

**BOATS, CAVES, SPIES AND STORIES:**  
**A NARRATIVE STUDY OF OUTDOOR MANAGEMENT**  
**DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES**  
**IN THE UNITED KINGDOM.**

**A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**by**

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**Abstract:** (Brunel University, Uxbridge, School of Business and Management, Peter Stokes, *Boats, Caves, Spies and Stories: A Narrative Study of Outdoor Management Development Programmes in the United Kingdom, 1999, Doctor of Philosophy.*)

The thesis develops new understanding in relation to Outdoor Management Development (OMD). The argument is in three parts. Part One reviews notions of management development within which OMD is conventionally located. It underlines the powerful influence of a modernistic positivistic-objectivist methodological paradigm in much of the OMD commentary, manifesting itself as an objectivised corporate imperative of optimum effectiveness and efficiency. Complementary critical perspective paradigms are introduced including comments on narrative and social construction.

In relation to this context, the argument presents a contemporary set of images sourced from *prima facie* conceptualisations of the OMD domain. Part Two considers possibilities for revisiting the contextualisation of OMD. This is undertaken through a contemporaneous and diachronic look at OMD. This involves a novel debate on the “origins” of OMD and comments on the neglected influences important to how individuals construct narrative. Certain narrative accounts in OMD writing are reviewed. These are shown to be very influenced by the predominant positivist paradigm.

The third and final Part of the argument presents: Methodology, Stories and Conclusion. The debate develops a qualitative participant observer approach that facilitates the writing of narratives that underline the reflexive and deeply personal experience that the research involves. The Stories are accompanied by reflective commentaries. The argument concludes and contributes a number of points. The contemporaneous conceptualisation of OMD is positivistic and this is a consequence of its close association with modernistic perspectives of management thinking. Also, modernistic meta-narratives have been apparent in the historical accounts in the field. Consequently, storied and narrative accounts have been marginalised but where written they are imbued with positivism also. Bearing the above in mind the thesis writes fresh socially constructive accounts of experiences in OMD contexts and provides reflective commentary on them.

# CONTENTS

**Acknowledgements**

**General Introduction**

**i-ii**

## **PART I: Management Development: Perspectives and Approaches**

|   |          |
|---|----------|
| <b>Chapter One: Management Development - A Matter of Perspective</b>                  | <b>1</b> |
| 1.1 Chapter One: Overview   | 1        |
| 1.2 Developing and “Emerging” Managers  | 2        |
| 1.3 Management Development Literature:<br><i>OMD’s Neo-Alma Mater</i>                 | 4        |
| 1.4 “Representing” Organization and Management  | 6        |
| 1.5 Modernism: A View “Downstream”  | 9        |
| 1.6 Corporate Imperatives and the Conceptualisation<br>of Management Development      | 11       |
| 1.7 Management Training, Development,<br>Education and Learning: Fashion and Meaning? | 14       |
| 1.8 Contributions From Critical Perspectives  | 25       |
| 1.8.1 Reflexivity   | 29       |
| 1.8.2 Social Constructionism  | 33       |
| 1.8.3 Social Constructionism: Relativism....  | 38       |
| 1.8.4 Social Construction and Emotion   | 43       |
| 1.9 Management Development Literature: Conclusion                                     | 47       |



**(Part I Continued)**

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>Chapter Two: Considering Narrative Processes.</b> | <b>49</b> |
| 2.1 Chapter Two: Overview                            | 49        |
| 2.2 Views of Narrative                               | 49        |
| 2.3 Narrative Fact and Fiction                       | 54        |
| 2.4 Narrative: Fact, Fiction and Management          | 56        |
| 2.5 Narrative: Time, Structure and Language          | 61        |
| 2.6 Narrators Narrating                              | 67        |
| 2.7 Moving On  | 76        |

**PART II: Outdoor Management Development: Predominant Paradigms and Alternative Insights.**

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>Chapter Three: Conceptualisations of Outdoor Management Development (OMD) – The Problematic of Contemporary Representations</b> | <b>78</b> |
| 3.1 Chapter Three: Overview  | 78        |
| 3.2 Outdoor Management Development (OMD)<br>- An Introduction  | 78        |
| 3.3 OMD: An Industry?  | 81        |
| 3.4 OMD and Corporate Imperative<br>- The “Effectiveness” Debate   | 86        |
| 3.5 OMD: Isomorphic Transfer   | 91        |
| 3.6 OMD Courses: Images and Impressions  | 97        |
| 3.7 OMD Process: Reviews, Participants and Facilitators  | 106       |
| 3.8 Thematic Representations in OMD  | 111       |
| 3.8.1 A Thematic Representation of Reality   | 111       |



## **PART III: Making Stories.**

|  |            |
|--|------------|
| <b>Chapter Six: “Doing” the Research.</b>                        | <b>185</b> |
| 6.1 Chapter Six: Overview  | 185        |
| 6.2 Research Design: Preamble                                    | 185        |
| 6.3 A Personal Narrative: Research as “lived experience”.        | 186        |
| 6.4 Contextual and Methodological Considerations                 | 192        |
| 6.4.1 Contextualising Ideas in Relation to Previous Research     | 192        |
| 6.5 Methodological Commentary Underpinning the Current Research  | 197        |
| 6.6 Research “Activity”  | 202        |
| 6.6.1 Research Activity: Organizations and Individuals Contacted | 203        |
| 6.7 Research Methods and Approaches                              | 207        |
| 6.7.1 People Watching..... and Being Watched                     | 208        |
| 6.7.2 Discussions and Chatting                                   | 213        |
| 6.7.3 “Jotting it Down”  | 217        |
| 6.7.4 “Vigour” and “Rigour”                                      | 221        |
| 6.8 Making Sense and Presenting Ideas                            | 225        |
| 6.9 “The Passage of Time.”                                       | 229        |
| 6.10 Access Issues   | 231        |
| 6.11 Some Comments on Ethics and Politics in the Research        | 236        |

**(Part III Continued)**

|  |   |            |
|--|---|------------|
| 7.6  | Stories: “Happy Endings?”   | 285        |
| 7.6.1  | The Arrival and People Talking at the Finish                                    | 285        |
| 7.6.2  | Narrative Accounts: “Experiences for a Week”                                    | 289        |
| 7.6.2.1  | The First Task and the Review   | 289        |
| 7.6.2.2  | The First Task and the Review<br>- Reflective Discussion                        | 291        |
| 7.6.2.3  | Writing, Directing and Acting<br>Out a Satirical Sketch                         | 293        |
| 7.6.2.4  | Writing, Directing and Acting<br>Out a Satirical Sketch - Reflective Discussion | 295        |
| 7.6.2.5  | The “Major Project”   | 296        |
| 7.6.2.6  | The “Major Project” - Reflective Discussion                                     | 303        |
| 7.7  | Stories: Final Thoughts   | 306        |
| <b>Chapter Eight: Overall Conclusion – Ongoing Stories</b> |   | <b>307</b> |
| 8.1  | Revisiting the Arguments  | 307        |
| 8.2  | Thinking About Methodological Contributions                                     | 320        |
| 8.3  | Thinking About Thinking and Experiencing  | 322        |
| 8.4  | Facilitation and Control: Consequences for Sense-Making                         | 326        |
| 8.5  | The Onward Journeys   | 328        |
| <b>Bibliography and References</b>                         |   | <b>333</b> |



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## General Introduction.

This introduction seeks to situate the discussion and indicate the flow of the argument across the chapters of the thesis. The first chapter of the document conducts a review of management development literature. This has proved to be a complex and perplexing field for many commentators. The section considers some of the dominant paradigms that shape the literature. In turn, the next step responds to some of these, perhaps, more conventional perceptions. A discussion of critical perspectives underlines the available richness and complexity of the issues and experiences involved in *manager* development. It is at this point that a range of ideas concerning narrative, and its processual construction, are also introduced. *Manager* and *Management* are terms seemingly implicit within Management Development. As has been noted in major research reviews the literature relating to this domain is vast (Storey, 1989a,b; Fox, 1994a,b) but, equally, it has been argued that large portions of the literature are predictable, repetitive and perhaps rather prescriptive. (Storey, 1989a; Alvesson and Willmott, 1992; Watson, 1994; Knights and Willmott, 1995) An extensive review, therefore, seems a potentially long-winded and unproductive task. These apparent deficiencies and the non-evolutionary nature of much of the work nevertheless seems to legitimise a useful way through the literature. For the current research, the area of literature dedicated uniquely to “management” will be examined not in its own right but rather through the filter of “management development”.

The discussion on management development provides context for the subsequent chapters that comment on experiences relating to *Outdoor Management Development* (OMD). Initially, this considers the common or popular perception and images of OMD i.e. the way it is “made to look” or is portrayed. It relates the *concept* (and meta-narrative) of an “OMD industry”. Importantly, it also debates the influence of a particular strain of corporate imperative on the appearance and conceptualisation of OMD programmes. OMD, by its very title, seems incorporated within management development and in this respect OMD has leaned heavily on models and approaches issuing from its “parent” domain.



