

Training by Theatre, Seeking Authenticity

**A Study of the Everyday Dramas of Training and Development
in Australian Organisations**

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by

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Thesis Summary

This dissertation reports on studies of training and development practices in Australia, referred to here as *personnel development*. Two trends at present prevalent in this field are explored: the application of *theatre* in training programs and the *authenticity* discourse of organisation members in training and development events. This research focus emerged during fieldwork which included shadowing, participant observation and interviews with personnel development professionals.

A dramatisitic frame of analysis is adopted to interpret the results of the field studies. This analytical framework borrows interpretive tools from a diverse selection of drama-inspired theorisations of social action – ‘dramatism’, ‘dramaturgy’, ‘the ritual process’ and ‘the narrative approach’ – as well as from the dramatic theories of identity – that formulate the self as relational, multiple and socially constructed – and from organisation studies probing the relationship between drama and organisational life.

The thesis contributes to the developing body of research on theatrical interventions in organisations. It builds on observations of two theatrical training events, a coaching session based on role-play and a training event incorporating a piece of participative theatre. The underlying processes through which theatrical training works are explored. Moreover, and unlike most studies on theatrical interventions, audience responses to the theatrical training are documented and interpreted. The dramatisitic analysis reveals that theatre-based training encourages reflexivity and offers trainees increased engagement with the content of training.

The thesis also contributes to empirical studies of identity and authenticity in organisations. The observations of the way personnel development professionals teach

authenticity and the interviews about the way they practice and make sense of authenticity reveal that Australian personnel development is part of the contemporary social trend which demands authentic lives and authentic workplaces. The study introduces a dramatisitic perspective on authenticity which, unlike previous studies, reconciles theatricality with authenticity.

Thesis Certification

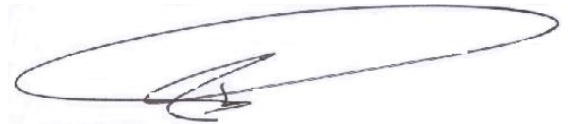
This thesis is submitted in fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of PhD, in the Macquarie Graduate School of Management, Macquarie University. This represents the original work and contribution of the author, except as acknowledged by general and specific references.

The research presented in this thesis was approved by the Macquarie University Ethics Review Committee (Appendix 2) on the 24 November 2010 (5201001463) and (Appendix 3) on the 2 March 2011 (5201100127).

I hereby certify that this has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other university or institution.

Sara Zaeemdar

March, 2013

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a large, sweeping oval shape with a smaller, more complex mark inside, likely representing the initials 'SZ'.

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Author's Publications

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Zabrodska, K., Ellwood, C., Zaeemdar, S., and Mudrak, J. (2011). "Workplace Bullying as Sensemaking: An Analysis of Target and Perpetrator Perspectives on Bullying Interactions." Paper Presented at: *The 7th International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry*. University of Illinois, USA.

Zaeemdar, S. (2012). "Performing Authenticity in Organization Theatre: A Study in Two Episodes." Paper Presented at: *The 28th EGOS Colloquium*. Helsinki, Finland.

Introduction

Chapter 1: An Introduction to the Dissertation

The focus of this dissertation is the practices of professionals whose efforts are directed at the training and development of people working in Australian organisations. I have observed activities conducted in this organisation field¹ – henceforth termed *personnel development* – and collected the practitioners' accounts of these and similar activities. My description and analysis of these observations and accounts identifies and attempts to interpret two trends at present prevalent in the field: training by *theatre* and *authenticity* discourse and training.

This research focus has emerged during fieldwork including shadowing, participant observation and interviews with personnel development professionals. The results of each visit to the field have helped to form the direction pursued in subsequent fieldwork, and to formulate the final research focus, namely, an exploration of theatrical training and of the pervasive authenticity discourse and training. The research is more specifically focused on the training and development activities organised by a Sydney-based consulting company Learning & Development Australia² (aka L&D Australia or L&D), which specialises in theatre-based training.

In this introductory chapter, I present an overview of the processes through which the study has been translated into the chapters of this dissertation. The chapter is organised as following: I briefly present an outline of my fieldwork and the emergence of the research focus (presented in Part II of the thesis). Next, I move to a brief

¹ Organisation field has been defined by Dimaggio and Powell (1983) as a community of organisations sharing the same frame of reference in that they are devoted to the same types of activities.

² This is a pseudonym to secure anonymity of the consulting company.

summary of the relevant sociological, psychological and organisational research related to drama and authenticity which represent the literature reviewed in this study (in Part I of the thesis). The overview also traces the development of an analytical frame, termed *a dramatistic frame*, which informs the interpretation of my fieldwork results (in Part III of the thesis). In the section following this overview, the areas of research to which this thesis contributes, the consequent formulation of the research questions and the main conclusions of this study will be presented. The chapter ends with an overview of the structure of the thesis.

Fieldwork and research focus

The study reported here took place in the personnel development field of practice in Australia. The fieldwork started with a pilot study, during which I shadowed a consultant from L&D Australia over a period of two months. During this time, I had an opportunity to observe an L&D theatre-based training session conducted through coaching by role-play. In later fieldwork I observed another L&D training event, which included a theatrical performance. This training session – a showcase of L&D Australia’s theatrical training to a group of personnel development professionals – was focused on an exploration of the notion of authenticity and its relevance to workplace performance. My observation of the session was followed by a series of individual face-to-face interviews with the participants. The aim of the interviews was to explore participants’ reflections about the theatrical medium and the authenticity themes advocated in the workshop.

Following a social constructionist approach to conducting research, the result of fieldwork was examined for identification of ‘naturally occurring’ themes in the field of personnel development (Silverman 2007, p.37). According to the constructionist

convention the researcher's attention and focus of study should be guided by the findings resulted from fieldwork. An initial analysis of the field material (discussed extensively in Chapter 6) led to the conclusion that the application of theatre as a 'technology' (Clark and Mangham 2004b) for training and development is considered fashionable in this field of practice at present. It also became clear that the organisers of such practices are actively engaged in an authenticity discourse, and are trying to connect it to work and family life. What is more, the personnel development professionals design and implement training and development programs in which organisation members' authenticity issues, through the problematisation of the relationship between the individual and the social structures such as the organisation and the family, are explored. As a consequence of this initial analysis the research focus has been directed towards these two activities of personnel development professionals. My first aim is to develop an understanding of theatre as a training technology. My second aim is to investigate the relevance of the authenticity discourse and training to the everyday practices of personnel development.

An introduction to the literature review and the dramatisitic framework

To frame and interpret the results of my fieldwork, and to provide insight regarding the main research focus, I review the literature probing issues of the relevance of drama to organisational life and identity (and authenticity). These two areas of research are closely related to drama-inspired theorisations of social action. Thus the literature that forms the theoretical basis of this dissertation originates in what are effectively three areas of research. This three-part literature review helps to situate my research in the context of the existing research relevant to theatre and authenticity. Moreover, the

literature review provides for the development of an analytical framework, which informs the later interpretation and analysis of the field material.

The first area of research (an extensive review will be presented in Chapter 2) contains a collection of influential views that depict social life and its emergent meanings as constructed along dramatic lines. The reviewed perspectives share a *dramatistic frame*, which I use in this study to aid my understanding of everyday life across settings such as home and work. I do, of course, borrow this term from Kenneth Burke's (1969, 1978) 'dramatism'; however, in this dissertation a dramatistic perspective includes also several other influential drama-inspired theorisations: among others, Goffman's (1959, 1974) 'dramaturgical insights', Turner's (1969, 1975, 1980) 'genres of cultural expression', and the more recently developed 'narrative approach to organisation studies' (Czarniawska 2004). In the lens of these perspectives, social life and drama are intertwined, in that each reflects and at the same time shapes the other. Social action conceptualised in this way, is accomplished in dramatic form, and its meaning is achieved through dramatistic interpretive tools, examples of which – such as Burke's 'pentad', Goffman's 'frame analysis' and Turner's 'ritual process' and 'plots' and 'narratives' – inform my study.

The second area of research (presented in Chapter 3) includes literature on identity and authenticity. The dramatistic framework is further developed in this chapter through a review of the perspectives that propose dramatic theorisations of *the self*. Such dramatistic perspectives tend to conceptualise the self in ways that are similar to the ways characters are constructed in drama. Such a self lacks any 'essence'; instead, it is developed through symbolic interactions (Mead 1934/1967), is comprised of multiple performed characters (Goffman 1959), is constantly negotiated through

conversations (Davies and Harré 1990), is fluid and fragmented (Gergen 1991), and is socially constructed (Gergen 1999/2009). Such perspectives, it will be argued, inevitably problematise the notion of authenticity (Goffman 1959; Mangham and Overington 1987), rendering it difficult to study. In people's everyday lives, however, authenticity remains a matter of concern. Thus the literature review in this area identifies a need for a perspective that reconciles authenticity with theatricality.

The third area of the literature review comprises organisation research on drama and theatre. Such studies have adopted a dramatisic approach to organisational life. The dramatisic research in this area can be divided into two distinct groups (Schreyögg and Höpfl 2004). One group of such studies explains organising efforts *as drama*. In such research (Mangham and Overington 1987), the dramatisic concepts and theories, e.g. dramaturgy and dramatism, are used in order to explain social life and its meaning in organisations. A second group of studies in organisation research examines the increasing employment of dramatic techniques and theatrical interventions in organisations. Such studies of organising *by drama* (e.g. Clark and Mangham 2004a, b; Meisiek and Barry 2007; Nissley et al. 2004) include both conceptual and empirical research. As will be presented in Chapter 4, the review of both these groups of studies – research viewing *organising as drama* as well as research studying *organising by drama* – helps to situate the current research in the context of the existing literature and further extends the dramatisic framework adopted in this thesis.

This three-part review of the existing literature on drama and identity provides a dramatisic framework that offers interpretive tools for understanding how the activities of personnel development professionals are organised in this field of practice. This dramatisic framework is not intended as a grand theory of social action, drama or

identity; on the contrary, this frame encompasses a collection of various theorisations which – when adopted for interpretation of the fieldwork results – contribute to a better understanding of the theatrical training and authenticity discourses as practiced in the field under study, namely, the field of personnel development.

Moreover, the literature review helps to situate my research within the body of existing work on identity/authenticity in organisations and organising as/by drama. In the next section, I identify the gaps in the existing literature on organising by drama and research on identity and authenticity, and describe how, through its conclusions, this dissertation can address the gaps and contribute to each of these bodies of scholarly work.

Contributing to research in organising *by* drama

An emerging body of organisation research has been focused on exploration of drama-based practices in organisations. Once described as being in its infancy (Schreyögg 2001; Schreyögg and Höpfl 2004), this field of organisation research has grown considerably during the last decade (Biehl-Missal 2012) yet, there is still much room for improvement (Meisiek et al. 2012). This thesis is intended as a contribution to this body of work, by adding to it an analysis of two theatre-based training events organised by personnel development professionals.

The review of the earlier empirical research on theatrical interventions and training reveals that most of these studies take a critical look at the structure and content of organisational theatre and emphasise the political aspects of organising by drama (Clark and Mangham 2004 a, b; Nissley et al. 2004; Westwood 2004). In some studies, theatrical interventions are viewed as managerial manipulation devices employed to encourage the organisational audience to certain ways of conduct (e.g. Clark and

Mangham 2004 a, b). The organisational audience in this view is presented as made up of passive onlookers who, enchanted by the theatrical interventions, can be coerced and manipulated. Within the existing literature, few studies have considered the organisational audience to be active contributors to the construction of the meaning of theatrical interventions (e.g. Nissley et al. 2004; Westwood 2004), but even fewer studies have documented the dynamics of such audience contributions (e.g. Meisiek and Barry 2007). The thesis attempts to address this rarity in the existing literature on theatrical training and interventions.

Looking through the dramatisic frame developed in this thesis (Part I), the audience of organisational theatre are not portrayed as passive audiences who can be duped by manipulative persuasions; rather they are active participants in the construction of the meaning while taking part in theatrical interventions. The study of theatrical training events reported in this dissertation then is intended as a contribution to the body of empirical studies that view the organisational audience members as active participants who help shape and construct the theatrical training events. In this view, the theatrical training events and their meanings are constructed through the collective interaction of all involved – the management, the performers and the organisational audience. Therefore, the two theatrical training events – observed during the fieldwork – are approached in terms of both the *dynamics of performance* and the *dynamics of audience participation*. The thesis will explore both the underlying processes through which the theatrical training works and, at the same time, the trainees' involvement in the construction of realities and meanings during the course of the training events. The aim of such exploration is to investigate how training by theatre works. Consequently, the following research questions will be addressed:

- What are the working mechanisms activated through the dynamics of performance and participation in the studied theatrical training events?
- What training outcomes are achieved in these two theatrical training events?

Relevant conclusions

This thesis presents theatrical training events organised through the application of both conventional and participative theatre. In the former the organisational audience is not active in the creation of the performance, while in the latter the audience is invited to participate in and change the world of the theatrical performance. The analysis of these observations and the interviews with the audience members results in an exploration of the distinguishing dramatic mechanisms through which theatrical training works

- My study shows that theatrical training influences its audience through *dramatic persuasion*, the aesthetic process through which the training pulls the trainees into the world of the theatre and persuades them to suspend disbelief in the world of fiction. Operation of this mechanism is specifically visible when the audience are invited to take part in the construction of the theatrical performance, e.g. the trainees engage in acting a character or suggesting a script for new versions of the drama. My study indicates that, through dramatic persuasion, theatre-based training offers the trainees increased engagement with the content of training and therefore can be considered a powerful and engaging training technology.
- My study of theatre-based training indicates that this type of training provides the trainees with opportunities for *dramatic experimentation*; that is, opportunities for learning through active participation in the world of drama –

by creating alternative theatrical realities, by suggesting new scripts for different versions of the theatre or by playing a part, etc. – and by observing the outcomes. The study shows that dramatic experimentation improves improvisation capacities, encourages reflexivity, and provokes self-reflection.

Contributing to empirical research on identity and authenticity

The literature review of dramatisic formulations of identity (in Chapter 3) reveals that dramatisic formulations of the notion of self have often been accused of encouraging inauthenticity because theatricality and authenticity are commonly taken as opposites. But advocates of dramatisic views (Brissett and Edgley 1990; Mangham 2005) have regarded this criticism as a misconception, in that dramatisic approaches do not promote deceit and concealment, but simply render the notion of authenticity an abstract ideal, the evaluation of which is conceptually and empirically problematic (Goffman 1959; Mangham and Overington 1987). However, in everyday life, and in corporate settings people talk about, and seek for, their ‘authentic selves’ (Gubrium and Holstein 2000; Garrety 2008). The study of personnel development attempted in this thesis also shows that the topic of authenticity is of interest in the corporate setting in Australia and attracts considerable attention from the organisers of training and development workshops and programs. The ubiquitous presence of authenticity in the contemporary societal and organisational discourse cannot be easily dismissed. The contemporary fascination with the problem of authentic being is one that calls for further investigation. There emerges a need for reconciliation of the dramatisic views of the self with the concept of authenticity. This reconciliation is attempted in this thesis. The questions posed to address this research problematic inquire:

- What is the allure of the notion of authenticity in contemporary organisations and specifically in personnel development in Australia?
- Are there any dominant definitions of authenticity and commonly held interpretations of the concept of self, promoted and taught through personnel development everyday activities?
- How is that authenticity and theatre, the apparent opposites, both emerge as the latest trends in this field of practice?

By attempting to provide responses to such research questions the thesis contributes to the body of existing literature on identity in that it provides empirical evidence for how working people construct their identities and speak of their authenticity through application of dramatic means, and in doing so opens an avenue connecting theatricality and authenticity. One of the main foci in this dissertation, therefore, is an attempt to add to the empirical inquiries on authenticity in organisational life³. The thesis offers a study of practices, viewpoints and narratives of personnel development professionals, who themselves actively contribute to the authenticity discourse and training in the organisational setting. The thesis also contributes to a better understanding of the issues related to individual identity in organisations and it adds to the existing empirical studies in this area.

³ The thesis is focused on providing an 'empirical' exploration and analysis of the diverse definitions emerging from the field studies.

Relevant conclusions

Several interesting insights result from the analysis of my observations in the field and the interpretation of the accounts given by personnel development professionals around the notion of authenticity:

- The talk and search for authenticity appears to be a fashionable trend in personnel development in Australia. What is more, this is by no means a local trend, but part of the global picture. Organisation members seek for their 'true selves' in the workplace. Personnel development practices attempt to fulfil those demands.
- No single working definitions of authenticity can be identified; in contrast the personnel development professionals who contribute to the design and implementation of authenticity training hold diverse views on the legitimate and accepted pictures of authenticity in everyday work and life.
- The interpretation of the reflections about authenticity also reveals that people view their self and identity from multiple perspectives. The self is taken by some as possessing (or at least acquiring) an essence; while for others, it is fragmented, fluid, and socially constructed.
- The field studies allow an account of authenticity as being taught through theatrical technologies, and being practiced and made sense of through the application of the dramatic devices of sensemaking (Weick 1995) such as narratives, plots and storytelling. The study shows how organisation members practice and make sense of authenticity dramatically. In conclusion, the apparent opposition between drama and authenticity is challenged: the

application of dramatic devices is found to produce not only deceit and concealment but also authenticity, as paradoxical as that may sound.

The dissertation at a glance

Following this chapter, the thesis is divided into three parts. Part I (Chapters 2, 3 and 4) contains the literature reviews of the dramatisitic views on social action, the self, and organisational life. The aim of Chapter 2 is to present a selection of influential dramatisitic perspectives, which explain the different ways people act and make sense of social actions – their own and those of others – while continuously negotiating such meanings. There, I draw on Burke’s dramatism, Goffman’s dramaturgical insights, Turner’s genres of cultural expression, and the more recently developed narrative approach (Czarniawska 2004). The focus in Chapter 3 is on the processes through which people construct and make sense of the self. This literature review adopts a dramatisitic view of self-construction; and, in the process of elaborating this view, problematises the notion of authenticity. Chapter 4 documents the *dramatisitic turn* in organisation practice and research. This chapter is focused on a review of organisation research that explores organising *as* drama and organising *by* drama.

Part II (Chapter 5) is a *confessional tale* (Van Maanen 1988/2011) about doing fieldwork. It contains an account of the different stages of the field study, a discussion of their implications for the research focus, their limitations, and unexpected results. The epistemological and methodological stance taken in doing and writing this research is also presented.

Part III (Chapters 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10) is devoted to the presentation and interpretation of the results of the fieldwork. This is done by drawing on the dramatisitic theories, concepts and interpretive devices reviewed in Part I. Chapter 6 provides an outline of

the everyday practices in the field of personnel development where theatrical training and the authenticity discourse and training are identified as fashionable activities. This provides a context for the later analysis of my field observations and my interpretations of the accounts of personnel development professionals. Chapters 7 and 8 are devoted to the interpretation of two theatrical events observed during the course of the field studies. In Chapter 7 a coaching session by role-play is analysed. Chapter 8 contains an exploration of a training event which included a theatrical performance. The transformative processes involved in the theatrical training as well as the trainee participation during the sessions are explored in both chapters. Chapters 9 and 10 focus on interpretations of personnel development professionals' accounts about authenticity and its relevance to their everyday working life. Chapter 9 aims at better understanding of the way personnel development professionals formulate and theorise authenticity. Chapter 10 studies the work life narratives through which these professionals make sense of authenticity in the context of their own life stories. The final chapter of the thesis comments on the results of the study and presents tentative conclusions.

Part I

The Dramatistic Perspective

Chapter 2: Dramas of Social life and Their Meaning

Chapter 3: Dramatistic Personae

Chapter 4: Dramas of Organisational life and Their Meaning

All the world is not, of course, a stage, but the crucial ways in which it isn't are not easy to specify.

(Goffman 1959, p.72)

Chapter 2: Dramas of Social Life and Their Meaning

This chapter develops the *dramatistic approach*, adopted in this thesis, through an extensive review of key selected theoretical accounts in which social life and its meaning are approached through the lens of *drama*. I borrow the term ‘dramatistic’ from Burke, but I include into it other approaches (e.g. dramaturgy, ritual and narrative) that look into the dramatic aspect of social life⁴. Such perspectives build on a thread of thought that goes back to Aristotelian philosophy. In Aristotle’s *Poetics*, ‘drama’ was described as an ‘imitation of actions’ (Turner 1980, p.153). As emphasised by Badham et al. (2012, p.201), the word drama in classical Greek means ‘to do’ or ‘to act’. To this effect, the dramatistic turn in social studies makes perfect sense as dramas provide frames for understanding human conduct and the ways through which people accomplish meaningful lives (Brissett and Edgley 1990).

The view of social life through a dramatic lens has been further developed in some influential contributions during the 20th century. Kenneth Burke’s formulations of *symbolic action* were formed through his *dramatism* which provided a logic of inquiry for making sense of what people do and the way they verbally explain such doings (1969, 1978). Erving Goffman proposed a *dramaturgical* framework and interpretive devices. *Frame analysis* (1974) was offered by him as studies of the basic frames people

⁴ The distinction between the dramatistic and the dramaturgical has been the topic of debate. For instance, Höpfl (2002) refers to Theodore Sarbin’s (1986) distinction between the dramatistic and the dramaturgical as the former being concerned with the ‘theatricalities of performance - devices, acting techniques, masks, deceptions and so on’ and the latter consisting of ‘half remembered roles of epic scripts which are embedded in folk-lore and myth, archetypes and roles learned in early life’ (Höpfl 2002, p. 261). I have not, however, included the distinction in this chapter as the theoretical focus of the thesis is on key selected theoretical accounts in which social life and its meaning are approached through the lens of ‘drama’. In this thesis, theories and concepts from both dramatism and dramaturgy (grouped and labelled as a ‘dramatistic’ theoretical framework) will be applied to interpret the field studies.

apply to situations so as to turn them into meaningful experiences. Goffman also suggested that mechanisms for the manipulation of the meaning of social situations consist in the effective performance of characters and the enactment of scripts (1959, 1967). Victor Turner, with a broad anthropological focus, looked at *forms* of drama in different societies and described the processual unfolding of *genres of cultural performance* such as *social dramas* and *rituals* (1969, 1975, 1979, 1980). In more recent years, the *narrative turn* in social studies (Mitchell 1981) has both built on and added to dramatistic views of social action. The most extreme of such approaches render social life as enacted narratives (MacIntyre 1981)⁵ and believe that social life becomes meaningful only performatively and narratively (Riessman 2008). The narrative approach has also been adopted in organisation studies (e.g. Czarniawska 2004). In this chapter, I will briefly review these theorisations in order to introduce a preliminary summary of a dramatistic framing of social conduct and its meaning. This dramatistic perspective will inform my understanding of personnel development activities and their emergent meanings in the forthcoming chapters.

Dramatism of symbolic conduct

Kenneth Burke described his life-long scholarly work as a journey that set out to explore ‘the nature of literary forms’, but later reoriented to studies of language, a set of theorisations which he dubbed *dramatistic* (1978, p.330-335). Burke’s body of work on dramatism, thick in volume and wide in scope, offers a frame for interpretation of human conduct, language, and the construction of symbolic realities. Dramatism builds on the assumption of human capacity for symbolic action, and renders people as

⁵ Such views have been criticised, for example in Strawson (2004)

'symbol makers' and 'symbol users' (Czarniawska 1997, p.31). Language interested Burke specifically as the *primary* mode of symbolic action, which was reflected in his dramatisitic interpretation of human conduct (Kärreman 2001). Burke's dramatism then approaches language not as a mode of knowledge but as 'a mode of doing' (Burke, 1978, p.330).

Burke's dramatism offers an understanding of *motivated action* according to the circumstances of its occurrence. To clarify, motives in Burkean terminology do not refer to the cause behind the responsive conduct; rather, motives are complementary *verbal explanations* people think or say about what they or other people do, in order to make sense of these actions. The capability for conducting purposeful action and providing a verbal account that makes it meaningful, in other words motivated action, features in Burke's work as a distinctive human activity (Brock et al. 1985).

Burke's dramatisitic framework came to the spotlight in sociological studies, most prominently, through the work of Michael Overington who introduced dramatism as a methodology for explaining social conduct and its meaning (1977). As Overington admitted, Burke's dramatism had already served sociological theorisation by providing the basis for the symbolic interactionist studies of motives. As mentioned, motives are, in Burkean terms, the verbal explanation of action. In the same way, *accounts*, *justifications* and *rationalisations* were terms formulated by symbolic interactionist scholars (Mills and Horowitz 1963, Scott and Lyman 1968) as explanations people give for social actions – their own or those of others.

Dramatism, Overington pointed out, is not only a helpful model for the explanation of social action and its motives. Its focus on language and verbal explanations makes it also a powerful tool for exploration of other methodologies, theories and perspectives.

Dramatistic insights can be adopted as a critical tool, a 'meta-method' for reflecting on other sociological theories (1977, p.133). Similarly, Kärreman (2001) acknowledged the virtues of adopting dramatism in organisation studies as a 'metaperspective' that reflects on the meaning conveyed by other organisation theories⁶.

Overington proposed the adoption of two other dramatistic formulations by sociologists: the *pentad* and the *ratios* between its five elements, a duo that has been applied not just in sociological scholarship but also in studies of organisations and management. Following on the introduction to these two notions, I draw on the literature from sociology and organisation theory to reflect on how a dramatistic framing of events and actions may develop understanding and create meaning.

The pentad and the ratios

The dramatistic pentad is, according to Burke, hardly an original concept: it is close to interpretative frameworks such as Aristotle's 'Four Causes', 'the Latin hexameter' and the 'journalists' catechism' (for further detail see Overington 1977, p.141 and Burke 1978, p.332). The five elements of the pentad – act, scene, agent, agency, and purpose – can help investigate human conduct and its motives:

In a rounded statement about motives, you must have some word that names the *act* (names what took place, in thought or deed), and another that names the *scene* (the background of the act, the situation in which it occurred); also, you must indicate what person or kind of person (*agent*) performed the act, what means or instruments he used (*agency*), and the purpose. (Burke 1969, p.xv; italics in the original)

⁶ He applied this dramatistic approach to provide a novel explanation of *contingency theory*, *strategic choice theory* and *social constructionism* (Kärreman 2001).

The pentad, as Burke described it, tells the interpreter 'what to ask' (1978, p.332). The pentadic inquiry therefore, can be conducted through five questions exploring what, who, how, when/where and why an action took place, hence providing a meaningful statement of motivated action: what was done? (Act); when or where was it done? (Scene); who did it? (Agent); how did she/he do it? (Agency) and why? (Purpose).

Burke (1985) argued that although different people who make sense of the same act may disagree about each of the pentadic elements (even how to explain the act itself), any 'complete statement about motives' (in Brock et al. 1985, p.20) must include an explanation regarding the five elements of the pentad. A complete statement can be read as a *meaningful* one. Nevertheless, on some occasions, only one or a couple of pentadic elements are offered as explanation of what has happened (or will happen) but the participants in or the audiences of the activity may be so taken by such explanations that they will produce the other elements in consistency with these, what Mangham and Overington (1983) denoted as a dramatistic *mystification* which can be used for manipulative persuasion.

This codification of five questions led to a crucial point made by Burke regarding dramatism: that the pentad is meant as an analytical tool for interpretation of the action that has already happened. Pentadic analysis has no claims on providing guidelines for future action (Burke 1978). To elaborate on this point, Burke gave the example of the pentadic interpretation as a means for literary criticism. The dramatistic pentad is not meant to produce a text but is a guideline for interpretation of one that already exists: 'My job [in developing the pentadic analysis] was not to help a writer decide what he might say to produce a text. It was to help a critic perceive what was going on in a text that was already written' (Burke 1978, p.332). This *retrospective*

feature of the pentadic perspective makes it an effective analytical tool for the interpretation of all types of symbolic activities, including artistic events such as theatrical performances. The pentad shows how to approach the drama that has unfolded, how to question and interpret it, and how to comment on the interpretations it offers (Mangham and Overington 1987).

The pentadic elements however, are not the only focus of Burke's work; he emphasised that it is the relations among the elements, i.e. the *ratios*, which offer an understanding of what has taken place (Burke, 1978, p.332). In effect, the correlation between any given two elements of the pentad can be used to explain action and its motives (explanations of action). As Overington pointed out:

The Scene-Act ratio, for example, is an assertion that particular acts correlate with particular scenes, and "sensible" explanations will exhibit a consistency between acts and their scenes. Likewise, the Scene-Agent ratio explains actions as a result of a correlation between agents and scene. (1977, pp.141-142)

Several attempts have been made to formulate the nature of such correlations. Kärreman described the relation between the elements of the pentad as being 'dramatistically bound' rather than following a fixed mechanistic pattern (2001, pp.99-100). This relationship, he argued, can be causal (one element may cause the other; for example, an action may transform the scene); it may be coincidental (Burke for example described a coincidental scene-act ratio in Joseph Conrad's novel *Victory*, in which the drama gets to its peak when, in the background, there 'happens' to be a volcanic eruption); or, the ratios may follow 'a principle of selection' (when the presence of one element privileges the presence of certain other elements. For instance, hospitals are scenes that privilege patients, doctors and nurses as agents.).

Mangham and Overington described such selective correlation of the five elements as 'synecdochic', as one element signifies the presence of the other. For instance, certain scenes 'signal' certain types of actions (1983, p.131). This selection process, they argued, in drama, as well as in social life, should follow culturally encoded expectations of the participants and the audience; otherwise, the drama would not be rendered 'sensible' (Overington 1977, p.142).

Accepting this argument leads one to the conclusion that in spite of the retrospective nature of the pentadic analysis discussed before, inquiries regarding the 'ratios' add a prospective angle to the dramatistic inquiry. The relationship between the pentadic elements makes the ratios not only a tool for explanation of situations, but also a means for *prescription* of action in such situations. As the pentadic inquiry justifies actions, the ratios between the five elements provide guidance for people who are unsure of how to behave in certain situations or with certain people. The ratios 'bring the situation into line with the cultural expectancies that are set in the linguistic structure of mind' (Overington 1977, p.143).

Reflecting on the formulation of ratio-based inquiry, Overington spoke of Burke's emphasis on 'the motivational influence of sheer terms' (1977, p.134). People's interpretation of what has happened defines the course of their future actions, in ways which are consistent with their perception of specific ratios. He gave an example of a death in the street: if the observers interpret the act as murder, they would look for a murderer (agent) and the reasons behind the crime (purpose). He emphasised: 'it is not the fact of the act as murder, but the fact of *calling* it "murder" which leads to the search for an intentional killer' (1977, p.134). In brief, the 'verbal explanations' by which

people make sense of what has occurred, are powerful in that they may influence the prospective course of conduct.

As a final point of discussion on Burke's dramatism, it is necessary to look closer into the relation between drama and motivated action as formulated within dramatistic inquiry. Commentators have highlighted that Burke's dramatism is concerned with drama in its literal sense: Overington (1977) suggested that Burke used drama not as a metaphor but as a 'fixed form' of human action, since human conduct is for him 'essentially' dramatic. In fact, Burke studied this 'form' by observing theatrical productions and then making analogies with formal processes that shape human actions: a playwright can write a successful script if she or he knows how to connect the agent, purpose and the scenes and their ratios (the characters and plots) in ways that are consistent with cultural expectations of the audience. Human conduct can be understood in the same light. So, 'Burke is saying that drama provides a form for the analysis of human action' (Overington 1977, p.143). Burke himself stated that in his model 'drama is employed, not as a metaphor but as a fixed form that helps us discover what the implications of the terms "act" and "person" really are' (Burke 1968, p.448). He further reinforced his view on dramatism as a literal perspective by giving an example of people trapped in a ship-wreck (in Brock et al. 1985):

There is an unlimited number of ways of responding to that situation. Yet, each response is a very literal response to the situation. Thus I don't view the theory of dramatism as a metaphor or as a way of saying that "all the world's a stage." I use the notion of the stage to highlight that an act is occurring. (Brock et al. 1985, p.24)

In summary, Burke's dramatistic perspective offers an understanding of symbolic action and its meaning by the application of drama as a form of human behaviour. In

Burke's world, all we do is dramatic. The literature on the pentad and pentadic ratios, in my reading, draws on four main principals: first, the pentadic elements are formed as five questions that, if posed and answered, can interpret any symbolic action in a meaningful way. Second, the pentad is aimed to be, as Overington (1977) put it, a 'logic of inquiry' (p.133): it questions and interprets what has already occurred rather than providing guidelines for future conduct. Third, the different elements of the pentadic inquiry are to be in accordance with one another if the action and the explanation of the action are to be regarded as meaningful. Further, the dramatisitic-ratios add a prescriptive angle to the pentadic analysis. Finally, dramatisitic devices, the pentad and ratios, have been emphasised by Burke – and by all who were influenced by him – as a literal, not a metaphorical perspective.

Inspired by Burke's dramatism, Erving Goffman's theorisations are intended not specifically for interpretation of the meaning of human actions; but, rather, for studying mechanisms and rules that, in Goffman's terms, 'define the situation' within which meanings are produced (Kärreman 2001). The next section is devoted to Goffman's dramaturgy.

Dramaturgy of social interactions

Goffman's dramaturgy is a framework for constructing and understanding the 'social realities' of people's experiences. Dramaturgical insights are not meant to prove the truth or falsehood of such realities but to study the ways those realities can be projected, maintained or discredited (Goffman 1959, p.66). In his early work Goffman developed dramaturgical techniques for the projection and maintenance of certain impressions of one's behaviour and character, in order to impose the desired definition of the social situation. Later, Goffman extended the dramaturgical formulation of the

definition of situation to develop *frame analysis* which deals with an examination of the basic *frameworks* people apply to their everyday life events so as to organise and make sense of their experiences. The scope of my review of Goffman's work is limited to: first, the rules and techniques of expression meant for definitions of situated reality, explored under the more general title of *impression management*; then, Goffman's formulation of frame analysis, which provides his ground rules for examining the frames through which participants in social situations perceive realities.

Impression management

Goffman suggested taking the perspective 'of a theatrical performance' for studying social life organised within the boundaries of all types of social establishments, 'domestic, industrial, or commercial' (1959, p.xi). He thus elaborated his formulation of the theatrical model: in theatre, the actors are engaged in projecting certain impressions of who they are and the situation they are acting within so as to shape the theatrical reality the audience experiences. The same mechanisms apply to social life, the difference being that on the social stage the distinction between the actors and the audience becomes obscure in that everyone gets to perform and be an actor.

What is more, in social interactions people try to 'gather information' about others with the purpose of reaching a definition of the experienced reality, so as to act and interact accordingly. They try to create and sustain certain impressions of themselves to be able to get 'a desired response' from the others with whom they are interacting (1959, p.1). Thus, similar to life on the theatrical stage, social life can be arranged, and understood, through enactment of dramaturgical principles.

Goffman directed his principles for the dramatisation of social action at a specific social domain, what he termed the *interaction order*, which is the domain of activities taking

place in situations of face-to-face interactions (Goffman 1983). According to him: 'While in the presence of others, the individual typically infuses his activity with signs which dramatically highlight and portray confirmatory facts that might otherwise remain unapparent or obscure' (1959, p.30). Such social occasions in which the participants sustain a 'single focus of cognitive and visual attention', or as Goffman called them 'encounters' (1961, pp.7-8), constituted the main unit of social organisation to which he devoted his dramaturgy.

Within encounters, he argued, people communicate information through two modes: first, communication in the conventional sense, 'the verbal symbols and their substitutes' (1959, p.2). Verbal expressions are presumed to be easy to control (and manipulate) by the individual who conveys them. Goffman called these the 'expressions given'. The second mode of communication involves the 'expressions given off', those expressive behaviours that are supposedly out of the individual's command or control; hence, they may be used by the others to check on the validity of the individual's verbal expressions. However, general assumptions regarding the authenticity of the expressions given off are known to everyone and therefore with the benefit of this common knowledge anyone may take advantage of and manipulate their purportedly given off expressions in order to present their actions in a certain light. They can put on a show or a performance; in fact, 'almost anyone can quickly learn a script well enough to give a charitable audience some sense of realness in what is being contrived before them' (1959, p.71).

Nevertheless, people who receive the impressions are not easily deceived. First of all, the audience is equipped with the same dramaturgical tools; unlike in theatre, in real life, the audience are also fellow actors. All participants are aware of the potential for

manipulation of the expressions given off and look meticulously for proof of validity of the claims presented by others. This 'sets the stage for a kind of information game – a potentially infinite cycle of concealment, discovery, false revelation and rediscovery' (1959, p.8). Yet, Goffman argued that participants in their capacity as 'audience' usually have the advantage in this game:

The arts of piercing an individual's effort at calculated unintentionality seem better developed than our capacity to manipulate our own behaviour, so that regardless of how many steps have occurred in the information game, the witness is likely to have the advantage over the actor. (1959, p.9)

Due to such disadvantage on the part of the performer, Goffman developed his set of techniques for effective 'impression management' and contingencies of their employment (1959, p.15).

Impression management does not necessarily imply a sinister motivation on the impression manager's part. At many social occasions, one projects a certain impression of oneself only in order to conform to the rules of politeness or the demands of one's official role in that situation. Impression management, indeed, is a social activity that everyone gets involved in: regardless of one's objectives, one tries to control – consciously or habitually – the response others make towards one. This only becomes possible by controlling the definition of the situation which others come to and this requires managing the impressions one is making on the others. Performance, therefore, becomes everyone's means for negotiation of impressions and meanings in social encounters.

Goffman approached a performance from three different angles: first, he argued that each encounter involves continuous interchange of 'performer' and 'audience' teams.

These are ephemeral groupings of people who work together dramaturgically to establish a certain image of themselves and the actions they are conducting. Second, 'information control' matters to the success of the performance. The performers attempt to control the audience's access to information in order to maintain the desired impression. Destructive information, that which may disrupt or discredit the performance, must be hidden from the audience (1959, p.141). The third aspect is concerned with the control of space. The performing team acts on the 'front stage' for the audience who is not granted access to the 'back stage' where the performer team (or individual) can act 'out of character' (1959, p.167).

Along these aspects of performance, Goffman proposed and exemplified several techniques for impression management; as the performance is directed through control of information by the performer team, some aspects of the reality projected by performers may be *idealised* while inconsistent aspects may be *under-communicated*. For instance, the performers may highlight their actions in conformity with the dominant moral values of the society while concealing all aspects that may discredit this image. An 'expressive coherence' is sustained through such idealisation techniques (1959, p.65). *Audience segregation* is another technique by which such coherence may be attained. The performer maintains a separation between the audience groups for which she or he acts in contradictory ways and therefore saves each set of impressions from the threats imposed by the others. Another technique is used by task performers whose activities have little visibility. In such cases the performers may apply *dramatisation* techniques. For example, service providers may overcharge clients on their visibly dramatic services in order to cover the cost of other tasks that are less visible. Another technique concerns the *management of the social front*, which involves

the 'setting' where the performance is taking place, the 'appearance' of the performer and the 'manner' in which she or he performs. In a fashion reminiscent of Burke's pentadic correlations, Goffman advised impression managers to maintain consistency between the setting, the appearance of the performers and their manners (1959, p.27). Moreover, staging techniques, Goffman suggested, are very regularly adopted to manage impressions: the performers rehearse and develop a bond in the back region. *Communications out of character* which occur in the back stage provide the members of the same team with intimacy and backstage solidarity (p.113).

Performers need also to be conscious of many ways through which their projected impression may be discredited. Hence some strategies for impression maintenance are required. The performance may be misunderstood by the audience. *Unmeant gestures* may easily lead to misunderstandings. There are always incidents that are not meant by the performer to convey meaning of any kind – the performers might embarrass themselves by momentary loss of physical control or they might be over-excited about their performance – but at the same time such incidents may ruin the performance and the audience may misinterpret their meaning. In brief, the framework for impression management stems from Goffman's belief that, while impression management is extremely difficult, it is a device for defining the meaning of the situation one is experiencing and as such is a necessary part of everyday life (Goffman 1959, 1967).

Framing the experience

In *Frame Analysis* (1974) Goffman proposed methods for the 'organisation of the experience' through finding a response to the question 'What is it that's going on here?' (p.8) He explained:

My aim is to try to isolate some of the basic frameworks of understanding available to our society for making sense out of events and analyze the special vulnerabilities to which these frames of reference are subject. I start with the fact that from an individual's particular point of view, while one thing may momentarily appear to be what is really going on, in fact what is actually happening is plainly a joke, or a deception, or a theatrical performance, and so forth. (1974, pp.10-11)

He introduced *primary frameworks* as the 'original interpretation' of what is going on, without which the scene would be considered meaningless. Employment of these frames determines people's perceptions and descriptions of the things happening. Any social group develops a 'framework of primary frameworks' through which they make sense of their everyday life events and activities. This 'belief system' or 'cosmology' according to Goffman constitutes a major part of the culture of that society (1974, p.27). In many societies, he argued, there is a belief that any event can be explained and understood within a conventional framework of frames. These include two main categories of primary frames: natural versus social. Natural frames are employed to make sense of events that no intentional causality, direction or orientation regulates, as if they are Nature's doing. Social frames, when applied, describe life events as *guided doings*, as activities that were intended by some intelligent agent whose motives can be questioned by applying some moral standards.

In contrast to primary frameworks that make meaningless events meaningful, the other type of frames, 'keys', are not 'meaningful in themselves' but guide actions based on the pattern of activities already established as meaningful (1974, p.40). Certain types of activities are organised on such grounds; for instance, playful actions are usually patterned after serious actions. Goffman also brought other examples from everyday life; dramatic staging, retrospective description and fantasising are all activities that

seem to mean one thing while actually having another meaning. Keys are a 'set of conventions by which a given activity, one already meaningful in terms of some primary framework, is transformed into something patterned on this activity but seen by the participants to be something quite else' (p.44).

Keying, then, is defined as the process that transforms a set of activities already meaningful in a primary framework into a key. In this sense a dramatic performance which stages a fight is a keying process with the following elements: first, the functions and the scope of activities are transformed so that there are no actual casualties. Second, all participants are aware of such transformation of frames. They see what is going on as theatre not as a real fight between adversaries. Third, the transformation is bracketed in time by the provision of cues, i.e. the rise and fall of the theatre curtain. Therefore, during that period of time if the participants are asked 'what is it that's going on here?' their response would be 'it's a performance' rather than 'it's a fight'. Actions and events that are understood only by application of primary frameworks are happening literally while keying of these events transforms them to another version, a 'nonliteral activity'; the activity that is framed as a fight when staged transforms into a performance that is patterned after a fight. Yet, the performance is a literal activity in its own terms. 'The staging of these actions is really or actually occurring' (1974, p.47).

Goffman elaborated on common keys employed in everyday life such as make-believe activities that are patterned after another frame of events but have no 'practical' purpose and are rather designed as a pastime for entertainment or for aesthetic pleasure. The most prevalent type of make-believe, dramatic scriptings 'provide a mock-up of everyday life, a put-together script of unscripted social doings, and thus are a source of broad hints concerning the structure of this domain' (p. 53). Goffman then

elaborated on 'the organisation of the inner worlds' of stage plays, radio shows, movies, and fiction writing and the way a dramatic reality is constructed and sustained by collaboration between the playwright, director, actors and the audience (or, in his term, the onlooker) (pp. 124-156).⁷

In summary, Goffman's dramaturgy offers dramatistic means for making sense of social situations. His frame analysis problematises the frameworks people apply to make the situation and their place within it meaningful. Furthermore, his impression management provides possible techniques and guidelines for projection of certain meanings of the self and the situation in social interactions.

Reflecting on Goffman's formulation of frames, the symbolic anthropologist Victor Turner, commented that 'social life may itself be seen as an endless negotiation about which cultural frame of meaning should surround and account for a given bit of behavior' (1979, p.489). Turner adopted a dramatic view of social life in that he presented cultures as constructed and expressed through 'collective performance'. His anthropology, then, built on drama as the means for framing 'social processes' enacted through collective performances. Such dramatic tools, or as he described them 'genres of cultural expression' are the topic of the next section.

Genres of cultural performance

Victor Turner presented 'social processes' as essentially dramatic in form, in that they are enacted as public performances (1975, p. 32). He examined the structure of such social performances and introduced several 'genres of cultural expression' that are

⁷ The insights provided by Goffman's theatrical frames influenced scholars of other disciplinary traditions; for example, the organisational theorists Ian Mangham and Michael Overington in their development of a theatrical analogy for understanding organisational life (*Organization as Theatre* 1987), about which I will write extensively in the forthcoming chapters.

performed repeatedly and in many cultures. For Turner, performance is a form for public reflexivity, 'the ways in which a group or a community seeks to portray, understand, and then act on itself'. Such reflexivity is necessarily dramatic, that is 'literally in doing codes' (1979, p.465). The expressive genres induce reflexivity and persuade members of a society to consciously or subconsciously follow certain ways of framing of situations and consequently offer them a repertoire of possible actions to take on. In other words, the rhetorics and the structure offered by the expressive genres may inform future processes of collective or individual actions (1980, p.153). From these genres, I will draw on *social dramas* and the *ritual process*.

Social dramas

In Turner's view studying societies and their cultures is best achieved through a 'processual approach' that pictures societies as always flowing and changing. Social processes offer opportunities for the enactment of contradictory interests and priorities and the subsequent emergence of conflict and upheaval. *Social drama*, as a genre of cultural expression, reflects Turner's belief in the advantages of learning about a society through its 'public episodes of tensional irruption' (1975, p.33).

