, where perseverance means determination, the ability to keep on going, or ‘pacing’ in CGT terminology, it becomes crucial. Perseverance, along with altamirage and sagacity, allude to the need for the researcher to develop what Sertillanges (1960, p. 162) describes as a ‘prepared mind’.

The focus of recent research into serendipity sought to understand the conditions necessary for serendipity and to explore its processes (Wopereis and Braam, 2018); what constitutes a prepared mind, has had little attention. For Merton, a prepared mind meant that the researcher had developed skills of: ‘enterprise, courage, curiosity, imagination, determination, assiduity, and alertness’ (Merton and Barber, 2006, p. 178). Rivoal and Salazar (2013, p. 178)

offer a more concise ‘background knowledge, an inquisitive mind, creative thinking and good timing’. Researchers needed:

*intellectual readiness, coupled with exposure to a wide range of experience, that we create a sense of lived experience — ours and others. [And a readiness] to seize the clues on the road to discovery. (Fine and Deegan, 1996, p. 444)*

Others suggest that serendipity is characterised by an openness of the researcher; to discerning opportunities and learning from unexpected events (Kirchberg and Kagan, 2013; Alvinus *et al.*, 2016a). This addition of openness to the skills has been referred to in various guises; for example, encountering (Nutefall and Ryder, 2010) and being anti-fragile (Taleb, 2012).

A clear link with the aims of CGT can be found, where those using serendipity in research are:

*prepared, curious and open-minded people acting on the world and finding some relation of knowledge and material possibility, the potential knowledge of which was always there, which others in their society had failed to realize. (Cunha *et al.*, 2010, p. 320)*

Cunha *et al.* (2018) appreciate the core skills of analysts; the ability to work in a state of abstract wonderment, letting go of their preconceptions to uncover relationships between different incidents, developing explanations of what is happening. Serendipity is the output of a purposeful, skilled, and systematic process, not merely a flash of inspiration.

It seems that serendipity demands that researchers become skilled and confident enough to embrace uncertainty; to be able to identify and benefit from opportunities emerging from within the chaos of uncertainty. To be able to do this requires one additional factor: time. In the same way that CGT's can have a long gestation period (Artinian, 2009a), serendipity ‘requires ‘time—making time to observe, understand and ponder, and stretching time, if needed’ (Rivoal and Salazar, 2013, p. 4). I suggest that when researchers enter this pondering

state in abstract wonderment, without preconceptions and open to the encountering uncertainty, they are accessing their preconscious thoughts, which is an aim of CGT (Glaser and Holton, 2004). It is a process which links the systematic with the serendipitous to help the theorising process in CGT (Holton and Walsh, 2017, p. 91). In this way, CGT should rightly be an example of 'slow research'.

#### **4.4.2. Serendipity and the CGT process**

Was Glaser's attention grabbed by serendipity in the same way that Merton's was? Merton suggests that serendipity emerged as a by-product of an on-going research programme and that the unexpected observations should refer to existing theories (Konecki, 2008b; Yaqub, 2018); Glaser rejected both requirements. Merton's requirements appear to privilege what was anathema to Glaser, theoretical capitalism. Instead, CGT provides two interrelated forms of serendipity; substantive and theoretical (Konecki, 2008b, p. 183). The former arises from the injunction to enter the field in abstract wonderment and the latter to be open to creating new hypotheses and theoretical constructions

Glaser and Strauss' only acknowledgement of Merton's influence was a brief footnote in *Discovery*. They argued that Merton was only interested in the 'grounded modifying of theory, not grounded generating of theory' and as such his approach to serendipity was driven by providing a solution with an existing problem in mind (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p. 2).<sup>27</sup> In exploring typologies of serendipity, Yaqub (2018, pp. 171–172) agrees, categorising Merton's understanding as a type of serendipity in which a targeted search solves a known problem by a new route. Yaqub contrasts Merton's understanding with three other typologies, namely:

- where a targeted search solves a different problem
- where an untargeted search solves an immediate problem

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<sup>27</sup> Glaser and Strauss were correct in this interpretation with the information available when they wrote *Discovery* in 1967, however, Merton's stance was expanded upon in *Travels* (for example: Merton and Barber, 2006).

- where an untargeted search solves a later problem

It is tempting to suggest that CGT seeks to encounter serendipity in the latter two types based upon Glaser and Strauss's argument that CGT should have no preconceptions (hence untargeted research) and seek to allow the core category (the problem) to emerge during the analysis. However, this may not be the case. A CGT study is exploratory; it exists within a given research field, the substantive area; while a new problem might emerge, it is a problem grounded in the existing experiences of the Participants; it is an immediate problem. Neither the immediate problem nor the explanations are provided by serendipity; serendipity 'does not of itself, produce discoveries' (Ziman, 2004, p. 217). Serendipity does, however, provide opportunities to uncover connections.

It is important to recognise that serendipity emerges from the convergence of psychological (openness and awareness of the researcher) and sociological elements (a supportive working environment); either element in isolation will not lead to serendipity (Merton and Barber, 2006). It is the 'exploitation of serendipitous opportunities by persons primed to appreciate their significance' (Ziman, 2004, p. 217). Serendipity can be influenced but not forced (Makri *et al.*, 2014).

I am not sure that Merton and Glaser were that far apart in reality. Merton had already argued that 'empirical research goes far beyond the passive role of verifying and testing theory: it does more than confirm or refute hypotheses. Research plays an active role' (Merton, 1949, p. 506). He went on to argue that research should also initiate, reformulate, deflect, and clarify theories (*ibid.*); using research to develop new hypotheses requires the recognition of the 'serendipity pattern' which:

*involves the unanticipated, anomalous and strategic datum which exerts pressure on the investigator for a new direction of inquiry which extends theory.* (Merton, 1949, p. 506)



In other words, the serendipity pattern yields an observation that was not preconceived at the start of the study; the observation was surprising because it challenged existing knowledge and demanded that researchers give way to their curiosity to explore further. Researchers must be sufficiently theoretically, and methodologically, sensitive to extend the theory from the particular to the universal. This final aspect is crucial because it is often neglected by those who use Merton's quote above. The concept of the 'serendipity pattern' provides the starting point for further research (Merton and Barber, 2006, p. 261); like a CGT, it is a hypothesis waiting to be tested.

Merton emphasised the need to provide people with the right socio-cultural microenvironment to encourage serendipity. Merton and Barber (2006, p. 258) criticised those who suggested that serendipity could be reduced to resulting from a natural talent. They preferred to recognise the need for institutions to provide the culture and environment in which people felt safe and encouraged to explore different connections; spaces where researchers/or other employees, are 'officially permitted to deviate to chase after presumed wild geese' (Ziman, 2004, p. 218).

It seems as if Glaser and Strauss' achievement in GT is to provide analysts with the right microenvironment to encourage serendipity, while at the same time identifying the skills required to enter the research field in abstract wonderment and uncover that which has been missed by others.

#### **4.4.3. Discovering or uncovering**

Unlike Glaser, I do not view CGT as a process of discovery, with all its undertones of triumphalism and ownership, but an uncovering of something buried beneath the detritus of vested fictions.

It seems as if the action of uncovering is more dangerous than the action of discovering. There is an implicit declaration, when using the language of discovery, that something existed

beforehand, which only gains meaning when announced. Heinz Leymann (1990) announced that 'in recent years, a work environment problem has been discovered, the existence and extent of which was not known previously' (p. 119); the problem of mobbing. The statement is manifestly untrue, those who were struggling with the phenomenon knew what was happening, it was part of their daily lives, even if they did not have the language to describe it. By arguing that mobbing was an unknown phenomenon, Leymann unwittingly allowed managers to say that they did not know it was going on and justify their collusion in the mobbing phenomenon. Discovery acts from above, however gently, it is still imposed (Dussel, 2011).

CGT uncovers from below; grounded in stories from Participants, who are the real experts in the phenomenon. It is the purpose of the communicated CGT to encourage participants to engage with and build on the theory; gently challenging how they encounter their world. Imposition, otherwise known as *forcing*, does not have any part in the CGT method or in a CGT itself.

A CGT is an exercise in soft power where skills in facilitation, influencing, negotiation, persuasion (Glaser, 1992; 1998) and understanding are valued. Ultimately, a CGT is an act of communication in which the search for understanding is privileged above being understood; but it is an understanding that must lead to responsible action.

The theme of uncovering is evident in Glaser's writing style; he enjoys using dissonance as a pedagogical tool. It would not be an exaggeration to suggest that he is playful in his use of dissonance; using it as a means of encouraging his audience to engage with and understand his work. As Glaser states, dissonance 'creates a lot of reading because everybody is trying to figure it out' (Gynnild, 2011, p. 242). The dissonance is not found in fractured sentence construction or the use of harsh words, but how he provides advice and then leaves the reader to work through the implications of the advice.

Reflecting on the experience of being taught GT by both Glaser and Strauss, Charmaz (2000; 2011) paints a portrait of two men who challenged analysts to go deeper and broader in their search to uncover new data. For those who were new to memoing, Glaser reserved a specific task; he would explain how vital memoing is as part of the GT process before telling them to go home and write some memos. To the consternation of his students, he provided no more instruction. People must 'figure it out' for themselves; for those unwilling, or unable, to learn for themselves, Glaser's advice was to leave the course. This approach is present in Glaser's writing, of particular relevance is his instruction to enter the research in 'abstract wonderment of what is going on that is an issue and how it is handled' (Glaser, 1992, p. 22).

When I first read Glaser's instruction on abstract wonderment, I skimmed over it and ignored it. However, I kept returning to it, wanting to understand what it meant and more importantly, how do I know what it means to be in abstract wonderment and why it is necessary. Like Merton's experience with serendipity, I became passionate about abstract wonderment. It is only through *being in* abstract wonderment that the analyst can fully experience the preconscious thoughts which help them uncover the hidden relationships that underpin the CGT and, as I will argue, to embrace Being-Fun.

In *Discovery*, both Glaser and Strauss sought to provide students with the means of escaping from those constraints on research that inhibit the creativity and spontaneity which, when liberated, lead to surprising and delightful results. In this context, Glaser's dissonance becomes a challenge to us, as readers and would-be analysts, to seek out those areas of our lives, careers and research which are incongruent. Surprisingly, through his dissonance, Glaser asks us to work with the twin concepts of awareness and experience, which are essential to developing congruence (Rogers, 1962). By highlighting the discrepancy between our own needs or beliefs, be they vested fictions or preconceptions, and the collected data, I believe

Glaser expects that we will be freer to analyse the data, without unconsciously tainting the new theory.

It is from this congruent position of uncovering that this chapter and the remainder of the thesis is written. It is a position I describe as being a servant-analyst; to approach a study in abstract wonderment is to put yourself at the service of the data, the Participants, and the wider community. In the next section, I explain the outcome of the PGT and about understanding how serendipity influences the use of abstract wonderment.

#### **4.4.4. Encouraging serendipity**

What do we need to do to promote serendipity in a CGT project or in our workplaces? The answer is found in abstract wonderment. It is sometimes comforting to find that others share the same view. Holton and Walsh (2017) linked serendipity, and its usefulness for developing theory, with the memoing process; it was a link on which I had been working. However, Holton and Walsh did not explore how this link emerges in detail; an oversight addressed by building on the primary memoing process (see section 4.5). The memoing process in CGT is intrinsically linked with encouraging serendipity.

#### **4.5. Revisiting memoing in Classical Grounded Theory**

Reflecting on this exploratory journey into Being-Fun, it is difficult to imagine what would have happened if I had not decided to learn how to write a CGT memo. It is from this decision that I began to understand the act of communication, the critical distinction between horizontal and vertical communication, the difference between communicating-informing and communicating-understanding. Moreover, I would never have met a research partner that is so full of surprises and is fun to be with — my memos.

#### 4.5.1. What is a memo?

When I began the PGT, I did not appreciate why Glaser, in one of his rare moments of dogmatism, wrote that if an ‘analyst skips [memoing] ...[they are] not doing grounded theory’ (Glaser, 1978, p. 83). Nor why other scholars had argued that memoing is an essential activity in a GT study (Babchuk, 1996; Charmaz, 2006; Montgomery and Bailey, 2007; Birks *et al.*, 2008; Gibson and Hartman, 2014; Corbin and Strauss, 2015).

My lack of understanding was grounded in my experiences of memos as records, or even as political weapons. When I first started work, the memo was a formal, paper document recording an action or agreement. Currently, the memo, in its most usual form of an email, is used similarly; to convey a specific message that offers both concise information. However, in current businesses, the email is weaponised; to ‘hide through showing’ (Park, 2010, p. 663) ‘by providing concise information to others which explains what has happened/is happening.

Such memos emerge from all levels of the organisation as an efficient means of transmitting information (Guillory, 2004, p. 112); protecting and absolving the sender of responsibility.

Others, however, might use the memo (email) as a form of protection; proof that a question has been asked or an action has been completed — qualitative research is no different. Memos have been used as little more than field notes; reducing the document to the status of evidence to be presented and judged by external audiences (see, for example, Montgomery and Bailey, 2007). Used in this way, the memo becomes a statistical monitoring device.

Glaser and Strauss encouraged researchers to move away from viewing the memo as a form of positivist evidence, towards the acceptance of it as a liberating rhetorical device (Glaser, 1978), like that envisioned in Cicero’s *De Oratore*. In other words, the memo should not force a protectionist mentality but provide freedom to the researcher, fulfilling the threefold functions of teaching, delighting and movement (*docere, delectare, movere*); core conditions for Being-Fun. To transition from protecting self-interests and performing for others, to

embracing creativity and autonomy was not easy. In the early days, I was aware not only of a desire to show my supervisor that I had been 'doing the process' but also of gaining approval for what I was doing; I was audiencing.

Charmaz (2011) tells of the experiences of students in Glaser and Strauss's early classes on GT at UCLA, where the students were sent home and told to write memos, without being told how to; challenging the dominant paternalistic and commanding structures of the education establishment at the time. Charmaz adds that Glaser and Strauss '[expended] substantial effort and time to help students and new scholars 'get it' and bring them into the grounded theory fold' (p. 178). What was meant by 'get it' implied letting go of the certainty that was expected in research those who 'came [to the class] with quite structured views of social, community, and institutional processes ... [and] felt that order was fixed, and change was problematic.' Those unable to 'get it' risked failing the course (*ibid.*). Although the demand to 'get it' was non-negotiable for Glaser, it was tempered with a drive to help people 'get it'. Glaser's monographs and articles across the last 50 years are a testament to that drive to help; for some students 'getting it' meant embarking on an intellectual journey that changed their lives (Charmaz, 2011).

Despite the emphasis on writing memos, there has been an acknowledgement that 'memos are neglected as a GT procedure' (Glaser, 2014b, p. 1). Exploring CGT more deeply, I began to understand the function of the memo and how it fits with its status as essential for the CGT process. However, serendipitously encountering the work Niklas Luhmann led to an appreciation of how memos work as research partners. Understanding the latent potential of memos means developing a genuinely ethical relationship with the data, moving from communicating-information (providing instruction) to communicating-understanding (developing understanding) which creates to genuine-original data.

Communicating-information is a process by which messages are transmitted to another person as an object. It does not call for any interaction other than to be heard. To use memos as a form of protection is to treat the memo as an object of communication: an evidential artefact. It is an approach contrary to the spirit and instructions of the CGT method to avoid worrisome accuracy. That is not to say that communicating-information is negative; it is a vital part of life to give and receive instructions. However, the purpose of the memo is different in a CGT study; the memo is an intrinsic part of an attempt to explain what is happening. It is a means of producing knowledge, revealing hidden connections at a preconscious level; the purpose of a memo is to surprise.

Glaser discouraged the sharing of memos to facilitate the freedom for analysts to explore, make mistakes, and to play with the data and their thoughts (Glaser, 1978); to experience the pleasure of surprise without being judged. In his discouragement, Glaser was aware of the danger that analysts might begin audiencing; sacrificing creativity, autonomy, and fun to gain approval from external judges/audiences.

Glaser prefers encouraging analysts to rediscover their creativity (Snowden and Boone, 2007). This rediscovery is enhanced when we escape from four fears that affect self-confidence and creativity; being judged, the messy unknown, taking the first step and not being in control (Kelley and Kelley, 2012). CGT encourages mistakes, as long as the analyst takes the time to learn from them (Glaser, 1992). It is an approach that is built into the DNA of the method; any theory will be modifiable as more data emerges, just correct it later. Such an approach is counter-cultural in an era where judgment, blame and conformity are dominant.

#### **4.5.2. Understanding communication**

My approach to memoing is grounded in Luhmann's theory of communication. The first hurdle to be crossed in Luhmann's theory is that humans do not communicate, only communication communicates (Luhmann, 1992b; 1995). Luhmann, like Glaser, deliberately

moves the human away from the centre of the action; communication as data becomes central. What does this mean? In a Luhmannian world, the human being as a single entity does not exist; the concept of the human being is a simplified construct. The human being is three separate autopoietic (self-generating) systems a biological body, a brain, and a psychic mind, which communicate with each other.

Moeller (2012) points out that Luhmann's views are not as radical as they at first seem; he argues that Luhmann articulated them to provide a higher degree of precise discussion. Communication does not happen outside of us; it happens in our mind; there is no physical transfer of information, even in the written word. We must try to understand if we are being communicated to, and we must also work out what that communication means, finally the way the response is expressed lets the other person know whether the message has been understood. It seems as if CGT aims to encourage the analyst to bracket their preconceptions to be able to explore the range of possible selections.

### **Embracing irritation**

Luhmann's theory of communication is often divided into three distinct actions; message, utterance, and understanding; however, he also adds a fourth precursor action; irritation. There is a tendency to describe an irritation as something annoying, an object; an itch or a person (Heinonen and Strandvik, 2005; Bono *et al.*, 2007; Filippov *et al.*, 2010). Others have defined an irritation as a sign of mental health problems (for example, Rothermund *et al.*, 2017). Charles Sanders Pierce (1877), in contrast, argued that irritation could lead to doubt.

In his paper, Pierce distinguished between doubt and belief, arguing that irritation leads to a thought which creates doubt; that doubt remains until the doubt is resolved by belief which results in an action. If *belief* is changed to read *understanding*, Pierce's argument is in line with Luhmann's argument that irritation is an internal response to an external stimulus. For example, in a conversation with someone else, we may hear the noise of what is being said,



but we may not be listening; if something is said that surprises us (for example, we feel offended or upset), then we listen more intently. Irritation is the point at which we can make a distinction — where we focus on a specific element rather than something else. Thus, human action is derived from the communication – we act on the irritations that we experience with our senses.

Serendipity is, therefore, a communicative act, experienced through irritation. The purpose of abstract wonderment is to make us aware of and responsive to those irritations. By actively listening and reading, letting go or bracketing our preconceptions, being self-aware, we become attuned to the impact of irritations and thus enhance the possibility of encountering serendipity. In understanding the source of the irritation, we must take an interest in the problem and act on that interest; in this case, irritation becomes the first motivating event in the creative process (Hammershøj, 2014; 2018). It is justifiable to suggest that the equivalent word in CGT is sensitivity; be that theoretical or methodological sensitivity.

### **Seeking understanding**

Through the surprise of irritation, the reservoir of things to be uttered or forgotten is agitated (Bechmann and Stehr, 2002). In CGT, the reservoir is created by the writing of memos. As notes/codes/categories (predetermined information) are analysed memos are added to the reservoir, new serendipitous connections are produced and become visible (utterances), they are compared with other memos, new meanings (understanding) can be inferred by the analyst.

The written word, for example, is a piece of information, nothing more, it only has the meaning that the author intended or the reader extracts from it; even then it is imperfect. As I write these lines, the reader will interpret my words against their understanding; I must relinquish control. I know what I mean to write and express it to the best of my ability, and yet there will still be something missing from the ideal that my brainwaves uttered to my mind

and is communicated on the page. I watched the Participants as they struggled to express what they are thinking; often telling me that their words are the best they can do; an example of baselining. However, at this point, it is important to note that if the information remains as information, it is not communication.

During data analysis, poor communication emerged as a theme, not just at an organisational or managerial level but across all levels in the organisation. Alfred wisely stated that *'I've always said that communication is the great problem solver. It's just that [people at work] do not know how to do it'*. The result of poor communication is conflict and the duelling process in which one party attempts to silence the other; when the conflict emerges, people seem to use information exclusively; they stop trying to understand. As the interviews progressed and tales were told, and later during data analysis, a simple question kept nagging me; why do people not communicate?<sup>28</sup>

### **Communicating-Information**

In the main study, data analysis revealed two different forms of communication: communicating-information and communicating-understanding. It was no surprise to see that transmission of information dominated the structural communications produced by the organisation, or that senior managers transmitted their information not wishing to engage in discussions.

How one company engages in communicating-information in its performance management review process is discussed in detail in the next chapter (see, section 5.4), with or without any input from employees. No options were made available for the employees to feedback on the process; it became a 'simple, black-and-white processes of conformity' (Montuori, 2005, p. 20).

A style of communication that can be described as soft totalitarianism; a blend of blind

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<sup>28</sup> These questions must also be addressed within the context of this study into workplace behaviour and the CGTM; this thesis is not the place to have a wide-ranging discussion on communication.

obedience and informed acquiescence in which transmission of information by command replaces understanding and equality.

### **The totalitarian organisation**

The difference between autocracy and totalitarianism is found in the extent to which power is exercised; the former seeking to eradicate political opposition while the latter seeks to control all aspects of people's lives. Soft totalitarianism reflects the use of fun as a means of exerting control or by using technology and fear. For example, the way Amazon controls the activities of its employees (Cadwalladr, 2013; Davis, 2014; Osborne, 2016), or how Kay described her manager asking her why she had been to the toilet twice in an afternoon. To describe an organisation as totalitarian may seem harsh; however, with the emphasis on eliminating difference, reducing complexity, and increasing certainty, it is a relevant discussion to engage in.

In the totalitarian organisation, communicating-information dominates. Managers tell workers what to do; workers follow those instructions. In the case of Maria, she wanted her patients to listen, not to question, saying that '*relationships aren't that important*' and that her colleagues needed to listen and not query what she was saying; she was the professional, and she expected respect from them;

*I think relationships aren't that important to be honest unless it's personal relationship.*

*I think it is the communication you have and the respect [where respect means]*

*Listening. I think the respect is that they listen.*

Maria saw her power being vested in her professional identity, but I would suggest that this hides a different driver for communication; her passion for her role, she lives her role both inside and outside of work:

*Talking to them, listening even though you can't do anything about it. It's listening. It's knowing your job inside out and back to front. I also think it's having a passion about your job ... I am passionate about it - I live, eat, breathe occupational health. I know it inside out, back to front, also I enjoy doing it. I enjoy doing it I enjoy coming in solving problems, having those bad sides and downsides but it's also the one time when someone turns round and say's thank you.*

Communicating, in this case, is linked with passion and developing understanding. There is a difference between being competent in a job and being passionate about it. I think Maria expressed what Glaser encourages analysts to achieve; by being both passionate and knowledgeable about their job empowers people to feel more secure in their role. Having a passionate knowledge of a skill enables a person to bend the rules (Kasparov, 2017); it also allows them to engage in a freer discussion, being able to listen without feeling threatened. More than that, being secure in a role frees the person up to help others.

It seems that this is precisely Glaser's point; becoming/disbecoming yourself (Gynnild, 2011) provides a safe place from which to encounter the Other, where 'the Other' is a person, object or even data incidents. To find that safe place or sense of security requires a genuine dialogue within ourselves and with others: the question arises as to how this productive communication can occur—a question communicating-understanding helps answer.

### **Communicating-understanding**

Both Luhmann and Glaser reject the transmission approach to communication. Where Glaser's rejection is implied in his denunciation of theoretical capitalism and imposed hierarchal structures, Luhmann is more explicit. Luhmann criticises the transmission model for treating information as a possession to be bestowed and accepted without change; compelling others to accept our worldview and in doing so, risking a duel. For example, managers who rate their team's performance without any discussion risk initiating resistance

actions such as withholding support, leaving the employee with a sense of simmering discontent.

I mentioned earlier the egalitarian ideals of both Luhmann and Glaser. Now I would like to introduce Paulo Freire into the discussion. I encountered Freire as part of my exploration of the development of the concept of Automatonising. I had not expected to be able to join Glaser, Luhmann and Freire in dialogue but freed from their disciplinary boundaries, their work is similar and mutually reinforcing. They all recognise that difference troubles (irritates) communication and that through communication the two parties maintain and defend their own identity while growing together (Freire, 1992, p. 107).

Speaking from an educational perspective, Freire (1992) rejects the transmission model claiming it promotes a ‘mechanistic, dogmatic, authoritarian viewpoint that converts education into pure “communication”, the sheer transmission of neutral content’ (p. 99). He also adds that the transmission model is ‘anti-dialogue’ which is characterised as loveless, arrogant, hopeless, mistrustful, acritical (Freire, 1974, pp. 42–43); the relationship between the two parties involved is hierarchal and empathy-less. Echoing Luhmann, Freire argues that only dialogue, nourished by love, humility, hope, trust, and empathy truly communicates.<sup>29</sup>

The conversation between Glaser, Luhmann and Freire was serendipitous. All three authors call on us to move beyond the simple dynamics of communication and develop an ethical relationship with those whom we encounter; listening and trying to understand what they are saying without imposing our thoughts and views on their communication. It is an ethical approach that lies at the heart of this study and my counselling practice. This understanding does, in part at least, confirm the need for employees to develop higher-order social skills, and

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<sup>29</sup> It is worth mentioning that not all transmission information is irrational; rational information also exists. For example, the instruction to a child not to put their hand into a fire. The communication can come afterwards as the parent explains why it is not a good idea.

increase sensitivity in communication, to counter the increases in job insecurity raised by the growing use of artificial intelligence in the workplace in future years (Frey and Osborne, 2017; MGI, 2017; OECD, 2019).

Despite writing his monograph *Theoretical Sensitivity* (1978), Glaser has been criticised for lacking clarity about developing sensitivity (Birks and Mills, 2015); though accurate, it is a weak criticism. Glaser does not offer step-by-step guidance for developing sensitivity, but to criticise him for lack of clarity implies is to misunderstand the broader CGT process. CGT is underpinned by the demand that analysts develop sensitivity to data; to give voice to the data, but this is not possible unless sensitivity to communicating-understanding is also developed. Corbin and Strauss (2015, p. 77) put it well, arguing that ‘qualitative researchers aim for sensitivity, or the ability to carefully listen to and respect both participants and the data they provide’. Researchers must be able to enter the research field willing to engage with literature across disciplines, to develop intellectual breadth, while at the same time developing self-awareness to be able to identify and assess their preconceptions and attachments and bracket them (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). The awareness that Glaser and Strauss encourage is detailed in an article written several years before *Discovery*. In *Contexts and Social Interaction* (1964), Glaser and Strauss identified four different awareness contexts; open, closed, suspicious and pretence. For CGT, open awareness is the most crucial: ‘each interactant is aware of the other’s true identity and his own identity in the eyes of the other’ (p. 676). It is the only, genuinely communicative action where equality between the ‘interactants’ is present.

This desire for openness flows seamlessly through Glaser’s writing, whether it is about the way analysts enter the field of research, how the data is analysed, or how data is presented. More than that, however, Glaser wants analysts to develop openness or honesty. To describe this openness as transparency would be too simplistic. Instead, he calls for an ethical relationship to develop between the analyst, participants and, strange as it may sound, data. It is an ethical

relationship of communication, a dialogue between equals, in which sensitivity to irritation generates understanding and then action.

#### **4.6. Chapter Summary**

As stated earlier, the first task in a CGT study is to identify the core category, from which the theory flows. Uncovering the Automatonising process helped make sense of Glaser's writings. I understood why he stridently rejected the remodelling of CGT. In developing a deep appreciation of CGT, I recognised that Glaser, and Strauss, were resolving the alienation dichotomy; where alienation can be a curse but, in certain circumstances, also a blessing. The dominant discourse on alienation focuses upon issues of estrangement, powerlessness and isolation (Ifeagwazi *et al.*, 2015), increased narcissism (Lange, 2004) or the loss of Being (Dussel, 1985, p. 53). While I do not dispute that alienation can lead to feelings of boredom, helplessness and disengagement (Dutko, 2016), it is remiss to ignore the role of alienation as part of a transformative learning process; which is what I believe CGT is capable of offering.

Alienation is merely a state of 'experiencing or inducing feelings of isolation or estrangement' (OLD, 2018a), which begs the question of who or what the alienated person feels isolated from? Is it, as Marx and the dominant discourse seems to imply, a feeling that is imposed from outside, however, what if I voluntarily choose to become isolated or estranged? What will happen if I decide to set aside all I know, all my expectations and preconceptions about issues; to let go of all that is familiar to be able to observe more clearly and develop my understanding? Such a movement would be a form of voluntary positive alienation; however, I suggest that is precisely what is demanded of the CGT analyst.

Negative feelings of alienation are an output of the anti-social process of Automatonising; it is for this reason the Automatonising process will be explained in the next chapter, before exploring more positive aspects of alienation as a necessary condition for approaching research, working in abstract wonderment and living in Being-Fun.

In this Chapter, I have made several unique contributions to our understanding of CGT as a research method. First, is the suggestion that developing methodological sensitivity is a prerequisite for conducting a CGT study. Building methodological sensitivity is not a process of summarising Glaser's work but instead making it personal; recognising connections and networks that fit individual research (and researcher) contexts. Like CGT itself, developing methodological sensitivity is a fun process; a process where the analyst is encouraged to encounter themselves and their identity both as a researcher and as a human person. Indeed, the keyword in methodological sensitivity is *encountering*; encountering the data, other disciplines, other people, and ourselves.

Secondly, explicitly fusing CGT with serendipity is a unique contribution. Serendipity is key to the development of new knowledge, but it is also imperative to Being-Fun. When organisations attempt to manufacture fun, the serendipitous element of fun (a deep emotional response to the pleasurable unexpected) is missing. Serendipity requires a different approach in our relationship with others; not just a relationship of equals but a relationship in which we actively seek to understand and participate in developing others through communicating-understanding. It is a relationship in which we no longer seek to be understood by others but actively seek to understand others; where mutual aid is provided beyond the borders of ourselves, departments, functions, or disciplines.

The third contribution is the recognition that CGT is a subversive research method. It has been argued that CGT was developed to help halt the progress of proletarianisation, in academia, by privileging the liberal arts—moving beyond scholarly skills by developing analytical skills. Such a move means building ethical, 're-humanising' relationships by being open, non-judgmental, and trusting, which will, in turn, promote creativity, productiveness and the common good.



In the next chapter, we will see how the understanding of CGT presented in this chapter, contrasts with the experiences of employees in their workplaces. The Automatonising process with its sense of isolation, disengagement and individuality draws the soul out of the employee; it requires us to be relaxed knowing that we are constantly challenged by the dichotomy of Being-Fun/Having-Fun, wanting to experience the former while being drawn to the latter. It is a battle for the 'soul at work' (Berardi, 2009).