Having provided some of the necessary introductory “conventional”, or normative views, of OMD, this allows the next step of the argument to be undertaken. This involves a temporal step back in order to gain an impression of how this “image” may have emerged. It is necessary to look closely (and, more importantly, freshly) at the meta-narratives concerning OMD’s *popularly perceived* origins and development because these continue to contribute contemporaneously, to creating OMD experiences. In particular, the argument points to the increasing annexation of the “outdoors for development” by a managerialist ethos. This part of the argument, therefore, seeks to build a platform that demonstrates how and why narrative presentations in OMD have been suppressed, neglected and marginalised. Alternatively, where they are written it considers why they are managerialised with certain corporate imperatives

Consequently, in Part Three of the discussion a qualitative research methodology is developed with the intent of writing stories in relation to OMD experiences. Participant observation is the adopted approach and a range of issues surrounding its use are discussed. The Stories are a series of narratives that provide considerable material for discussion and comment. This takes place in the form of reflections which seek to apply the theories emergent from the preceding chapters. Through this work and the concluding commentary, it is the ambition of the argument to show the extent to which narratives, and their many facets, offer a powerful and meaningful approach for understanding human sense-making in relation to OMD.

*It is important to state at this point that the views and ideas presented in this work are my interpretation of events and statements. In no way are they intended to represent official policy or positions of any of the organizations or individuals referred to in the thesis. The field research was not necessarily directly drawn from any of the organizations mentioned in the ensuing discussion. Names used in the fieldwork narratives have been changed for reasons of confidentiality.*

# **PART I:**

**Management Development:**  
**Perspectives and Approaches.**



## CHAPTER ONE: Management Development - A Matter of Perspective.

### 1.1 Chapter One: Overview.

This Chapter discusses in a succinct, yet potent and relevant manner, a range of perspectives in management and management development epistemologies and also considers the manner in, and extent to which they contextualise and conceptualise debates in relation to Outdoor Management Development.

The Chapter contends that substantial areas of commentary on management development are conceptualised within a *modernistic* and *positivistic* framework. This is manifested in a *corporate imperative* characterised by a focus on *optimised performance, effectiveness* and *efficiency*. A number of images of modernism and related forms of thinking (“downstream thinking” (Latour, 1987 cited in Chia 1996:1)) are portrayed and discussed in association with this idea. In particular, the notion of “representation”, and how this plays a role, is elaborated.

In response, critical perspective writing on the management sphere is reviewed with the intent of providing a complementary understanding to the above perspectives and constructions. Latour (*ibid*) employs the alternative term of “Upstream thinking” in relation to these perspectives. In particular, the discussion provides an understanding of social construction and in relation to that interpretation a view of narrative is postulated. At this point it will be useful to say how this relates to the focal issue of OMD. Overall, the ideas in this first Chapter provide important “background theory” (Phillips and Pugh, 1994:57) in that they create context for the later discussions. Subsequent chapters consider the extent of, and reasons for, the current adherence of OMD’s conceptualisation to a modernist paradigm and provide salient and prevalent images and impressions from existing literature and practice. Let us begin.



## 1.2 Developing and “Emerging” Managers.

The term and phenomenon, “management development”, seem to beg a dissection into the expression’s two constituent parts. This is a widely employed approach and the debates of “what is management?” and how is management “developed” are long standing and have been approached from a range of perspectives. (*inter alia* Taylor, 1911; Mintzberg, 1973; Stewart, 1963; Storey, 1989a,b; Alvesson and Willmott, 1992; Mumford, 1994; Fox, 1994a,b; Burgoyne, 1994; Watson, 1994, 1999a,b; McAulay and Sims, 1995a; Knights and Willmott, 1999; Parker, 2000) Although the argument has considerable longevity it continues to evolve. As McAulay and Sims (1995a:12) have commented: “there is much unfinished business”. Nevertheless, in the course of these debates, large areas of management development literature and practice have attracted criticism for capricious trend following, or dogmatic adherence to a particular paradigmatic view, rather than conducting a more searching understanding of the nature of developmental activity. For example, Mumford (1994:3-20) remarks that management development has a preoccupation with new-fangled approaches and techniques (many of which concentrate on a modernistic - an expression elaborated further below - emphasis of performativity and effectiveness). Thus, when the development of a situation, or set of circumstances, is viewed as not satisfactory the given “technique” is claimed to have failed rather than to have been misapplied or prematurely abandoned and understood - usurped by the arrival of the next fashionable (modernist) approach. More importantly, underlying contextual issues and alternative conceptualisations are left inadequately addressed.

OMD has become embroiled in the above debates. As stated above OMD *per se* is discussed at greater length in Part II. Nevertheless, it is useful to point up the extent to which OMD has also become aligned with a modernist, representationalist paradigm. Also, there is a need to debate the consequences of that liaison and consider the, hitherto, uncommented contribution that social constructivist and narrative perspectives (linked with a critical perspectives approach) make on the field. However, in any argument there is the potential

pitfall of replacing a given hegemony with a neo-orthodoxy. This Part is not, therefore, intended to be the first step in an analysis of “exclusion” of certain perspectives. The arguments will be concerned with an attempt to debate and understand, to a greater extent, management development (or human experience of the same). OMD constitutes one approach among many approaches, techniques, concepts and debates embraced by the term “management development”. Nevertheless, it is important to underline that OMD has historical “roots” and constructs that predate its managerial commitments and that its application to the management development domain (something of a neo-*alma mater*) is relatively recent. Therefore, the approach(es) of OMD, the accompanying philosophies, sources and relationships from which it seeks to “make sense” (Weick, 1995) of its relationship with management development are important. It is, in part, the above mentioned differences in OMD, as compared to many other areas of management development, that suggest that it may provide particularly interesting experiences through which to consider an understanding of attempts to develop *people* for managerial activity.



### 1.3 Management Development Literature: OMD's Neo-Alma Mater?

Storey (1989a:4), in his major review of management development literature, declares four categories within the domain. These groups of writings are those that:

- “(a) define the nature of management development: its conceptualisation, its aims and perspectives;
- (b) relate to the practices of managers: what is done or should be done to managers;
- (c) [are] about [the experiences of being a] manager but not the vast bulk of literature about management per se: i.e. textbooks on planning, organising and the like;
- (d) attend to management development in context, both the wider socio-economic context and the changing organizational context.”

Storey's typology signals a number of debates in which he alludes to the presence of patterns running through management development literature. Many of these attempt to constitute meta-narrative style accounts that seek to embrace holistically both generalised and idiosyncratic images of managerial life. And, as will be debated shortly below, Storey's categories themselves perpetuate a privileging of a representationalist mode of thought in that they create normative categories as “facts” which are legitimised through subsequent analysis of them. (Chia, 1996:4) However, Storey's concerns regarding “its [sic:management development's] conceptualisation” and “management development in context” admit perspectives and insights that invite, and develop, a more individualised, ideographic or social constructivist (Berger and Luckman, 1971) account of managerial lives and experience (Watson, 1999a,b, Knights and Willmott, 1999, Parker, 2000).

Given the extensive range of management development literature it will be useful to employ Storey's definitional template as an *a priori* framework for the early



section of the discussion. In so doing, it will be necessary to retain in mind the constructs of the paradigm in which it is framed. Chia (1996:1) observes, that such “categories” in seeking to incorporate or include a set of meanings and predetermined elements are equally arbitrary in the way they exclude the “other” in any given discourse. As such he argues that it is seemingly paradoxical that it is a modernist discourse structure that permits the expression (i.e. categories and labels, for example, “upstream” and “downstream”- see below) of such positions. Chia problematizes this situation but notes that a “reflexive turn” at the very least recognizes and discusses the predicament.

On his model Storey concludes that aspects (a) (“conceptualisation”) and (d) (“socio-contextualisation”) of his typology have been particularly underdeveloped in written commentaries and, as already noted above, these two dimensions provide important inroads and concerns for the ensuing argument. In referring to Storey’s work it is important to state that the current argument sees the relationship of contextualisation and conceptualisation as more blurred, intertwined and dynamic than suggested by Storey’s model (and others framed within a modernist construct). This having been recognised the model and its representationalist conceptualisation are nevertheless a point of departure for debate.(Parker, 1995:554)

In the initial stage of the Chapter, some comments will be made on the first of Storey’s categories (a): conceptualisation of management development. In much of management development literature (and to an even greater extent in the case of OMD) this frequently incorporates attempts to provide definitions and create nomenclature focused on the notion of optimised performativity and effectiveness at team and organizational levels. Such work tends towards the positivistic, modernistic and representationalist and understandings of these terms are necessarily developed.