Social drama is structured through four phases: first it surfaces in form of a 'breach' of the routine and taken-for-granted social relations or customs of a group of people whose opposing interests are expressed symbolically in an open disagreement. The breach, if not restored, often leads to a 'crisis', a pointed and public division of the society into antagonistic poles. This stage is a turning point in the social dramas of groups and societies as conflict becomes overt and the 'true state of affairs' is revealed while real loyalties are unmasked (1975, p.39). Through the third phase, 'redressive actions' are undertaken by different parties to stop the breach from further widening.

These actions or 'mechanisms' vary in depth and magnitude and are conducted by official or unofficial representatives of the social system. These can range from the provision of personal advice to formal judiciary actions. They may as well include a public ritual of finding a scapegoat to sacrifice for the social group's 'sins of redressive violence' (1980, p.151). The final phase of the social drama involves the effects of the redressive mechanisms undertaken, which if successful, bring the opponent parties together as reconciled. The social relations, however, will be altered and never the same as what used to be prior to the breach. When redressive mechanisms are unsuccessful, the social group recognises the inevitable breakdown and comes to terms with its disintegration into separated social systems. Turner noticed that social drama, in form, resembles 'tragedy' as defined by Aristotle as 'the imitation of action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude [...] having a beginning, middle and an end' (1980, p.153).

Social dramas in Turner's formulation are events or sequences of social events noted, in retrospect, as temporally and processually structured. This structure constitutes an archetype after which many social processes are patterned.⁸ As a genre for collective expression, social drama provides a model for understanding the 'agonistic' relations within a society (1975, 1980). According to Turner, there are great many social processes that are patterned after social dramas. In each culture such dramas are translated into narratives and then recounted, enacted and remembered through cultural rituals and performances. To this effect, they become a part of the 'collective

⁸ In fact, Turner argued for the universality of social drama as an 'isolable unit of social process' that can be identified in societies of 'all scale and complexity' (1975, p.33). In his opinion, social drama is 'a spontaneous unit of social process and a fact of everyone's experience in every human society' (1980, p.149).

memory' of that culture's members. Social drama, in such light, provides possible structures – ways of connecting social actions and events to one another – and offers individuals and groups a frame for informing their actions: 'life, after all, is as much an imitation of art as the reverse' (1980, p.153). Social dramas as a genre present a repertoire of aesthetic tools and styles to shape people's perceptions of social situations and to direct the prospective course of collective and individual actions. Put differently, such a paradigm offers 'a rhetoric, a mode of emplotment, and a meaning' to social processes (1980, p.153).

The ritual process

Another genre of cultural performance – the *ritual process* – was defined by Turner as:

Prescribed formal behavior for occasions not given over to technological routine, having reference to beliefs in invisible beings or powers regarded as the first and final causes of all effects. (1980, p.159)

A ritual in such formulation has several distinctive qualities: first, it is essentially a performance and it develops through 'performative sequencing'. Then, it features an 'antiseccular' performance, either magical or religious. Turner claimed however, that, in contemporary western societies, as magic and religion are announced obsolete⁹, ritual has been replaced by a range of aesthetic forms, e.g. opera, ballet, theatre, the novel and so on. Finally, a ritual is different from other social performances in that it 'transforms' the participants from one mode of being to another. The ritual process involves

⁹ This is not, however, the view adopted in this dissertation. Religion and rituals are still established parts of contemporary life. Even magic, in the metaphorical and literal sense, has an undeniable presence in our sensemaking toolsets (Rhodes and Pitsis 2008). This point has been elaborated upon by Latour (1993).

transitions from one social world to another. The latter qualities distinguish rituals from other cultural performances such as *ceremonies* (1980, pp.160-161).

Turner borrowed Van Gennep's classical formulation of *les rites de passage* (1909). Staged in three phases, rites of passage are performed with the purpose of the upward mobility of specific members of the social group. These 'initiates' are first separated from their everyday lives and the established social structure. Then, they enter a 'liminal' space, 'a limbo of statuslessness', during which all participants in the ritual process are stripped of their established identities and status and are directed through the transformational process. Later, having passed the transition phase successfully, they are allowed to claim their new status and position. Hence, they reintegrate into the social structure but as different and new (1969, p.97).

In summary, Turner introduced social dramas and the ritual process as two main cultural genres that offer a frame for the organisation and understanding of social processes. Turner spoke of another cultural genre, *narrative*, as 'the cultural grandchild' of the ritual (1980, p.167). Next, I will draw on the studies of narrative as a mode of textual doing. The narrative perspective on social life is relevant to the dramatic views studied in this chapter, since any performance, in theatre or in life, is an enacted narrative.

A narrative approach

If one adopts the view of social life as drama and drama as enacted narratives, then life is but enacted narrative (MacIntyre, 1981). Narrative comes in many forms and across many spatial and temporal domains. In Roland Barthes' words, 'like life itself, it is there, international, transhistorical, transcultural' (1975, p.237). In effect, studies of narrative forms and structures have not been confined to literary theory but have found their

way into the domain of social studies. The recent emergence of the narrative turn in social studies is an indicator of the success of such adaptations:

One of the reasons for an eager spousal of a narrative approach in both the humanities and social sciences might be that it is useful to think of an enacted narrative as the most typical form of social life (MacIntyre, 1981/1990: 129). This need not be an ontological claim; life might or might not be an enacted narrative but conceiving it as such provides a rich source of insight. (Czarniawska, 2004, p.3)

Czarniawska's (2004) definition – closely followed in this research – defines narrative as 'a spoken or written text giving an account of an event/action or series of events/actions, chronologically connected' (p.17). This distinguishes narrative from other forms of written text such as tables, lists, and recipes. A narrative connects the events/action to each other chronologically, but lacks a meaningful structure, or in other words a *plot*. Following the distinction suggested by many narratologists beginning with Aristotle, Czarniawska distinguished *story* as a specific narrative type that, in addition to chronological connections, incorporates a plot. A narrative in the form of a *chronicle*¹⁰ (in which the events and actions are connected only by chronology) must be transformed so as to produce a 'proper story', one with causal links between the events/actions and a meaningful structure which results in some evaluative point(s) (Czarniawska 2004, pp.17-19; 2008b, pp.35-37). This becomes possible though the process of *emplotment*, the insertion of a plot into the otherwise inconsistent and fragmented list of actions and events, and the creation of a meaningful whole (White 1973; Czarniawska 2004).

¹⁰ Chronicle in modern times resembles the organisational type of 'report' (Czarniawska 2004; Riessman 2008).

In everyday life, emplotment is a device for giving meaning to the web of actions and events that one is a part of. In other words, emplotment is a device for what Karl Weick (1995) called *sensemaking*: 'the processes by which people produce meaning in both their collective and their individual lives, continually attaching significance to things that are happening to them' (Czarniawska 2008b, p.38).

The narrative approach suggests that people understand and make sense of an experience (an action, an event or a combination of both) by locating it within a plot. A basic plot is usually defined as follows: a balanced situation is disrupted by external forces or internal complications; corrective actions follow to reverse the effects of such disruptions and reclaim balance; this concludes with arriving at a final state of affairs, a new balance for the new situation (Czarniawska 2004). Through emplotment, actions become sensible.

But which plots are used to make sense of life? Czarniawska (2004) suggested that people emplot their narratives by choosing from the pool of scripts and conversations available to them. Stories and conversations are not created from scratch but are constructed by drawing on previous stories and conversations, on the set of narratives repeatedly told, written and enacted. People change these scripts and personalise them. They may subvert them; their ways of emplotment may be contested by other participants in the social interactions; they have to negotiate and construct such narratives through collective acts of positioning (Davies and Harré, 1990); yet, their narratives are built on plots that are recognisable as sensible. Such 'repetitive patterns of emplotment' were described by Czarniawska and Rhodes (2006) as *strong plots*. They emphasised that this notion does not have universalistic implications but:

[...] some plots are strong – or stronger than others – because they have been institutionalized, repeated through centuries, well rehearsed [...] One should therefore speak of *conventional* rather than *traditional* plots, and of *dominant* rather than strong plots: they are strong in a given time and place. There are many mythologies and each of them contains many myths, many Greek dramas – some of which are more remembered in certain times than others – and a great many folk tales. (p. 204, italics in the original)

Strong plots are offered by narrative frameworks each culture has accumulated. Termed *interpretative templates* (Czarniawska 2008b, 2010, 2012b) such frames are devices for interpreting the social world and its participants.

Interpretative templates

Interpretative templates are like ‘templates on our computers’ in that they offer a ‘pattern’ for sensemaking and interpretation (2010, p.207). Czarniawska introduced this notion as a complement to Goffman’s frame analysis. In Goffman’s view, to be able to understand ‘what it is that is happening’, one inserts one or multiple frames into what is being experienced. Frames are organising devices: when one experiences something new, she or he locates it within an already existing frame to make it meaningful. In the same vein, Czarniawska defined interpretative templates, as ‘schematic plots that can be used for weaving disparate events in a meaningful whole’ (2008b, p.38). They complement frame analysis in two main ways: first, in addition to suggesting a frame for understanding the situation, they provide ‘a prescription for further action’ (Czarniawska 2012b, p.762). These templates are emplotted stories of the past that provide a platform for construction of meaning in the present and future:

The production of meaning is always retroactive; making sense of future events is a projection of the past interpretative templates onto the future, with a hope that they will hold. We can see

present events as meaningful only when they become the past, although their meaning may be continuously changing. (2008b, p.33)

The second point of distinction between interpretive templates and frames lies in Goffman's (1974) sharp division of 'natural frameworks' explaining uncontrollable events and 'social frameworks' interpreting intentional actions; whereas the notion of interpretative templates integrates both types of framing and, as discussed before, adds to it a guideline for responding to the experienced situation (2008b, p.39).

An interpretative template contributes in two major ways to producing meaning: it offers first, a way of emplotment and second, a set of characters. Often the two elements are connected: 'certain characters are typical of certain plots'. In the same vein as Burke's notion of dramatisic correlation between the elements of a meaningful statement, interpretative templates offer plots and characters which are consistently connected. Popular culture for example offers interpretative templates that make use of strong plots and known sets of characters (Czarniawska 2012b, p.762). For instance – and from personal observation – a theatrical piece scripted for an organisational training session may tell a story of an anguished woman (character) 'married to her work' who has given up on having a family in pursuit of professional ambitions (strong plot). This template is known to the organisational audience. They can make sense of her situation when her boss and colleagues (other characters) impose on her inconvenient working hours, as they consider her as not having other priorities¹¹.

¹¹ From field notes written during direct observation of a piece of organisational theatre.

In summary, interpretative templates offer ready-made forms of narration¹², those that are a part of what Czarniawska called a repertoire of plots available, acceptable and legitimate in a certain time and place (1997, p.16). This, by no means, conveys that people repeat the past; each narration is new, both in form and in content. People tend to use the plots of the past just because they make sense to them. They insert such templates into their life events and create new stories.

Concluding remarks

Social theorists and philosophers have long theorised about human action and its interpretation to understand the relation between 'the world of life' and 'the world of meaning' (Holt 1989, p.170). One standpoint is that of the proponents of the dramatisitic framing of social life, who have conceptualised social action as accomplished in dramatic forms and have offered interpretive tools for understanding its meaning. Table 2.1 exhibits a summary of the reviewed dramatisitic views.

This chapter was an attempt to organise the dramatisitic views of social life into a narrative that accounts for their applicability to social life as unfolding in different settings. These perspectives provide interpretive tools for the understanding of social realities which occurred in the past; they offer explanations for what is happening in the present; and they provide guidelines for future conduct. I have selected this specific collection of dramatisitic perspectives since – when applied as analytical frames – they create an image of how social life is organised through the activities of personnel development organisers in this field of practice.

¹² This does not mean such templates are static and pre-established; rather, they are prone to adjustment while following dramatisitic consistencies.

Dramatistic view	Conceptual perspective
	Analytical tools
Dramatism	People's actions are dramatic in form and can be interpreted by application of dramatistic tools
	Pentad and ratios
Dramaturgy	People perceive social situations through frame analysis, negotiate the definitions of these situations in interaction with others, and in the process manage their presentations of self
	Impression management and frame analysis
Symbolic Anthropology	Cultures are constructed through public performances which provide frames for individual or collective action
	Social dramas and rituals
Narrative Approach	People account for their actions in narratives and direct their actions performatively
	Plots and interpretive templates

Table 2.1 A collection of dramatistic views of social life and its meaning

Chapter 3: Dramatistic Personae

Shifting attention from how people make sense of *what they do* to how they develop an understanding of *who they are*, this section will be devoted to a review of drama-inspired theorisations about *the self* and relevant formulations of the notion of *authenticity*. The scope of the identity literature reviewed in this section is purposefully limited to dramatistic approaches, in the hope of organising the main threads of theory and empirical research that represent the self and its meanings in dramatic terms.

Drawing a historical map of the contemporary formulations of the notion of *self* would reveal that many such views are informed (explicitly or implicitly) by the pragmatist philosophy of William James who proposed the concept of *duplex self*¹³ as an ‘empirical entity’ that is centred in experience (1892/1984). Another major influence can be traced back to G.H. Mead’s work (1934/1967) on the development of *multiple selves* through symbolic interactions such as language, game and play. In symbolic interactionist renditions such as *role theory*, the individual’s multiple identities have been associated with corresponding social roles, a consequence of membership in several social institutions (Merton 1957, Kahn et al. 1964, Biddle 1986, Stryker and Burke 2000). More recently, however, some theorists denounced the notion of role – as proposed by role theory scholars – as ‘static’ and essentialist. Consequently, they widened their analytical lens to incorporate poststructuralist philosophical views of subjectivity (Davies and Harré 1990, p.43) and the constructionist sociology of identity (Berger 1963/1969; Gergen 1991, 1999/2009). Further elaborations came from drama-inspired theorists whose notion of self as *performed character* alluded to Erving

¹³ William James conceptualised the self as a two-fold entity, ‘partly known and partly knower, partly object and partly subject’ (1892/1984, p.159). His notion of self as the ‘me’ and the ‘I’ will be further discussed in chapter 9.

Goffman's meticulous conceptualisation of expressions given and given off, and the selves produced through the process of impression management (Goffman 1959, 1961; Mangham and Overington 1987; Brissett and Edgley 1990; Edgley 2003).

Within his framework of impression management, Goffman theorised the self as multiplied social entities, each tailored for a specific and segregated group of audience (1959, p.48). The Goffmanesque self is thus multiplied in presentation; it appears as characters in situation-tailored performances. The individual transforms to a 'face', playing different parts through everyday encounters (1967). In an audience's presence, people dramatise some aspects of their conduct to construct an ideal image of themselves, to conceal some aspects of their behaviour, to take a character that they are not authorised to take, or to show their dislike of a character by expressing 'role distance' (Goffman, 1969). All these 'interaction constraints' emerge as soon as one is in another's physical presence, or imagines it (1959, p.65). So, the self that is projected through social interactions is a presentation, a mask (Goffman 1959, pp.19-20).

Being concerned with the 'static, formal and ritualistic' aspects of Goffmanesque 'role' and 'identity', Bronwyn Davies and Rom Harré developed their *positioning theory* (1990), a linguistic model that prompted the discursive turn in identity research. Looking at social episodes from a positioning lens reveals that people negotiate the definition of the situation and their position in it through conversations. Thus positioning theory offers a set of discursive tools useful for exploring the dynamics of producing selves through social encounters.

Davies and Harré pointed out that most dramatisic perspectives (including Goffman's) had focused on 'roles' as predefined entities enacted in accordance with pre-written scripts while neglecting the inspirations provided by improvisation theatre. In contrast,

their positioning theory offered explanations for the production of 'choosing subjects' who, instead of taking up a prescribed role, bring their own lived histories, learnt narratives and characters into conversations. The concept of positioning denotes that 'in speaking and acting from a position, people are bringing to the particular situation their history as a subjective being, that is the history of one who has been in multiple positions and engaged in different forms of discourse' (Davies and Harré 1990, p.48).

Positioning unfolds when people tell stories which are fragments of their autobiographies. Through such braided multiple storylines, a repertoire of complementary characters or positions becomes available for attribution to themselves and to others involved in the conversation. People position one another through *interactive positioning*, while positioning themselves through *reflexive positioning*. When an utterance is said or an act is performed, the participants respond to the imposed positioning by either accepting or resisting the positions attributed to them. They may try to develop alternative storylines, thus challenging the first round of positioning (Harré and Langenhove 1999). Positioning, in this sense, is a dynamic process and a constant effort in negotiation, in that there are multiple storylines and positions developed in one encounter. The same applies to the selves produced through ongoing acts of positioning: rather than fixed and objectively solid, such selves are fluid, prone to change and open to challenge and negotiation.

In a similar vein, Mangham and Overington (1987, p.143) diagnosed the disappearance of all absolutes as 'the symptom of our age' and announced that the self lacks any essence; rather, it is fluid. Personal identities resemble those of fictional and theatrical characters because, firstly, in life like in theatre, characters are nothing but the sum of the actions they conduct. Secondly, characters do not precede their actions; but quite

the reverse; actions are the starting points on the theatrical and the social stage. Finally, like in theatre, social characters are constructed through the process of presentation to the audience, interpretation of audience response, and rewriting of the characters accordingly. The relationship between theatre and social life is in fact best manifested in the production of personae:

Hamlet is an artificial reality. A product of the author's imagination but one with a multiplicity of selves – almost as many as there are of us in the audience... On the theatrical stage, what we observe when we go to Hamlet is not only a product of our imaginations and that of the author, but also a product of our response to a third party, the actor. This is what makes the [theatrical] analogy so powerful: an author, an actor, members of the audience between them create the character. As in the theatre, so in social life and organisational life: every one of us is not only the product of our 'onli[e] begetters', our parents, but are formed by the responses of others to us and ourselves to them. As characters we are the result – and only the result – of a process of creating, presenting, interpreting and being interpreted. (p.143)

The recent wave of theorisation on self and identity has been influenced by similar traditions of sociological and psychological theory that portray the self as lacking an essence, and as fragmented and fluid (Gergen 1991; Kellner 1992). According to such theorisations, it is better to give up on the hope for a coherent, unified and essential self: there is no 'true self' to be discovered.

Such views on identity are often divided into two opposing stances in their implications (Czarniawska 2000; Holstein and Gubrium 2000). They either celebrate the emancipation of individuals from 'the tyranny of authenticity' as, in this way, 'everybody will be who they want to be' (reviewed in Czarniawska 2000, p. 276); or they announce the end of the 'story of the self', with no more empirical reality behind it (reviewed in Holstein and Gubrium 2000, p.57). A vivid instance can be found in the

conceptualisation of self by the leading constructivist psychologist, Kenneth Gergen (1991, 1999/2009). In 1991, he looked at how the numerous technologies of communication *saturate* the individual's life with social relationships, which in turn saturate one's selfhood. He described the existence of a contemporary person as being in a state of *multiphrenia* – a state of numbness resulting from the fragmentation of self, in which everyone suffers from plural identities and lack of coherence. He believed these plural selves compete with each other for domination, but none can achieve a longitudinal dominance. Later (1999/2009) he described the self as being constructed in 'a net of relationships'; therefore, in this conceptualisation, the self becomes a *social construct*. He celebrated the emergence of the *relational self* as 'world becomes meaningful in relationships' (p.98). Thinking, remembering, and feeling all get their meaning through relationships; so does the self. Hence, the self is but a social construct produced through interaction and discourse in everyday life. As time and space change their course, so does the construction of the self (Gergen, 1999/2009).

In summary, dramatisitic theories of the self, however different in approaching the notion of identity, seem to bear similarities in some respects. First, such drama-inspired perspectives focus on the processes of constructing self rather than on their end-products, i.e. self as an entity. Therefore it is actions, and not what results from them, which are the starting point of scrutiny in studies so informed. For the constructionists, the self is not an essential entity or possession, but a process and a social construct. People are continuously engaged in a chain of social interactions through which they try to make sense of who they are (Berger 1963/1969; Gergen 1999/2009). As Peter Berger commented:

The self is no longer a solid, given entity that moves from one situation to another. It is rather a process, continuously created and re-created in each social situation that one enters, held together by the slender thread of memory. (1963/1969, p.124)

Psychologists have named this process 'selfing', a process of constructing one's self as a product or series of products in and through ongoing interactions (McAdams 1996). Poststructuralist theorists have similarly proposed a perspective on the 'subject as a verb rather than a noun', hence focusing attention on 'selving' instead of 'selves' (Davies 2000, p.17).

Second, it is assumed that such processes take place through everyday social interactions, i.e. face-to-face or imagined conversations. The meaning of one's self is constructed through negotiations with others in social situations; those others are also defining the situation. This process is an ongoing negotiation (Czarniawska 2006), as interactions are more often than not a playfield for forcing, challenging, contesting, resisting and negotiating the social/psychological realities including those of the self.

This brings me to the third theme common to the dramatisitic views of identity: an emphasis that selfing, as any other human activity, is situated, and therefore it necessarily results in multiple selves. As Brissett and Edgley observed, 'the person's self is not carried from situation to situation' (1990, p.114); rather, a person acts in many different contexts and therefore has many different selves. But does the problem of authenticity, the loyal expression of the 'true self' (Guignon, 2004), vanish if one adopts a dramatisitic view of the self that is relational, contested and multiple?

Theatricality and authenticity

Acting and actors have been accused of deceit, immorality and hypocrisy throughout history. 'The word hypocrite in Greek means literally an actor and hypocrisy, to play on

stage' (Höpfl 2002, p. 264). As 'putting on an act' is generally taken as the opposite of authentic behaviour, the fact that dramatisic views of social life have been criticised for advocating inauthentic behaviour should not cause surprise. Yet, such criticisms have been considered as partial and limited readings of dramatisic perspectives (Brissett and Edgley 1990; Buchanan and Badham 1999/2008, Mangham 2005). Here, I seek to review conceptualisations that problematise the apparently natural opposition of authenticity and theatricality. These conceptualisations will be divided in two groups. In the first, authenticity is defined from the perspective of the performer – in the sense of revealing her or his immediate feelings and thoughts (Goffman 1959). This definition follows Jean-Jacques Rousseau's conceptualisation of authenticity which assumed that immediacy of expression would reveal one's true feelings and thoughts protected from mediation or design (Guignon 2004). In the second approach, authenticity is viewed from the perspective of an audience who evaluates a performance in terms of its immediacy and naturalness. So, in this definition under the lens of scrutiny are impressions of natural and real (Goffman 1959; Mangham and Overington 1987). I will present both views and argue for the need to further extend this body of work, through theoretical and empirical contributions.

Authenticity on the performer's part

In Goffman's view, authenticity, in the sense of the expression of 'immediate heartfelt feelings', is nothing but an abstract ideal. What is more, such precise expressiveness is not necessary (and on some occasions is harmful) for the 'smooth working of society' (1959, p.9). In social interactions, reaching an agreement that corresponds to each and every participant's opinions of what the situation should be about – i.e. an ideal consensus – is impossible. In practice, people direct their expressive behaviour

towards achieving a *working consensus* on how the interactional situation is to be defined. The participants in the interaction order tend to compromise by suppressing at least some of their immediate feelings and opinions and taking into account other participants' wishes regarding the definition of the situation. In some cultures (at least the Anglo-Saxon culture studied by Goffman), people follow rules of tactfulness and generally cooperate to reach a working consensus. This is how the society can work, in Goffman's terms, based on 'a kind of interactional *modus vivendi*' (p.9). Authenticity then, in the sense of the expression of immediate thoughts and feelings, without the interference of a harmonising social filter, is impossible to realise by all participants of an encounter. Some participants, at least, must compromise.

Even if one suspends the above rationale for a working consensus versus an ideal one, and for a moment believes that everyone's expressions can be loyal enactments of psychological processes, i.e. of immediate thoughts and feelings, the possibility of an authentic expression of self still remains problematic. Reflecting on Goffman's take on the notion of authenticity, Kärreman (2001) commented that all that is socially situated is in fact mediated through 'the logic of impression management', even the supposed authentic expressions of the self. Moreover, impression management is not a matter of choice; rather, expressions are always dramatic. As discussed earlier, interaction constraints emerge in all social situations. According to the dramaturgic views so far reviewed, meaning is constructed through social interactions. Expressiveness, argued Brissett and Edgley (1990) is the only way of communicating meaning: 'man is not only condemned to freedom (Sartre, 1959) but also is condemned to expression, no matter how imperfect it may be' (p5). Hence, meaning cannot be achieved unless through expressions, given and given off. Such inevitability of the dramatic expression, called by

Charles Edgley the 'dramaturgical principle' (2003, pp.143-144) shatters any optimism in regards to finding a way for social interaction to be a 'true' expression of an internal and authentic psychological self: 'we are what we do' and all we do is dramatically expressed (Brissett and Edgley 1990, p.114).

Authenticity in the eyes of the beholder

Mangham and Overington (1987, pp.86-97) problematised the notion of authentic behaviour in that the mere appearance of naturalness – which is usually employed by the audience as a criterion for evaluation of authentic behaviour – does not necessarily indicate the immediacy of expressiveness. The authors drew on an analogy between the world of stage theatre and the world of social life. They reasoned that in theatre, a successful performance projects a sense of 'givenness' (p.84), a theatrical reality that seems natural (authentic) without raising the curiosity of the audience regarding the activities of backstage and details of production. Acting – more than all processes in a dramatic creation – takes on the burden of creating such a sense of naturalness for the audience. Mangham and Overington asked: How do actors achieve authenticity in characterisation? The response, they proposed, lies in the repetitive process of *rehearsals*. Regardless of the techniques the actors use to portray a character, they have to repeat the part over and over through rehearsals – and through each night's performance – to achieve a sense of naturalness. In real life, people master a certain character in the same way. In everyday life, they face a repertoire of situations – never wholly similar in form or circumstance, yet mostly routine, familiar and repetitive – in which they each play and repeat their parts. The performance is never the same as the one before but familiar enough, on the social stage or on the theatrical stage.

Mangham and Overington did not deny that from time to time there occur unusual and extraordinary situations in which people have to improvise. But even improvised actions do not emerge out of thin air; rather, they are built on collective rehearsing (see Chapter 4 for further development of this theme).

Here lies the *paradox of acting*: for a stage character to be rendered authentic, it demands the actor's careful construction and control. The actor must design it so meticulously that it appears natural and undesigned in the audience's eyes (Mangham and Overington 1987, p.86). In social life in general, and in organisational life in particular, actors are considered authentic when their actions appear natural to their audience. But, such performances, as described by e.g. Richard Rottenburg, are in fact 'well-practiced and long internalized ways of acting' (2004, p.42). The paradox of acting, extended to the domain of social life, means that when people evaluate someone as acting authentically, they are in fact evaluating whether her or his behaviour looks natural or reveals signs of design and deliberation. An authentic appearance, then, is much less firmly connected to the 'solid world' as one would expect, Goffman suggested (1959, p.71). Consequently, empirical evaluation of the authenticity of somebody's behaviour can prove more difficult than expected.

Dramatisation of self in organisations

So far I have attempted a review of dramatisitic theorisations of the processes of achieving a sense of self. This section is meant to illustrate and elaborate on some of these issues in a set of reflections on Gideon Kunda's ethnography of the Silicon Valley company Tech's attempt to fashion corporate citizens 'true to themselves' and 'true to the company'. Adopting a dramatisitic view inspired by Goffman's dramaturgy and Turner's take on rituals, Gideon Kunda (2006) examined organisation members'

formulations of selves under the influence of this particular regime of normative control. In *Engineering Culture*, he reported on various managerial devices that Tech employed to implement the *corporate culture* which he classified as normative control. As a control mechanism, strong corporate culture is seen to work through education of organisation members so that they internalise it. Strong culture, Kunda explained, is meant to change the employees so that they start to 'desire' to contribute to what secures organisational interests. Such normative control is intended to shape their experiences, thoughts and feelings – in short their selves – to be oriented in ways that guarantee organisational objectives. In this sense, a strong culture encourages the employees to identify with the organisational ideologies, internalise them and express them authentically (2006, p.91).

Strong culture: A liberating resolution or an oppressive manipulation?

Among those who practice and study such forms of organisational control, Kunda identified two contrasting positions – supporters and critics. For the first group, cultural control – and the managerial devices that make it possible – offers a solution to the longstanding management problem, that of the inherent conflict between individual and collective interests. This group argues that the implementation of strong culture forms the interests of the individual employees in a way consistent with the company's interest. Hence the inherent conflict transforms into cooperation. Strong culture, in this view, shapes the organisational members' selves in a way that their potentials for growth are realised through consolidation of their commitments to the organisational objectives. Such self-actualising processes are implemented through processes of education, personal development and growth. Such prospects promise the

development of a better, healthier self, saved from the threat of 'anomie and alienation and the pathology of conflict' (Kunda 2006, p.14).

The opponents, however, challenge such optimism by providing theoretical and empirical justifications that present strong cultures in an oppressive light. For the critics, the implications of a strong culture go beyond organisational boundaries. Such control mechanisms invade the organisation members' private lives to capture the self and tame it for organisational purposes. Strong culture in this reading is evaluated as a quasi-totalitarian control system whose claim on the employees is not satisfied only by an imposition of rules, regulations and patterns of behaviour at workplace; it goes beyond organisational jurisdiction to capture their sense of self and identity. Such control, in their opinion, is but a 'sophisticated and manipulative form of tyranny in the workplace' (Kunda 2006, p.15).

Kunda viewed both stances as capturing elements of empirical reality. His ethnographic studies of Tech's strong culture program revealed signs of both liberation and oppression. His study showed that Tech employees were in fact ambivalent towards the effects of strong culture. As much as they genuinely embraced some aspects of it, they were resistant to others.

His study of organisational rituals such as presentations, formal gatherings and festivities in Tech, revealed that, through such social dramas, employees were prescribed with the desired 'member roles', which can be described as 'explicit, detailed, wide-ranging, and systematically enforced prescriptions for what members in good standing are to think and feel about themselves, their work, and the social arrangements under which it is performed' (p.161). The employees at Tech were directed to take risks, to be creative and hard-working and, even, to question the senior

management and the way things were directed at Tech. More importantly, the employees were encouraged to appear authentic in the enactment of such activities (p.91).

These prescriptions were simultaneously embraced and refused by the employees. Kunda observed that the employees had learnt to balance their commitment to their organisational roles by means of cognitive and emotional distancing in that they expressed commitment to their organisational duties but at the same time were reflexive about their activities and doubtful of the ends they served. In so doing, the employees achieved a sense of autonomy, control over external organisational forces, and an emphasis on free choice. In fact, the successful construction of the 'organisational self' in Tech, he observed, depended also on projecting an impression of the self as capable of managing the balancing of such 'role embracement' and 'role distance'¹⁴ (p.188). However, such balancing acts and their display were not achieved easily. Occasionally such attempts were unsuccessful and surfaced as burnout – an expression of a failed performance of self.

Kunda concluded that corporate culture's 'engineering' of employees' selves – so that they *desire* to achieve organisational goals – resulted not in unproblematic realisations of authentic and stable organisational selves but produced members that experienced fluctuations between role embracement and role distance on an everyday basis. Such members had internalised an ambiguous and ambivalent stance towards their working life. They viewed drama as an obvious metaphorical device for making sense of their

¹⁴ He was, of course, inspired by Goffman's formulations of 'role embracement' and 'role distance' (1961).

working lives while often using irony as a rhetorical form for expression of their beliefs and emotions, in short, their selves.

The most interesting implication of Kunda's study, in my reading, is that people who worked in Tech were neither absorbed nor duped by the strong culture: they did not idealise it, but neither did they blame it as the single culprit for their failures or emotional burnouts. Instead, they took an ambivalent and reflexive stance towards the culture. They were subject to the strong culture while being an observer and shaper of it.

On a more general note, then, one notices that organisational members are not necessarily the passive objects of managerial processes; rather, they are capable of reflecting and responding, and eventually shaping such processes. People's lives are organised within social structures, e.g. organisations, and are influenced by the constraints imposed by those structures; but, at the same time, organisation members have great capability in reflecting on and responding to such restraints. They can have an influence on the forces that shape their working lives. Authenticity is enacted in the interstices of such dynamics.

Concluding remarks

The dramatisitic views reviewed in this chapter render the problem of authenticity conceptually and empirically problematic. From a dramatisitic point of view, one's expressions of self in social interactions can never be anything but a dramatised version of what one thinks and feels. Consequently, authenticity in the sense of a precise expression of the inner life of the performer is taken by dramatisitic views to be impossible and even irrelevant to the smooth working of societies. Moreover, from the perspective of the audience who is evaluating someone as authentic, even those

supposed authentic actions that come off with natural ease or with passion and conviction may be the result of years of rehearsals and social performance.

In everyday discourse, however, people still speak of and seek authenticity (Gubrium and Holstein 2000). According to Rebecca Erickson (1995) some societies (she spoke specifically of the American society) are even obsessed with concern for authentic expression. She related this trend to the removal of absolute standards – be they moral, scientific or social, the dominance of the soulless corporations and the prevalence of ‘image’ over ‘substance’ as advocated by mass media. Similarly, within organisational settings, authenticity has been reported as a major concern (Kunda 2006, Garretty 2008). As shown in the case of Tech, authentic displays of selves are expected of organisational, and social, actors.

The problem of an authentic self, then, is not to be easily dismissed. Therefore, the challenge of reconciling authenticity with theatricality in a way that addresses such concerns requires further consideration. The allure and dominant presence of authenticity in contemporary social and organisational life should be incorporated into dramatised views of self and social interaction. This is in fact, one of the objectives pursued in this research. As the ethnographic studies of the field of personnel development revealed, the problem of the authentic self in the workplace is a major concern in the everyday practices of professionals active in this organisation field. In Part III of this dissertation, I will attempt to add to the body of studies of ‘authentic organisation members’ and will try to investigate such formulations from a dramatised view.

Chapter 4: Dramas of Organisational Life and Their Meaning

The relationship between drama and organising has been of interest to organisation scholars during the last few decades. Such enthusiasm can be related to the recent *aesthetic turn* – in management practice and research – focusing on the symbolic, emotional and artistic aspects of everyday organising (Strati 1999; Linstead and Höpfl 2000; Nissley 2002, 2010). In this chapter, organisation research which has commented on the relationship between drama and organisational life will be reviewed. This includes studies with conceptual as well as empirical elements.

In their editorial introduction to the special edition of *Organization Studies- Theatre and Organization* (2004), Georg Schreyögg and Heather Höpfl identified two main traditions of inquiry into the relationship between organisation and theatre. In the first and more established view, organisational life is framed *as* theatre. These studies are built on Goffman, Burke, Turner and Mangham and Overington's figurative application of drama for making sense of social life. Moreover, in such studies theatrical techniques and processes of 'producing theatre' have been reflected upon as sources of inspiration for new ways of thinking about organisation studies and practice. Viewing organisations as theatre, Schreyögg and Höpfl (2004) argued, widens the scope of the analytical insights applied to the world of organising in that it allows for 'parallels to be drawn between theatrical performances and organizational performances' (p.692). The second group of studies, according to these authors, explores theatre *in* organisations. This most recent trend in studies of drama in organisations comments on 'theatre performances in organizations intended as an organizational intervention' (2004, p.696).

Inspired by Schreyögg and Höpfl's categorisation, this chapter's review of organisation research is concerned with the above two areas of research, rephrased as: *organising as drama* and *organising by drama*.

Organising as drama

The theatrical model for understanding organisations was most elaborately introduced by Ian Mangham through his collaboration with Burkean scholar Michael Overington in their work *Organizations as Theatre* (1987). In the development of their analytical approach, Mangham and Overington admittedly borrowed strongly from Burke's dramatism and Goffman's dramaturgy. Unlike those authors, however, they used a theatrical analogy in order to explain the less known domain of organisational life by relating it to the better known domain, that of theatre. For this purpose, they studied the multiplicity of ways in which theatre could be used as a metaphor for understanding organisations, ranging from exploring production techniques in the backstage to the nature of activities on the front stage on performance nights.

Mangham and Overington pointed to three main advantages of the theatrical analogy as an interpretive framework. The first was that 'the playful imagery it calls up runs counter to the more usual, much more 'serious' notions of organisations' (p.3). Such theatrical framing of organisational life, they argued, allows for consideration of playful interchange between frontstage and backstage activities, reinforcement of creativity and improvisation, and rendering unexpected contingencies as a natural part of organisational life. Second, in contrast to better known analogies – such as system, living organism, or control mechanism – the very novelty of the theatrical model encourages reflection in organisers as well as in researchers who study their efforts. Finally, viewing organisation as theatre offers a liberation of spirit; it offers a

humanistic, artistic and playful approach, refusing the pessimistic belief that life in organisations is a result of forces that organisational members have no control over:

The organizations that promise us life and death are the products of human action: we want a perspective which forcibly makes that point and allow us a part as moral actors to do what we can to work for life and against death, to give the world high comedy and not great tragedy. (1987, p.26)

The authors argued that everyday social life is organised through a recurrence of ordinary and mundane social situations. The performance of routine processes makes up the basis of the social world and constructs what is taken as reality. Such ordinariness allows for conducting life activities with little conscious attention.

In the theatre, everyday realities transform into theatrical ones. When witnessing the theatrical transformations of reality, the audience develop a *theatrical consciousness* in that they are aware that what is on the stage is just a performance. The members of the audience frame the stage activities as a theatrical reality and therefore know that there is 'an actor "behind" a character, a playwright "behind" a script, a stage "behind" a performance, a reality "behind" the appearance' (Mangham and Overington 1987, p.49). However, at the same time they become reflective of such changes of frames, and of the rhetorical interpretations offered by the staged reality and of the relevance of these to their own everyday life. Consequently the audience begin to interpret life, both staged and everyday versions, in a new light.

Similarly, social situations are disrupted by a failure of some part of routine everyday processes. When there is a breakdown in routine life, people develop a *reflective consciousness* about the situation that was previously taken-for-granted. Energised by emotions and affects, they direct their attention to fixing the breakdown in the routine

processes. This attention is driven towards a common aim: to retain the routine process, create givenness and stabilise social life once more. In organisations, domains of constant conflict and commotion, such disruptive events occur often, and force the participants to reflect and reconsider their activities and taken-for-granted realities. In organisational performances, people develop a consciousness of how it was before and start to reflect on what the best course of future action must be. The emergence of reflective consciousness takes the form of an awareness of the distinction between the activity and the person participating in it, a theatrical consciousness which is liberating in that it brings into the spotlight 'all the possibilities for knowing that any action is only one among several options and the agent is neither captured by it nor totally revealed in it, that the agent's consciousness is not *necessarily* discernible in any action, that the social world is not a seamless unity of ritual conduct' (Mangham and Overington 1987, p.49, italics in original).

Other organisation researchers have contributed to the development of dramatic approaches in organisation studies. For example, Kärreman (2001) drew a list of advantages of the application of Burke's and Goffman's perspectives to studies of organising. He argued that Goffman's dramaturgy adds to the commentary on the mechanics of interactions and Burke's dramatism offers a framework for the interpretation of the meaning of human conduct in settings like organisations (p.91). In Kärreman's view, a dramatistic view of organising is beneficial, in the first place, because – unlike most organisation theories – dramatistic perspectives reinforce the importance of both repetitive and improvisational aspects of organising in that they allow for an analysis of interactions that occur both routinely and creatively. The second benefit consists in the fact that these perspectives account for action and

interaction in relation to context, a point that has been neglected by other theorisations of organisations. Goffman's dramaturgy aims for an understanding of socially situated interactions while context is incorporated in Burke's pentadic framework. Thirdly, the dramatic approaches are easily applicable to specific everyday situations in organisational life whereas other organisation theories formulate abstract and generic explications of organising practices. Finally, viewing organisation as a play, in Kärreman's opinion, provides organisation studies with rich and insightful analytical tools which highlight the constitutive role of language and symbolic expressions in shaping organising efforts.

Seeking to develop a practice-oriented (*phronetic*) approach to managing organisational change Badham, Mead and Antonacopoulou (2012) also made a list of advantages of a dramaturgical approach. First, such a perspective, following the ethos of pragmatism, provides an alternative to rationalistic views of organising. The latter portray change management as a *master technique* that prescribes formulae for order and control through a sequence of planning, execution and evaluation, conducted by official change agents (Badham 2006). In contrast, the dramaturgical view highlights the uncertainty, complexity, unpredictability and situatedness of processes and entities involved in managing change. The dramaturgical perspective views the change processes as occurring through continuous negotiations between various participants (change agents and others) who seek to define the change situation. The implications of a dramaturgical slant on managing change are, therefore, radical. Managing change as such resembles a transition ritual. Rational planning turns to preparing and plotting rituals, executive tasks transform into handling interactions, and evaluations turn to reflection:

In this context, the fulfillment of change roles is not simply or primarily a matter of defining roles and allocating responsibilities for formally managing change. It requires the use of rhetoric, negotiation and entrepreneurial creativity in confronting the conflicting expectations, frames and interests in situational encounters. In this context, change agency is less a matter of technique than it is about acting mindfully in the face of situational complexity (March 2006; Weick 2001), predictable irrationality (Ariely 2008) and the frequently unexpected (Weick and Sutcliffe 2001). (Badham et al. 2012, p.196)

The second major contribution of a dramaturgical approach to managing change, the authors suggested, is that such framing provides metaphors that facilitate understanding and sensemaking of change situations. Preparing rituals, for example, may be explored metaphorically as writing scripts for a dramatic production; handling interactions may become sensible by looking at the dynamics of a live performance and interactions between the actors and the audience; while reflections may be made sense of as 'theatre-like activities – pre-performance (rehearsal), during performance (response) and post-performance (reviews)' (Badham et al. 2012, p. 199).

Dvora Yanow (2001) reflected on the insights offered by improvisational theatre for management practices and studies. She summarised the principals of improvisational theatre in four main points. First, despite the general misconception, improvisation is developed not from scratch but is built on sustained practice over time – through collective interaction between all participant actors who *trust* one another. Second, to be able to improvise – in the sense of inventing a new act in the moment – the actors need to be aware of the context of interaction and the emerging script. They must also be mindful of a co-actor's line of thought and actions while at the same time being attentive to their own developing feelings and thoughts. In other words, the actors must have worked and rehearsed together over a long period of time to be able to

develop a mutual understanding of the situation. Third, as a rule, all improvisational acts are purposive in that in any given scene, each actor acts in certain ways to reach a set of objectives. Finally, despite having different objectives, the actors support each other in an effort to create a theatrical reality that suits all of them. The improvisation of each creative act is usually followed by an affirmatory response. The actors take care of their partner(s) by being 'in the moment', a status which becomes possible only if one is directed toward the other rather than oneself. In improvisation, actors are attentive to the sayings and doings of their fellow actors rather than focusing on themselves or being concerned with what others may be thinking about them. As Yanow claims, the lessons for organising practices are obvious:

The establishment of collective, practice-oriented familiarity and trust enables improvisatory acts directed towards an organisation's or group's purpose under conditions that foster other-directed care and undistracted attention to that purpose. (2001, p.59)

Such provisions can be fostered by managers in workplaces in order to encourage more creative and improvisational interactions between organisation members. Trust, other-orientation and collective practice are required for encouraging playful actions and creative decision making in the workplace.

To adopt such improvisational theatre practices for directing organising efforts, organisers would need to assume a collective willingness for trust, collaboration, unselfishness, and creativity. However, as Schreyögg and Höpfl (2004) have suggested, organisational life differs from theatrical life in that organisational actors more often than not lack this sort of commitment to the construction and maintenance of a successful performance (p.692). A possible solution for increasing organisation members' dramatic commitment has perhaps been sought through taking theatre

inside the boundaries of organisations. The next section is devoted to a review of studies that frame organising *by* drama – practices which employ theatre as an organisational technology.

Organising by drama

Drama has entered the practices by which organisation members manage their everyday activities in the workplace. Not in a figurative sense but in practice, an increasing number of companies use theatrical techniques and dramatised practices routinely across different organisational functions (Nissley et al. 2004). What is more, a corporate or industrial theatre consulting sector has emerged and is growing (Clark and Mangham 2004a). Meisiek and Barry (2007) relate the significant rise in corporate investment in the recruitment of theatrical techniques to the capacity of theatre to portray organisational life in familiar ways. Following the enthusiastic adoption of theatrical techniques by practitioners, organising by drama has come to the attention of organisation researchers. For instance, Schreyögg and Höpfl (2004) identified a variety of forms of dramatic performances commonly taking place in organisations: role plays, theatrical product promotions, Christmas parties, and theatrical performances staged as organisational interventions. The latter, labelled ‘organisational theatre’ by Schreyögg (2001), involves four elements: first, it is theatre in the conventional sense – written by playwrights, performed by actors and directed (often by professionals) for an organisational audience; second, the performance is aimed at staging specific organisational problems (e.g. an inter-departmental communication problem, a post-merger cultural clash, health and wellbeing difficulties, discrimination); third, the audience groups are purposefully selected (from specific departments to the whole organisation to a multi-organisational network); and finally,

the production is usually commissioned by the main corporate decision makers i.e. senior managers (p.696). Organisation theatre has been met with interest by organisation practitioners and has emerged as a fashionable and innovative intervention and training technology in personnel development communities.