## 5. Uncovering the Automatonising process

**Summary:** Within the framework of Lonergan's critical realist approach to creating new knowledge, moving from experience to understanding to action. This chapter transitions between the Participants experiences and the analysts nascent understanding of their primary concern and how they resolve that concern.

### 5.1. Introduction

Recognising the core category is a significant moment in a CGT study, the Eureka moment! It marks the point at which a clear focus for the study begins to emerge, and genuine-original information produced. The primary concern is identified, and the analyst begins, tentatively, to explore how the participants resolve that concern, forming a probable theory. The analyst acts tentatively as they remain open to the influence of more information from the constant comparison process, memos, and insight. Recognising that fun is a source of employee resistance, driving both positive and negative behaviours, was such a moment.

#### 5.1.1. Emerging codes

From the initial data analysis, a series of codes converged on the concept of socially-generated, passive, non-violent aggression, reflecting the tendency for Participants to explain workplace behaviour in terms of what annoyed them about their colleagues and workplaces. In the initial stages of study in a rush to finish, it is easy to mistake codes for the core category.

Like magpies, we can alight on the shiniest object, the one that seems to make the most sense and fits with our unacknowledged preconceptions, mistaking description for the explanation. For example, the early code duelling referred to the way two people engaged in a conflict; it describes what was happening for the Participants. However, the code does not explain and clarify, at a productive level, the purpose or nature of duelling. Only by exploring the different connections between duelling and other aspects of the data analysis did it become clear that duelling is a lower-level category. Duelling, while occurring between two protagonists, was

rarely an action that was isolated from others; it required an audience to demonstrate the power of one party over another; which immediately raises the prospect that bystanders and the demonstration of power might lead to a higher-level code. The duel described how people controlled the behaviour of others, much like the proxy wars of the Cold War era. This uncovering led to another eureka moment of identifying the core category to be audiencing. However, this still described what was happening, reflecting the performance instead of the development of an abstract, higher-level explanation.

A question asked about my orientation was important. What was I, unwittingly, looking for; what was I ignoring in the data because it did not fit my own view of the world of work? What vested fiction(s) was I holding on to that meant I did not see the bigger picture, the higher-level issue. Challenging vested fictions is tricky. It means analysing the impact of those external sources of real or imaginary sources of authority — society, faiths, workplaces, or families — on the analysts and the study. Approaching the data, seeking out what felt most uncomfortable and exploring why it was uncomfortable was a fruitful approach.

Revealing Automatonising was the first step in the study; uncovering the *as-is* problem. At one level the theory is simple; people for a variety of reasons do not engage fully in their work and encouraged by their employers, behave like robots, mechanically following the latest set of rules and procedures. Through the Automatonising process, employees have:

*lost that sort of appetite. They're just turning up, they're getting their paycheck, and that's it. They want to do overtime; they'll do it, if they don't it's like two o'clock comes then they don't care about the place until tomorrow morning. So that's the lack of apathy with everybody...you can't find anybody that really gives a damn. (Peter)*

There is a similarity between Automatonising and the concepts of skilled incompetence (Argyris, 1995) and its later evolution into functional stupidity (Alvesson and Spicer, 2012). Skilled incompetence explains how competent employees stop asking difficult, but necessary,

questions to avoid upsetting other people. The development added by Alvesson and Spicer to create functional stupidity is to suggest that organisations actively inhibit cognitive engagement by their employees by discouraging:

- *reflexivity* — creating an unwillingness to question existing practices
- *justification* — creating a situation where reasons for commands or actions are not sought or offered; where employees offer, or the employers demand, blind obedience, or informed acquiescence
- *substantive reasoning* — questions may be raised but framed in a narrow context.

The lack of cognitive engagement is supported by a lack of motivational and emotional engagement. Where employees '*don't give a damn*', their willingness to use curiosity, creativity and critical thinking is restricted, doing no more than is necessary to fulfil the requirements of the job.

Communication is reduced to an exchange of information; a set of precise instructions from which no deviation is allowed or requested. The demand for precision, or more accurately—being awkward, reflects a lack of trust or acknowledgement of the ability of employees to influence their working environment. There may be good reasons for this approach. For example, in Peter's case, many employees are temporary contractors, working on a weekly contract: '*temps that have just come in, not even been in a factory before*'; and need clear guidance. However, job insecurity creates a culture of functional stupidity, discouraging employees from contributing suggestions to improve their role or job processes because it is '*above my pay grade*' (Louise). Sue described how she turned her '*dimmer switch up and down*'; turning her emotions, creativity and curiosity off as she walked through the office door, and back on when she left for the day; she '*did as she was told*,' only functioning in work. The lack of engagement becomes a game.

The employees are having fun resisting the demands to become another homogenised artefact of machinery; reflected in the code; Having-Fun-Duelling. Duelling is a significant aspect of fun at work emerging from this study; the generally positive dominant view of fun neglects to address the weaponising of fun. This weaponising of fun refers to the different ways in which fun is used to harm others; small acts of petty aggression deployed to achieve small victories over those we dislike exercising the feelings of *ressentiment*. The data analysis suggested that employees create vested fictions to explain their new-found behaviour, and why they are right to surrender control to or fight with, others in their organisation.

The purpose of this chapter is to explain the basic anti-social process of Automatonising. The first part of this chapter explores what is meant by Automatonising and its significant categories and variables. Detailing how employers actively encourage employees to become compliant, and the appearance of the Disembodied Other as a focus of umbrage for concerns from ranging from micromanagement, performance management and the deskilling of job roles. The second part examines how employees respond to Automatonising by explaining different characteristics of Having-Fun, often in creative and, to employees at least, fun ways.

The focus in the following section expands on how the automatonising process emerged from the data analysis.

## **5.2. Uncovering the main concern**

The first stage in the CGT process is to analyse the data and develop codes; these codes are examined and challenged to reveal their purpose. For example, codes for power were easily identified, but did not add anything to awareness; what was the purpose of the power and control? What was the expected outcome of using a behaviour linked with a specific code? The analyst does not provide hypothetical answers; answers must surface from within the collected data.

Consequently, sample questions included:

- who has power and control?
- when are power and control used?
- how power and control are achieved?
- what happens after power and control have been achieved?
- what happens if power and control are not achieved?
- what does the person who loses power and control do afterwards?
- what is the impact on the audience? Who is the audience? Why are they relevant?  
How do they impact the situation?
- when and where are power and control let go voluntarily?
- how can control be reclaimed?

Detailed questioning of codes and categories revealed different dimensions to data; in this example, questioning suggested that power and control are nuanced. Ostensibly people surrender power and control when they sign a contract of employment, described as an:

*employee/employer relationship and a number of things that are, if you like, laid down for the employee to achieve within a certain timescale or within, from the time they get into work until the time they leave. (Alfred)*

We agree to abide by the conditions of our employment; as defined by the contract, job description and our roles and responsibilities as well as other policies and procedures, such as acceptable behaviour policies. If we are in a professional role, we may also be bound by the standards and ethics required of our professional bodies. However, there are also other less formal arrangements, governed by unwritten expectations:

*You are a representative of that organisation or that entity so therefore in all situations you're trying to promote that brand, that company, in the way that you act. So that*

*where I work, you should always be trying to demonstrate pro-social behaviour, acceptance of feedback and things like that. (Tom)*

The demand to become a good corporate citizen, as Tom described it, has been added to the professional competencies measured through performance appraisals (Sophie, Tracy, Tom). When the notion of pro-social behaviours first emerged, it was described as a form of reciprocity between employees who had job satisfaction (Bateman and Organ, 1983); there is little evidence of a link between productivity indicators and citizenship (Bolino *et al.*, 2015). What was mostly an informal arrangement between employers and employees that benefited the organisation, has been replaced by a reluctantly accepted demand:

*Citizenship is contributing to your department for things you don't get paid for.... I am often told I am a good citizen, but all that is is that I have an inability to say no, which isn't a good thing actually. Citizenship, to me, means that you're gullible! (Tracy)*

The emerging informal contract demands the employee take responsibility for all aspects of their working life; health, skills development, working hours and behaviour. The language being used in workplaces is strikingly similar to that used in the development of higher-order cyber-physical systems; demands for increased self-awareness, developing greater resilience to disturbances and changes, the ability (or responsibility) to maintain in and organise itself (Lee *et al.*, 2015a). Tracy stated that in her organisation, they are:

*told that autonomy is the gift of our job. So, the fact that you are autonomous means you can choose your diary, you can choose what you want to do and want you don't want to do. You know we've got no hours in our contracts.*

It sounds like a good employer encouraging their staff, however, when asked 'But are you truly autonomous?':

*I don't think so. I think that's the double edge sword...I think this it's a sham...its strengths are really just traps...our ability to take responsibility and actually take actions is probably fairly diminished.*

Adding that:

*I've spoken to colleagues who've said 'oh yeah you've got to work every day. I stay there to eight o'clock. Or if I'm writing a paper, I stay until I've finished'. And I think to myself, 'I don't want to be like that. I don't want this to be everything'. But then I'm just as guilty as everybody else.*

It is a recognition of the influence of the employer's primary instrument for control, the 'surveillance culture of performance targets' (Tracy). It seems that while we complain about workplace culture, we tacitly support it; internalising the culture, creating vested fictions to justify our acceptance and adherence. Once internalised, the demands of the culture become normal and expected; we become less defensive about further demands. For example, Participants who become good corporate citizens, resolve an internalised guilt at not keeping up with their workloads by taking work home evenings and weekends. Interestingly, they are willing to sacrifice family and leisure time to provide an illusion to their managers and peers of control over their workload by their (Sophie, Sue, Tracy, John).

The employee's response not only relates to the demand of the employer but also the way the employee seeks to gain the attention of their manager an act that can be either positive or negative as we shall see later.

### **5.2.1. Identifying patterns**

When asked what he understood by workplace behaviour, George answered: *'it is the way people do certain things'*. He followed this with a list of negative actions such as people arriving late, leaving their desk to have a cigarette, or not refilling the photocopier. What was



it about these behaviours that upset George? What was the reason for the organisation/managers not addressing these issues? What drove these behaviours in the first place? Is there a reason for these employees arriving late in the first place? How does George cope with these issues? What was he doing?

At a simple level, George was judging or attacking his colleagues. However, he was also differencing, setting himself apart from his colleagues, highlighting the difference between his behaviour and misbehaving colleagues. The judgment of colleagues who were regarded as not doing their duty, not pulling their weight, or even not doing their best was contrasted by an expression of feeling guilty if the Participants felt that others might perceive them in the same way. Where do power and control reside in this situation? It could rest with the organisation, but we cannot ignore the role of the superego and broader society, parental and other authority figures in determining the value, definitions, and interpretations which we place on doing our duty.

At this stage of the analysis, the network of connections was quite extensive, but it became more extensive still. The category of performing is significant because of its internal and external dimensions. Do I perform for myself, or for other people? Is the audience the manager who assesses an employee's behaviour or performance? Or is the audience invisible to the workplace; our dead parents who told us to do our best, without defining what that means? How do we know when we have done our best? Is it our god(s), through his/her ministers who tell us to behave and act in a certain way, which may be incompatible with the demands of the workplace? Do we have to become one person inside of work and a different one outside?

Inside most workplaces, our performance, either in terms of productivity or behaviour, is assessed formally and informally. To what extent does this measurement process affect our behaviour? Taylor (2013) describes how performance measures have become a form of

workplace tyranny. In the following sections, a contribution will be made to Taylor's argument by suggesting that performance statistics have themselves become disembodied, and meaningless to the average worker, including senior managers. At the same time, the worker is reduced to the status of a machine, human capital, to be calibrated to deliver statistically perfect, if not realistic or necessary, performance.

### **5.3. The employee as an automaton**

In transcending the description of what was happening, it became clear that a unifying factor was the transformation of human persons, workers, into objects or resources to be used by others. If this assertion had been the final theory in this study, I feel the task would have been easier. I could have entered into a theoretical debate going back to Marx's views on living labour and objectified labour. However, while Marx's views are relevant, the CGT process demands the generation of a grounded hypothesis of what is happening in the data and not a theoretical description. In this study, the question was pragmatic; there was no evidence of a strict division between living and objectified labour; the question was how people balance between the two.

We cannot escape being a resource at work; whether we work in a university, a factory, or clean windows, we are a resource through whom others will benefit. We must surrender some autonomy to fulfil the roles and functions demanded by employers/customers as expressed through our contract of employment and job description. However, data revealed a concern that employers are making excessive demands. For example, linked with demands for workers to do their duty was a growing demand for employees to become measurably good corporate citizens. The tension exists not in the well-documented issues of work-life balance but rather a balance between being a *productive-object* rather a *producing-person*.

The distinction between being productive-object (an automaton), and a producing-person is central to the remainder of this thesis. In much the same way that Glaser and Strauss

recognised that doctoral candidates had been used as theory testers, discouraged from developing their different theories, employees are objectified. Increasing demands from employers for better performance management and personal development targets mean employees are not being developed for effectiveness but calibrated for efficiency. The data suggested a connection between the demand for increased efficiency and the feeling that there was general deskilling of job roles; employee-proof procedures that detail how each task must be completed replace skills and expertise.

George accepted the hierarchical structure of his organisation, nevertheless:

*You just feel like a modularised android can do the job I am supposed to do. Just doing what you've got to do, saying what you have to say, and filling out the forms and that's it. Androids can fill out forms and tick boxes; there's no leeway for professional input.*

Colin identified the emotional cost of becoming a 'robot':

*if you can find a robot that doesn't have any feelings, heart, thoughts sensations that can do the job and tick the boxes that would be lovely —but we haven't quite invented one of those yet.*

### **What is a 'modularised android' or a robot?**

Although dictionaries differentiate between android and robot, both words have the same quality of an object operating to a predetermined set of instructions. Furthermore, both words refer to a person who behaves in an emotionally detached or mechanical manner. However, the experiences of the Participants often seemed more closely aligned with the definition of an automaton as:

1. A moving mechanical device made in imitation of a human being.
  - a. A machine which performs a range of functions according to a predetermined set of coded instructions.

- b. Used in comparisons to refer to a person who seems to act in a mechanical or unemotional way (OLD, 2018b).

As a process, automatonising explains the transformation of the human into a moving mechanical device that behaves according to a predetermined pattern. Automatonising occurs where one party is left feeling that they are unable *'to do what you want to do, how you want to do it and the way you want to do it'* (George). What about those employees who work in those governance roles, who are monitoring their colleagues? Do they pass through the automatonising process to be able to do their own jobs? The answer to this question is a probable yes.

At this stage, it would be easy to argue that the automaton is a victim. It is an argument that was supported by the analysis and an argument that will be developed over the next few sections. However, such a suggestion would not be strictly accurate. Participants who accused others of dehumanising behaviours were not averse to dehumanising others if they felt they were affecting the way they completed their tasks or were perceived by others in the organisation. Distinctions are made between themselves, colleagues who behaved like them, their local managers and those whom they regarded as different and distant (the Disembodied Other).

### **5.3.1. The 'Disembodied Other'**

The concept of the Disembodied Other initially arose from the way those who set performance targets or defined job roles were regarded as different and distant from the local group. Initial *in-vivo* codes referred the Disembodied Other as 'the suits' (George), 'target setters' (Dominic), 'the management' (Peter), 'the government' (Colin), 'from above' (Alfred), 'the board' (Sophie). The Disembodied Other described *'the faceless manager from HQ'* (George) who has little relevant experience of the organisation and a limited contextual understanding of the implications of the objectives on people at a working level.

From the perspective of the worker, the Disembodied Other is an exemplary automaton, who seeks to transform everyone else into their own likeness. Dressing differently and even speaking differently—corporate speak—the Disembodied Others are to be avoided. What is ignored by the accusers is that the Disembodied Other is doing their job; their job being to set, monitor and measure progress against objectives set by someone else. Everyone in the organisation is an employee, answerable to the owner (either the shareholders or Public); unless they are the owner.

The primary characteristic of the Disembodied Other is being unemotional; focussing on the targets (productivity) and not the people that deliver the targets (productiveness):

*as long as they tick the boxes dot the I's and cross the t's and meet the targets, that's fine. (George)*

*So, they are not too bothered about us as people they're more hitting targets. And yeah, I suppose they are more about patient care but us as the carers, as the individual, we are not looked upon as a priority by management. (James)*

From an academic perspective, the modern organisation exists in an ever-changing world and must adapt to survive; which in turn requires access to information (Choi, 2014; Kloviene and Gimzauskiene, 2015; Krishnan and Pertheban, 2017). The need for measures was readily accepted by the employee's; however, once more, it is a question of finding the right balance between generating statistics and enabling employees to fulfil their roles. The primary concern is the disconnect. Workers do not know what the Disembodied Others do or how they arrive at their targets; meanwhile the Disembodied Other is disconnected from the lived experiences of the worker, inhabiting a space in which statistical perfection is attainable.

Since the 1970s, there has been a growing awareness of the need to move beyond simple measures of performance towards the development of a balanced set of measures (Neely *et al.*, 2000). At a practical level, the purpose of performance management is to:

*To make everybody achieve the goals and objectives that have been set for them as teams and to improve the efficiency, and therefore competitiveness of the company that you are working in. (Alfred)*

In this case, Alfred recognised that work occurs in a context; a situation in which employers identify vital activities that need to be achieved to further the strategic and tactical objectives of the business and to demand that the employee fulfils these targets during their working day. These measures are useful to help achieve the strategic objectives the organisation and improve performance (Franco-Santos *et al.*, 2012) and should take account of four key aspects: people, process, culture and infrastructure (Neely *et al.*, 2000). However, if the organisation does genuinely believe that by not having adequate measures it faces an existential threat to its survival (Tung *et al.*, 2011), as a corporate body, it will become anxious. Any such anxiety will demand that the organisation identify and control risks by monitoring the performance of the organisation, including a return to micromanaging. At an extreme, it can create the equivalent of a panic attack in which the threat of *the threat* replaces the actual danger. Irrespective of work context, the movement towards demanding and generating more information has adversely affected Participants who are cynical about the amount of data generated and its use.

The experiences of the Participants are compelling, in that they record a gradual movement away from engagement with employees towards an exclusive focus on the process. However, the focus on delivering process excellence as a response to an increasingly complex competitive environment is leading many companies to exist in a state of permanent change (Das *et al.*, 2011). Initiative is followed by initiative, with little time to embed the changes. The search for stability and certainty by driving process improvements, which are inherently unstable, led Bauman (2000, p. x) to argue that for employees:

*living under the reign of change, there is no final product; there is no end process stuck in a continuous scientific and mathematical, statistical loop, seeking for the impossible perfection but a mathematical perfection.*

Bauman's quote reflects a scenario alluded to by the Participants, where the product is no longer the focus of production; the attainment of mathematical perfection becomes the unattainable product. This approach has consequences for employees:

*from my perspective, you know every year that went by the expectations were so much higher and so much greater than they were the previous year, so to achieve the expectation for the next year the 11% improvement year on year on year on year, for instance, is getting towards being impossible. (Alfred)*

The emphasis has shifted from gaining increased human effectiveness to procedural and human efficiency. The use of process improvement tools such as Total Quality Management, Statistical Process Control, or the Balanced Scorecard stresses delivering human efficiency as well as process efficiency. This movement is significant in respect of the Automatonising process because it reinforces the objectification of the human.

The difference between efficiency and effectiveness is analogous to the difference between information and understanding. A machine requires information, analytical data; it needs to know what, when, where and how to do something—to follow a predefined process—it does not need to know why it is doing something. Efficiency has been defined as 'the efficacious use of current resources, in other words, getting more out the resources used' (Möller and Törrönen, 2003, p. 111) and underpins growth but not development, which, as will be discussed in Chapter 7, instead refers to increasing wisdom and understanding (Ackoff, 1989).

The drive for process efficiency is just one aspect of the demand for employees to conform to predetermined scripts. The organisation must have a way of ensuring that the human resource is working within the guidelines provided; achieved through the performance management

review, sometimes optimistically referred to as a development review. I use the word 'optimistically' in recognition of the comments offered by the Participants concerning their company's performance management processes, which I will discuss shortly.

### **The Disembodied Other as a figure of fun**

The Disembodied Other is both real and fictitious. There is someone somewhere developing key performance indicators, and they will mean something to someone, politicians, directors, or managers of other areas. However, for the employee, the Disembodied Other is an alienated figure upon whom they use fun to vent their ire, which can be both damaging and creative at the same time:

*here's a classic when they all arrive, we all make sure we have our name badges on attached to our left breast, and you could see his eye flick down and think 'oh that's so and so.' Years and years ago, before the current one was in post we all swapped badges and I had one that said so and so, we all swapped badges and you could see them walk past and think 'that's not them' and 'that's a woman's name, and she has long brown hair', and that's just to stop you suddenly looking at us and glancing up at our name badges. (George)*

Through this incident, it is possible to explore several different dimensions of Having-Fun-Decaying; Having-Fun-Resisting, Having-Fun-Duelling, Having-Fun-Playing and Having-Fun-Bonding. It is difficult to say what the aim of the protest was. Local managers demanded that a professional image be presented to the CEO, one which was inherently false but conformed to the assumed desire of the audience — the CEO. Contrary to standard practice, male employees had to wear ties and keep desks clear of clutter; everyone had to be in the office – even if that meant cancelling patient appointments.

The response was to have fun at the expense of the CEO by changing the name tags. At one level, it might be possible to describe this as child-like behaviour, but that would be too crude.



It is a form of resistance against the alienation process while at the same time, letting the senior managers know that they are aware that the process is ongoing (Medeiros and Alcapadipani, 2016).

Using fun as a form of resistance is 'good resistance' (Rodrigues and Collinson, 1995; Cassegård, 2014, p. 372; Medeiros and Alcapadipani, 2016). However, the humour used above and elsewhere in the data was intended to cause harm by embarrassing the CEO. There are hints of on-ongoing duelling, by playing games with the senior managers; swapping identity badges is a passive-aggressive attack to confuse the CEOs known habit of looking at identity badges and pretending to know who people are. The small act of swapping badges becomes a powerful, political act of communication, conducted by a disenfranchised group against a powerful disembodied other. It was in part about dehumanising and reinforcing the anonymity of the CEO—he was stripped of his communicative ability (part of the silencing sub-process)—while the employees reclaimed their own identity, humanising themselves.

Who was the action for? The CEO was involved, but the real audience was George's colleagues. Using the CEO as a scapegoat bound the group together, even if only for a short while. It had the effect of providing levity and fun and a sense of catharsis. What the longer-term impact was is unknown. Indeed, what the CEO thought of the group's behaviour, would have been fascinating.

### **Who is the customer?**

Over the years, the management literature has been full of advice for organisations to make sure their primary objective, and the focus of performance measures, is customer satisfaction (for example, Johnston, 2004; Edgeman and Eskildsen, 2012; Abdallah, 2013; Pantouvakis and Bouranta, 2013), or even customer delight (Kim *et al.*, 2015; Dey *et al.*, 2017). This objective is achieved by developing a balance between operational efficiency (process and procedures) and service effectiveness (human input) within the organisation, both of which are monitored by

targeted performance measures, in an objective to deliver service excellence (Asif and Gouthier, 2014; Thüerer *et al.*, 2018). Such an approach seems obvious were it not for two fundamental problems; understanding what is meant by excellence and, more fundamentally, the identity of the customer is not readily apparent.

Most senior managers do not understand what is meant by excellence and how it applies to their organisation (Thüerer *et al.*, 2018). The focus on performance data to deliver excellence, impacts employees directly because:

*it causes angst, people get very demotivated, and at the end of the day, if you're providing a service for a customer, it impacts on the service they get. And the impact is that if that person is going out to do whatever it is for the customer if they don't feel valued and they don't feel, yeah valued, that's a good word; they don't feel valued, then they won't perform. (Alfred)*

The instruments (performance measures) meant to drive customer service affect the morale and motivation of the employees. Feeling valued was a meaningful category. However, Alfred expressed it best when he suggested that:

*If as a human being, you don't feel valued, so you are valueless it must be very, well soul-destroying for you. If you are not valued by anybody at all. You go to work...so forty hours out of your whole week you're totally undervalued, or you're not respected, then that must be awful.*

To be unable to express an opinion has created a situation where people feel voiceless and valueless, which in turn affects customer service. The link between performance measures, people feeling valued, and customer service was intriguing because it was challenging to identify the customer. Which brings us to the second issue; who is the customer?

The customer emerging from the data analysis seems to be the Disembodied Other. Take, for example, Tracy's argument that the customer in a university context is not necessarily the student who pays tuition fees. Tracy highlighted tensions that exist between teaching and research, with students wanting more teaching and universities requiring more research funding:

*When I first came here, there was a definite feeling that we are a research-intensive university; therefore, those who teach, or like teaching or want to make teaching their priority, need to wind their necks in. (Tracy)*

The focus has been on ensuring that performance is measured by the number of articles published in internationally recognised journals: 'You've got to be able to contribute to institutional case studies. You've got to be REFable; you've got to be entered into the exercise'. Additionally, in Tracy's case, the academic must-win research funding, her organisation used 'a red, amber, green system and if [academics] were on red for too long then capability proceedings would be instigated'. The students seemed to be of secondary interest to the organisation.

There are different customers. Tracy was unsure who the final customer was; plenty of stakeholders could be identified; students, politicians, funding organisations, private companies, and the public, but identifying a single primary customer was elusive. The same question is relevant to those working in the NHS, who is the customer? Rationally, we might think it is the patients, but the answers are more complex, involving political decisions, commissioning groups, private suppliers, and their shareholders. Even private sector companies with a single range of products, it is not clear who the customer is:

*the original purpose of the business was to get the customer, give excellent customer service, and I don't think that exists anymore. (Alfred)*

Alfred was not alone in suggesting that the setting of targets had more to do with senior directors achieving their bonuses than satisfying customer demands (fiddling the figures).

What emerged from the data analysis was that the customer was becoming a Disembodied Other; no direct connection existed between the employee and the customer of the performance targets. Where employees had direct access to customers, they were able to work with them, but they were conscious that they were being monitored and hurried along; always in the background were the need to achieve targets. A customer may be impressed with a shop worker remembering their name, not realising that remembering a name was a performance measure upon which a wage rise might be dependent (as was the case for Louise).

Peter raised an important point reflecting on the differences between being self-employed and working in a target-driven organisation:

*As long as you can do what they say you're just producing a bland, average product that you don't care about. Not you don't care about, but you're just thinking I'm just selling units. They don't become like ... You know if you. If it's your company, you'd be making the best product you could, you'd get involved in the packaging, and how that looked, you're proud of that product, and you'd hope that your customers are. And you try to get a feel for who your customers are.*

Where there is no care, there is little concern about either the product or the customer; the genuine customer disappears to be replaced by another employee as customer. Maybe it was the way which people ignored outside phone calls to continue a conversation (George) or finish off their crosswords (Sophie). Louise described how:

*when I'm talking to the customer [a colleague] will interrupt me and try and start having a conversation about the newest man in her life or whatever.*

In this situation, the need to have fun outranks the needs of the customer.

Who is the primary customer? The analysis suggests that the Disembodied Other, the consumer of the statistics becomes the primary customer whose needs must be met. Data is provided, it is consumed but little evidence of a beneficial outcome for either the end-customer or the employee. Although data is collected it has little effect at the level of the employees; *'at the point there is an issue, a problem a workplace behaviour, what happens; either nothing, well nothing, because there isn't that person, that structure, that process'* (Tracy). It drives a mentality in which policies and processes are privileged above people:

*we keep on being told that a KPT [Key Performance Target] that we've already failed is more important than staff well-being. We have it continually on our agenda in the other group, but we're never asked because it is easier to ignore staff well-being than pretend that you care. (Tom)*

From those Participants in the private sector, the purpose of the statistically driven Disembodied Other was transparent. It is the fiduciary duty of directors to generate profit for the shareholders; therefore, one would argue that the ultimate customer should be the owner of capital—the shareholder. However, the Participants viewed the issue differently:

*well the cynic in me would say it was so that the CEO receives his bonus. And therefore, all the people underneath him receive their bonuses. (Alfred)*

The lack of care observed by Peter earlier in this section is not universal. People do care, people want to do a good job, not out of duty, but because they are passionate about their work. Nevertheless, when their role becomes meaningless, when the organisation treats them like automatons, why should they care?

Despite frustration with the way roles had changed over the years, and disruptive behaviour, employees still cared; George still cared and was open about what needed to change:

*It should be about customer care. It should be about customers and people and less about targets, objectives and boxes ticked and stuff like that...Oh god, how would I change it? Maybe employ someone to do all the tick box rubbish and leave the rest of us to do what we do best - the care thing.*

When work became meaningless, George became disruptive; having fun by challenging the automatonising process that he found so frustrating and demeaning.

### **5.3.2. Being connected**

In contrast to other studies (for example, Riordan, 2013; Chung *et al.*, 2018; Khaleel *et al.*, 2018), this analysis suggests that friendships are less important than developing a friendly, working relationship among colleagues, and between managers and teams:

*I think if you can be friends with them if you didn't work with them, it would be a bit different...I haven't added any of them to Facebook because I don't really want them to know what I am doing at the weekend or how I feel about something or what I am. I think it's a different relationship because your job depends on what they think a little bit (Leslie)*

*You can be friends in work. But outside of work. Work is work. Like there's only one, say there's two or three of them that I speak to outside of work. One because I've known her for about five or six years, and I get on like a house on fire with her. And that's from working with her elsewhere. That's built into a friendship because we both trust each other, and we click. But I wouldn't go out with a lot of them because I don't trust half of them (James)*

By prioritising effective working relationships over friendships, a distinction is made between friendliness and friendship. Chung *et al.* (2018) offer a textbook definition of friendship, arguing that the core attributes of friendship include shared experiences and reciprocity. When James stated '*I can have friends in work, but they stay at work; they do not enter my*

*personal space*’; he questions whether friendliness and the need to develop relationships because of the time spent together and the need for mutual support, is being mistaken for friendship. Riordan (2013) disagreed, arguing that we all need friends at work a suggestion supported by developing a culture of fun at work (Tews *et al.*, 2015; Michel *et al.*, 2019). Such managed friendships are not mistaken for genuine friendships (Baldry and Hallier, 2010). Reflecting on a demand to reveal something personal, in a management team building event seeking to encourage friendships, Sophie asked:

*why do I need to tell people something about me they do not know already? If I had wanted them to know, I would have told them. Knowing something about me will not affect the way I do my job; it shouldn't affect the way they work with me.*

The blurring of boundaries between working alliance and friendships appears to be reinforcing the blurring of the boundaries between work and play.

As a counsellor, I empathise with Sophie’s view. I do not enter friendships with clients; there is a clear and explicit boundary put in place at the beginning of our working relationship, we come together for a specific purpose, and we behave accordingly. Dominic, a paramedic, described the relationship between crewmates as being like a marriage; showing care and concern, information is shared but rarely did he develop those relationships outside of work. The characteristic of this type of relationship is the spirit of friendship, demonstrated through openness, trust, respect and mutuality.