However, the discussion (in the latter stages of the Chapter) progresses to consider dimensions of contextualisation (Storey’s category “(d)”) in management development relating to issues of conceptualisation). Crucially, it



debates their interplay with modernist conceptualisations and the opportunities available for reconceptualising and recontextualising views and making fresh sense of managerial development (and, in particular, OMD) experiences. This section of the discussion elaborates certain themes from the critical perspective literature. In association with this it also develops social constructivist and narrative ideas. Within the overall course of the argument it will be seen that it is possible to discuss the very terms “OMD” and “management development” as constructs that discursively frame experience rather than providing non-negotiable tenets, givens and facts:

“Discursive framing is a process whereby human beings draw on sets of linguistic resources, categories and concepts made available in their culture to make sense of a particular aspect of their lives and are thereby influenced in the way they conduct themselves in that part of their life.”(Watson, 1999b:6)

Ultimately, this initial Chapter of the argument seeks to prepare the ground for a more pluralistic appreciation of the experience of management development. Nevertheless, the elaboration of Storey’s model necessarily moves the discussion into a problematic discussion in relation to representation. This will now be developed prior to considering the notion of the *corporate imperative*.

#### **1.4 “Representing” Organization and Management.**

The term “representation” has already been mentioned above. The ideas and notions surrounding representation, and the consequences of these, are of central importance to the subsequent argument and therefore it will be useful to reflect, at this early point, on questions it raises. Such issues permeate the debate in general but are further addressed in some detail in the chapter on methodology. Vitaly, there is also a need, here, to discuss certain aspects of representation so



as to heighten a reflexive awareness with regard to the overall argument process and construction.

Representationalism needs to be situated in relation to other possibilities of thought and constructing knowledge. Chia (1996:1 following Latour 1987) indicates that various forms of approach or thought may be divided into two strands: “upstream” and “downstream” thinking. Representation is associated with the latter of them. As will be seen the proposal of these two states *per se* provides a reflexive irony.

Downstream thinking is preoccupied with a search for “reality”, built on a tendency to seek convergence and generalization among ideas.(*ibid*) It is dependent on diachronic ordering of ideas. In this it seeks to build on particular similar forms of previous thinking in what is deemed a “progressive” and theory-building manner.

Chia (1996:vii) suggests that representation is “*logic and rhetoric of organizing as reality-constituting social practices... the logical and rhetorical strategies deployed in the production of organizational texts and their consequent effects on our understanding of organization.*” Representationalism, Chia notes (1996:2) is the “fundamental epistemological [“philosophy of *knowing*”(Watson, 1999b:19)] stance of downstream thinking”.

Furthermore, Chia (*ibid*:p.vii) warns of the “theoretical conundrum” [surrounding organizational theorising which is due to] “an excessive diet of representationist thinking in which theories are unquestioningly regarded as straightforward attempts to accurately capture and represent an *already constituted external reality*”.[Emphasis added] He continues: “organizations are henceforth unproblematically taken to be discrete and identifiable social entities existing ‘out there’ that readily lend themselves to research and analysis.”(*ibid*:p.4) Chia complements his message: “[representationalism] takes as given the pre-existence of an already constituted world that we subsequently apprehend...”.(*ibid*:p.5) To accomplish or undertake this it undergoes a



“‘Forgetting’ of assumptions” (*ibid*:p.5 following Woolgar, 1988) of the existence of these creations. Culler (1983:152) points out that “any ‘given’ may be a construct”.

Representationally constructed theories overlook the linguistic basis and logic they employ in order to represent. This tends not to be “a concern in mainstream... analysis”.(Chia, 1996:5) Such assertions constitute a “rhetorical ploy” that seeks to realise “an arbitrary but strategically useful distinction between what is problematical and what is not”.(*ibid*:p.4)

Relating the above points to a debate on (the now problematized representation of) management development and OMD it can be seen, for example, that Storey’s typology serves the argument well as a specific illustration of the above. Equally, large areas of writing on management development in general, and the majority of writing on OMD in particular, equally can be seen as representationalist.

Placing the above thoughts in a broader context, representational thinking is associated with other patterns of what is termed “Downstream” thought. For example: Systemic (Rorty, 1980) and Modernism (Cooper and Burrell, 1980) (Management development and OMD are more extensively discussed in the context of representationalism and modernism below). Hassard (1995:127) suggests that representationalist thinking is akin to “picture theory” wherein language is developed and adjusted in order to report the static properties of objects in the world. He invokes a number of discussions on these concerns: Wittgenstein (1953) on “language games”; Kuhn (1962) on “scientific revolutions” and Pepper (1972) on “world hypotheses”. Usefully, Hassard points out that: “These writers examine the effects of reality rather than the cause. They argue that our knowledge of the world is constructed as a problem of “representation” rather than one of factual accuracy”.(Hassard, *ibid*) He concludes that a central thrust of postmodernist writing is the “replacement of the factual by the representational”.(*ibid*)



Having presented impressions of downstream thinking the discussion now turns to consider Upstream thinking (Latour, 1987 cited in Chia, 1996:1) It is in this perspective of approach that the thesis seeks to develop its arguments. Upstream thinking is a process that involves “moving upstream” away from convergence and corroboration of meanings into “facts”.(Chia, 1996:14) As already noted it implicitly (by the very use of a labelling device) uses modernist discourse in order to express itself however its “ontological commitments” are different to downstream thinking.(Chia, 1996:12)

Rather, its beliefs and propositions are the consequence or social constructs of the interaction of individuals within a community. As such the charge of deconstruction and nihilism is often levelled at Upstream thinking since it often defines itself in terms of what it is not as much as the meaning it constructs. As such Chia believes that it offers: “...inexhaustible opportunities for gaining fresh insights into the ontological character of social organizing processes”. However, Parker (1995:554) warns of the need to “negotiate or avoid the subjectivist and relativist quagmire of postmodernism without falling into the trap of naïve positivism or empiricism”. Mindful of this the discussion will consider below some issues of reflexivity and at a later point, relativism.

### **1.5 Modernism: a View “Downstream”.**

Modernism is strongly associated with representationalist and “downstream” thinking. And, modernistic thinking underpins and permeates large areas, of “mainstream” management development (and OMD) writing and practice. As such it is important to make a number of comments.

Gephart (1988 cited in Boje and Gephart, 1996:7) contends:

“For modernism, there is a scientific method and arguably the best way to produce valid knowledge. The method leads in organisational science to



*forms of positivism that focus on the statistically quantifiable relationships among variables*".[Emphasis added]

Bendix (1960 cited in Gephart, 1996a:134) remarks that "modernism is based in the formal rationality of the law". Peukert (1989) applies this suggesting that a fundamental belief of modernism is that "*all social problems can be solved rationally by state intervention and the application of scientific and social theory*".[Emphasis added] Habermas (1973) discusses the transition of late capitalism (for him strongly associated with modernism) to postmodernism in terms of the economic and socio-cultural sub-systems. He contends that there is a tendency to capitalise fresh areas of the state especially government and socio-cultural sectors i.e. it is possible to witness an increasing role for "management" in areas of society where, formerly, it was less present. Apparent from these brief statements is the intent to sponsor and establish a "solution" in meta-narrative (generic and non-idiosyncratic) terms in relation to social interaction through the representationalist institutions (Berger and Luckmann,1971:65) of, for example, state, science, capitalism. A poignant consideration of the application of modernistic thinking is Bauman's thesis on modernity and the Holocaust in which it is claimed that technology and managerial processes were potently employed within a modernistic ethos with generic and tragic and catastrophic circumstances for the Jewish people and other social and ethnic minorities.(Bauman, 1989)

Positivistic, modernistic managerialism has been advocated by many commentators as a panacea for alleged representations of "difficulties" and "problems" in the areas where it has been introduced. The corporate imperative of "optimal solutions" and "heightened effectiveness enhancement plans" have, however, sometimes appeared blind and deaf to other (or "excluded") experiences:

"organisational imperative and bureaucratic ethos in late modernism differs from the imperatives of earlier modernist forms in that:  
1.obedience is worth more than individuality; 2.the individual is



dispensable; 3.all organisational acts are planned - spontaneity is suspended because it reflects a loss of control.... [and] there is a move from voluntarism to paternalism”.(Scott and Hart, 1989:50-57)

It will be seen below how these ideas are echoed in Mumford’s three types of training process and environment model. The themes of “obedience”, “planned acts”, “control” and “paternalism” are prevalent in modernism and can be seen as being valued within models such as those Mumford and other writers propose. Scott (1974:250) restates that the fundamental purpose of the *modern* management paradigm is to enhance efficiency and organisational productivity. In turn, this is seen as being legitimised and “driven by a sense of determinism that treats the imperative of effective management as unquestionable givens.” In addition, Scott and Hart (1989 cited in Gephart, 1996a:34), together with Fineman and Gabriel (1996:10), reiterate concerns that increasingly the management imperative is based on social Darwinist concepts namely that managerial status is based on superior competitive qualities i.e. the survival of the fittest. The above points make a brief but valuable portrayal of the modernist paradigm. The next part of the argument takes some of these ideas and considers the ways in, and the extent to, which they “represent” the activity of management development.