Organisational theatre and other dramatic practices have been borrowing from both conventional and modern theatrical traditions, a trend that has been reflected upon by researchers of the field. Informed by empirical and theoretical analysis, studies of organising *by* drama have investigated dramatic practices along two lines of inquiry. The first line consists in exploring the mechanisms through which organisational theatre – and other theatrical techniques – function and influence life in organisations. In the second group of studies, examples of dramatic organisational practices have been studied and their short and long-term effects on the organisational audience have been evaluated. In the next section I will review examples from both lines of inquiry.

Organising by drama: Underlying processes

Schreyögg and Höpfl (2004) drew on Luhmann's theory of *second-order observation* (1998) to account for the processes through which the organisational audience of an organisational theatre perceive the staged reality. Their account explains how organisational theatre constructs a duplicate reality for the audience who go through what can be called a splitting experience, as their everyday taken-for-granted reality transforms into a theatrical representation. The audience members observe the staging of their own everyday working lives dramatised from the viewpoint of the performing team. Such observation of their daily activities as observed and enacted by a group of strangers, i.e. the performers, is assumed to lead to an increase in organisational audience's reflexivity and targets an awareness that alternative ways of doing things

are possible. The unfamiliarity of this experience may as well develop reflexivity towards 'gridlocked situations' – rendering 'the undiscussible discussible' (Schreyögg and Höpfl 2004, p.697). Likewise, such observation of everyday organisational life – as perceived and constructed by the Other – reveals to the organisation members that alternative realities maybe constructed by the involvement of different social participants.

Mangham and Overington (1987) described the transformative powers of organisation theatre in terms very close to Schreyögg and Höpfl's (2004) conceptualisations. They also reflected on the transformation of realities by the theatrical staging of the routine and taken-for-granted. The theatrical representation of the familiar alters it to the unfamiliar. What interested Mangham and Overington, however, were the mechanisms that persuade the audience to be taken into the unfamiliar world of performance. In their view, the audience resists accepting the staged reality as anything but make-belief. What, then, convinces them to believe in what they see?

Mangham and Overington chose to explain theatrical mechanisms by adopting the notion of *theatrical balance* (p.51). Theatre works through the development of a balance between two processes: first, the audiences' framing of the staged reality as theatrical as opposed to real, and second, a voluntary suspension of disbelief towards the unfolding world of the performance. In other words, the audience of any theatrical performance knows that what they witness is 'only a performance', but at the same time – mesmerised by the aesthetic devices offered by the performers – they are lured into the world of performance and temporarily believe in the staged reality as 'real'. Without this suspension of disbelief, the audience never becomes engaged in the theatrical performance or the interpretations it conveys. In the context of conventional

theatre where the audience and the stage are separated in principle, the creation and maintenance of the theatrical balance is of the essence. The audience must be engaged in the performance but in moderated ways, lest they mistake the staged reality as their own and consequently want to participate in the stage activities.

The audience's engagement is developed in other ways in so-called modern theatrical renditions, as the marked separation between the performer and the audience is less defined or is broken down in this type of performance. Organisational theatre consultancies and theorists have paid specific attention to the modern theatre such as in the work of Berthold Brecht and Augusto Boal who revolutionised theatre by introducing new theatrical paradigms that focus on stimulation of audience reflexivity. In both of these theatrical conventions, the goal is not to achieve a state of balance, as is meant in the case of conventional theatre, but to create a state of chaos and disruption so as to trigger the audience's conscious attention. Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt* (V-effect) provides a counterpoint to conventional Aristotelian theatre in which the audience is encouraged to see the projected reality as 'the only reality'. A V-effect occurs when the performance is used to alienate the audience from the character and the action – a process that works through showing the familiar facts of life in not only unfamiliar ways but in a startling manner. In contrast to conventional theatre in which the audience is persuaded to give into the theatrical reality and feel emotional empathy towards the staged characters, in the Brechtian paradigm, the audience is constantly put at a distance from the performance and therefore experiences not empathy but intellectual alertness. Brechtian performance invites the spectators not to suspend their disbelief but to view the staged reality only as one possibility, constantly compare it to their own lives, and maintain a theatrical consciousness and reflexivity towards

what they do, while they do it (Mangham 2005). Accordingly, Brecht's V- effect has been used by organisational theatre performers and commissioners as a means to inspire reflexivity in organisations (Schreyögg and Höpfl 2004).

Boal's 'forum theatre' works to help all people – specifically the 'oppressed' audience of conventional theatre – to find their 'theatrical nature'. Boal viewed all theatre as a political weapon; while conventional theatre is in the service of the ruling class, his forum theatre offers a liberating alternative (1979, p.vi). He believed that every human being has an actor-spectator nature which needs to be valued and activated. The role of forum theatre is to provide an 'open pluri-vocal space, in which all contributions are valued' and all participants can perform (Clark and Mangham 2004b, p.846). But this requires a destabilisation of the established power structures in a way that all spectators can explore aspects of their selves through acting but without hesitation or fear.

For Boal, conventional theatre – exclusive, expensive and in need of sponsoring – is a form of ideological oppression through which a certain version of reality is staged and which the passive audience is lured into accepting. In contrast, in forum theatre – if practiced in its ideal form – there is no visible distance between the actor and the audience. Participants are encouraged to change the actors' performances, to start a new character, or to change the performance in the way they desire without fearing the consequences. According to Clark and Mangham:

In conventional forms of theatre, the audience, the spectators, passively observe the actions of the characters on the stage. By and large in the conventional theatre there is a code of non-interference by the audience. Not so in Boal-inspired theatre [...] Boal's life work has been to enable spectators to transgress, to break the conventions, to enter what he calls the 'mirror of a

theatrical fiction', rehearse forms of struggle and then return to reality with 'images of their desires' ready to take action. (2004b, p.844)

Forum theatre operates through provoking the participants to take action by participating in the construction of the theatrical reality, instead of only imagining it.

According to Meisiek and Barry (2007), Boal's theatre is primarily a means for political change in that it aims at shaking up the established power structures through engaging the audience as co-actors, hence developing an awareness of alternative power balances. Boal's theatre, they reasoned, is based on the connection between the two basic theatrical concepts of 'a staged dialectic' and 'a related dialogue': the former denotes that the dramatic action unfolds through interactions of opposing parties (individuals or groups) who are in conflict; the latter signifies that such interactions must reflect the conversations that represent the familiar realities of the spectators' lives, otherwise theatre cannot be related to. These two features make forum theatre an ideal vehicle for organisational intervention since organisational life abounds in conflicts between opposing forces while much of organising efforts happen through conversations. Having viewed such dialectics represented by forum theatre, organisation members may enter into conversations as equals, reflect on the staged reality and become aware that an alternative course of actions is possible and therefore alternative realities may be constructed. In this sense, forum theatre disturbs the balance of the theatrical and organisational stage and works as an instrument for the facilitation of movement, action and change.

Organising by drama: Practical aspects and effects

Nissley et al. (2004) conducted a structural analysis of theatre-based training and interventions. Using Boalian terminology, they examined the 'politics of performance'

along two dimensions: *control of the role* and *control of the script*. This study resulted in a map of various types of dramatic interventions. On one end of the spectrum are the *corporate-controlled* performances in which the script is dictated by the corporate sponsors (the management) and the characters are acted only by the performers/consultants who are in charge of the intervention. On the other end are located the *worker-controlled* performances in which the organisation audience improvise the script and play the roles. Most theatrical interventions, however, combine a variety of control levels in that they incorporate some audience-active elements in which the performance is co-scripted and the characters are improvised by the audience. Such dramatic practices are placed between the two ends of the spectrum. This typology directed attention to the fact that as the parties involved – managers, workers and performers/consultants – have different and often conflicting interests, theatrical interventions are always political.

Nissley et al. (2004) pointed out that the dramatic interventions which are commissioned and sponsored by 'management' may be practiced as managerial tools and resemble the corporate-controlled type; however, these sponsors 'must recognize that they cannot control the event[s]' (p.832) as the performance's meaning is always jointly created by all involved. The workers who are audience to the sponsored theatrical intervention make sense of the performance 'in their own way' (p.832). The authors argued that organisational theatre and other dramatic techniques, if presented as finished products, offer limited scope for inducing participative learning. However, the theatrical training encouraged by the conventions of non-scripted and improvisational theatre may have different results. For example, Boal-inspired theatre, in which the organisational members get to enact roles and decide on the script, may

drive people to learn through finding 'themselves' and 'their voice' in the performance (p.834).

Observing the thinness of the body of empirical studies on organisational theatre, Clark and Mangham focused on this area in two studies (2004 a, b). Their studies were founded on the assumption that organisational theatre is a *technology* through which 'an organisation of dramatists, actors, directors, set designers, lighting specialists, and musicians' brings to the stage a performance for a selected organisational audience (2004a, p.37). In each study, they explored a specific type of organisational theatre. In the first study, they reflected on their observations of organisational theatre of the type they termed *corporate theatre* (2004a), an 'extravagant piece of theatre' directed by a professional theatre team and commissioned by senior management. The desired goal was to encourage the required behavioural change in middle and low level managers of two recently merged banks and therefore facilitate a smooth transition to a post-merger balance. The theatre piece was to be acted by the banks' senior managers while all the aspects of production were directed by professional performance consultants.

The authors' observations of this type of organisational theatre were in shocking contrast with those reported on audience-active organisational theatre. They found the piece of corporate theatre to be non-democratic, an absolute show of power. It was expensive, commissioned and controlled by a minority group in the organisation, the senior managers. Clark and Mangham concluded that while organisational theatre inspired by Brecht or Boal is believed to be aimed at liberation, empowerment and highlighting 'what is and what might be' (p.54), corporate theatre is not aimed to empower, nor to encourage the audience to think and reflect on alternative possibilities, but to seduce the audience to accept the one represented reality – in this

case the merger – as ‘the established reality’. In this sense, corporate theatre becomes a coercive tool (p.55).

In their other study (2004b), they investigated a piece of forum-based organisational theatre. They summarised the steps to be taken in Boalian *radical theatre* (Boal, 1979) as follows: first, the participants (spectators) share with the performing team an unresolved problem; then, the participants propose a set of solutions of which one is enacted by the actors. During this enactment, any participant is free to replace any of the actors and change the script as see fit. Then, all possible paths and ideas must be tried and rehearsed. However, the so-called forum theatre they had observed followed Boal’s rules very loosely. This drama-based training module simply resembled standard training room practices in that it combined a piece of conventional theatre with a participative element in the form of role-play (p.845). Rather than adopting radical techniques of Boal, this training session was ‘Boal lite’ (p.844) in that it encouraged neither freedom of action nor uncontrolled expression on the part of the audience. They concluded that forum theatre, in the ideal radical sense, is not easy to practice in organisations due to the fact that organisational theatre is always planned and commissioned by managers and hence the audience do not dare to get involved without fearing the consequences. They pointed out that in practice the established hierarchy of organisational roles regulates the aesthetic space of the organisational theatre.

Westwood (2004) studied the role of humour in organisations through an exploration of comedic theatre and the role of jesters in organisational settings. He introduced corporate humour as an established genre of organisational theatre that has been previously commented upon from two main critical perspectives. The first body of

scholarly work views corporate humour as a means for perpetuating the established power structures. The second, and an opposite view, is suggestive of the subversive powers of comedy in that 'comedy and humour can be deployed as resistance, challenge and subversion' (p.777). Westwood studied the work of an Australian corporate comedian who specialised in organisational satire and parody with the intention of examining the extent to which the subversive potentials of corporate comedy can be realised. After conducting a sociological, historical and cognitive analysis, Westwood concluded that although comedic theatre is potent with subversive capacities, it works usually in favour of the established power dynamics. This is caused mainly by the way comedy works. It is true that comedic performance disturbs the mundane realities of working life by threatening the usual order and the way things are usually done. The effects of this threat are, however, limited to the realm of comedic reality and not real everyday practices. The main mechanism through which comedy works, that is *comic relief*, is realised precisely because the comic threat is confined to the stage representations, to the world of performance:

The invasion of the alternate, the absurd, is shown not to be real - and people can laughingly, slip back from this odd and this oddly threatening world into the security of the paramount reality.

The realisation that the threat to normalcy is not real engenders feelings of relief and return that is pleasurable and experienced as humour. (p.784)

Nevertheless, comedy can offer a subversive reminder, evidence of the vulnerability of the dominant reality and an awareness of alternatives. Such results, if pursued with other radical change mechanisms, may foster subversion and destabilisation of power structures. What is more, the emergent consequences of a comedic organisational theatre cannot be precisely planned or predicted. The effects of comedic performances are not solely a product of the comedian's work and his intentions, nor do they reflect

the intentions of the sponsoring clients (often management). Rather, these effects are formed through the dynamic interaction between the comedian, the audience and the contingencies of the performance. Corporate comedy, therefore, practiced in certain situations, may lead to subversive actions.

Meisiek and Barry (2007) viewed theatre as a platform for an *analogically mediated inquiry*, that is, a process designed to provoke reflection and facilitate problem-solving through analogical analysis. In such inquiries, theatre's 'structural and relational aspects are compared to and mapped onto a target domain, thus furthering one's understanding of it' (pp.1806-1807). They conducted a longitudinal study of a theatrical piece, targeted at 3,000 employees of a home care services company. Due to the large organisational audience, the theatrical piece was presented in 30 performances, each for a group of 100 employees. The organisational theatre was designed by the senior management as part of a change initiative for promotion of employee involvement in new work practices for improved efficiency. The management hoped to raise employee reflexivity regarding these specific issues. Their ultimate goal was to present to the employees the type of behaviour that could support company values.

The emerging effects, however, were contradictory to such expectations. Each performance and the conversations that followed it, constructed 'shifting reflections' that changed the subsequent theatrical performances and as a result the employees' understanding of their workplace over time. This did not necessarily occur in ways desired by the performance sponsors, but rather in varied and unexpected ways. Meisiek and Barry found that analogical inquiry does not necessarily lead to predesigned conclusions intended by the managers in charge, rather:

Perspectives within the organisational theatre are distorted and grand messages and message makers lose their hold; the more performances occur over time (30 in our case), the more the original theatre construction becomes disengaged from the issues that created it. We end up with shifting landscapes of issues and interpretations.

They concluded that it is impossible to plan a theatrical performance so as to achieve a certain set of responses from the audience. Such performances do not necessarily inspire the organisational audience to arrive at the specific conclusions intended by senior management, and may lead to unpredictable results.

In a subsequent study in 2010, the same authors proposed the notion of *analogous artifacts* which are 'objects and performances that induce but do not dictate analogical considerations' (Barry and Meisiek, 2010, p.1505). They argued that organisational theatre in its capacity as an analogous artifact can promote 'mindfulness'¹⁵ in the workplace. According to Barry and Meisiek, artifacts such as organisational theatre encourage collective mindfulness through fostering 'looking more' and 'looking differently'. When organisational members watch (or participate in) a piece of theatre, they are witness to a representation of their everyday reality, which is familiar and yet, having been represented, becomes distinctive and loses its taken-for-granted status. In their opinion, 'distinction making' results in 'seeing more' (1508). Barry and Meisiek suggested that artistic interventions – especially the ones that engage the organisation members as participants in the co-creation of the art piece – reveal unnoticed aspects of working life since the interaction between the artists and the employees creates new frames of analysis for the interpretation of organisational activities. Moreover,

¹⁵ Their definition of mindfulness was inspired by Weick et al. (2000, p.34): 'the capacity of groups and individuals to be acutely aware of significant details, to notice errors in the making, and to have the shared expertise and freedom to act on what they notice'.

audience-active organisational theatre 'shifts contexts' (p.1515) by engaging the participants in experiencing selected aspects of their working life through the medium of theatre. This difference of medium induces reflection and provides for 'seeing differently' through the application of fresh analogies that disturb the routine way of doing work. Seeing more and seeing differently therefore, in their opinion, leads to mindful sensemaking of working lives.

Reflections on studies of organising by drama

Empirical studies of organising by drama – reviewed in the previous section– can be divided into two groups. The first consists of research which has directed a critical gaze towards the basic structure of organisational theatre and the politics of performance that are seen to flow from such structural conditions (Clark and Mangham 2004 a, b; Nissley et al. 2004; Westwood 2004). Some authors have stressed that all theatre-based interventions are political and can be controlled by those in power in organisations, i.e. senior managers and corporate sponsors (Nissley et al. 2004). Some have emphasised that theatrical interventions, more often than not, offer opportunities for the establishment of status-quo power structures (Westwood 2004). While these authors have noticed that, due to the unpredictability of the organisational audience's response to the theatre, any intended imposition of power or control cannot be easily planned, their empirical studies have failed to document the audience's perspectives, reflections and responses to such theatrical interventions. Some authors (Clark and Mangham 2004a, b) have gone further with their criticism of theatrical interventions and proposed that theatre, as used in the corporate setting, has become yet another coercive managerialist tool used for 'anaesthetizing audience reaction by imaginative participation in the performance so that the cherished beliefs and values do not appear

to be directly challenged' (Clark and Mangham 2004a, p.37). In such studies the organisational audience's part in the construction of the meaning of the theatrical interventions has been ignored.

A second line of research, on the other hand, has characterised the audience as active contributors to the construction of the realities of theatrical interventions and training, and has also documented and analysed the dynamics of audience interaction (with the performance and with other members of audience) before and during the performance. Such studies have further reported evaluations of the effects of theatrical interventions on the organisational audience as well as on the organisation after such events (Meisiek and Barry 2007, Barry and Meisiek 2010).

Similarly, in the study of theatre-based training events in this dissertation, I adopt the view that the audience actively shapes the theatrical interventions and the contents and that the effects of theatrical interventions on organising practices and organisational audiences can neither be planned nor predicted (Schreyögg and Höpfl 2004). Therefore, theatre-based training will be approached as a complex process that must be studied through exploration of both the structure of the performance and the audience's perceptions and reactions. It is then intended in this dissertation to provide a picture of organising by drama by studying both the *dynamics of performance* and the *dynamics of audience participation* in the theatrical practices organised by personnel development professionals. In Chapters 7 and 8 (devoted to the exploration of two theatre-based training events), the discussion will focus on the aesthetic and interpretative processes through which theatre transforms organisational realities. At the same time the lens of inquiry will be directed to the exploration of how such transformations are co-constructed through interactions between the performers and

their audience *during* the training event. In Chapters 9 and 10, the audience's reflections *after* the performance will be discussed in order to provide a picture of the outcomes of theatre-based training and the way each audience makes sense of the topics of training through their own sensemaking (Weick 1995) devices.

Concluding remarks

This chapter reported on the dramatistic turn in organisation practice and theory. A selection of organisation research that views organising and organisations *as* drama was reviewed. Moreover, it was reported that an emerging body of organisation research attempts to understand organising *by* drama as practiced by a new group of consulting companies that incorporate theatrical techniques into their products and services¹⁶. A collection of such recent organisational research was also reviewed in this chapter.

As a final note on the literature reviewed and presented in Part I, it should be stressed that this overview of the sociological and organisational research on drama, identity and authenticity provides a dramatistic perspective that comprises multiple theories and concepts which will be adopted in the forthcoming chapters so as to make sense of the field material, the observations and interviews conducted in the field of personnel development. The dramatistic perspective creates a lens through which the activities involved in personnel development and the identities constructed through such organising activities will be approached, interpreted and presented. This review of existing literature was conducted in order to report on the established, or emerging,

¹⁶ L&D Australia, the personnel development consultancy I studied, is a good example of this.

literature related to the research topics – theatre and authenticity – which this dissertation reports on.

Next, in Part II (Chapter 5), the fieldwork experiences and methodologies will be described. In Part III an overview of the main activities conducted by personnel development professionals (as observed during fieldwork) will be provided. From these, theatrical training and authenticity discourse and training will be identified as the main topics of interest in this research. Later, the theatre-based activities of a personnel development consulting company, L&D Australia, specifically a theatre-based training event focused on authenticity training will be explored and interpreted. Following this, the reflections of a group of participants in this authenticity training event will be reported on and interpreted. Such personnel development activities and the professionals' reflections will be approached through a dramaturgical frame and will be interpreted by applying the dramaturgical theories outlined in the current and two previous chapters.

Part II

A Confessional Tale

Chapter 5: Doing Fieldwork

Chapter 5: Doing Fieldwork

The ‘narratives from the field’¹⁷ I will recount in this dissertation are situated in the field of practice commonly called *personnel development*. The main protagonist in these accounts is Learning and Development Australia (aka L&D Australia), a small consulting company specialising in performance-based training and development programs. Supporting characters also make appearances and on occasion dominate the stage. Among these is a group of personnel development professionals who offered many narratives about their working life experiences in the field of personnel development.

In order to provide an overview of my fieldwork – how it was planned, conducted and interpreted – I address the following questions through a personal account. What methods of inquiry were selected in each stage of fieldwork and how did they serve the research purpose? What were the limitations and unexpected results of the study, and how did they impact the course of the Ph.D. research?

As Gareth Morgan and Gibson Burrell (1994) once said, no methodology chapter can be written without reviewing the theoretical and epistemological conventions that have informed and shaped one’s approach. In an effort to provide a picture of the theoretical influences on my approach, I developed in the previous chapters (Part I) a set of frames comprised of dramatisitic conceptualisations of social life, especially in organisations. In this chapter I depict the second set of conventions, the approaches to social science

¹⁷ Narratives *from* the field are the ethnographer’s accounts in a narrative form while the narratives *of* the field are the storied accounts uttered by the interlocutors (Van Maanen 1988/2011).

known as 'social constructionism' and 'narrative inquiry', which have informed the ways my field research has been conducted and interpreted.

In this chapter I give a chronological account of how my field studies were planned, conducted and interpreted, while shaping and being shaped by my reading of social constructionism and narrative inquiry. The chapter is organised as follows: first, I report going to the field. This is a commentary on doing a pilot study with the purpose of researching an L&D consultant's processes of identity construction. This phase of the research project resulted in sharpening my epistemological focus and methodological approach, on which I reflect in the second part of the chapter. The story of my subsequent studies – participant observation of a training workshop and a set of interviews with personnel development professionals – will be narrated next. Finally, I describe the methods applied in the interpretation and presentation of field studies.

The pilot: Shadowing

I started my pilot study after having conducted a literature review on dramaturgy and role theory. Preparing for fieldwork, I had read a text on shadowing (Czarniawska 2007) and found it perfectly suitable for my purposes at the time. According to this text, an organisational ethnography may involve mobile or stationary methods of observation. Shadowing exemplifies the former type, during which the researcher moves with the observed person like a shadow. Back then, I was interested in formulations of the self as constructed through the management of multiple role-identities and I was convinced that shadowing permitted investigation of such constructions through mobile observation of people engaged in different interactions and different roles in various settings.

Czarniawska (2007) considers shadowing suitable for studies of *processes* of organising because its focus is on 'what *is* going on' in the field of practice and not 'what *should* be going on' (p.33). Similarly, Barley and Kunda (2001) consider ethnographic studies of work processes the best method for the production of detailed descriptions of working life occurring *in situ* (p.84). In literal terms, ethnography denotes 'highly descriptive writing about particular groups of people' (Silverman 2007, p.12). In practice, organisational ethnography necessarily involves direct observations in a field of practice (with a possibility of participation).

As a mode of direct observation, shadowing suits studies of today's organising practices better than conventional ethnographies as it involves mobility and hence allows for studies of the work and lives of practitioners who are constantly on the move (Czarniawska 2007, pp.16-17). Ethnography in the conventional sense reveals the ways of life of a community in overwhelming detail over a long period of time and, in some renditions, requires painstaking internalisation of the Other's way of life in the form of an 'inside view' (Turner 1980, p.146). However, when the aim is to look at certain work processes and over a short period of time (as access to organisational fields is a short-lived privilege that has to be constantly re-negotiated), shadowing is a legitimate choice as it makes no claims for comprehensiveness but it aims for investigation of a specific process situated in time and place (Czarniawska 2007, p.37). Both qualities, providing mobility and highlighting specificity, were appealing to me when I first set out. I did not want to observe work and life in the field, but an organisation member's construction of a sense of self. That involved observations of the individuals in differing interactional contexts, for which the mobility provided by shadowing was useful.

My investigative ambitions were further focused on the concept of 'dramaturgical awareness'. The term was coined by Brissett and Edgley (1990), but was previously conceptualised by Goffman (1961) and Berger (1963/1969). Dramaturgical awareness means being aware that *all* one does is expressed through dramatic means (Brissett and Edgley 1990, p. 5). Berger argued that one's dramaturgical awareness gets triggered in moments of 'transformation of consciousness', when everyday routine life is disturbed and 'the given' transforms to 'possibility' (1963/1969, p.157). I was curious to see how organisation members experience and enact such modes of consciousness when their taken-for-granted life is disturbed. I suspected that such disturbances would be abundant in the working life of a person with multiple role-identities, exposed daily to conflict and stress. I was especially interested in studying women's identity constructions. The persons to be shadowed were to be selected based on the complexity of the life they were leading. Multiple memberships in different groups would make them suitable candidates, in that each membership would entail a set of role-identities which they would have to manage in order to achieve a balance of role embracement and role distance and avoid burnout and role-overload¹⁸. I suspected that such processes would also entail instances of disruptions and therefore emergence of the individual's dramaturgical awareness.

The links between our school¹⁹ and L&D Australia were being established and in light of mutual interests between the two parties, the prospect of future collaborations appeared promising. L&D Australia's training and development programs were a

¹⁸ These ideas were inspired by Goffman's 'role distance' (1961) and Merton's (1957) and Kahn and Wolfe's (1964) views of role theory.

¹⁹ Macquarie Graduate School of Management (MGSM)

source of inspiration for our research group²⁰ as L&D consultants practiced drama in their consulting projects. L&D Australia had been founded and directed by two performing art professionals, their consultants were mainly professional actors, and a majority of their training methods were based on theatrical techniques. They claimed to specialise in Boal's forum theatre. To add to their attractiveness from my point of view, many women consultants worked with them, including the company's founders and some of their veteran consultants. The research proposal I pitched to L&D Australia communicated these objectives:

This project is aimed to look at the identity of female consultants in L&D Australia, the actresses who are acting as performers, performing as educators, educating as business consultants, and doing so as women. It would be fascinating to explore the different roles these consultants juggle; the pressures, conflicts and ambiguities they experience; their conflict resolution methods and the ways they develop a sense of who they are through such processes.

Maria volunteered for the project. Having worked for L&D on a full-time and a part-time basis for the previous five years, she had recently returned from her three-month annual leave, during which time the company had gone through some radical reforms. As clients, budgets and projects had increased, the partners felt it was time to professionalise and structure its management. They had made some positions redundant (including Maria's previous position) and had recruited an experienced executive (with an MBA and an established business record) for the new position of General Manager. On her return to L&D, Maria was working as a part-time consultant/facilitator/trainer and at the same time she was back on the theatre stage, taking a leading role in a critically acclaimed play in Sydney. She was also a mother and

²⁰ Drama, performance and storytelling at MGSM (<http://goo.gl/0hvST>)

a wife. This profile appeared promising in providing a picture of multiple role-identities, occasions of disruption and hence the emergence of dramaturgical awareness. As this mode of consciousness had been defined as an awareness of one's dramatic capacities, I had assumed that professional actors should exhibit it masterfully. How such a mode of awareness would emerge and become observable, however, was to be seen.

It was agreed that I would shadow Maria during arranged times, in the premises of L&D, with her clients, at the theatre backstage and frontstage, and at her residence²¹. The shadowing process included periods of intense note-taking, especially during the periods that observation capacity was limited, e.g. when Maria worked on her computer. In general – and as a reflection on limitations of ethnographic methodologies – the tasks performed in the virtual sphere produce a challenge for the shadowing researcher as they are not easy to observe, unless permission to see, in this case, the computer screen is granted (journalists, for example, are used to a colleague watching over their shoulder). This last possibility, however, may be disturbing for people not used to it; alternatively, no technical means, such as a second screen, may be at hand (Czarniawska 2012a). In such cases, other methods of investigation must be attempted. Czarniawska (2007) proposed the application of *diary studies* in which persons under study, in response to the researcher's invitation, report on their day's activities. In this sense, the collaborating practitioners become 'observant participants': they observe,

²¹ I initially intended to limit my shadowing to her working life but she insisted I pay a visit to her house or be present at a function their family was participating in and naturally, I did. After all, as Gideon Kunda observed, one cannot draw a defined line between family life and working life as each overflows to the other's territory (2012).

report and reflect on what they do. Complementary interviews are a commonly-practiced mode of such studies.

The virtues of interviewing are not limited only to making explicit the invisible aspects of organising. Interviews also introduce other – and expert – viewpoints to one's field study. According to Barley and Kunda (2001), complementary interviews are useful for getting closer to work processes in the field as they construct an image of how people make sense of field practices and what is important to *them*. Annemarie Mol has pointed out that interviews not only report on the interlocutors' perspectives, but also reflect the events they have 'lived through' (2002, p.15). In this sense, interviews are *indirect* observations through which the researcher can collect other people's personal experiences – *their* direct observations (Turner 1975, p.33).

Maria agreed to audio-recorded face-to-face interviews on days we met and phone interviews on other days. In both, my interview strategy was to ask her what she had done during the day. This resulted in accounts about her activities which were usually structured as short narratives. Through many narratives she related her work life stories, reflected on the challenging situation she was experiencing at L&D, in theatre and with her family and expressed her frustrations, hopes and moral beliefs. During these interviews, I also asked for clarifications regarding what I had seen but not understood. In order to understand her self-construction processes and 'capture' her dramaturgical awareness, I also inquired about her feelings, intentions and hidden thoughts, hoping to find a way to the realm of unseen consciousness. The pilot study led to a few valuable lessons learnt which reoriented my research efforts and refocused my pursuit in the course of my future fieldwork.

First, when shadowing, the position of the shadowing researcher is precariously dependent on the shadowed person. Their relationship has implications for access; negotiation for access must be constantly renewed, and as the researcher depends on one person, such negotiations become crucial. Organisers, more often than not, have changing schedules and priorities (as was the case with Maria). What is more, the agreement to be shadowed may dissolve at any time during this relationship (this happened with another volunteer for this project who, after two meetings, decided that she preferred 'not to be distracted from her duties at L&D').

On another note, when doing fieldwork one experiences an interplay between the positions of 'observer' and 'participant'. There are a variety of prescriptions in regards to the ethnographer's optimal participation in the field. Some have advised being a fly on the wall; others have advocated 'getting close' to the everyday life in the field through 'immersion', i.e. firsthand experience of field life through maximum participation (Emerson et al. 2011). Czarniawska (2007) has argued that although on the part of the ethnographer, some degree of participation in the field is unavoidable, the position of complete participation – even if desired – is not easily achieved. If ethnographers attempt to learn the practices of the field (which requires considerable time and effort), the scope of their observations may become limited (p.9). In practice, shadowing researchers need to be reflective of the circumstances of the fieldwork.

Further, participation may or may not allow getting closer to work processes and may have unexpected consequences. Having enjoyed a relatively stable observer status as a research student and Maria's shadow at L&D Australia, on the last session of observing

Maria in her L&D consultant capacities²² I was sent out by the General Manager to purchase some pens just a few minutes before the start of the session. The General Manager told me that Maria had requested the pens and therefore I should go and get them. In this instance, the loss of observer position was quite literal: on my return, I had lost my seat, the start of the work session and some of my dignity. The pens did not come to any use and the only person who mentioned them was Maria who after the workshop complained about not having been given the chance by the facilitator of the session (a senior manager in L&D) to run her pen/paper exercise. Maria was disappointed that her disagreements with L&D's senior managers had become overt at that session. In retrospect, I concluded that the treatment I received in the field, and consequently the access I was granted, depended on Maria's political situation in L&D.

Later, when I started writing up and presenting the results, it became evident that the pilot was a failure as far as the investigation of dramaturgical awareness was concerned. I started to doubt my approach to fieldwork, the literature I had been reading, and the research questions I had formed. As explained earlier, I was looking for situations in which Maria would reveal her dramaturgical awareness and I expected a professional actor to show high levels of such awareness. As my observations were futile in this regard, I tried, more than once, to find my answers by questioning Maria during the interviews, which also failed to produce answers. Upon reflection on 'what went wrong', I arrived at two main explanations. First, for the empirical investigation of modes of consciousness, one needs to enter another territory, that of the psyche. However, to get into people's heads is not the sociologist's job and definitely not the job

²² On that day, L&D presented a working session as part of the *Breakfast Events* organised by a business network in Sydney. This was considered a big marketing opportunity and all L&D staff were present and had a part to play in this event. The session included a theatrical piece in which Maria acted.

of the student of organisations (Silverman 2009). Second, and on a more practical note, it seemed that I was trying to 'manufacture' results rather than arriving at themes emerging from the fieldwork. This is apparently a direction commonly assumed by misinformed qualitative researchers (Silverman 2007, p. 37). An ethnographer, instead, should look for emergence of 'naturally-occurring' themes in the field rather than eliciting certain conclusions from the interlocutors (Silverman 2007, p.50).

In the light of such newly found insights, I re-read my fieldnotes and transcripts with a fresh gaze. There emerged a picture of the way L&D Australia organised their consulting activities through theatrical means. It was fascinating to see the types of activities taken for granted and the kind of people considered as typical at L&D. It was also interesting to see how they interacted with their existing and potential clients and the types of products and services they offered them. These newly found interests redirected my research focus towards finding out more about L&D Australia's consulting practices.

I was also encouraged to read more on dramatisitic views of social action and the self, which fascinated me, and moved my conceptual focus away from role theory. I started to read texts on constructionist and narrative views in organisation studies, which further shaped and developed my assumptions about how field studies should be organised and interpreted. In the next sections I reflect on these perspectives.

On constructivism

From the constructivist point of view, reality is *constructed* as opposed to being a given entity, the essence of which – or truth about it – should be discovered. Inspired by contemporary philosophical and artistic movements, constructivism in the social sciences emerged as an alternative to the 'totalitarianism' of positivist epistemologies

and methodologies borrowed from the natural sciences (Gergen 1999/2009, pp.27-28). Karin Knorr Cetina (1994) described the emergence of constructivism as a clear break from the hitherto dominant sociological traditions built on 'modernist' thinking. In the same vein, Kenneth Gergen (1999/2009) considered constructivism as a specific outcome of the so-called 'postmodern' movement in social sciences. According to Gergen, the constructivist movement started with a critique of the modernist values inherited from the Enlightenment, such as objectivity, scientific truth, rationality, order, prediction and control. Such critique took a creative turn and evolved into a new way of thinking about social reality, and a new epistemology.

Knorr Cetina (1994) pointed out that the first signs of diversion from the modernist paradigm emerged with the development of 'microanalysis', that is, the interpretation of social situations using methods such as ethnography, discourse analysis and the like. Reflecting on the *local* nature of social life, such trends added alternative methods of social inquiry to the set of then-established scientific methodologies which made assertions about universal regulations and grand theories. Influenced by the postmodern movement, Knorr Cetina argued, such pursuits grew from micro-methodologies into a distinct epistemology²³. Therefore, a new approach to the nature of social reality and a novel way to frame the relation between the 'knower and the known' emerged (1994, p.2).

Constructions of realities are differently explained in different brands of constructivism (see Knorr Cetina 1994 for a review). Social constructionism – the constructivist

²³ Admitting the undeniable influences of the postmodern movement on development of constructivist sociology, Knorr Cetina distinctively differentiated the two approaches (for details see Knorr Cetina 1994, p.4).

rendition I follow in this research – frames the process of reality construction as a social activity. Social constructionism became primarily known through Berger and Luckmann's publication of *The Social Construction of Reality* (1966), in which they conceptualised reality as the everyday world of people constructed through their thoughts and collective actions (p.33). Such reality is constructed by all participants through interactional negotiations in social situations (pp. 43-47).

In a more recent rendition – which also shaped my understanding of social constructionism – Kenneth Gergen presented an epistemology from which the following ensues: primarily, this stance assumes that no realities, knowledge or meanings are immune to socialisations in that 'what we take to be the world importantly depends on how we approach it, and how we approach it depends on the social relationships of which we are a part' (p.2). Therefore, it is through social interactions that meaning, values and lives are constructed. The most radical conclusion resulting from such line of thinking, according to Gergen, is that scientific knowledge is also constructed socially. Scientific experimentation and theorisations are mediated through social relationships between scientists, their colleagues and scientific texts. In this sense, no scientific knowledge can be purely objective, that is, constructed on grounds of value neutral assumptions and hypothesis. Rather, all accounts are biased in that they are constructed within a *community of science* (Gergen 1999/2009, pp.14-24). On another critical point, Gergen dealt with the misconception that 'social constructionists lament the death of all values'. He argued that social constructionists, instead, vouch for the multiplicity of values in the world, in that they are neither absolute nor solid entities, but constructions produced through social relationships (p.25). Moreover, Gergen insisted that as an intellectual tradition,

constructionism advocates for multiplicity to the extent that it even abstains from recommending its own premises as 'the' truth:

It recognises that constructionism is itself socially constructed. Constructionism is not, then, a candidate for the truth. Nor is it a belief system. Rather, the constructionist dialogues represent invitations to a way of understanding. As constructionist ideas enter our ways of talking, they may also transform our actions. (1999/2009, p.29)

In the realm of organising, social constructionism translates into an epistemology guiding the organisation researcher to not look for the essence of organisations in the form of fixed properties but, to explore how a given picture of an organisation is constructed. In other words, the constructionist researcher studies the *processes* that continuously reconstruct the organisation (Kärreman 2001, p.16). Czarniawska (2008b) pointed out that the adoption of a constructionist approach in organisation studies leads to a redefinition of the role of research as 'describing practices' rather than 'formulating principles' (p.7). Such adoption, then, transforms the research results from an 'ostensive' to a 'performative' definition of organisation. In the latter description, an organisation is a product of actions conducted by organisational actors who continuously redefine what they do according to the context. Therefore, at any given time, there is more than one definition of the organisation that is sensible to its members – or to outsiders (Czarniawska 2008b, pp.5-18). Thus, she argued, the best starting point in organisation research is to observe, describe and reflect on activities and processes rather than products. Extended to the domain of methodology, this means that a constructionist researcher is likely to initially observe organising activities rather than describing the products resulting from these processes, namely the specific organisations, the organisation members and their identities.

Such views also reinforce the belief that the researcher's duty is neither to prescribe cures for organisational maladies, nor to revolutionise work practices or emancipate the people who work in them (Rhodes and Pitsis 2008). Constructionist researchers refrain from claims of offering 'better' or 'true' ways of organising. The constructionist researcher's job, then, is not to capture the essence of organisations or to unveil organisational realities but consists mainly in making organising practices explicit through reporting on work processes and their possible products (Czarniawska 2008b).

These aspect of the constructionist views of organising practice and research appealed to me as they were consistent with my dramatisic perspective in that they portray people not in need of rescue, but as capable of reflecting on and responding to the limitations imposed by the social structures in which they are located (Chapter 3). Organisation members, seen from this point of view, are capable of devising their own means for a better working life. Of course, the researcher can offer alternative ways of organising but constructionist researchers make no claims for the superiority of their viewpoints over those conceived by practitioners.

Consequently, adopting a social constructionist view of doing fieldwork redirected my research focus from the quest for the truth of dramaturgical awareness and the identities of L&D consultants towards the observation and understanding of the processes involved in organising personnel development at L&D Australia. The subsequent phases of fieldwork were also shaped by the influence of a narrative approach on which I will reflect in the following pages.

Narrative inquiry

Constructivist studies have questioned the ubiquitous value of objectivity and facts and some, alternatively, insist on the 'fictionality' of social life (Knorr Cetina 1994, p.5). This has resulted in a view of social life as becoming meaningful through enacted narratives. It has been noted in the previous chapters that narration works as a device for collective sensemaking which, as formulated by Karl Weick (1995), conveys the process of the retrospective interpretation of a situation, enactment of such interpretations and, accordingly, construction of social realities. Narrating then, as discussed earlier (Chapter 2), is a continuous effort to make life meaningful. In the same vein, narrative can be related to the domain of working life: 'constructing stories seems to facilitate organising, at least to some people; and it certainly facilitates their understanding' (Czarniawska 2008b, p.39). Seen in this light, the narrative approach can be related to organising, and the research conducted on it, in three main ways: first, what Jerome Bruner (1986) called a 'narrative mode of knowing'; second, what has been termed by Fisher (1984, 1987), a 'narrative mode of communication'; and third, what can be identified as a 'narrative mode of analysis'.

The narrative mode of knowing in organisation practice and research

In 1986, Jerome Bruner introduced narrative as a mode of knowledge which is complementary to the other more explored type, 'logical argument'. He argued that neither of these modes of thought can be replaced by the other; rather, they are both necessary means for understanding the world we live in (pp.11-40). Although the two types of knowing have different operating principles and dissimilar verification procedures, they are both formed with the purpose of convincing an audience of something. An argument attempts to prove the truth of its logical propositions where a

narrative aims for the construction of, not the truth, but an impression of 'lifelikeness' (1986, p.11). Both types of knowing, also, build on the casual linking of events. Yet, there are some pointed distinctions between the ways each connects the web of events together. Logical argument offers a unique way of linking the set of events and aims to prove that a specific way is the true way. In contrast, a narrative makes a causal connection between the events, yet leaves space for multiple ways of emplotment. In the realm of storytelling it is not truthfulness, but 'verisimilitude' that matters (1986, p.12).

Practitioners and students of organisations both take advantage of what a narrative mode of knowing can offer. On the practice side, it is much easier to learn the secrets of one's trade through learning the stories that go around the workplace. Stories are engaging and entertaining and thus helpful as a way of obtaining work related knowledge (Riessman 2008, pp.8-9). This applies also to researchers who attempt to explore the work and life of organisational members by putting together the collected images of events, actions, and conversations and retelling them as 'tales of the field' (Van Maanen 1988/2011). It is impossible to understand the processes of organising and the products that result from them only by reference to figures, diagrams, charts and similar 'logico-scientific' tools; there need to be narratives to offer meaning to such abstract fragments (Czarniawska 2008b). Therefore, narrating is a means for knowing in that it offers a way of organising incoherent pieces of information into sensible bodies of knowledge.

The narrative mode of communication in organisation practice and research

Narrative is a useful form for everyday communication. It can be related to organisational life in that organisers usually tell stories when they recount, for other

organisers or for outsiders, what has happened at work. When asked about their organising efforts they often answer by following patterns of storytelling as people habitually do when trying to make sense of their everyday lives. To this effect, narrating is, to use Fisher's phrasing, a primary mode of communication (1984). In this application, narrating resembles a sort of 'metaorganizing', the organising of organising in that people organise their experiences of the workplace through telling stories about their working life (Czarniawska 2008b, p.33). Such organisation by narration, Czarniawska has argued, is accomplished as much through the communication of fragmented stories (e.g. casual talk with colleagues in the corridors or correspondence with organisation researchers) as through carefully designed written plots (e.g. official 3-year plans). Such narratives create a rich resource for studies of organisations. In this sense, narrating is a means for communication related both to organising practice and theory.

The narrative mode of analysis in organisation research

The narrative approach has been recently established in organisation research with regard to informing methodologies for the collection and interpretation of fieldwork. The organising devices offered by narrative inquiry constitute a 'mode of analysis' for the interpretation of organising activities (Riessman 2008). For example literary devices such as 'genres', institutionalised ways for organising narrative elements (Bruss 1976, p.5), are effective tools for understanding and interpreting organising efforts both for organisers who emplot their narratives following certain genres and for the researchers who try to analyse these work life stories. Many examples of such genre storytelling can be found amongst the published narratives of practitioners. Autobiographical accounts of CEOs and business leaders are perhaps the most

prevalent genre of contemporary management (Rhodes and Pitsis 2008). Similarly, narrative analysis has been frequently employed for the design, implementation and interpretation of fieldwork.

Along the same lines, I have employed the three modes of the narrative inquiry as a way of understanding personnel development practices. I have attempted to collect narratives from the interviewees (in subsequent field studies); narrative analysis has been employed as the main means for interpretation of the results of the fieldwork; finally, a narrative view has provided a way to communicate the research results. Employing such means, I have organised the results of my fieldwork in the form of narratives.

In what follows I reflect on the next stages of my research project, i.e. the subsequent field studies and interpretation and presentation of the results.

Participant observation and follow up interviews: The case of Be Yourself!

The pilot study had significant outcomes for my research. I had gone to the field with a formed hypothesis and discovered that there was no way to collect evidence for it. Yet what I had collected from the field – a different set of phenomena – appeared as a much more interesting topic for inquiry. Doing the fieldwork, writing and presenting its results, and reading more literature, resulted in the reformulation of my research interest to exploring L&D Australia's organising processes and products. The plan was to observe one of their theatrical training workshops and then interview all involved (the performers and the audience) to explore their take on such a mode of training. An opportunity for observation of such a training workshop was offered through the organisation of an event for the Phronesis Network, a joint network established in collaboration between L&D Australia and MGSM. The main aim of the network was to

promote the idea of *wisdom in the doing* through marrying practices of business education with academic research. This event was delivered by L&D Australia, but organised by MGSM's drama, performance and storytelling group, with a double purpose of keeping the *Phronesis Network* active as well as providing fieldwork opportunities for PhD students. For L&D Australia, *Phronesis* events worked also as a chance to showcase their training products – as endorsed by MGSM– to potential clients. The workshop, titled: *Be Yourself! Women, Authenticity and Workplace Performance*²⁴, involved an audience-active theatrical performance. The workshop was attended by 25 personnel development professionals – 24 women and one man. The majority of participants were personnel development consultants who came from small consulting companies or personnel development managers in large corporations, looking for the most recent training trends. At the end of the session I presented my research topic to the audience and invited them to partake in follow up face-to-face interviews, which eventually attracted 13 participants²⁵ from different companies.