It is the spirit of friendship that binds the group together for a common purpose, sharing experiences of adversity and encouraging each. It is an inclusive approach to working relationships, more akin to camaraderie than non-workplace friendships (Authayarat and Umemuro, 2012; Carberry and Meyers, 2017). However, it can also be exclusive; the bonds of the camaraderie may lead to a sense of rejection among others, especially in the way fun is used to bind the group together, as was suggested by Tom and Robert.

Dark, or inappropriate humour, is used to bind the group together; this was particularly evident among the paramedics, nurses and prison officers interviewed. However, humour also plays a role in relieving the pressure from the violence they saw each day; sharing jokes '*that you can't find humorous outside of that office*' (Robert) because they may offend someone listening. If a new person enters the group, they must be enculturated into the humour:

*he's quite a new facilitator, really nice, good lad, he's quiet, strait-laced and I've made a challenge that I would get him to swear before the end of the year.*

To be fully incorporated into the group, the new colleague must conform to the will of the group; the group's determination of fun overrides that of the individual. The power emanating from the group threatens those disconnected from the group. Where the manager is disconnected from the group, confrontation is likely.

### **The local manager**

When the group connection with their manager is broken, it is difficult to re-establish that relationship; especially if the manager had little credibility in the first place. Newer managers, promoted based upon their qualifications and youth as opposed to skill and experience, seem to be particularly vulnerable to disconnection.

Participants were clear that relationships with their local manager were to be friendly but not necessarily friendships. The relationship with the manager should be '*a bit like a relationship with a doctor or a teacher*' (Leslie); people whom you may have a good relationship with and can discuss context-specific issues; someone who '*I won't be scared to say anything or do anything*' (Leslie). However, a different relationship emerged with senior managers, who were regarded as distant and powerful but detached from the world occupied by the employee.

When a senior manager visited, staff had to be on-site, workspaces tidy, people dressed differently and spoke differently, looking busy; all acts belonging to the category presenting, a sub-process of performing.



The primary role of the local manager is that of a connector, between the team and the wider organisation. It is also a protective role; protect the team and the broader community from the effect of what Alfred described as the top-down-chorus-line:

*because the people at the management level are getting hassled by the person above them who is getting hassled by the person above them and up it goes and up it goes up the ladder and yeah. (Mary)*

Except for two Participants, local managers were described as supportive, listening, understanding, and protective, looking after their team by '*filtering the shit coming down*' (Tracy). The team seemed to need to know that their manager was prioritising their interests; but equally, it seemed essential to the manager that the team did not blame them for the increased pressure:

*I was lucky because...because I had a team of people who understood where I was coming from and understood that it was a top-down pressure, the pressure wasn't actually coming from me [... it is ...] the top-down chorus line for want of a better terminology. (Alfred)*

*it's the management at the top who are setting the rules that create the problems for that [local manager] to then put pressure on us. So, we have a lot of time for them, but it's just the guys higher up that are just silly to deal with. (Dominic)*

They have time for the local manager because:

*we understand they are getting it from higher management telling them to do whatever but you have more time and respect for them because they've got targets to hit themselves and it's very pressurising on them to deal with everyone because they know inside that they don't want to be looked at as the person being a pain in the arse, being*

*pushy, being hard and telling certain folk to get off-station now because he's been told to.*

(Dominic)

While Alfred and Mary discussed a one-way process, when comparing incidents, it soon became evident that this is a two-way process which requires a certain degree of collective amnesia from the team and a scapegoat for it to function. The local manager is the person to whom the team can vent their frustrations, rather than vent that frustration against other people in the organisation.

There was an overwhelming view that senior managers were disconnected from the reality of what happens on the shop-floor. The perception is that status, hierarchical levels, and location provide the basis for a perception that senior management teams are inaccessible and different from those that work on the shop floor. How local managers reinforce this disconnect for their benefit is also an issue raised through the analysis. Reinforcing the distance as a form of self-protection; emphasising the demand from senior managing was a means of avoiding their accountability and responsibility for addressing the issue with senior managers or even protecting their careers. Such a self-centred approach is noticed by team members; serious problems emerge where local managers impose their interpretation of senior management directives:

*He was just going overboard with all the sort of performance management things and not really listening because part of being a manager is the ability to listen, to understand, to come alongside...it got to the stage where some of the team members, and I know this is true, were threatening to do something to him outside of work. Because it got that bad. (Alfred)*

In their study of NHS managers, Gatenby *et al.* (2015) identify three roles that middle managers fulfil:

- **the entrepreneurial leader** role is NHS specific - calling for a change in approach to adopt private sector management approaches; however, it can be extended to other organisational structures.
- A **government agent** is expected to fulfil two functions; align local policies to satisfy directives from the central government and to monitor and achieve performance targets.
- The **diplomat administrator** is expected to negotiate the boundaries between professional elites and managerial imperatives.

A small change in emphasis from 'government' to 'head-office' and 'professional elite' to 'experienced and skilled staff' helps locate the same roles to junior managers in the private sector. Junior managers are passive recipients of critical decisions such as budgets, change programmes and other policies (pp. 13-14). As passive recipients, junior managers are not allowed to have an input into the decision-making process; their skills and experience are ignored, and yet they are still required to enforce the decisions of senior managers.

### **Micromanaging**

*'How are things going' and he said, 'it's only getting worse, Alfred'. And he said the problem is that some of the senior managers are micromanaging right the way down and they don't really understand what goes on at ground floor level. (Alfred)*

A sub-process of the top-down-chorus-line is that of micromanaging. Micromanaging occurs when senior managers control the day to day work of people several hierarchical levels beneath them. It is also part of the process of deskilling; arising from a lack of trust a senior manager has in his lower-level managers to fulfil their responsibilities. However, micromanaging suggests the manager is not fulfilling their job role (Ivanov, 2013); a director *'should be thinking strategically not being concerned with what someone five or six levels beneath him is doing'* (Alfred).

Micromanaging has an impact both internally and externally. Internally it creates angst among employees; concern that a director is checking up on their work. It produces an environment in which employees become reactive; focusing upon satisfying the demands of directors, *'the flavour of the month'* and not what is essential for the business. Micromanaging also promotes functional stupidity as employees wait to be set their priorities; no longer thinking for themselves, not because they are not capable of doing so, but as Peter stated *'why should they? As long as I do what I'm told, I'm not going to get bollocked'*.

Micromanaging demotivates employees. Employees not trusted to fulfil their role feel devalued; *'if they don't feel, yeah valued, that's a good word; they don't feel valued, then they won't perform'* (Alfred). The question of value is essential not just in respect of the employee being valued, the value of the tasks being set is also questioned; the amount of time and effort required to produce a report for a director is higher than the task would typically warrant. Being micromanaged for Sophie meant that each time the director asked a question, supplementary contextual information had to be provided because the breadth of the directors' remit meant that he could not retain the contextual information in his memory.

It would, however, be a mistake to argue, like Serrat (2017, p. 473), that micromanagement is mismanagement. The data analysis supported other reports that micromanagement fosters demotivation and lack of trust (see, for example, Snowden and Boone, 2007; Cleary *et al.*, 2015; Delgado *et al.*, 2015). However, the data also identified the need to be aware of the context in which the micromanaging is happening; why does the senior manager feel it necessary to be involved to such a level? What has caused the loss of trust?

There is little doubt that some managers seek to micromanage because they have autocratic tendencies. However, the analysis suggests several other reasons; first, because lower-level managers are not, in the opinion of the director, fulfilling their roles and need to be reminded of how to do it. Sophie explained how her director regularly walked on to the shop-floor to

find out whether a part was in stock or not; in doing so, he reminded his direct reports that they should do this, not him. Such an approach is only possible if the director has an excellent working knowledge of the role and responsibilities of those that work for him. It may not be possible if a director has been brought into the company from outside.

Second, as an initially positive motivation, the micromanager might wish to remain connected to the business. As managers rise to senior positions, contact is lost with their former teams/colleagues, but also opportunities to use those skills that gained them access to higher positions dwindle. Being involved in lower-level tasks offers the opportunity to practice those skills while reminding subordinates that they retain those skills. There is, nevertheless, a question of showing interest in what others are doing, engaging in:

*management by walking around, you go around, and you talk to people. You're MD; you're on the shop floor, be highly visible. (Peter)*

Also, no warning should be provided:

*If they suddenly parachuted in on a Tuesday at ten past four, you would not have time to tidy up your desk, and they would see it as it is really is. (Paul)*

This is not micromanaging, but fact-finding, although the staff should be free to say what they want to say without fear of repercussions. Being told to engage in superficial cosmetic tidying up to impress the senior manager as they walk around does not help to reduce the feeling of judgement experienced in the team members:

*it's like a judge with his wig and his gown on or so you think...You have to be so careful and so guarded as to what you say...we all pile in and tick along. We sit at our desks, and do our work and not speak to anyone. (George)*

The judge metaphor is sometimes replaced by that of that royal visit as described by Sophie and Peter. What is reinforced is the sense of senior managers being unapproachable, distant,

different, aliens; what is missing is a sense of humanity and therefore, collegiality. Where the humanity of senior managers is evident, a different attitude is present:

*two years later he arrived and said 'oh I remember that you asked a question at such and such a conference do you know we took on board your comments', and I thought actually you did, and you remembered me because of what I said. And he even remembered my name. (Colin)*

The third reason for micromanaging is more intricate. Senior managers should be focused upon the strategic objectives of the business and driving the business towards those objectives. If an objective is failing, senior managers feel it necessary to become involved at a detailed level to resolve issues, creating tension for employees. Although recognising the need for objectives, that need should be balanced with the interests of employees:

*they are not too bothered about us as people they're more hitting targets. And yeah, I suppose they are more about patient care but us as the carers, as the individual, we are not looked upon as a priority towards management in the ambulance service. (Dominic)*

When the business owners are venture capitalists, the situation is worse for the employee. Concern exists that the owners focus on the wrong priorities: *'everyone there thinks it's tarting the place up because they're looking to sell it. Rather than get production sorted out, just tarting it up'* (Peter). However, what Peter described is an extreme version of what other people were facing in their organisations; minimum spend and the strong senior management focus on the wrong areas of the business.

There is a need to achieve a balance in terms of micromanaging. That balance is achieved when the senior managers are trusted by their employees and therefore connected to the employees. The connection emerges through effective communication; an approach that is not based upon the transfer of information along the top-down-chorus-line but rather a process of developing a shared understanding. In the context of the automatonising process,

this distinction is crucial; the need to remove the communicative ability, to silence and alienate others is necessary to win the duel.

### 5.3.3. The duelling process

The response to the automatonising process was initially coded as misbehaving to reflect the suspicion of the dominance of negative behaviours. This was a mistake but one grounded in the data, for example:

*The way certain people will always arrive five minutes before work, come in take their coat off, get their coffee and start at nine. While some people will crawl in at five past nine and, hang their coat up, do their coffee, and don't actually start work until quarter past nine and do that regularly. The way some people will sneak out for 3 or 4 cigarettes during the day, the way some people will go to the photocopier when the paper has run out and walk away and leave it for someone else to put the paper in. (Colin)*

Or

*But some people who are in a bad mood you kind of aggravate to get in a bad mood even more...I couldn't tell you [why] if I'm honest...because it's quite funny when you get a reaction from people. (James)*

Or

*Because they're all incompetent. I think the problem is that the people who have been there the longest they should know the simple things, play dumb. And the managers know who can do what. Because we work with them every day nearly and they start to know who they can trust.*

Why do you think they play dumb?

*Confidence. Confidence and they're scared.*

Scared of...?

*Doing something wrong.* (Jorgos)

However, while the behaviours are damaging, they function as a way of relieving pressure or boredom in the instigators. The same people describing negative behaviours in others used the same, or similar behaviours, behaviours themselves. Thus, the person claiming to be the victim of their colleagues' insensitivity or bad behaviour, may not have been as innocent as was claimed.

The concept of duelling reflects a response to conflict arising from the Automatonising process, offering challenges to the heterodox views on nonviolent aggression in the workplace. Historically a duel has been considered to be 'an act of violence intended to compel our opponent to fulfil our act of will' (Clausewitz, 2013, p. 2). Duelling often evokes the image of pistols at dawn; Clausewitz, writing in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, extended this image by comparing duels to individual conflicts on the battlefield.

The preferred weapon of the modern workplace duel is communication in its various guises; any attempt to control another person is a communicative act (Baecker, 2001). Drawing upon Clausewitz, the compulsion to control another person is only complete when that target is silenced either through an unconditional surrender to our will or a physical or metaphorical death. Non-violent aggression is effective not necessarily because we are afraid of the other person but because we are silently compelled to do the will of the other. In the silencing their opponent, the victor also silences those who might have offered that opponent support; indeed, the alleged target of bullying may not be the immediate opponent, it might be the wider audience.

A factor rarely addressed in bullying, and other issues of control is that control requires the agreement of both parties before it can take effect. In this assertion, the concept of the duel becomes dominant; if no agreement is reached, the conflict continues until one party is



silenced/controlled. We, as human persons are responsible for our choices and our actions within a conflict scenario, to the extent that we are making those choices and the way our past impacts upon the willingness to risk encountering others. This does not imply collusion, but it does imply that the 'victim' has 'agreed;' even if the choice has been limited; through blind obedience or informed acquiescence (LRN. Corp., 2012; 2016).

To focus upon communication means letting go of the certainty of causality; '[c]auses have to select their effects and effects have to select their causes' (Baecker, 2001, p. 2). To state categorically that Effect A is related to Cause B is naïve; there are almost certainly other causes and effects to consider. Communication is problematic because it allows both parties (or even researchers) to choose their preferred cause and effect, or to choose one that makes the most sense of the uncertainty surrounding them. When we use the terms 'bullying' or 'mobbing', what is being described is an intensification of the duelling process; an intensification in which the persons who will ultimately be recognised by others as the 'victim' begins to emerge.

### **Understanding duelling**

The duelling process is an extension of a process initially developed to account for mobbing in workplaces. Leymann's (1990, 1996) process reflects a structured process of a failure in communication, independent of personality or behavioural traits, defined as:

*hostile and unethical communication which is directed in a systematic way by one or a number of persons mainly toward one individual. There are also cases where such mobbing is mutual until one of the participants becomes the underdog. These actions take place often (almost every day) and over a long period (at least for six months) and, because of this frequency and duration, result in considerable psychic, psychosomatic and social misery. (Leymann, 1990, p. 120)*

Although Leymann (1996) identifies 'hostile activity variables', he suggests that the communicative actions themselves did not have a purely negative character. The actions were healthy interactive behaviours which if frequently used over an extended period led to 'their content and meaning [changing], consequently turning into dangerous, communicative weapons' (p. 170). The impact of these weapons is wide-ranging. In this case, the target could refer to the individual being accused of bullying, gossiping, joking or the person claiming to be the recipient—at this stage of the conflict; it is not clear who the 'real' target is.

Leymann identifies five areas in which a victim's life is impacted; the ability to communicate; the ability to maintain social contacts; the damage to their reputation and consequently their occupational status; and finally, the impact on a person's health. He also identifies gossip, jokes, and ridicule as key communicative weapons; the effect is amplified if managers acted based on perceiving the gossip as fact.

In presenting his findings, Leymann (1990) describes a phased structure of critical events escalating to extremes of impact. The process begins with a 'critical incident'; a conflict between two people which escalates as others are drawn into the process through the stigmatising of the individual target by using aggressive manipulation, such as malicious gossip. When management acts to resolve the conflict, cognitive bias has already been formed against the target, which is then subjected to performance management procedures. The final escalation occurs when the individual is expelled from the 'group', be that a team, department, organisation, or society at large; i.e. there is a metaphorical death of an individual, or in some instances an actual death, through suicide.

The data analysis suggested that Leymann's mobbing process is a snapshot of what is happening at a higher level in the organisation and daily in the interactions between people and that Leymann had not explored different aspects of the conflict. This view is supported by

the identification of three causes of workplace bullying; individuals' desires not being met, escalating conflict, and the workplace culture itself (Baillien and Witte, 2009).

Conflict requires entities to disagree with each other; this is true whether we disagree with ourselves or others. I will offer a probable explanation of what happens as a conflict between two people, based primarily upon Stephen Karpman's concept of the drama triangle before moving on to extending Leymann's mobbing cycle into the duelling process.

### **The drama triangle**

A modified form of Karpman's Drama Triangle (2009, 1968) has become a powerful tool in my discussions on developing relationships where conflict exists. In this adaptation, the corners of the triangle are occupied by the Victim, Persecutor and Helper.

The triangle works with a dynamic perception that individuals have of themselves, or of others, as individuals, couples, or groups. Because of the number of potential applications, the possibility of each person holding and moving between positions at different points in a conversation; the expressions **Alter** and **Ego** are used to reflect not people but the two different communication positions; the addressor and addressee respectively, as used by Niklas Luhmann (1995, pp. 140–141). In a healthy, functional relationship of equals, help is either accepted or declined, and nothing more happens. In a dysfunctional relationship, the following actions follow:

1. Alter offers help to Ego.
  - a. Ego perceives Alter as controlling or interfering, places themselves in the position of Victim. The reasons Ego may resent the interference include:
    - i. Ego has been reminded of something s/he should have done but has not, or vice versa
    - ii. Ego is reminded that they do not have a skill
    - iii. Ego resents being dependent upon Alter

2. Holding the position of Victim, Ego perceives Alter not as Helper but as Persecutor
3. Experiencing the rejection of their help, Alter perceives their position as changed.  
Alter is also locating themselves in the Victim position while perceiving Ego as the Persecutor.
4. Two people cannot hold the same position; if they try to the conflict will escalate.
5. If the conflict continues to escalate a scapegoat will be sought; a movement towards the 'outer world' — a place external to the conflict situation.

As stated earlier, conflict arises when the demand for control is rejected – the duel which follows such a rejection is necessarily a form of negotiation; an assertion attested to the dictum that war is a continuation of politics (Clausewitz, 2013). Conflict begins and ends with discussions, irrespective of how long the conflict in the middle lasts. It is vital to step back from this and understand the event that could occur before the conflict begins.

Clausewitz argues that the conflict begins with animosity between the two sides that may be historical, and unknown; importantly he also argued that the conflict is rooted in the way the parties 'feel' towards each other. Luhmann agrees with Clausewitz, reiterating that these feelings must occur within the operationally closed system (the human person) and are expressed through communicative actions. Although, Leymann (1990) refers to this as the 'initial critical incident', it seems more appropriate to code it as a sensitising event; the irritation that leads to action. From this moment both sides are aware of the developing hostilities and engage in the dance of escalation to extremes, joining the duel to the extent that their resources (physical, mental and allies) are capable of sustaining.

Although Leymann describes the process as a linear flow, the Participants describe the process as being more fluid, ebbing and flowing, the only fixed boundary occurs at the point of expulsion. The victor may sense victory at the point of silencing (which is where Automatonising occurs); however, there is still scope for the 'loser' to gain support and re-

enter the duel. It is only when the loser accepts the compulsion to do the will of the victor that the battle is temporarily over.

Once both parties have entered the duel, conflict is inevitable, as each seeks to silence the other; neither party listens to the other, becoming embedded in their reality of what is happening. Moving into this totalising 'I' position, we lose sight of what is in our common interest, focussing on our self-interest. The totalising movement is one of deification; the totality that we exist excludes all others, instantly making them inferior to our own totality (Dussel, 1978).

What is suggested by this study is the totalising action of the company, through Automatonising, creating its own centre in which employees become the excluded other, subservient to the centre. The example used by the Participants is the use of forced ranking performance appraisals, where employees are excluded from taking any meaningful part in the discussions about their performance. At the same time, employees are being totalised, forced into a situation in which they are responsible for their health, welfare and training while feeling rejected by the organisation, seeking revenge and justifying their actions by recourse to what they perceive as being owed by the company.

The data analysis revealed that organisations are increasing control over their employees' lives. In such circumstances, the duel becomes inevitable; the only question is how long it takes for one party to acquiesce and allow themselves to be controlled by the other. Where the demand for control is integrated with workplace objectives, performance appraisals through which pay awards are determined, all of which seem rational, the veneer of compliance masks the ongoing resistance (Ybema and Horvers, 2017). The use of performance appraisals as a means of control should not be a surprise as they are part of the communicative structure of the workplace and the semblance of collegiality and dialogue. However, where force is no longer an option, as it may have been in the Victorian era, the loci of control is now on

controlling attitudes and beliefs seeking to develop a docile and apathetic population (Chomski, 2012).

The data analysis suggests that organisations use two primary weapons to encourage docile and compliant workforces: by embedding a performance management culture and by deskilling jobs.

#### **5.4. The performance management culture: Ticking boxes**

Despite over 100 years of research employee performance appraisal, there is little agreement between researchers and practitioners over the usefulness or application of the research (DeNisi and Pritchard, 2006; Waal and van der Heijden, 2015; Cardy and Munjal, 2016; Ledford *et al.*, 2016). The way performance appraisal systems are being used was roundly condemned throughout the interviews.

The movement away from employee development reviews to performance reviews reflected a change in attitude from employers; a change which emphasises the delivery of specified objectives (productivity) as opposed to seeking to understand how the employee's skills could be developed (productiveness). The measures are used to ensure that employees fulfil their contractual responsibilities; helping the business meet its tactical and strategic objectives by being efficient, keeping to time, and achieving the right quality standards. Annual objectives were rarely discussed with Participants, and links between the tactical objectives and strategic objectives of the organisation were seldom evident.

It is important to note that the Participants did not reject the need for, or appreciate the usefulness of, either performance measures or the discussions, the primary complaint was how the discussions focused upon communicating-information and not communicating-understanding.

The disconnect between the employee and the Disembodied Other is most evident when discussing performance measures. It is the point at which the employee felt most alienated from the more extensive organisational processes, but also where the employee also engages in Having-Fun-Decaying, as they take the opportunity to vent their frustration at that which seeks to silence them. The performance management process is such that employers no longer feel it is necessary to allow the employee a voice in the process—a machine/resource does not have the right, or ability, to respond.

Sophie explained the timescales involved in the performance appraisal process for her direct reports.

Table 5-1: Performance Review Schedules

Stage	Process	Duration	Employee involved?	No. of people evaluated
Stage 1	Set Personal Objectives	2 weeks	No	13
	Assess employee		No	13
Stage 2	Calibrate direct reports	3 days	No	31
Stage 3	Hold development discussion	3 weeks	Yes	13
Stage 4	Obtain signatures and comments (Manager/Employee)	1 week	Yes – but limited	13

As can be seen from Table 5-1, employee involvement was reduced to a minimum in the process. Objectives, assessment, and calibration tasks (Stages 1 and 2) were completed without

the involvement of employees. It is based upon the forced grading of employees, described by its detractors as 'rank and yank' as those in ranked 1 are performance managed out of the business (Mulligan and Bull Schaefer, 2011; Giumetti *et al.*, 2015; Hashim *et al.*, 2015).

Proponents argue that organisations will experience a gradual improvement in the performance of all employees as weaker performers are exited (Johnson, 2004). Better performers, on the other hand, are motivated to do better as they are rewarded personally and financially for their efforts (Moon *et al.*, 2016); echoes of Weber's protestant work ethic, with its emphasis on prosperity being the sole reward for hard work, are evident.<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, it is assumed people will be motivated to avoid being placed onto the lower grades (Vaishnav *et al.*, 2006); however, good people will inevitably be forced ranked into the lower grades over time, especially where the whole team is exceptional (Pfeffer and Sutton, 2006).

In the case of Alfred's organisation, four grades were used to rank people. His difficulty began when he only had four direct reports; with the team's agreement, the solution was to allocate each grade in turn over two years. Approaching the appraisals this way, Alfred managed to avoid the problem of increased competition affecting the overall performance of the group. It has been suggested that FRDS affects teamwork as people begin to look after their interests as opposed to that of the team, especially if their pay rise or job may be at risk (Berger *et al.*, 2013).

The main concern emerging from the data analysis was the lack of consultation and the impact of personal vendettas against employees inherent in the process. Peter recalled how he had exceeded his targets for the year, however, because he had changed roles at the end of the review period, he was downgraded to a 2 by his previous manager (despite being ranked as a 5 the previous year) to allow the remaining team members to be given a higher score. In the discussion, blame was attributed, by Peter's former manager, to the higher-level managers

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<sup>30</sup> A full discussion on the PWE will be found in Chapter 6



who conducted the 'calibration' exercises; managers too far removed from Peter's daily work to either know him or what he had been doing over the year. The calibrators were forcing people into fields; those whom they knew, for positive reasons, were likely to get a higher score. Ultimately at the higher-level calibration, the human is reduced to the level of a statistic, to be moved between boxes to achieve the desired distribution.

When Peter complained, with the support of other managers, he was advised that even if the score was wrong, it could not and would not be changed, and was advised to comment in the appropriate field on the appraisal form. Instead, he looked for a job elsewhere. The sense of injustice and opportunities missed are palpable in the discussions with the Participants, for those given a high score as well as those given low scores.

The FRDS is said to help attract and retain talented (Thomason *et al.*, 2018); however, in Sophie's workplace, higher-ranking employees were disenchanted with the system. Moving from 5 to 4 was perceived as a slight on their abilities, raising questions of what the employee had done differently. Interestingly, those graded 5 were offered personal development opportunities which amounted to attending video conference meetings with senior directors — the employee could observe but not contribute. In the discussion after the session, the employees were advised that because they were high performers, they were going to be part of an action team to focus on helping business transformation, the immediate response was: '*great even more work*' (Peter); several years on and the team is still to be established.

For lower-ranking employees, concern was expressed that:

*If the scores of people who score a 1 or 2 are increased to fit the curve, it can hide that further investment is needed in the human capital of this company and make it difficult to obtain funds for training staff as budget holders could say 'we fit the curve there is no need for additional investment. (Sophie)*

Although Sophie's comments could be regarded as cynical, they matched other Participants' concern that training budgets were diminished and the expectation that employees will personally invest in their skills and betterment. Companies do not see it as their responsibility to train people who might leave. Given the emphasis on what is essentially argued as an evolution of the scientific management approach, Frederick Winslow Taylor's comments on the subject are enlightening:

*What we are all looking for, however, is the readymade, competent man; the man whom someone else has trained. It is only when we fully realize that our duty, as well as our opportunity, lies in systematically cooperating to train and to make this competent man, instead of in hunting for a man whom someone else has trained, that we shall be on the road to national efficiency. (Taylor, 1911, p. 1)*

Taylor rejected the dominant view of the captains of industry of his day; he felt that employers should develop their staff, to provide them with the opportunity to develop, and move beyond the roles that they had been allocated if they were capable. Such an approach is far from the deskilling that the Participants alluded to in their interviews.

## **5.5. Deskilling jobs**

Complaints about the deskilling of jobs are nothing new; Marx expresses his concern in the 1844 *Paris Manuscripts*, and the GT method emerged as a response to the proletarianisation of academia (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). However, with the advent of automation and the emphasis on lean manufacturing processes with their associated simplification of roles, the ease with tasks can be either automated or reduced to minimal human intervention and then with detailed instructions, is more pronounced. As roles are deskilled, the demand for skilled labour and long-term contracts has declined.

Andrew Haldane (2017), Chief Economist at the Bank of England, suggests that 4.3% of the working population in 2016 were on some form of a short-term, self-employed, fixed contract

or zero-hours contract arrangements. It is a figure projected to rise to 7% of the workforce in the next decade; accounting for 13.5million workers, a rise of 3million since 2000 (p. 6).

Additionally, Haldane provides an insight into the way full-time employment is changing, stating that 'work and workers may have become more diffuse, more granular, more divisible than in the past' (p. 5). He continues by arguing that the current trend in employment has more in common with the era of the Industrial Revolution than latter-day modern economies.

In Haldane's picture, he refers to work becoming artisanal and task-based, the experiences identified within this study would suggest that the employer's emphasis is more likely to be found in task-based, de-skilled, process-driven roles which leads to a sense of a loss of control and insecurity (George, 2016). There is a difficulty faced by employees; an environment in which Automatonising is the prevalent movement, supported by the growth of precarious work, leads to a changed employee mindset. The changed mindset reflects a societal shift where responsibility and blame are individualised (Bauman, 2002). The employee becomes, effectively, self-employed with all the responsibilities for knowledge, skills, and professional development that such a status entail. At the same time, the employer restricts their involvement, providing training for the necessary workplace and procedural adjustments.

Haldane fails to address the increased proletarianisation of employment and the future impact of technology. A recent OECD (2019, pp. 95–96) analysis suggests that a typical job faces a 47% risk of being automated, and 18% of workers in middle income, and 22% of low-income jobs are at risk in the next 10 to 20 years. Precisely those task-based roles discussed earlier, will be affected by this change. Haldane does not offer any comfort that the rise of *homo oeconomicus*, or the 'entrepreneur of the self' (Cooper, 2015; George, 2016), will change soon. To create the *homo oeconomicus* is to develop a form of 'liberation management' wherein the 'no one can exploit the workers better than the workers themselves' (Cederström and Fleming, 2012, p. 4).

It would be wrong to argue that the impact of automation is of itself harmful. As Kasparov (2017) writes, ‘romanticizing the loss of jobs to technology [or changes in working practices] is little better than complaining that antibiotics put too many gravediggers out of work’ (p. 42). Technology will change job roles; but what is missing and was identified a century ago by Winslow Taylor, is the commitment of employers, and arguably Disembodied Others, to encourage long-term investment in the skills needed to thrive in future years. To encourage the developing of a skill set that fosters serendipity and creativity, along with the highly developed social skills identified by Frey and Osborne (2017), that will help employees to thrive in the future.

### **The use of contractors**

Those Participants working in large companies explained how their organisations were reducing overheads by taking on casual staff on short-term, weekly, contracts. As a Purchasing Resource Manager in the late 1990s, I remember having discussions about moving towards mandatory annual contracts for all employees, and the flexibility it provided to release staff without having to deal with HR and trades unions opposition. The difference now, suggested by this analysis, is the increasing scope of roles that are now deemed to be contractable. In one company, all but the essential, non-rules based, core functions (those jobs that require creativity or critical thinking skills) have been allocated self-employed contractors hired through, primarily, local employment agencies.

For the employer, the use of hyper-flexible working arrangements is a significant benefit; however, it demands much of the contractor. The new contracting class, the precariat (Standing, 2012), is required to be:

*Habituated to self-reliance; accepting a high level of risk; allergic to bureaucracy; juggling multiple short-term ‘projects’; blurring the boundaries of work and non-work time; preternaturally adaptable; striving to be innovative and unique; producing*

*monetary value from knowledge, symbols, or otherwise intangible resources; carefully branding the self; personally funding perpetual education upgrades; vigorously managing social networks within highly informal labour markets; performing work without a guarantee of compensation; assuming responsibility for maintaining a steady flow of paid work and, hence, on a job search without end; and willingness to put the passion for the work ahead of the size of the pay. (Peuter, 2014, p. 264)*

It is an interesting description because it does little more than describe the characteristics of the self-employed. However, the core difference lurks beneath the surface; contractors and employees become 'risk-bearing, benefit-bereft, non-unionised, self-sacrificing, meritocratic-minded, always-on [and] independent' (*ibid.*), without the luxury of choosing that state.