## **1.6 Corporate Imperatives and the Conceptualisation of Management Development.**

The above discussion has made a range of points with regard to representationalism. During that process the representationalist characteristics of Storey’s model were underlined by way of a preliminary illustration. It is now timely to consider the substantial extent of representational forms in management development commentaries. Representational forms are also prevalent in OMD and, thus, the present section of argument provides important context for a consideration of this and the emergent issues below.



Management development, for those who provide or undertake it, is not proposed as an altruistic process and this has influenced much of the conceptualisation of the domain. An appreciation of the energies and ideas that drive the processes of management development requires an understanding of the corporate ethos underpinning the activity. Central in this is that participants are usually sponsored by companies to attend courses. As a consequence, organizations anticipate a net “beneficial” effect from the process usually synonymous with heightened effectiveness and efficiency in some respect. This rationalisation provides important implications for its conceptualisation.

Mumford (1994:3) illustrates this ethos in his definition of management development as: “an attempt to achieve managerial effectiveness through a planned and deliberate learning process”. Robinson (1994:369) corroborates Mumford’s view and employs comparable language. Although Mumford, within a broader debate, has more recently reviewed the *directed* (sic “planned and deliberate”) aspect of this definition, it has to be acknowledged that the “element of intention” (Storey,1989a:5) and “control” still remain in many definitions of management development. Certain writers readily underwrite the “control” approach suggesting that “desired behaviour” should be considered and this, in turn, can be “translated into training needs”.(Stewart, 1994:33-48) Furthermore, Ashton *et al* (1975) refer to “conscious and systematic decision-action processes to control the development of managerial resources in the organization for the achievement of organizational goals and strategies”. Additionally, Beckhard (1985) describes a conventional picture of *the* management development process as the identification of organizational goals and the skills and competencies needed to achieve these objectives, and the marshalling of organizational resources in order to achieve identified requirements. In addition to certain above mentioned desires to “control” and “optimise” development, the linear and unitary nature of such models is very evident.

Mumford (1994:12) attempts to expand these ideas by producing a three “type” model that conceptualises a possible *range* of “approaches” to management development. Firstly, *Type 1* is the “Informal managerial” - accidental processes.



There is a clear lack of planning in this approach resulting in learning that is “real, direct, conscious and insufficient”. Secondly, *Type 2* is the “Integrated managerial” - opportunistic processes. Here activities are owned and planned by managers with clarity in the objectives. In this instance, learning is considered to be “real, direct, conscious and more substantial.” Finally, *Type 3* is the “Formal management development” - planned processes. In this case learning is planned, effected and tends to be owned by developers outside the organization.

Of particular interest here is a difference between *Type 1* as opposed to *Types 2* and *3*. The *laissez faire* ethos of *Type 1* contrasts with the more controlled aspect of the latter two categories. There is also the implication that the development, learning, or experience of learning taking place in *Type 1* environments may not be “as useful” or meaningful as *Types 2* and *3*. Clearly, Mumford intends *Type 2* environments to provide some form of optimum, or at least “best”, compromise for developmental activities. While the *Type 2* suggests that people as managers are involved and aware of their own learning it still leans towards a model that perhaps values programmed learning above more informal learning and development. The model attempts to both conceptualise (i.e. provide a framework for understanding) and contextualise (it suggests a range of environments and situations), management development albeit in sketchy terms. Nevertheless, it demonstrates the difficulty in developing a more flexible and empirical view of the domain that pays due attention to the *perceptions and constructions* of human processes of people experiencing managerial roles. Moreover, it demonstrates only brief consideration of ideas involving, for example, “experiential learning” (Kolb, 1984a) or notions of “accidental learning”.(Mumford, 1994:3) As the present argument is developed increasing attention will be paid to these ideas and the processes and ways in which they might be understood and constructed.

From these initial remarks, it would be difficult to suggest to the contrary that many companies are interested in undertaking and directing development of managers principally as a means of increasing “effectiveness” and “productivity” in the firm. Indeed, for some commentators, this obvious corporate objective can



generate ethical problems on a number of levels. For example, many OMD commentators may be uncomfortable designing or running a course that is overly preoccupied with improving the “bottom line”. This may appear somewhat naive, given the competitive markets in which the majority of firms operate, however, it provides a challenge to consider alternative issues and perspectives at stake within management development processes and experiences. Indeed, the subsequent discussion debates ideas that suggest there may be merit in recognising and focusing on supplementary and complementary aspects of course participants lives rather than regarding attendee managers as little more than factors of production requiring fine-tuning.

The debate above has introduced a range of forces that have contributed to shaping the conceptualisation of management development. The argument now pauses to talk about a number of salient terms associated with (and embroiled in) the domain. The implications of such “labels” may seem to be largely representationalist. Nevertheless, it should be undertaken because, in part, the changing nature of the nomenclature reflects and illuminates the changing perception of the nature of the field.

### **1.7 Management Training, Development, Education and Learning: Fashion and Meaning?**

A discussion on management development cannot proceed too far before addressing the debate concerning nomenclature. Four key terms often employed in the debate are: management training, development, education and learning. Within the nomenclature it may be contested that certain terms seem more orientated towards the concerns of the second and third categories of Storey’s (1989a:4) earlier mentioned typology, namely: “what is done or should be done to managers” and “the experience of being a manager”. In addition, it was also noted above that it is in these two groups of writing that the majority of work up to the time of Storey’s model has been focused. As a consequence, it will be seen



that the semantic discussion (and subsequent implementation into practice of the terms) has developed in such a way as to largely obscure the contextual and conceptual aspects of the debate. Such a debate will be important when considering the impact and legacy of these managerialist terms with reference to OMD.

The expressions “management development”, “management training”, “management education” and “management learning” are frequently used interchangeably. Interestingly, management learning appears perhaps less often confused with the other terms. This might be attributed possibly to the relative youth of the expression. On the other hand, management development, training and education have weathered debate for a substantial period of time. Consequently, their meaning has been dismantled and reconstituted many times over. That the terms can mean many things to a range of differing audiences is hardly surprising. However, at the same time, within this discord there are certain commentators who concur. Lucas (1992:2) observes that Drew-Smith (1989), Wexley and Baldwin (1986) and Burgoyne and Stuart (1978) all agree on the following distinctions:

“(a) *Management training*: the process by which managers acquire the knowledge and skills related to their work requirements by formal, structured or guided means; (b) *Management education*: structured, formal learning process taking place within an institutional framework; (c) *Management development*: the broader concept concerned with developing the individual rather than emphasising the learning of narrowly defined skills. It is a process involving the contribution of formal and informal educational experience.”(cited in Lucas, 1992:2)

According to this definition, management training and education are presented as somewhat rigid, prescriptive processes containing little of an evolving nature. However, with regard to management development the key phrases “developing the individual” and “...informal educational experience” suggest an alternative perspective. In the first phrase, the idea of a “broader concept” suggests that



development may occur from a range of sources and situations. Nevertheless, there are shades of prescriptiveness in the language i.e. the process is something that *is done* to the individual. Equally, the definition re-employs the term “educational” (also contained in “management education”) which seems to contradict its juxtaposition with the use of the word “informal”.

Within the general debate, many definitions draw a difference between “training” and “development”. It is argued that development is, above all, concerned with processes which bring about greater “capabilities whilst there is still scope for “discretion, creativity and indeterminacy”(Storey,1989a:5). Other writers suggest that the area of management training is not a separate domain to that of management development, but that training is incorporated within development.(Krouwel and Goodwill, 1994:17) One writer, Garavan (1997) suggests that learning is the “binding component” over training, development and education. He claims that it is unuseful to see them as separate.(*ibid*:p.50) Watson (1999b:103) reframes the issue and advocates talking “about life learning relevant to management”.

Moreover, a particular concern associated with a “training” approach for many people is that it potentially leads along a competencies (Boyatzis, 1982) route and this is often argued as over-simplistic and restrictive. However, this is a charge also levelled at certain aspects of “management development”. “Competencies” and “skills” are accorded an important role within the nomenclature, however, what is meant, or signified, by management competencies appears somewhat problematic. Various definitions are available among which:

“the ability to perform the activities within an occupational area to levels of performance expected in employment... including the qualities of the personal effectiveness such as those which are required in the workplace to deal with self, colleagues and customers”.(The National Training Agency, 1989)



Alternatively, Burgoyne (1988:40-44) has defined competencies as “simply the willingness to perform a task”.