When conducting participant observations, many researchers take advantage of modern technologies such as audio and video recording devices in order to capture more details of what is going on in the field and to compensate for the limitations of their span of attention. Working life abounds in complex situations in which multiple activities and interactions take place simultaneously. Some of such activities leave subtle physical traces as they are transient. Audio and video recording allows for

²⁴ This workshop was originally designed for and presented at a national conference organised by the largest professional women's network in Australia (WNA).

²⁵ Unfortunately, none of the L&D consultants who were involved in the delivery of this workshop were persuaded to participate in the interviews.

capturing a more detailed description of life in the field (Barley and Kunda 2001, p.85). Therefore the workshop *Be Yourself!* was video-recorded.

On Interviews

During the month after the workshop, I conducted 13 one-hour audio-recorded loosely-structured individual interviews with the participants of *Be Yourself!*. My main objective was to collect narratives in which the workshop participants would reflect on their experience of the theatrical training session, *Be Yourself!*, in terms of first, the application of organisational theatre and second, the topic of authenticity as explored through the workshop. In short, I was interested to see how such theatrical training influenced the audience both through its medium and the content it advocated. These were the questions on which I loosely followed up:

How did you get to know about the workshop? What is your professional background? What do you think of the workshop? What do you think of the piece of theatre acted out? How did you find the characters and the themes discussed? How are the themes specifically relevant to women? What is it to you 'to be yourself'?

According to Cassell (2009) interview is the most widely-used method for conducting social research informed by a variety of epistemological traditions, and yet some scholars are sceptical about the usefulness of interviews for academic research. For instance, in their critique of the 'interview society' Atkinson and Silverman (1997) claimed that the obsession with the interview in qualitative research was caused by the false impression that an 'open-ended interview offers the opportunity for an authentic gaze into the soul of another' (p. 305). From the constructionist gaze, however, the interview does not unveil the truth of the interlocutors or the social realities they report on; rather, it exhibits 'a sample' of those realities (Czarniawska 2004, p.49). Such

re-formulations of the interview, in general, portray it as a conversation between the interviewee and the interviewer. Holstein and Gubrium (1995), for instance, viewed the interview as an active dialogue between the researcher and the interlocutor, through which reality is co-constructed and meaning is collaboratively accomplished (Holstein and Gubrium 1995). Similarly, Silverman (2011) reformulated the interview as a participant observation in an interaction where the researcher and the interlocutor negotiate for the direction their conversations should take.

From the narrative point of view, the interview may help to collect accounts of how the interlocutors see and interpret social realities. An interview, then, is often a site for the production or recounting of narratives. The belief that interviews produce narratives and interpretations and do not unveil the 'real' practices does not weaken its validity as an 'enterprise in knowledge production' (Czarniawska 2004, p.47). This is because, first, interview accounts reveal the perceptions which inform the interlocutor's course of action; second, interviews provide a means for the researcher to collect indirect observations of the interlocutors; finally – and most relevant to organisation researchers – interviews may tell a great deal about the way practices are organised, as there is no reason to suspect that the interlocutors produce an altogether different account of their organising practices just for the researcher's ears (Czarniawska 2004, p. 49).

In practice, collecting stories may prove a challenge. Some interlocutors avoid telling stories as it may appear to them that scientific theorising has a more legitimate air. Even the interviewers are not immune from such assumptions: 'in most cases both sides [of an interview] have to combat the shared conviction that 'true knowledge' is not made of narratives' (Czarniawska 2004, p.51). Moreover, the interlocutor's

tendency for narration is related to the way the researcher poses the questions. Some questions, in spite of the interviewer's intentions, may discourage narratively structured responses.

There is no 'correct' list of questions or 'best interview technique' that ensures the production of narratives in an interview situation, as each interview is a unique situation and must be treated as such. Nevertheless, one may find inspirations in experiences of others who are experienced in interviewing. In conducting my interviews with the participants of *Be Yourself!*, I prepared myself by following Dvora Yanow's (2001) inspirations from improvisational theatre, Jovchelovitch and Bauer's (2000) instructions for 'narrative interviewing', and Barbara Czarniawska's recommendations for 'eliciting narratives' (2004, pp.47-59).

Dvora Yanow (2001) borrowed a few improvisation theatre techniques for conducting interviews. First, she suggested being Other-oriented, which in the realm of theatre requires the actor to be attentive to what the co-actors are doing in order to respond to them appropriately and purposefully. Second, the interviewers should practice being present in the moment, by being aware of themselves, the others, the context and the constraints imposed on the interaction. Moreover, she proposed the *Yes and ...* technique in encouraging the interlocutors to play along; the interviewer should respond to the interlocutor's acts and speech in a way that first, affirms them (Yes) and then, adds to them (and...). Yanow argued that a researcher who probes into organisational practices has many *Yes and ...* moments, 'acknowledging what he or she has just been told and responding in such a way as to move the conversation or interaction forward' (2001, p.60). Following such insights, in each interview I attempted to be other-oriented and to be conscious of the context and the dynamics of

the interaction between the interviewee and myself. Prior to each meeting, I would gather information about my interlocutor through their webpages. After each meeting, I would make notes of the history developed with the interviewee, the circumstances of our meeting, and how I viewed the dynamics of our interactions. During the meeting, I tried to be attentive to the direction towards which the interviewee took the conversation and also attempted to enact the 'Yes and ...' technique in order to encourage further exploration of the topics.

Another set of useful techniques came from Sandra Jovchelovitch and Martin Bauer's (2000) text, which is based on a translation of the work of the German narrative scholar Fritz Schütze. Schütze's formulation involved 'a systematic proposal' for eliciting narratives during social research interviews. Bauer (1996) had employed narrative interviews specifically in conducting post-event interviews so as to reconstruct the social event from the perspective of the participants. Jovchelovitch and Bauer asserted that narrative interviewing goes beyond the conventional 'question-answer' paradigm and proposed specific guidelines and rules for conducting fieldwork (2000, p.6). The method starts with a preparation phase during which the researcher conducts an initial ethnographic study – to become familiar with major social events of the community she or he is studying – and identifies some initial topics of narration, which necessarily will reflect the interests of the researcher. Then the researcher is ready to start the interview. In the first phase, the interviewer must introduce the method to the interlocutors as aiming for 'uninterrupted story-telling'. The interviewer then introduces an initial topic of narration and triggers the interlocutors' memory and guides them to start story-telling. Second, the main narration phase begins in which the interlocutor tells stories and the interviewer listens attentively and offers affirming

comments (similar to Yanow's suggestions) to encourage the narration. The interviewer should refrain from imposing judgements or ideas in this phase. As the narration comes to a natural end, the interviewer starts the third phase through which she or he asks question based on what has been narrated by the interviewee. The interviewer should abstain from asking 'why questions' so as to prevent the manufacture of justifications. The questioning is most effective if the interviewer uses the interlocutor's own words which have been articulated in the narration phase. The first three phases should be recorded, with the interlocutors' consent. But in the fourth phase, the recorder must be turned off. In this way, the formal situation breaks off, trust is established and therefore small-talk ensues. This informal talk may contain valuable narratives and the researcher should record them as fieldnotes after the interview ends.

I found some aspects of narrative interviewing appealing: it was a method for post-event inquiry which applied in the case of my interviews. I also had had a preparation phase through my shadowing and participant observation of Be yourself!. I found some of the suggested techniques quite useful for practice, for example, the instructions regarding active listening and abstaining from commenting when the interviewee is telling a story were quite effective. I also followed these instructions in regards to paying attention to the themes and vocabulary used by the interlocutors during their narrations. However, insightful as these techniques are, I found them quite optimistic in assuming that the interlocutors would be persuaded to tell stories when they are told at the outset that the aim of the interviewer is storytelling. Moreover, guiding the interlocutors at the start of the interview to uninterrupted story-telling seems like an imposition of the researcher's agenda. Some people may feel threatened if they are

pushed to tell *only* stories. In addition, such a suggestion is precarious in that some interlocutors may find the interview method unprofessional (even if they are habitual story-tellers) and may lose interest in the whole process (I am reflecting on my own experience here). Therefore, I employed some techniques from narrative interviewing but did not practice it as a systematic method.

The other major source of inspiration came from Czarniawska's (2004) sharing of her own experiences when trying to collect narratives through interviews. From these I formulated a few techniques which may encourage narrative production: first, allowing the interviewees to choose their own timeframe in responding to the question. People organise their conversations by application of different temporal strategies: some use chronology (the sequential time) and some use the rules of kairotic time, 'a narrative time, punctuated by important events, which might even run backwards in chronology' (p.52). Both such strategies may produce narratives. However, if the posed question imposes a specific timeframe on the interviewees they may reduce their response to a list of activities, events, or concepts with no chronological connections or meaningful structure (a plot). Second, being spontaneous during the interviews and following the interviewee's lead, when they introduce a new topic – provided it was not too far from the research topics – can be at times helpful in inducing narratives. Finally, posing the proper question is critical for collecting narratives: if the interviewees are asked 'what is your job about?' they produce a different response (usually lists of activities) compared to when they are asked 'would you describe what you did yesterday at work?' (which may elicit a narrative response).

My quest for collecting narratives through the interviews was successful on some occasions and failed on others. A variety of texts, e.g. narratives, stories, lists, points of

view, moral statements and reports, were produced as a result. The follow up interviews originally aimed to investigate the way the participants of Be Yourself! had made sense of the theatrical training session. Due to the fortunate coincidence that the participants were also personnel development professionals, the interviews provided a space for the production of many accounts about other practices of personnel development in different companies and from different organisers' perspectives. These accounts offered *a* picture of personnel development processes and products and therefore reformulated the research focus from L&D Australia to include, in a more general sense, *practices of personnel development* as observed through my fieldwork. After an initial reading of such practices (the results will be presented in Chapter 6), the more in-depth research focus was defined as the exploration of *theatre-based training* and of *the authenticity discourse and training* within the practices of personnel development professionals.

The fieldwork at a glance

My field experiences have left the impression that detailed objectives cannot be specifically designed prior to the study; nor can one anticipate the circumstances or the outcomes. Rather, the meaning should emerge out of the practice of fieldwork. Assuming a constructionist attitude, one should practice what one preaches. The reality of fieldwork is constructed through collaborative activities between the researchers and the others they encounter in the field and their collective acts of sensemaking. This implies that as a field of practice, research is also socially organised and constructed through *doing fieldwork*, to paraphrase Davies and Gannon (2006). Through the process, researchers develop a sense of inquiry, an understanding of the other's routine and taken-for-granted realities, and insight into their own interests for future research.

Interpreting fieldwork: Translating actions, observations and text

Through the forthcoming chapters I apply a variety of strategies for the analysis of the texts collected from the field. In the remaining part of this chapter I will discuss these strategies. In order to organise material collected from the field, different processes and techniques of reading, interpretation and writing have been applied. In practice such processes are intertwined, as they are all attempts at making sense of what one has experienced in the field. However, for purposes of clarification and justification, I will describe separately the methods by which the observations, conversations, texts, fieldnotes and video/audio recordings collected from the field have been transformed into the chapters of this dissertation. Multiple processes of translation were necessary: actions and observations were translated into texts in the form of fieldnotes which were in turn interpreted and translated into other texts, discussions and oral and written presentations. Through this process, field activities materialised through inscription, so that the conventions of literary theory were applicable to them. Before moving onto a review of techniques for text analysis and the narrative conventions employed in the construction of the current text, I should retrace my steps back to the beginning, to describe writing field notes and transcribing the workshop and interview recordings.

Transcribing

A first step in interpretation of ethnographic studies is to translate the observations into writing. My note-taking and transcription routine when I was shadowing Maria was organised as follows: I took notes each day in the field and later in the day typed them up. This collection of notes was complemented by the transcripts of the diary-interviews which were produced at a slower pace. For transcription, I followed David

Silverman's instructions for 'conversation analysis' (2001, 2007). Therefore, all conversations (about five hours) were transcribed to show pauses, repeated words, interruptions, tone and volume of voice. During later observations I followed almost the same routine. I typed the fieldnotes and transcribed the video-recorded version of Be Yourself!. Meanwhile, I conducted the follow-up interviews with the participants and began to listen and transcribe the 13 hours of audio-recorded conversations. By this stage, and through interaction with all the texts produced from the fieldwork and with other texts (literature), the following themes were emerging:

- Personnel development: activities and products
- Employment of theatrical means in personnel development practices
- The appeal of authenticity discourse and training in personnel development practices

I transcribed the 13 interviews, but this time I limited the conversation analysis transcription style only to the parts I found most relevant to the above themes. For each interview, a profile was created, in which the interviewee was described regarding her or his professional and personal background. I also reflected and wrote on the context of our conversation: the details of the way the appointment was made, the place we had met up, and my own impressions of the interviewee. This was time-consuming, but it was reassuring to produce comprehensive transcriptions, which included both the content that was produced during an interview, and the contexts in which it was located.

Jovchelovitch and Bauer have viewed the process of transcribing as the first step in the analysis of fieldwork results in that being involved in such translation opens up various

'flows of ideas' for later interpretation (2000). Such flows of ideas were shaped by reading the texts, both those produced from the fieldwork and the existing literature.

Interpreting: The art of reading

Czarniawska (2004) has proposed a framework for the interrogation of texts produced during fieldwork²⁶ by making a distinction among three ways of reading a text: through 'explication' the reader questions the texts as to 'what it is saying'; through 'explanation' the text is interrogated according to 'how (or why) it says what it does'; and through 'exploration' the reader thinks 'what do I think of what the text says?' (2004, pp.60-61). I followed these questions in interaction with my fieldwork results. Such a distinctive classification, of course, is possible only in a conceptual sense. In practice the reader uses the three modes in combination and often at the same time.

After discussions with my supervisors, it was concluded that conversation analysis, though helpful in producing a detailed transcription, would not be followed in further interpretation and writing of the dissertation. Therefore, for purposes of final presentation, the excerpts from the transcribed interviews were edited into coherent and readable summaries, as faithful to original as possible. After all, there are other ways of showing respect to those who have participated in the research than repeating word by word what they have said. It is also the duty of the researcher to add a 'novel reading' to such findings as long as the original meanings are not lost or twisted, but the voices of all involved – the researcher and the interlocutors – are included (Czarniawska 2004, p.62). Such reading of the fieldwork results led to production of

²⁶ She drew on Paul Hernadi's (1987) hermeneutic triad: explication, explanation and exploration

various types of text: my own accounts of the field as well as the accounts produced by my interlocutors. These were to be analysed with various text analysis tools.

Narrative analysis, that is, 'a family of methods for interpreting texts that have in common a storied form' (Riessman 2008, p.11) offers a variety of interpretative means. The existing guidelines for narrative inquiry in the social sciences (Riessman 2008) and organisation studies (Czarniawska 2004) explicitly invite students to look for the narrative devices that fit their research purposes and therefore to combine different narrative means and approaches. Following such advice, I have used a variety of analytical devices according to the type of text the analysis was intended for. For instance, I have used dramatisic analogies to interpret my own narratives, thus interpreting a coaching session by drawing on Victor Turner's rites of chieftainship (See Chapter 7). In the case of some stories gathered from the personnel development experts, I employed structural analysis (Czarniawska 2004, 2008b) with the intention of making explicit the plot, the characters and the conclusive points of the story (Chapter 10). Genre analysis has also been frequently employed. Specific methods of explanation are described within the respective chapters.

The accounts produced through interviews are reliable reflections on the practices of the field so far as the logic according to which they are produced is considered. In the utterances collected from the field, one can discern, as Czarniawska (2008b, pp.11-13) has suggested, examples of the 'logic of theory', 'logic of practice', and 'logic of representation'. She borrowed the concepts from Pierre Bourdieu (1990): the logic of theory can be found in the utterances of experts, such as academic scholars, management gurus and alike; the logic of practice reflects the collective actions in which the actors of a given field of practice are engaged in their everyday life. It is the

logic of practice that organisational researchers aim for when they collect practitioners' accounts through interviews.

What Czarniawska later renamed the 'logic of representation', Bourdieu saw as 'officialization':

the process whereby the group (or those who dominate it) teaches itself and masks from itself its own truth, binds itself by a public profession which sanctions and imposes what it utters, tacitly defining the limits of the thinkable and unthinkable and so contributing to the maintenance of the social order from which it derives its power (Bourdieu 1990, p.108).

The logic of representation originates in the logic of practice but is garnished by the logic of theory. In the context of ethnographic studies, accounts that follow the logic of representation are often presented by locals to visitors and outsiders (including organisation researchers) who question the everyday taken-for-granted activities. Being observed or interviewed creates a sense of awareness and a detachment from routine since the ritual façade of everyday activities is broken. This often encourages practitioners to style their accounts by drawing on theorisations and conceptualisations. Gideon Kunda observed a similar process in his study of culture in Tech (as reviewed in Chapter 3), which he identified as a mode of 'cognitive distancing', through which the interlocutors distance themselves from their everyday work realities and exercise a sort of scientific detachment and express their observations of the workplace by borrowing from various scientific theories (2006, p.178).

Through the course of my fieldwork, I collected accounts exhibiting the logic of practice (it may be added that Bourdieu's work in French is called 'Le sens pratique', a practical sense, or that which makes sense in practice). However, I also collected a fair share of accounts that reflected official representations. These are specially the texts that do not

conform to any narrative form but are comprised of a series of theorisations and reflections. I have been confronted with a difficult question: are such accounts valuable? Or is it only the accounts reflecting practices of the field that should be noticed and interpreted? These questions can be answered by looking at the critical role the official pictures of organising can play. The logic of representation reflects what is taken to be the legitimate (and illegitimate) actions and actors and the dominant institutional order. The accounts that follow the logic of representation, then, help to identify the repertoire of legitimate practices and actors within a certain organisational field. Viewed in this light, all utterances containing reflections, narratives and moral judgments are valuable for producing a picture of life in the field, if the interpreter considers the logic followed in their construction and the subsequent type of image produced. Chapter 9 in this dissertation contains the interlocutors' accounts that follow the logic of representation. Those accounts are interpreted considering this point.

Ultimately, my readings have to be compared to other readings – not of the same, but of similar material. In fact, it is possible to reflect and to create novel readings only by considering the texts that 'resonate, run along, interfere with, alienate from, and give an extra dimension to the main text' (Annemarie Mol 2002, p.3). Following these instructions, I made texts 'aligned with' or 'distanced from' texts offered by the literature. Obviously, other texts produced during the fieldwork were also considered and related to. All texts from the field were put in interaction with one another in order to explore the explicit and implicit commonalities and differences in the interlocutors' accounts and to reflect on the implications for informing final interpretations.

Ethnographies are often structured and organised like stories, at least in part. Such narrative writing became a recognised genre in organisation studies. According to Rhodes and Brown (2005, p. 471), such academic writing has added an emotional and subjective aspect to the conventional rationalistic ways of writing about management. They reasoned that 'borrowing from literary genres can assist us in our efforts to produce more interesting and readable accounts of organisations' (p.483). At present, there are many guidelines for ethnographers who wish to employ the conventions of narrative writing. I have used Van Maanen's *Tales of the field* (1988/2011).

Writing tales of the field

As Van Maanen (1988/2011) has pointed out, writing ethnographies involves making 'strategic choices and active constructions', deciding which details to include (or exclude), deciding how to summarise and present the results, and deciding which voices to use in describing the field experience (p. 73). He has distinguished among three modes of representation: realist accounts, confessional tales and impressionist accounts. The ethnographer writing in a realist style presents *one* reading of what has happened in the field and arranges the facts so as to support such a reading, often through references to so-called grand theories. The author does not have a personal presence in such ethnographic accounts; instead, the details of life in the field are presented through selected excerpts from natives' points of view. The ethnographer has an authorial power in this style of writing in that she or he presents the realist tale as 'the true' representation of the field and the readers are discouraged from looking for alternative representations.

Confessional tales are personalised – and to some extent self-oriented – accounts of fieldwork in which the ethnographers admit to their doubts and flaws and at times

even invite the readers to challenge their interpretations. In this rendition each experience is described in a way that is open to criticism and alternative interpretation. The ethnographer's point of view is presented *only* as her or his view, implying the possibility of other – and perhaps better – views of the field. Another quality of confessionals is that they are usually success stories in that the researcher reflects on the challenges and hardships she or he has faced in conducting the fieldwork, which have been overcome through learning strategies for survival. Such claims of success are supported by and materialise in the presentation of the stories the reader is reading.

Impressionist tales are named after impressionist movement in painting in which the painter portrays a scene located in a larger landscape at a specific moment, as if it has been captured by chance. Such tales of the field include a series of 'remembered events' from the field in which the author has partaken (pp.101-102). The distinctive feature of this style is that it reports on rare and extraordinary events, not on usual or routine activities. Such events are highlighted and dramatised in the ethnographer's accounts. The aim of impressionist accounts is to recreate such events through detailed descriptions so as to engage the readers' imagination as if they have witnessed the event alongside the ethnographer. The natives of the field become real characters with names and biographies. Such tales follow mostly a narrative rationality as opposed to a logico-scientific argumentation, and try to create an impression of believability. While telling stories, the impressionists may step out of the narration and add a few analytical reflections to their account. The conclusions presented by this style of storytelling are fragmented. They come in bits and pieces and what has been presented in the beginning as critical may lose its importance by the end.

Writing chapters of this dissertation I have employed variations or combinations of the three modes of writing. The narratives in this chapter are intended as a personal account in the form of a confessional, although they also incorporate the realist and impressionist styles in some parts. In this personal account I have recounted the challenges I have faced through different stages of my research and how I have – or have not – overcome them. In Chapters 6 and 7 and 8 the dominant style of writing is that of an impressionist tale. Throughout the chapters I report on my own observations of training and development work processes, work sessions and showcases as well as similar observations collected from the interviewees. I write these as detailed and dramatic narratives and highlight the leading and supporting characters, their actions and their interpretations, while adding my reflections and analytical remarks. The result is presented as a series of fragmented yet recognisable images of activities and products of the field of personnel development. I do not claim, however, that there is no trace of the realist style in the narratives of these chapters.

Chapter 9 is written in a style close to that of the realist mode. The author and her personal accounts are absent from these pages, which contain the personnel development professionals' opinions and beliefs about being authentic. I do not, however, claim to draw on any 'grand' theories; nor have I attempted to create one 'true' version of what authenticity means to these professionals. In Chapter 10 I return to the impressionist mode of narration, dramatically reconstructing work life stories of personnel development professionals. The narrators are characterised in detail and the reconstruction of their stories creates an impression of presence.

Concluding remarks

Gideon Kunda (2006) believed that any method chapter is an ethnography of the research process; a confession of one's limitations and shortcomings in doing fieldwork, and a justification of the validity of the accounts produced from what has transpired in the field or – in the case of the narratively-informed – their verisimilitude. Accordingly, this was the way in which my confessional tale was organised. I produced an account of how this research has been conducted, its results manifested in the chapters of this dissertation; I described chronologically how the pilot study was planned and directed; I reflected on the learnings resulting from this phase of research, which reformulated my conceptual focus, redirected my observation methods and directed me towards developing an epistemological stance; I recounted the organisation of Be Yourself! and the follow up interviews through which a picture of the processes and products of the personnel development field of practice, specifically their activities around theatre and authenticity, was produced; finally, I reflected on how the research results were transcribed, framed, interpreted and reported.

The most significant insight gained from these processes, in my view, is that field studies cannot be planned in detail, but are paradoxical and unpredictable processes in which one hopes for the best outcomes. And, in my experience, the unexpected outcomes are often more thought-provoking than the initial ideas. Also, doing fieldwork, like any other practice, is organised and achieved through negotiations between all involved.

I do not aim to describe *the Australian* learning and development field, or to discover the truth about theatrical training or authenticity. Instead, I report on a sample of personnel development activities that I had the opportunity to observe. My direct

observations were limited only to the work processes of one consulting company, L&D Australia, which operates mainly in Sydney, and on occasions in Melbourne. Neither did the complementary indirect observations provide a comprehensive picture of the field of personnel development. Through the forthcoming chapters I will describe the specific processes, activities, events, perspectives and people I have been fortunate to observe or interview. This is only a snapshot of certain activities and certain people. Nevertheless, the literature on topics of theatrical training (Nissley 2002; Clark and Mangham 2004a; Barry and Meisiek 2010) and authenticity discourse (Erickson 1995; Guignon 2004) shows clearly that my snapshot is a part of a global picture, in which influences, models and imitations go both directions, from and to Australia.

The next chapter reports on the personnel development processes and products identified through the course of fieldwork. The aim in Chapter 6 is to provide a picture of the taken-for-granted, the legitimate and the fashionable activities in the studied field of practice. I will, consequently, explain how *theatrical training* and *the authenticity discourse* came to be the focus of my study of personnel development practices.

Part III

Studies in the Personnel Development Field of Practice

Chapter 6: Organising Personnel Development

Chapter 7: Rehearsing Reality

Chapter 8: Performing Authenticity in Organisational Theatre

Chapter 9: Authenticity in Everyday Working Life

Chapter 10: Narrating Authenticity

I enjoy coaching people because it leads them to gain insights into themselves and therefore enables them to develop and grow.

(Mary, personnel development manager)

The arts in general, and theatre specifically, they all offer ways of thinking, lateral ways of thinking, which I think are useful to move us away from very set ways of thinking and operating. So, I think that's the essence of what theatre can offer to the training and development space.

(Eve, personnel development consultant)

If you spend a third of your life at work, then seriously, you want to be yourself at work!

(Alice, personnel development consultant)

Chapter 6: Organising Personnel Development

As mentioned in the previous chapter, organisation scholars have recently emphasised the importance of studying the *processes* of organising rather than its *products*. Such a notion was early on propagated by Karl Weick, who suggested that *organising* as opposed to *organisations* should be studied (1979). In this and later works (e.g. 1995), Weick insisted that processes, not structures must be the focus of attention. Studying organisations by describing properties, places, and issues – a typical approach of organisation scholars according to Czarniawska (2008b) – implies a quest for the 'essence' of organisations. In contrast, studying the activities involved in organising embraces the view that 'nothing is organised for good or forever' (Czarniawska 2008b, p.6).

Following such an approach to research, in this chapter I begin my report on personnel development, with an exploration of organising efforts in this field of practice according to the results of my fieldwork. In this chapter, I study the accounts provided by the 13 personnel development professionals²⁷ I interviewed. In most cases the accounts were produced in response to questions such as 'What do you do on an everyday basis? What is your professional background?' This analysis is corroborated by observations conducted at (and around) L&D Australia (See Chapter 5 for details of the fieldwork). The study of the personnel development activities results in the identification of activities that are taken as routine and given as well as those activities that are considered as novel, exciting, and fashionable in this field of practice.

²⁷ Some interviewees worked in small and medium-sized consulting companies; they will be called *consultants*. Others belonged to personnel development departments of large multinational corporations, and they will be referred to as *managers*.

The chapter progresses through an exploration of *coaching* which was presented by the personnel development professionals, during the interviews, as their everyday routine and taken-for-granted activity. Different coaching methods, described by the interviewed professionals will be presented and interpreted. Then, the activities and ideas presented as fashionable in this field of practice will be identified by drawing on the field observations as well as the interviews. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the fashionable trends in personnel and development, amongst which *training by theatre* and *authenticity* are to be explored in later chapters.

Coaching: 'I do a lot of coaching'²⁸

During the interviews, many accounts of coaching were produced, and coaching was repeatedly referred to as a routine activity of personnel development professionals. The interlocutors recounted different methods of coaching, mentioned a passion for coaching, and even the need for coaches to themselves be coached from time to time. This is how Mary, a personnel development manager, described her coaching practices:

[The process of coaching] depends on what the context of the coaching is for; in some contexts I might coach someone for the purpose of building their skill in a particular area; it might be hard skills, for example to complete reports on time or accurately; or it might be soft skills like giving and receiving feedback; so, that's what I would do, I would just work with them on whatever they want to focus on and just be there to keep them on track. [During a coaching process] the trainees are encouraged to set their own goals and establish their own solutions. Then they go and implement it and we make sure that they stay on track. If

²⁸ This was expressed by an interviewee describing her main activities.

it's not working then we relook at it. They are given feedback and they can move from there. Coaching is kind of a reiterative process.

Coaching, I was informed by the interviewees, is quite in demand, and organisation members seek it more and more. Hall et al. (1999) explained such increasing demand for coaching by the therapy-like features of this method: the trainees enjoy the confidentiality, personal attention and feeling of security, shown to them by the coach who also provides them with performance feedback. A similar picture of coaching was presented by Maria, a consultant at L&D Australia:

In a coaching session it is important to challenge the trainees but also to make them feel safe; give them constructive feedback; tell them what habits are good to keep and what's better to be changed.

Coaching has been described by Whitmore (2009) as a long-term process which builds on psychological theories and is aimed at the improvement of individual performance which may be achieved through personal growth, self-discovery and self-development. The 'essence of coaching', he argued, is in helping people to learn not from outside but 'from within' themselves (p.9). He further connected the coaching process to the quest for meaning and spirituality in the workplace.

The coaching practices of one of my interlocutors, Alice, resonated closely with such a spiritual take, as she described her coaching method as 'a meditation process which creates a space to see what life is about.' Another consultant, Kim, described her coaching business's mission as the creation of meaning and purpose in the work place:

My coaching business is all about creating more meaning at work through authenticity, through finding purpose, through communication and all sorts of things that really impact how people feel and improve at work.

Relating the history of career guidance services – and the place of coaching within them – Jenny Bimrose (2006) linked the growth of such services to the complexities of getting into, and navigating the labour market. According to her, business coaches help employees develop an occupational identity and consequently develop their skills and knowledge so as to contribute to their better performance in organisations (2006, p.2). Such self-development through the coaching process was also described by Mary, one of my interlocutors:

When coaching, I can give people tools, knowledge, and techniques to be able to change themselves. [Through coaching] I'm able to identify the areas where people need to build capability; or, help them identify where their strengths are; and get them focus on those strengths and using those strengths more often.

During my fieldwork, I heard the coaching process described as borrowing from a variety of techniques and theoretical concepts, most visibly notions taken from drama and psychological theories. Below I discuss a few accounts describing such coaching practices.

Colours of Personality²⁹

The following narrative presents a coaching method as described by Anne, the training director of a personnel development consulting company:

²⁹ The real title of the method has been changed to protect the interlocutor's anonymity.

Our coaching method has a theatrical and entertaining element. It gets people to understand more about themselves, understand more about each other, and value and appreciate the differences and learn how to work around them. We are the first and only company in Australia that uses this coaching method. Originally this is an American method and the guy who developed it, in fact turned profiling³⁰ into an entertainment tool. He called this EDUTAINMENT³¹. [In this method] we use imagery. We have four coloured cards, on each card there are a set of images and at the back of the card there are some descriptions. These four cards represent the four aspects to someone's personality. First of all, we get people to look at images in order to identify their dominant colours. And then let them read the descriptions and see if they fit.

On the green card, we have Albert Einstein, the Wizard, and Sherlock Holmes. So, green represents thinkers. These people look for new solutions, often they are high academics. The blue card represents feelers who care about being connected with others and having harmony, peace and love. The orange card represents risk-takers, people who would say 'hey let's go take a chance' and the golden card represents people who are very highly-structured. They know the step by step process and the goals and they know how to get there. They're on time and diarise everything.

[In coaching sessions] we coach a group of people with a specific communication problem. For example, a company sends one of their

³⁰ Based on the explanations I received through these interviews, profiling can be understood as a development process through which people's ways of thinking and working and their habits are translated into 'personality types' which are later used as a basis for understanding their current qualities, their 'strengths and weaknesses' and eventually as a platform for their prospective *personal* development.

³¹ When interviewees emphasised a term or a phrase, it is presented here in uppercase letters.

managers and his employee who have a hard time communicating with each other and are in conflict. We get them to sort the cards first by image and colour, and then by description. We explain to them that everyone is a combination of all colours but they tend to overuse some colours and underuse some. The ones people overuse are their natural strength lines and where their motivations lie. The ones they underuse are where their biggest areas for personal and professional development lie. Then to engage these people in our method and from the entertainment perspective, we bring actors to play the role of the manager and the employee. In the role-play the actors play out the manager and the employee with their dominant colours as have been identified and the trainees get to see the show unfold in front of them. That's how we get people to learn, in terms of communicating more effectively, by not being too dominant in one colour. So they can go in and add another colour to their range and know when a situation or a person requires them to do that. In this way no one gets offended at all because we look at the behaviour as a colour. There is no judgment attached to it at all. We just say 'you're just acting blue right now, step into another colour!' and people go 'ok!' and it's just so non-threatening and non-judgmental. We don't tell people to change themselves; we say to them 'it's just a colour! Go into it for a minute and then step back out'. So, people just step in, step out, step in, step out – to become more efficient.

Two aspects of this narrative need to be highlighted: first, in this narrator's account, Colours of Personality is differentiated from other coaching methods due to its entertaining qualities resulting from the application of theatrical role-play and props, e.g. the colour cards and imagery. Anne described the method in more general terms as

edutainment and provided a reference to its origins, which could have been intended as a way to introduce the method to an outsider as a novel concept. In this account, the employed theatrical devices are presented as innovative and to some extent exclusive to this coaching method.

Second, the Colours of Personality approach, as presented in this narrative, does not diagnose nor prescribe essential personality types for the trainees. The exercise entails an emphasis that people are 'a combination of all colours', and so they can learn to monitor the 'overuse' and 'underuse' of the colours and, considering the 'situation', decide to step into/out of a colour in order to make things work. This can be interpreted as what Arlie Hochschild (1979, 1983) described as *surface acting*.

Borrowing from the performing art theories, Hochschild distinguished between surface and deep acting. In surface acting (an English school of acting), the actor focuses mainly on the creation of the 'outward demeanour' of the character they play, as opposed to *deep acting* (Stanislavski's *method acting*) in which the actor tries to internalise the feelings and features of the character and change her/himself to *become* the character. In contrast, in surface acting the actor pretends to have the emotions claimed by the character while she or he does not, in reality, experience them. The actor, in this method, is consciously putting on a show of what is expected of someone who has that experience³² (Hochschild 1979, pp.557-558; 1983, pp.33-34). This is exactly what Colours of Personality, as presented by the coach, teaches:

³² She related such formulations to Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical formulation of the expressions 'given off' by individuals. The dramaturgical equivalent of surface acting, she argued, is impression management (1959).

In this coaching method, we tell people that everyone acts out their personality based on the roles they're playing in life. [We tell them] 'You know you play all these different roles; so, put on a mask and no matter what role you're required to play, play it well!' We get the actors to do the role-plays so we can say to people 'you could do this! Watch what the actors can do; you can [also] step in and play the attributes of a colour and what's required of you without changing yourself.' Putting on a mask is allowing people to step in easily without any stress, becoming [more] productive and then coming back to who they are. We don't try to change people's personalities. We tell people to be true to who they are.

In this sense, this coaching method can be framed as a means for teaching surface-acting. In this narration, there is implied an assumption of a 'true self', which surface acting can help protect. In this way the trainees can become 'productive' and fulfil their organisational responsibilities, with their true self stays intact while they change colours. In short, through role-play and the colour analogy, this method coaches the trainees so they gain more awareness about the situation, the behaviours required of them, and consciously step in and out of the colours/roles by surface-acting.

Coaching by psychology

The more experienced coaches are reportedly educated in psychology and behavioural sciences (Hall et al. 1999, p. 39). As one of the interviewed personnel development consultants commented, having an academic degree in psychology gives a consultant a definitive competitive edge in the labour market. In the same vein, my interlocutors introduced a number of psychologically-informed concepts and techniques that they employ in their coaching sessions. In this section, I report on the extensive references

to psychological theories – either academic or popular – in describing coaching sessions and training modules.

Coaching for development of *mood analysis* skills and practicing *empathy*, for instance, was described by Maria of L&D Australia, in the following.

This coaching process follows a special method for expressing the moods. I guide you, for example, to stand in the centre of the room – and there are four different chairs at the corners for your four different moods. For example, you sit on the anger chair and say what you're angry about and then go to the centre and reflect on what *the angry Sara* has just expressed. Then you go and sit on the other chairs and express yourself and then to the centre to reflect and so on. I find this method extremely helpful in practicing empathy when you try to imagine what it would be like to be in the other person's shoes and you try and recognise when somebody – or even you – are speaking a FACT or some POINT OF VIEW. Fact is what people said or what they did; a point of view is how you FEEL about something or your assumption about something. 'She really hates me', for example is completely a point of view which may or may not be true and this coaching process helps you understand your points of view from the facts and see how others may confuse their facts and points of view and you can develop empathy for the others' feelings and thoughts.

Empathy in general was emphasised by all my interlocutors as the building ground of coaching. The coach should experience it and should help the trainees achieve it. Such efforts to recognise and simulate *how the Other feels or thinks* were considered the prerequisite for achieving 'compassion' and 'shared understanding' and building

‘rapport’. Relatedly, a coaching technique for understanding ‘how people think’ was described by Mary, a personnel development manager:

I’m an accredited practitioner of Herrmann Brain Dominance Instrument (HBDI), which is all about thinking preferences and I can coach someone through that tool to help them understand how they think and how other people think and therefore, how might they be thinking differently or similarly; and how that may be beneficial or may create conflict in that relationship, if they’re working together. It’s a very simple technique, because I say [to the trainees] ‘Plan a holiday!’ and they go through the activity and just the way that they approach that activity gives me insight into their thinking preferences. And so, in that simple activity you can help someone understand more about themselves. This, in my mind, is beneficial for everyone, including the individual and anyone they interact with.

Jane, a development manager who worked in financial services, suggested that, in the development of employees, not only industrial and organisational psychology but also clinical psychology could be of use. In her description, coaching becomes a tool for ‘supporting people through their personal challenges’, a therapeutical technique for facilitating working life. She told me about her wish to obtain a degree in clinical psychology:

I am passionate about psychology. It’s just that I’ve been interested in human behaviour and how you help people through personal challenges. I find that interesting. Whilst there are all sorts of different psychological tools from the corporate point of view in the personnel development

space – [for example] there's a profiling and coaching tool, or we send people on leadership courses – there is all that sort of tools but I think it's more interesting to look at things from a clinical aspect. Not in terms of having to medicate people to be emotionally better, but just [to understand] more the cognitive behavioural side.

Kim, another personnel development consultant related the main mission of her coaching business as raising awareness about a psychological complex called the *impostor syndrome*. This was presented through the narration of a story about how she had started this coaching business. She had quit her top executive job a few years previously, while to all appearances, she had been considered a very successful executive woman. Later, she had begun a sequence of unsuccessful initiatives and finally she had started her coaching business based on the notion of the impostor syndrome:

What I discovered with the benefit of the hindsight was that what I've been doing to myself for about 40 years, was to be running an impostor syndrome. So, I've since been working on identifying what triggers this syndrome and really getting a much better understanding of it! The whole thing has a huge impact on the way that we interact with people, and the way that we run our careers and run our relationships. It has the potential to derail us enormously and I've chosen to focus on it in a business environment because I think that business can be quite heartless. I think it actually reinforces that feeling of not being good enough by that fear factor that is so strong in so many organisations. They set up competition and it stands in the way of so many things that organisations say they're trying to achieve, [for example] employee engagement, if I'm feeling like a fake and

a fraud, I don't want to be trying to contribute my ideas, my discretion and my effort because if I do that I might be exposed and somebody might actually figure out that I am a fake or a fraud and then I might lose my job. I think there are lots of people out there who have the tendency to experience the impostor syndrome. I think it's actually the HUMAN CONDITION! This is a tendency to experience this 'not good enough' feeling. So, I'm constantly trying when I am coaching – and I LOVE the coaching – and working with people to pull that apart so they can see that.

Kim's coaching business is explained and connected to her life story. Moreover, the focus on the impostor syndrome is presented as purposeful and legitimate. The legitimacy is achieved partly by referring to the need to grapple with 'the heartless business'. Thus a coaching enterprise is, in this sense, positioned as a rescuer that raises awareness of the impostor syndrome, caused by the villain of corporatism³³.

Kim provided a short history of the discovery of the impostor syndrome. This scientific history presents the academic origins of her coaching business and hence guarantees its legitimacy. Psychological theory, thus, is evoked for legitimisation purposes. The syndrome in this narrative is specifically connected to women in business, as the main victims:

[The impostor syndrome] was identified in an academic environment, back in the 1970s, by two psychologists who were working with PhD and Master's students. They were finding that women particularly, were terrified that they were going to fail [their examinations] while they had absolutely blemishless

³³ Accounts of organising, which characterise villains and heroes in day-to-day organisational efforts are a common narrative convention organisers employ in making sense of their efforts (Czarniawska 1997, pp.36-37; 2008, p.33)

academic records right the way through and there was no reason for them to think that they would [fail]! So the psychologists investigated further and they realised that there was this pattern running with this very high-achieving women where they felt like a fake and a fraud. They couldn't see that they had been successful. They thought that if there had been some measure of success that they couldn't deny, it was actually due to good luck or anything other than 'I'm smart'. The scientists called this the impostor syndrome.

Some other interlocutors – consultants from small businesses – also claimed legitimacy for their coaching practices by drawing on various psychological theories, for example the *left-brain/right-brain* theory. These consultants explained how they see it as within their responsibilities to train organisation members to activate their right brain so as to add its merits to the rational thinking of the left brain. According to one consultant, Alice, the corporate world is in dire need of authenticity, presence and creative thinking, which could be encouraged by activation of the right brain:

It is important to allow the right brain to inspire the left brain! The left brain is totally required; but, it is necessary to open up the way for the right brain to lead you and widen your horizons. This is a great marriage. A lot of [people in] corporate [environments] and businesses are heavily left-brained. Their right brain is not active and when people are like this, they are not open to opportunities.

Why Psychology?

One can conclude that various psychological theories inform the routine activities of the personnel development consultants. Psychological concepts and techniques are commonly employed in personnel development practices. This was to be expected:

psychology is commonly associated with the acknowledged purpose of personnel development, 'developing business through developing people' (Watson 1994, p. 893). As related by practically all my interlocutors, their main responsibility is to 'help organisation members to develop and grow'. Reportedly, the *raison d'être* of personnel development lies in 'enhancing the attributes of the person' and promoting 'awareness' and 'self-development' (Höpfl and Dawes 1995, pp.19-26). Psychology or the science of the psyche, then, is a natural choice for guiding the practices of personnel development.

What is more, psychological theories are commonly employed in personnel development practices due to their ubiquitous presence in contemporary life. According to De Vos (2012), psychological theory has infiltrated all domains of our lives today. Its presence in personnel development is but another example of *psychologisation*, a concept defined by De Vos (2012) as the entrance of 'psychological vocabulary and psychological explanatory schemes in fields which are supposed not to belong to the traditional theoretical and practical terrains of psychology' (p.1). De Vos argued that psychology has entered every aspect of the modern individual's everyday life through education systems at schools, through Human Resource departments at work, and through media and entertainment at home and leisure. Therefore, 'we all have become students of psychology' (2012, p.19).

According to him, psychologisation is a modern phenomenon. He traced the birth of psychology back to the Enlightenment, when the project of modernisation began. Before this time, God was present in all aspects of human life and God's power connected humans to the world and gave meaning to this relationship. After the Enlightenment, the sciences replaced God in mediating a meaningful relationship between modern individuals and the modern world. Modern individuals were

bestowed with *a scientific gaze* towards the world and all was embraced by this, including the self (p.20). Modern subjectivity resulted from the adoption of this scientific gaze that reduced all human and social realities to 'objectified and measurable mechanisms' (p.24). De Vos concluded that the modern individual adopted an inward scientific gaze and became *homo psychologicus* while psychology became the main tool for sensemaking in everyday modern life. In the late modern days of the *globalisation* and *mass communication* of ideas and practices, he argued, people make sense of their lives by adopting a psychological gaze. As a result, psychology has entered all domains related to subjectivity.

The picture painted by De Vos is convincing in its account of the omnipresence of psychological discourse in everyday life. Personnel development undertakings (usually a part of wider human resource management activities) fit nicely into this portrayal of the role of psychological theories in the development of the (late) modern working individual. The choice of psychological concepts and techniques in personnel development implies fashion-like qualities. The next section is therefore devoted to a discussion of fashion and an exploration of fashionable trends in this organisation field.

Fashionable activities and ideas in personnel development

Personnel development practices – in the capacities of both consultants and managers – have been blamed for a tendency towards 'fads', 'fashions' and 'flavour of the months' (Huczynski 1993, Clark 1999). Managers have been accused of recruiting 'quick-fix solutions' (Watson 1994, p.897) and consultants have been criticised for introducing transitory management packages that promise to cure organisational maladies, to no avail (Gill and Whittle 1993, p.284). This critique belongs to a more general approach which looks disapprovingly at organisers' proneness to take up fashionable

management ideas. In this rendition, management consultants are portrayed as shrewd traders who take advantage of the practitioners' predisposition to fashion (Salaman 2002).