Meaning employees become more docile for fear of losing their jobs; less willing to 'rock the boat' (Louise). The fear is real; many contractors are employed at the whim of the manager.

Many contractors hope that they will be retained or offered one of the dwindling permanent roles, which requires the contractor to do exactly what their manager asks of them.

Insecurity over future employment appears to drive a set of behaviours in which maximising performance and avoiding blame are central. Tasks have been reduced to a series of written rules-based instructions, to be followed assiduously, by anyone with a minimal amount of job-specific training. However, the demand for increased speed in completing tasks leads to departures from the scripts. Peter described the way contractors would change settings on machines to increase output:

*They've gone from the original setting messed it all up, denied all knowledge, so we come to it and Oh god it's like, and it takes ages to kind of put it right. If you do eventually put it right. So, it costs a lot of time. Instead of having the balls to say, I've done this and this and this, it's like a lot of panic. They're under a lot of pressure, and they panic a lot.*

The contractors panic because they know that by admitting to making a mistake, they face being unemployed the following week.

## **5.6. The employee's response**

Having identified the primary concern, the analyst must seek to explore how the employees respond to that concern. The initial coding of the responses was simplistic; for example, turning off, following orders, getting own back, owing me. Responses indicated frustration and lack of satisfaction with their work roles, their employers (in the form of the Disembodied Other) and general unhappiness with the way they are expected to fulfil their job roles.

Whether the employee's responses to the automatonising process were malicious, is questionable. It is not possible to merely explain that people fought back; a veneer of compliance often masked a more profound and protracted conflict. Instead, the response arises from frustration, and a desire to dissipate *ressentiment*, by entering the duelling process. The frustration is directed at Disembodied Others, people who are different, existing on the periphery of their world, who exert influence (real or imagined) over their role. At the same time, there is a determination towards being professional; to fulfil their role to the best of their ability, irrespective of the frustration

The analysis suggests that the process of Having-Fun manages this tension.

### **5.6.1. Target driven behaviours**

Performance targets have unintended consequences. The analysis suggests that people focus on those targets which impact their financial or career possibilities. In a hospital setting, the demand that nursing staff attain a set number of competencies or skills leads to some tasks not being completed, and it is 'borderline' whether patients are at risk (James). Prison officers are expected to issue a set number of behavioural warnings; previously ignored minor infringements, now result in warnings: leading to confrontations on the prison wings (Robert). In factories machine tolerances are being exceeded to achieve challenging production targets,

risking the breakdown of the machines and injury to operators (Peter). With the increased use of short-term contracts, employees feel they have little choice but to comply; however, it is also possible that people are focussing on these objectives out of frustration: *'if that's what they want me to do, that's all I'll do'* (Maria).

### **5.6.2. Sleep-working**

Allied to target-driven behaviours, although less severe, is sleep-working. Sleep-working refers to a form of workplace somnambulism; it is a response by the employee to both functional stupidity (Alvesson and Spicer, 2012) and automatonising. Sleep-working people are awake, functioning efficiently but disengaged from their environment and unrelated events. It is an autohypnotic state we enter when driving along a familiar road, driving as if on autopilot, safe and competent but not consciously aware of what we are doing, just functioning.

Sleep-working emerged as a recognition that employees responded to automatonising by turning-off or tuning out; for some, this was a mental act, for others, it meant a physical separation such as wearing headphones or listening to music at work. Peter offered a succinct summary *'they've lost that sort of appetite. They're just turning up, they're getting their paycheck, and that's it'*. The employee becomes nothing more than a 'dead man working' (Cederström and Fleming, 2012).

For many of the Participants, daily routines are performed automatically; getting up, going to work, and strict timescales and rituals govern coming home. At work, the homogenisation of tasks and behaviours through the use of detailed procedures alongside coercive management practices are having a similar effect on employees with the demand for either blind obedience or informed acquiescence (LRN. Corp., 2016).

As the sleep-working code emerged, it became noticeable how it manifested itself in different settings as people adjusted to the demands of those in power; husbands, wives, children (young and old), friends and colleagues. Initially, sleep-working was conceived of as an

unnecessary response which spurned the use of our critical faculties; however, a broader awareness of the response revealed it to function as a survival tactic.

As with many behaviours, difficulties arise when we move from conscious to unconscious behaviour; we stop thinking about what, or why we are doing something. It is this automatic response and acceptance of authority—familial, institutional, societal, or theoretical—that Glaser and Strauss were initially concerned with in *Discovery* and why Glaser demands that researchers should become themselves (Gynnild, 2011). He is, in effect, suggesting that they wake up from their somnambulist state.

### 5.6.3. Having-Fun-Decaying

Earlier I offered an example of Having-Fun-Decaying (p. 101) when discussing George's changing name tags prank when the CEO visited. Having-Fun-Decaying explains how what appears to be fun and relieves the tension of the automatonising process for one person over time damages relationships with other people. Examples include:

- playing games with their managers; deliberately being contrary 'for the fun of it' (Jorgos),
- being intentionally obtuse or pretending to be stupid and wanting to have detailed instructions issued in writing (George).
- deliberately trying to confuse managers by alternating between supporting and attacking behaviours, sometimes by agreement and with the support of fellow team members (Tim).
- gossiping: Gossip is fun, but not for the person being gossiped about if they find out. Equally, gossip is not fun for those who are listening in to the gossip, wondering if they are targets of gossip.
- leaving work early, take an extended lunch, or not answer telephone calls (Colin; Sophie).



- working at their own pace, declaring “*I didn’t do it because I couldn’t be bothered’ and ... ‘I’m quite slow, I’ll do things in my own time’ is fun; especially when managers don’t tackle the behaviour’* (Tom). In an environment in which targets must be achieved with fewer employees, to have one person taking time out or not fulfilling their role, leads to a valid question from others ‘*am I less valuable [than the person doing nothing]?’* (Tom).

Tom was not alone wondering if he should copy the behaviours he was witnessing. It leads to a spiral of decay in the organisation, but it also leads to deterioration in the person involved; it is not a sustainable position. Initially, it was tempting to code this process as Having-Fun-Revenging, to reflect the creative ways in which the employee gains vengeance on the organisation or their peers. However, decaying seemed more appropriate as it reflects the longer-term damage caused by such behaviour, especially if managers do not challenge the behaviour

Having-Fun-Decaying appears to be addictive. Not challenging the behaviour, or if laughs or supportive comments by others reward the behaviour, the negative performance continues. There is a risk that the search for other fun outlets will escalate. Where do we draw the line? The question is as relevant in this context as it is in the organisation’s encouragement of fun. Like gambling, playing computer games or drinking alcohol, confusing a manager may initially be fun, but what happens when boredom arises, or the manager fails to respond, does the employee look for another outlet, target or source of fun? An example provided by both George and Sophie was to escalate the conflict by providing false (but non-attributable) information to the manager. Such an action, while mitigating the resentment they felt, had a consequential short and long-term impact on the business and relationships within the department and wider business; but the consequences were secondary to the ‘fun’ of humiliating their manager.

#### 5.6.4. Having-Fun-Audiencing

The demand for employees to be good citizens, to exceed their job descriptions (and remittance) and contribute to the department or organisation was discussed earlier (p. 129). This demonstration of commitment ranges from taking work home and finishing things off, to a more pervasive approach in which the employee agrees, unconditionally, with their manager.

More importantly, showing commitment drives behaviours categorised as Having-Fun-Audiencing. Having-Fun-Audiencing is a form of communication, in which the employee presents an image of themselves that is tailored specifically to their audience, in this case, senior managers. In this situation, the employee tries:

*to creep round to show how wonderfully hard working they are and hoping someone notices, and they get a mention somewhere in dispatches (George)*

*There's things I will do because they help my CV and currently when I am looking at them now, I'm thinking I am glad I did that, and I am glad I did that because that's going to look good there. But I don't think I do citizenship in terms of how's that going to help anybody else. It's how is it going to help me. (Tracy)*

It is a behaviour fostered by the combative nature of the workplace. Where performances are measured on the achievement of defined objectives, reducing collegiality to a minimum:

*there was no willingness to look at everybody's interests there was no conception of the fact that maybe there was a way of getting a win-win. (Mary)*

When Having-Fun-Audiencing, it is more important to be seen to be doing something than it is to do the right things.

There is, however, a further dimension to Having-Fun-Audiencing. When audiencing, the most obvious audience is not always the immediate target audience. The audience may not be

the person being spoken to, but those who are listening (as is the case in a duelling situation; see, section 5.3.3); George's audience in the name-badge swapping game (p. 138) was not just the CEO but principally his colleagues. The audience for a bully may not be the victim but rather those bystanders who are grateful not to be targeted but accept the implied warning that it could be them and feel compelled to do the bully's will, even if that is not to intervene.

Contextual audiences, those who are physically present in the work environment may be replaced with an absent audience. The absent audience may be parents or other authority figures whose approval is sought, or with a past traumatic conflict that has yet to be resolved, for example, Maria stated that:

*I think as a child always being told you were never going to make anything of yourself.*

It's back to that bloody-mindedness again.

*Yeah, I think that's where it all stems from, I'm still looking for, at the end of the day I think, is parental approval that, I think a lot of it goes back to that. The parental approval that you are never going to get.*

Does the job satisfy it?

*I think it satisfies me and I love the work or the job. I think the parental approval no matter what I did if I was the queen or ran the country it wouldn't be enough*

Mary's absent audience was the small church she belonged to as a child:

*I was demonised by the church too. I was told I was evil. And they tried to cast the devil out of me.*

The absent audience shares similar characteristics to the Disembodied Other in that a psychic, as opposed to a physical, relationship, drives the behaviour. Whomever the audience is—parent, church, god, partner, teacher, ex-lover—they become a reference point for behaviour, either seeking their approval or resolving past injuries. One person becomes the embodiment

of the super-ego. For both Mary and Maria, fun emerged in countering the impact of those childhood influences; revenge against the absent audience was Having-Fun, proving them wrong in by excelling in their professional and personal lives.

#### **5.6.5. Having-Fun-Being-Professional**

Arguably, the codes used to explain their behaviour of the exemplars above, Maria and Mary, could have reflected a different code Having-Fun-Being-Professional. Although they immersed themselves in their work with passion, their motivation was not one of being professional but instead proving someone else wrong, resolving the conflict with the absent audience. In such situations, the employee is within the constraints of the drama triangle; regarding themselves as a victim.

The Having-Fun-Being-Professional attitude is evident where people have a passion for their job but feel thwarted by the Disembodied Other:

*we will still fulfil our jobs because that's why we're in the job basically, enjoying what we do, we love helping people so from the patient care perspective it's working really well, and it doesn't stop, but from the Service personnel perspective, it's a bit like 'get off our backs 'for doing what we need to do we're helping out. (Dominic)*

Having-Fun-Being-Professional is a way of silencing the Disembodied Other. For Dominic, George, Colin, Mary, and Maria the ability to claim that, in their professional medical opinion, they must do something, provides them with a sense of satisfaction and enjoyment at being able to confound the Disembodied Other: 'seeing the look on his face was priceless' (Maria). For others, the professional aspect is more about '*knowing your job inside out and back to front*' (Kay); having a depth of knowledge which makes it difficult for anyone to challenge your opinion on a matter. This professional standing could be used to an employee's benefit, for example, not being questioned on their work submissions or being able to disparage a peer for personal advantage.

## 5.7. Chapter summary

Within this chapter, an explanation of the source and impact of the Automatonising process has been proposed. The Automatonising process is an anti-social process that reflects a continual duel between labour and capital (employer and employees) for control over the working day.

A spectral figure, the Disembodied Other, was revealed to be the ultimate consumer, if not customer, for increasing demands for productivity and improvements. The Disembodied Other became a scapegoat for employees who wished to project their frustration on to; it is a figure who exists on the periphery of the employee's world, affecting their workday lives.

While employers seek to embed the process by deskilling jobs and performance/behavioural management, employees feeling increasingly silenced and alienated from their roles, respond either by offering blind obedience or informed acquiescence or engaging with different dimensions of Having-Fun. The different dimensions of Having-Fun contribute to the wider discussion on fun at work emphasising the way fun is deployed as a form of resistance. Four principal forms of resistance have been suggested: Having-Fun-Duelling, Having-Fun-Decaying, Having-Fun-Audiencing and Having-Fun-Being-Professional. Each form of fun provides employees with instant feedback, that fleeting moment of pleasure or entertainment that is the hallmark of our current understanding of fun.

To be able to go to work, do their job, be told in clear, concise terms what to do, laugh, and go home to their families or friends ready to return the next day, is enough for some employees. For some, a fleeting sense of victory in the ongoing duel provides the sense of instant gratification that enables them to dissipate the impact of the automatonising process.

However, an alternative approach of Being-Fun has been identified. An approach in which employees negate the impact of the automatonising process by focusing on their personal and professional development by embracing Being-Fun. For these employees embracing a

proactive form of fun improves not just their productiveness and effectiveness but ultimately provides a source of improved productivity and efficiency.

How we develop an orientation towards being proactive and productive is the focus of Chapter 8, in the meantime, the next chapter will integrate the twin concepts of Having-Fun and Being-Fun with the existing literature on fun at work and the broader discussion on how to develop happy-productive employees.

## 6. Integrating the existing literature

**Summary:** The purpose of this chapter is threefold: to connect the emerging theories into the existing knowledge we have on fun at work, to extend the discussion and to explore how the method might contribute to the development of the literature.

### 6.1. Introduction

So far, engagement with the existing literature has been limited to providing a background for the emerging theory. In this chapter, a fuller encounter with the literature locates the emerging theories, of automatonising, Having-Fun and Being-Fun, in a broader framework. That context reflects a wider discussion on fun at work but also what it means to encourage happy-productive employees. Revealing the automatonising process and the subsequent duel between employers and employees exposes a historical movement towards developing the ‘world of total work’ (Pieper, 2009, p. 20), where ‘the demands of the world of work become greater and greater, till at last, they make a total claim upon the whole of human nature’ (*ibid.* p. 78). It is a world where workers, irrespective of social class, become functionaries (automatons) of the social system in which they work and live. In ‘total work’ we live to work rather than work to live; fun becomes an indulgent reward, or a distraction, for serving the organisation.

Earlier in this thesis, it was suggested that Glaser and Strauss developed GT as a response to the increasing levels of proletarianisation in academia. They were concerned that doctoral candidates were being reduced to the state of academic functionaries, demonstrating technical proficiency (scholarship) but little creativity or autonomy (analytical skills). It is a concern shared by Pieper, who argues that instrumentalising everything to facilitate work, including reason, cultivated *acedia*, a state in which the worker becomes disengaged from reality (Levy, 2007), isolating themselves, giving up ‘on the very responsibility that comes with

[his/her] dignity...that [s/he] not want to be what [s/he] really, in the ultimate sense, is' (Pieper, 2009, p. 28).

The emerging theories in this dissertation contend that the employee's response to being isolated (autonomised) is to embrace Having-Fun or Being-Fun. If the employee feels isolated and resorts to Having-Fun as a distraction or as a weapon in the duel for control, the quest for the happy-productive employee will remain elusive.

These themes are developed further in this chapter while integrating the current literature into the emerging theories. The chapter is divided into four sections: the first explains the purpose of literature reviews in CGT studies. The second provides a historical context for the use of fun in work, while the third part explores the current uses of fun in work. These two parts reflect the ongoing transition from work as a means of salvation to the general adoption of the right and duty to pursue happiness in work (Costea *et al.*, 2005). The final part engages with the concept of happiness in understanding how Being-Fun, as part of a widespread movement, helps to challenge the automatonising process.

## **6.2. Using existing literature in CGT**

In his influential work, Punch (2005, p. 266) identifies three possible ways to connect a study to the existing literature: review the literature in advance of the study; review the literature ahead of the empirical work, or integrate the literature after completing the empirical work.

In a CGT study, the existing literature is consulted when the theory is virtually complete to locate and enrich the emerging theory within the current body of knowledge (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978; Rennie *et al.*, 1988; Charmaz, 1990; Stern, 1994; Glaser, 1998; Andriopoulos and Lowe, 2000; Simmons and Gregory, 2004; Olson, 2008; Alammari *et al.*, 2018; Ratnapalan, 2019). The purpose of such a delay is to prevent, as far as is possible, the thoughts of other scholars influencing the analysis (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Charmaz, 1990; Cutcliffe, 1997; Glaser, 1999). It is an approach guided by Glaser and Strauss' (1967) instruction that:



*an effective strategy is, at first, literally to ignore the literature of theory and fact on the area under study, in order to assure that the emergence of categories will not be contaminated by concepts more suited to different areas. (p.37)*

The quote is consistent with other instructions advising analysts not to discuss the emerging theory until it has matured (see, for example, Glaser, 1998; McGhee *et al.*, 2007; Muller and Kogan, 2010; Willig, 2013). The advice is offered to help analysts reduce the risk of being unduly influenced by the opinions of others too early in the study. Delaying the literature review does not, however, prevent an analyst looking at closely allied fields to help develop sensitivity (Brooks, 1988; Pandit, 1996; Annells, 1997; Glaser, 1998; Blase and Blase, 2002; Pauleen and Yoong, 2004; Simmons and Gregory, 2004; Mediani, 2017; Martin *et al.*, 2018). There are some instances where Glaser appears to have evolved his thinking (Muller *et al.*, 2019), firstly by suggesting that closely related literature should be avoided (Glaser, 1978) and then arguing that existing literature can be used to as data, provided that new data is subjected to the constant comparison process (Glaser, 2005a).

While all grounded theorists agree that it is necessary to consult the literature (Muller *et al.*, 2019), seemingly different approaches have emerged over time. Bulmer's (1979) argument for an extreme interpretation of the blank slate approach to literature, was rejected by Charmaz (1990) who maintains that what was needed was a delayed reading of the literature (p. 1163). It is now 'conditionally accepted' that a review can be undertaken before a study commences to help guide topic development (Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Backman and Kyngäs, 1999; Baskerville and Pries-Heje, 1999; Eisenhart, 2001; Gasson, 2004; Churchill *et al.*, 2007; Mavetera and Kroeze, 2009; Pearse and Kanyangale, 2009; McCreddie and Payne, 2010; Hut mire, 2016; Thistoll *et al.*, 2016). This approach is supported by those who prefer the constructive or descriptive forms of GT, and it should be noted that Strauss' (1990) adoption of such an approach led to his academic divorce from Glaser (see, Glaser, 1992).

Like Urqhart (2002), I am not sure that the two sides are as far apart as they initially seem. Both sides accept that doctoral candidates and those seeking research funding are often required to conduct a detailed literature review (Barbour, 2001; Pace, 2004; Bruce, 2007; Bryant, 2009), and therefore encourage analysts to demonstrate their awareness of existing literature at critical stages in their study. It is impossible to achieve the blank slate state that Bulmer wants; nevertheless, he is correct that the analyst must approach the literature *as if* a blank slate, with an openness that does not seek to prove or disprove an existing theory (Fernandez, 2004). The central question is not whether all literature should be avoided or whether existing knowledge should guide topic development, but how do we recognise when the emerging theory reaches a mature stage, so that engagement with the literature becomes fruitful.

Suddaby (2006, p. 635) says that engaging with existing literature before the start, or in the early stages, of a study, is not necessarily a risk to the integrity of the study. He argues that the risk is not that the data will be sullied *per se* but that analysts might, consciously or otherwise, begin hypothesis testing instead of directly observing what is happening in the data. Suddaby notes that we are all human and that 'we should pay attention to extant theory but constantly remind yourself ... that what you observe is a function of both who you are and what you hope to see' (*ibid.*). Similarly, 'the trick' according to Charmaz (2006) is to ensure that the literature does not 'stifle your creativity or strangle your theory' (p. 166). Nevertheless, will an early engagement affect the analyst's confidence to engage with their theory?

By way of example, Strauss and Corbin indicated a range of benefits for early engagement with the literature. Existing literature helps develop sensitivity, offers a secondary source of data, stimulates questions, directs theoretical mapping, and provides verification of emerging thoughts. Each of these advantages offers comfort to the researcher that they are progressing in the right direction—but raises the question of whose direction? It seems that this need for

reassurance is precisely what concerned Glaser. Avoiding existing literature, in the early stages, means analysts are free to explore; to actively listen to the data without depending on a guide.

To apply Suddaby's suggestions obliges the analyst to remain open, range over several different disciplines and practice reflexivity when reading the literature (Giske and Artinian, 2007; McGhee *et al.*, 2007; Fendt and Sachs, 2008). How can this be achieved? Suddaby (2006) offers a pragmatic solution: draw upon the literature from several different substantive areas; be conscious of the risk of being influenced by existing theories; be aware of the limitations of CGT research. Fendt and Sachs (2008), in a similar vein to Luhmann's (1992a) Zettelkasten approach, suggest that analysts develop two-way conversations between the empirical data and existing literature. It is an approach that was adopted in reviewing existing knowledge in this study.

Central to this conversation is the granting of respect to both the data and the literature. This respect is a practical application of the bracketing of preconceptions, evaluating a text, identifying different perspectives and dimensions. Where a text was deemed to be useful, it was essential to understand why and how that perception arose and why other elements of the text were not applicable. The process is time-consuming, but as Strauss and Corbin (1998) suggest 'doing research is hard work. It also is fun and exciting. In fact, nothing can compare to the joy that comes from discovery' (p.14).

The notion of research being fun is central to both Glaser and Strauss' view of GT (see, for example, Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Legewie and Schervier-Legewie, 2004). However, in the quote above, Strauss and Corbin drew out the central issues to be discussed as the emerging theory is integrated, enriched and elaborated by the existing literature (Rennie *et al.*, 1988, p. 142). Issues that relate directly to the development of happy-productive employees: fun, excitement, joy, and hard work.

In the next section, attention turns to answering the question ‘what is fun?’ It is a question that has rarely been addressed, at a conceptual level, in the literature but as the literature review revealed, the answer has a profound impact upon how we understand and approach fun in both in our work-life and everyday-life.

### **6.3. What is fun?**

The complexity of meanings associated with fun, along with the tendency of each subsequent generation to create new synonyms (McManus and Furnham, 2010) means that *fun* is a difficult concept to define (Tang *et al.*, 2017; Blythe and Hassenzahl, 2018) and to research (Plester *et al.*, 2015). For many of us, the word ‘*fun*’ resonates with subjectivity (Clancy and Linehan, 2016), used to describe enjoyable, entertaining, and pleasurable experiences. It might be difficult for us to define what we mean by fun, but we can readily describe those experiences, situations, or events that we find to be fun. We might explain how we have fun; pointing-out those people we think are fun to be with; or how, lovingly or otherwise, we make fun of others.

Although tempting, creating a new definition from previous definitions, adding subtle changes, would not expand our understanding of fun in a work context itself. Broad definitions do little to explain how fun resolves the tension between the automatonising process and the desire for autonomy of employees. It is a tension that contains a philosophy of work, a difference over the conception of the meaning and purpose of work.

#### **6.3.1. The evolution of fun**

Before delving into the complexities of integrating the emerging theory with existing literature on fun in the work setting, it will be useful to explore the etymology of the word *fun* itself.

Table 6-1: Basis of definitions of fun

Basis of definition	Author(s) (by year)	Proposed Definition
<b>Activity-fun</b>	Ford <i>et al.</i> (2003, p. 22)	'work environment that intentionally encourages, initiates, and supports a variety of enjoyable and pleasurable activities.'
	McDowell (2004, p. 9)	'engaging in activities not specifically related to the job that are enjoyable, amusing or playful.'
	Fineman (2006, p. 279)	'literally the positive face of positivity, where the contagion of expressed joy and laughter is harnessed to increase employees' subjective feelings of wellbeing at work.'
	Fluegge (2008, p. 15)	'any social, interpersonal, or task activities at work of a playful or humorous nature which provide an individual with amusement, enjoyment, or pleasure.'
	Lamm & Meeks (2009, p. 614)	'playful social, interpersonal, recreational, or task activities intended to provide amusement, enjoyment, or pleasure.'
	Pryor <i>et al.</i> (2010, p. 204)	'the pleasure you experience while you are involved in some action such as doing something, seeing something or even relaxing.'
	Mücelandili & Erdil (2016, p. 305)	'Pleasant activities in the workplace that provides contacts and interaction among employees.'
<b>Social-fun</b>	Plester & Hutchinson (2016, p. 333)	'as a multi-layered concept that is simultaneously collective while being also experienced in an individual and personal way.'
	Tanaka <i>et al.</i> (2018, p. 277)	Work is fun when 'done in camaraderie with mutual respect.'
<b>Organic</b>	Strömberg & Karlsson (2009)	'consists of humour rituals like joke telling, physical joking practices (pokes, tickles, jostles, grapples, dances, tactics of scaring people), clowning, nicknaming and using satire to create a fun workplace.'
<b>Being-Fun</b>	Comm (2018)	'what interests us the most is what will give us the most fun. It is how we live our lives in a way that is authentic and true to who we are and want to be a way that is authentic and true to who we are and want to be.'
<b>Constructed-fun</b>	Peluchette & Karl (2005, p. 269)	'extent to which a person perceives the existence of fun in the workplace.'

While we may never identify the precise source of the word (Lieberman and Mitchell, 1993; Tasci and Ko, 2016), the proposed origins are both intriguing and illuminating as they resonate with the two distinct approaches to fun suggested by the data analysis (Having-Fun and Being-Fun).

In its first recorded use in 1685, the word *fun* described acts of fraud and deception (OED Online, 2019c). The 17<sup>th</sup> century use drew on a Middle English word *fon*, first recorded in 1440, to describe actions of being toyed with, made a fool of, or looking weak (OED Online, 2019b). The slightly later publication, the *New Dictionary of the Terms Ancient and Modern by the Canting Crew* (B.E., 1698) defined *fun* as a cheat or a slippery trick, with examples given of ‘*what do you fun me?* [meaning] Do you think to sharp or trick me’ and ‘*I funn’d him* [meaning] I was too hard for him, I out-witted or rooked him’ (p.76). Less prosaically the *Canting Crew* dictionary also pointed out that fun could refer to an arse: ‘*I’ll kick your fun* [meaning] [ I’ll kick your arse’. These definitions may have led Samuel Johnson in his *Dictionary of the English Language* to argue that fun was a ‘low cant word’ used by the criminal classes (Johnson, 1755). Johnson also says that fun was being used to describe merriment and ‘frolicksome delight’ (p. 504). By the late 1800s, using fun to describe pleasurable or amusing events was an established practice. These early definitions characterise fun as a response to events or something that happens at the expense of other people. However, there is an equally historic alternative perspective on the etymology of fun.

Writing in 1877, Mackay agrees that one root of *fun* does reflect frivolous foolery or cheating. However, referencing Chambers and Webster, he also suggests the German word *wonne* meaning delight and joy, offers an alternative source (p.185). This reference is crucial because many modern scholars writing about work and fun conflate fun, joy and happiness (Ford *et al.*, 2004; Bolton and Houlihan, 2009; Bakke, 2010; Chan, 2010; Fincham, 2016; Tsaur *et al.*, 2019). However, Mackay’s sense is that fun has two distinct sources: pleasure (*fon*) or joy (*wonne*),

which in turn reflect the two orientations identified in the data analysis: Having-Fun and Being-Fun.

Having exposed two distinct two roots of fun, the question must be asked about the impact they have on the emerging theories presented in the previous chapters? The employee like George, who engages with acts of petty non-violent aggression (changing name tags, for example) is Having-Fun, cheating and hoaxing. However, delight is uppermost in George's mind; a return to the days when he was encouraged to make decisions, to plan his day: to act autonomously as a professional. Having-Fun is extrinsic fun, rooted to fun through *fon*; grounded in the individual transient, experiences of pleasure, stimulated by external factors. Being-Fun, however, is intrinsic fun, emerging from the satisfaction of a sincerely held desire. Being-Fun, rooted in joy (*wonne*), delights in action; a creative activity in which the employee is developing professionally and personally through meaningful work that enables them to contribute to the common good. Adding the common good to this process reflects the importance of fostering and protecting inborn human talents, qualities, and potentialities that must be nurtured and even protected (Pieper, 1989a).

For employees in search of happiness, and employers seeking happy-productive employees, the question to be asked is which of these orientations will deliver a long-term benefit? Is *fon* or *wonne* more conducive to achieving happiness? Before being able to answer this question, we address an issue that has exercised employers and academics over the last century; should work itself be fun? In answering this question, we gain insight into why organisations follow the *fon* root rather than *wonne*.

#### **6.4. Should work be fun?**

It seems to be true that workplaces must be fun. The abundance of evidence appears to support the suggestion that organisations that do not embrace fun face existential risks (van

Meel and Vos, 2001; Michel *et al.*, 2019). Nevertheless, this has not always been the case; fun and work have had a chequered relationship and arguably continue to do so.

The call for workplaces to be fun is a relatively recent phenomenon. In the 1980s, management practitioners, academics and consultants seemed to embrace an ‘unprecedented turn’ towards subjectivity and the self-assertion that happiness is both a right and a duty (Costea *et al.*, 2005, pp. 145–146). This subjective turn is the culmination of a gradual shift in the ethos of work; where ‘ethos’ refers to the cultural processes through which a social ensemble acquires its balance, through which it articulates its values and makes the body social work’ (*ibid.*).

The changing cultural processes reflected the religious changes that of the previous several hundred years. The theological absolutism of the Middle Ages was replaced in turn by the self-abnegation of Puritan rational capitalism, which in our secular era has been superseded by subjective cognitive capitalism driven by the right and duty to be happy in work (Costea *et al.*, 2005; Reveley, 2013). Out of this subjective turn emerged the recommendation that work should be fun (Warren and Fineman, 2007; Kavanagh, 2011; West, 2014; Vamplew, 2016); a recommendation that was effectively anathema to mainstream managers for whom work was not meant to be fun.

As discussed in the Introduction to this thesis, encouraging employees to be happy is not new. The encouragement employees received to be happy-productive from the 1920s, crucially, did not include fun; Freud’s pleasure principle was regarded as a threat to production and commercial interests (Collinson, 2002). Since at least the outset of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, many business owners and managers (see, for example, Frederick Winslow Taylor, 1911, p. 41; Henry Ford, 1922, p. 55; Theodore Roosevelt quoted in Michel *et al.*, 2019, p. 1) expressed their view that work, especially hard work, was good and non-work was evil (Kavanagh, 2011). Fun and happiness were understood to be different. To the modern ear, which conflates fun and



happiness this may sound strange, but to understand these concerns, we need to appreciate the relationship between capitalism and religion.