Nevertheless, the approach of seeking to develop competencies has dangers.(Storey, 1989a:9) The pursuit of competencies as a way to develop managers can lead to a Fayol-type (Fayol, 1916) mechanistic “characteristic list” of managerial functions. In turn, these competencies risk becoming the focus of attention at the expense of process or other aspects of experience. If there is to be an attempt to nurture “management”, then treating the area as a compartmentalised collection of discretely separated skills appears myopic and unhelpful. The symptoms of the above issue are widespread. Storey notes in his above-mentioned review of management development literature that many articles concern “what is done to managers” and that there is a “descriptive but there is [also] a high prescriptive element” (Storey, 1989a:10). In other words, there appears to be, within that literature, a pre-occupation with and propensity to reduce the *experience* of management to lists, techniques and mechanisms.

The preoccupation with competencies seems a distraction. The more pressing issues for consideration is more elusive. The human experience of managing seems to defy ready categorisation. For this reason, whilst management *training* and competency *development* are embraced by the term “management development”, they are often seen as being distinct from many of the processes of management development.(Storey,1989a:5)

Lucas (1992:6) (arguing, perhaps ironically, ultimately from a pro-competency development stance) expresses concern that without developing a substantial range of “personal qualities”, for example, “openness to change”, “assertiveness”, etc., how can competencies of any kind be successfully developed? However, conversely, how can essences of the human condition be reduced to competencies? Fuller-Good (1998:7) suggests “competencies would be fine if they addressed emotions” but does not see that desiring to compartmentalise in this way is problematic. Equally, there have been a number of attempts by some writers to move the “trait” or “characteristics list” type



model forward by developing various composite and multivariate models. Such paradigms primarily seek to break the petrified mould of the trait approach by attempting to embed a *process* or *dynamic* within the list of competencies. Perhaps one of the more well-cited (in both management and OMD writing - Storey (1989a:11); Bank, (1994:12)) models has been produced by Hawrylyshyn (1967) whereby he matches skills, knowledge and attitudes to learning processes. The model then adopts vector-like characteristics where the movement or development of a notional competence or trait is tracked along a process. Interestingly, Storey (1989a:6) insists that approaches such as Hawrylyshyn's model still pertain to the mechanical, rational approach and therefore the "classical school" i.e. a "school" used to structure and establish "representations" of attitudes.

In spite of questions and reservations expressed about "competencies" or "skills" approaches, the concept has had a significant impact on the overall conceptualisation of management. A substantial degree of support may be found in the literature to indicate that management has keenly embraced the competencies concept. Mabey and Iles (1994:1) go as far as saying that competencies have "'come of age' in the 1990s". In addition, Mabey (1994:58) locates the widespread development of "competing models identifying 'competence'" in the 1980s. This is important for the discussion below on OMD concerning the extent to which this trend has brought about a "competency-outcome" development culture in that domain. The degree to which this has influenced both practice and research in OMD will be debated.

Moreover, it might be argued that the product of many initiatives for developing managers (such as, for example, the Management Charter Initiative or reports by Constable and McCormick (1987) and Handy (1987)) has been largely to generate measures that seek to formalise and structure learning and understanding about management. The propensity of their tone may be seen as prescriptive, tutor-directed, instructional, classroom-based. Given the above definitions it would seem that the key thrust and consequence of these initiatives and trends has been located along the "training" and "education" routes and



typical characteristics of such prescriptive trends are attempts to “identify” and “categorise” the “competencies” of “skills” alluded to above.

Nevertheless, by contrast, such approaches differ significantly from some of the work of a wide range of commentators who have considered the broad variety and fragmented (i.e. not necessarily rationally planned) nature of managerial activities: *inter alia*, Stewart (1963), Mintzberg (1973)(fragmented and interrupted experiences); Knights and Willmott (1999)(“lived experiences”); Watson (1994, 1999a,b)(“emergent managers”); and Parker (2000)(“cultural images”). In other words, the use of a check-list of traits or characteristics for a manager to adhere to in, what is probably a more chaotic, ongoing and emergent experience appears increasingly less useful and helpful for generating understanding. Vaill corroborates this movement: “In order to determine competencies you have to be very simplistic about managing”.(Vaill, 1989:xiv)

McAulay and Sims (1995b:22) have suggested that any form of rigid or prescriptive categorisation may well be at the expense of learning from more informal situations. They suggest (*ibid*:p.22) that by the year 2000 and beyond the concepts of management learning will have ascended to a very prominent position. This is supported by Salaman and Butler (1994:35) who exclaim: “Suddenly, management learning is hot news.” They, in fact, seem to be suggesting an ascendant hegemony that will challenge the dominance of disciplines like strategy.

“Learning is important as a way of stepping beyond managerial functions into a more sensible world of interrelated parts. Strategy is perhaps ‘making it’ on these terms. Management learning has, in our opinion, at least as much potential as strategy of making sense of this holistic world.”(McAulay and Sims, 1995b:23)

Csath advocates putting spiritual learning and human growth on the learning agenda.(Csath 1995:24) In this light, Blood (1995:23) is concerned that any



conceptualisation of learning may be over-strongly rooted in Western culture. He recognises that this is increasingly problematic in a growing global culture.

“One of the critical thinking abilities that global managers will have to master is the appreciation of different ways of *constructing reality*. This is learning the roots of cultural differences.”(Blood, 1995:24)[Emphasis added]

He proposes a basic model of four levels of thinking. He advises that his fourth and final ultimate level: the “Constructed” level is “where the holder of knowledge acknowledges his/her role in the creation of meaning”.(ibid) There are shades of positivism’s optimal solution here but Blood’s thoughts do have resonances for aspects of the OMD experience. It will be noted below that OMD might be argued as being very much rooted in “British/Anglo-Saxon” culture and context. Blood suggests an opening out of the vision or spirit in our attempt to break down existing perceptions and construct new ones. It will be seen that his desires for management learning in general are also relevant to OMD.

The above discussion has raised a number of issues stemming from the semantics and operationalisation, or “lived experience” of the nomenclature. In particular, it drew attention to the propensity within the training, education and development domains towards more atomistic and mechanistic-style approaches focusing tightly on the fulfilment of the corporate imperative. The difficulty in providing definitions for common terms was also demonstrated and this provokes strong concerns from some writers.

The inference is that beneath the apparent certainty of models, typologies, lists and control mechanisms, the degree of understanding about how managers behave and learn and create meanings in their lives (and thereby what development might complement these) may in many respects be very limited. Certainly in relation to management development within OMD, Hogg (1988) has (misguidedly) claimed that this is a particularly high profile debate. However, Hogg, in the same manner as many other writers, falls victim to employing the



same rhetorical, representationalist language to describe and evaluate the corporate “benefits” apparently identified to date.

The apparently rigid “control” approach to “developing” human beings for the activity of management possibly overlooks and neglects some of the nuances and sensitivities of the learning processes taking place both at a group (social psychological) level and individual level (personal psychological) level. Argyris (1962) has pointed out that the door to development is “locked on the inside”. This means that managers learn most usefully by learning how to develop themselves. This approach has been supported to some extent in the notion of “self-development” elaborated by Pedlar, Burgoyne and Boydell (1986) who have written extensively in recognition and advocacy of this. The concept of self-development is important because it begins to move the catalytic, pump-priming role for development towards the individual process and context:

“The individual may decide that as part of his/her self development process he/she might undertake management training of either a personal nature, but intrinsic within the terms is the understanding that this process is *self-directed*, rather than *organisationally directed*.”(Pedlar *et al*, 1988)[Emphasis added]

This marries well with the sentiment that “people learn wherever they are. Learning is a universal part of the human condition, and people do not suspend their capacity for learning when they come to work.”(McAulay and Sims, 1995a:5)

The enhanced focus on “learning” is perhaps an encouraging development in the management development literature. This is due to the idea that the thrust of many areas and activities concerned with management development has, over recent decades, drifted towards discussing the human being as *spirit* and *perspective-prone* rather than just the object or product of a given process. There is growing support and evidence for viewing management development as a social construct. To what extent is management development a largely *artificial*



process in its current paradigm? Within management development to what extent is OMD offering an alternative view of such social constructs? Unfortunately, there is considerable *prima facie* commentary to suggest the susceptibility of the OMD domain to the above-discussed rhetorical aspects of management development. By way of example, one recurring manifestation of this trait can be found in the clumsy transposing of well-known (and over-worked) management theory models over OMD course structures. Examples of this abound in OMD-providing organizations. Popular models are Adair's (1983) Team Venn diagram and the Kolb (1984) Experiential Learning Cycle. The generalised templating of management theory (and more significantly the perceived orthodoxy of management theory) over OMD, as with management development as a whole, distorts a potentially more enlightening view of the learning and experiences. In support of such feelings McAulay and Sims (1995a:15) have argued: "...what do we know about the performance of theories experientially?"