Czarniawska and Joerges (1996) related such trivialisation of fashion in organisation studies to the dominant 'masculine culture' in social sciences, which dismisses concepts – such as fashion – that are more associated with femininity. In this perspective, fashion is considered an 'irrational deviation from rational managerial behaviour' (Czarniawska 2005, p.130). Despite such efforts to ridicule organisational fashion, it is a persistent phenomenon which cannot be treated as a deviancy. Hence other scholars took the initiative to frame it as a rational process, ascribing predictability, manageability and controllability to fashion processes. Gill and Whittle (1993) for instance, tried sequencing fashionable mechanisms by introducing a life-cycle model, in which the cycle starts when a management activity is packaged and presented by consulting companies as innovative. If successful in enchanting client organisations, this package goes through the honeymoon period during which it is adopted, imitated and becomes a must-have managerial package. However, it soon matures, falls out of fashion and finally declines (pp.289-290). Another interpretation was proposed by Abrahamson (1996) who introduced 'fashion-setters' as a collection of inter-related players (consultants, business schools, gurus, etc.) who sense and pursue the current tendencies of 'fashion-users' (practitioners) so as to build new organising fashions which gain a market. In such renditions, managers and practitioners are portrayed as the passive fashion consumers who are to be persuaded.

This perspective has another implication. Abrahamson's (1996) model of fashion-setters/fashion-users invited academics (as part of the supply side of fashion setting)

to study such processes and further, to get involved in shaping the fashion trends in order to 'disseminate scholarly rhetorics' and 'improve' the fashion demands of the managers (p.279). This call for intervention positioned business schools and management academics as indispensable in the process of fashion-setting (Clark 2004, p.298).

Such views have in turn been scorned for presuming the superiority of university-based knowledge over popular management ideas. Rhodes and Pitsis (2008) suggested that through such tales of scholarly supremacy, academics claim to own the 'true' understanding of organisations whilst popular management rhetorics 'appeal to those of lower intellect' (p.78). Yet, the distinction between the different spaces which produce management knowledge – and the knowledge produced – is becoming increasingly blurry as academic space, consulting space and the popular media all provide practitioners with management education (Rhodes and Westwood 2008).

During my fieldwork I encountered several ideas and activities belonging to the personnel development practices that revealed traces of the fashion mechanism. Therefore I describe them as fashionable in personnel development. In doing so, I follow the latter reading of organisational fashion in which fashionable ideas and activities are not portrayed as trivial, transient, or a consulting trick, but as a natural part of organisational life. The question then is 'Why and how, in a given time and place, an idea (or activity) becomes fashionable in an organisational context?' Such understanding builds on Czarniawska and Joerges' (1996) definition of fashion as 'an expression of what is modern, of what the community to which one belongs recently chose as the most valuable or exciting' (p.34).

Of the many ideas and activities which were observed and communicated as personnel development daily routines, some were presented frequently and characterised as novel, exciting and *fashionable*. These activities and ideas were to be adopted and imitated.

- Conversations: a great deal of attention was paid to training schemes oriented around conversational skills. The idea is, according to the interlocutors, that effective conversations are crucial for 'better organisational communication', 'conflict resolution' and 'performance improvement'. Several training modules exemplified this tendency: Crucial Conversations (a training module introduced by several personnel development managers and consultants), Conversations that Count (a workshop presented by L&D Australia in Sydney and Melbourne and participated in by 200 managers), and Difficult Performance Conversations (training modules conducted by L&D Australia).
- Meditation: 6 out of 13 interviewees stated that they meditated daily in their private lives. One consultant provided meditation-based business coaching and mentoring to professional clients (including L&D Australia's General Manager and co-founders).
- Psychology: as discussed, there were many references to popular and academic psychological concepts in the utterances of personnel development organisers. Examples include Herrmann Brain Dominance Instrument (HBDI); right-brain/left-brain psychology; impostor syndrome, external/internal locus of control; mood analysis and empathy.
- Theatre: all my interlocutors had experienced theatrical training in one way or another. Yet, this type of training was still presented as a novel way of doing

personnel development. The consultants who specialised in theatrical methods (such as L&D Australia) believed that such organising by theatre provides them with a competitive edge in the business.³⁴

- Authenticity: authenticity in the workplace, especially women's authenticity, emerged as a much celebrated idea within the personnel development community. L&D Australia consultants stated that they had presented multiple workshops exploring the issues around authenticity. These training sessions had had high levels of participation. All participants in the workshop Be Yourself! expressed their interest in the topic and some described their own coaching practices as 'all about authenticity'.
- Women in the workplace: there emerged a dominant interest in exploring the issues working women face at work and private life spheres. During the course of my fieldwork, I observed several training workshops – held in Sydney and Melbourne – with such topics as work-life balance for women, women and leadership, and women as authentic beings. This topic of women in the workplace was also frequently referred to as a focus of personnel development activities such as coaching women in leadership positions and gender diversity programs. Personnel development is prevalently staffed by female professionals and is conceived as a feminine occupation (according to my interviewees).

Concluding remarks

This chapter reported on an initial analysis of the field material collected during observations and interviews in the field of personnel development. The analysis of the

³⁴ According to an interview with L&D consultants in April 2011, organising by theatre has accounted for the considerable expansion of their client-base over the last few years.

activities communicated by the personnel development professionals showed that coaching is assumed as a taken-for-granted activity in personnel development professionals' working lives and that many coaching practices rely on psychological theories to gain legitimacy. Moreover, the analysis identified some fashionable activities and ideas which are to be pursued and imitated in this field of practice. These include activities such as training by application of theatrical technologies and techniques, and ideas such as the importance of women's issues, conversation, meditation, and authenticity in the workplace.

It is now time to address my earlier, general questions: 'Why these trends? Why here? Why now?' While psychologisation seems to be universal, and women's issues are in focus in most western countries, conversations have traditionally been seen as an important part of social life. Meditation is usually connected to various waves of *Orientalism* in the West, and as such has been commented upon by many authors. Coaching is related both to psychology and to the centrality of sports in contemporary societies. 'Theatre' and 'authenticity' are both relatively more alien in the organisational context, and also appeared to be dominant in the material I collected.

Thus my questions are: How does theatre contribute to training and development? Why has authenticity attracted so much attention within the personnel development and training community in Australia? Therefore, the coming chapters will be devoted to an exploration of how theatrical training works, why authenticity has emerged in the studied field of practice, and how personnel development practices contribute to the discourse of authenticity in organisations. Chapters 7 and 8 report on two theatrical training sessions conducted by L&D Australia while the notion of authenticity and an authentic professional will be explored in Chapters 9 and 10.

Chapter 7: Rehearsing Reality

In this chapter, I describe the employment of theatrical means in the design and implementation of training programs in personnel development practices. This exploration builds on the observation of Difficult Performance Conversations, a training event conducted by a team of L&D Australia consultants. When I was shadowing Maria, I observed this training program³⁵ which was delivered to a selected group of sales managers working in a pharmaceutical company in Sydney. The training program was based on a theatrical module of L&D Australia known as Rehearsal for Reality³⁶. The training program progressed from a gathering of trainees in a training room, to coaching sessions (through role-play) in smaller groups, and finally gathering back into a big group for a wrap up and return to the routine of organisational life.

Trying to frame and make sense of the activities practiced in this event, I noticed that such a training process is structured in ways reminiscent of a *transition ritual* as described by Victor Turner (1969). Turner developed his conceptualisation of *Les rites de passage* based on Van Gennep's (1909) original formulation. These are rituals through which the individual or group moves from one social status to another. A rite of passage develops through three stages: separation, transition and incorporation. Through the separation stage, the person subjected to the ritual becomes detached from the established social structure and her or his rather stable status and identity; then the person enters a limbo-like space, a condition referred to in cultural studies as *liminality*, in which the transition occurs. In the *liminal space*, the individual loses

³⁵ The account of this observation is mainly based on my fieldnotes as no permission for audio/video recording was obtained. This account also includes excerpts selected from audio-recorded interviews with Maria.

³⁶ A term originally proposed by Augusto Boal (1995) in the formulation of his forum theatre.

previous identities in order to obtain new ones. When transformed, the individual begins reincorporating into the social structure, into a new status with the rights and obligations attached to it.

In a training process, managers experience a similar transition. First they are separated from their routine place and their established positions in the organisation, then they enter the liminal space of training and, after passing through the transition rituals, finally come out as more capable managers (or, in the case of the workshop Difficult Performance Conversations as more capable conversationalists). This is why I chose to frame the training process as a ritual located in a liminal space. My framing builds, more specifically, on a comparison between the training workshop and Turner's (1969) description of 'the rites of installation of chieftainship' in an African tribe. In what follows, I will first present the arguments for the choice of the ritual analogy by reviewing examples of organisation research which have employed a similar framing of organisational practices. Next, Turner's *installation rites* and the *rites of training* in Rehearsal for Reality will be described and discussed.

Training as a ritual

One could ask if there is a need to move to the domain of anthropology and cultural studies in the conceptualisation of personnel development practices where the practitioners themselves rely strongly on the power of psychological concepts to make sense of their working life. Czarniawska and Mazza (2003) have addressed this question arguing that organisation studies are in dire need of metaphors that distract attention from 'the individual psychological states'. Metaphors borrowed from anthropology and cultural studies – like *rite of passage* – do this job, they reasoned, as these metaphors 'divert attention – and therefore blame – from the individual, but do

not dump it on systems. They point at the complex arrangements that people put in space only to forget them in time' (2003, p.268).

Another concern may be raised about the application of 'non-modern' concepts such as liminality and rites of passage to the realm of contemporary organising. Such conceptualisations may seem out of place, as Turner himself insisted that liminality is not applicable to modern societies (1982). However, the great divide between so-called premodern and modern societies has repeatedly been announced as exaggerated (Latour 1993; Rhodes and Pitsis 2008).

Moreover, according to Turner (1975) rites of passage are a 'genre of cultural expression' (discussed in Chapter 2), in that other collective cultural performances may be patterned after them. Such rituals become a part of the collective memory of the members of a culture and offer a frame for structuring and informing individual and collective actions. Ritual process, in this sense, can become a cultural archetype after which people's perceptions of social situations are shaped and the course of prospective actions is directed. It is therefore not surprising that the processes of training in Rehearsal for Reality are organised and structured in ways reminiscent of the rites of passage.

Similar anthropological metaphors have been applied to the interpretation of organisational processes. Eriksson-Zetterquist (2002, pp.89-103) has described a graduate training program as a three-phase ritual: separation of the newly graduated from their previous occupation (university), entering the liminal space of training, and finally entering the corporate environment, now in a managerial position. Similarly, Czarniawska and Mazza (2003) have referred to 'a condition of liminality' describing consultancy practices. They suggested that management consulting resembles rites of

passage, where consultants are summoned to organisations to organise such rites: their task is to 'temporally turn a regular organisation into a liminal one' bringing in their 'foreignness of expertise' as 'special powers obtained in distant places' (2003, p.279-280). In other critically minded studies, consulting specialists such as management gurus have been portrayed as 'witch-doctors' (Clark and Salaman 1998; Micklethwait and Wooldridge, 1996).

In what follows I refer to Turner's (1969) account of the *rites of installation of the chief* in an African tribe; following that I will recount the training event while making comparisons with installation rites. Such framing of theatrical personnel development practices results in novel insights, which will be discussed at the final part of this chapter.

Rites of installation

In recounting the rituals of the installation of the chief – the highest tribal status – Turner (1969) began with a sketch of the wider social structure (pp. 97-113). Each tribe belonged to an interconnected network of tribes, centrally ruled by a headchief who was the political source of power. The authority of the headchief extended to control over the chief of each tribe. Each chief was that tribe's symbol of power, fertility and wellbeing. The ritual powers, however, were assumed by another figure, the headman. To take up his office, the prospective chief had to pass the rites of installation, and the headman was in charge of the installation rituals. Through a series of symbolic performances, the headman guided the initiand from the status of an ordinary tribe member to the status of chief. On the night of his installation, the chief-to-be was separated from the tribe (hence, symbolically, from his normal status) to

spend a night in seclusion. He was accommodated in a newly constructed shelter separated from the village.

There, the headman conducted the rites of transition. He washed and purified the initiand with the sacred medicine and taught him 'medicines of witchcraft' and 'wisdom'. During this phase the initiand was expected to behave in a humble manner, as befitted the status of a person deprived of all previous or promised privileges. He was also subjected to the *rites of reviling* (Turner 1969, p.100). The headman gave ceremonial speeches and reminded the initiand of his wrongdoings. Other tribe members could join in the scolding process. During this ritual, the initiand was passive and humble; he obeyed instructions and embraced the wisdom bestowed upon him by the headman.

After passing the transition rituals in the secluded shelter, the initiand was formed anew and bestowed with additional powers to make him capable of coping with his new station in life. These powers were symbolised by the 'lukanu bracelet' which had belonged to the headchief, was passed to the headman, and was in turn passed to the new chief on his installation. The lukanu bracelet was believed to have mystical powers responsible for the fertility of the tribal lands and people. The newly-installed chief, owning the lukanu bracelet, left the shelter and returned to his tribe, now possessing the essential power and wisdom to rule.

In what follows I describe the L&D Australia's training event, building on an analogy with the described rites of installation of the chief in the African tribe.

Rites of training in Rehearsal for Reality

When the L&D Australia team (five consultants) arrived at the pharmaceutical company, they were directed to a big training room. During the next hour, they were engaged in the final preparations and organisations for the upcoming training session in which each consultant would be in charge of coaching a small group of managers through the Rehearsal for Reality methodology. The client company had signed up a number of their sales managers³⁷ (about 25) for a half-day workshop for training on how to deal with challenging conversations with subordinates.

Paul, the project leader, started the preparation session by inviting his colleagues to 'check in' – a ritual that marked the beginning of all L&D meetings – by briefly sharing their feelings and thoughts about the forthcoming session. After the check in, Paul asked them: 'If you had a magic wand, what would you do for your trainees?' Maria answered 'I would like them to become able to approach their relationship problems from the point of view of the other party. I want to make them reflect on that'. Other responses and discussions ensued. The hour was up and the trainees were directed, by Helen, the pharmaceutical company's personnel development manager, to enter the training room.

In analogy with the installation rites, the main characters of this training ritual can be identified. The participant sale managers/trainees resemble prospective chiefs. Guided by their designated L&D coach –the headman – they were to engage in the rites of coaching and, empowered by the wisdom bestowed on them, they were to transform into managers capable of handling difficult conversations. Participation in this

³⁷ The sale managers are called hereafter trainees.

ceremony was not a matter of choice but had been prescribed by the personnel development department, the headchief who held the political power. Helen as the personnel development manager represented this figure while the L&D consultants – positioned as coaches and organisers of the transition rites – held the ritual powers.

Helen projected L&D Australia's slides on a white screen. The title read: Difficult Performance Conversations: A Rehearsal for Reality. She introduced the L&D Australia team to the trainees, took them through the workshop agenda and divided them into several groups, to each of which a coach was assigned. Thus the trainees were separated from the organisation, stripped of their everyday status and prepared for a phase of seclusion through which they were to become capable of dealing with their subordinates, with newly gained wisdom.

Then each coach took their group to a pre-assigned room. Maria's group consisted of three sales managers: Lucy, Jade and Tony. The coaching sessions most resembled the liminal space of the ritual: during the secluded coaching sessions, trainees/initiands were also to pass the coaching/transition rituals by following the instructions of the L&D coach/headman in order to obtain the wisdom for managing/ruling their subordinates. This wisdom was introduced by Maria as L&D Australia's main philosophy. She drew a diagram on the board, a triangle with the word *awareness* in the centre and *purpose*, *habit*, and *choice* at the vertices. She explained:

We have a purpose in whatever we do but how much of that, we do out of habit and how much is conducted by conscious choice? We hope that through the course of this coaching session you gain awareness regarding your unhelpful habits and become attentive to your choices. We won't tell you what to do; just see what possibilities may emerge if you are aware.

In a sense, Maria presented the trainees with the magical formula through which they would obtain the 'awareness' required for managing their employees. She taught them, as the headman taught the initiands of the installation rite, the wisdom 'which made them feared by their rivals and subordinates' (Turner 1969, p.98).

The coaching started with Lucy's problem. She needed to conduct a difficult conversation with one of her sales representatives who had performed very poorly. She was responsible for convincing this man to attend an official performance assessment conducted by Human Resources (HR). Lucy was afraid the employee would refuse to attend this meeting, if she was not able to direct the conversation properly. Maria instructed her as to how rehearse the conversation:

Let's assume Lucy that you're going to let this guy know he has to show up to the HR meeting. Your purpose is to communicate the message that there's no possibility to skip this meeting. With this purpose in mind you should try to be mindful of your communication habits and choose to use strategies that meet the purpose.

In the first rehearsal, Lucy was going to call the sales representative – now acted by Maria – and direct the conversation as she saw fit. To simulate the conditions of an indirect phone conversation they sat back to back. In the first round of the conversation, Maria/sales representative was very difficult and uncooperative and did not make it easy for Lucy to say what she had called to say.

After the rehearsal, Maria commented on the performance; then the other participants were also invited to comment. Tony and Jade both pointed to Lucy's unhelpful conversational habits in the role-play and made suggestions as to how she could act better. These comments were welcome by Lucy who announced she would take them

on board through the second rehearsal. This scene echoed the collective reviling of the initiands of the installation rite by the headman and the other members of the tribe; in this liminal space, criticism and comments are allowed regardless of official statuses and normal hierarchies. The trainee listened to and welcomed the suggestions from colleagues who in everyday situations would have not interfered with her style of communication management.

Next, Maria wrote down a summary of their discussion on the board. She concluded that Lucy needed to prepare by having in mind and communicating just the *facts* in order to prevent any unexpected reactions from her adversary: 'Facts matter the most. Try to stay objective and don't get emotional'. Then, the group started listing those facts for Lucy. They rehearsed the phone call for the second and third times, followed by more discussions and suggestions. In each role-play, Maria would act out 'the employee' in a different manner, approximating another version of the prospective reality. Maria then suggested that Jade (who was making lots of suggestions) take Lucy's place and act as her so that Lucy could see herself played. Lucy observed the scenario unfolding between Jade and Maria. The group rehearsed Lucy's scenario a few more times until she announced that she felt much more comfortable. Then Maria moved on to Tony and Jade's cases, which were discussed, coached, and rehearsed in the same fashion.

When the group coaching sessions were finished, the L&D consultants led their trainees back to the main training room. Helen and Paul led the closing ceremony. Helen thanked the L&D team and hoped that the sale managers had all taken from the coaching sessions what they wanted to take. After the wrap-up, Paul invited everybody to 'check out' by sharing one word that reflected their take on the training program.

The sale managers, one by one, articulated their learnings manifested in one word and the session officially concluded with Paul's wishes for success for future challenging conversations.

Discussion

Participation in the training rites was not a matter of choice for the trainees/initiands, but was decided by the HR/headchief. To achieve the new status of capable managers/chiefs within the organisation/tribe, they were to follow the L&D coach/headman's instruction and learn the magic hidden in the 'power of facts'. In order to achieve awareness about their unhelpful habits in conversational situations, they were instructed to reflect on the choices that emerge in each conversation. While within the liminal space of coaching, the trainees were to follow these instructions and respectfully attend to the comments and criticisms of the coach and their colleagues.

The analogical description of the training event above raises two questions. First, what are the implications of the use of theatrical coaching methods when the training is framed as a liminal space? Second, does any liminal entity in the coaching ritual bear a resemblance to the sacred lukanu bracelet – the symbol of the power delegated from the headchief to the headman and in turn bestowed upon the chief at the completion of the rites of passage?

Rehearsing creativity

According to Turner (1969), *liminal personae* are necessarily ambiguous and difficult to categorise, as they are 'betwixt and between' possible positions and identities (p.95). By acting as men or women, as alternative selves, or as co-trainees, the participants of the Rehearsal for Reality became even more status-less since the role-play as a coaching device enriched the repertoire of entities that participants could become

while in the liminal space. Turner (1982) has argued that such statuslessness and liberation from the established social structure fosters creativity.

Application of dramatic techniques contributed further to the construction of such creative space through offering alternative identities and realities. The managers in the coaching space were not restricted to their managerial positions and responsibilities; they were encouraged to take different characters and observe others characterising them. Moreover, Rehearsal for Reality provided freedom to experiment with reality without fearing consequences beyond here-and-now.

Thus it can be concluded that the rehearsals added to the repertoire of scripts the trainees would be able to employ on their return to day-to-day practices. In fact, Rehearsal for Reality aimed at teaching managers to become more capable in improvised action and in widening the range of their everyday performances. According to Richard Schechner (1981), rehearsals add to the array of one's *restored behaviour*, that is, 'known and/or practiced behaviour, either rehearsed, previously known, learned by osmosis since early childhood, revealed during the performance by masters, guides, gurus, or elders, or generated by rules' (p.84).

Rehearsing rationality

When I inquired about L&D Australia's philosophy (purpose, habit, choice, awareness), Maria explained that it means that, in order to reach their purpose, trainees should become aware of their bad communication habits, such as acting emotionally, and instead to learn communicate the facts. 'Facts matter the most' she said, while contrasting 'emotional acting' with 'objective acting'. L&D Australia's training modules, such as Rehearsal for Reality, according to Maria, advocate that in dealing with relationships at the workplace, emotions must be managed. In this sense, a form of

emotional labour (Hochschild 1979) is prescribed. Maria explained that Rehearsal for Reality helps the trainees to access their emotional range and through multiple rehearsals learn to manage it:

As actors we have the ability to access emotions, because we're trained to do so. We can raise emotions in the trainees to show them when they're emotional their conversation would not work. This is because they're in another space with their emotions, because they are not OBJECTIVE³⁸. So practicing to manage such emotions would be helpful.

According to Maria, being professional actors, L&D Australia consultants are able to offer scenarios in which the trainees' emotions are triggered. Through rehearsing such challenging situations, the trainees gain insight into how emotions blind their judgments; therefore, such training programs provide the trainees with practices and techniques that equip them with the 'objectivity' required to resolve conflict in work situations. It could be said that such desired 'objectivity' and 'facts' were presented in Maria's account as 'special powers' offered to the trainees. To return to the ritual analogy, the aim of L&D's Rehearsal for Reality, with its strong emphasis on the power of facts and objectivity, was to equip the trainees with the *lukanu of rationality*, which awarded them mystical powers to obtain objectivity, good judgment and wisdom which will lead the organisation/the tribe towards prosperity.

Rehearsal for Reality: Dealing with uncertainty

Upon closer examination of L&D's Rehearsal for Reality, contrasting pictures emerge: in one, Rehearsal for Reality widens the range of trainees' spontaneous performances

³⁸ Uppercase letters indicate the interviewee's emphasis.

in real work life situations, while in the other it teaches the trainees to limit their expressions to factual and objective arguments. It is also paradoxical that teaching the 'supremacy of facts' is performed by application of fictional training methods such as theatre. Such contrasting images can nevertheless be put together, in that they both offer ways to deal with uncertain, unpredictable and uncontrollable aspects of organisational life. This can be further understood in the light of what training and development practices aim at. Höpfl and Dawes (1999) emphasised the strong desire for 'order, control and predictability' in organisational life (p.22), and argued that personnel development practices are expected to realise this desire through the development of organisational members who act with self-awareness in the face of complex, tensioned and unpredictable realities of everyday organising.

In this perspective, Rehearsal for Reality can be seen as an effort to create a sense of control over unexpected and uncontrollable organisational life. Through the rehearsals, the trainees are instructed to master their emotions and exert objectivity. To develop such skills, they are invited to practice. As explained by Maria, through Rehearsal for Reality the trainees are pushed out of their comfort zone by rehearsing the unwanted situations. Hence, training by theatre, such as that described, seems to provide an appropriate and creative device for exploring *predictions of unpredictability*. Rehearsal for Reality, therefore, can be viewed as an effort to exert control over what is not controllable, or at least to maintain an important illusion of controllability (Langer 1975).

Concluding remarks

What stands out in the above description of the training event, are the possibilities Rehearsal for Reality provides for experimentation. The observation of, and

participation in, the dramatic scripting and acting offered opportunities for experimenting, activated through the dramatic mechanisms of the role-play. This mode of experience can be called *dramatic experimentation*. In the remainder of this chapter, I will explore its underlying processes.

Three dramatic processes – identified in studies of theatrical training and interventions by Meisiek and Barry (2007, p. 1806) – allowed for such experimentation during the Rehearsal for Reality training event. First, the theatrical role-play had *mirror-like* effects; second, it worked as a *window* to a fictive future; and third, it worked as a *passage* between the theatrical reality and everyday routine reality.

The Rehearsal for Reality worked as a mirror in that the trainees were provided with the chance to observe themselves and their organisational life acted out by the L&D coach and by the other trainee-participants. Such *second-order observation* (Luhmann 1998) as staged by others, reveals the image of ‘attractive and unattractive’ realities of the participants’ organisational lives (Meisiek and Barry 2007, p. 1806), which arguably may lead to an increase in the organisational audience’s reflexivity and target an awareness that alternative ways of doing things are possible (Schreyögg and Höpfl 2004, p.698).

Moreover, the Rehearsal for Reality worked as a window to fictive prospective situations the trainees may encounter. According to the trainees³⁹ and the L&D coaches, the fictive situations scripted, improvised and acted out during this session provided accurate approximations of real life situations. This impression is supported

³⁹ In the beginning of the observed Rehearsal for Reality coaching session, Tony – who had participated in a few other L&D coaching sessions told Lucy and Jade that ‘these people act out roles so well! It is amazing how real they look’. Lucy expressed – after the rehearsal of her case – that Maria had personified her subordinate in a way that was quite helpful.

by the sheer multiplicity of the scripts offered and emerging through the coaching session, as well as by the speed with which the professional actors produced 'real-like' characters from their learnt repertoire of human characters. This added to the reliability and precision of their approximations (or at least created such an impression for the trainees). Maria and other L&D consultants said many a time that 'being actors we can approximate characters and realities quite precisely and that's what our clients like about us.' Such accurate approximations add to the repertoire of the scripts the trainees can practice in the safety of the coaching session, as well as in their 'real' organisational life. This may also offer the trainees a sense of preparedness for dealing with challenging situations in their working life, as pointed out by the trainee/sale managers of the Rehearsal for Reality during the training event.

Most notably, the Rehearsal for Reality provided participation in a fictive reality, a simulated situation in which the coach/actor personified the sale managers' adversaries. When the trainees rehearsed their conversations, they participated in the fictionality of the situation and also entered 'a domain of action' (Meisiek and Barry 2007, p. 1806), where they could be creative in trying out new characters and new scripts – in short, new possibilities. In Boal's (1998) terms, they became *actors-spectators* who did not only look at the staged images but entered 'the mirror of the theatrical fiction', transformed the image they saw in it and brought back that transformed image or 'the image of their desires' (pp.9-10) to the domain of reality, that of working life.

These three dramatic mechanisms – the mirror effect, the window effect and theatrical participation – explain the claim that the trainees are offered a wider range of experimentation during Rehearsal for Reality. This experimentation includes

opportunities for increased reflexivity and awareness of new possibilities, effective rehearsals, a feeling of preparedness for dealing with future challenges, and participation in the dramatic reality and therefore practicing action rather than passive imagination. All these dramatic effects of the Rehearsal for Reality appear promising in the sense that they provide opportunities for action and reflection on such actions, their meaning and consequences.

Doing drama – or taking actions within the theatrical domain – may result, according to Boal (1998), in taking action in real life. The present study falls short of the investigation of the effects of such dramatic experimentations from the perspective of the trainee-participants. However, later I observed another L&D training event – also comprising a participative theatrical element – and this time I had the chance to video-record the training event, and interview the trainee-participants shortly after the training event. In the next chapter, this training event will be explored, focusing on both the dynamics of the theatrical mechanisms involved, and their interpreted effects – including opportunities for dramatic experimentation by the participants, as well as their perceptions and reflections regarding such experimentation.

Chapter 8: Performing Authenticity in Organisational Theatre

Through this chapter, I explore organisational theatre as practiced in personnel development as well as its application as a training *technology* (as Clark and Mangham 2004b called it). In so doing, I will draw on the dramatistic conceptualisations reviewed in Part I of this dissertation. More specifically, I will adopt Goffman's (1974) notion of *framing*, Mangham and Overington's (1987) notion of *theatrical balance*, Mangham's (2005) formulation of *aesthetic distance*, and Burke's *pentadic* analysis in order to analyse the transformative processes of a theatrical training workshop. First, I will analyse the way its trainee-participants engage with the training session; and second, I will show how they collaborate in the construction of meaning throughout the training. Better understanding of such processes will contribute to the knowledge of both the dynamics of theatrical performance and the dynamics of audience participation in organisational theatre.

The analysis focuses on field material collected during the participant observation of a theatre-based training workshop designed and conducted by L&D Australia. The workshop *Be Yourself! Women, Authenticity and Workplace Performance* was advertised as being designed to create 'an open space that provokes discussion and reflection rather than prescription'. The workshop description promised an exploration of what authenticity means and how it can be related to everyday working life. Through the course of the workshop the meaning of authenticity and an image of an 'authentic female manager' were negotiated and constructed collectively by the performers and the audience.

The accounts of the participants' interpretations are based on their comments during the workshop as well as views they shared during post-event interviews. In those

interviews I asked them to reflect on their role in the training session, on the theatrical component as a training technology, and on their interpretations of authentic being. These accounts will be further developed and analysed though the next chapters (Chapters 9 and 10).

I shall now briefly introduce the analytical frame developed for the interpretation of the dynamics of performance and participation in Be Yourself!. Then, the workshop will be described, and analysed (in two sections). The result of the analyses is a set of insights regarding the application of organisational theatre as a training technology in personnel development practices.

A frame of analysis: Dual theatrical transformations

Theatre transforms life into ‘a plausible appearance’ (Mangham and Overington 1987, p.49); in other words, a performance is an abstraction of actuality, a staged reality that calls for reflection and interpretation of what otherwise would have been taken for granted. This is how Aristotle conceptualised tragedy (Holt 1989). Such transformation occurs in both *form* and *substance*, through aesthetic devices such as literary tropes, costumes, scenography, and musical effects. In Mangham and Overington’s (1987) opinion, two interconnected transformation processes occur in theatre. Through staging ‘that which is not staged (life)’, theatre inspires reflection on mundane everyday life activities, and through its specific figurative devices, theatre interprets social reality and provides grounds for making sense of life. Drawing on their understanding of these two processes, Mangham and Overington (1987) decided to build on the theatrical analogy, and explore *organisation as theatre*:

The theatre is thus doubly resourceful for students of social action. It shows how life can be treated as staged; how all the elements of theatrical performance can comment on the taken-for-

granted events of the everyday world. At the same time, it interprets social realities through the chosen metaphor of a particular drama in such a way as to highlight the relation between, say, people's intentions and their acts, between their acts and the contexts of action, between such contexts and the resources for action that they offer. (p. 52)

Following Mangham and Overington's conceptualisation of the two-fold theatrical transformation (1987), my analytical frame in this chapter contains two sections: the first explores the aesthetic transformations through which theatre stages organisational life, while the second considers the interpretations of organisational life offered by the narratives and metaphors presented and extended through the training session. While Mangham and Overington employed the idea of 'organisation as theatre' to explore organisational life in general, in this chapter I use their framework to explore the specific dynamics of professional organisational theatre in the drama of organisational life.

In section one, I explore the theatrical training event in terms of the aesthetic processes that constructed a representation of organisational life. The aim in this section is to examine the underlying processes involved in such aesthetic transformations. Specific attention will be paid to *theatrical framing* and to the *maintenance of an aesthetic distance*, both activities contributing to the quality and intensity of involvement of the participants in the training workshop. This analysis will be complemented by the participants' reflections during the course of the post-event interviews, in which they evaluated the theatrical session in terms of its engaging qualities.

In section two, I explore the content of the narratives and statements offered through the training as well as the reflections, arguments and viewpoints offered by the performers during the course of the training workshop. I will also reflect on the way

such explanations were negotiated, changed and reconstructed through interactive acts of sensemaking (Weick 1995) between the performers and the trainee-participants. For analysis of such interpretive processes, a *pentadic* inquiry will be attempted.

The divide between the aesthetic and rhetorical transformations is, of course, only for analytical purposes. In practice, such theatrical processes operate simultaneously and, if successful, engage the audience in the world of theatre. Therefore, after making explicit the aesthetic transformations and rhetorical interpretations constructed through the course of *Be Yourself!*, I will draw on the insights emerging from the interplay of these processes to explore what makes organisational theatre a creative and engaging means for the training and development of organisation members.

Be Yourself! Women, authenticity and workplace performance⁴⁰

One of the reasons for the theatrical event was to showcase the training products L&D Australia provide for potential clients. The participants (24 women and 1 man) were personnel development consultants or managers, who were interested in the most recent training trends in their organisation field. The workshop started after a morning tea at Sydney Theatre Company, a venue regularly hosting theatrical and musical performances. The choice of the venue signalled one of the assumptions behind L&D's methodology: that learning of corporate skills can take place in a space created by the arts (according to an L&D consultant⁴¹). This was a big room filled with some 30 chairs set in a half-circle, facing a small stage on which the performance would take place. On the wall behind the stage, a slide presentation continuously showed images of people

⁴⁰ The account of this workshop is based on the transcription of the video-recorded session and fieldnotes as well as the transcript of the audio-recorded post-event interviews.

⁴¹ This was communicated during rehearsal sessions, in which I had the opportunity to participate.

('being themselves', as described by the L&D Australia consultants in rehearsals). Music was playing in the background. The projected images and the music worked as decor and props in this performance. They signalled the artistic spirit of this training session, projecting 'images of authenticity'. The session was organised and conducted by three performers from L&D Australia: a facilitator leading the session and two other actors, who would perform in the *forum theatre* (originally developed by Boal 1979, 1995). The management of physical space, on and off the stage, was conducted with subtlety and skill throughout the workshop. The performing team took advantage of the affordances of space at their disposal, issuing cues for framing and participant interaction while developing, adjusting and maintaining the aesthetic distance, of which more in the next section.

Section one: The aesthetics of authenticity

The authors of *Organizations as Theatre* (Mangham and Overington 1987) suggested that theatre works through the creation of a 'dramatic tension' (p.51). Such tension lies in the difference between the intentions of the performers and the intentions of audience. The performing team tries to pull the audience into the world of drama but the audience resist such dramatic seduction and tend to avoid framing theatre as anything but a performance. This creates a tension between the dramatic pull and the 'theatrical consciousness'⁴² of the audience (p.49). Theatre, then, happens when the audience believe – however temporarily – in the staged reality, knowing nevertheless that when the performance finishes, this theatrical reality will cease to exist. This is what the literary scholar Tzvetan Todorov said about written texts: a 'fictional contract'

⁴² As discussed in Chapter 4, the members of audience develop a theatrical consciousness in that they are aware that what is on the stage is just a performance and there is 'an actor "behind" a character, a playwright "behind" a script, a stage "behind" a performance, a reality "behind" the appearance' (p.49)

is an implied agreement between the author and the reader, in which the readers are promised an enjoyable read if they choose to *suspend their disbelief* (1990, p.26). In theatre, this is achieved when the audience suspend their disbelief of the theatrical reality while being aware of doing so. The dramatic tension is then resolved through the achievement of a balance between belief and disbelief, what Mangham and Overington (1987) termed a 'theatrical balance' (p. 51). The success of a theatrical performance, according to these authors, depends on the maintenance of this balance, which secures a *proper* level of audience engagement with the performance. The distinction between conventional and modern theatre lies in their contrasting stance towards this theatrical balance.

In conventional theatre, in which audience participation is limited to applause at the beginning and the end – and perhaps to expressive reactions during the course of the performance – achievement of theatrical balance is vital for the success of the performance as the audience must believe in the theatre, but never get too involved in it, lest they mistake it as their own day-to-day reality and become participants in it (Mangham and Overington 1987). In contemporary theatrical traditions – such as Boalian convention– the goal is not to achieve a state of balance, but to create a state of chaos and disruption so as to trigger the audience's conscious attention. In contrast to the conventional theatre in which the audience is persuaded to give into the theatrical reality, in contemporary theatre the audience is kept in a state of alertness so as to achieve higher levels of reflexivity. The distance between the actors and spectators in such conventions is removed and the audience are encouraged to participate in the co-construction of the performance. (See Chapter 4 for a more detailed discussion).

Participative theatre, as practiced by personnel development specialists and exemplified in the case of Be Yourself!, combines the mechanisms of conventional and contemporary theatre in that the audience is encouraged to participate in the creation of the theatrical reality but such participation is still regulated and a theatrical balance pulls the performance together. In the case of Be Yourself!, as in many other L&D Australia's theatrical training modules, both conventional and participative components are incorporated in the training session. But in which way, or ways, is such a theatrical balance created and maintained? The notions of *theatrical framing* (Goffman 1974) and *aesthetic distancing* (Mangham and Overington 1987; Mangham 2005) will be adopted to explain the processes through which theatrical balance develops.

First, in order to interact and engage with an artifact (object or event), one initially needs to adopt an attitude that differs from the mundane perception of everyday life (Bullough 1912, p.88). In other words, the individual must insert a 'non-literal frame' or a *key* (Goffman 1974, p. 47) to perceive what she or he is viewing as art. If the staged event or object is seen in the frame of its everyday use or with the insertion of literal frameworks (Goffman 1974), it will not be regarded as art, so it must be stripped of its utilitarian aspects. For an event to be considered theatre, the viewers must adopt a theatrical framing of that event so as to perceive their experience as a theatrical performance, and not as ordinary day-to-day activities. When the audience members of a theatrical performance are persuaded to *voluntarily* suspend their disbelief, they are in fact convinced to adopt a theatrical framing of what is happening on the stage. The audience is usually provided with 'keying cues' (Goffman 1974, p.45) which guide the

start and the end of the theatrical framing. Such cues in the theatre are provided, for instance, by the rise and fall of the curtain.

The balance between belief and disbelief is also determined through the aesthetic distance offered by the medium and/or realised by the audience. The aesthetic distance – in Mangham's (2005) formulation – conveys the degree of separation between the audience and the staged performance. In conventional theatre an established aesthetic distance regulates the relationship between the audience and the staged performance. No participation is encouraged. It is assumed that 'the relative passivity of the audience enables it to participate more fully in the world of the play' (Mangham 2005, p.951). In contrast, in participative theatre the aesthetic distance is decreased, and in some conventions such as Boal's (1979; 1995) forum theatre, the aesthetic distance is largely removed. In such conventions, it is believed that the removal of the invisible line drawn between the audience and the performance will result in more reflexivity and engagement.

Thus, an examination of the underlying processes through which a theatrical balance is constructed and maintained provides a useful contribution to the understanding of the aesthetic transformation (and consequently the aesthetic involvement) available through a theatrical performance. One such process – the theatrical framing – reveals the voluntary development of an aesthetic attitude that helps to frame the observed event as theatre. Adoption of such framing is necessary for the occurrence of the aesthetic experience. The second process, the creation of aesthetic distance, decides the degree of audience participation in the construction of the theatrical reality.

The following account of the workshop will be divided into five parts. These five parts parallel the parts of the workshop in each of which the participants were directed to

insert a different type of frame around their experience. Some parts contained theatrical components, while the others simply involved participative training and discussions. Within the theatrical parts, the degree of aesthetic distance was adjusted by the L&D performers, of which more next.

Part one: Participative training

The facilitator, Cate, started the session explaining the notion of authenticity, and introducing the session as non-prescriptive, as an open space for provoking thought and reflection. The later *forum theatre*, she said, would also serve as ‘a catalyst for discussion’. Cate then invited everybody to remember a day from last week and list the roles they had played, and then discuss ‘in what roles they felt most authentic’. During this part, participation was encouraged but in a controlled way. The facilitator commented on the presented arguments, while skilfully editing and directing the discussions. The trainee-participants shared their insights and participated in the discussions readily.

Part two: The mini-play

The mini-play was next. The facilitator, Cate, first familiarised the trainee-participants with the framing *cues* for interacting with the upcoming performance: when she said ‘action’ the scene would begin, and when she cued ‘cut’, the audience would applaud and the discussion would start. Such cues functioned in two ways. First, the beginning and the end of the theatrical framing was suggested to the audience. Cues, Goffman said, are ‘the brackets in time and space within which and to which the reality transformation is limited’ (1974, p. 45). Second, the audience involvement was prescribed through such cues: discussions, the audience were informed, were expected only *after* the play ended. During the play the aesthetic distance was to be preserved.

This is quite contrary to Boal's (1979; 1995) conceptualisation of forum theatre which should provide an open, pluri-vocal space, where everybody is a contributor and the aesthetic distance has no place. In this sense, there should be no visible line between the actor and the audience; the participants should be encouraged to feel free to change the actors' performance, to start a new character, and to change the performance in any way they desire (Clark and Mangham 2004b). Thus although the play was introduced as forum theatre, the facilitator's explanation of cues regulated the audience interaction in accordance with the arrangements of a conventional theatre where only the performers act while an established aesthetic distance divides them from the audience.⁴³

Cate then introduced the characters of the play: 'Alison' was an events coordinator who had worked with the event company for a couple of years. She was a young mother (with a sick son at home) and was about to meet one of her clients, 'Robyn', a senior manager within a large telecommunication company, which had been involved in mergers and was rapidly changing. Cate described her own part as 'the disembodied voice, the inner voice, the dialogue inside Alison's and Robyn's heads'. We watched the drama unfold⁴⁴: the struggles of Alison and Robyn in coming to an agreement regarding the event. Neither character acted authentically, as demonstrated by the difference between what they said to the other and what their 'disembodied voice' uttered. While the mini-play was performed, an established aesthetic distance regulated both the actors and the audience. We were invited to suspend any disbelief in 'the disembodied

⁴³ Clark and Mangham's studies of organisational theatre (2004a, b) revealed that forum theatre is a fashionable concept amongst the organisational theatre community; but when adopted for organisational purposes, such theatrical productions follow Boal's guidelines rather loosely (see also Chapter 4).

⁴⁴ See appendix 1 for the transcript of the play.

voice', and to have faith in the power of theatre to enable us to get into the characters' heads and know their 'true thoughts and intentions'. In this way the play portrayed the characters' duality – what is inside the head and what is for public show. The play ended on the facilitator's cue.

Part three: Participants become critiques

After the play, the participants were invited by Cate to approach the play through the lens of 'being yourself' so as to evaluate the authenticity of the characters. The two actors (who were still seated on the stage) were excluded from the discussions. A reversing of positions between the actors and the audience thus occurred; the actors now were to absorb all that was discussed and to reflect the comments in their upcoming replay of the theatrical piece. The participants' commentaries varied as the trainee-participants approached the topic from different perspectives.

Part four: The character interview

The participants were then invited by Cate to interview the *characters* (Box 8.1) in order to better understand their motives and behaviour and what was stopping them from presenting more of their 'true self'. The aesthetic distance was therefore decreased (not removed, as the audience participation was still regulated and limited to questioning) as the audience members were allowed to enter the world of the theatrical characters.

When an aesthetic distance separates the stage from the audience, it is as if the audience views the stage and all it holds through a transparent *fourth wall*. This notion was suggested by the 18th century French philosopher, art critic and writer Denis Diderot. Inspired by this notion, such breach of the aesthetic distance has been conceptualised as 'breaking of the fourth wall', when the characters and the audience

engage in face-to-face interaction (Dawson, Levy et al. 2011, p.388). The reciprocal relationship between the characters and the audience, Auter and Davies (1991) have proposed, results in the enhancement of audience engagement with the drama, as such interactions with fictional characters resemble 'usual social activity as in real life' and consequently create a sense of intimacy (Giles 2002, p. 280). In this part of the session, the character interviewing was cut short by Cate as there was not enough time. Box 8.1 illustrates some of the questions asked of the characters and their responses during the character interview.

Question: Robyn and Alison, what would you feel would happen if you told the truth about what you felt?

Robyn: I feel that if I share that I am not confident in what I am doing, that would undermine my position. I am afraid that I would look like a fool in this situation because I have never done an events management job before and all the ears and eyes in the company are on me to see how I go with this. So, I feel in some ways my position is on the line in terms of where I go in the company and I feel like I can't reveal that vulnerability because then I feel I've really lost credibility.

Alison: It is not nice to share things with Robyn. She is scary and I would be worried of her reaction. I would be very worried of what she would do if I said my son was sick!

Question: Alison, what makes you intimidated by her?

Alison: The whole setting is too formal for me. This is the first time I am

managing a corporate event; before this I just have managed festivals and things like that and this is new to me and I feel I am not using the correct language when meeting her.

Box 8.1 Illustrative character interview

Part five: Rescripting and rehearsing

The theatrical engagement was further developed when Cate next suggested that the groups should now discuss and then present ways for improving the scene so that the characters become more authentic, asking: 'How else could this scene be played out? Can other versions of the play be scripted? How could you coach Alison and Robyn to embrace their lost opportunities for being themselves?' After a short discussion in small groups the participants shared their suggestions for the new script. There was just enough time to act out a few suggestions (Box 8.2).

Audience suggestion: We think Robyn should change the tone of the scene by focusing more on working as a team. We want to see her telling the consultant that she knows she is the expert and they need to work together on this project and hopefully this will help Alison's confidence problems too.

The new script was played out:

Robyn: Alison thanks for meeting with me! If it's ok, I just want to go through the dress rehearsal. Because, the way I understand, it is very close to the actual event and I feel worried that if something goes wrong, what do you do? There is no time allowed to fix it before the actual event! Is there anything we can do to move it?