#### **6.4.1. The influence of the Protestant Work Ethic**

In his influential text *The Protestant Ethic and Spirit of Capitalism*, Weber (2005) implies that rational capitalism is based on the principles of the Protestant Reformation; especially the teaching of John Calvin (1509-1564) and the Puritan communities that developed his ideas. Weber notes that Catholic countries, which had a communitarian ethos, were less likely to be prosperous when compared with those Protestant countries that emphasised individual achievement. The conclusion drawn by Weber is that Protestantism, especially in its Calvinist/Puritan form, leads to a strong work ethic.

In the teachings of Luther and Calvin, humans are tools of divine grace, meant to subjugate their environment for the glory of God (Heede *et al.*, 2005). The ‘protestant ethic’<sup>31</sup> sanctified work, transforming work to a calling from God which incorporated all aspects of a person’s life (Baumann *et al.*, 2016); giving work a spiritual standing that it had not had before (Höpfl, 2007, p. 406). Living an austere life of hard work and forgoing frivolity, provided a means of escaping the fatalism that accompanies Calvinist beliefs in human depravity, and the predestined damnation for all but a select few.

In recent years, the word ‘protestant’ has been dropped in favour of using the more inclusive term ‘work ethic’ to include other religious perspectives, and none (see, for example, Byrne, 2017; Rusu, 2018; Uygur *et al.*, 2017). This inclusive ethic reflects the similarity between religions in their approach to the meaning and purpose of work, even where social teachings differ (Tawney, 1928; Löwy, 2009; Arruñada, 2010; Murtaza *et al.*, 2016; Andersen *et al.*, 2017).

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<sup>31</sup> Although I will follow convention and use the word ‘ethic’, whether we can call this an ethic is questionable; it is more a recognition of the affinity of capitalism for puritan theology (Luhmann, 1998, p.56)

What unites the religious approach is that the ‘sanctification of work [becomes] a potent psychological cocktail driving people forward’ (Kim *et al.*, 2013, p. 639). It is a work ethic which demands: systematic and methodical work; thrift; enquiry; and individualism, alongside mechanical and managerial skills (Kavanagh, 2011, p. 342). Weber argues that any:

*waste of time is thus the first and deadliest of sins...Loss of time through sociability, idle talk, luxury, even more sleep than is necessary...is worthy of absolute moral condemnation...every hour is lost to labour.* (Weber, 2005, p. 104)

In return, those who work hard are rewarded with health, fulfilment, enlightenment and purpose, upward mobility and accumulation of wealth and capital (Weber, 1930; Coulson *et al.*, 2013). When enough wealth is accrued, wider society benefits from employing others. Importantly, being successful is a sign of God’s grace and an indicator of being chosen for the reward of eternal life (King *et al.*, 2004; Ward and King, 2017). By contrast, poverty is the reward for a sinful life; evidence of moral and/or personal deficits (Weber, 1930; Parenti, 2007). In such circumstances, a ‘self-sustaining motivator to create wealth was developed (Steenkamp, 2013, p. 5); where ‘economic fortune is a worldly confirmation of divine benevolence’ (Beradi, p. 85).

Improved work performance is a likely outcome for those who regard their work as a calling or vocation; this is, however, associated with an increased willingness to make sacrifices (Ward and King, 2017). The austerity of Weber’s argument means that enjoyment, luxury and conspicuous consumption are not considered relevant to the happiness of the individual (Pekkola, 2010; Stavrakakis, 2010):

*the summum bonum of this [Protestant] ethic, the earning of more and more money, combined with the strict avoidance of all spontaneous enjoyment of life, is above all completely devoid of any eudæmonistic, not to say hedonistic, admixture. It is thought of so purely as an end in itself, that from the point of view of the happiness of, or utility to,*

*the single individual, it appears entirely transcendental and absolutely irrational.*

(Weber, 1930, p. 18)

For Weber the right to happiness is superseded by a duty to work, acquire and save (Löwy, 2009, p. 72); anhedonic capitalism waging war on pleasure (Sommer and Sacco, 2019), meaning:

*identities and social bonds were deposited on entry in the cloakroom together with hats, umbrellas and overcoats, so that solely the command and the statute book could drive uncontested, the actions of the insiders as long as they stayed inside.* (Bauman, 2000, pp. 25–26).

Not only were social bonds to be left in the cloakroom, the irrationality of emotions meant they had no place in business or science (Goodwin *et al.*, 2001, p. 2). For Weber and his disciples, play, or fun are frivolous and unproductive activities that pose a risk to the organisational order and control, and should be avoided (Petelczyc *et al.*, 2018). Living a morally good life and working hard concludes the elusive quest for happiness (Rokhman and Hassan, 2014; Ward and King, 2017).

The centrality of an ethical and productive life, grounded in work, still resonates in the 21<sup>st</sup> century; although removing the word ‘protestant’ strips the approach of its overt religious connotations (Bleakley, 2004; Heede *et al.*, 2005; Zabel *et al.*, 2017; Rusu, 2018). Zabel *et al.* (2017, p. 302) categorise the internalisation of work goals, long-term collaborative problem solving, delaying gratification by setting smaller goals and placing work at the centre of life as evidence of how the PWE has influenced the skills and attitudes affecting every day (working) life. The automatonising process and the employee responses, discussed in the previous chapter, are influenced by the PWE.

Despite references to the puritan culture of hard work that underpins Weber’s work and the popular image of Puritan life as austere and mirthless, it seems that Weber may have ignored

inconvenient aspects of Puritan life. Exclusively fun activities (theatres, playhouses, sports) were rejected in favour of less direct forms of enjoyment that could be constrained by temperance (Kavanagh, 2011). For example, beer, cider and 'hard liquor' were provided by town authorities to attract labourers (Daniels, 1991). To regard the Puritan domination of work and social life as uncontested would be a mistake; a tension existed as theatres, playhouses and sports challenged the Puritan hegemony (2004, p. 54). If one can argue, as suggested in the previous chapter, that duelling is a form of fun, it is interesting to note that more duels occurred in Puritan dominated Boston, Massachusetts, than in any other 18<sup>th</sup>-century region of America (LaCroix, 2005).

In light of the above discussions, it seems as if fun at work would be the antithesis of the PWE (Plester, 2009, p. 584). However, as the general atmosphere moved from the repression of desire to the stimulation of desires in the 1980s (Heede *et al.*, 2005; Pekkola, 2010; Lee, 2017), and the quest for happiness moved from the transcendent to the immanent realm, the spirit of Weber's ethics changed. Fun is now used to develop a work hard/play hard culture (Goggin, 2011), blurring the boundaries between work life and social life for the benefit of the organisation (Kavanagh, 2011).

In the next section, the evolution and impact of fun will be explored to the extent that it deploys fun (*fon*) as an instrument to enforce total work, reinforcing the automatonising process.

#### **6.4.2. Subjective work ethic**

How Weber might have reacted to the exhortation to encourage employers to develop cultures and environments of fun (Michel *et al.*, 2019) and to encourage workers to work hard **and** play hard **in** their workplace is not a straight forward question. An instant reaction based upon the discussions above might be that he would have rejected, out of hand, anything frivolous. However, as we will see in this section, to use fun as a means of encouraging the

emergence of total work, defined, and controlled by employers, would probably have met with Weber's approval.

As suggested earlier, although it had been recognised that happy workers are productive workers, fun was explicitly excluded from the workplace (Warren and Fineman, 2007; Kavanagh, 2011; West, 2014; Vamplew, 2016); then in the 1980s, several authors argued that fun should be included explicitly (Deal and Kennedy, 1982; Pascale and Athos, 1982; Peters and Waterman, 1982). The idea that fun could be used as a 'managerial resource that can be used positively to energise and motivate employees' (Warren and Fineman, 2007, p. 100) seemed to reject the Weberian ideology that the salvation of their souls should be enough to motivate workers. Nevertheless, studies have claimed to identify many benefits for employers who do adopt fun.

### **Benefits of fun**

Newstrom (2002, p. 5) indicates that the benefits of fun at work divide into three categories, indicating the likelihood that the benefits will be attained; probable, possible and uncertain. The three categories present an incremental benefit; beginning with employee wellbeing, which improves employee commitment. The suggestion is that employees who are committed to their work and employer are likely to be more productive (Karl *et al.*, 2010).

Probable benefits include providing a distraction from the seriousness of the job (Poon Teng Fatt, 2002; Bolton and Houlihan, 2009) which in turn reduces stress/anxiety (Poon Teng Fatt, 2002; Ford *et al.*, 2004; Tews and Noe, 2019), and lowers boredom (Hudson, 2001) thereby boosting employee creativity (Poon Teng Fatt, 2002; Mulaomerovic *et al.*, 2019).

Possible benefits include improved commitment (Ford *et al.*, 2004; Fluegge-Woolf, 2014; Becker and Tews, 2016; Plester and Hutchison, 2016) and camaraderie (Ford *et al.*, 2004; Choi *et al.*, 2013) which in turn helps to improve staff retention (Abramis, 1990; Ford *et al.*, 2004; Yerkes, 2007) and makes the company a more attractive place to work (Owler *et al.*, 2010;

Tews *et al.*, 2012). All of which leads to increases productivity (Ford *et al.*, 2004; Pryor *et al.*, 2010; Fluegge-Woolf, 2014; Tang *et al.*, 2017). There is also increasing pressure on organisations to present themselves as fun places to work to attract high-quality recruits (Tews *et al.*, 2012), particularly for the Millennial generation that expects work to be fun (Warren and Fineman, 2007; Tews *et al.*, 2015; Maxwell and Broadbridge, 2017; Alatalo *et al.*, 2018; Michel *et al.*, 2019).

The overwhelming positive focus of these studies has been criticised (Petelczyc *et al.*, 2018), ignoring concerns that fun at work is coercive and distracting (Fleming, 2005b; Renee Baptiste, 2009). Management gurus and the popular management press have continued to present, primarily anecdotal, evidence of the benefits of fun at work (Ford *et al.*, 2003; Tews *et al.*, 2013; Fluegge-Woolf, 2014; Bilginoglu and Yozgat, 2017) when empirical evidence reveals mixed results (Bolton and Houlihan, 2009; Georganta and Montgomery, 2016; Plester and Hutchison, 2016).

Others have raised concerns, mainly in line with the PWE argument, that fun is a distraction, unprofessional, inappropriate or unproductive (Ford *et al.*, 2003; Karl *et al.*, 2005; Lamm and Meeks, 2009; Choi *et al.*, 2011; Patel and Desai, 2013; Plester and Hutchison, 2016; Bilginoglu and Yozgat, 2017). Suggestions that fun at work might be just another management fad pandering to management demands for quick and simple solutions to avoid engaging with complex issues (Bilginoglu and Yozgat, 2017) seem to be floundering as fun is now a valued management practice (Ford *et al.*, 2003; Bolton and Houlihan, 2009; Bilginoglu and Yozgat, 2017).

#### **6.4.3. Historical use of fun at work**

Encouraging employees to have fun is not, as it might at first seem from contemporary literature, a recent event (Hunter *et al.*, 2010). Veal (2004) argues that the PWE, even in its nascent form, was adopted primarily by the English middle class as a counterpoint to the ‘unvirtuous idleness’ of aristocrats and the poor, who worked hard when weather permitted,

but who preferred to spend their time playing hard. Fun, even as a distraction (Having-Fun), was found in fairs and markets, drinking, and being entertained. The excesses of the working class on a Sunday led to the establishment of the unofficial 'St Monday' holiday (p. 21). In a direct challenge to the evolving PWE, happiness was found outside of work; workers worked to live rather than living to work.

Responding to the absenteeism caused by excess drinking, but also to curb other perceived vices such as violent sports, employers sought to increase loyalty by providing sports and social clubs towards the end of the Industrial Revolution (Andersen and Pors, 2014; Vamplew, 2016). However, employers also destabilised their workers by ensuring that workers bought the products they were making, increasing the employer's wealth while keeping the workers poor: 'everyone but an idiot knows that the lower classes must be kept poor or they will never be industrious' (Arthur Young (1771) quoted in Vamplew, 2016, p. 341).

Vamplew (2004) argues that beginning with the rise of the landless labourer employers, there has been a time-lagged trade-off between rising income levels and increased leisure time. As wages rise, permanent consumption levels increase to absorb the wage rise. Access to new consumer goods was 'vital' to encourage the worker, in accord with the PWE, to work hard to attain a better standard of living. The less disposable income people have to spend on leisure, the more important it is to keep working.

Over the same period, there was a subtle shift in the theological advice worshippers were given. From the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, there was an increased belief that humans could control of their destiny and be happy in this life; as opposed to a vision of deferred happiness in heaven (McMahon, 2018). Workers, unchained from their fields or tasks, blessed by a guaranteed income, spent more time seeking fun and happiness; both became an object of desire, no longer the privilege of the higher classes. It was a happiness grounded in

consumption of alcohol, tobacco or other goods (Vamplew, 2004) which laid the foundations the consumer society where maximal consumption is spurred on by the need to sell.

From the beginnings of the industrial revolution, it seems there has been an ever-present attempt by employers to blur the boundaries between work and play, to increase productivity. Although Fleming and Spicer (2004) regard the blurring between consumption, work and leisure as a symptom of the modern workplace, it seems as if there has been a gradual blurring of our approach towards happiness. It is a deliberate blurring dictated by the middle-classes ideology of work being the source of happiness (Veenhoven, 2015). It is an evolving ethic of control; which demands blind obedience or informed acquiescence and total commitment to both the organisation and the job, where the employee must demonstrate a supportive attitude to the employer at all times (Baumann *et al.*, 2016, p. 378). The employer not only demands an employee's emotional labour of the employee but the whole person.

#### **6.4.4. Emotional Labour**

The emerging theory of automatonising represents the essential nature of the PWE, and its latter-day guises, the dehumanising of the workplace:

*The more bureaucracy is dehumanised, the more completely it succeeds in eliminating from official business love, hatred and all purely personal, irrational and emotional elements which escape calculation. (Weber, 2009, p. 216)*

Ostensibly, the call to leave emotions at the factory gate seems to have been rejected in the modern era. Employees are encouraged to express all that is different about them (Spicer and Fleming, 2016), creating an 'enchanted workplace' (Gee and Lankshear, 1995) where everyone one is free from 'cumbersome rules, regulations and red tape' (Terry, 2005, p. 431) to be more motivated and productive (Walker, 2011). Where scientific management emphasised rules and order, this—superficially—new approach of 'liberation management' aims 'to free agencies and their employees from the oppressive rules and oversight embedded' (Light, 2006, p. 7). It is



a call to embrace openness and flexibility while rejecting bureaucratic closure (Cock and Böhm, 2007). All that is required is a commitment from everyone in the organisation to deliver improvements in productivity (*ibid.*).

In liberation management, it does appear that we have reached a point when Weber's ethic has been replaced with a progressive, humanising approach (Land and Taylor, 2011, p. 36). Some have argued that with the employers' emphasis on developing 'fun' activities, we have reached the era of the play ethic (Kane, 2004; Leeder, 2014). However, others have suggested that we have merely embarked on a different form of employee control: normative control (Fleming and Sturdy, 2011).

Hancock and Tyler (2004) surveyed the early writings of influential liberation management writers and revealed less of a radical shift away from Weber's ethics than initially appears. They identified a strong emphasis on, for example, commitment, control, efficiency, effectiveness, evaluation, flexibility, goals, measurement, performance, planning, self-management. Liberation management demands commitment as the price of entry to the organisation and an acceptance that the worker will become an entrepreneur in their own right (McKinlay and Pezet, 2018). Cederström and Fleming (2012) indicate that the price for the employee is even higher, that emotions can be quantified and provide a source of value for organisations; requiring employees to manage their own emotions and personalities for the benefit of the company.

Cederström and Fleming argue that whereas in previous years it was good enough to 'fake' emotions, now employees must 'cultivate the unruly and natural sides of ourselves to get ahead, and we should never hesitate bringing these to work' (p. 37). It is a demand that requires audiencing, as discussed in the previous chapter; giving the impression to colleagues, customers and managers that they are committed to their work and their employer (Ivanova

and Scheve, 2019). It is a development of Arlie Hochschild's theory of emotional labour (Hochschild, 1979; 2003).

Hochschild is often credited as the inspiration for the field of the sociology of emotions; emotional labour ('service with a smile'); however, her work has a rich ancestry in the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory, and particularly the work of Erich Fromm (Fleming, 2005a; McLaughlin, 2017). She defines emotional labour as 'labour that requires one to induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others' (Hochschild, 2003, p. 7). Employees are expected to project a positive image of themselves **and** their employer, demonstrating enthusiasm and commitment (Hines and Matteson, 2017); even if they do not feel or believe it themselves. The required emotional display is non-negotiable if the person wishes to remain employed (Ashman and Gibson, 2010). These feeling rules are imposed on the employee, not by choice but through the dictates of the company manuals, with the sole purpose of keeping the customer happy.

Hochschild (2003) differentiates between two strategies to regulate emotions: surface acting and deep acting. Surface acting requires the employee to show, through their behaviours, the expected emotions, either by acting or hiding what they truly feel (Ashforth and Humphrey, 1993). Deep acting reflects an attempt to modify their genuine feelings to engender empathy and understand the customer, to present a more genuine face to the customer (Ashforth and Humphrey, 1993). The impact of both strategies on employee health and well-being is under-researched (Goodwin *et al.*, 2011), and has led to a difference of opinion among researchers (Glomb and Tews, 2004). A notable impact of emotional labour has been emotional dissonance and job dissatisfaction (Hochschild, 1983; Morris and Feldman, 1996; Flam, 2002; Glomb and Tews, 2004). This dissonance arises because of the disjuncture between the self-as-presented and the self-as-experienced. Employees risk feeling insincere, lacking real feeling or

authenticity; in short, they begin acting as ‘an emotional robot’ (Gorman, 2000, p. 153) treating themselves and their customers as objects (Zammuner and Galli, 2005).

There has been a uniformity among researchers that surface acting is more harmful to the wellbeing of employees (Hülshager and Schewe, 2011; Bagdasarov and Connelly, 2013), while deep acting is more beneficial to both the organisation and employee, leading to increased job satisfaction and productivity (Ashforth and Humphrey, 1993; Zapf, 2002; Hülshager and Schewe, 2011; Bagdasarov and Connelly, 2013). However, longitudinal studies suggest that in the long run, deep acting may be harmful, while surface acting may be more beneficial to both the employee and the organisation (Goodwin *et al.*, 2011).

Cederström and Fleming (2012) among others (see, for example, (Miller *et al.*, 2007; Grant *et al.*, 2009) highlight the impact of liberation management on the emotional labour debate. The authors acknowledge a subtle change in the debate. Acting is no longer acceptable; the employee must ‘become’ their emotions, embracing the required feelings wholeheartedly, or risk being ‘managed out’ (Dale, 2012, p. 17). Not only must the employee surrender, or even extinguish, their inner life to the employer but any failures are not due to systemic problems in the organisation but the employees ‘shortcomings, [...] inadequate application, poor work ethic’ (Collignon, 2019, p. 93). It is a form of neo-normative control (Costas and Fleming, 2009).

### **(Neo)Normative control**

Although Hochschild (1983) alluded to normative control in her Afterword, referencing Kunda’s comments on the Japanese use of guilt and shame to evoke emotional labour (p. 201), it is not a theme she developed further. Kunda defined the concept of normative control as:

*the attempt to elicit and direct the required efforts of members by controlling the underlying experiences, thoughts, and feelings that guide their actions...it is the*

*employee's self—that ineffable source of subjective experience— that is claimed in the name of corporate interest.* (Kunda, 2009, p. 11)

Where normative control exists, workers respond to emotional and physical demands, not because of the threat of reward or sanction but because the ideals of the company are absorbed into the employees' private interiority (Fleming and Spicer, 2003, pp. 168–169).

Costas and Fleming (2009) argue that we have moved beyond Kunda's understanding of normative control to an era of neo-normative control within a new spirit of capitalism.

Blurring the distinction between work and home transforms living labour into objectified labour. Living labour is the 'creative source' that produces all value, including the surplus value that valorises capital; without living labour, capital cannot valorise itself (Dussel and Gomez, 2001). In appropriating the person's whole life (work and non-work life), the totality (the whole self) of the employee has been subsumed (consumed?) by capital to maximise surplus value.

Neo-normative control exists 'when employees are invited to display "who they are" by revoking certain extra-employment themes associated with fun, consumption, alternative lifestyles, ethical values...' (Costas and Fleming, 2009, p. 373). In such circumstances, language itself changes; employees become consumers discarding images of hierarchal and dependant relationships to the centrality of consumption in modern society, emphasising autonomy, pleasure, self-fulfilment, desire, freedom and choice (Dale, 2012, p. 17). We are now living and working in an era where 'the employee's "real" self behind the cynicism' is the desired resource (Costas and Fleming, 2009, p. 373).

Where control was used to manage employee behaviour within defined limits, neo-normative control fulfils a totalising function; highlighting diversity in the organisation and exploiting those idiosyncrasies as a resource (Holmqvist and Maravelias, 2018, p. 268). Peticca-Harris *et al.* (2015, p. 575) offer the example of video game makers, who love their job (idiosyncrasy) but

are exploited through the use of deadlines and the precarious nature of their work (neo-normative control mechanisms) impacting career prospects and deadlines (idiosyncrasies).

Neo-normative control does fulfil a function for both parties. It provides a space in which the employee can express their frustration or concerns within constraints. It is illusory to think that neo-normative control exists outside of other control mechanisms; no organisation will accept the complete rejection of its values and norms from an employee while allowing them to remain. We should not forget that neo-normative control is a gift from the employer to the employee that can be quickly recalled (Walker, 2011). It is in this context that Having-Fun surfaces; employers encouraging employees to have fun as a form of distraction or to vent frustration.

In the liberation management era, supported by neo-normative controls, the employee becomes responsible for their idiosyncrasies and their happiness. Employees must become motivated, energised and self-managing (Bolton and Houlihan, 2009, p. 562). However, many workplaces have become nothing more than 'containers for work processes' (Baldry and Hallier, 2010, p. 151); very different from the image of 'progressively individual, casual, comfortable or even entertaining' workspaces of some higher technology companies like Google (Dzidowski, 2016, p. 143).

So far, the argument has been made that fun (as *fon*) has had a chequered history in the workplace. For much of the last century, fun was rejected by most organisations with the belief that fun and work were not compatible. However, in the 1980s that emphasis changed, to harness the power of fun for the benefit of the organisation. The previous chapter contributed to this debate by extending the discussion to explain how *fon* is used by employees to resist the increasing influence of the PWE, liberation management, normative control and attempts at imposing the rule of total work.

In the next section, attention turns to the alternative behaviour demonstrated by the Participants to this current study, their embrace of *wonne* root of fun, as a way of promoting their personal and professional development and avoiding the conflict inherent using *fon* as a form of resistance.

## **6.5. Avoiding the ‘total work’ culture**

The move towards total work has, unsurprisingly, not been universally accepted. Two early dissenters were the psychoanalyst Erich Fromm (1900-1980) and philosopher Josef Pieper (1904-1997), whose ideas have undergone a revival in recent years (Aijian, 2017; McLaughlin, 2017; Warne, 2018; Funk, 2019). Fromm, the Marxist, and Pieper, the Catholic, arrive at the same point using different language. Both authors expressed concern with the ongoing march towards a life of total work and discussed what it means to be a happy-productive worker. Ultimately, what both men sought to explore is what it means to be a human in a society that seeks to dehumanise us.

Where the previous sections helped place Having-Fun in the context of the dominant literature addressing fun at work, the following sections explore how the concerns and ideas of both Fromm and Pieper resonate with the subversive agenda of Glaser, and contribute to the emerging theory of Being-Fun. This part begins with Erich Fromm, primarily because of his relevance to the automatonising process before exploring, with Pieper, the importance of fun, happiness, and importance of *becoming*.

### **6.5.1. Erich Fromm and Automatonising**

Erich Fromm died in 1980, two years before Deal and Kennedy (1982) and their colleagues began to advocate the use of fun at work. Fromm would not have been surprised by the subversion of fun, from being a personal experience into an objective and measurable productivity tool; he may even have pointed out that this (mis)use of fun was precisely the concern he raised in 1968:

*A spectre is stalking in our midst ... a completely mechanized society, devoted to maximal material output and consumption, directed by computers; and in this social process, man himself (sic) is being transformed into a part of the total machine, well-fed and entertained, yet passive, unalive, and with little feeling.* (Fromm, 1968, p. 1)

Fromm perceived a risk to humanity, not from emerging technology *per se*, but from the danger of being subsumed by, and becoming dependent upon, that technology (McCorry, 2015). It was a warning against reducing humans to the ‘state of insignificant cogs serving vast economic machines’ (Fromm, 1942, pp. 108–109) whose ‘only purpose ... [is] to produce and consume more and more’ (Fromm, 1968, p. 13).

Fromm, who fled Germany in the early years of the Nazi government, struggled to understand the appeal of authoritarian overlords, wherever they might be found—nationally, in workplaces or at home—or why people embraced self-destructive behaviours (Charleton, 2012). He warned that those behaviours which are positive for an organisation might be destructive for the human person; the ultimate expression of this concern is the risk of the human person being reduced to the state of a ‘slave’ or an ‘automaton’ (Fromm, 1964, p. 53).

Fromm’s actual concern, underpinning his complete works, is revealed in a simple but provocative question: ‘must individuals be passive and dependant in order to have a strong and well-functioning organisation?’ (Fromm, 1968, p. 14). Although reflecting on the central issue of individual freedom, it is a question that incorporates four dominant eudaimonic themes: autonomy, competence, relatedness, and self-esteem. Wolfgang Weber (2019, pp. 85–88) suggests that how organisations promote or limit these needs reflects the emphasis placed upon:

- *intrinsic aspirations* which tend towards meeting Fromm’s needs and resulting in increased personal wellbeing, better social relationships, and greater awareness of personal responsibility, or

- *extrinsic aspirations*, the emphasising of material and financial rewards, social recognition lead to increased conflicts at a:
  - personal level: increased anxiety and depression, negative self-appraisal, and compulsive buying habits
  - group level: alongside levels of anti-social activities and conflict alongside inferior quality relationships in workplaces

The PWE, with its explicit rejection of eudaimonia, emphasises the importance of extrinsic aspirations. The intrinsic aspiration, by contrast, is aligned to the productive orientation (productiveness); it is a way of re-establishing a relationship with the world and society (Lorenzen, 2019) and experiencing our unique individuality as a human person, and social being (Dietrich *et al.*, 2017, p. 5). Productiveness, as opposed to productivity, refers to our ability as human persons, to liberate ourselves and use our powers to realise our potential (Fromm, 1966, p. v).

Fromm's emphasis on liberating the human person is grounded in his admiration for Karl Marx, not necessarily as a political activist but as an author who calls for workers to change their relationship with their employers and seize the opportunity to realise their potential. Considering the previous discussions, one might be able to assume that Fromm would have asked whether fun is being used to reinforce the demand for employee passivity and dependence; indeed, has fun become the modern opium of the worker? Moreover, if so, how can workers regain their freedom?

### **6.5.2. Marx on fun**

In 1844, Karl Marx set out the foundations of his philosophical thought in *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, and intriguingly, seems to have recognised the relationship between fun and *wonne*. Dismissing fun as we generally understand it — those moments of amusement



and enjoyment — by advocating a lifelong process of personal and intellectual growth through which we develop and fulfil our potential as human beings.

Fun and personal growth are the unifying concepts that permeate every aspect of this thesis. However, as we have seen fun is a confusing word to explain. Marx seems to be uneasy with the way that the object we wish to get fun from might take over our lives, becoming an addiction, as it moves from a desire to a need. In that movement, we lose control; losing autonomy and surrendering our independence to another who can provide the objects that hold out the offer of fun. As we surrender our autonomy, we too become an object to be used to satisfy the needs of another; compelled to do their will. Beneath the anti-capitalist rhetoric, Marx was ultimately rejecting any form of control that objectified the human person (Fromm, 1966).

In the *Manuscripts*, Marx confronts those shackles that constrain our freedom; the shackles that bind us to an endless loop of consumption. It seems that this endless loop of consumption is a form of escapism; a way to run away from the drudgery of the daily grind of work; getting drunk on Friday night, sitting out in front of the TV with the latest must-see box-set, saving up (or paying off the debt) for that must-have white plastic gadget or exotic holiday. It is a form of addiction to an artificially created need. It is a need regulated by organisations of varying shapes and sizes from advertisers, to our employers, religions or even families. It is nothing less than the deliberate manufacture of dependency.

Marx juxtaposes this consumption-led lifestyle with one that is productive. A productiveness where the labourer is autonomous, creative, willing to think for themselves; it is the rejection of all those idols or 'vested fictions' (Glaser, 1998, pp. 247–250). Marx does not deny the need for rational authority, for example, the need for a parent to stop a child hurting themselves, but instead challenges the use of irrational authority which removes the enjoyment that should be found in work (Marx, 1867).

Marx points to a future to be avoided because of his aim to homogenise society. It was a shock to recognise that those accusations levelled against Marx were the same complaints emerging from employees about their employers (see, for example, Davies and Bansel, 2010; Hansen, 2013; Goh, 2017). Marx was worried by the automation of job roles; this was not primarily a concern about the impact of technological advances, but rather the way the human person was becoming the reduced to the state of a non-sentient, robotic, individual. Taylor (2013), for example, highlights the idea that approaches to performance management are used to embed a 'claustrophobically monitored experience of top-down target-driven' experience of work (p. 80). An experience in which positive behaviours are equated to compliance with managerial demands. Previously skilled roles are being reduced to processes or procedures to be followed by contract labour that can be brought into a company and begin work with minimum training, merely following the process.

Marx's political agenda may have flaws; however, this thesis, is not interested in the broader political (with a 'P') aspects; they did not emerge during the study. What did emerge was that employees want to enjoy their jobs; they see fun as an essential aspect of their job. The job may entail working in a factory, or teaching, nursing, policing or even working as a researcher, but few people go to work to be unhappy and unfulfilled.

Little attention has been given to Marx's views on leisure and play. Hinman (1978) suggests that in Marx's writing, lie the foundations of a critical theory relating to play and leisure. Hinman argues that Marx appreciated that freedom, meaningfulness, and creativity are missing from the workplace; and the response is to find them in an alternative world of play and leisure (p. 199). However, Hinman offers support for the emerging theories of Having-Fun and Being-Fun contending that attempts to find meaningfulness, creativity and freedom will only generate what he describes as 'alienated leisure' if we keep work and play separate. He suggests 'alienated' because it reflects an escape, distracts from what is happening in the

workplace and reinforces the automatonising process. The difficulty here is that both play and work are regarded as separate objects. Hinman's quest is to find a way of unifying work and leisure in a positive way.