In an attempt to break away from the constraints of the rhetoric, Lucas (1992:2) draws a semantic nuance by adopting the term "*manager* development" rather than management development. This is an attempt to move away from the difficult generic area of "management" and its development which :

" ...often refers to a firm's strategic plan for the development of managerial talent [whereas] manager development [is] taken to mean the development of the individual manager".(Brouwer, 1965 cited in Lucas 1992).

But, although Lucas's study commences with a concern for the experience of the individual and (by implication) collections of individuals working as groups it is ultimately positivist, and seeks to confirm compliance with the conventional rhetoric of management development. The many abstract terms of the management development literature may be surrogates for the abstract processes actually taking place. Their heavy usage throughout the literature, to a large extent, devalues the terms. They become clichéd and consequently empty of insight and meaning (social constructionist and representationalist notions point



up yet further difficulties here). This process is often compounded by trends, fashions and susceptibility to convenient eye-catching acronyms intended to provide managers with memorable (and marketable from many authors' point of view) catch phrases. This situation persists not only in the more populist writings (for example, the "excellence" writings of Peters and Waterman (1982) and Peters individually) but among the writings of many commentators considered by their peers to be pre-eminent in the field.

Much of the current management development debate appears to have created an unhelpful maelstrom of terminology and approaches. In response, the debate is moving now towards a more intensive period of study into the *experiences* of management. Even writers strongly sponsoring the above discussed corporate imperative (e.g. Mumford), whilst not abandoning that ethos are refocusing their attention on the "individual learner" and the "learning organisation".(Mumford, 1994) Moreover, McAulay and Sims, (1995a:6) buttress this move by acknowledging more flexible approaches: "Learning is essentially impermanent. Learning is best when it is a verb, an activity, a process: not a noun or a product." However, there is a continuous danger that any debate on processes within management development will be waylaid and stunted by the legacy of difficulties within preceding approaches and philosophies. The implication is clearly that the questions require restructuring and new approaches need to be developed. The required impetus therefore seems to be: "Help managers to see learning as travelling and value it - not just atavistic, measurable pieces of learning."(McAulay and Sims, 1995a:6) This is an invitation for managers to take a fuller role in understanding their own learning rather than comply with a prevailing corporate paradigm or imperative. McAulay and Sims welcome such an approach but offer a *caveat*:

"We would hate management learning to be seen merely as a branch of organizational behaviour. Because psychologists have researched learning, and the main input from psychology into management has been organizational behaviour, the risk is there. But psychologists have made other inputs into management (such as occupational psychology),



organizational behaviour has other roots (for example in sociology), and management learning can expect to develop independently. There seem to be *ample opportunities for reframing other management disciplines as learning* and to consider the ways in which disciplines contribute towards management learning”.(McAulay and Sims, 1995a:11)

But caution should be exercised in the reification of the term learning. For, in seeking to determine what “learning” *is* there is a danger of excluding or silencing voices rooted in what it is deemed *not to be*. In becoming freshly preoccupied with a novel term an object is represented by it which is subsequently legitimised.(Chia, 1996) Therefore, there are indications that in studying processes in management development, and particularly in OMD as will be seen below, there may be benefit in standing back and re-considering stances. Important questions such as “how do participants make sense of their experiences” (Weick, 1995) need to be broached. Also, information is needed on the qualities and kinds of experiences of learning.(McAulay and Sims, 1995a:15). If we consider the fourth category of Storey’s categorisation of the literature - management development in context - it can be suggested that it has a major role to play in unravelling some of the confusion of approaches and thinking about the area in much of the literature produced to date.(Storey,1989b:3-11) That contextualisation together with better conceptualisation will provide more meaningful commentary on the *human activity* called management development(Storey, 1989b:6-10) can only be welcome.



## 1.8 Contributions from Critical Perspectives.

There is, as alluded to above, a need to respond to the dominant influence of the corporate imperative paradigm of optimum effectiveness. This reply can be usefully constructed from a range of *critical perspectives*.

An examination of critical perspectives will serve two important purposes for the development of the thesis. Firstly, it provides a response to the modernist and positivist paradigm that has played a potent role in shaping management development literature and OMD theory and practice. In so doing, it provides opportunities to rephrase and reconstruct existing perspectives. Secondly, and most importantly, the critical perspective writings assists in providing a fresh account about how individuals construct experiences in OMD. The application of critical perspective paradigms to OMD is an underdeveloped aspect of the area and in particular, this section provides ideas concerning social construction and narrative. The next section of the argument furnishes the basis from which subsequent chapters dealing more directly with OMD will be developed. It is very important to underline that this is not intended as a review *per se* of these perspectives, nor of course, is it (impossibly) exhaustive. Rather, it discusses ideas in a manner that assists in reconsidering OMD.

Critical perspective writings offer a number of debates and epistemologies. It is the intention of the discussion to develop certain ideas drawing on these perspectives. In particular, the concepts of social construction and narrative will be developed in relation to experiences of OMD. It should be stated that they share the commitments of “upstream thinking”(Latour, 1987) cited and commented on above.

This section of the discussion reviews, initially, some pertinent (with regard to the thesis) aspects of postmodernism. These ideas should be reviewed in relation to the preceding discussion on representation, modernism and its resonance within certain corporate imperatives. In conveying an impression of postmodernism it will perhaps be useful to bear in mind that:



“The literature on postmodernism is so vast, diverse and unwieldy that even the initiated cannot keep up with it, let alone make coherent sense of it”.(Hollinger, 1994:xi)

With this in mind, the focus of this argument will draw out points for the subsequent debate on OMD. As a consequence of the complexity of postmodernist “output”, Hassard (1996) seeks to simplify the debate by considering postmodernism through two “generic concepts” in relation to modernism. These are that postmodernism points at a “new *epoch* of social enquiry” or, alternatively that it constitutes “a *new form of epistemology*”.(*ibid*:p.47)[Emphasis added]

Firstly, as a novel epoch of social enquiry (i.e. one that follows on from, and replaces, modernism) Boje, Fitzgibbons and Steingard (1996:63) list writers subscribing to this idea. These include *inter alia*: Clegg (1990), Drucker (1990, 1992) and Jameson (1991). Moreover, Power (1992 cited in Hassard, 1996:47) suggests that post-modernism is, in effect, a “negation of modernism”. Parker (1992) notes that it may be appropriate to employ the hyphenated form “post-modernism”. This corresponds to similar usage of the prefix in modernist “labels” such as “post-Fordism”, “post-capitalism” and “post-industrialisation”.(in Bell, 1973; Harvey, 1989; Piore and Sabel, 1984) If post-modernism is a fresh epoch than Hassard suggests that it is problematic in representationalist terms since it is “based on the idea that we simply need to find the right way of describing the world out there”.(Hassard, 1993) Alternatively, Chia states that postmodernism does not constitute an era. (Chia, 1996:7)

Secondly, as a new branch of epistemology Parker (*ibid*:pp.1-17) suggests the term “postmodern” - with no significance attached to the prefix form. Hassard (1993) states that this body of literature concerns innovations in poststructuralist philosophy. It is deeply concerned with the role of language and discourse and the world as it is constructed by them (echoing its “upstream” (Latour, *ibid*) commitments. Again, Boje, Fitzgibbons and Steingard (1996:63) indicate writers viewing postmodernism as a novel epistemological development. These include



*inter alia*: Derrida (involved in a deconstruction of discourse through an analysis of differences between meaning); Lyotard (concerned about local narratives as opposed to grand meta-narratives); Foucault (discussing the censoring power of discourse and the embedded power relations of language). Such critical perspective ideas associated with discourse and narrative begin to offer contrasting approaches to the meta-narratives embodied in the earlier discussed notions of predominant corporate imperative. However, Chia not only problematizes postmodernism as an epoch, he also sees difficulties viewing it as an alternative epistemology: “postmodernism [is] characterized by the insistent turning back of organization theory upon itself so as to reveal tensions and contradictions embedded in the representationalist truth assertions.” (Chia, 1996:7) and in this “postmodernism is parasitical upon the very categories promulgated by modernism which it seeks to criticise. It is not a substitute paradigm.” (*ibid*) Nevertheless, Cooper and Burrell (1988:91-112) suggest that postmodern analysis focuses on the idiosyncratic “production of the organization” rather than the (more modernist) “organization of production”.