Alison: Firstly, that is the normal process but also I can try to change it, if that's a great concern for you. I have to check with the venue and there may be an additional charge...

Audience suggestion: Alison, you should ask Robyn why she is concerned and then try to explain the reasons for having the dress rehearsals the night before instead of trying to fix things the way Robyn wants.

Alison: Robyn, what exactly are you concerned about?

Robyn: I'm concerned that the dress rehearsal is too close to the actual event and that will not allow any time for final changes. What if something goes wrong?

Audience suggestion: Can you tell her some examples of things going wrong?

Robyn: What if something goes wrong technically or what if somebody doesn't know what they are doing technically? I don't know what could go wrong but...

Audience suggestion: This may be a good time for Robyn to share that this is her first time running an event.

Robyn: I've not managed any events before and I've been asked to do this and this is my first time. I feel I am being watched by the firm how I can handle this but I don't know this area and I don't know how to manage this event and I'm really looking up to you to help out with this.

Audience suggestion: I would say something in between. This is not about 'I am insecure and I don't know this', but about 'can you help me to make sure nothing

goes wrong'. I don't think sharing that much insecurity would help in this situation.

Audience suggestion: I would like to see Alison act differently because in my reality and where I come from it is very unlikely for the client to be the first to open the doorway to trust. It's very likely that it's the responsibility of the service provider to build the relationship, so there's trust. So, I would like to see that Alison takes the burden or the opportunity to build this trust. She can ask more questions, share more from the evidence she has based on her experience, on what works.

Box 8.2 Illustration of rescripting and rehearsing

At this point, the session turned into a different type of theatrical production. There was less distance between the participants and the performing team as they were all taking part in the construction of a new version of the script and consequently new performances. During this exercise, the notion of aesthetic distance became irrelevant, as the audience became a part of the performing team. In fact, the whole session transformed into a rehearsal with the trainee-participants authoring new scripts and directing new versions of the play. Mangham and Overington (1987) described the rehearsal as a creative process of 'variation and selective retention' (p.177), in which the director and the performing team come up with a repertoire of interpretations from which they choose a few to try out, see the results and then make amends by trying other ideas created through such creative process of selection and trial. Similarly, during this part of the training workshop the participants in small groups drafted a variation of texts and interpretations and then directed the performers to try them.

As there was not enough time, the rescripting and rehearsal process was quite short and the session was soon concluded by Cate. This abrupt conclusion of the rehearsals was the main complaint of a few of the participants in post-event interviews. One participant, Kerry, believed that 'the time was not enough for suggesting more script ideas'. Another, Kim, believed that 'they could have gone for another half day'. Mary said that she 'would have liked to see more suggestions to be played out.'

In what follows I review the participants' accounts in individual interviews, where they reflected on the theatrical format and its effects. Their feedback is quite supportive of the success of the training session in engaging its participants. Their accounts are valuable in providing a *participant perspective*.

Be Yourself! in the eyes of the participants

So far, I have described the aesthetic transformations – theatrical framing and variable degrees of aesthetic distance – through which the participants' engagement with the staged reality was achieved. During the post-event interviews the participants reflected on their engagement with the theatrical training session. From the participants' positive feedback one can conclude that the theatrical session succeeded in some degree to persuade its audience. Reportedly, the theatrical session provided new insights for practice and opportunities for reflection. This sort of training was described by one of the audience members, Eve, as 'the best learning environment where all are learners together, but the facilitator knows a little bit more.' Hillary, a personnel development manager found the training session 'fascinating' as it had created 'a great learning environment'. Kim, a coaching consultant, found the training session 'powerful':

There was such level of involvement! It was fascinating to see the perspectives of others in the room. It's fascinating to see how many different points of view were there; my feeling was that the room was very respectful [towards others' perspectives] as well.

One can conclude that framing cues directed the participants to adjust their perception of *what is going to happen* next, which determined the course of their subsequent participation. Aided by a gradual decrease of the aesthetic distance between the audience and the performance, their engagement took new aspects and their type of learning transformed. During the mini-play – an example of a conventional type of theatre – the theatrical balance was achieved through an established aesthetic distance which separated the trainees from the stage and the performance. One participant, Jane, found the mini-play 'powerful' and 'engaging' in that it showed 'both sides of the fence' of the interaction. The mini-play created the opportunity for her to observe both Alison and Robyn, while in real life 'one is positioned only on one side'. A coaching consultant, Anne, regarded such techniques as engaging the trainees 'in ways that cannot be expected of a lecture or a presentation':

The theatre was powerful. It was entertaining as well. As soon as you take someone into entertainment, you have that concentration and when you got someone's concentration, the training is sinking in a deeper level. When you have that kind of engagement, there is no way you're thinking about anything else. Theatre does that in a more powerful way than a lecture. Because in a lecture you might pick on something and say 'oh that is an interesting concept' but then go to your own world; or you might stop listening because you might get bored or you might think of

something else. Your mind wanders all over the place, but with theatre – because it is entertaining – you have that person’s attention.

The participants appreciated the novelty of the ‘disembodied voice’. They found this idea interesting in that it revealed the inner thoughts of the characters, which in real situations remain hidden and inaccessible. For example, Kerry, a personnel development manager, reflected:

I think the play was excellent! I love the whole concept of theatrical training as a way of getting you to re-examine things and I think the whole way that they did the outer persona versus the inner dialogue, to see such a marked difference, was such a clever way.

Mary had found the actors ‘brilliant’: they had played their roles ‘really well’ and, she added, ‘having the third voice was a really really good idea’. Anne confessed that she would have preferred to have more time, in the final part of the session, to suggest a new script in which ‘the inner voice changes to be more positive’. Lisa expressed her opinion about the disembodied voice as follows:

The inner voice, I’ve never seen that done before; I thought that was quite insightful! And I thought it was in a realistic way. So, you could empathise with them. I thought it was well done!

During the participative components, the degree of aesthetic distance was gradually decreased. During the character interview, the participants were allowed to enter the fictional world of the characters Alison and Robyn. This was an illustrative example of what Boal (1979) described as coexistence of fiction and reality, which reportedly creates higher levels of intimacy between the audience and the fictional character

(Giles 2002) which may result in higher levels of engagement (Auter and Davies 1991). Through the next part, when the audience were encouraged to suggest script ideas, the aesthetic distance decreased yet more as the audience became the authors of the script and creators of the characters. In this part they actively participated in the construction of the theatrical reality. Reflecting on the opportunity to rescript and coach the characters, one participant, Kim, appreciated the 'responsiveness of the actors in enacting the suggestion' and said that the rehearsals provided 'an opportunity for participation':

I enjoyed it where we got the chance to ask, 'What happens if this actor acts in another way? What now? How does the scene unfold?' I could say 'Well I think Robyn could have been much more honest' and then she acted as if she was really honest and then I went 'No, no! Not quite that much!' This gave the opportunity to see the consequences and make some distinctions around the characters.

Yet another participant, Jack, believed that the interview with the characters and the production of new performances allowed for the training to become 'real' as opposed to only 'theoretical', which – in my reading – was meant as a comment on the usefulness of such training for everyday practice:

I've seen theatre done before to dramatise a point; and that's very effective. But the fact that L&D Australia took it to the next level, to discuss the theatre, to interact with the characters as opposed to the actors, and then to direct the new scenario, that I think pushes the boundaries. It makes you reflect back on what you're seeing as a real thing rather than a theoretical thing.

The theatrical components had also been successful in creating 'a givenness' – a theatrical reality that seemed natural (Mangham and Overington 1987, p.84). For example, Alice believed that the characters were very easy to identify with:

I'm sure, any of us can relate to either of or both of them at some time in our life or have seen examples of that happened.

As mentioned, Lisa found the play realistic and the characters easy to empathise with. Jane similarly recounted:

[The mini-play,] it was very powerful, and you know, I sat there and I thought 'how easy it is to identify with both of those characters!'

Another common theme mentioned by the interviewees was related to reflection opportunities that this training session had offered. Nina, for example, stated that the theatrical session had given her 'a chance to have lots of good conversations and do a bit of self-reflection'. As mentioned before, Kerry highlighted that such training provides new perspectives for the 're-examination of things'. Jack believed that theatre that encourages people to 'do the role-plays and reflect' can be used to make 'a lot of cultural shift' in organisations. And Alice stated:

The theatre is such a great tool. It is so powerful because it motivates you to remove yourself and not to be attached to the situation.

She found it an emancipatory experience that evoked reflection:

I loved that we were invited to offer script ideas and were invited to change the situation. Because, interesting enough, a lot of people will think 'Well I'm powerless to change that situation or that's just the way it is or you just have to accept that'.

It is possible to see the gradual change in the degree of aesthetic distance through the course of Be Yourself! and reflect on the changing levels of engagement, as described by the participants. Such training by theatre persuaded its audience – by means of providing framing cues and decreasing the degree of aesthetic distance – to gradually step into the fictional world of theatre: first observe, then interact with the fictional characters, and eventually author and direct those characters.

I now turn to the second mode of theatrical transformations. Theatrical training is not operationalised only through aesthetic processes. It also engages the audience in the theatrical world through the interpretations it offers. Accordingly, in the next section the focus of analysis will be devoted to the second transformative process, the content interpretations of the theatrical session.

Section two: Making sense of authenticity

To explore how the topic of authenticity for women in the workplace was explored during the theatrical training session, a method of analysis inspired by Burke's pentad (1969) will be applied. I will analyse the narratives, arguments and viewpoints communicated through the theatrical training and reflect on the collective interpretation of such themes by the actors and the participants. As mentioned before (Chapter 2), Burke's pentadic analysis has been recommended as an effective means for the interpretation of dramatic performances and for commenting on the interpretations offered through their plots (Mangham and Overington 1987). Overington (1977) also suggested the pentadic analysis as a means for the interpretation of verbal statements which people produce to explain their own or others' actions. Following such reasoning, I will first present the pentadic frame adopted in this section. Then, I will apply the pentadic frame to analyse the

explanations, comments, narratives and arguments offered by the performers and participants in making sense of the theatrical performance and the meaning of authenticity.

The pentadic analysis of the workshop

Burke (1969) regarded action as necessarily dramatic in form, and therefore the conventions of theatrical productions can be used as an interpretative framework to explain human conduct. A playwright, in Burke's opinion, can write a successful script if she or he knows how to connect the *scene* with the characters (*agents*), their means (*agency*), *actions* and *purposes* in ways that are consistent with the cultural expectations of the audience.

Burke's (1969) dramatistic *pentad* – act, scene, agent, agency, and purpose – offers an understanding of symbolic action and its meaning. Through the pentadic inquiry one asks 'What was done? When or where was it done? Who did it? How did she or he do it? And why?' The pentadic analysis can therefore be used as a 'logic of inquiry' (Overington 1977 p.133). These questions can be used to investigate an action that has already been conducted, or a text that has been written, in order to make sense of it. Thus, the pentadic inquiry can be adopted to make sense of the meanings conveyed through theatrical events such as *Be Yourself!*. The pentad provides a guide as to how to question and interpret theatre and how to comment on the interpretations offered through the performed metaphors and narratives (Mangham and Overington 1987).

The relation between the elements of the pentad – called *ratios* by Burke (1969) – can also be used to explain symbolic actions and events, as the different elements of the pentadic inquiry are to be in accordance with one another in a way that makes sense to

the participants, that is to be consistent with their cultural expectations. Ratios therefore reveal cultural norms and expectations (Overington 1977).

Be Yourself! created a space for the exploration and negotiation of interpretations around the topic of authenticity in the workplace. Such interpretations were offered through the enactment of the mini-play as well as the discussions and interactive exercises. Through these collective processes of sensemaking (Weick 1995), the participants and performers shared their understandings of Alison's and Robyn's actions and interactions.

Regarding the negotiation and co-construction of meaning during a theatrical performance, Mangham and Overington spoke of the 'triadic collusion' between the script, the performers and audience (p.153). The script provides the basis of the performance, the characters and their relationships, and the plot. Through rehearsals, the performers (director, actors and the crew) interpret and negotiate different readings of the text. In the final performance the potentials of the script are realised and communicated to the audience, who will impose their own interpretation when perceiving what it is that is happening on the stage. Such readings are not necessarily the same as the author's or the performers'. In the case of organisational theatre such as Be Yourself! in which the audience contribute to the changes in the script, the interactive process of sensemaking achieves different dynamics. In what follows I will explore such multiple interpretations of 'the authentic female manager' through the interactive sensemaking between the performers, the participants and the script, by applying the pentadic ratios.

Authentic actors, their actions and purposes

In my reading, the facilitator of the workshop, Cate, (also the author of the play and the training session) presented and directed the arguments in a way that provoked diverse readings of an authentic woman. This was partly due to the fact that she offered several statements and narratives regarding authenticity throughout the course of the workshop. In one line of argument she emphasised the correlation between the actors, their actions and their purposes, and proposed that authentic conduct is achieved through a concordance with one's purpose. As she said after the play was performed: 'authenticity is all about awareness or mindfulness of what masks we are putting on and for what purpose.' In this interpretation, then, the authentic woman reflects on the reasons motivating her actions in a given situation and then decides on the self she wants to present since an authentic self can be achieved through mindful reflection.

Cate offered another reading of authentic conduct by narrating a story of two women make an authentic connection (see Box 8.3). This time authenticity was achieved through coherence between an action (a sincere confession) and actors (two women with children). The two protagonists of the narrative built their working relationship around the open sharing of the complications of motherhood. Through honest and open communication, these women achieved authenticity as well as 'a great working relationship'.

<p>I actually had a situation where we were asked to present in a large women's conference in Melbourne and it was a great topic and I really wanted to go for the sake of our organisation but I have an eight year old daughter whose birthday was on the same day and she said 'The only thing I want for my</p>

birthday is that you're not away!', so I was trapped in this situation. Here is this great topic about women – and by the way very much around 'being yourself' – that I really want to go to and here is my daughter's birthday. I actually went to the woman who organised the conference and instead of saying for example 'I have to go overseas' or whatever, I said 'Look! This is my dilemma! It's my daughter's birthday and she's made that decision' and the woman went 'Oh! Thank God you made that decision! I have a two year old and I have to travel today and I still feel guilty about it.' And from there we created this really great work relationship through going to that level of authenticity.

Box 8.3 Illustration of achieving authenticity through honest communication

Presenting what authenticity means, Cate also reinforced the agent/action/purpose relationship in the script she had written for the play. This script was based on *role theory* concepts (as stated by her in the rehearsals). The play portrayed the characters struggling with multiple role demands, role conflicts and stress. Thus role expectations provided an explanation for Alison's and Robyn's motives, by explaining why these women were not acting authentically; they were struggling with multiple and conflicting roles.

The concept of multiple roles was also embraced by the audience through the course of the workshop and after it ended. The notion was applied to justify the difficulties experienced in achieving authenticity. For example, one interviewee, Jane, defined life as a 'juggling act' between many conflicting roles while another, Maria, admitted that she was looking for answers as to how to manage the tension between the roles 'pulling her in different directions.' Yet another interviewee, Vivienne, drew close links

between authenticity and the notion of role demands: 'When we're trying to be ourselves, is it because of social expectations or are we truly being who we are?!'

Authentic actions as situated

The principle of a successful drama requires also a consistency between the scene and the actions played out within it. Burke (1969) presented relation between the scene and the action as the relation between *implicit* and *explicit*. That which is implicitly communicated through the stage-set when the play starts will be explicitly articulated through the performance, or so one assumes. As Mangham and Overington (1987) suggested, the scene not only correlates with the action but on occasions it prescribes the action. Both in dramas and everyday life, people witness so many repetitive scene-action relationships that the presence of one automatically signals the enactment of the other.

A dominant line of interpretation through the course of Be Yourself! followed this pattern . As the participants of the training session suggested, a professional setting – such as the meeting of an event manager (Alison) and a client (Robyn) – demands professional behaviour. As stated by one participant during the workshop, the sick son at home 'is simply irrelevant'. Another participant, Eve, expressed a similar opinion during the interview: 'sharing of insecurities and domestic problems could not resolve the tension caused by lack of trust on either side'. She believed that the professional front must be maintained by the two characters' 'clarifying of the goals in hand and change in attitude; not by sharing the insecurities but by looking at the project as a team effort.'

Eleven of the 13 interviewees agreed that such professional behaviour should have been maintained in this scene, arguing for the maintenance of professionalism or for

the professional presentation of oneself. One consultant, Kerry, summarised this point as: 'Relationships are great, but, they shouldn't get in the way of work. Relationships are a component of work but when you're at work you are supposed to be focused on work; not letting your personal life get in the way.' Jack commented similarly: 'If Alison had said to Robyn "to be honest this is my first corporate event, I don't know what to do and I need your help" that would have been career suicide!'

The authentic actor and her means

Another line of interpretation emphasised the relation of agent to agency, that is, the repertoire of means allowed/permitted or expected of a given agent. For example in the case of *Be Yourself!*, both the performers and the trainee-participant justified Alison's and Robyn's actions based on a range of diverse – and at times contrasting – gender-oriented commentary: 'Women are not confident in their abilities'; 'Women need to feel that they are 75% competent of their skills to apply for a job whereas for men this is dramatically lower'; 'Women usually act tougher towards each other. They do not try to understand the other side's story'; 'Women feel more competitive towards each other whereas if we put a man instead of one of the women in this scene, the result would be different.'

In this way a dominant line of interpretation was constructed collectively during the course of the workshop. These general and multiple viewpoints reflect that how the participants related the inauthentic behaviour of Alison and Robyn (and of women in general) to their gender. Gender is, after all, commonly referred to as a means which motivates actions in specific directions.

The multiple meanings of authenticity: A summary of the pentadic analysis

In this section I have adopted a pentadic frame of analysis in order to interpret the comments and interpretations produced by the participants and performers of *Be Yourself!* This analysis is to aid understanding of the way authenticity and an authentic woman were made sense of during the theatrical training session. Multiple, and at times contradictory, interpretations were introduced. At one point, Cate defined authenticity as a mindful presentation of self in accordance to one's purpose. In another reading she presented authenticity in work relationships as achieved through open sharing of personal and family-related dilemmas. Achieving authenticity was presented by many participants as challenging, due to their multiple and conflicting roles. Authenticity in the workplace was also connected to conformance to the rules of corporate professionalism. Moreover, the performers' and the participants' statements about gender provided a range of justifications for why it is more challenging for women to achieve authenticity.

The participatory parts of the training session also allowed a collective process of negotiation and co-construction of multiple interpretations. Such collective processes of interpretation resulted in re-negotiating and re-shaping the image of 'the authentic female manager' through changing the characters in the rehearsals (Box 8.2). In other words, the aesthetic transformations in interaction with the interpretative processes evoked by the organisational theatre resulted in an active participation of the trainees in shaping the realities of both the training session and the theatrical realities.

In the last section of this chapter I will reflect on the two transformations explored in this chapter – the transformations in form and content – and the training opportunities emerging from the interplay of these processes.

Concluding remarks

It has been argued in this chapter – with reference to Mangham and Overington (1987) – that organisational theatre transforms realities in two ways: first by staging them, and then by interpreting them through the tropes it offers. Adopting a selection of dramaturgical theories, I analysed both transformative processes in the case of *Be Yourself!*, in order to contribute to a better understanding of how organisational theatre works. I will now move on to the exploration of the possible outcomes of organisational theatre by analysing aesthetic and interpretive mechanisms that operated during the course of *Be Yourself!*. These mechanisms can be called *dramatic experimentation* and *dramatic persuasion*.

First, the organisational theatre event provided for what was introduced in the last chapter as *dramatic experimentation*. The theatrical components of the training session worked as *a mirror* in which the trainees observed a reflection of their own everyday working life. The mini-play, specifically, staged a familiar situation and characters that were ‘easy to empathise with’; yet, the unfamiliarity of the aesthetic form through which the scene was performed caused the audience to reflect on the different ways such a scene could have unfolded. The ‘disembodied voice’ specifically was considered by the participants as novel, unfamiliar and a cause for reflection. Theatre with its fictional capacities provided for *distinction making* (Meisiek and Barry 2007), for observation of the thoughts ‘that people have but [which] do not go anywhere’, hidden and inaccessible in real life situations, yet ‘realistic’ and ‘believable’. The voices in the heads of the fictional characters gave the audience the chance to *see further* (Meisiek and Barry 2007) or as the participants described it, to see ‘both sides of the fence’. The

participants appreciated the chance offered by the training session for 're-examination', 'self-reflection', and reflexivity through 'detachment from the situation'.

Moreover, the participative components of the organisation theatre offered opportunities for entering the realm of theatrical reality and taking action, in other words, *doing drama*. In this sense the trainees experimented with questioning the fictional characters and offered new scripts so as to change and resolve their communication problems. Rescripting and directing the rehearsals opened *a window* to a fictive future in which these personnel development professionals got to experiment with different methods of *coaching* the fictional female managers in relating to one another in more authentic ways. This directorial/authorial role resembled these trainee-participants' everyday work roles in their 'real life'. In their capacities as personnel development managers and consultants, these participants really do coach managers like Alison and Robyn (Chapter 6). In this sense, the trainees were engaged not only in the construction of the theatrical reality, but also in shaping *pre-actions*, actions that, unlike fictional actions, 'precede – rather than stand in for – the actual action' (Clark and Mangham 2004b, p.844) relevant to real work life. The trainees thus rehearsed coaching as if to practice for a possible future situation, in which coaching for authentic behaviour would be their 'real' purpose. As a result of such experimentation, the participants related to the organisational theatre not only through empathy and positive identification with the characters and/or the staged situation, but also through active evaluation of the problematic situation and making decisions for improvement through new versions and possibilities. These aspects of the participative components of Be Yourself! fit within the Boalian forum theatre conventions in which – unlike the conventional theatre where *new understanding and*

learning results from identification with the staged reality, emotional involvement and amusement (Clark and Mangham 2004b; Meisiek and Barry 2010) – the participants reach new understandings through *practicing* in the theatrical space and by rehearsing and exchanging views with the other participants and the performers in the world of theatrical training ‘without fearing the future consequences’ (Clark and Mangham 2004b, p.846).

Such outcomes of the participative theatre were also mentioned by the participants during the post-event interviews. They referred to the appeal of the diversity of the views shared through the course of the training session, the opportunities for participation and experimenting with the scripts, and the learning which was useful for practice.

The second formulation, *dramatic persuasion* refers to the capacities offered for persuading participants to suspend their disbelief and engage in the world of organisational theatre. As discussed, the gradual decrease in the degree of separation between the performance and the trainees resulted in gradual increase in the levels of engagement. In other words, the participants were persuaded by the theatrical reality by being pulled into the world of drama, by becoming a part of the theatrical reality. This persuasion presumably provides for a high level of engagement with the content of the training. However, this is an active engagement which becomes possible through doing drama, through taking action in the theatrical domain. As shown, the participants evaluated Be Yourself! as an ‘engaging training environment’ that was ‘powerful’ in providing ‘increased concentration’ through which the learning ‘sinks deeper’. The participants were persuaded to attend to the discussions, interpretations, and the negotiation of meaning.

The engagement capacities offered by dramatic persuasion make organisational training a promising training and development technology; however, dramatic persuasion may have other implications since such persuasion may lead to manipulation. In Chapter 4, I have reviewed commentaries that critique organisational theatre's potential for the manipulation of meaning, for projecting particular characters and images serving the intentions of sponsors and commissioners (management).

In the case of *Be Yourself!*, one can also detect some grounds for such criticisms. Organisational theatre may persuade the audience too powerfully, diluting the difference between reality and theatre. The account of one of the participants, Jack, demonstrates this point. Wanting to know the reality of the actor versus the character, he had questioned the actor who had played Alison after the workshop, to see if she 'really had kids in real life'. Still, he admitted that:

[...] the actors played the parts very well. They were introduced as who they were [in the beginning]; but then from that point they were only referred to as the characters and they stayed in character. The young lady who was playing the consultant, Alison, was doing a lot of hair flicking during the play; and I was sitting and going 'that's really annoying!' but then I sat back and watched and all of a sudden told myself 'Hold on! The hair flicking, it's a part of it'. When I spoke to her after the workshop, she didn't touch her hair even once. Things like that, to me made a massive difference and I went 'You have really researched your character. You touched your hair because you were nervous and that was the character you were playing!'

As one steps in and out of fiction in the theatrical domain, the distinction between fictional and real entities may become blurred. While, on the one hand, this is part of the desired educational impact, it can be taken advantage of. Whatever the motivation, however, it is not necessarily easy to 'program' (Schreyögg and Höpfl 2004, p. 698) the processes of organisational training to achieve certain sets of learning and understanding in the trainees (as also pointed out by Meisiek and Barry 2007). Participants in organisational training are equipped with dramatistic tools for sensemaking, and participate in shaping the meaning of the drama.

In this chapter, I explored organisational theatre as a training technology in personnel development practices. The participants became engaged with *Be Yourself!* through dramatic persuasion. They collectively contributed to the construction of the content offered through the training in regards to 'what authenticity means' and they experimented with different versions of the staged situation through doing drama. In the next two chapters I will attempt to provide an account of some possible outcomes of this theatrical training workshop by exploring the way the participants related to the notion of authenticity, as captured shortly after the workshop during post-event interviews. In doing so, no ambitions for capturing the 'true' effects of organisational theatre are claimed; however, the accounts produced in the interviews do offer some significant reflections on the workshop themes.

Chapter 9: Authenticity in Everyday Working Life

The notion of authenticity can be approached from within the wider sociological debate that has persistently problematised the relation between the individual and society, that is, between the self and the social context within which the self arises (Archer 1996; Kunda 2006). Conceptualisations of authenticity can be traced back to the Romantics, for instance Jean-Jacques Rousseau who theorised it as a personal virtue achieved through 'being true to the inner self as it reveals itself and expressing it openly, with full candor, and without any embellishing or editing' (Guignon 2004, pp.77-78).

Contemporary definitions of the concept are quite similar to that of Rousseau. Thus 'the project of being authentic' is depicted as consisting of two steps: first, 'pulling the self back' from social entanglements and 'going with the flow' so as to discover the 'real innermost self'; second, expressing the discovered 'true self' through everyday actions and interactions (Guignon 2004, p.75). Such notions of authenticity put value on what is *inside* the individual as the *original*, in contrast to what is motivated by the society, which is *fake*. Authenticity in this sense is the individual's defence mechanism for resisting a 'socially determined identity' (Seeman 1966, p.68). Hence, the authentic person is portrayed as unique, non-conforming (even rebellious), and expressive of her or his differences (Taylor 1991).

Most conceptual formulations of authenticity, regardless of their diversity, side with essentialist views of identity by advocating that there is a self 'out there' (perhaps the better term is 'in here'). These formulations contrast with the dramatisic perspective

adopted in this research⁴⁵. Nevertheless, as there is a body of literature that views the self as an essential entity and in view of the fact that talk of authenticity is common and widespread – and arguably becoming more so (Guignon 2004), the essentialist concept is an important one to examine.

But, what is the appeal of the concept of authenticity in contemporary life and, more specifically for this thesis, in organisational life? To provide answers to this question, in this chapter I will continue with the exploration of how authenticity was made sense of by personnel development managers and consultants. A brief review of scholarly theorisations on authenticity will be conducted and later related to the personnel development professionals' interpretations of authenticity given in the face-to-face interviews after the workshop *Be Yourself!*. The accounts produced during these interviews included reflections on authenticity as interpreted by a group of professionals who had experience in two worlds – theatre and organisations. These personnel development professionals were questioned very shortly after the theatrical training, which explored the topic of authenticity and its connection to workplace performance (See Chapter 8). It was expected that this group would be more reflective about the issue of achieving authenticity, especially because they had volunteered to share their reflections in the interviews. Their accounts were mainly offered in response to my question 'What does it mean to you to be authentic?' The accounts presented in this chapter are rich with stylised formulations which allude to the 'official' representations⁴⁶ (Bourdieu, 1990, p.108) of authenticity. It has been argued (Kunda 2006) that being interviewed often encourages practitioners to style their

⁴⁵ Dramatistic views of identity have been reviewed in Chapter 3.

⁴⁶ For more details on the logic of theory, practice and representation see Chapter 5.

accounts by drawing on theories and concepts to create presentable and official pictures of their practices for outsiders (such as interviewers). Such accounts provide a picture of what is legitimate (and illegitimate) and taken-for-granted (Czarniawska 2008b). Analysing these official pictures helps, therefore, to identify the repertoire of legitimate notions of authenticity and authentic identities in this field of practice.

The chapter thus begins by reviewing a selection of literature on authenticity. Then, the entrance of the topic of authenticity into organisational life is discussed. Next, the interviewees' accounts of authenticity will be explored. These accounts are interesting because authenticity emerges as a trendy topic, fashionable in this organisational field. I address my previous questions about fashionable trends and consider why authenticity is fashionable. Why in personnel development? Why now? What is more, the study of such accounts helps to depict some *products* of the practices of personnel development, i.e. the kinds of subjectivities being constructed in this field.

The authenticity discourse: Essential self or socially-constructed self?

According to Kellner (1992) pre-modern identity was seen as fixed and clearly prescribed by predefined and stable social roles. Through the performance of such roles, a person would achieve a secure status in the community and an identity seldom prone to change. As Guignon put it 'in such societies, the primary orientation of life was "outward" rather than inward: what mattered was how one was faring in the shared undertakings of communal life' (2004, p.76).

In contrast, conceptualisations of modern identity, in general, present it as individual, mobile, multiple, personal, self-reflexive, and subject to change and innovation. Yet, amongst these, two major perspectives can be distinguished. One group of theorists are engaged in a quest to capture the *essence* and *the truth* of the modern self. The other

group see the self as lacking an essence and instead being *a social construct* (Kellner 1992). The problem of authenticity arises from the contradiction between these two perspectives on modern identity.

The emergence of the idea of an *essential self* can be traced back to the Enlightenment and Descartes' formulation of the *cogito*, the 'transcendental self' as a philosophical entity and the source of logic and thought, its perpetual nature lying beyond ordinary experiences. Such an entity was considered universal, timeless and essential in human nature (Holstein and Gubrium 2000, p.18). The same view of a self that transcends mundane social life was emphasised within the Romantic movement of the 18th century, although the essence of the self for the Romantics was not that of Cartesian logic and thought, but of passion, soul, and morality (Gergen 1991).

Later, the theorisation of *multiple selves* came to life through the work of pragmatists such as William James (1892/1984), who portrayed the *empirical self* as centred in experience. This empirical self was described as a two-fold entity; the '*I*', the subjective dimension, and the '*me*', the object of the *I*'s conscious reflexivity. While the *I* was formulated as the permanent and unchanging part of the self – what was previously known as the transcendental Ego – (p.175), the *me* was considered as being constituted by three changing components: 'the material *me*', 'the social *me*', and 'the spiritual *me*' (p.160). The social *me* was also multiplied: 'a man has as many social selves as there are individuals who recognise him and carry an image of him in their mind' (James 1892/1984, p.162).

In recent years, James's conceptualisation has inspired the work of many scholars. For instance, the psychologist Dan P. McAdams, developed a framework for the analysis of personality, in which, through the reflexive process of *selfing*, the Jamesian '*I*' would

produce the 'me'. McAdams described selfing as a narration of one's past linked to the present and to one's anticipated future. Selfing provides one with temporal coherence and a sense of uniqueness or an *identity*. The different elements of identity in such a conceptualisation are arranged into a hierarchical pattern as the 'I' transcends the other manifestations of the self, and monitors, shapes and unifies them into a coherent identity (McAdams 1996, pp.301-309).

The modern self in this take is considered mobile and prone to change; nevertheless, there remains an essence to it, one 'truth out there' needing to be discovered (for a further critique, see Gergen 1991). The modern self, thus conceptualised, is constantly challenged to search for its essence as it is exposed to many identities, possibilities of which expand continually. The main consequence of such multiple possibilities of being is manifested through anxiety and stress as one needs to examine such possibilities continuously and from them, discover one's true self (Kellner, 1992). In light of such views of the self, authenticity, understood as loyalty to the true essential self, emerged as a modern virtue (Trilling 1972).

In comparison, the modern – and late modern – self has been conceptualised as a social construction. Such views of the self mainly build on George Herbert Mead's (1934/1967) formulation of self⁴⁷ as an entity developed through *symbolic interactions* such as language, game and play. Mead's individual tries to imagine the thoughts of *generalised others* in order to view and evaluate her/himself through their eyes. This act of 'taking the attitudes of others' in the group, community or society gives the

⁴⁷ Mead built on and extended James's theories.

individual 'his "*me*"; that is the self he is aware of' (p.175). The *I* is the response of the individual to such imagined attitudes in social situations:

Both aspects of the "I" and the "me" are essential to the self in its full expression. One must take the attitude of the others in a group in order to belong to a community [...] on the other hand, the individual is constantly reacting to the social attitudes. (Mead 1934/1967 p.199)

Following such formulations, Erving Goffman (1959) theorised the self as multiple social entities, each performed for a specific and segregated audience or group of audiences. The individual thus appears as an actor, a mere 'holding company' for the parts that she or he plays (1961, p.91).

The recent constructionist wave of theorisations also portrays the self as socially-oriented. Kenneth Gergen described the self as 'relational', as the 'world becomes meaningful in relationships' (1999/2009, p.98). Gergen argued that today people's lives are saturated with social relationships, which in turn saturate their selfhood (1991). From this perspective the self is inherently fragmented and there is no hope for coherence and unity. People's plural selves, according to Gergen, compete with each other but no self can achieve long-term dominance. In more hopeful views people, however fragmented and contested, negotiate for construction of their sense of self through social interactions (Czarniawska 2006). The individual in this sense shapes the social while being shaped by it.

However, Gubrium and Holstein (2000) observed that in spite of (or even in response to) late modern and social constructionist views of identity, people still long for the discovery and expression of 'the true self':

This self occupies an inner sanctum insulated from the moral ravages of today's world. Social life may shape who we are, bestow glowing or blemished identities; it may confuse our public

personas beyond recognition, but we still believe that a “true self” lies somewhere inside, in some deeply privileged space [...] It is taken for granted that in our most private recesses we do not need to divide ourselves between countless identities but rather feel it is still possible to get in touch, and be at one, with our true selves. (p. 96)

Gubrium and Holstein suggested that an institutionalised notion of ‘a core self’ (p.99) that protects the individual against the contamination of society plays a major part in the perpetuation of this popular belief. One could protest, however, that as much as this yearning can be understandable in the discourse of personal therapy, it has hardly any relation to life in organisations. In contrast to such expectations, however, the quest for the ‘true self’ has also been witnessed in organisations. Karin Garrety (2008) has observed:

Notwithstanding postmodern scepticism regarding the notion of a ‘real’ self, people still produce and narrate degrees of ‘realness’ and ‘fakeness’ as they enact themselves at work, in response to organisational demands. (p.103)

She argued that employees are still ‘deeply attached’ to a notion of ‘core’ or ‘real self’ in negotiating their identities within organisational ‘regimes of control’ (p.93). Similarly Westwood and Johnston (2011) in an Australian case study suggested that ‘employees are sensitive to matters of authenticity and authentic identity’ (p.17).

Authenticity as a contemporary corporate fashion

Rebecca Erickson (1995) pondered the increasing interest in the concept of authenticity amongst individuals, corporations and social scholars. She pointed to the transition from industrial to postindustrial society and from modern to postmodern culture during the last three decades (counting from 1995). The obsession with authenticity, she argued, is driven by people’s struggles to make sense of reality during

such cultural and social transitions. Today, people are in constant fear of losing 'the real thing', hence 'the real me' and 'the real you' (p.121). Such fears are augmented within academic circles by the wave of postmodern theorisations that announce the self to be fragmented, decentralised and morally destabilised. At the same time, 'mass society' fears loss of the 'real self' as a result of the penetration of diverse and numerous identity types, presented by mass media, TV and movies (p.128). Erickson also referred to a general concern with the emergence of a *commodified self* as people engage, in one way or another, in packaging, labelling and marketing their selves (p.130). Another element that has contributed to this obsessive authenticity-awareness, she argued, is the increase in provision and consumption of *services* rather than *goods*. The reality of the latter is tangible, but services can only become real through their *image*. Therefore, the quest for the real and authentic has emerged as a prevalent trend of our time.

Guthey and Jackson (2005) related this 'authenticity craze' (p. 1064) to the recent scandalous collapses of big corporations (at that time, it was Enron and Parmalat; in the 2010s the list became longer). They traced the obsession with authenticity in workplaces back to the beginning of the 20th century when large bureaucratic corporations began to dominate the economic scene (especially in the US), threatening the dominant social and economic order, not only because of their rise and power, but because they were 'so abstract, so elusive, and so faceless' (p.1064). The authors argued that a lack of actual legitimacy led business representatives (the leaders for example) to construct an image of realness and legitimacy for corporations, through personification of organisations as human, moral and authentic.

The Australian fascination with authenticity seems to be part of this prevalent corporate trend. Fleming (2009) observed that in recent decades, authenticity has

become a popular topic in many large corporations in the USA, UK and Australia. Authenticity is demanded in everything from consumption to corporate strategies regarding human resource management. In his study of call centres in Australia, he noted that the workers were encouraged to embrace their individuality by free expression of their lifestyle choices (such as sexual orientation, hobbies, hairdo and clothing). Interpreting this phenomenon from a critical political stance, he argued that the new corporate ideology of 'just be yourself' is but a control mechanism for exploiting labour. He contended that the idea of 'be yourself' limits the authentic expression of self to superficial life choice matters while undermining the authentic behaviour that jeopardises corporate interests. In his opinion, the managerial discourse that encourages personal authenticity in the corporate world is only aimed at maximising profitability as this ideology 'absorbs more of the employees' self into the regime of production' (p.8). Thus, it is aimed at achieving higher productivity through engaging employees' private selves.

Authenticity as a logic of representation

My study of personnel development shows that the topic of authenticity is of interest in the corporate setting in Australia and attracts considerable attention from the organisers of workshops and training programs. For example, during the course of the interviews after the workshop Be Yourself! all of the interviewees expressed their interest in the notion of authenticity as the main reason for participating in the workshop Be Yourself!. They also voiced a desire to improve their chances of realising their authentic self – at work and at home. Such interest in authenticity is not limited to this workshop and its participants. L&D Australia had originally designed and conducted the workshop Be Yourself! in 2010 for presentation at the largest annual

women's conference in Australia, organised by the largest professional women's network in Australia (WNA). The topic was predefined by the conference organisers and L&D Australia had to pitch to win the opportunity for presenting this topic at the conference. That workshop attracted some 50 female middle/senior managers from all around Australia. 'Authentic women in the workplace' was the focus on both occasions. Personnel development organisers' interest in the idea of authenticity (and in the authentic female manager) then can be understood as part of a general social and corporate trend in Australia (and globally).

My interlocutors presented their understandings of authenticity as well as their everyday experiences in this regard, in a rather diverse fashion. In what follows their accounts of authentic living and working will be discussed.

Quest for the true self and its expression

As Kellner (1992) posited, believing in a true self, more often than not, leads to anxiety as people face many possibilities of being from which they are to realise their one true identity. For some, the stressful process of achieving one's authenticity turns into a romantic quest, described by one of my interviewees in the following way:

The whole life's journey is about finding out who you truly are. I don't think there is an end point; you keep peeling back the layers. Does that mean that we have masks that we put on like in a play? [I think] our essence in its purest form is the authentic truth that is us. So, we are on a journey, to discover a deeper meaning of it. It's hidden inside, and I really think we all are in that journey, to discover who we are. Will we ever find out? This is my belief! We will find out at the death toll. And again maybe we will never really know; but it's ok, because the journey

is exciting; because I never know what's gonna happen next. I believe the search for the authentic self is part of the journey; that's why we are alive.

This consultant's definition of an authentic being is consistent with the first step in the two-fold process of the authenticity project (Guignon 2004) in that it connects the discovery of one's essence to an inward exploration. Moreover, finding one's true self by 'peeling back the layers' and reaching it at the end of one's 'life journey' creates a romantic image about one's purpose in life. This interviewee's description also extends to the second step in the project of being authentic: the loyal expression of the true self, although this is not always easy to practice:

To me the human essence is what we can think and feel, what we believe in ourselves to be true even if it is against social norms and what expectations are. Although, sometimes we know it but we can't express it or won't express it because we feel we will be alienated.

Another consultant provided an account that bears considerable similarities with the previous view of authenticity, prescribing going inward in search for the truth and then expressing it outwardly regardless of social consequences:

Being true to yourself is about going deep within yourself, to your deepest knowing, it's your intuition, it's your heart ...⁴⁸ and communicating and operating from that place. It's about taking a moment to stop and think and go inward to think how I want to be outward in the world. It's also that feeling you have after you have acted;

⁴⁸ An ellipsis (...) is used here to show a pause.

when you feel liberated and good, knowing that's the right thing you did.

It's that knowing that even in the face of potential conflict, there are those crucial conversations you have to have with people.

In addition to presenting authenticity as discovering the hidden true self and communicating it truthfully, this interviewee also introduced an element of doing the right thing in the face of possible consequences. Authenticity, thus portrayed, may cause discomfort as the expression of what is true may disturb one's social relations. As Guignon (2004) put it, achieving authenticity in this sense is a demanding process through which one has to find one's autonomous beliefs and be courageous enough to follow them, even if this costs one's status and position in social relations. So, 'authentic people are not necessarily the happiest people in the sense of having pleasurable feelings most of the time' (p.77). But the appeal of authenticity, he argued, is in that it is an 'ethical virtue' necessary for having a 'good life' (p.77). For the authentic person, life is not pre-determined by society but it is achieved through discovering the available options for being in the world and choosing those options that help to nurture one's deepest beliefs, desires and needs. This way of life, Guignon suggested, requires courage, belief and passion. Thus, the authentic individual is a self-aware person whose social interactions are directed with an inner sense of clarity, passion, conviction and courage that is lacking in inauthentic people. As one interviewee phrased it, 'If you're expansive and you're bravely opening up to any opportunity then you know you are authentic.' In this sense, even the arbitrator for judging the authenticity of one's behaviour is to be found inside as it is one's feelings that provide the evidence for one's authenticity. Such views of authenticity, however, have been criticised as creating 'a cult of inwardness' (Adorno 1973/2006, p.60), 'impulsive reflexivity' (Giddens 1991),

and 'a culture of narcissism' (Lasch 1991; for a detailed review, see Fleming, 2009 pp. 23-25).

Reconciling masks with the true self

'Different faces' and other similar metaphors were reiterated in all interviewees' accounts. The persistent appearance of these analogies is not surprising as the interviews followed up on the content of the workshop Be Yourself!, in which the metaphor of 'masks that we wear' was elaborated on repeatedly by the workshop organisers and the participants.

In some accounts, the idea of 'wearing masks' carried a rather negative meaning. It was presented as the opposite of being authentic, something that ideally has to be avoided. However, it was explained that the *role demands* imposed by the position of manager/consultant at times leave no option but to 'wear a mask', 'put on a uniform', 'show different faces', or 'play personas'. The interviewee quoted below, for instance, stated that such mode of acting is unavoidable for a manager:

[At work] I'm putting on my persona the whole time. Because sometimes, there is something inappropriate going on and you have to deal with it, but I don't like confrontation, it is in contrast with my natural personality. [However] when there is a confrontation just avoiding it, hoping it would go away is not an appropriate option. I think this is just the reality of being a manager. I think it's very rare that you get an employee who only gives you joy and happiness; but you know, that's a manager's life.

One consultant emphasised the importance of 'being resilient' in consulting jobs. Her explanation portrays resilience as the impression management necessary for being an 'effective' consultant:

You've got no choice! Even though I'm saying that you have to be yourself, but ... one minute you go to a law firm and then to a major bank, and next minute you go to an engineering company and the next minute you go to a university. And you have to be able to adapt and act in each of those environments, and I would change how I interact with people. So, if I'm working in the big bank, you'll see me in my formal suit and you'll see me acting in a different way than when I go to an engineering firm, or at the university where I'm talking about a completely different thing, and I'm talking in a kind of a different vocabulary. This, for me is only superficial. You can still do that and know who you are inside; and then, when you have your relationships with your work colleagues, you can be yourself fully. But you do need to adapt to be a consultant. Every time I go to a meeting, I think: 'What is appropriate clothing-wise?' and that's the symbolism. You're actually changing who you are; you're adapting to, 'I'm similar to you!' I think that to be a consultant, you need to be able to adapt yourself; but you need to have a sense of yourself at the same time; [you need] to be resilient.