The answer appears in Marx's view of genuine production work as being 'a free manifestation of life and enjoyment of life' so we might begin to work to live (Marx, 1986, pp. 34–35). In this quote, Marx is concerned with unalienated work (productiveness); he regards it as a way of creating a reciprocal relationship with others:

*In the individual expression of my life, I would have directly created your expression of your life, and therefore in my individual activity, I would directly confirm and realise my true nature, my human nature, my communal nature.*

Where Marx uses play, it is arguable that he is talking about fun (*wonne*) for 'play' should provide freedom, conscious activity, create relationships, be transformative, and affirm the human activity (Hinman, 1978, p. 208). Fundamentally, these elements will counter the dark side of self-fulfilment and self-actualisation by challenging the narrowness of self-interest that is central to the Having-Fun approach to life.

At work, if the employee can create a connection between the product/service they are producing/delivering and their own need for satisfaction and contribution, the happy-productive worker emerges. Lorenzen (2019), using the example of a production line worker, demonstrates that even in this most Fordist of environments, employees can develop a productive orientation to work. Marx's key elements are all in place; employees see the whole production line and feel part of something bigger than their job (meaningfulness); they know what they are doing their job for (conscious activity). The employees also have pride in their work, in their team (relationships), in themselves and the products they make. Choosing to work with the team proactively (freedom), the employee knows that they can make a

difference to the speed at which the car is built (transformative). In such an environment, Lorenzen suggests, employees can find both fun and happiness.

The focus so far has been to understand how automatonising and fun have been co-opted to foster the productive worker, in the following section attention, will move to focus on happiness at work.

## **6.6. Happiness at work**

So far, in this chapter, I have explored the concept of fun, and suggested that the dominant approach was not to try and define fun but instead, explain its actions, benefits and uses. In adopting this approach, they reduce the term fun to an insubstantial device. Happiness has also suffered this same reductive approach. Happiness, like fun, is difficult to define; but once again a brief return to the roots of happiness helps place Being-Fun and Having-Fun in context. It is not the purpose of this section to explore the fullness of the subject but rather, as per the aims of a CGT literature review, seek to integrate what is known into the emerging theories.

Happiness and fun, employees have been told, is in their grasp—if they are willing to grasp it (Bolton and Houlihan, 2009, p. 561). For employers embracing the fun at work agenda, fun will lead to ‘motivated, energised, and self-managing citizens ... “fun” will not only create happiness but also energy performance and commitment’ (*ibid.*). Ford *et al.* (2003) assert that activities provoking a sense of happiness, pleasantness and wellbeing make work fun (p. 22). Later the same authors suggest that a fun culture is characterised by ‘regular experience of laughter, joy happiness, surprise, jollity, enjoyment, spontaneity, or light-heartedness’ (Ford *et al.*, 2004, p. 119). Meanwhile, others argue that developing positive working environments, and promoting the wellbeing of employees, including fun as a significant strand of activity, provides a competitive advantage (Wright and Cropanzano, 2004; Luthans and Youssef, 2007).

## **Happiness and wellbeing**

Renee Baptiste (2009) highlights a dependency that is presented by many of the definitions of fun at work discussed earlier, that they rely on external experiences to generate feelings of happiness and wellbeing. It is Cropanzano and Wright (2000; 2001; 2004; 2007) who are credited with encouraging researchers to accept that happy-productive workers are more interested in wellbeing than job satisfaction. For them, the pursuit of happiness is grounded in eudaimonia (Wright and Cropanzano, 2004, p. 346). However, they seem to mistake the meaning of eudaimonia, which far from referring to our feeling good, signifies the source of happiness in living a virtuous and noble life (Pieper, 1998; Cederström and Grassman, 2010). Happiness is not something we receive, but rather it requires action, an orientation towards an ultimate aim of contemplation (Pieper, 1998, p. 18) or mindfulness (Bush, 2011).

Many writers, follow Cropanzano and Wright by conflating well-being and happiness in support of their arguments for fun (see, for example, Warren and Fineman, 2007; Jenkins and Delbridge, 2014; Čančer and Šarotar Žižek, 2015; Alatalo *et al.*, 2018; Oowler and Morrison, 2019; Tews *et al.*, 2019). They seemingly draw on Kant's exhortation to think freely.<sup>32</sup> For example, the assertion that laughter is necessary for our health and happiness (Kant, 1987, pp. 203–207). Kant argues that being able to see the funny side of things helps us cope with those things that we cannot control, and therefore helps us live a happier and healthier life (Butler *et al.*, 2015, p. 499).

Even if we ignore the caveat present in the literature emphasising the links between happiness, wellbeing and the mantra of 'working hard' (Renee Baptiste, 2009), we must take care not to ignore Kant's modification of what he meant by play. It is true, Kant suggested that play meant being free of mental constraints (Goggin, 2011). However, Kant was not concerned

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<sup>32</sup> Using Kant in these arguments on fun is fraught with danger, given our current understanding of fun only emerged after his death; however, using words that approximate our understanding of fun, we can make some observations.

with what we understand as play but rather the freedom to embrace nonconceptual thought; for Kant philosophy was play/fun/*wonne*. Nietzsche (1911) is also dismissive of attempts to force happiness (p. 64); nevertheless, he recognises the power of fun lies in its emergence through thought: 'there is a depth of happiness in which the most painful and gloomy parts do not act as antithesis to the rest, but are produced and required as necessary shades of colour in such an overflow of light' (p. 102). He continues to suggest that happiness reflects a 'tempestuous outburst of freedom, of absoluteness, of power and divinity' (*ibid.*). Pieper, drawing on St Thomas Aquinas, also argues that we cannot make ourselves happy; happiness is a gift (Pieper, 1998, p. 26).

The happiness Nietzsche, Kant and Pieper propose is not something that simply happens to us, that we can chase after, but something that emerges from deep within us when we provide a fertile ground for it to emerge. Happiness viewed from this perspective is the realisation of freedom and authenticity and should be juxtaposed with the current dominance of subjective happiness; which, as suggested earlier in this chapter, 'disguise[s] inauthenticity or oppression' (Duncan, 2014, p. 91).

### **Work and human dignity**

Where Weber saw human dignity as dependant on work, Pieper rejects such a proposal outright. Human dignity is violated when we limit ourselves to the activity of work, irrespective of the source of this limitation, be it political repression or economic exploitation, or our unwillingness to cultivate leisure (Hebert, 2013, p. 147). Where Weber and the advocates of liberation management seem to wish to increase the size and scope of the proletariat, Pieper, in common with Glaser and Strauss in *Discovery*, seeks to abolish the proletariat. The proletariat in this case meaning anyone 'fettered to the process of work [which limits] the limitation of existence and activity to the sphere of the *artes serviles*' (Pieper, 2009, p. 57).

While Glaser's seeks to reduce the proletarianisation of students, Pieper's target is wider society. Pieper wants nothing less than the abolition of the contrast between different groups; it is an ethical programme that refuses to categorise people into social or intellectual groups, for example, master-slave, worker-educated. It does not matter whether people are construction site labourers or knowledge workers, prostitutes or academics, the material condition in which they work is not as important as how they work (Breclaw, 1993). What concerned Glaser and Pieper, and it must be added Lonergan and Simone de Beauvoir (MacLaughlin, 2012, p. 299), is how people drift into doing nothing deliberately (today we might say 'mindfully') lacking a reflective awareness of their work and their lives.

Glaser's preferred method of engineering social change is to increase the social value of students, encouraging them to develop analytical skills and creativity, gently challenging vested fictions. Pieper's approach was similar, in that he aimed to cultivate the inner life of workers, but this needed to be supported by public policies (Hebert, 2013).

Pieper did not accept that it is possible to combat the 'total work' worldview from within that view, accepting its basic principles and pointing out the ultimate conclusion to people, hoping they would change direction. It is a point addressed by Rojek (2012), who argues that people:

*are not thinking in terms of massive systems transformation which will bring together the dispossessed and the decomposed into one united front and change everything; they are much more interested in engaging with the state and the corporation to try and produce rational solutions to whatever they are addressing. (p. 13)*

It seems as if Glaser and Pieper were embarked upon an attempt to make a 'massive systems transformation' one step at a time: challenging the foundations of institutions and approaches to life at a personal level. Both Glaser and Pieper share the same aim of 'deproletarianising' which means 'enlarging the scope of life beyond the confines of merely useful servile work and

widening the sphere of servile work to the advantage of the liberal arts' *ibid.* p. 59). To move to the liberal arts, *artes liberalis*, means to escape the automatonising process.

For both Glaser, developing his elite corps of analysts (Gynnild, 2011) or for Pieper, the concept of the *artes liberalis* needs extending. The revised concept should focus on developing 'every human action, even the humblest servile work' (Pieper, 2009, p. 62). It is a process that Kaplan (1997) argues should 'encourage a confrontation with the self and the world as wholes' (p. 441) which is achieved by:

*Striving to develop lifelong habits of communication and community, [establishing] patterns of involvement and interaction with the self, with others, with political and social action, and with the universe of natural and created things. **Individual happiness has more to do with these disciplines than it does with technique or job-related skills.*** (*ibid.* my emphasis)

Kaplan is asking people to learn the art of encountering: embracing the search for reality (Warne, 2018) by challenging their preconceptions and vested fictions. It is a view that the human person should privilege human flourishing over skills-based training (Warne, 2018); productiveness over productivity. It not a rejection of the servile arts but rather using the liberal arts (in its expanded sense) to inform and support the servile arts (Rehman, 2020).

Kaplan also alludes to a broader discussion that 'happiness without joy is unthinkable, but joy and happiness are different' (Pieper, 1998, p. 43). If as has been suggested fun is grounded in the German word *wonne*, which means joy, we have a connection between happiness and fun, as *wonne*; a connection that also links with the argument made earlier that fun (not happiness) is a fundamental human need (Glasser, 1994).



### Happiness is a journey

Although Pieper uses theological language, his thoughts are relatively easy to move from the transcendent to the immanent realm, into our daily lives. He discusses the process of our journey toward eternal happiness describing our condition on the journey as 'being on the way'; *status viatoris* to be contrasted with one who has arrived '*status comprehensoris*' (Pieper, 1997, p. 1). It is a language that not only reflects the process of *becoming* so beloved of Glaser, Lonergan and Freire but also reflects the approach necessary to understand Being-Fun. To live as *status viatoris* is to 'live conscious of [our] incompleteness and [our] status as travellers, seekers, searchers pilgrims' (Webb, 2010, p. 329).

The process of becoming has both a positive and negative aspect; the absence of fulfilment, and the orientation towards fulfilment (Wargo, 2018, p. 68). The negative aspect is the risk that we will return to nothing, experiencing the emptiness of an absence of fulfilment. In this study, this is the gap that Having-Fun seeks to fill; providing us with instant gratification, an instant feeling of being replete and yet a subsequent emptiness that needs refilling. It is a false fulfilment, which leads to alienation and despair when we realise that Having-Fun, in or out of work, is an illusion.

Being-Fun, on the other hand, reflects the orientation towards fulfilment as an orientation towards completeness, meeting others in an encounter, without preconceptions. Webb (2010) suggests that this is the foundation of our being *educable*; motivated to explore, probe, question and learn. A space for everyone, not just academics to inhabit (Sylvester, 2013), it is a space of productiveness that disrupts productivity, undermines predetermined outcomes, questions the success expected of us by the Disembodied Other. Being-Fun, creates eccentrics, people who challenge the concept of total work, who do not fit into imposed workday routines, who look at the world differently (Steel, 2012, p. 51).

## 6.7. Chapter summary

The chapter began with a review of the purpose of existing literature in a CGT study. Where traditional research methods highlight gaps in our knowledge, the CGT review seeks to embrace fun as the analyst connects the emerging theory with the literature.

As pointed out, both Glaser and Strauss felt that research should be fun, but as with many definitions of fun at work, there is little explanation of the concept of fun itself. By differentiating between the two potential roots of fun, it has been demonstrated that the root of fun determines the approaches and uses of fun in work.

Fun, as *fon*, reflects an approach that is ultimately inauthentic and oppressive. It is used as a distractive device that furthers the Puritanical aim of enfolding employees in an era of total work. It is ultimately a conflict generating position as employees themselves fail to find happiness in the managed and artificial fun activities on offer to distract them from increasingly servile work.

By contrast, a separate body of literature supports the alternative root of fun found in *wonne* or joy. It is an expression of human growth and flourishing, where people have jobs and roles in which they feel fulfilled, working to benefit the wider community. It is a path to encouraging the emergence of effective, rather than efficient, happy-productive employees. At a theoretical level, this second root of fun supports the praxis of Being-Fun, which will be considered in the next chapter.

## 7. Having-Fun/Being-Fun

**Summary:** The flow of the dissertation has followed the critical realist and CGT process of knowledge development; a gradual movement from experience (common-sense/data), through understanding (scientific inquiry/theory) and judgment (interiority/reflection). In this chapter, the focus is on the final element of the process, developing ethically based action.

### 7.1. Introduction

In previous chapters, attention has been drawn to two distinct approaches to fun at work; Having-Fun and Being-Fun. The core argument presented has been that Having-Fun is used by both employers and employees to provide short-term distraction and gratification, a fleeting illusion of happiness.

Having-Fun is a form of entertainment, where entertainment is 'a form of flattery, extremely refined perhaps, yet nevertheless, courting favour to win success' (Pieper, 1992, p. 28). Fun becomes an object to be used, and abused, as a way of increasing productivity (by employers) or to overcome those demands for increased productivity and total work and the automatonising process (by employees). Being-Fun helps escapes the lure of Having-Fun and the conflict it generates. However, Being-Fun and Having-Fun are not independent of each other; they exist in tension. It is easy to move from Being-Fun to Having-Fun, but equally possible, albeit more complicated, to move from Having-Fun to Being-Fun.

Being-Fun reflects a conception of what it means to be a happy-productive employee but also presents a philosophy of life and how to live in joy. It reflects the advice that understanding must be theory must be supported by practical action (Lonergan, 1973; Luhmann, 1995; Glaser, 1998; Pieper, 2009). This chapter aims to outline what it means to embrace Being-Fun.

In the first part of the chapter, a distinction will be made between Having-Fun, Having-Fun-Being-Professional and Being-Fun, highlighting the tension and ease with which people can transition between the two orientations. Being-Fun as a process means to develop as a human

being, emotionally, intellectually, and professionally while embracing abstract wonderment. To embrace Being-Fun is to open ourselves up to a risk an encounter the unknown. By genuinely encountering the Other, we must move away from our desires of power and control and our longing certainty.

Being-Fun requires us to approach the world in wonderment, practising the arts of presencing and contemplation to help us to let go of our preconceptions and desires to experience the world around us. It is a liberating process that challenges the vested fictions that remain unchallenged, enabling us to develop authentic, ethical relationships with those around us.

## **7.2. Having-Fun is a wicked problem**

Antonyms for fun include boredom, unpleasant and unhappy; their relationship to the weaponising of fun through the Automatonising process has been suggested in previous chapters. However, approaching fun this way pushes us towards conflict, encouraging us to do all we can to avoid boredom and unhappiness, as if they were intrinsically wrong. It is part of the western philosophical tradition to create endless loops of thesis-antithesis conflicts; subject/object, good/bad, theism/atheism, without recognising that boundaries between concepts are not that clear.

Having-Fun at work is a wicked problem. Wicked problems are characterised by being unique, multi-perspective events. They are problems in which there is no right answer; each stakeholder can provide a strong justification for their position. Furthermore, the problem is often nested within other problems (Rittel and Webber, 1973). The various dimensions of fun discussed earlier suggest that each person has a different understanding of what constitutes fun. A constructive source of fun for one person may result in an undesirable impact on someone else: with each person defending their use and understanding of fun.

The literature in the previous chapter suggested that fun is used as an experiential object that exists on a continuum (Pryor *et al.*, 2010). Inside work, fun becomes an object defined and

controlled by employers. As an object, fun has been used to create a need from a desire; we must have fun, or we suffer boredom or worse unhappiness. The necessity for fun has permeated the workplace; if the literature discussed in the previous chapter is correct (p. 192), not only must employers ensure work is fun for millennials, but they must also match the expectation of potential recruits. However, the data analysis in this study suggested the presented image is false and does not match the treatment received by people in the workplace.

Creating a fun workplace is a complicated task. SouthWest Airlines manage to make it work because they can convey the message that they value their employees (Baldonado, 2015). Having-Fun is just one aspect of SouthWest's broader approach to service, with a clear customer to focus attention on; the passenger, as opposed to a Disembodied Other. Where employees are not valued, they are more likely to find ways in which to relive that boredom by deploying Having-Fun as a weapon against the employer and those colleagues who annoy them.

Writing up this thesis, I encountered an uncited article boldly declaring in its title that *Housework can be fun* (Humeston, 1940). Caroline Humeston had been a student paying her college fees working in domestic service. Her main argument was that domestic service is fun when the role is meaningful to the servant, and they can develop personally and professionally. Her argument reflects a different approach to the subjective happiness emphasis found in a simple Google search on the word 'fun'<sup>33</sup> which suggests housework is meaningless and should be completed when distracted. The Google search implies that housework is servile work, which holds no meaning or purpose beyond its necessity.

Initially, Humeston's understanding of fun appears to be the same as that for Being-Fun. She characterises fun by emphasising the need for emotional satisfaction, personal growth,

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<sup>33</sup> Google search on using the expression "housework can be fun" dated 10/01/2019.

intuitive and intelligence building, and finding value in work. Humeston supports Hinman (1978) and Lorenzen (2019) suggesting happy-productive employees require; freedom, conscious activity, genuine relationships, their work to be transformative, and affirmation.

While Humeston does not explicitly mention the concept of social value, implicitly, her argument points to the social value of a domestic servant through the work she did in the house and helping the children in her care. Furthermore, she argues that the worth of the role should not be defined by society but by the person fulfilling the role. Every job is essential, argues Humeston, but people are more important than the job and should be treated with respect; she also adds that the respect a person has for their job is a mark of the respect they have for themselves. However, Humeston adds a further dimension to the discussion alluding to living a life of service but not servility. It is service based upon the needs of others, helping to make a difference to other people's lives without dominating them, developing an ethical relationship with others

The point of departure between Humeston and Being-Fun arises from Humeston's expression of fun as an object to be sought, and once found never lost. Humeston does not see fun as a process, a way of *being* in the world.

### **7.2.1. The Importance of being valued**

As mentioned earlier, the importance of being valued as a human being was vital to the Participants. For example, although a CGT study should not pay too much attention to the frequency of a term (Glaser, 1992), Dominic used the word *fun* 28 times throughout his interview. His use of the term reflected the Having-Fun orientation, referring to experiences of laughter, jokes, social activities. As the data analysis progressed, more instances of fun surfaced. It was not that the data incidents themselves seemed to be fun, but the stories told of the positive and harmful use of fun. Descriptions of petty acts of vengeance, challenging

managers and leaving work early, were contrasted with the way humour was used, or people found different ways of having fun in work.

Near the end of his interview, however, Dominic was asked:

Damian:       What does 'fun' mean?

Dominic:       *Having the opportunity to be yourself.*

Dominic's definition of fun was in a Luhmannian sense, irritating, it demanded attention, understanding and action; it reflected the importance of 'discovery power of staying open' (Holton, 2017, p. 46).

Dominic's reply raised a critical question. If fun means being yourself, what does it mean to be yourself in work? The answer was not an expression of individuality or diversity, as discussed in the previous chapter; it seemed more existential than that. In his demand to be valued as a person, Dominic inadvertently highlighted the contradiction between the demands of Weber's work ethic for conformance and adaptation and the desires of the employee. For Dominic, fun meant being yourself, including being true to what he considered to be professional, even if that conflicted with the demands of his managers. It was a theme that emerged across the Participants; the conflict between the demands of managers and what the employee felt to be intuitively correct. It seems to be an adaption of Hochschild's emotional labour theory; that employees are willing to play along with the demand unless their core values are shaken when their self-respect is fundamentally challenged.

By contrast, an employee's sense of value can be found in the validation of others. The anonymity of work offered Louise the space to be herself. Louise experienced fun in the freedom she found serving customers in the shop:

*the fact that I know this is a stranger and I'm never going to see this person again, it doesn't really matter, it does matter what I say, but it doesn't really matter what they*

*think of me because I'm in the middle of a crowd like no-one, so I can be as confident and as I want to be. But when it's someone I know I'm going to see again I'm a bit more cautious about what I say.*

Louise lacks confidence, however, being nameless to customers, she feels empowered to let her natural, confident self out, but she does add:

*you know, you have to give a good impression; you have to be confident in what you're selling to a person, and you have to be polite, and you're like the face of the company. So, you have to do it.*

The demand from her employer to make a good impression on customers is problematic for Louise. She enjoys the anonymity of being a shop assistant; being unknown to the customer provides her with an opportunity to be less guarded than she would be with people she knows. In being less guarded, she appears to be more confident and open with customers, which they appreciate and return to the shop. As the number of returning customers is one of Louise's performance measures, the more customers return, the more she is rewarded, and the more valued she feels by her employer. However, as Louise loses her anonymity with returning customers, her shyness returns as she feels the pressure to perform and begins to fear the loss of recognition and validation by her employer.

One of the difficulties for Louise was that her sense of being relied upon her manager and colleagues as external authority figures providing validation. However, as Glaser (Glaser, 1993 Gynnild, 2011) argues, by valuing ourselves, we gain our freedom and build social value.

### **7.2.2. Reconciling Having-Fun-Being-Professional with Being-Fun**

Louise offers a good example of the tension between Having-Fun-Being-Professional and Being-Fun. By being herself in work (albeit thanks to the anonymity she felt) her job was fun; however, that form of fun disappears when she feels she must perform and risk the loss of



value. The concept of Being-Fun developed out of this confusion; it helps explain what happens when people let go of their fear of the chaos, complexity, ignorance, and uncertainty that governs workplaces, and society.

Being-Fun is inherently a social process; encouraging employees to risk encountering their fears and grow emotionally, intellectually, and professionally. It is a social process that seeks to understand as opposed to being understood; meeting other people, cultures and ideas in awe and wonder as they are and not as we would wish them to be.

Louise's story also helps in explaining that Being-Fun and Having-Fun do not coexist.

Although Being-Fun and Having-Fun, as orientations, are mutually exclusive, they are not dualities. The actions occur on different planes; the data suggest that Being-Fun and Having-Fun are distinct orientations that exist in a dynamic relationship. Louise moved between the two; experiencing the freedom of being herself of Being-Fun but being drawn back into Having-Fun when she became consciously aware of the demands of her employer.

We want to engage with Being-Fun, but it is more complicated, taking time, effort, and risk, but when we do engage with it, we are rewarded. However, Having-Fun is easier, offering an instant response, and the object can be provided by others.

### **7.2.3. Being-Fun is risky**

Tracy had built a reputation for always having the answer to difficult questions at work. For most people, this would be regarded as a positive attribute. However, if Tracy did not know an answer, she would be accused of deliberately withholding information; even if no-one else was able to provide an answer. Tracy would often spend evenings at home trying to find the right answer, which was duly presented the next day. Reflecting on the experience, Tracy explained how she was driven by anger to find a solution, but as the solution evolved, she felt a sense of satisfaction and joy. After the event, Tracy realised she enjoyed the intellectual challenge of finding a solution but also, had fun '*putting [her manager] back in his box*'. Again, the tension

between Being-Fun and Having-Fun is highlighted in Tracy's enjoyment of the intellectual challenge (Being-Fun) and enjoying the attack on her manager (Having-Fun-Decaying).

The tension must be put in context. Tracy and her manager were engaged in a duel, with simmering resentment held for each other. The attack on Tracy was a way to silence her, while Tracy's counterstrike sought to silence the manager. Tracy's anger provided the motivational spark to stir her creativity. While Tracy was immersed in finding a solution, enjoying the intellectual challenge, she was no longer bound by the duelling process.

The creative space she inhabited when developing her solution was found when she let go of her daily concerns (and anger) to focus on understanding what was happening in the problem situation. In that space, Tracy was not concerned with the need to be valued; she did not feel the need to prove herself to anyone. She was aware of her abilities and used the skills she had to develop a unique solution while finding herself in the creative space. This ability to let go of subjective thoughts in favour of grounding ourselves, in reality (objectivity), is central to Being-Fun and the embracing of abstract wonderment.

### **7.3. Entering abstract wonderment**

To approach someone (or something) in awe and wonderment means allowing them to become the centre of our world, to be interested in what they have to say, in what they are doing because they are doing it. The analogy of a young child opening a Christmas present is useful to explain the concept. The child is filled with excitement and anticipation of what might be hidden beneath the wrapping; an excitement that is often difficult to contain grounded in wondering what it might be. Of course, the child may be disappointed, or find the box itself more interesting than the toy—disappointing the adults in the room—but that sense of wonder is infectious. It is the sense of excitement of not knowing, that motivates people like Tracy. The sense of excitement leading to achievement, which arises when

confronted with a problem at work or home, and we solve it, having had to deploy our creativity and critical thinking, and looking forward to the next one.

Glaser's injunction to let go of preconceptions has led to arguments that he is demanding the impossible of researchers; asking researchers to become a blank slate and forget all they knew before (Bryant, 2002; Thomas and James, 2006; Sandelowski, 2010). The criticisms are weak because they represent a partial reading of his work; Glaser has acknowledged that professional interest and experience are significant but that they should not detract from the recognising new connections and patterns (Glaser, 1998). There is a subtle but essential point that seems to be missed by Glaser's detractors; CGT is a process in which the analyst learns how to encounter the data in openness and trust; they must learn how 'not to know' things (Glaser, 1998, p. 92).

Far from demanding the impossible, Glaser has built upon those psychoanalytical foundations I discussed earlier by drawing on the practice of presencing. Rogers (1957) identified four core conditions or key pillars for his person-centred counselling approach: acceptance, congruence, empathy and unconditional positive regard. Later in his life, he added the fifth pillar of 'presence'. Presence means that the analyst is open to encountering awareness; it is the condition that binds the other conditions together (Rogers, 1989, p. 188). Despite the concept being discussed at least for the last 50 years, we are still in the early stages of developing an empirical understanding of presencing (Colosimo and Pos, 2015).

Understandably, Glaser (1978) does not mention presencing in his list of analytical skills; however, without it, the supporting structure for the CGT method collapses. The collapse occurs because, without presencing, analysts cannot enter the field in abstract wonderment free of their attachments and desires.

Early in the 20th century, Freud (1912) wrote a small but significant article on the required behaviours of a psychoanalyst. The similarities between the Freud and Glaser's CGT seem to be

too strong to be coincidental. Freud suggested that analysts should not direct their attention to anything, adopting a state of ‘evenly suspended attention’ without which analysts would be tempted to:

*select material before [them]; one point will be fixed in [their] mind with particular clearness and some other will be correspondingly disregarded, and in making this selection [they] will be following [their] expectations and inclinations. This is precisely what must not be done ... [they are] in danger of never finding anything but what [they] already [know]. (Freud, 1912, p. 392)*

Freud continued to advise psychoanalysts that they ‘should simply listen, and not bother about whether [they are] keeping anything in mind’ (*ibid.*). What Freud and Glaser are suggesting is that the analyst creates a safe space for the participants and themselves.

### **7.3.1. Finding a creative space**

Glaser’s advice to enter the study in abstract wonderment is significant in any discussion of presence and bracketing; it moves us beyond ‘letting go of preconceptions’ to actively creating a safe space, in which the analyst meets the participant but also a creative space in which the analyst encounters the data.

The Ancient Greeks understood the word ‘presence’ in different ways. In one understanding it meant being alongside, much the same use as therapeutic presence. However, presence was also referred to as a space and an unconcealing action. Krell (1974) describes this aspect of presence as a creative space in which we can linger and observe: ‘an open expanse (*Gegend*) of unconcealment, into which and within which whatever comes along lingers’ and what lingers is transformed (p. 600).

To linger in this space, we must let go of our preconceptions, to be able to ‘unconceal’ connections and conduct deep work. Newport (2016) suggests that deep work occurs in a

physical and mental space, free of distractions; it is a space in which we push our 'cognitive capabilities to their limit' (p. 3); it is contrasted with shallow work which is explained as 'non-cognitively demanding, logistical style tasks, often performed while distracted' (p. 6). It is a point raised by the Participants; they were able to think without interruptions from people, phone calls or emails. At home, they found a space in which they entered a physical and mental creative space in which they could linger.

Newport also argues that deep work adds value and is difficult to replicate. However, he overlooks the enjoyment found in engaging in deep work (as we saw with Louise earlier in this chapter), whether that work is academic, DIY, or work based. On its own, Newport treats it as an object to be found, a way to be productive; however, deep work, when expressed through the lens of Being-Fun points to a productiveness orientation.

It is in creativity that we find an antidote to the Automatonising process. In the Automatonising process and the deskilling of roles, space for being creative in workplaces is being lost, unless it is a specific part of a job. However, Frey and Osborne (2017) offer a challenge by suggesting that jobs requiring creativity would be the least affected of all because creative traits cannot be mimicked by technology, yet (p. 262).

Creativity is primarily based upon interpretation and value judgments, which is a problem for AI; it is difficult for technology to mimic these values on an on-going basis—especially as these values change over time. This difficulty does not negate the use of automation but recommends the judicious use of technology to support creativity (Eaglestone and Ford, 2002). However, creativity should not be considered solely in terms of using the imagination; we must also consider: expertise and motivation (Amabile, 1998). Care must be taken not to privilege the functional skills of the craftsperson more than the development of higher-order thinking, creative skills and servant-leadership orientation of an artist.

By embracing our creativity and orientating ourselves away from the need for fun objects, we can begin to develop as human persons. Essential to entering the creative space, in this study, is the willingness to encounter others rather than destructively competing with them.

### **7.3.2. What is meant by encountering?**

When we communicate with others we risk exposing ourselves, leaving ourselves vulnerable: ‘putting something of yourself at the mercy of those others, trusting them without any guarantee they will take good care of what was put in their keeping’ (Fink, 2007, p. 13).

Fink’s warning is founded upon in the philosophy of Knud Ejler Løgstrup whom himself had argued that trust is not an issue of confidence, but instead, it is an event where ‘one person [dares] to lay himself or herself open to the other in the hope of a response’ (Løgstrup, 1997, p. 77). For Glaser trust was an essential aspect of the CGT process; analysts must learn to trust in emergence and the GT method (Glaser, 1992, p. 87), and to trust themselves (Glaser and Holton, 2004, para 3.7).

Two data incidents provide support for Løgstrup’s argument. Working on a production line, Peter, an electrician subcontractor, risked teaching operators how to repair machines by adjusting the settings. It was a risk due to health and safety concerns, albeit extremely limited, and not being management practice. However, the benefit of that action exceeded his expectations. Through a simple act of communication, being open to others, willing to share information, Peter positively changed the relationships between himself and others in the organisation (and increased output):

*Without being a prick, you just communicate and tell them what you’ve done, try and make them; they like that that changes like I said I’d change a whole department myself - by me communicating more with the production managers it really changes their outlook on engineering rather than it is at first; it brings the whole thing closer together.*

For Maria, however, the risk of trusting people was not reciprocated:

*one of the hardest lessons I've learnt is, you know. You trust people; you expect people to tell you the truth, you try and help and support people, and they kick you in the teeth*  
(Maria).