It has been suggested that there is a process of *commodification* within modernism.(Alvesson and Willmott, 1992) And, indeed, critical perspectives, tend to reject the “worth” of commodification. Postmodernism is suspicious that, from a modernistic perspective, everything can potentially be packaged or made ready for consumption.(Boje, Gephart and Thatchenkery, 1996:33) In particular, Lyotard (1984 cited in Boje and Gephart, 1996:6) has noted the increasing commodification of, for example, education and knowledge. Moreover, insights can be gleaned of how aspects within the management education and development domain have been “commodified”. The trends to introduce competencies frameworks (as discussed above) may be seen as an attempt to “package” up management in some way. Equally, the corporate imperative of profit or revenue maximisation (a key tenet of the modernist paradigm) has driven management development providers to commodify and market their training and development “products” in accordance with this imperative. With buyers of these products viewing development through a process of commodification, they too are persuaded that seeking “deliverables” from their



purchase is part of “desirable best practice”. Such a buying process may simply perpetuate the deemed appropriate response from the supplier - “provide the customer with what they think they want”. This is an idea considered further within the OMD discussion below. The impact of commodification within OMD is very significant. This is particularly the case concerning the manner in which the corporate imperative can be witnessed underpinning much of the writing. Within the fieldwork there is scope for discussions regarding various ways in which the concept of the “outdoors” (for example) has been commodified.

In addition, Boje, Gephart and Thatchenkery (1996b:15) have focused attention on the rise of the *organizational imperative* in late modernism whereby managerial competitiveness is based essentially on the superior competitive qualities of people and their organization. It is readily possible to detect strong strands of Darwinism in these assumptions. Darwinist approaches, built on representationalist and “scientific” categories are generally refuted by critical perspectives. Below, it will be seen how OMD conjures up vivid images and situations that bring into sharp focus issues surrounding the Darwinist organizational imperative.

Moreover, Boje, Gephart and Thatchenkery (*ibid*:p.6) raise the question of the significance of science within modernism and provide a postmodern critique. They propose that *science* constitutes the major *cultural movement* of modernism in that it “embraces a totalizing perspective on knowledge” offering, it is important to note, a “meta-narrative of enlightenment”. With the alleged implosion and passing of modernism (Hassard, 1993) the “grand narrative becomes unsustainable and science is transformed into a [consumer] product to be sold”. Clearly, postmodernism has a suspicion of “the value of science”(Baudrillard, 1983) and meta-narrative. This perspective comments on OMD, where large amounts of the writing and commentary seem to subscribe to research and analysis with “scientific overtones” - akin to the positivistic, hypothesis-building approaches closely associated with science. A critical perspective that offers alternative narratives may help to enrich the debate.



In tandem with the increasingly questionable value of meta-narratives, equally, the dismantling of dualistic perspectives is central to developing critical perspectives (Boje, Gephart and Thatchenkery, 1996b:12) This has important implications for a domain such as management development which is replete with dualistic models (i.e. bi-polar extremes with a continuum between them). OMD is particularly prone to the use of this device and the comments made in this section will be useful for that portion of the discussion.

In summary, this overview has sought to discuss broad strands of critical perspective thought relevant to OMD and, therefore, cannot hope to do full justice to the emerging areas in the management and management development literature which are both rich and complex.

### **1.8.1 Reflexivity.**

Discussion of reflexivity in relation to representation and the above-mentioned perspectives is necessary and important for better understanding the context of the immediate discussion and the broader conversation concerning narrative, social construction and the methodology chapter.

Reflexivity: "...is an attempt to make explicit the process by which the material and analysis are produced... Both the researcher and researched are seen as collaborators in the construction of knowledge".(Banister *et al.*, 1995:149) Wilkinson (1988:493 again in Banister (1995)) offers a role to "personal reflexivity" which is about "acknowledging who you are, your individuality as a researcher and how your personal interests and values influence the process of research from the initial idea to outcome. It reveals, rather than conceals, the level of personal involvement and engagement." In the discussion in the methodology chapter a number of commentaries are constructed in an attempt to make more apparent the role of personal reflexivity in the thesis.



Banister *et al.* (1988:493) also talk about the need to be “critically subjective” which is termed as “able to empathize with participants, yet be aware of our own experiencing...”. Banister’s *et al.* position becomes problematic however as it strives to provide a middle ground between some notional objectivity and subjectivity. This is reinforced by Hassard (1995:127 following Lawson, 1985) who clearly associates reflexivity within a postmodern (“upstream”) perspective: “In a postmodern approach to knowledge, we must also possess the ability to be critical or suspicious of our own intellectual assumptions”.

Equally, Wilkinson (*ibid*:p.495) offers a role to what she terms “functional reflexivity”. This involves: “continuous, critical examination of the practice/process of research to reveal its assumptions, values and biases [with regard to the methods chosen and the manner in which they are employed]”. Clearly this is related to the notion of personal reflexivity. Reflexivity, therefore, intertwines and obviates the notion of separation of the researcher and the researched. Research implicitly and integrally involves a subjective interaction for all concerned.

In this sense, reflexively, the present thesis is a representation of many forms and things: field visits to OMD courses, discussions with many people in many different situations, my personal life experiences - past and present, documents pertaining to OMD organizations, discussions with friends and colleagues and thoughts that emerge and are hurriedly jotted down whilst, for an everyday example, doing some domestic chore. Also, most importantly, it seeks to “represent” the existing theory or epistemology by relating it to a point or points, summarising it or citing it *verbatim*.(Lawley, 2000) This thesis therefore is, in turn, a representation of these multifarious representations.

Moreover, all of the above ideas within the *form* of overall document are “represented” so that it complies with the conventions and prescriptions of doctoral and texts and processes. The experience is multi-textual and multi-dimensional. I, as the writer, seek to present or represent organizational life to a



range of audiences, for example students, academics or business practitioners.(*ibid*)

It is important to recognise that this very document is, itself, a representation. As such it is, for example, organized in a chapter form where linear structuring of the text means groups of ideas are arranged in a sequential manner. What does this linear representation exclude? Text, for example, perhaps precludes oral or sensory experiences. It also *straightens out* something more complex and interconnected in nature.(*ibid*)

With an understanding of the implications of reflexivity it will now be valuable to also revisit the above remarks on representation. Although Chia (1996) espouses and values the merits of upstream thinking more than downstream he does note reflexively (as already commented) that the very idea of the “two categories” can be expressed only through a modernist frame of reference and is hence problematic.(*ibid*:p.2) Hassard (1995:128) sees similar issues present: “The rationale for reflexivity is that *propositions which remove representation from the grasp of the factual are themselves representations*. In other words they treat as real both language and a universe divorced from language. The result is that they beget their own critical analyses”.[Emphasis added]

As such, it can be said that Upstream and Downstream thinking are inevitably and inextricably linked – each arising, seemingly paradoxically, as a direct consequence of the other. In this, Chia talks of a “logic of supplementarity”( *ibid*:p.1) and continues: “The presence of the other is implicitly recognised as the very condition for the articulation of the one”.(*ibid*) Chia (1996) follows the upstream argument to a situation of deconstructionism. The inherent problem in such a position is that form, structure or fixed meaning or flawed or assumptions underpinning meaning cannot be fixed. Chia (1996:10) points out that the purpose is not nihilism however the “careful and systematic dismantling of deeply careful and entrenched structures of thought”. A key facet of this argument is that representationalist thinking is based on “creating the illusion that an objective reality exists apart from the *investigator’s perception*



and that statement's made refer to this external reality".(ibid:p.7) The relationship between perception and external objects is a crucial one for the present thesis. Embraced by upstream thinking and related to this debate (and embroiled in the discussion on perception and external reality) are the concepts of social construction and narrative. It will be necessary to declare an understanding of how the present argument intends to comprehend the relationship between perception, the notion of "external objects", social construction and narrative.

Having the time to elaborate a range of issues surrounding representation it is now useful to reconsider the starting point for the discussion. In this light, at the initial point of having presented the Storey's model it can be seen how, for example, Storey's typology "represents" an area or "thing" labelled "management development" as four discrete items. In so doing Storey (like a large number of other commentators) not only creates a representation with the typology but also prescribes, and most importantly, circumscribes a domain called "management development" and, subsequently subjects the creation or representation to analysis.

How does all the above commentary relate to the flow of the present thesis? As stated, the argument below will discuss areas popularly "represented" under the label "OMD" (Outdoor Management Development). For example, in the present Chapter a debate is undertaken regarding a predominant representation in management development concerned with optimised efficiency, effectiveness and performativity. The extent to which modernistic and positivistic representations underpin the conceptualisation and contextualisation in a domain labelled "OMD" is discussed shortly. It is shown that OMD has tended towards a representationalist mode in the manner in which it relates and debates issues. Equally, subsequent discussion considers how the "origins of OMD" are represented and the consequences of this for contemporaneous experiences. It seeks to develop a view of OMD experiences as emergent from social constructive and story-telling processes. In so doing it shows the ways in, and the



extent to, which various narrative building is subdued and while other stories are actively encouraged to emerge.