A similar formulation of resilience was expressed by another interviewee. To be resilient then, for these consultants, is defined as 'knowing the true self' but acting at times, 'knowingly' and 'superficially', despite the authentic self, in order to create the appropriate impression on employees, colleagues or clients. This closely recalls

Hochschild's process of surface acting (1979) and Goffman's (1959) impression management. Goffman (1959) formulated the notion of a 'cynical performer' as one who does not believe in the character she or he is putting on. In this sense, the consultant who described consulting as surface acting while her 'true self' can only be expressed with her colleagues in the backstage is a cynical performer. This conceptualisation does not necessarily imply deceptive intentions on the part of the performer. As Goffman put it:

We know that in service occupations, practitioners who may otherwise be sincere are sometimes forced to delude their customers because their customers show such a heartfelt demand for it. (1959, p.18)

Such successful performance becomes possible through the meticulous design of the 'expressions given off' (Goffman, 1959, p.4), the non-verbal, theatrical and contextual bodily actions through which the individual influences the definition of the situation in which she is a participant. Goffman described the expressive techniques required for the success and maintenance of such impression management (e.g. one's clothing, make up, speech patterns, bodily gestures and alike) as the construction of a personal front that is dramatisatically consistent with the setting (p.24). Such conscious impression management was described as necessary by some interviewees in order to adapt to the new clients' organisational setting and to perform the required managerial duties. In the same vein, Höpfl (2002) argued that organisational actors, specifically in service roles, are led to adjust their performance according to client demands. The actor in such instances is putting on a 'mere performance' so to – as Diderot (1773) explicated – demonstrate professional competence (Höpfl 2002, p. 255). Similarly, Clark and Salaman (1998) argued that due to the qualities of consulting services (reliance on

interaction, intangibility and perishability of services), management consultants' biggest challenge is to convince the potential clients of the value and quality of what they offer. To achieve this, they must actively engage in impression management.

Two main points must be highlighted in my interviewees' accounts: first, such acts of impression management are not presented as motivated by self-interest or insincerity but are justified by the role demands that are acknowledged by both the performers and their audience. Second, in these accounts, the interviewees address the problem of authenticity in their implications that impression management – if performed successfully, only superficially and with awareness – will shield the 'true self'. Acts of surface acting, if conducted consciously, may help protect the true self from being subjected to change in favour of corporate ends (Hochschild, 1983). In other words, impression management is applied by these consultants/managers in order to make them resilient in dealing with the corporate demands. Such trivial acts of the 'inauthentic presentation of self', therefore, are depicted as necessary for preservation of one's core self. In this sense, in order to stay true to oneself, one is required to wear masks.

Further, my interviewees suggested that in order to nurture the 'true' self, one needs support systems. These include the opportunity to express the true self in the private sphere with one's spouse, family and close friends; meditation (6 out of 13 interviewees practiced meditation on daily basis); and discovering where one's passions lie, that is, doing activities that one enjoys and likes. Such 'tempered radical strategies' (Meyerson, 2001) help to maintain one's sense of loyalty to one's true self while doing the corporate bidding.

Maintaining core values

Another conceptualisation of 'being authentic' articulated by the personnel development professionals was that of 'maintaining a set of core beliefs' and being true to them in different situations, as depicted in this excerpt:

I think there are certain selves that we have. Ultimately, if you're being truly authentic by my definition, you're not compromising your values anyway. So, that to me is true authenticity. I might have a slightly different face with my friends, slightly different face at work; slightly different face with my family; but ultimately my values of honesty and integrity and respect and loyalty, and all that values and beliefs that are core to me, are not compromised in any of those different faces that I put on for you [...] so in terms of authenticity, how we portray ourselves in my mind doesn't necessarily mean that we are not authentic; in my mind it's different when you portray yourself as something or someone that is not in line with your values and beliefs; that to me is not authentic.

Erickson (1995) formulated her definition of authenticity in the same way, that is, as 'commitment to self-values' (p.127). She believed this conceptualisation creates a common ground between the late modern lamentation about the loss of self and essentialist prescriptions of the quest for the core self. She argued that the concept of authenticity, if seen as commitment to certain values, does not deny the transience and fragmentation of postmodern identity; neither does it deprive the self from experiencing a sense of coherence and moral judgment. The same line of argument can be traced in the same interviewee's account of being authentic:

I think that things like my core values, my beliefs, what I stand for, all that kind of stuff, that's always the same. [But] what I would choose to display or how I would react would depend on the situation. For example I work a lot with different cultures and so the way I would interact with them would very much depend on the context [...] So, I don't think that I am being different as much as I choose to adapt my behaviour to the circumstances.

This contextual acting depicts a new picture of authentic being close to what Holstein and Gubrium (2000) described as *a situated authenticity*. According to this view, the truth about the self is constructed in different situations through everyday life experiences. Therefore, people possess multiple true selves, and can only be held accountable for being loyal to those in their respective local realms. In this light, authenticity is localised and multiplied: 'authenticities are situated and plural – locally articulated, locally recognised, and locally accountable' (p.70). Following this view, the answer to the question of who one really is lies not in the uncovering of an entity, but in an exploration of the complexities of the self as an everyday project (Giddens 1991, Holstein and Gubrium 2000).

Integrity, wholeness and presence

Another dominant definition of authenticity articulated by the interviewees alluded to 'being whole' or 'having integrity', as shown, for example, in the following account:

I think the injunction 'to thine own self be true' is a very powerful thing for me. It's an area that I do believe in [...] I suppose I have to frame authenticity in terms of what I love doing; the moments when I feel whole. Right now, I feel whole because I am being invited to think. So, I

think the act of wondering and searching for my response is one that I love and makes me feel whole. I do enjoy teaching [authenticity] a lot. It's about being present to my own sense of self – from meditation to communication, to teaching, to washing the dishes, but it's about being present, and that for me is the most important thing. Being present is about being conscious, feeling that my response to a situation is all of myself, so it's like an embodied way of being in the world, [it's] very philosophical. I love the presenting and facilitating process with people and bringing people into their truth and their awareness. So, through my own integrity or my own wholeness, I like to invite that in the other, in whatever form I do it.

Such an understanding of authenticity bears similarities with what Calhoun (1995) described as *integrity*. Integrity and authenticity are considered close concepts in ethics (Guignon, 2004). In this formulation, an *integrated-self* is defined as the integration of parts of the self into a whole. In this picture, 'any person whose actions are fully determined by her endorsements has integrity' (Calhoun 1995p.238). Such a conceptualisation of integrity (and authenticity) puts the preference on whatever it is that has originated from the person and is expressed intensively, loyally and consistently, no matter what the content of such loyal commitment is. Therefore even washing dishes may be considered as an authentic act, serving one's sense of wholeness.

Such connections between authenticity, a sense of wholeness, and 'presence' were also suggested by a couple of other interviewees who supported their accounts of authenticity by referring to Eastern wisdom. Authenticity was conceptualised as 'being

present' and 'feeling whole', which can be achieved through taking the position of a 'meta-observer':

The wise people who have learned how to believe and to wear the right mask for the right situation, have been able to step back and be a meta-observer, sort of like, neutral observer with no emotions. Like I step back onto the wall like a fly and watch the movie going on between myself and my joint venture partner. I guess I want to watch it from the perspective of 'ok, this is the facts that I'm missing because I'm in the throes of the emotions of being me or in the throes of the emotions of being the partner and I'm not getting the facts and I should stand back and look at the facts'.

The same notion was articulated by another interviewee who recounted an event in which her daughter was injured during play. She explained:

I sat with it and observed the situation and then came back into myself. It was like being an observer of a scenario: I was aware that when I see blood I want to pass out, so I just had to somehow not look at the blood too much and just apply the compression and go into being a diligent mother.

Such a reading of authenticity seems to be quite popular in organising practices, personnel development included. A simple Google search shows thousands of management and leadership books, websites, workshops, etc. referring to concepts such as 'being present', 'wholesomeness', 'impartial spectator' and other Buddhist-inspired ideas.

Mindfulness, conscious self and authentic masks

In another representation of authenticity, and similar to the above accounts, the personnel development organisers referred to wearing masks as well as ‘awareness’ and ‘conscious acting’; however, what made their view distinctive was that the reference to the true self or integration was absent. In these accounts, mask wearing and impression management was not depicted as a way to protect one’s inner truth; rather masks were presented as an authentic part of one’s self, that is, if they are worn with mindfulness.

This point was articulated in the workshop *Be Yourself!* by L&D organisers when connecting authenticity to their principle philosophy of *purpose-habit-choice-awareness* (discussed in Chapter 7):

What matters is to be mindful about what our purpose is and what choices we have to meet our purpose. We need to be mindful of the roles we play and need to be aware that we have choices.

In this sense, admitting to *conscious choice*, as existentialists would argue, is the necessary condition for being authentic (Sartre 1945/1975). Some interlocutors defined authenticity in the same vein – not as an obsession with the truthful expression of the core self, but, in an existentialist mode, as conscious identity choices and the mindful presentation of self:

I talk about authenticity! But what I also talk about is that sometimes we have to WEAR a mask that helps us fit in to a particular situation. Everything for me is contextual. It’s being aware of what I’m doing and why I’m doing it which I believe [matters] and then that doesn’t impact on my authenticity.

Thus, even a masked presentation of self can be an authentic expression:

As long as I am true to myself, the mask is just a temporary apparatus, permitting me to stay connected [to the clients]. That mask is just a tool that I have adapted of my true self. Because if someone else was in my place, they would wear different masks and their mask would be different than mine. This is my mask! I've created it and it's still mine! It's authentic!

In *Invitation to Sociology* Peter Berger (1963/1969) proposed three depictions of society: society as a prison, as a puppet theatre, and as 'a stage populated with living actors'. It is by the latter analogy, he argued, that an individual is depicted as an agent with freedom of choice. Authenticity – and here he quoted Sartre – is the belief in human freedom of choice. Summarising Sartre's and Heidegger's existentialist stances, Berger concluded that justifying one's actions by referring to the obligations imposed by social roles is an inauthentic act and an indicator of 'bad faith'. An authentic individual is aware that there is always a choice. Some choices have drastic consequences of course, thus one decides against them, for example:

It is true that a judge in some cases has 'no choice' but to sentence a man to death, but in choosing so he chooses to remain a judge, an occupation chosen by him in the knowledge that it might lead to this, and he chooses not to resign instead when faced with the prospect of this duty. Men are responsible for their actions. They are in 'bad faith' when they attribute to iron necessity what they themselves are choosing to do. (p.165)

Existentialism, according to Berger, suggested that social rituals, religious systems and social roles make people lose themselves in a taken-for-granted possibility and keep them from living authentically. Those rituals, systems and roles give people

justifications for denying their freedom. Seen in this light justifying one's mask-wearing by reference to the role demands of one's job as a consultant can be seen as bad faith. In contrast, claiming full responsibility for one's choice of masks and acceptance of the notion that *existence precedes essence* (Sartre 1945/1975) is a sign of authentic living.

Summary: Representing authenticity

The accounts of personnel development organisers can be seen to exhibit a diverse understanding of the notion of authenticity. These accounts may not necessarily reflect the way the organisers practice authenticity at work. Nevertheless, the accounts illustrate the ways in which personnel development professionals have consciously invested in the authenticity trends, as well as describing some aspects of how they make sense of this concept, what concerns them in regards to authentic living and what they represent as authentic, justified and accepted in their practices. These versions were, of course, presented following an engaging organisational theatre event in which 'being authentic' was the central theme, and, at least partially, were presented in response to a situated question during the post-event interviews about what 'being authentic' meant.

One understanding of authenticity, presented by two of my interlocutors, accords with that of those scholars who have noted that popular views of authenticity have been shaped by essentialist views of individual identity. In these perspectives, the individual – who is in pursuit of a better and richer life – is encouraged to turn inward, reflect on what is hidden inside, discover the truth of the self, and express this human essence in daily interactions. However, there were also other descriptions given of authenticity. In some accounts although the interlocutors emphasised the importance of being true to one's core self, they pointed out that in practice one has to wear masks in order to be

able to address clients' needs. What is more, such masked presentations of self were used as protectors of the true inner self. In this way the consultant/managers need not change their 'real identity' from one situation to the next; but, by superficial surface acting, they can keep their real self intact. In some other interpretations authenticity was presented as secure even in the face of different modes of self-presentation as long as one stands for some core values. Yet other interlocutors pictured the self as fragmented but viewed authenticity as the integration of these fragments into a whole through the exertion of presence and awareness. In still other accounts authenticity was described not in an essentialist fashion but in ways endorsing the multiplicity and fluidity of the self. In these notions authenticity was taken as a belief in a conscious self that mindfully admits to freedom of choice.

Concluding Remarks

Interest in authenticity has emerged as a contemporary social trend and a recent corporate fashion. Several scholars have attempted to explain the reasons behind such enthusiasm for leading an authentic life. In regards to social trends, one contributing factor may be the recent wave of postmodern theorisations of reality and of the self as fragmented, fluid and essence-less. Such startling announcements have resulted in an obsession with returning to the true and the real. Another reason for this social trend has been sought in the saturation of everyday life with images projected by the omnipresent technologies of mass communication. Such dominance of image over substance has led to a quest for authenticity. These trends have been reinforced also by the commercialisation and commodification of what were considered previously as untradeable, such as people's selves.

Today, the corporate world not only is expected to meet public demands for corporate social responsibility, sustainability and environment conservation, but is also required to provide for the authenticity demands of its members, its audience and observers. In other words, organisations are expected to appear authentic. It is not then surprising to discover the fashionability of authenticity in personnel development.

Personnel development practices contribute to the authenticity discourse through various means. One of these contributions is in the attention to corporate demands for authentic leadership. Leaders stand as symbolic personifications of their corporations (Guthey and Jackson 2005). As such, authentic leadership was counted as a main area of training and development by the personnel development organisers I interviewed. Moreover, personnel development practices contribute to the authenticity demands of organisation members by offering the desired training to become an authentic organiser. Personnel development practices also contribute to the construction of the image of the organisation as authentic. A commonly acknowledged objective of training and development practices is to align the interests and goals of the individual employees with those of organisations (Höpfl and Dawes 1995). Such practices are a site in which both groups' interests in authenticity overlap: the organisers who yearn for authenticity in life and work can attend to their needs and the corporations that desire to project an authentic image of their practices and their members can do so.

The accounts given by my interviewees provide one lens onto how authenticity is perceived in the workplace and the outcomes that the authenticity discourse and training (for example training sessions exploring the idea of authenticity as in the case of Be Yourself!) has on organisational members. It is a lens that focuses on personnel development professionals who are involved in the promotion and implementation of

such discourse and training, and their personal and confidential reflections on what it means to them to be authentic. These accounts were given to what was most probably taken to be a 'sympathetic ear'. The reflections are interesting first because they mirror the findings of the previously reviewed process of L&D Australia's training by theatre. Moreover, as organised through a logic of representation, such accounts reflect what are taken as legitimate definitions of authenticity by the organisers who in turn may use these perspectives in their own training and development activities.

As we have seen, the review of different representations of authenticity presented by the interviewees reflected different viewpoints in regards to the formulation of self and of an authentic being. Some believed in a notion of true self and consequently described authenticity as an effort to retain their human essence and enact its reality in everyday life. Some acknowledged the notion of a core self, yet admitted that its true expression in all aspects of life, especially in work situations, is impossible. People in this interpretation were pictured as having an essence while, at the same time and because of the demands of organisational roles, creating multiple selves for presentation. These people accounted for their inauthentic acts through the adoption of dramatic metaphors such as masks, a persona and a uniform. Such metaphors reconciled the notion of drama with authenticity in that the former in fact protects the latter as these people put on masks to protect their core self from the violations of organisational life. Some others formulated authenticity as the integration of the fragments of one's self into a whole. Meditation and a sense of presence were prescribed for the achievement of authenticity. Another group refrained from commenting on the existence of an essential self and instead defined authentic being as being conscious and responsible for one's choices in life. There was, therefore, no simple and one-dimensional

interpretation of what authenticity meant. In the next chapter I continue with the study of the reflections of these personnel development professionals, who made sense of what authenticity means, this time, within the context of the narrators' work life stories. Similar and new formulations of authenticity were presented through these narratives, which will be further explored in the next chapter.

Chapter 10: Narrating Authenticity

In this chapter, I continue to explore the topic of authenticity as interpreted by personnel development professionals after the training workshop *Be Yourself!*. Similar to the previous chapter, the current one builds on the accounts of the interviewees who responded to the question ‘What does it mean to you to be authentic?’ Prompted by this question, the interviewees connected the theme of the workshop, *Be Yourself!*, to their own lives as they made sense of the topic through narrating examples from their everyday experiences. The focus in this chapter, then, is the ‘work life narratives’ (Czarniawska and Rhodes 2006) of these personnel development consultants and managers.

To identify such work life narratives within the accounts produced during interviews, I have followed Charlotte Linde’s (1993) formulation of ‘life story’. In this rendition, life story is defined as a narrative form for identity construction, ‘an oral unit of social interaction’ that recounts the events that have made people what they are (p.20). Life story in this sense is a narrative tool that people exploit to make sense of themselves:

Life stories express our sense of self: who we are and how we got that way. They are also one very important means by which we communicate this sense of self and negotiate it with others. Further, we use these stories to claim or negotiate group membership and to demonstrate that we are in fact worthy members of those groups, understanding and properly following their moral standards. (p.3)

Life story, Linde suggested, is a [Western] cultural inheritance of contemporary times as it is taken for granted that each and every adult has a life story. According to her ‘technical definition’ (pp.21-25) life stories meet the following two criteria:

1. They make a 'point' about the narrator, 'not a general point about the way the world is',
2. They have 'extended reportability', in the sense that the narrated events cannot be commonplace, but must be either unusual or set against common expectations of 'how the world should be'.

Regarding the second criterion, it must be mentioned that a story may obtain extended reportability because it is emplotted by the narrator as being unusual or morally significant. Life stories often contain 'pivotal points', dividing the narrative into parts and 'permitting the passage from one state to another' (Greimas and Courtès, 1976, p.439). These include for example career milestones, marriage and divorce or severe illness, which are conventionally reportable in an extended timeframe. But even a trivial work trip that is seen as being in conflict with one's responsibilities as a mother can acquire this extended reportability.

It is necessary to note that life stories are fluid and subject to constant reinterpretation and revision. Such narratives are structurally and interpretatively open in that they may change retrospectively according to the changes in the speaker's attitude towards life, or the change in the criteria and circumstances of the interpretation. For instance, a person may change a story or may delete it from her or his repertoire. In some ways life stories are close to 'soap operas' (Linde 1993, Czarniawska et al. 2011) in that both genres are structured episodically (with an unknown number of episodes to come) and they are prone to change in structure and in interpretation depending on the changes in circumstances (the audience's feedback, social/economic factors, etc.). Work life narratives may be viewed through a similar perspective, as core themes or episodic units within more general life stories.

In what follows, I have identified the personnel development work life narratives and analyse how authenticity is made sense of through these accounts. The stories have been analysed with a focus on their emplotment, characters and the evaluative or moral points reinforced by the narrator. When applicable, plots were submitted to a structural analysis. In such analysis, different elements of a plot are identified. An initial state of affairs (first equilibrium) is disturbed by complications. To reverse the effects of the disruptions a number of forces (actions and events) are enacted by the narrator or the other characters. This results in a final state of affairs or a new equilibrium. Plots conclude at a point (or more than one) that reflects on the change from the first state of affairs to the second (Todorov 1971/1977; Czarniawska 2004)

Plots in these work life narratives alluded to women's work-family tensions, various ways of resolving the conflict between the wish for achieving authenticity and the demands of a corporate workplace, and struggles with dominant organisational cultures as well as authentic femininity at work and at home.

Work and family life spilling into one another

In this section I discuss two life stories and a short narrative with reference to interviewee comments related to the latter, all centred on being a working mother/wife. The first story is Maria's, the L&D Australia consultant (and professional stage actor) I shadowed. She participated in *Be Yourself!*, not as a performer, but as part of the audience. After that she participated in the post-event interview during which she reflected on what she had taken from the workshop. The second story is from Vivienne, a personnel development consultant who had established her own business. The third narrative is a short episode from life of a personnel development

manager, Jane, also a mother. The first story recounts the challenges involved with membership in both family and work groups, the second demonstrates a solution, of sorts, to this deadlock, while the narrated episode indicates that this solution has ramifications not noticed, or at least not recounted, by the second narrator.

Home and work unreconciled

[A few nights after the workshop] I had an argument with my husband. I had been working really hard and really long hours and doing lots of work at home and often staying up late at night and my husband had been complaining. It actually reached to a bit of a crisis point one night when he was waiting for me in bed and I said 'oh! I'll be there!' and he said 'how long do you think you'd be?' and I said 'oh! You know 45 minutes or so' and it was 3 hours later that I came to bed and he was still awake and he was really REALLY depressed and disappointed and he said 'I don't know! I don't know if this can work'. He said 'I can't stand it like this anymore!' We had a conversation like this before, maybe a year ago when he actually left us for a while. Anyway, this made me consider the Be Yourself! event. Because for the rest of the weekend, I was so inauthentic, it wasn't funny! Because I was trying to pretend to my husband that I wasn't doing any work; I was playing with the kids and I was cooking dinner and I was watching TV and then, I just waited for him to go to sleep and THEN I would have to do all my work. I would do everything HE wanted me to do and I was being deceptive because I knew that I had to get a certain amount of work done and I didn't know how to get out of that! Not getting the work done [was not possible]. Basically if you go up in front of a group of people and it's a really high stake workshop and you're not ready, you look like an idiot; it's

kind of like going up on the stage without learning your lines! You just have to do it; doesn't matter how long it takes! So with my husband I was pretending not be one thing while I was doing something else secretly, that's being inauthentic. But I couldn't see another way around it because, the stakes were so high with my relationship and yet I had this workshop that I had to deliver and I didn't know how I was gonna get ready for that workshop and it's a REALLY high stakes workshop. I felt like I was trapped and the only way I could get out of it was to pretend to the different parties that I was giving them everything that I needed to give them without letting them know that I was doing the other thing. And of course the person that's most impacted by that is me, my sleep, my inability to enjoy what I'm doing – because I'm thinking about something else – the stress levels, and that feeling of not being authentic.

Maria's life comes to the verge of crisis because her husband is deeply unhappy with her extreme devotion to work. This is a state of imbalance (disequilibrium in Todorov's terms 1971/1977, p. 111) to which Maria needs to respond. But there are complications as the work is demanding and the stakes are high. So, she responds by pretending, or acting 'inauthentically'. She acts in this way with an awareness of pretending, but she sees 'no way around it'. The ending of the story conveys this point: work and family life can work together but with a great price for Maria, as she has to sacrifice her authenticity and even her health and joy.

I put this story into the context of other episodes Maria had recounted during our first encounters when I was shadowing her. Back then, Maria had similar concerns. She saw herself in a crisis with no hope of resolution, as if pushed by a number of forces of fate. She saw no way to escape, commenting:

I want to have my cake and eat it too; I want to have my career and I want to have my family and I want to be an actor; then if I want to have all those things I have to pay the price somewhere and the price is my energy and my time. This is never gonna get easier. I just have to keep going and perpetuate this cycle.

In both narratives Maria portrayed herself as an almost tragic figure, one who is condemned to repeat her efforts over and over without any hope of escape, just as in 'the story of Sisyphus, where the boulder, eternally pushed up the hill by the tragic hero and eternally rolling down again, stands for the fate of Sisyphus' (Czarniawska 2004).

During those first interviews Maria spoke of the agreement between her and her husband regarding their work arrangements and her responsibilities as 'the bread winner' in their family:

My husband doesn't have any formal qualifications and my ability to make money is greater than his; he works in hospitality; the pay is not good and it is very intermittent. Restaurants go out of business very easily and very quickly. He doesn't have the kind of drive or want that I have to have a career; so it's partly choice and it's partly that my earning capacity is greater at the moment and therefore it's my responsibility to make the bulk of money; he works as well but he doesn't get paid as much as I do and he works just the weekends.

Thus it appears that a gender role switch has occurred. Maria seems to have an agreement with her husband (partly due to choice and partly due to chance) to be the 'bread winner' in the family and have a career. However, the gender switch seems to be working only partly. This division of labour is seemingly contradictory with the

conventional organisation of roles in the family, where the provider is the man (or both the man and the woman). In Maria's work life story the gender role switch is narrated as a nonconformity with the patterns of characterisation and emplotment offered by 'strong plots' (Czarniawska and Rhodes 2006), the dominant plots that have been repeated, rehearsed, and established through years⁴⁹.

One such strong plot can be found in representations of women becoming actors in a world that is considered to belong to men. Czarniawska (2008a) studied women in the financial sector and described the fates of these women as being reminiscent of the tragic feminine characters of Euripides:

They transgress 'women's place' and commit heroic or mad deeds (depending on whether they are self-sacrificing virgins, besotted mothers, uncontrollable hags or clever matrons). By doing so they might save the city (Athens) [...], but afterwards they must either die or be sent back to a place 'suitable for women'. (p.167)

If 'the city' is taken as an analogy for the family, then the same pattern may be applied to Maria's story. Although Maria's first narrations subvert the conventional division of labour in the family, later stories show that the gender switch has not in fact been accomplished. Her husband does not acknowledge the demands of her work and does not grant her any discounts on her family duties and Maria's story unfolds along the lines of the dominant plot in which a woman who has taken a male role must pay the price. Maria highlighted the costs involved in going through such an 'abnormal' way of life. Both she and her husband are portrayed as sufferers, but Maria saw her share of sacrifice as much bigger, because she has to give up her energy and health and – in the light of her recent epiphany – her authentic identity.

⁴⁹ Refer to Chapter 2 for detailed explanation.

But in addition to the gender-related aspects of this story, Maria's dilemma has a further context that emerges in the crossover between personal life and organisational life. In his study of the emergent realities of post-industrial lives, Gideon Kunda (2012) spoke of:

[...] the problem of living with the constant overflow of work into private life, and the difficulty of creating and enforcing, as individuals and families, a clear, stable, and manageable boundary between the demands of the workplace for involvement, dedication, time, and the competing demands of family life, or life away from work (p.147).

Being torn between work and life is a condition which for many creates anguish, dilemmas, and ongoing conflict. The concept of *timed labour* – a creation of modern industrial times – Kunda argued, is getting more difficult to measure as work overflows into home and the boundaries between corporate and private spheres are blurring. How people are to cope with the new limitless work sphere, and with what measure of success, he concluded, is an open question. The next narrative offers one possible response to such a question.

A successful journey of discovery

Episode 1: I guess it's quite young when you decide you want a profession and I actually didn't really know what I wanted to be. So, dentistry was something I got the marks for; I got in. I liked it; didn't love it. Then, at the time, I practiced 15 years. But something in me just felt that I really wanted to work with people at a more motivational level; not just motivating them to dental health but in their life.

Episode 2: When I had children, 12 years ago – I decided to get 3 years off to have one child and then a second child in a quick succession – [this was] an identity change for me totally and I remember this well because being a

dentist I was so controlled; [in that career] everything is anally retentive and a lot of it is left brained. When my child was born, I loved parenthood so much! It was so interesting watching him develop and it was a whole new learning experience for me that I thought 'I can't do two jobs! I can't be a dentist anymore.' I didn't want to go back to dentistry because I loved what I was doing as a mom. So like I said [this was] a whole shift from being a career woman to this family woman! Something happened! Your hormones go crazy, I think! And then I said 'that's it, I'm not going back to dentistry' and my husband, who was my business partner, went 'what do I do? A wife who really wants to stay at home is really rare among career women!' At the same time he was losing a business partner but he sort of looked at the bigger scheme of things and thought 'somehow we'll manage'.

Episode 3: So, I left dentistry; brought up the kids and through the process, I decided I loved the training and development area and started to do some coaching. I asked 'in children there is so much fun and there is so much absorption. What happens to adults?' I started loving this area as well. There was no way I was ever going to go back to dentistry. I finally decided: 'hang up the drill, full time mom, part-time coach, part time trainer' and I guess that began a journey of discovery of how I can build my coaching business over these exciting things I have learned with leading my family and in leadership at home.

Epilogue: So, that was the transformation and it's not that I regret having been a dentist... I guess coming into the personnel development space with leadership facilitation was a marriage of that really left-brained environment [of dentistry] with a totally chaotic, more right-brained environment with the kids and that marriage of both was a natural progression; great

learning. Now, I feel more integrated because when I was a dentist, and a single person, even though married, I was quite selfish. A lot of it was very sequential, very linear, very planned. Now, with the marriage of everything, even though my life's quite chaotic, I feel whole. So, I guess that's integration. I don't feel fragmented.

This story can be framed as a romance. According to Sköldberg (1994) quest for the 'genuine self' and its ultimate realisation is the central message of the romantic mode of narrative (p.229). The structural organisation of events and actions in the romantic genre resembles the structure of religious myths in that, in both, the individuals find their true self through initiation, a 'ritual death' and 'resurrection' (Sköldberg 1994, p.230). Similarly, Vivienne's story unfolds through challenges and tests (pregnancies) to which she responds (with her husband's blessing) by quitting dentistry; then her identity as 'a career woman' dies; she becomes a 'family woman'; eventually through her journey she unites the two fragmented characters and is resurrected, this time as integrated and whole. The story thus terminates with a happy ending.

Vivienne's work life story, in contrast to Maria's, portrays work-life balance as achievable. The sharp distinction between family and work spheres has been removed since she has taken her experiences of 'leadership in the family' to her new work space to teach 'leadership in organisations'. What is more, she has chosen to change her career to one that is aligned with her new identity as a mother. She describes dentistry as 'left-brained, rational, planned, in the head space' – just as she was when she was not a mother – while personnel development and training is 'right-brained' and 'in the heart space'.

Needless to say, teaching is conventionally considered a female career⁵⁰ (O'Hara 1962, Eccles 1985, Alvesson and Billing, 2009) and thus Vivienne's choice of career satisfies conventional norms and expectations associated with 'work as gendered' (Berk 1985, p. 196). Vivienne has changed career path from a male career (she has hung up her drill) and turned to a female career while taking her 'rational organisational skills' with her to the new space. One could argue that Maria's career choice (also in training and development) could have been framed in the same light. Nevertheless, Vivienne's is a success story in contrast with Maria's tragic tale, because of the different roles their husbands play in their working lives. In Vivienne's case his support of Vivienne's pivotal decision to quit dentistry is a key factor in her eventual achievement of integrity.

However, Vivienne did not report any concerns about the economic consequences of her choice of quitting dentistry and being a family woman, which have played an important part in changing careers and allowing her to feel whole at the very end. Perhaps her husband saw it as financially feasible. In contrast, the following short episode told by another working mother, Jane, indicates the economic factors of the household, which Vivienne did not notice, or at any rate did not mention.

Tales of poor mothers

Sometimes acting inauthentically is necessary, like I deliberately made a day that I'm not in the office and I work from home, the day that my son goes to the local pre-school; so I can do the other things the other mothers do, I can do the drop off, I can do the pick up, I can stay for a chat, I can

⁵⁰ Personnel development was also described by all the interviewed managers and consultants as a 'feminine career'.

become a part of that pre-school community and I found that's important for me, that's important for my son and it's important for me to have a relationship with the other mothers. And I think [the way I appear] depends on how I am emotionally feeling, like, if I'm feeling good and confident and energetic, then I think that I can pull it off and when I'm having a day when things have been kind of getting on top of me, I probably don't look as I'm coping and I'm sure they all are thinking 'oh! That poor woman! She has to work!'

In Jane's narrative, again, the dual role of women as mothers and as employees and the balancing act in their lives comes into focus: which role takes precedence? Jane is making an effort to create and maintain her image as a good mother in line with her perception of normative expectations. This is to be achieved by intense impression management, taking one day off work and trying to create an image of a 'good mother'. On the occasions that her performance fails, her true image is revealed to the 'other mothers': she becomes the woman who *has* to work. Whether 'the other mothers' are actually thinking it or not is immaterial for the present analysis; what Jane suggests, intentionally or not, is that there exists a common belief that women in good financial standing do not *have to* work when they have children. 'Poor woman' acquires a double meaning: psychological and economic.

In spite of the increasing rate of female employment in Australia, studies show that a mother's absence from home is persistently viewed negatively. Such attitudes towards 'appropriate maternal employment' have been noted in Australia (Evans and Kelley 2001). Although overall female employment has increased radically during the last few

decades⁵¹ and the employment of single and married women is generally accepted (and encouraged), mothers' employment, when family and work are in conflict, is a place of concern in public opinion. This also includes and reflects Australian mothers' own attitudes toward their parenting and work responsibilities (Kelley et al. 2009). Lupton and Schmied (2002) reported on a longitudinal study of middle-class first-time Australian mothers and their spouses who pictured the ideal of a 'good mother' as 'a stay-at-home mother' (p.97). Some of these mothers stayed at home while the ones who returned to work experienced guilt and ambivalence about their decision and fear of missing out on spending 'quality time' with their young children. Evans and Kelley (2001) noted that overall full-time employment of Australian mothers was considerably lower than in other Western countries. Moreover, among those mothers who *had* to work, only a minority *preferred* to work.⁵² Such statistics are an expression of Australian moral values that prioritise the welfare of the family and children over work. As women are known as the primary care-takers of children, when there is a conflict between work and family, work should give way (Rammohan and Whelan, 2007)⁵³. Against this background, there has recently been an increasing trend of employment in the form of mothers working from home (Kelley et al. 2009). Jane exemplified this recent trend: taking one day off from the office and working from home instead.

⁵¹ In the 2011 census data published by Australian Bureau of Statistics, women make up 45% of the working population.

⁵² They asked these mothers 'if women should work full time, part-time or at all when children are under 6 years old' (p.29-30). In response, 71% believed that these mothers should stay at home while only 2% favoured full-time employment.

⁵³ This morality accounts for the higher levels of part-time employment of Australian women compared to women in the US, Canada and UK (Rammohan and Whelan, 2007).

Most of my interviewees alluded to the idea that their 'mother' role identities should come first. The importance of having a career was not downplayed but the use of flexible work arrangements (flexible work hours, part-time employment, and working from home) was emphasised. However, two interviewees, Anne and Mary, told the story differently. They were both more comfortable at work and preferred to see themselves as working women rather than as mothers. Nevertheless, they showed explicit concern about such deviancy. Anne admitted that 'the role I am more comfortable with is being at work than being a mother and it's purely because [at work] I have control!' She accounted for such 'unusual preference' by admitting that in general she could not feel or express her feelings well (a necessary attribute for a mother) and to overcome this, she was trying 'transcendental meditation' to get in touch with her feelings. In my interview with Mary, she remembered an encounter with Anne in the workshop Be Yourself! that was related to this topic:

What was interesting was that the person that was in my small group [in the workshop] had the same response as me and neither of us felt that we were at our best or being our true selves when we were being mothers. And she first mentioned it and she was a little bit tentative about saying it and I just went 'don't worry, I'm exactly the same!' You should have seen that physically, her entire body, not just her face, but the entire body, was relieved! The relief that there was another human being, another woman on the face of this planet, who didn't think that their strength was being a mother!

It is not surprising to see that the belief that ‘mother should not work unless financially necessary’ is strongly held and causes mothers like Jane to manage their image as a mother with care and consideration.

However, expectations of realising one’s true self in the workplace are obviously not limited to working *mothers*. Next I will explore the story of two personnel development consultants who narrate their struggles to find their authentic self through changing careers.

Towards achieving authenticity: Turning points

The following two stories share the narrative component of a pivotal event that changes the course of the narrator’s life and consequently their career path. In the first story it was a disease that turned the narrator’s life around. Rethinking her career in light of the disease, Kim restarted her career as a personnel development consultant because she felt she needed a job with more connection to others and that could be achieved through providing coaching and personnel development to other people. The second story, like’s Vivienne’s, is a romance. Alice’s attitude to life went through radical transformation as she searched for (and finally found) her father. Based on this experience, she builds her mentoring and personnel development business to show people how to achieve their dreams ‘in life and at work’.

A big shift inwards

Episode 1: I actually had a background in fast-moving consumer goods marketing and I worked for big corporate companies and moved from there to advertising in account management, and wound up then as a strategy planner and the first woman on the board of the company. Then I left and set up my own business and the reasons that I left were a combination of

things. I didn't particularly enjoy the advertising industry, but when I was actually promoted to the position of a director on the board, I didn't understand why I had been promoted, I had no support, no mentoring, nothing. I was puzzled and for two years I was the only woman sitting there but I wasn't sure what I supposed to be doing and what kind of contribution I was to make and I guess, with the benefit of hindsight, I could have certainly gone and seen somebody and ask for a mentor but nothing was offered and I didn't know it was a possibility; so, I wound up leaving and starting my own business. And the funny thing was that one of the first businesses I started was an advertising company and that confirmed that no! I didn't like the industry.

Episode 2: My business was struggling financially and it was actually about that time that I was diagnosed with bladder cancer. It wasn't an aggressive, life threatening cancer because they caught it quite early. It just caused me to stop and think about what I was doing and it was a life and a business decision. I wound up going into working with people, coaching and training, and that sort of area because, I wanted the connection and I felt in the work that I was doing I was very much removed and it was all brain work rather than necessarily the connection. I started to train and that was about 12 years ago and that's been an interesting journey as well because I LOVE the coaching.

Epilogue: For me what's happened gradually and increasingly is that I'm comfortable with who I am. I actually like myself, which I haven't been able to say when I was much younger. I feel real. I have accepted myself and I can connect to people easier. I have a sense of groundedness. I guess what it is, it's reduced my reliance on other people giving me feedback that what

I'm doing is on track or what I'm doing is a good job, because I have internalised that now. So, that's been a big shift because I have had, in the past, quite a strong external locus of control; so, it's been a big shift for me.

Kim recounted her experience of achieving authenticity. The potentially fatal disease forced her to turn her gaze inward to discover what she really wanted from her life and career. The story ends with this critical point that as a result of the pivotal event (cancer), change of career, and achieved inwardness she is now a more authentic person. This is elaborated (and legitimised) by referring to a logic of psychology as reflected in – 'the internalisation of the locus of control', 'self-acceptance', and 'growth' – concepts developed and popularised through the self-help culture and endorsed by the field of *positive psychology*⁵⁴.

Carl Elliot (1998) argued that the obsession with such concepts originates from two dominant Western moralities of the time i.e. achieving *self-fulfillment*⁵⁵ and living authentically. Accordingly, one can live a *meaningful* life if one discovers one's true potential and tries to express and nourish one's talents truthfully. The obsession, he argued, comes not from a self-centred interest but from the belief that self-fulfillment and authenticity are 'moral ideals' and 'an unfulfilling life, a life that is not authentically yours, is not just an unhappy life, or a boring life, or even just a life of quiet desperation. It is a failure' (p.187). He contended the authentic individual in search of self-discovery and fulfilment is living a 'higher life' whereas a life not lived authentically is unethical and wasted:

⁵⁴ Developed in academic circles by Ryff (1989), Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000), Seligman (2002).

⁵⁵ Proposed by Maslow (1943, p.382)

What Luther referred to as a calling survives nowadays not so much as a calling by God, but as a calling from *within*: the idea of discovering yourself, of finding your own particular place in the world. A meaningful life is a personally fulfilling life, and fulfillment is something that you discover and create on your own, especially through the life of work, and the life of family and household (p. 184; italics in the original).

This notion of authentic life and work as a calling was emphasised by the narrator of the next story.

A calling: Fulfilling dreams in life and at work

I'm a writer. It's kind of my CALLING. I've written a book, which contains life mentoring recipes. It is based on this work that I do with people in my coaching business. I mentor people, partnerships, managers to go for their dreams and goals. I started this business because I had a significant thing happened to me in my life which was that I found my FATHER.

I never knew my father; had never seen his photo. My parents broke up before I was born and they weren't married. I found him in 2003 and that really changed my life! I had employed government investigators before and they couldn't help me, but when I REALLY decided that I wanted to do it and I just kind of meditated on it and connected with it and went to a deeper place within myself, the day that I actually said 'I'm gonna work on finding him' was the day that I actually found him ONLINE.

As a result of that I thought – well, amazing dreams can come true! So, I just designed a kind of business model AROUND IT. How many of us actually put our big dreams, even our small dreams to the background? How many of us live our lives like we would like to live our lives? So I started this coaching and mentoring with people and have been running it for the last

seven, eight years. I lead people through meditation and it's not all MEDITATION; it's a combination of right brain-left brain psychology. I work with people to reach their goals at work and life; to go for their dreams.

Alice has a calling to write and inspire others as she has been inspired herself – an inspiration that comes from 'within'. Finding of her father was the pivotal event that turned around the course of her life and career. The search had achieved its goal only after overcoming the complications, not through external efforts (not even by the involvement of professional investigators), but by internal renewing of her determination and meditating on her purpose 'in a deeper place within'. Here, the narrator refers to what Hazleden (2003) described as the shared belief in the self-help culture that to resolve one's problems with the world, one initially needs to achieve a resolution with one's authentic self. The self in this formulation is depicted as having been 'ontologically separated from itself'. Thus, one is encouraged to search for the lost essential self to amend the separation (p.416). Similarly, the search for the lost father bears fruit only when Alice reconnects with her determination and purpose – within herself. To find her father, she has to find herself.

The story continued with a second pivotal event which had influenced Alice's business model:

The thing is when you go for your dreams and live the life that you LOVE authentically and truthfully and what's meant to be and what feels right; you actually set up a ripple effect in your community. Here is your dream fulfilled, then you inspire and encourage other people in your community and in the wider world to go for their dreams too and think 'maybe I could do that'. I did that for my parents. Because a year after I found my dad, I

was getting married. My parents hadn't met since their breakup, but they were supposed to meet for my wedding. They met and they hit it off and then they were engaged in a year and they were married a year after that and they are still happily married to this date! It's an AMAZING, AMAZING story! So I tell that story in the context of this conversation because it is, it's that thing of when you're REALLY truthful to yourself and you REALLY go for your dreams, you DO genuinely inspire people. That's what I coach people to go for their dreams at work and at life.

In this episode again the point of the story is that if you are authentic and go for your dreams, you can have an effect on the way universe is working, you can inspire others to live their dreams and the universe will become a better place. This morality is supported by the author's story which can be viewed as a variation of romantic comedy – a popular plot both in contemporary theatre/movies and in life (Czarniawska 2004, p.22). A separated family, despite all complications is reunited (comedy) – as a result of Alice's journey of soul searching and reconnecting with her inner determination (romance). Further, by metonymic linking of this plot to the rules by which the world runs, the narrative concludes: to make the world (and the workplace) a better place, people should listen to 'their calling' so as to reconnect with what is inside. According to the narrator, the same approach can be prescribed for the development of working people by means of 'meditation', reconnecting one with one's 'true and authentic self'.

Being authentic within the culture

This section includes three narratives in which the narrators recount the challenges of maintaining their authenticity while adapting to the cultural expectations of the

workplace. The first story belongs to Hillary⁵⁶, an American personnel development manager at a major Australian Bank. She struggled with the organisation's claims on her authenticity as an American and as a woman. The second narrative comes from Jack, the only male personnel development manager who participated in the workshop. He gave an account of his day to day struggles in adapting to the workplace culture while expressing his authentic self at home. The third narrator, Mary, shared her experience of being trapped in the midst of a corporate culture in conflict with her core values.

Tyranny of authenticity

I often feel that I have to put on a uniform if you will; because I've been called out in this organisation for being assertive and aggressive and having really strong opinions; and I come from a country where I wouldn't be called out. Sometimes I don't know when it's too much and when it's too little, and I feel that I am always told by other people 'oh well, you know, maybe you should come off a little less strong! Well, maybe you should assert your views a bit less'! Because I can't be really truly who I am all the time, probably being a woman in an Australian organisation is hard. Some time ago, I've got this feedback that in some situations I'm coming across too positive, and people think it's fake. Since then I talked to a good friend of mine, an American, who is in branding and he said 'for what it's worth, it's very common in America that people have GREAT days and work's FANTASTIC! And that's how we are! But in Australia it's like work is ok! Get by!' I don't know if this is really because of the culture that people are

⁵⁶ At the time of the interview Hillary was pregnant.

telling me this or it's just because of my personality. I tried to tone it down and that didn't feel right either! Because I am a positive person! I like seeing people happy, and if people aren't happy I feel that! I feel for them.

It was at the same period of time after that was pointed out to me that I was told 'you are on our talent list! It is the highest form of talent and we're very impressed with the amount of work you've done. There's just this one little thing you need to do and it's that you're coming across as completely positive and everybody thinks it's fake! No one can believe you can be that positive a person; so we need to ask you to tone it down!' The HR person talking to me is also American and I knew her from before. She said 'I've explained to them you're always a positive person. That's just who you are, but, look, this is Australia and culture is different!' I said 'ok! Well! What do you want me to do? How do I tone it down? I'm not really sure what you want me to alter!' She said: 'maybe instead of saying: wow! What a great day you're having, maybe smile a little bit less, and you know, complain a bit more about things, and be a little less enthusiastic about things'. And I'm like 'what? How am I gonna do this?'

I started to try ... but I just want it to be easier! I don't want to be constantly monitoring myself! So if it is easier for me to tone it down, then I tone it down but then that isn't easier really because then I'm having to consciously affect my interactions to match other people. I have also started to think, like 'hang on a minute! I'm just a positive person or I just like to show opinions.' So, I don't wanna live my life based on the norm of other people to find what they want me to be! What's that about?! Ever since I've been pregnant I feel like I've been given a lease to just be myself again; because, a) no one messes with a pregnant woman; b) a lot of people will

attribute it to pregnancy. And honestly I just don't have the energy to fake it! I don't at all!⁵⁷

Using a structural analysis, the story can be divided into a chain of events with mixed messages: Hillary received highly positive feedback about her work behaviour and was put on the 'talent list', but the positive feedback was conditioned by her changing the way she behaved. This created a complication as she became confused about what she was expected to do. To resolve the problem and restore balance she sought advice from a fellow American who informed her that she was giving off an impression of being fake. She was advised to 'tone it down'. Hillary was then supposed to get involved in impression management but this was also challenging as she needed to spend so much energy 'faking it'. She accounts for her failure to do so by alluding to her desire for maintaining her authentic, positive and happy self. The story is resolved by a temporary solution – her pregnancy – which gives her the liberty to be 'herself' without the fear of being judged as fake. Her behaviour which has once been evaluated as 'too positive hence dishonest', would now be associated with 'pregnancy hormones'. Popular psychobiological theories (De Vos 2012) of everyday life conversations came to her rescue.