Her response was to withdraw; *'having learnt what you have learnt, you become very reliant, self-reliant, and there's no trust.'*

For Maria, trust was slowly eroded as she grew up and came into contact with others (MacIntyre, 2007). Without trust, it seems as if communication can only be communicating-information. Without accepting the risk of being misunderstood or rejected, we cannot participate in communicating-understanding. Ostrom (1998) argued that for productive dialogue (communicating-understanding), reputation and reciprocity are vital alongside trust. While Ostrom argued that all three elements are necessary, she did not explore the relationship between them; however, Løgstrup (1997; 2007) and Glaser (1963) (in an early article discussing academic workplace relationships) do provide some signposts on those relationships (Figure 7-1).

### **Dimensions of trust**

Løgstrup (1997) proposed two reciprocal actions to enable trust: taking a risk any communicating (trustee) and accepting responsibility when someone does take that risk (trustor). Both are necessary for understanding human interdependence. He argues that we have a responsibility for what we do with any communication (data). We can try to understand what is being said and support the growth of the other person—even if we disagree with what is being said. In which case, the too and fro of the discussion helps develop an understanding on both sides (Luhmann, 1995). Alternatively, we can use communication data against the person. What we cannot do is to 'be indifferent to the question of whether life is promoted or ruined' (p. 18) through communication.

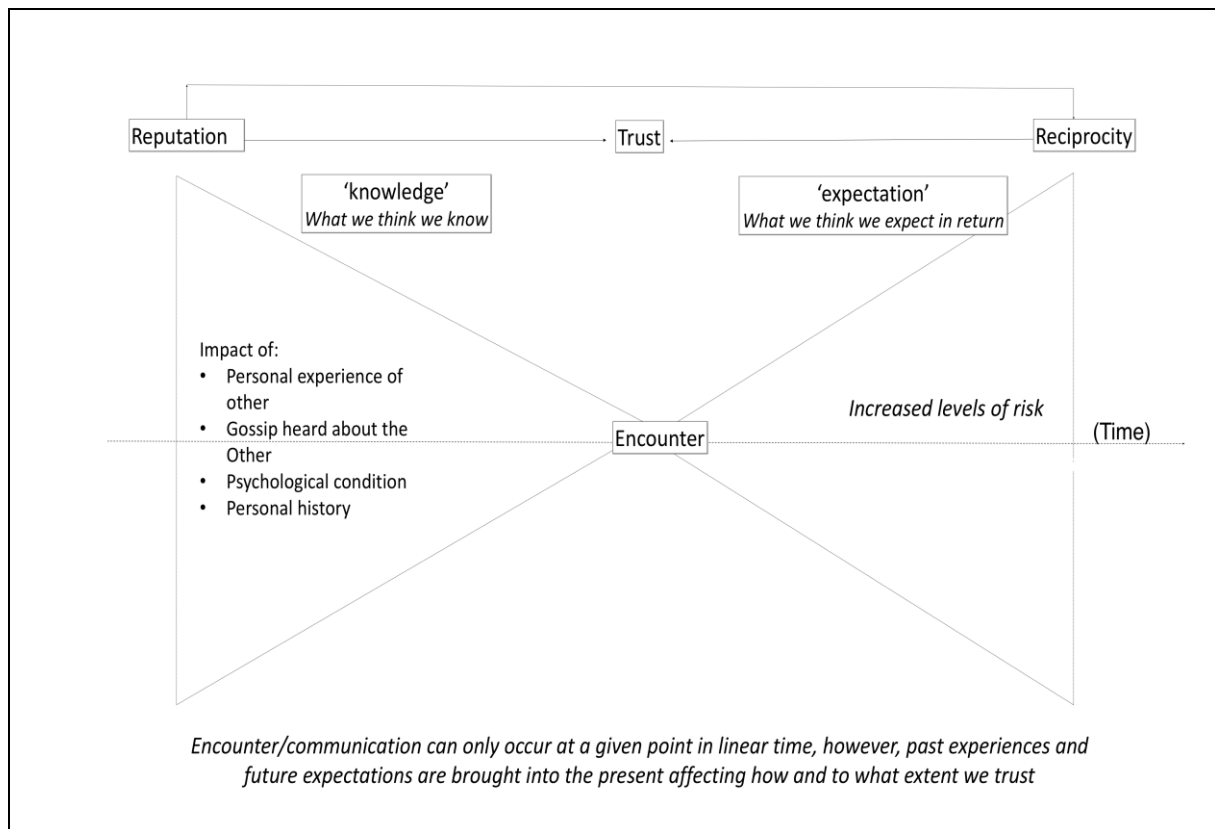


Figure 7-1: Encountering others in communication

When we risk trusting, we ‘let the other person emerge through deeds, words, and conduct [as opposed to] hinder this by our suspicion and by the picture we have formed’ (p. 14). Hence, Løgstrup argues that we should approach communication without preconceptions based upon reputation or reciprocity; mirroring the core demand that Glaser makes in respect of an analyst. Glaser (1963), in a foretaste of his later arguments, indicates that successful relationships, and by extension communication, require reciprocity and reputation (he uses the words mutual attractiveness) but also autonomy.

Løgstrup and Glaser differ from Ostrom, in their exploration of the bivalent ambiguity of trust; although Glaser’s discussion is more muted, both ask who is the trustee and the trustor? For example, in a CGT study, the analyst is asked to trust the method, the data, the reader and themselves; to risk presenting ‘plausible findings [rather than] build a strong case on facts’



(Glaser, 1963, p. 381); while the reader is asked to trust the analyst, their analysis and their arguments. If trust is present, a productive relationship is possible, even where the two sides disagree (Thornton, 2017). How we decide to trust seems to be based upon the interplay between prior knowledge (reputation) and future expectations (reciprocity).

#### Reputation

Reputation is used to describe what we think or know of a person or a thing, what we might consider to be knowledge. The data analysis in this current study suggests that what we think or know is composed of several variables; what we have heard from others or what we have experienced ourselves, both of which have positive and negative dimensions. However, our interpretation of what we hear can be affected by our personal stories, our background, or psychological history.

However, it seems that conversations in work are rarely open and honest; the demands of political correctness and a growing victim-culture mean that *'you cannot tell people what you think'* (Robert). Trust is missing in such circumstances.

Our certainty about past events is constrained, as time goes by, our memories fade and change; we cannot be as confident of an event, but our perception of colleagues tends to linger. Jorgos, a European restaurant owner, would not employ English staff because *'they want the job, they want the money, but they don't want to have to work'*. He explained how he felt young Britons did not have the same work ethic as his countryfolk, or others from Continental Europe. Or George's awareness of the actions of his CEO. Peter's experience of working in a highly unionised quarry in his early working years, coloured his view on trades unions.

#### Differencing

The Participants referred to the process of differencing; highlighting how others, often perceived as poor performers, were different from themselves, and should be avoided. John's

example of a colleague whom he differentiated by using a dehumanising label of 'deadwood' is enlightening. John, 'a teetotaler' which added an extra layer of differentiating: 'he was an alcoholic as well. He was a registered alcoholic. A heavy drinker'. Being an alcoholic and a poor performer created a barrier to the way that John was able to relate to 'deadwood'. John had no expectations of 'deadwood' and avoided him; there was no expectation of reciprocity.

Interestingly, John did not feel he could trust his opinions to his colleagues:

*Although I probably disliked him more than others, I don't think I actually rated on him formally or presented myself that way until he was gone, and then I jumped for joy ... I think they [his colleagues] were quite surprised that I was quite pleased that this person was gone.*

#### Reciprocity

Reciprocity refers to the shared social rules that are used to develop social action (Ostrom, 1998, p. 2). Reciprocity, in a positive sense, encourages people to increase cooperation and develop shared understandings, while letting go of any need for power (Jones, 2011, p. 8). If that trust in mutual benefit breaks down, the movement from communicating-understanding to communicating-information increases the risk of conflict as each party seeks to gain control.

It is easy to focus on the reciprocal demand. In the earlier quote from Maria (p. 225), we see her annoyance emerge when she felt her expectation of trust was not reciprocated. Glaser (1963) presented reciprocity as a transaction of mutual helpfulness (p. 387) emerging from human interaction (p. 387, fn17) in which an offer of help is dependent upon what is to be received in exchange. Others have, however, challenged this contractual arrangement.

Løgstrup, along with other philosophers such as Emmanuel Levinas (2013) and Jacques Derrida (2000), proposes an 'ethics of hospitality'. The basic argument is that by basing our decision to trust on either reputation or reciprocity, we are attempting to exercise sovereignty

over the other person 'by filtering, choosing, and thus by excluding and doing violence' (Derrida, 2000, p. 55). By not demanding reciprocity, embracing unconditional hospitality 'I let them come, that I let them arrive, and take the place I offer them, without asking of them either reciprocity (entering onto pact) or even their names' (*ibid.*). We exercise openness and responsibility for the other person (Popke, 2007, p. 512) while being aware of the risks and danger of doing so (Critchley, 2004).

### **Coming alongside people**

The purpose of encountering is so we can come alongside others; be they participant, colleagues, friends, or family:

*to motivate people more, you have to get alongside them to understand their difficulties and to be able to use your experience as a manager to come alongside people. (Alfred)*

Alfred used the expression 'come alongside' five times during his interview; a desire to understand what people are saying from their perspective. It was a view expressed by other Participants, notably by Sophie.

Rather than use the code *coming alongside*, being alongside better reflects the longer-term journeying together. While the category was present in other data incidents, it was also present by its absence in others; meaning that those managers who sought to control and overpower employees did not make any attempt to come alongside their teams.

Being alongside people encourages the encounter. The smallest of actions demonstrate how a manager can show how they can be alongside and understand their team:

*you're the only manager who I've known who has said please and thank you to me. And I know that could sound crazy to somebody but even the simple things of saying 'please' and 'thank you' and respect comes into it and that sort of understanding. (Alfred)*

In that incident, the employee is treated as a human person. In Alfred's words, work begins to be a joy, and that experience stays with a person.

### **Making a difference**

Making a difference was a significant category to emerge the data analysis; indicating that the employees' job had purpose and meaning. How people make a difference was unique to them, and their circumstances; they want '*to make a difference in the real world*' (Mary).

Making a difference enables employees to find a purpose in their role. Making a difference is related to coming alongside people and hospitality; it cannot be imposed; it must be offered and will not be achieved unless someone feels the benefit of the difference. By having a purpose, employees can counter the effect of the Disembodied Other's demand for compliance and the Autonomising process.

When Participants spoke about what happened as they engaged with other people or a difficult problem, their voices changed timbre; they became animated. As Participants changed their focus from the challenges they faced in work towards their desired relationships with their job and colleagues, they expressed a desire to have fun, but at the same time, a different process began to emerge. It was a process which recognised the need for themselves and their colleagues to develop as individuals and teams; even Having-Fun in a destructive way led to a bonding that strengthened the team (for example, George's experience with his CEO). People sounded happier as they began to move out of their personal and functional silos:

*you get so many operators that want to learn ... so even if you just showed them settings here and on this if you get this again try giving this a tweak and you'd work with them keep showing them and showing them and showing them. That, to me, is common sense. But to them, it was like 'no-one's ever shown us this before'. And the production team leaders were actually praising us up, which I'd never had as an engineer. (Peter)*

The 'tech ops' were meant to be automatons, following detailed written procedures without deviation, but Peter was acutely aware that they wanted to learn. They were not happy having to stand down at their workstation waiting for someone to 'tweak' a machine, all the time fearing the impact of not meeting that shifts production target. They sought to develop their skills, to be useful. This desire was not altogether altruistic; the more they learned, the more productive they could be, and the less precarious their position might be.

The 'tech ops' were short-term contractors, taking care not to upset their managers; inhabiting a precarious workspace. The process is different from sub-contracting work to another company. Contractors are hired weekly subject to the demands of the company's workload, fulfilling those rule-based roles that need human interaction. Their role exists so long as they satisfy the manager; Paul referred to a discussion he had with a director of his company: '*if the contractors are causing you grief sack them and get some more. You don't know how satisfying it is to sack someone*'.

As explained earlier (section 5.5), the precarious nature of the contractor's role not only creates a docile worker; a choice over whom and when they work is a luxury rarely offered to those members of the precariat who are poorly paid and often in debt (Standing, 2012).

However, it also means that contractors are:

*habituated to self-reliance; accepting a high level of risk; allergic to bureaucracy; juggling multiple short-term 'projects'; blurring the boundaries of work and non-work time; preternaturally adaptable; striving to be innovative and unique; producing monetary value from knowledge, symbols, or otherwise intangible resources; carefully branding the self; personally funding perpetual education upgrades; vigorously managing social networks within highly informal labour markets; performing work without a guarantee of compensation; assuming responsibility for maintaining a steady flow of*

*paid work and, hence, on a job search without end; and willingness to put the passion for the work ahead of the size of the pay. (Peuter, 2014, p. 264)*

Contractors carrying all the risks of their employment — sickness, training and development, holiday entitlement and while being paid a lower rate than their job or educational level would suggest<sup>34</sup> providing their employers with a competitive advantage as they do not have to bear those costs.

The contractor must, in these circumstances, make a difference for themselves to build their social value while at the same time, minimising the risk to their livelihood. Peter, as a full-time engineer was able to make a difference for the tech ops, not because he had to but because he wanted to do it for them, treating people like human persons and not automatons: that is the essence of Being-Fun.

#### **7.4. Being a human person**

Automatonising is dehumanising while Being-Fun is humanising; central to this assertion is an understanding of what it means to be a human person.

An ancient insight suggests that a human is comprised of two parts; the Individual and the Person (Gracia, 1991; Luhmann, 1992a). The Individual links us to other animate and inanimate objects, where we are a category, bound by the laws of cosmic, ethical, historical forces and influences, no different to rocks, plants, or other animals. Through our creativity, our struggle for liberty and our ability to reason we become a unique person (Maritain, 1946; Gracia, 1991). Although as a human being, we need both aspects, nevertheless, the Person should be in the ascendancy. Though the Automatonising process, being encouraged to live a robotic and isolated life, the Individual is ascendant; we become homogenised, losing what differentiates us not only from the other orders of creation but also from other human beings.

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<sup>34</sup> Paul stated that several of the contractors in his organisation held PhD's and were fulfilling roles that required them to adhere to a simple two-page script.

Tracy suggested that in her place of work '*we are not a community we are a pack of individuals*'. This pack of individuals is categorised as 'alienated individualism' (McCowan, 2006, p. 60); occurring where individuals either separate themselves from or are excluded from, their community and prioritise their own needs. The data analysis supported McCowan's argument by highlighting those circumstances where people prioritise the achievement of their objectives at the expense of the team and lack awareness of the impact of their behaviour on colleagues. Notably, McCowan did not address the possibility that outside of the work context, the alienated individual may be a loving person, and that the context might encourage deviant behaviour.

An Individual is, an animate being seeking to satisfy its immediate needs without recourse to reflection or reason, no longer caring about creating, perpetually trapped in Freud's oral stage of development, simply consuming. As an Individual (automaton), acting upon instinct, bound by processes, procedures, or a tasks list at work (servile work)— we try to exercise control over that which we can influence, what we can consume. At a symbolic or magical level, by consuming we are incorporating for the sake of possession; having something that cannot be taken away.

The Individual as consumer 'is the eternal suckling crying for the bottle' (Fromm, 1976, p. 36). We are suckled at the breast of the manufacturers for the latest fashion, software, phones, cars, TV box set, to name but a few, gradually living an isolated existence moving between work and distraction/consumption. In contrast, the Person, engaging with the metaphysical, meaning 'beyond the physical' (Öcalan, 2015, p. 57), aspects of their humanity moves beyond consumption to production.

Being-Fun emphasises the development of employees as Persons, in relationship with the extended community. As we have seen, Glaser argued in favour of developing the social value of individual analysts and the CGT community. Glaser's approach may once again reflect his

penchant for dissonance. CGT is a research method rooted in the community; the method gains from encountering the community in context and then offers the theory back to the community. It is a mutually symbiotic and autopoietic relationship—working for the common good. Furthermore, the emphasis placed by Glaser on developing the creativity and critical thinking of the researcher is a call for developing the Person as opposed to the Individual.

#### **7.4.1. Challenging a dominant worldview**

Reflecting on the Automatonising process and the subsequent objectification of workers, it is apparent that the primary difference is not between two different types of ‘having’ but the difference between Being and Having. Considering the previous Person/Individual discussion, the distinction between Being and Having becomes significant.

There is a tension that exists at a level of praxis between the Person and the Individual. To become fully a Person is a utopian dream, one that is worth aiming for but which we are unlikely to achieve fully. In the same way, to be reduced to a wholly Individual state would require us to be obliterated from any form of society, and regress to an animal- or rock-like existence. In response, the answer is to strive towards being a Person by refusing to treat others as individual objects; to ignore the Person in someone else is tantamount to treating them as an object to be controlled. In exercising control, we gain a sense of certainty on how they will behave after; as a controller, we set the parameters on their behaviour.

As part of the Automatonising process, employees are treated as human capital objects (Individuals), the Person is ignored, to develop a uniformed, constant employee-automaton moulded to the organisation’s design. The perception of the human as an object whose performance (and constituent physical and mental abilities) can be adjusted to achieve maximal productivity is questionable, manipulative, and exploitative.

The data analysis suggests that employees regard resilience, assertiveness, or confidence training programmes as attempts to make them responsible for their own health. The



organisation's duty of care is discharged by providing training; if these 'individuals' have not been able to implement these lessons; they must be weak in some way (Tracy). Where a culture of 'survival of the fittest' exists, we also find those characteristics promoting the Individual in the ascendancy; aggression, meritocracy, competition, and self-reliance (Lutgen-Sandvik and McDermott, 2008).

The suggestion made in this study is that the retrograde transformation of the employee from Person to Individual, and the associated increase in normative control of managers, is aided by the normalisation of individualism, an emphasis on subjective happiness, the current approach to fun at work and the injunction to 'just be yourself' (Fleming and Sturdy, 2009); the impact of which is discussed in the next two sections.

### **Individualism**

Workplace policies define those behaviours that apply across a business, irrespective of the individuals and their drivers. Such an approach risks disregarding the impact of social structures inherent in workplaces through unique functional cultures and how broader societal factors affect behaviour. By ignoring these structures, workplace policies reduce any social problems to the lowest indivisible level, the people involved. Hence, bullying is often reduced to a personal problem between two people, with the problem reduced even further to identify one person as the primary problem to be adjusted; ignoring the broader organisational issues that lead to the bullying event in the first place.

While the rise of mass individualisation has been linked at a macro scale to the dominance of the market forces and the erosion of possible collective action (George, 2016), the same issues are played out at a micro-level in individual workplaces. Collective responsibility replaces individual blame; division and competition, augmented by the adoption of the principle of the survival of the fittest, are actively promoted.

## **Being resilient**

There is a discourse in workplaces and wider society, and about the need to develop greater resilience, in this brief section I will argue that this debate is as much about developing individualism in the workplace and increasing the instability of work, as it is about health and wellbeing.

There is little consensus on what characterises resilience; demonstrated by the multitude of definitions, and the varying degrees of complexity they address (Carpenter *et al.*, 2001; Walker *et al.*, 2004; Skodol, 2010; Southwick and Charney, 2012). However, a consensus does seem to indicate that resilience is a dynamic process of positive adaptation (Loh *et al.*, 2014) and its existence depends upon interdependencies with other concepts, social relationships and the broader socio-ecological environment (Carpenter *et al.*, 2001; Bartley, 2006). The language of equilibrium is often used when discussing resilience (Gunderson, 1999), however proactive movement can be encouraged by reflecting on values and beliefs within the context of past negative experiences of adversity (Luthans and Youssef, 2007).

In the homeostatic vision, we see the links with alienation discussed earlier. Such vision privileges what is predictable, constant, and efficient; organisations can demand that employees demonstrate the ability to maintain an equilibrium. As Tracy stated:

*there's a definite feeling that resilience in this environment means that you can take anything ... [it has] something to do with a complete acceptability that you're working life is indelibly and inextricably linked to your personal life. So, the concepts of identity of having a work-life identity and a non-work life identity are almost non-existent ... if we take resilience as something about your ability to manage your own well-being, maybe, your kind of subjective conscious understanding of when you are in spaces of wellness or not wellness ... it leaves the individual at a complete cul-de-sac, not even that, just a wide-open plain.*

To be on the 'wide open plain' means that the organisation has discharged its duty of care by providing resilience training, and the employee becomes responsible for their own welfare.

Tracy is indicating that her organisation is only interested in the employee if they continue to deliver. In such an environment, the bonds of collegiality break, and isolation reinforces the properties of individualism. The equilibrium-resilience argument can be quite insidious, who looks after those who are too fragile to be able to bounce-back; '*how many hits do you have to take before you actually fall?*' (Tracy), what happens when a person develops mental resilience but their physical resilience, for example, after a major operation, is compromised.

In a competitive environment, who will be willing to instigate a conversation in resilience? We rarely know, let alone understand different levels of tolerance among our peers. We cannot see what is happening beneath the surface. Interestingly, in a less competitive environment, for example, among ambulance crews and prison staff, and to a lesser extent nursing staff, there was a greater recognition that the teams needed to support each other. Whether that was using dark humour (Robert; Tom) or suggesting to a crewmate '*you are my point of fact, my point of communication, you are my point of being relaxed*' (Dominic); the need for mutual aid was palpable. This mutual support continued despite attempts by the Disembodied Other to disrupt the development of relationships; for example, splitting up the prison officers' teams or, in the interests of efficiency locating ambulance crews away from a central base and limiting opportunities for social interaction.

### **Real individualism**

Saul (2013) suggests that our understanding concept of individualism needs challenging:

*if [individualism] is self-gratification, then this is a golden era. If it has to do with personal public commitment, then we are witnessing the death of the individual and living in an era of unparalleled conformance. Specialisation and professionalism ... build defensive cells in which the individual is locked. (p. 466)*

Saul's suggestion is not new. Fromm, 50 years earlier, had argued that we must 'return to real individualism and humanism' (Evans, 1966, p. 29). Tay also contends that the individualism we see in workplaces and wider society is more accurately described as pseudo-individualism:

*We live in an age no longer of real individualism, if only for some, but of pseudo-individualism for all. Never in public life have people been more willing to talk about themselves, to see their own egos as the centre of the universe and the true end of civilization; never have they been less perceptive, and less honest, about themselves and their problems. They want to touch others, to have encounters because they cannot bear to live with themselves. It is precisely this emotional and intellectual dishonesty that forms the real content of the attack on objectivity and the demand for "commitment" or "communication" — the demand that the facts not be allowed to stand in the way, that the medium itself becomes the message, that content takes second, third and ultimately no place. (Tay quoted in Chipman, 1979, p. 759)*

Real individualism refers to a code of conduct for encountering others (Yao, 2015, p. 48) in which each person recognises their part in society and is willing to accept responsibility for that society (Brunner, 2003; Hummels *et al.*, 2005, p. 266). It is a commitment to encountering others, developing ourselves, our skills, talents, and abilities on behalf of our colleagues and the wider community; a foundation for Being-Fun through service.

### **Hedonism**

Individualism and competitiveness are supported by the PWE (Steenkamp and Basson, 2013), and thus, its normalisation would have been accepted by Max Weber. However, given Weber's (2005) view of fun as a distraction from the main aim of making money, I wonder how he would have reacted with Fleming and Sturdy's (2009) assertion regarding the normalisation of fun at work. If individualism is the process by which people are reduced from Person to Individual, hedonism is the experience of people in the Individual state; where hedonism

refers to an orientation towards pleasure-seeking, enjoyment and excitement and disregard to future consequences (Zimbardo and Boyd, 1999, p. 1278). Having-Fun is hedonistic (Stebbins, 2018, p. 263).

Hedonism and individualism have both been criticised as functions of the socio-economic system we live in; both become objects that are to be sought after in the search for an objectified form of happiness (Fromm, 1976; Martín-Baró, 1996). In an interesting comment, Carl Rogers (1989) expressed surprise and concern that his experiences with clients did not support the hedonistic ideal of objectifying happiness or the homeostatic vision.

Rogers dismissed the Automatonising tendency and the search for transitory, instant pleasure (Having-Fun) in favour of eudaimonia, arguing that a 'good life was not a state of being (an object) it was a process (an orientation) defined by:

*the process of movement in a direction which the human organism selects when it is inwardly free to move in any direction and the general qualities of this selected direction appear to have a certain universality. (Rogers, 1989, p. 186)*

Rogers (1989) contrasted hedonism with his characteristics of the good life:

- *increasing openness to experience* (p. 188) – this characteristic is the opposite of defensiveness, where the person is 'completely available to awareness' (p. 188). People are self-aware but also aware of their environment, and open to enjoying it; it is a less intensive form of encountering.
- *increasingly existential living* –Rogers was vague on this characteristic. As a person becomes self- and Other-aware, and open to experiences, they release control; allowing themselves to be formed by the experiences rather than adapting experiences to their preconceptions. It is a responsive state which emphasises antifragility rather than robustness or resilience.

- *increasing trust in their organism* – as a result of the increasing amount of data collected from the previous two characteristics, people can compare and contrast; ‘weighing, balancing, and computation’ (p. 190) previous experiences and data sets trusting their judgement rather than outside influences—reducing the possibility of alienation.

In setting out these characteristics, Rogers offers empirical and experiential reflections, echoing the aims of the CGT as a teaching process. Rogers encourages people to let go of their fear and risk of encountering others in their environment person to person (p. 185), without preconceptions.

For Fromm, Glaser, Rogers, and Martín-Baró the good life is not found in *Having*, it is found in the process of *Being*; it is an outward-looking process of Being that is self- and Other-aware. Each author issues a demand for social justice, either overtly at a macro-level (Fromm and Martín-Baró) or a personal level (Glaser and Rogers); a demand to liberate people from psycho-social demands for conformance, individualism, hedonism and the Automatonising process.

### **7.5. The servant-analyst/servant-leader**

There is unity between the principal writers mentioned above; they write about the need for us as Persons to awaken, to live life fully and risk encountering with others. While Glaser did not speak of being a servant explicitly, CGT is a method in which the analyst places themselves at the service of the data, letting go of their own beliefs, prejudices, concerns and preconceptions, to give voice to the participants and to help them understand what is happening in their specific context. Analysts place themselves, and their skills, at the service of the community. This brief section explores how the concepts of being a servant-leader and servant-researcher relate to Being-Fun.

The Participants differentiated between managers at a local level, who were often described in term of being servant-leaders, being supportive and protective, and those managers at a more senior level who behaved according to their own rules and agendas, the Disembodied Others. Servant-leadership is a term coined, in 1970, by Robert Greenleaf who rejected the pseudo-individualism discussed above, insisting that managers should not be ego-centred when encouraging staff development and engagement.

Dussel (1978) argues that servants place themselves in the service of the poor and act as prophets. They witness to the current order dying and the coming of a future time when the poor will be exalted as 'subjugators to cease subjugating' (p. 36). I suggest that 'the poor' is a relative term; in the context of this study, it refers to those struggling under the yoke of the Disembodied Other, in its real or imaginary form.

The 'current order' — workplaces dominated by the bonus culture alluded to by Alfred — is not dying; it is in the middle of a duel in which the outcome has yet to be decided. It is a duel that is wider than the employee-employer relationship; it is societal. However, so long as employers encourage individualism and hedonism at work, and employees are willing to privilege Having-Fun in its various dimensions, the duel will continue.

It is doubtful that the Disembodied Other will be beaten in open conflict. This assertion resonates with Glaser's recommendation that analysts should work in the background, asking questions and proposing answers; encouraging people to think for themselves and ultimately to become themselves. In developing an orientation towards Being-Fun, engaging with real individualism and servant-leadership, employees and analysts find the means to avoid the conflict in the first instance.

### **7.5.1. What is servant leadership?**

Almost forty years after Greenleaf authored his original essay on servant-leadership there is unfortunately still no consensus on its meaning. While Greenleaf explains that:

*The Servant-Leader is servant first ... it begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead ... The best test, and difficult to administer is this: Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, and more likely themselves to become servants? And, what is the effect on the least privileged in society? Will they benefit, or at least not further be harmed? (Greenleaf, 2007, p. 6)*

With over 44 identified servant-leadership characteristics there is, understandably, a degree of confusion over the concept; several innovative studies have sought to empirically explore the multiple concepts involved (Parris and Peachey, 2013; VanMeter *et al.*, 2016). In their literature review of servant-leadership, van Dierendonck *et al.* (2017, p. 1233) propose six core themes:

- Empowering and developing people
- Humility
- Authenticity
- Interpersonal acceptance
- Providing direction
- Stewardship

Each of these themes emerged at various points in the data analysis and in this dissertation. In the servant leadership literature, all these themes emphasise the word 'growth' (see, for example; Greenleaf, 1979; Russell and Stone, 2002; Parris and Peachey, 2013). However, a more apt word might be *development* as:

*development [as opposed to growth] has nothing to do with size or number, but with an increase in one's ability and desire to satisfy one's own needs and desires and those of others. (Ackoff, 1990, pp. 523–524)*



Ackoff makes an important distinction; objects grow while subjects develop. The servant-leadership literature, therefore, risks falling into a positivist trap by creating an object out of a concept. To emphasise growth is to suggest that servant-leadership is a 'pre-packaged' object, which can be bought and sold to managers as a tool, or a technique, to be applied in an organisation is surprising, if not a gross error. Engaging with servant-leadership, with its emphasis on creativity, critical thinking, and engagement, helps employees escape from those behaviours that encourage Automatonising.

Like fun at work, servant-leadership is not just another management leadership fad (Rennaker and Novak, 2007; Timiyo and Yeadon-Lee, 2016). It is different because it privileges how service is experienced by those who receive the service. Greenleaf was inspired by Herman Hesse's *'The Journey to the East'* (2003) with its focus on developing the person **in** the community, through service and creativity. Hesse's book supports Ackoff's arguments, providing an insight into how, when engaging with the essence of a subject, we help them develop as we too develop. If we treat the research field as a subject as opposed to an object, seeking to engage with the essence of the field, letting go of our preconceptions and entering the field in service, as opposed to being in control, we permit our creativity to emerge more fully with the data.

Being willing to encounter where employees are, not only do we help ourselves and others to develop but we also challenge those structures that 'suffocate [people] in the stifling atmosphere of prejudice and tradition' (Kropotkin, 2006, p. 35). In this study, 'prejudice and tradition' represent the disembodied orthodoxy of scientific management and its offspring performance management and the dominance of deconstructive competition.

With the ever-increasing demand for efficiency and change, people are being left behind; frustrated and confused by the double-bind employed by workplaces in which the outward message is *'we will take care of you, but the service will be your service — or even life — belongs*

*to us; we control you'* (Rose). The oxygen to be supplied to counter prejudice and tradition is a mixture of the heterodoxy of personal freedom, in the context of the common good, supported by democratic control.