Cultural perceptions of what is seen as 'true' or 'fake' obviously influence people's evaluations of authenticity. In a critique of the positive thinking, Barbara Ehrenreich (2010) noted how *being positive* is not only the stereotypical national character of Americans, but an established part of their self-image.⁵⁸ Such positive thinking and

⁵⁷ The number of exclamation marks in this quote is an attempt to reflect the tone of voice of the interviewee.

⁵⁸ Ehrenreich's main arguments pointed to the negative consequences of positive thinking i.e. the major crises America faced in the first decade of 21st century including September 11 and the financial crisis.

optimism, she argued, is more of an ideology than a reflection of psychological conditions or moods. Established through academic and popular positive psychology, being happy and positive, in American culture, is a moral obligation and the way to realise authenticity (Seligman 2002). Hillary's confusion regarding her true identity forced her to wonder whether 'this is a case of cultural difference' or whether there was something wrong with her 'personality'. The organisation demanded that she appear authentic – thus less positive – while at the same time she was trying to maintain what she believed to be her true self. Such contradictory claims on authenticity, from the individual and the organisation, show that the moral obligation to achieve authenticity is unclear in practice. If American culture strongly dictates 'being positive' as 'the essence' of being human, then how is this American supposed to maintain her 'real self' in Australia, where it is demanded that she tones down her 'fake positiveness'? Authenticity, then, is not altogether liberating or empowering; it has other manifestations. It can be oppressive of the individual committed to the search for the true self. Further, authenticity can be costly not only for the authentic person but for the people with whom she or he interacts. The next narrative demonstrates this.

The dark side of authenticity

I feel most like myself as a parent because while it's not necessarily the proudest me when I'm shouting at my 6 year old or my 3 year old, it's definitely the purest emotion that I have. I am angry at that time, I am mentally upset, and I am expressing it in a manner that doesn't have controls. It's not necessarily the way that I want to behave, but it's an instantaneous thing. But at work, I would never speak to someone the way I speak to my children, which is like a contradiction because I care about my kids more than I care about anybody at work. At work you HAVE to have

that barrier; you can't say to someone 'what on earth are you thinking? What was going through your head when you did that?' You can't say that to another adult. [Right now] there are some shifts in our team which seems to be a lot more towards 'playing around'. Our head of human resources has done a few things and behaved in some ways, which I think if my child behaved that way I'd be appalled; and yet he is the head of HR.

The most recent thing he's done has been at lunch, where we have this table that people hang out in our area. I was sitting there when I got hit on the back of my head with a piece of rolled up paper! And not a light piece of paper! Well, I didn't respond, I didn't turn around; I just continued to work. Next day I got an email from the head of HR saying 'I have to apologise! It was me who hit you with that piece of paper on the back of the head. I thought it was funny, obviously you didn't find it funny, sorry if it was offensive.' Ok! Firstly, what part of that did you think was an ok thing to do? Secondly, why did it take you till the next morning to apologise when it was obvious by my response that I did not find it funny? And with such a culture, I am really struggling to see where I fit in this team! I keep to myself; I don't sit with them at lunch because I just want to tell them 'just shut up! Shut up! You are talking absolute drivell!' But I can't express myself like that!

I have a few friends at work that I would hang out with socially but to me work is work and I put my face on and that's how I work. This doesn't seem to be the case with many people here, they like to be really pally, they want to be everybody's friend and that makes for a very difficult situation in the training room environment when people are too relaxed and friendly, and

you have to bridge that gap and say 'we are here to achieve something and that's not the way to behave in this forum.'

I'm starting a stage of my career where I'm thinking 'where do I wanna go? What am I gonna do? If I'm in an environment that is not really what I want, is it time to shift? Is it time to move?' Because I don't think this is who I am and I'm starting to see cracks in the mask, where I'm finding that I am snapping sometimes, I'm going 'oh! Don't! You shouldn't! You shouldn't openly criticise in that manner because that's inappropriate.' But I guess there is a very thin line between what I wanna say and what I am saying, and that's the occasion of the crack getting through. So that makes me go 'is this time to shift? Am I struggling to hold it together? Am I gonna one day actually go 'argh!' And go mental and be pushed before I jump?

Jack's main source of frustration comes from differences in perspectives towards professional behaviour in the workplace. He is struggling with the 'pally culture' which he finds contradictory to his understanding of 'appropriate behaviour'. Everyday at work, he puts on his mask so as to hide his frustration and aggression and maintain his professional front. He seems to be cautious about the risks of an authentic presentation of self in the workplace; hence, the careful masking of his anger becomes critical and wearing a mask is justified by the demands of the office. He is afraid of being forced to show his authentic emotions at work or any 'cracks in the mask'⁵⁹.

At home, however, he is authentic when he expresses his immediate feelings of anger and aggression without editing or embellishment (similar to the Romantic formulations of authenticity). In this sense, Jack's narrative reveals an overlooked side of

⁵⁹ A couple of months after the interview, Jack did leave the company.

authenticity. The notion of authenticity seems to have been grounded on the assumption that if one looks 'within', one discovers 'light', 'passion', 'presence', 'spirituality' (all articulated by the interviewees). However, it is equally possible to find darkness, aggression, anger and mean-spiritedness inside. The question to be considered thus is whether authenticity of this darker kind is a virtue or not.

On the other hand, the narrator of the next story, Mary, defined authenticity differently, as loyalty to her core values and as a necessary part of her professional life.

Corporate culture and authenticity

I went into an organisation, which on the surface appeared to be very much in line with my values in terms of honesty, integrity, work ethics, that kind of thing. Then, 6 months into it, well, not even 6 months into it, there was a major change in the organisation. It was basically a take-over and it was interesting to see how people's behaviour changed as well. Everyone automatically went into self-preservation mode. It was difficult for me because I was one of the newer people coming to the organisation. I went in with certain expectations and a very logical, methodical and structured way of work. In terms of my relationship with my stakeholders, it was very professional.

In this organisation I battled for almost two years, trying to change the way I worked to be more aligned with the way that they worked. The way that they worked, it was all about relationships. It wasn't focused; it wasn't about the end goal; it was all about keeping people happy, not necessarily doing the right thing, whereas my entire career has been all about doing the right thing. The people I had most difficulty with were very much focused on what *was* as opposed to what *can be*, because that was what they were

familiar and comfortable with; I was coming in with fresh eyes and asking questions, trying to understand and challenge what had gone and proposing different ways. That was perceived as ignoring and not valuing the past and being too aggressive. That's how the organisation worked and I tried to assimilate into the organisation and then I got to a point where I thought 'well hang on a minute! I'm all for growth and development and self-actualisation and learning about yourself and taking that on board and changing but there comes a point where you can adapt to an environment but in doing so you actually start to compromise your own values and principles'. I felt I was going down that path, that I was compromising my own work ethics and standards of professionalism, my own discipline and what I felt were important to ME and MY success. Yes, there are different ways that I can work, and yes, there are different skills that I can develop to work more effectively with more people, but ultimately I am who I am and I've been working almost 20 years now; there are certain things that I'm not gonna compromise on! So I changed my workplace and here now, I am very happy.

In this narrative authenticity is defined as loyalty to core beliefs and values and acting accordingly regardless of the situation. A structural analysis reveals that the main force of disturbance in this story is the organisational change in the form of a merger and the consequent change in people's behaviour. The main complications emerge from the sharp difference between the irrational and unfocused way of working based on relationships and the narrator's core values regarding professionalism, logic, ethics and a structured way of working. As a corrective action Mary tried to change her way of working by compromising her authenticity. This initiative was unsuccessful as it

resulted in a fear of losing her authenticity, namely loyalty to those values. She resolved the conflict by quitting and joining another company. The story concludes with a statement about authenticity as referring to standing up for one's core values and doing the right thing regardless who such an act might offend. Mary acted in line with this morality and now sees herself as happy in her new workplace.

The authentic woman in the workplace

The work life narratives presented next allude to the maintenance of one's femininity in the workplace and its relevance to the achievement of a sense of authenticity. Nina, a young personnel development manager recounted several examples of the way she related to the notion of authenticity. Her narratives were centred mainly on the expression of femininity in the workplace. From popular culture, she borrowed icons of femininity in order to provide legitimacy for her accomplishment of gender in everyday organisational life. It has been argued that popular culture offers models of thought, behaviour, and identity formation by which people can emplot their own narratives and make sense of their own lives (Kellner 1992). Nina reflected on what authenticity meant to her:

Our company encourages people to be individuals. We celebrate that individuality and try to use that to the benefit of the firm. They don't try and make you the same type of person as a mass-produced factory. Personally, I am very girly and love shopping, love pink, love Barbie, LOVE *Legally Blonde*. I still have Spice Girls on my iPod and soft toys at home. My desk at work is covered with pink things that make me comfortable and at home. I recently had my hair redone in blonde and it's like 'that's me!' So I think being me means just to express myself through my personality, my clothes,

and my interests. It means not caring that people judge me for the fact that I like Spice Girls, think Barbie is my role model and all that kind of stuff! My first boss when I started here – she's now moved to another company – she was quite feminine as well and always used to wear pink suits. I really like that rather than the idea of women into wearing black pants suits to get to the top, to be like the men! I think we can do it our own way rather than having to do the way that they do and my new boss is very much the same – a lady, which I really like! One of the things I do love about my team and my managers that I work with here is that I prove myself in the work that I do. I switch the brain on when I need to when I'm at work, but they also accept me for being me, and I don't need to wear the black pants suit to do well and be recognised. I think sometimes women can be made to conform to that sort of style. Some women don't mind wearing pants, but for a lot of women it's not their choice.

For this narrator, authenticity can be achieved through the expression of individuality as opposed to being forced to conform to normalised forms of self-expression. Nina's personal take on individual authenticity is manifested in expression of her 'girlie'-ness modelled after typifications of the contemporary female in popular culture such as that seen in *Legally Blonde* and the Barbie doll. As Rhodes and Westwood (2008) argued, popular culture influences as well as reflects people's lives as it provides a grammar of motive for legitimisation and justification of their actions. Moreover, it offers subject position prototypes for the process of contemporary identity construction. It is exactly in this fashion that Nina accounted for her appearance and her girlie behaviour. The points she makes are very close to the themes of the movie *Legally Blonde* (2001) and her identification with Elle the heroine of this movie is strong. Elle is a young blonde,

always dressed in an ultra-feminine fashion in signature pink and in search of love and marriage. She is constantly referred to as 'not serious', 'not smart enough' and 'shallow'. Yet, she has a great determination for success (initially in love and later in her studies and career) which leads her to go through a transformation by entering Harvard Law School and becoming a successful lawyer while not compromising her overtly feminine looks. She continues wearing pink, high-heeled shoes, and make-up. Her girly attitude even comes to her help in winning cases in court. The movie challenges the stereotype of the 'dumb blonde' not by replacing it with the stereotype of 'the female lawyer who wears pants-suits and acts like men' but by offering an alternative in a woman who can be feminine and at the same time smart and successful in her career.

Commenting on the movie's plot and Elle's characterisation, Dole (2008) considered the movie as representative of the *third-wave feminism* movement that emerged on the turn of the millennium. She argued that in this movement, in contrast to the first generation feminists (examples of whom were also characterised in *Legally Blonde*) who fought for equality in rights – partially through equality in looks – women have returned to highlighting their differences from men by the overt expression of their femininity. 'Girly', then, instead of being a symbol of infantile immaturity, became a symbol of alterity and feminine power, as reflected in popular sayings such as 'girl power' (Ferris and Young 2006). The validation of girly led to the return of pink, Barbie dolls, fashion magazines, high-heeled shoes, long hair and make-up (Baumgardner and Richards 2000). According to Dole (2008) third-wave feminism conveys that 'a woman should be whatever she wants to be' (p.59) and thus a woman can be girly yet successful in a man's world as shown by Elle and expressed by Nina

through repeated emphasis that women need not be like men to be able to get to the top.

What is more, in such an emphasis on appearing feminine, there exists an element of reacting to the threats that working in an organisation imposes on Nina's femininity. Hence her looks needs to be carefully presented and maintained. As she said herself:

I love colour; I often wear a very bright colour eye shadow; obviously the hair is pretty blond now. This is a part of my personality wanting to be more extroverted, it's my way of doing it. I feel a bit more confident and I feel a bit more bubbly and outgoing; maybe I hope that it will stand out a lot, I don't know! I just feel comfortable being blond rather than naturally brown. I like frills, colours, lots of shoes. I got a collection of shoes at my desk that I change to every morning, so I guess it's me. If I were in an environment where I had to wear just a suit and a polite shirt everyday, I'd feel a little uncomfortable, because as much as I respect corporate I like adding my flair to it, so I'll have a suit skirt and I'll have a pink blouse on!

Work as a part of public sphere has been historically considered as masculine (Alvesson and Billing 2009). According to Gherardi (1994) from the time women entered the domain of organisations their 'dual presence' (p.598) in both public and private domains has been managed by forcing adaptability to a masculine form of cultural sociability which renders the female presence 'almost invisible' (p.602). Displays of femininity through clothing and make-up – if not in the service aspects of the organisation, e.g. in customer relationship roles – have been restricted to certain codes which limit the expression of feminine attractiveness. The emphasis on feminine appearance then may appear as a masquerade; as Riviere (1929) noted women who

wished for a presence in careers traditionally considered male, 'may put on a mask of womanliness to avert anxiety and retribution feared from men' (p.303). Today although such fear of retribution from men has not faded away, the mask of femininity may function less to prevent the revenge of men and more as a protector of women's authentic femininity. Wearing a mask of bloneness and the maintenance of feminine display may be interpreted as Nina's way of masquerading so as to protect her sexuality in the masculine world of organisations which force women to look and be like men. However, in quite a different narrative, Nina presented a more conservative picture of her appearance in circumstances that demand more 'professionalism':

Of course dealing with different people is different. I am very scared of having meetings with people at senior levels but I know that I need to step up and I need to be confident. I see that as a development that I need to reach and that does not make me fake or 'not me'. I'll still go to those meetings, being me. Though I'll probably wear a slightly more professional suit on the day and I'll sort of make it very corporate at the time; rather than to go like this, like what I'm wearing today. Today, I've got no particular meetings with senior people, so I wear these really high-heel boots. I won't wear these on a meeting like that. I would never wear mini-skirts because they're not appropriate; also, having off-the-shoulder tops or belly button showing, it is not appropriate. So, you pick and choose your looks to respond to the environment and the people you're dealing with. You could say, 'if you're being truly you, doesn't matter what you are wearing, regardless', but I'm also aware of the way people perceive you and of the need of coming across in a professional manner. I still need to reload my profile in the right way with these senior people.

Nina is consciously involved in impression management to guarantee her professional progress. She promotes the idea of looking girly but admits that it depends on the circumstances and the people with whom she has to deal. Hence she tailors her looks, her costume and her performance in accordance to the situation and the audience.

Concluding remarks

In this chapter the work life narratives of the interviewed personnel development managers and consultants were analysed. The analysis was aimed at understanding their interpretations of authenticity and the relevance of authenticity to their lives. The accounts about the meaning of authenticity reflect how the themes evoked during the course of the theatrical training session, *Be Yourself!*, were later related to the participants' life stories, and in other words, report on possible outcomes of the training by theatre. Moreover, the images of the authentic personnel development professional constructed through these narratives provide for the identification of some products of organisational efforts in personnel development, namely the organisers' sense of who they are.

As a result of the narrative analyses, the problem of authenticity surfaced around a few common themes. One theme referred to the overflow of work into family life. This problem was presented as a challenge to the attempts of the narrators – all working mothers – to achieve an authentic self. Possible solutions to such a challenge were presented in the work life narratives as a change towards a more feminine career (Vivienne), conscious impression management (Jane), or settling into a tragic stance towards life (Maria). Support systems (husbands, financial standing, and flexible work situations such as working from home) were considered critical if a working mother is to find authenticity.

Another plot was oriented around achieving authenticity as the result of a pivotal change in the course of a life, as narrated by Alice and Kim. Both stories reached a happy ending as a result of a change of career to a domain which allowed for the narrator's authenticity to flourish. The new careers – both in personnel development – contributed further to leading an authentic life because they allowed for inspiring others to make a connection, to follow their dreams and to live authentically. In these stories, authenticity was presented as a moral obligation necessary for the achievement of a *good life*. Reaching internally for one's authentic self was also presented as the way to improve the external world.

A third theme informing the work life narratives of the interviewees focused on the challenges posed by cultures which threaten one's authenticity. Hillary, Jack and Mary, caught between a rock and a hard place, struggled with their own demands for being authentic and the demands put on them by the prescriptions of the culture in regards to acting (authentically) in the workplace. This theme referred to the problem of authentic living which emerges from the tensions between the individual's interests and those of the social structure. Hillary's solution was to attempt impression management, which was unsuccessful. Her story ended with a temporary solution, her pregnancy. Jack's concluded with questioning whether it was wise to stay in such an organisation while his adopted organisational mask was cracking. Mary's challenge had in fact been resolved by changing her workplace. In these stories, the narrators questioned if mask/uniform wearing was in conflict with authenticity. Hillary and Jack were reaching for answers through trial and error. Mary, however, rejected the notion of masks when wearing them conflicted with her core values, the maintenance of which was, for her, a necessary condition for being authentic.

The last theme explored, was found in Nina's narrative of feminine authenticity in the workplace. Her understanding of being authentic was presented as an expression of individuality. For Nina, this was achieved through an over-expression of a feminine appearance, protecting her from the masculinity associated with involvement in the work sphere. Such feminine expression, however, was consciously managed so as to maintain a professional front that supported her progress in her career.

These work life narratives present *multiple meanings* of authenticity. Similar to the accounts reviewed in the previous chapter, authenticity in these narratives was described as integrity, a sense of wholeness, an inward quest for reconciliation with the essential self, self-acceptance and groundedness, loyalty to core values, the unedited expression of immediate feelings, and conscious impression management. In addition, a few novel descriptions were presented. Authenticity was introduced as a moral and ethical obligation and a way to improve the external world. Authenticity was also put into the context of the expression of individual differences. The downside of the longing for authenticity was revealed in that it may turn to an oppressive force, putting the individual in conflict with the culture which expects authentic performances. Moreover, it was asserted that authentic expressions may reveal negative feelings and thoughts such as aggression and anger.

Conclusions

Chapter 11: Dramas of Authenticity – Tentative Conclusions

In this dissertation, I attempted to make sense of my observations of personnel development practices through the application of a dramatisitic analytical frame constructed from the elements borrowed from several influential drama-inspired theorisations such as Burke's dramatism, Goffman's dramaturgy, Turner's rituals of passage and the narrative approach. An initial interpretation of the fieldwork revealed the presence of two phenomena that became the focus of further study: theatre and authenticity as fashionable trends in personnel development practices.

My fieldwork concerned the practices of a personnel development consulting company, L&D Australia, which applied theatre as a training technology. Observations of two theatrical training events, a coaching session based on role-play (called Rehearsal for Reality) and an organisational theatre event (Be Yourself!) were subjected to analysis. The observation of Be Yourself!, which explored the notion of authenticity and workplace performance (for women), was complemented by post-event interviews with the participants of the training session. The reflections of these interviewees in respect to the theatrical training and its content, i.e. authenticity, were subsequently interpreted.

The theory emerging from the results does not offer a 'correct' explanation of 'how theatrical training works' or 'what authenticity means'. Rather, it offers a set of tentative conclusions concerning the theatrical training and development practices of L&D Australia. The reflections of a small group of their audience – who were also personnel development professionals – helped to construct an image of this field of practice, and to give sense to their own self-construction processes. It is this set of

tentative conclusions that will be presented in this chapter, hopefully opening yet another direction within organisational research on drama and on identity and authenticity.

On training by theatre

My interest in training by theatre led me to explore how such training technologies work, and what possible outcomes may be produced. My analysis of the theatrical events – Rehearsal for Reality and Be Yourself! – led me to a conclusion that theatrical training provides the trainees with opportunities for *dramatic experimentation*. Further, the interpretation of Be Yourself! led to distinguishing a mechanism used to engage the trainee-participants, which I called *dramatic persuasion*. Moreover, it became evident from the post-event interviews with the participants of this event that organisational theatre resulted in high levels of engagement, encouraged reflexivity, and evoked self-reflection. In what follows, I will describe the two dramatic mechanisms and then reflect on their implications for training and development.

Dramatic persuasion

Dramatic persuasion refers to the aesthetic processes through which organisational theatre – in the case of Be Yourself! – pulled the trainees in the world of theatrical training and persuaded them, although temporarily, to suspend any disbelief in this fictional world and to believe in it. The training session unfolded through a mini-play in which – following the traditions of conventional theatre – the audience were separated from the performance and were passive observers of the theatrical reality. Still, the trainees were engaged in the world of the theatrical characters, two professional women whose struggles for effective communication were linked to their inauthenticity. At that point in time, dramatic persuasion was possible due to the

passivity of the audience. Later, dramatic persuasion was put to work differently – the trainees were invited to participate in the theatrical world. Through this transition from passive audience to active participants, the trainees were pulled into *doing drama*; that is, into taking action in the theatrical domain. In such a mode of engagement, the trainees were persuaded by a reality that was shaped, in part, by their own actions. The participant-trainees, in this sense, were given the chance to observe the theatrical actions and realities while shaping them. Comprised of both conventional and participative theatrical components, Be Yourself! persuaded the trainees to focus on topics around the notion of authenticity for women and workplace performance. It was through a gradual decrease in the degree of separation between the audience and the performance that the trainees became increasingly engaged with the content and interpretations offered by organisational theatre. The training was then evaluated as engaging, insightful and powerful.

Dramatic experimentation

Dramatic experimentation could be observed in both theatrical training events. The theatre worked as *a mirror* in which a scene similar to the participants' everyday working life was reflected. The participants of Be Yourself! reported that they saw in this scene images of their own personal experiences, or of others they had observed. Therefore, they were able to easily identify with the characters. Yet, the very staging of such everyday realities achieved an aesthetic transformation that created a sense of unfamiliarity which, according to the participants, evoked reflection and re-examination of the familiar.

Moreover, the theatrical training worked as *a window* into a fictive future, by staging aspects of organisational life through approximations of characters and realities. This

window was visible especially in the case of Rehearsal for Reality, where the multiplicity of scripts and speed of the coach/actors to create realistic characterisations resulted in approximations of a probable, or at least a believable, future. Through rehearsing in such fictive situations, the trainees added to their repertoire of learnt and practiced behaviours (Schechner 1981). This, one may hope, in turn added to their preparedness for participation in real life situations and contributed to their capacities for improvisation. Similarly, through suggesting script ideas and coaching the fictional characters during Be Yourself! the personnel development professionals practiced a possible prospective future in which they coached women to develop skills for more effective communication.

Opportunities for dramatic experimentation were offered within the participative components of the theatrical training events. Through role-plays, questioning fictive characters, or authoring and directing new versions of a play, the trainees entered the mirror and passed through the window and became an active part of the theatrical production. Such active participation made the training practical and insightful, according to the participants.

The negotiation of meaning through theatrical training

My analysis of the interpretive transformations offered by Be Yourself! focused on the processes of collective sensemaking and the negotiation, throughout the course of the event, of the meaning of authenticity. Authenticity was discussed from multiple perspectives and there was no 'correct' definition imposed by the theatrical performance or through the discussions. The L&D team also suggested different views on what authenticity means and how it can be achieved through multiple diverse narratives and viewpoints. Specifically through the participative theatrical components

the participants had the chance to express their views on the subject and define and redefine what authenticity means and how it can be practiced in the workplace.

Theatre as a training technology

The analysis of Rehearsal for Reality and Be Yourself!, as well as the interpretation of the accounts of participants in the latter event, reveals the advantages that theatrical technology may offer for training and development. My conclusion is that theatrical training provided for widening participants' repertoire of known and practiced behaviour and as such contributed to better capacities for improvisation. It was also suggested by the participants that such training encourages more practical – as opposed to theoretical – learning. It was also reported that theatrical training had encouraged reflexivity in the staged situations, and offered a pause, permitting re-examination of the participants' actual organisational experiences in similar situations. The staged reality made the participants reflect that 'it could be different [in real life]'. Thus the established ways of doing things transformed into contingent versions, which could be challenged and changed (Schreyögg and Höpfl 2004). Moreover, when doing drama in the role-play or in the organisational theatre, the participants actively sought alternative realities in the shape of solutions for the problems that were staged. Such active solution-seeking in order to resolve complications has been described by Mangham and Overington (1987) as a mode of *reflective consciousness* (p.48), which is an activity through which people create new realities, actions, and identities. This active mode of looking for alternative realities may result in a sense of freedom from 'social determinism' (Berger 1963/1969, p.157). A similar sense of liberation was reported by participants of Be Yourself!

Moreover, by encouraging discussion and engagement in the theatrical production, Be Yourself! created opportunities for interaction and collaborative sensemaking, in which negotiation of meaning, diversity of perspectives, and *polyphonic* conversations (Hazen 1993, p.1819) were possible. Theatrical training also evoked self-reflection: the interviews with the participants revealed that it gave them opportunity to relate the topic of authenticity to their own lives and their own sense of authentic self.

On the authenticity discourse and training

The focus on the authenticity discourse and training in personnel development was translated into two research questions. The first questioned the popularity of the notion of authenticity in the practices of these professionals. The second research question concerned the ways the personnel development professionals viewed authenticity in relation to their own everyday working life.

Seeking responses to the first question began with a review of literature on Australian and global interest in the notion of authenticity. This review complemented and informed the results of my observations concerning the fashionability of authenticity in Australian personnel development. The second question was answered by an interpretation of the accounts of the personnel development professionals during the course of Be Yourself! as well as the accounts of those participants who participated in the post-event interviews.

The allure of authenticity

The study of the participants' talk and of the training of authenticity confirmed that Australian personnel development is involved in the contemporary social trend (prevalent at least in Anglo-Saxon cultures) of demanding authentic life and authentic workplaces. Authenticity discourse and training answer the authenticity demands

coming from organisations (and from the public watching these organisations) as well as from the people who work in them. Through the training and development of authentic leaders and authentic organisation members, personnel development professionals help create an image of authentic organisations, and organisations that are sensitive to the authenticity concerns of their employees. Moreover, such training aims to provide support to employees who seek their authentic self at work and at home.

Making sense of authenticity

During the post-event interviews the participants were asked 'what does it mean to you to be authentic?'. The initial reading of the post-event interviews resulted in two types of accounts. The first type of accounts was those stylised according to the logic of representation (Czarniawska 2008b). These accounts are not necessarily reflective of what people do in their everyday practices; however, they present official pictures of the practice. In producing such accounts the practitioners borrowed from different theories and concepts and reflected on what authenticity means. As shown in Chapter 9, such accounts resonated with a diverse set of popular and academic formulations of authenticity. Such utterances are valuable in that they reflect viewpoints which are taken to be accepted and legitimate (and illegitimate) definitions of authenticity.

The second set of accounts was work life narratives, episodes from the interviewees' life stories, through which they made sense of authenticity in the context of their own everyday working life. These narratives were woven around challenges faced by the narrators in their everyday work lives with regard to what they took to be authenticity.

The official pictures of authenticity

The first set of accounts revealed legitimate and accepted formulations of the notion of authenticity for the personnel development professionals. Authenticity was presented in accordance with Romantic theories, in which the individual is encouraged to turn inward, find the truth of the self, and express this essence accurately and without editing (Guignon 2004). In some views, such achievement of authenticity was presented as constrained by the demands of the workplace. Serving a diverse group of clients, it was argued, requires resilience; that is, to be able to do impression management effectively (Goffman 1959). Although impression management was considered to be inauthentic, it was not presented as immoral or insincere; but as what is involved in working and serving effectively. In these accounts impression management – or, as described by the interviewees, showing faces, wearing masks, putting on uniforms or personae – was taken as necessary for protecting one's true self from the contamination of social and corporate demands.

Relatedly, authenticity was also defined as presenting different faces or acting contextually while holding a set of core values. This definition of authenticity builds on the notion of identity as fluid, fragmented and transient while bestowing on the self a sense of coherence and moral judgment (Erickson 1995).

Yet another reading of authenticity was justified by reference to oriental philosophies: being mindful and present in the moment, and having a meta-observer perspective in which one monitors one's actions and achieves presence. Wholeness is, in this way, achieved through integrating the fragments of the self. In this definition, all actions, if they are conducted with presence, can help in achieving integration and hence can be considered authentic.

In still other accounts authenticity was described as the belief in a conscious self that adheres to freedom of choice. In this notion, which resonates with existentialist readings of authentic being, we achieve authenticity if we are aware that we wear masks to reach our purposes, but we also always have choices about what masks to wear and what responsibilities come with those choices.

Analysing these accounts resulted in three tentative conclusions. Firstly, such multiple and at times contradictory views of authenticity can indicate that those who contribute to the authenticity training and development of organisation members presented the holding of multiple views of authenticity as legitimate and acceptable. Secondly, the interpretation of these accounts also shows that these professionals themselves held diverse formulations of the authentic self. Some believed in a 'core', 'true' and 'essential' self, which has to be discovered, expressed, or protected. Some believed in multiple and fragmented selves which are to be integrated. Some others saw all the fragments of their selves as true and authentic provided they were acting with awareness and mindfulness. Yet others referred to the contextual and local qualities of one's self construction.

The participants' accounts confirm that the views of identity as embracing truth and a core are present in contemporary life. However, these accounts also reveal that there exist views of the self as fragmented. The formulations, proposed by these interviewees, of the self as socially constructed, locally contextualised and fragmented demonstrates that such concepts are not solely the theorisations of late modern academics, but that people in their everyday lives make sense of their experience of subjectivity in such ways. As a result, such accounts provide empirical grounds for

conceptualisations of the sense of self – perceived by the individual – as lacking an essence, as fragmented, and socially-constructed.

Thirdly, such diverse pictures of the authentic self as constructed within the field of personnel development present a sample of subjectivities being produced in this organisation field. The identities are products of the processes of organising personnel development: coaching by psychology, training by theatre, and talking about authenticity.

Narrating authenticity

Most interestingly, the work life narratives of the personnel development professionals illustrated how they practiced authenticity in their everyday working life. The narratives collected were oriented around four types of problems or disturbances which caused the narrators to pause and reflect on their sense of authenticity. These included the challenges posed by the overflow of work into family life, the occurrence of pivotal events such as challenges in finding a family connection or being diagnosed with a major disease, the pressures on authenticity from the organisational culture, and the threats imposed by the workplace to a feminine authenticity. Every story narrated an active search for solutions.

Two types of corrective actions were suggested: some interviewees had changed their career to one that was in accordance with their own authenticity demands. Personnel development, in this depiction, was presented as a sensible choice which can support authentic living. All the stories which were resolved with a change of career ended happily.

The second group of solutions was to develop, or maintain, capacities for impression management. Some stories concluded on an optimistic note, in which the narrators gave an account of their active efforts for conscious impression management, yet the results were not yet certain. Some others concluded with a tragic stance of not being able to be authentic. In either case, the interviewees constructed an image of the self as an agent who can respond to the forces imposed by social structures.

Authenticity as achieved dramatically

Authenticity was made sense of through application of dramatic forms and devices. When people faced the question of what authenticity means to them, they used a narrative form which reflected and communicated the meaning of authenticity. Moreover, it was through theatre that authenticity was explored, discussed and made sense of. The field studies show that drama was used by personnel development professionals both as a way of contributing to the authenticity discourse and training and as a metaphorical device for making sense of their working lives. It was proposed that masking, taking multiple characters and playing each with passion and resilience were common practices used to achieve a sense of authenticity, integrity, groundedness, wholeness and presence. It is interesting to note that such playing of parts in everyday work life situations was recognised as a natural part of a manager/consultant's working life. It was suggested that the masks one wears can be an authentic reflection of the self if one wears them with awareness of one's choices and purpose in each situation.

It was argued in Chapter 3 that the notion of theatricality is viewed, in both common sense and academic thinking, in opposition to authenticity. The observations and interviews on the way personnel development professionals teach, practice and make

sense of authenticity provide an alternative view in which the notions of theatre and authenticity are intertwined. Authentic acting and authentic being, like any other mode of social action, are formed through drama, and become meaningful through dramatisic sensemaking devices. This resonates well with what Brissett and Edgley (1990) claimed: 'Con games, deceit, cynicism, and treachery are all dramaturgically accomplished to be sure, but love, truth, sincerity and authenticity are as well' (p.7). Along these lines, the main way to achieve a sense of authenticity – according to the interviewed managers and consultants – is through narrating, using dramatic metaphors, and teaching through drama. This provides a dramatisic perspective on authenticity which implies that it is through the application of dramatisic interpretative tools such as narratives and plots or the use of metaphors that people achieve authenticity.

Final remark: An image of personnel development

The research reported here was based on observations of a small part of Australian personnel development. The main areas for focus emerged out of the initial examination of the processes and activities through which the practitioners in this field of practice organise their everyday work. Coaching emerged as the *given* means for training and development. Upon further analysis it was concluded that most coaching processes relied on psychological theorisations – both academic and popular – for legitimisation. This inclination towards psychological theories appeared justifiable considering the purposes pursued in training and development practices. These are built around developing the organisation members, not only in respect to what they do at work, but also in respect to who they are.

Next, fashionable trends within the practices of personnel development were recognised and among these training by the application of theatrical technology as well as the interest in the notion of authenticity were further explored. From the study, there emerges an outline of the image of personnel development as an organisation field. This image reflects the way the professionals I have observed, and interviewed, view their everyday practices and 'what they are about'. In this image, personnel development is prevalently a feminine career, allowing for an authentic life as a maternal figure within the corporate world.

Throughout the interviews and observation, Australian personnel development was pictured as a *feminine* career in that the practices in this organisation field were described as organised, dominantly, by women. My interviewees emphasised the dominance of women in this field so much so that the men who work in this space were described by one interviewee as 'having a strong feminine side.' According to her, these men would not have been working in personnel development if they did not have 'that caring, nurturing aspect'.

Personnel development was also presented by the interviewees as an *authentic* career. Working as a coach and a personnel development professional, it has been suggested, can offer opportunities for embracing authenticity (especially for women) through achieving a better balance between work and family life. In addition to a sense of personal authenticity, working in this field was presented as a way to perform one's moral obligations in inspiring others to be authentic. Through coaching, training and development the practitioners have the opportunity to not only be authentic themselves, but also to invite other organisation members to get to their 'truth and awareness'. Some interviewees described as their main mission in their coaching

practices 'to teach authenticity'. They positioned their own responsibilities as 'helping' and 'caring' and 'nurturing' the organisation members so that they develop and grow. Accordingly, they positioned themselves as a maternal figure within the 'rational' and 'competitive' (and at times cruel) corporate settings.

The personnel development professionals presented their practices as bringing in emotions, connections, creativity, dreams and authenticity within the corporate setting. According to their accounts, they invite their trainees to 'connect to people' and 'feel the other' and 'believe in one's dreams in life'. Their business mission is to protect organisation members from the psychological dilemmas caused by the everyday struggle to meet corporate demands.

These professionals presented their organisational duties – with highlighted conviction – as those of care and nurturing. They argued for the femininity of their organisational field and for bringing back emotions, connectivity, authenticity and care through their practices. As such, they prescribed to the image of a *maternal organisation* (Höpfl and Kostera 2003) where care, nurture and connection to the other supplement the rationality and abstractness of conventional organisations.

The image of personnel development produced here is based on a limited number of field studies. Future research will hopefully allow an expansion of the study on theatrical and authenticity training. Although my study indicates that theatrical technology and authenticity issues are fashionable among personnel development practices internationally, their local translations may differ, both within and outside the Anglo-Saxon sphere. Thus observations of other theatrical training events conducted by other consulting companies in Australia, and in other countries, and observations of organisational activities and events which address the organisation members' concerns

with authenticity would extend and verify my tentative conclusions. In this study I attempted to contribute to the developing body of literature on theatre-based practices in Australian organisations by applying a dramatisic perspective on authenticity as is practiced and made sense of in everyday life. Hopefully, opportunities to extend my efforts will occur in the future⁶⁰.

⁶⁰ In this thesis, I have deliberately refrained from imposing my personal definitions of authenticity or narrating my personal stories focusing on my own subjectivity as it has been the aim in this thesis to follow the definitions emerging from the field and not those set by the researcher. This study is mainly focused on the themes that emerge from the studied field of practice of the Australian personnel development and a focus on the authenticity of the researcher detracts from this.

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Appendix 1

Theatre transcript of Be Yourself!

Facilitator: 'Action!'

Alison walks onto the stage. She stands facing the audience, speaking to the invisible receptionist.

Alison: Hi! I'm Alison Adams. I've got a meeting with Robyn Hughes, I'm a bit early. Oh! That's not a problem! I can just take a seat? Yep! I just take a seat.

She takes a seat and starts looking into the content of her purse and examining her clothes.

Disembodied voice: I'm on time! She'll be here soon. Oh, I better put some lip gloss on. Oh! Is that a hole in my stocking? Oh, no! Oh! Look at my suit! It's vomit! (trying to clean it off with her fingers) Jack was so sick this morning, I can't believe I left him with that baby sitter; I'm such a bad mum! Okay, (putting her purse on the shoulder again) now should I stand or should I sit? No I'll stand (she stands), no, no I'll sit (sits). No, stand, stand!

She stands and starts walking. At the very same moment Robyn comes in. Robyn is a tall woman in a pant-suit. The disembodied voice moves up the stage and stands behind Alison.

Alison: Robyn! Hi! How are you?

Robyn: I'm well and you? You're well?

Alison: Fine! Fine! And you're well? Busy?

Robyn: Yes, yes, extremely busy! And you?

Alison: Yes, we're very busy!

Disembodied voice: As if I'm going to say we're not busy!

Robyn (pointing to the seats): Please! Take a seat!

Alison: Great! (both sit)

Alison: So, your assistant told me that you wanted to have this meeting as soon as possible?

Robyn: Yes, I just want to know how we are progressing with the Gala dinner. And just to see if you have all the information that you need to move forward.

Disembodied voice (while Alison nods): Why could we not have this conversation over the phone?

Alison: Yes! We're tracking according to the plan; no hiccups yet! (laughs)

There is silence. Robyn looks at Alison without a word.

Disembodied voice: Oh! No! She's silent! She's staring! I think she hates me! Yes, she hates me!

Robyn then just goes through the pages she is holding, still without speaking.

Alison: So, what specifically are you concerned about?

Robyn: I have some concerns for the dress rehearsals. At this stage it is scheduled for 6th of June and I was wondering if there is any movement on that date.

Alison: Right! So, what was it specifically about that date that concerned you?

Robyn: It was just very close to the actual event; so I just want to have it earlier so that allows more time if there's any changes.

Alison: I see!

Disembodied voice: Events management 101!

Alison: It's just that it's the normal process that we book the room for the rehearsal the day before, mainly due to venue availability; we have to make it in the same time.

Robyn: Well, perhaps this time we can make an exception; maybe this time we can have it earlier than the day before; I don't know what you want to do if something goes wrong at the last minute? I don't understand why you want to put yourself under that stress!

Disembodied voice: Now she is telling me how to do my job! Oh God! I hate it when she does that! But maybe she is right? What if she is right?!

Alison: Absolutely! I can really see what you are saying, you want to make sure we allow enough time for changes.

Robyn: That's right!

Alison: I can call the venue, they will probably ask for an additional charge for the space and the time would be subject to availability. But as long as we give enough time for a top and tail the day before, that's fine!

Robyn: A top and tail? Excuse me! Can I have my own disembodied voice here? (talking to the disembodied voice!)

Disembodied voice moves from Alison to Robyn's side.

Disembodied voice (Robyn's): Top and tail?! What the hell is she talking about? Oh my God! I wish this woman would talk in plain simple terms! Oh my God! I'm so out of my league! I'm so incompetent in this! Top and tail?!

Robyn: Top and tail?

Alison: Yeah, a top and tail is just a practice of the start and finish of each interval, just so that we can walk through the technical requirements.

Disembodied voice: Oh! Why did I take this on? This is all so bloody ridiculous! You know damn well why you took it on! With all these upstarts coming in front of you! Oh my God! I'm meant to be on sales strategy, and here we are talking about tops and tails and tails and tops! Oh all this is frivolous!

Robyn: Yes, of course, I understand there's the technical element!

Alison: Right! So we are okay for the 6th of June then?

Disembodied voice walks to Alison's side again.

Robyn: The 6th of June? Yes! If we must, then of course we must!

Alison: Right! (smiles and starts to get ready to go)

Robyn: While you're here, I thought I might take the opportunity to introduce you to some of the stakeholders for the event and I also want you to meet with Adriana, just to go through the logistics.

Alison: Sorry Robyn, I didn't know that we have the logistics meeting today; I have scheduled it for next week.

Robyn (while looking at her watch): Oh! I'm sorry if that message didn't get through to your office but Adriana is on leave next week, so we only have this week to plan this. Is there a problem with doing it today?

Disembodied voice (Alison's): Only a two year old at home sick and vomiting, what should I tell her? What should I tell her?

Alison: I actually have a meeting scheduled in the city for 3.00 pm.

Robyn: Oh, that's okay, you can meet with Adriana just now, just until 3.00 pm, you can just make a start; the rest can be done over the phone. Is that fine?

Alison: Great!!

Disembodied voice: Not great!

Robyn: Good!

Alison: I just need to make a call.

Robyn: That's okay, I'll just go and get Adriana.

Alison: Thank you!

Robyn: Thanks! (while standing to leave)

Facilitator: 'And cut!'

Appendix 2



FBE Human Research Ethics Sub-Committee
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24 November 2010

Professor Richard Badham
MGSM
Macquarie University, NSW 2109

Reference: 5201001463(D)

Dear Professor Richard Badham

FINAL APPROVAL

Title of project: A Dramaturgical approach to identity: dramatic awareness - nature, effects, and ethical considerations.

The above application was reviewed by the FBE Human Research Ethics Sub-Committee. Approval of the above application is granted on **24 November 2010** and you may now proceed with your research. The following personnel are authorised to conduct this research:

Richard Badham - Chief Investigator/Supervisor
Sara Zaeemdar - Co-Investigator

Please note the following standard requirements of approval:

1. The approval of this project is **conditional** upon your continuing compliance with the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007)*.
2. Approval will be for a period of five (5) years subject to the provision of annual reports. **Your first progress report is due on 24 November 2011.**

If you complete the work earlier than you had planned you must submit a Final Report as soon as the work is completed. If the project has been discontinued or not commenced for any reason, you are also required to submit a Final Report on the project.

Progress Reports and Final Reports are available at the following website:
http://www.research.mq.edu.au/researchers/ethics/human_ethics/forms

3. If the project has run for more than five (5) years you cannot renew approval for the project. You will need to complete and submit a Final Report and submit a new application for the project. (The five year limit on renewal of approvals allows the Committee to fully re-review research in an environment where legislation, guidelines and requirements are continually changing, for example, new child protection and privacy laws).

4. Please notify the Committee of any amendment to the project.

5. Please notify the Committee immediately in the event of any adverse effects on participants or of any unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project.

6. At all times you are responsible for the ethical conduct of your research in accordance with the guidelines established by the University. This information is available at: <http://www.research.mq.edu.au/policy>

FBE HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS SUB-COMMITTEE
MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY

http://www.businessandconomics.mq.edu.au/intranet/research/ethics_approval

If you will be applying for or have applied for internal or external funding for the above project it is your responsibility to provide Macquarie University's Research Grants Officer with a copy of this letter as soon as possible. The Research Grants Officer will not inform external funding agencies that you have final approval for your project and funds will not be released until the Research Grants Officer has received a copy of this final approval letter.

Yours sincerely



Julie Zetler
Chair, Faculty of Business and Economics Ethics Sub-Committee

FBE HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS SUB-COMMITTEE
MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY

http://www.businessand economics.mq.edu.au/intranet/research/ethics_approval

Appendix 3

MACQUARIE
UNIVERSITY



Faculty of Business & Economics
Human Research Ethics Sub Committee
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Phone +61 (0)2 9850 4826
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2 March 2011

Professor Richard Badham
MGSM
Macquarie University, NSW 2109

Reference: 5201100127(D)

Dear Professor Richard Badham

FINAL APPROVAL

Title of project: *A Dramaturgical approach to identify: dramatic awareness - nature, effects, and ethical considerations.*

The above application was reviewed by the Faculty of Business & Economics Human Research Ethics Sub Committee. Approval of the above application is granted, **effective 2 March 2011** and you may now proceed with your research. The following personnel are authorised to conduct this research:

Richard Badham - Chief Investigator/Supervisor
Sara Zaeemdar - Co-Investigator

Please note the following standard requirements of approval:

1. The approval of this project is **conditional** upon your continuing compliance with the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007)*.
2. Approval will be for a period of five (5 years) subject to the provision of annual reports. **Your first progress report is due on 2 March 2012.**

If you complete the work earlier than you had planned you must submit a Final Report as soon as the work is completed. If the project has been discontinued or not commenced for any reason, you are also required to submit a Final Report on the project.

Progress Reports and Final Reports are available at the following website:
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