Any employee, irrespective of hierarchical level, can engage with servant-leadership; however, it is useful to reconceptualise our understanding of service as an employee. For this discussion, I will use the example of an early career researcher, as it is the work context I have been experiencing during this study.

### **7.5.2. Being a servant-analyst**

There have been recent discussions on the purpose of doctoral training programmes, which reflects the different understandings of competing stakeholders (Mowbray and Halse, 2010; Petr *et al.*, 2015; Hoyne *et al.*, 2016). The traditional purpose of the doctorate which sought to transform a scholar into a teacher of scholars (LaPidus, 1997) is being challenged. This thesis is not the place to enter a detailed discussion of what comprises an excellent doctoral training programme, however, critical aspects of the recent discussions resonate with the problems faced in the workplace with emphasis placed on transactional, command and control leadership styles.

LaPidus (1997) argues that the purpose of all graduate education is to prepare students to work in their chosen field. While a Master's programme involves an external professional input into the course content; the doctorate is viewed as a professional development programme; 'a stepping stone into an academic career' (Mullins and Kiley, 2002, p. 386). This view reflects an internalising action by the university; an introspective and transactional means of developing an 'operationally creative' specialist scholar who works and communes within a narrow field of research (LaPidus, 1997, p. 3). Developing this specialist means cultivating a professional academic identity which requires understanding the discipline, mastering the literature, developing discipline appropriate research skills and building up a

professional network (Ullrich *et al.*, 2014). However, the increase in doctoral candidates who have no intention of entering academia in recent years has led to a mismatch in the transferable skills, especially communication skills, offered on doctoral programmes (Mowbray and Halse, 2010; Hancock and Walsh, 2016). The skills in demand reflect those creative, leadership and social skills required to thrive in the AI age identified by Frey and Osborne (2017) discussed earlier (see, p. 223).

Recognising the changing demands, some doctoral training programmes include aspects of servant-leadership into their curriculums (Shulman *et al.*, 2006; Holmes and Sutherland, 2015; Lawson, 2016). These curriculums emphasise the need for budding researchers to develop a moral purpose (Colbeck, 2007) by committing to social justice, accepting personal responsibility and promoting equity (Shulman *et al.*, 2006). The purpose of these programmes which emphasise the twin dimensions of servant-leadership—leadership (roles) and stewardship (roles and moral purpose)—is to develop:

*future leaders who will creatively generate new knowledge, critically conserve valuable and useful ideas, and responsibly transform those understandings through writing, teaching, and application.* (Golde and Walker, 2006, p. 5)

Servant-leadership reflects a movement between conservation, generation and transformation (Holmes and Sutherland, 2015); a movement that requires setting aside the academic egocentrism of disciplinary specialists (Lawson, 2016). There is a commonality between these disciplinary specialists and their counterparts, senior executives in the business world, who stress their own needs for money, power and adulation over the common good (Friedman and Gerstein, 2016).

## **7.6. Chapter summary**

In this chapter, I have explored how we can begin to embrace the concept of Being-Fun. The core skills of Being-Fun — encountering, developing abstract wonderment, bracketing,

presencing, and above all, communicating — provide the basis for employees to challenge the Automatonising process. Building an ethical relationship not just with those around us but inside ourselves; being true to who we are, and our potential selves also provides a source of security in the workplaces of the future. Being-Fun responds to the need for high-level cognition and creativity, alongside well-developed social and emotional skills that will be required of employees in the future (Frey and Osborne, 2017; MGI, 2017; Autor, 2018; OECD, 2019).

However, Being-Fun is much more than just skills development; it is an orientation in life towards being open and trusting of others. At a personal level, it meant becoming a servant-leader/servant-researcher; being open to emergence and uncertainty in such a way as to hear the Participants, through the data. To extend unconditional hospitality to the Participants through the data, to allow their stories to linger in my creative space and reveal connections, allowing their stories to transform my understanding.

## 8. Conclusion

### 8.1. Introduction

This dissertation evidences the development of the theories of Automatonising, Being-Fun and Having-Fun using the CGT research method; a careful and detailed analysis of the primary interview data, integrated with secondary data from the literature. At the same time, the thesis also witnesses to the professional and personal development of a novice grounded theorist challenged by the emerging theory. The substantive grounded theory of Being-Fun/Having-Fun is an 'ever-modifying process' (Glaser, 1978, p. 5), it is a living theory.

A central pillar to test the rigour and robustness of a CGT is that it must be modifiable. It is a positive view of research; an orientation towards growth where 'doctrinairism and excess loyalty to pet ideas' must be avoided and the attitude that 'nothing is sacred' promotes development (Glaser, 1978, p. 5). In a specific sense, a CGT is a philosophical work, where philosophy means taking 'a step that leads to a state of "unhousedness"' (Pieper, 2006, p. 52). Unhousedness requires us to turn away from our ideas, values and conscience, or ideals and models (our preconceptions) to radically challenge those ingrained practices [vested fictions] that dominate the world of work (Neiman, 1995, p. 87).

At a superficial level, the embrace of fun since the 1980s suggests a significant shift in how to encourage employees to be happy and productive. By trying to improve employee wellbeing, job satisfaction, and promoting cultures and environments of fun, employers appear to have rejected the work ethic that gave us the spirit of capitalism and the clear distinction between work and play. However, as has been suggested in this dissertation, such a superficial interpretation is misleading.

The flow of understanding generated in this study reveals a unique interpretation. Far from the managed fun controlled by employers, the Participants pointed to the use of fun as a way

of resisting the movement towards total work. The Participants' main concern was not how to have more fun but how to combat being increasingly deskilled and dehumanised at work; a process described in this dissertation as Automatonising. However, Participants responded by using fun as a form of resistance; using fun to distract themselves from what was happening around them or by actively having fun at the expense of the organisation or colleagues. Fun used in this way enables employees to continue working while distancing themselves from what happens around them.

This research exposes a conflict between employers and employees, where fun is the weapon of choice for both sides. As the literature was consulted, even the employers' encouragement of fun activities was found to be less about employee wellbeing and more about control. Employers encourage fun because it increases productivity; employee benefits are a bonus. In the past employers sought to control employee fun outside of work, now they seek that control inside work. The demand for hard work is supported by injunctions to play hard; the boundaries between work and leisure are being blurred in the quest for an age of total work. Total work overvalues and idolises work (Pieper, 2009). It is an idolisation of work that is supported by religions of all kinds. In its current evolved form, Weber's capitalist Protestant Work Ethic encourages the growth of the happy-productive worker, by violating human dignity, as employees limit their activities to those supporting work alone. The employee becomes little more than an automaton as they are reduced to the state of human capital. It is nothing less than a battle for the very soul of the employee.

When fun and happiness become servants of increased productivity, the lines between work and leisure become increasingly blurred. However, the blurring is more concerning when the essential nature and characteristics of fun and happiness are themselves obscure.

This dissertation began by referring to Wright and Cropanzoni's (2004) assertion that the quest of developing happy-productive employees is the holy grail of management. In furtherance of this quest, management gurus, academics and practitioners have suggested that fun should be an essential part of an employer's toolkit. However, as highlighted throughout this dissertation, what is meant by happy, productive, and fun is far from clear.

In an original contribution to our collective knowledge, two roots of the word fun; *fon* and *wonne* have been connected to two interrelated but antagonistic orientations for fun; Having-Fun and Being-Fun. I have suggested that *fon*, with its origins in acts of cheating and hoaxing, reflects the current use of fun in workplaces, where fun is reduced to the state of an object used as a distraction. Employers use fun to tie the worker to production (Pieper, 2009, p. 60) while employees use fun to escape those same ties. The Automatonising process, with its emphasis on technical proficiency, and the distractions provided by Having-Fun, is challenged by Being-Fun.

Being-Fun, rooted in the German word for joy, *wonne*, reflects an alternative employee disposition, one that uncovers fun in personal and professional development through meaningful work. With its focus on productiveness rather than productivity, effectiveness rather than efficiency, Being-Fun is positively related to the development of happy-productive employees. These are the, yet untested but plausible, probable hypotheses and theoretical generalisations, emerging from this study. However, before being able to address the relationship between Being-Fun and the happy-productive worker, it will be necessary to verify the existence of Being-Fun as an orientation.

## **8.2. Reflecting on the PGT**

The PGT provided the space where I developed the foundations for embracing Being-Fun; in this section, I explain a little more about the personal impact of the PGT. What is offered is

unique to my situation, I do not suggest that it is a 'blueprint' for others to follow, indeed given the different starting points we have, that would be impossible anyway.

I mentioned above the idea of becoming unhoused. It is a valuable concept because it contains within it a theme that has run through this dissertation. Whether thinking about Lonergan's view of critical theory, Glaser's approach to CGT, Pieper's concept of *viator* or even the tension that exists between Being-Fun and Having-Fun, underpinning all is an acceptance that all things exist in a state of impermanence. There is an ebb and flow between creation and destruction: quantum physics suggests that the universe follows this cycle, even a black hole will ultimately reach a point at which irritation leads to a release of creative energy.

Learning to embrace irritation influenced the personal changes resulting from the PGT. Irritations are wonderful; they make us pay attention. It was irritation that led me to willingly strip away the vested fictions that had held me in the automaton state (in the safe space of a counselling room); to challenge the most fundamental beliefs that I held, too experience, to understand, and then to judge and act.

I was experiencing myself *qua* researcher (with the university being my place of work), while at the same time experiencing myself as *qua* theoretician of research, or more correctly, method. The former contributing to the theory of knowledge, while the latter contributed to the theory of the production of knowledge (Elzinga, 1971; 1972). While being aware of this relationship, I was equally mindful of the fact that my encounters with the Participants were, simultaneously, having a profound impact on how I produced knowledge, my understanding of CGT, and how I experienced myself as a researcher and human person: all of which constituted vested fictions. The challenges of being a researcher and producer are easily recognised; however, the symbiotic relationship by which the researcher processes and resolves that challenge is less defined but addressed by Being-Fun.



I began to understand that much of my life had been lived in Having-Fun, passively distracting myself by gorging on different objects, food, books, TV, people, ideas. From an educational perspective, Shor (1992, p. 27) suggests that passive participation usually arises from feelings of boredom, silencing or alienation. The result is that people begin to focus on outcomes, as opposed to developing an understanding of their topic. It is a similar situation to Alvesson and Spicer's (2012) concept of 'functional stupidity' discussed in Chapter 4. The result is that I, and I suspect others, focussed on outcomes (consuming), as opposed to developing an understanding of their topic (producing). It was chaos.

Chaos can be destructive, but Waelti-Walters (1982) argues that it is in moments of chaos and uncertainty, when a character's situation has become intolerable, that transformations occur. It is a moment where the character:

*can be developed no further in the direction in which it is moving. It is a final attempt to escape and may be either the desperate gesture of refusal or a shift towards the revelation of truth.* (Waelti-Walters, 1982, p. 505)

To become unhoused means, we must risk letting go of the certainties that exist in our life; become willing to explore the veracity of the vested fictions we have lived with for so long. Even if we decide to maintain the fictions at least, we know why we have kept hold of them.

To recognise that people are being encouraged to live their working life as automatons, to see how they were impacted by that, and do nothing about my own life would have been unethical. I reflected on my 'vested fictions' and behaviours, I felt, to be congruent, I could not continue with the same behaviours, that I would not develop as a counsellor, as a researcher, or indeed as a human being. Once embarked on this process, the sense of liberation was profound. All areas were subject to constant comparison, relationships, faith, politics, values, beliefs. Some were discarded, redundant to my life at present. However, others gained a surer foundation. I knew why I believed something. For the first time in my life, I felt motivated

enough to challenge what I had previously unquestioningly accepted. Space precludes from providing an in-depth account of this transformation, but a single example will suffice to be able to generalise.

My faith means a lot to me. I am what is described as a 'cradle Catholic', born, brought up and still practising. Rarely did I question what was received in matters of faith and morals, indeed Catholics are told not to question the Church in these matters; being on the traditional wing of the Church meant that this membership rule was adhered to.

A book by Erich Fromm, *On Disobedience* (2010), influenced my metamorphosis. In the book, Fromm argues that there will always be some form of authority but distinguished between rational and irrational authority. Irrational authority is grounded in force, reducing people to simple tools for the benefit of authorities. He also suggests that it is easy to internalise that irrational authority by creating vested fictions. In contrast, rational authority helps people develop as human beings. The personal challenge was to understand to what extent the Church was a rational or irrational authority.

My questioning was broad. Issues of divorce, homosexuality, abuse, abuse of clerical power, women priests, church buildings, the way Gospel readings are used to enforce a collective belief, were all subjected to the constant comparison method and found, for me at least, to be examples of irrational authority. The traditional movement, which I had been part of, no longer seemed to build up the community, but spoil it by totalising, differencing and separating people from each other and wider society (Dussel, 1978). This totalising action, which was also being revealed in the data, could not, with an informed conscience, be accepted.

I have not left the Church. I have a different relationship with it; I was unhoused. I found a spiritual home, still within the Catholic Church but in the South American Liberation

movement. Such is the irony of life that when I was younger, I was told these writers were Marxist agitators and must be avoided at all costs!

More to the point of this example, is that somewhere within me, I had been aware of the discomfort of the vested fictions, knowing that they did not fit, or work, they were unmodifiable because if they were modified the whole edifice might collapse. When the edifice did collapse, I found it had been a prison.

Most of us cannot leave our work, but we can develop a different relationship with our work so that it becomes more meaningful, helps our development, and builds up the wider community.

### **8.3. Contribution to knowledge**

Throughout this study, the research has contributed to knowledge by offering original contributions and supported or challenged existing knowledge in both the substantive area of fun at work but also in the current understanding of CGT. However, incorporating the meta-principles of critical realism and CGT within the theory of Being-Fun offers a unique way of incorporating CGT into everyday life at home and work.

#### **8.3.1. Contribution to the field of fun at work**

The field of fun at work is a relatively recent one. The literature is dominated by attempts at justifying why fun should be embraced and explaining the benefits of developing cultures and environments of fun. A small body of critical literature exists, which questions the overwhelmingly positive focus of the literature.

The original research presented here, adds some much-needed exploration of the word *fun* itself and in doing so makes original contributions to both sides of the debate. Previous research has lacked explanations of the etymology of the word fun. By identifying two roots of fun *fon* and *wonne*, two clear directions for fun were offered: Being-Fun and Having-Fun. This

research supports the call for organisations to embrace fun at work to develop happy-productive employees but challenges those who use fun as a distraction and aid to the enforcement of normative control.

The research has provided support for Hochschild's theory of emotional labour while offering a limited contribution by recognising that employees are willing to fulfil the behavioural demands of their employers up to the point where their ethical beliefs are under threat.

### **8.3.2. Contributions to Classical Grounded Theory**

Original contributions have been made to the collective knowledge of CGT.

A peer-reviewed article has been published explaining the concept of abstract wonderment developed during the PGT:

Stoupe, D. (2016) Understanding abstract wonderment: The reflections of a novice researcher, *The Grounded Theory Review*, 15(2), pp. 93-104

Since its publication, the article has been cited once (Turner *et al.*, 2018).

Two original contributions have been made to our understanding of CGT. As far as I am aware, no one has previously sought to examine the foundations of CGT forensically.

Developing the concept of methodological sensitivity and the identifying the subversive foundations of CGT will help future novice researchers understand the prerequisite analytical skills required of analysts and prepare them for the personal challenges of embracing the CGT method.

This research also supports Annells' (1996) argument that CGT is located within the critical realist paradigm, highlighting the symmetry between Lonergan's approach to critical realism and Glaser's pedagogical approach to CGT.

As a final thought on contributions to knowledge, this research has supplied evidence supporting Glaser and Strauss' argument in *Discovery* that GT and research more broadly, should be fun.

#### **8.4. Strengths and limitations of the study**

##### **Limitations of the CGT method**

As with any research method, there are limitations to using CGT. I have already addressed the issue of the vagueness of the epistemological roots of the method and suggested these could be addressed by adopting a critical realist position.

The misunderstandings surrounding the purpose of CGT can be confusing for researchers and those unfamiliar with the method. Sitting outside of traditional research methods and developing an 'unproven' theory is difficult to explain to some people. Few have made it as explicit as I, that a CGT is a precursor activity to traditional study.

There are other pragmatic considerations when using the CGT method. CGT involves two steep learning curves, often involving trial and error. While Glaser offers many different monographs; they provide a veneer of simplicity, and yet contain an expectation that the user will have a certain degree of relevant knowledge. It takes time to understand what has been written and then embed it in practice. A case in point was 'abstract wonderment,' Glaser does not explain what it means, nor does anyone else, and yet it is a core prerequisite for entering the research field. Even after completing the PGT, I am still learning about different aspects of the method.

The pace of the study was affected by my keen awareness of a lack of necessary skills, especially in the early stages, my lack of understanding of how to use memos in CGT. I do wonder how many connections were missed because I focused on providing evidence to my

supervisor that I had been writing, coding, and categorising data, instead of catching fleeting thoughts in a memo.

The second steep learning curve that faces an analyst is the amount of literature to be assessed after the theory starts to emerge. Learning how to code, categorise and theoretically sample data, while analysing the data is time consuming but then to be faced with a diverse range of literature across disciplines to read, understand and judge was exhilarating but also, sometimes, daunting. Occasionally, when things just cannot be understood, often technical philosophical discussions, it is also dispiriting. Not being an expert in a field means that you might miss vital information; the depth of knowledge is not as deep as it needs to be to comprehend the subtleties of an argument.

Allied to this point, is the real issue of working on a PhD with a chronic illness that limited the time available to work; continually stopping and starting work, with blocks of time off, reduced the opportunity to find flow, again the consequence could be that ideas and connections were missed. With a more traditional approach, the impact of illness may well have been mitigated.

While I have sought to present a coherent and well-researched argument, I am also aware that I am still learning. I can even now pick up an article and realise a connection with the theories presented here, wondering how I missed that piece of information the first time. Despite the intention not to engage in worrisome accuracy, it is a problematic aspect of the method to accept.

### **Limitations of the study**

It would be naive to think that the only concern employees have is that of the Automatonising process. It is a theoretical perspective that emerged from a small group of diverse individuals outside of a given context. That automatonising emerged in this study is serendipitous, a

different group of Participants, in a different context may well have identified another main concern.

Although potential limitations, these are not a weakness of the method or the product of the study, but rather, it is an encouragement to extend the study to different areas. Few studies have the luxury of infinite resources (time, money and energy), this study is finishing at a point at which all three are exhausted but also because I believe the study has reached a point in its development that it is right to move on to the next, verification, stage. As suggested earlier, this study is the first step to future research; a launchpad so to speak.

### **8.5. Directions for future research**

Research into fun at work, and fun as a concept in its own right, is difficult (Plester *et al.*, 2015). Such a statement is even more accurate of the concept of Being-Fun. Being-Fun is a theory that has scope to grow beyond the confines of this single, limited, study. It begins to address how we use fun as a means for personal, organisational and community growth.

Fun has already been identified as a vital tool for learning both in work and other adult settings (see, for example, Lucardie, 2014; Tews *et al.*, 2017; Michel *et al.*, 2019). However, these areas could be extended to understanding how the productiveness, inherent in Being-Fun, can help the development of professional skills, especially enhancing communications skills, in different work and learning contexts.

The key message emerging from this study is for organisations to investigate ways to encourage employees to feel less like automatons and more like fully functioning human persons. Being-Fun can deliver a different approach to achieving the holy grail of developing, long-term, happy-productive employees. Nevertheless, it may well be the case that not all employees want to have autonomy at work; in safety-critical industries, a high degree of control and direction is required. This study reflects a small group of employees, a larger sample size, and a more targeted set of questions, perhaps in the form of a survey, could

provide a greater sense of the desires of employees and understand what is possible across different industries. Irrespective of this limitation and future research option, it is still the case that there is a fundamental human need for developing Being-Fun in the workplace.

Exploring the relationship between the Automatonising process and expenditure on employee development is a potentially fruitful focus for both future research and management action. Should employees be responsible for developing their skills and competencies? Is it an investment that the employee should make in their future, or should it be an investment made by their organisation? Allied to this question, is what would be the answer to this question if workplaces continue to move towards zero-hours/short-term contracts? Such a question could be answered as part of a more focused investigation into the relationship between productiveness and productivity.

Despite the earlier concern expressed over approaches to performance management, performance measurement systems are essential to the successful operation of a business. However, a return to performance devolvement reviews where the productiveness of the employee and their skills and future development are central to the discussions is recommended. Such a move necessitates further research to identify suitable measures but also training and developing of managers and employees on how to embrace Being-Fun.

The support expressed by the Participants for local managers is encouraging; however, the emergence of the Disembodied Other is of concern. The concept and impact of the Disembodied Other, as an oppressor and as a scapegoat, could be another fruitful research area in future studies.

### **Extending Being-Fun/Having-Fun**

Being-Fun/Having-Fun as distinct orientations reflect a broader societal shift beyond the limited workplace context of this study and across disciplinary boundaries. For example, the



impact of how fun can, through what seems like an addictive process, lead to the Having-Fun orientation should be investigated further in a mental health context.

Already, in my counselling practice, the silencing process identified in Chapter 5, has been useful to clients, helping them explain marital and neighbour disputes. While I am passionate about how this can be used in a mental health setting; it is a process that should be subjected to further empirical investigation in the future.

The concept of Being-Fun/Having-Fun can be extended beyond the boundaries of adult employees and embrace the broader field of education and learning. As a school governor, I have observed how the school prepares the students for future work. In a world in which rules-based job roles will be delegated to AI, humans will add value by being highly creative, critically curious, and dexterous (Frey and Osborne, 2017). Are we doing enough work with students of all ages to develop Being-Fun skills; if not, what do we need to change to help children escape the life of an automaton? Any such study should assess how educational establishments encourage students to accept the Automatonising process by privileging rules-based approaches.

Finally, although there has been growing attention in recent years to awe and wonderment, the centrality of abstract wonderment to the CGT method means that this process should be explored and refined into the future.

## **8.6. Final thoughts**

Despite the limitations of the study, this research has suggested that it is both timely and necessary to rethink what we mean by fun. I have focused upon two dimensions of fun in this study; Having-Fun and Being-Fun. I have argued that Having-Fun ultimately leads to conflict with others or inside ourselves. Having-Fun is restrictive and deceptive, relying upon the creation of a series of vested fictions, which become unchallengeable because they work to distract us from that which troubles us.

Employers are deploying fun to produce happy-productive employees, but as we have seen, those employees are reduced to the state of automatons. To escape that state or distract themselves from the despair they feel at being dehumanised; employees have fun in its various guises. Alternatively, employers could generate happy-productive employees by embracing Being-Fun. Returning to the classical understanding of happiness, grounded in the joy of emotional and intellectual development through meaningful work.

However, embracing Being-Fun is positively risky. Being-Fun demands that we challenge our vested fictions as we become aware of them; where they are no longer valid, we must be honest with ourselves and seek to change, if we are to become a fully human person or even organisation. This challenge is not new, while Socrates challenges us, arguing 'the unexamined life is not worth living,' Malcolm X extends that argument, conceding that 'the examined life is painful' (West, 2001 quoted in Duncan-Andrade, 2009, p. 187).

Nevertheless, we have a choice, 'if you wish to strive for peace of soul and pleasure, then believe; if you wish to be a devotee of truth, then inquire' (Nietzsche, 1976, p. 30). Being willing to risk encountering others and ourselves—inquiry—and accepting the pain that goes with becoming more fully human **is** Being-Fun.

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# Appendix 1: GSoE Research Ethics Form

## GSoE RESEARCH ETHICS FORM

Name: **Damian Stoupe**

Proposed research project: **An exploration of non-violent aggression in UK workplaces**

Proposed funder: Self-Funding

Discussant for the ethics meeting: Shaofu Huang

Name of supervisor: Dr Ruth Deakin Crick

Has your supervisor seen this submitted draft of your ethics application? Yes

This study is an exploratory theory building study using grounded action as a research method. The purpose of the study is to develop a deeper understanding of the nature, process and variables of workplace behaviours which lead to non-violent aggression in the workplace.

The project consists of three key phases:

- Developing an explanatory theory – this is a full grounded theory study
- Developing an operational theory – in which problem is compared with the explanatory theory
- Identify an action plan – for this study this means the generation of options in the form of a systems model of non-violent workplace aggression.

The context of the project is broad, as it should be for a grounded action study, as it includes anyone who is currently working in organisations in the UK. The limit of the UK has been selected to reduce the cultural variation that may occur with a multi-country study. It is possible that another setting may recommend itself through the process of emergence during data analysis.

In common with other grounded theory/action studies, at this stage it is not possible to identify the number of participants who will be required to take part, nor who they are; both these factors, after the initial interviews, are determined by theoretical sampling. Neither will it be possible to define the questions or scope of discussion to be entered into.

The initial question that has been identified as the starting point for discussions is a broad question of “What do you understand by the phrase workplace behaviours?”

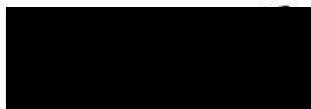
It should be noted that grounded action has been developed from grounded therapy, an approach to therapy that the researchers uses in his daily working life as a counsellor.

Ethical issues discussed and decisions taken (see list of prompts overleaf):

	Discussion Topic	Discussion Notes
1	Researcher access/ exit	<p>Participants will be invited to take part from the online community - LinkedIn</p> <p>Ethical raised with this approach are:  <b>The public v private nature of LinkedIn:</b>            Individuals have chosen to share information and as members of specific groups have expressed a professional interest in a field and are open to research requests. They also have the right to respond or not.</p> <p><b>Issue raised in discussion:</b>            The impact of low response can be mitigated by widening the participant field through use of different groups.</p> <p>Impact of high response rate and grounded theory exercise. The total number of participants required in a grounded theory study is an unknown and more people may wish to take part than is required. This can be mitigated by being clear in the information pack about the grounded theory process. People will also be need for the development of the operational theory: this could include those who did not take part in the initial interviews to try and include those who have offered their time.</p>
2	Information given to participants	<p>Three information sheets will be provided:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>General Invitation to participate in a study</li> <li>More specific invitation for those who respond to the general request</li> <li>Informed consent sheet which will include the details of the study</li> </ol>
3	Participants right of withdrawal	<p>Participants will be informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage and their data will be removed from the study. The destruction of data will not include any coding/memos derived from their data however.</p>
4	Informed consent	<p>An informed consent sheet has been designed for this study.</p>
5	Complaints procedure	<p>Complaints procedure is included on the informed consent sheet.</p>
6	Safety and well-being of participants/ researchers	<p>The researcher is a also a counsellor and is capable of providing a safe environment for participants, however, access to further assistance can be provide from within the researchers counselling networks.</p> <p>The researcher's safety will be maintained by regular</p>

		supervision with academic and counselling supervisor.
7	Anonymity/ confidentiality	Due to sensitivity of the topic and fear of potential repercussions from organisations, all interview data collected will remain confidential and that the participants constantly reminded that the nature of a grounded action study is to conceptualise data rather than use explicit quotes.
8/9	Data collection/analysis	Transcripts and identifying data will be held separately and transcripts will be anonymised with agreement of the participants. Following transcription the data will be audio recording will be destroyed.
10/11	Data storage /Data Protection Act	The researcher is registered as a data protection controller with the information commissioner already and abides the rules and regulations for electronic data storage and retrieval.  Data will be held in password protected folders synchronised between a home pc and online storage facility.
11/14	Feedback/reporting of research	As this is a grounded action study working at a conceptual level there is no need to use direct quotes from participants or to use specific identifiable examples in any reporting.
12	Responsibilities to colleagues/ academic community	The study is an exploration of the ethical relationship between individuals this is a

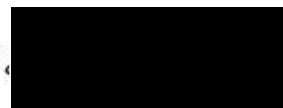
Signed:



Damian Stoupe (researcher)

Date: 11/3/14

Signed:



Shaofu Huang (Discussant)

11 March 2014

## Appendix 2: Participant Information Sheet

# Participant Information Sheet

**Working Title:** “An exploration of non-violent aggression in UK workplaces”

*Why is this research being done?* This study is being conducted by Damian Stoupe under the Supervision of Dr Ruth Deakin Crick at the University of Bristol. The purpose of this research is to develop a deep understanding of the nature, processes and variables involved in non-violent aggression in UK workplaces.

*What will you be asked to do?* Participation in this study involves taking part in an hour-long interview; depending upon your location, this will take place face to face or on Skype. The interviews will be electronically recorded and transcribed. You will be provided with a copy of the transcript and invited to take part in a second interview during which we may address any further questions I may have, or you can provide clarifications of what you stated or add additional material if you feel it is relevant to your story. It is anticipated that this interview can take between half an hour and an hour.

*What about confidentiality?* We will do our best to ensure that all information is kept confidential. As this study is privately funded there is no requirement for any outside bodies to have access to any of the data.

Extra safeguards for this study include:

- a. Your name, or other identifying information, will not be present on any of the transcripts, or any of the filenames used to hold information that arises from the interview.
- b. Only the researcher will have access to the recorded materials, which will be kept securely in compliance with the Data Protection Act in a password protected folder. All recordings will be deleted at the end of the study.

\_\_\_ I agree to have my interviews in this study recorded with a digital recorder.

\_\_\_ I do not agree to have my interviews in this study recorded with a digital recorder.

*What are the risks of this research?* This study has been ethically approved by the Graduate School of Education; however, it is possible that, due to the nature of the topic, we may discuss topics that you feel uncomfortable with. Every effort will be made to manage this risk and, if any further help is required, information helping you access suitably qualified counsellors can be provided.

*What are the benefits of this research?* Although the research is not designed to help you personally, the reflective nature of the interviews may help you understand your reactions, and the reactions of those around you, to workplace issues.

*Do I have to be in this research?* Participation is completely voluntary. You may withdraw at any stage of the research and, if requested, your personal data will be removed from the project.

*What if I have any questions?* This research is being undertaken by Damian Stoupe, supervised by Dr Ruth Deakin Crick. In case of any questions relating to the study please contact Damian in the first instance either by email: [Damian.stoupe@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:Damian.stoupe@bristol.ac.uk). Or by phone: xxxxxxxxxxxx.

If you are concerned about the way the study is being undertaken, please feel free to contact [Ruth.Deakin-Crick@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:Ruth.Deakin-Crick@bristol.ac.uk)

*Consent* I have read and I believe I understand this Informed Consent form. I believe I understand the purpose of the research project and what I will be asked to do. I understand that I may stop my participation in this research study at any time and that I can refuse to answer any question(s).

*Please sign:*

	<b>Participant</b>	<b>Date</b>
<i>Researchers commitment:</i>	I agree to conduct this study in accordance with the constraints identified in this document.	

<b>Damian Stoupe</b>	<b>Date</b>
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