The discussion has now presented and illustrated a number of ideas and concepts regarding balancing perspectives to the modernist paradigm. With the facility of these alternative epistemological frameworks it may be possible to reconfigure a number of dominant modernist themes within the OMD literature. In particular, the notion of corporate imperative is cast in a new light. The next stage of this Chapter discusses a range of ideas related to critical perspective approaches including social construction and narrative. These ideas are important to the thesis and the preceding discussion was significant for providing the context in which to set them.

### **1.8.2 Social Constructionism.**

Critical perspectives, introduced above, raise a fresh set of questions and ways of viewing the world. Within these, the ideas of social construction see meaning as emergent from social interaction of people. It is social interaction that assists in generating and “making sense” (Weick, 1995) of the world and the experiences therein. Whetton and Godfrey (1998:35-41) discuss how identity is socially constructed through: “continually renegotiated sets of meanings”. They contrast this with more functionalist views which perceive identity as social fact.

Berger and Luckmann (1971) in their seminal commentary on social constructionism state that the social construction of “reality” centres around the issues of “knowledge” and how this is negotiated or emergent through social processes. They offer an extensive treatise on questions concerning a range of issues. They consider the notion of social order and see it as “a human product, or, more precisely an ongoing human production”.(ibid:p.69). In considering society as, firstly, *objective reality* and subsequently, *subjective reality* they consider the nature of the development of knowledge and meaning. They focus



on the concept of “habitualization” noting it as: “Any action that is repeated frequently becomes cast into a pattern”(ibid:p.71) or the experience of “there we go again”.(ibid:p.76) A key motivation here is sheer economy of effort so that every decision to be taken in the course of a day is not based on “first principles”. This involves some form of “typifactory” scheme where “types” of individuals are negotiated as mutual frames of reference of mutual recognition and identification (or not). As Berger and Luckmann suggest (ibid:pp.45-46):

“The typifactory schemes entering into face-to-face situations are, of course, reciprocal. The other also apprehends me in a typified way – as ‘a man’, ‘An American’, ‘a salesman’, and ‘ingratiating fellow’, and so on. The other’s typifications are as susceptible to my interference as mine are to his. In other words, the two typifactory schemes enter into an ongoing ‘negotiation’ in the face-to-face situation. In everyday life such ‘negotiation’ is itself likely to be prearranged in a typical manner – as in the typical bargaining process between buyers and salesmen. Thus, most of the time, my encounters with others in everyday life are typical in a double sense – I apprehend the other *as* a type and I interact with him in a situation that is itself typical.”

This is seen as leading to an “institutionalization”: which “occurs whenever there is a reciprocal typification of habitualized actions by types of actors”.(ibid:p.71) They consider the notion of “relevance” structures which supply a “ready-made” “social stock”. What is relevant in this sense is what a given person is involved in. They offer the example of the a given company’s shares falling but if a person does not know of, or knows of but does not hold those shares then its relevance is diminished for the person. Different people have varying relevance structures and these may coincide creating what Berger and Luckmann (ibid:pp.59-60) term “interesting” discussions.

For Berger and Luckmann intertwined processes of typification, habitualization give rise leads to the “externalization” and “objectification” of this human and



social experience and permits a process of consequent internalization of a so created “reality” in that: “A world so regarded attains a firmness in consciousness.”(*ibid*:p.78) And, as such, everyday human experiences become seen as ‘legitimated’ (:a justification of “the institutional order by ascribing cognitive validity to its objectivated meanings”(*ibid*:p.111) or representations (Chia, 1996) rather than being “humanly produced”.(Berger and Luckman,1971:78) It should not be assumed that “these moments” occur in a “temporal sequence”(*ibid*:p.149) but rather intertwine and interrelate on an ongoing manner.

At this juncture it is useful to take stock of this conversation and relate it to the earlier remarks on management development. In the light of this discussion, it can be seen that paradigms underpinning management development activity are socially constructed. For example, the notion of the impact of training on the bottom line, or some other corporate imperative is the consequence of an objectification of these constructs. Watson provides a valuable review:

“Instead of seeing individuals or social groupings as entities, organisations or societies, groups and human identities are seen within the new perspective as the *ongoing achievements* of human interaction. Nothing is fixed, everything is moving. Persons and their worlds are continuously *in process*. Through interacting – and through institutionalising much of that interaction in cultures and discourses – humans are constantly creating (or ‘socially constructing’) a knowledge or ‘sense’ of who they are, of what they are doing and of where they are going”.(Watson, 1999:18)

He cites Chia and continues stating that social constructionism:

“privileges an ontology of movement, emergence and becoming in which the transient and ephemeral nature of what is ‘real’ is accentuated (Chia, 1996:581 cited in Watson, 1999:19)



It involves a move away from 'thingness' or entitiveness (Dachler and Hosking, 1995 cited in Watson, 1999:18) where certain features and characteristics are fixed ready to be described.

Chia seeks to contextualise this perspective in the light of Latour's theory of organizational paradigms: [construction is] "... seen as first steps in moving from the dominant downstream representationalist thinking to an upstream deconstructive mode of thought... [it] is therefore best understood as an attempt to rearticulate our accounts of human experiences without relying on the problematical assumptions underpinning representationalism." (Chia, 1996:15)

These remarks clearly position social constructionism as conceptually different to representational thinking. Watson comments that we will make: "better progress in our attempts to understand the human world if we turn away from more orthodox styles of thinking towards a more processual, relational, discursive or constructionist style of thinking about human beings and their social worlds."(Watson,1999:17)

Within the discussion on social construction, in a subjective reality context, Berger and Luckmann draw a distinction between primary and secondary socialization: "Primary socialization is the first socialization an individual undergoes in childhood, through which he becomes a member of society. Secondary socialization is any subsequent process that inducts an already socialized individual into new sectors of the objective world of his society."(Berger and Luckmann,1971:151)

In primary socialization the world is "mediated" by "significant others" (for example, parents or guardians) to the individual in a highly emotional process.(*ibid*:p.151) They suggest that there is little available choice in this phase of development and hence many possible confusions over identity are obviated; and, continue: "primary socialization ends when the concept of the generalized other (and all that goes with it) has been established in the consciousness of the individual. At this point he is an effective member of society and in subjective



possession of a self and a world.”(*ibid*:p.157) They are cautious, however to note that: “Socialization is never total and never finished.”(*ibid*)

Whilst primary socialization is valuable for the current discussion, secondary socialization is perhaps of greater immediate importance. Berger and Luckmann (*ibid*:p.158) state that: “Secondary socialization is the internalization of institutional or institution-based ‘sub-worlds’. Its extent and character are therefore determined by the complexity of the division of labour and the concomitant social distribution of knowledge.” Part of these experiences is language developed in the context of the particular “sub-world”. Interestingly, secondary socializations are contextualised with regard to primary socializations.

This initial insight into social constructionism illustrates how interpretation is crucial, at every level. Meaning is constructed depending on the particular experiences of the actors involved.(Fineman, 1993:11) This idea can also be discussed within the context of an OMD programme. However, temporary the duration of the OMD course, it nevertheless provides the coincidence of a myriad range of social constructions of the various participants in relation to their various perceptions of time and space.

Before moving on it will be useful to underline a number of points concerning the notion of “sense-making” (Weick, 1995) which was mentioned above. Sense-making shares a number of ontological commitments with social-constructionism. Weick points out that “Active agents construct sensible, sensible (Huber and Daft, 1987:154) events”. He also suggests that sense-making is invoked whenever “expectations” (and particularly notions of control of these) are interrupted: “Thus to understand sense-making is to understand how people cope with interruptions”.(Weick, 1995:5) Importantly, and here a powerful linkage with social constructivism is pointed up: “Sense-making is grounded in both individual and social activity”.(*ibid*) (He is quick to indicate that the notion of separating individual and social is problematic and a “durable tension”.(*ibid*:p.6) In an interim summative statement Weick suggests a number of “properties” that relate to the idea of sense-making. These are that it is a



process: “grounded in identity construction; retrospective; enactive of sensible environments; social; ongoing; focused on and by extracted cues; driven by plausibility rather than accuracy”. Many aspects of these notions relate well to social construction perspective. However, there is also need for some care. Weick’s discussion and ideas, on occasion, also have implicit leanings towards representationalist presentations. At times he uses ideas like “event”, “cue”, “grounded” unproblematically. Equally, he raises interesting comments of sense-making in relation to “interpretation” and interpreting”. These are discussed further in the methodology chapter. In summary, social construction engages a range of commitments including movement of meaning that is negotiated, human sourced and centered and perception-based in relation to a certain physical facticity of experience. This latter thought is important for the next step of the argument.

### **1.8.3 Social Construction: Relativism,.....**

The above remarks provide an initial understanding of social constructivism and the conceptual stance permeating and informing the present argument. There are now a number of issues that need to be debated in relation to it. Various writers feel it is important to discuss the extent to which the concept of social construction “can be taken”. This is associated with the issue of relativism in social construction. It is time to consider the problematic of “thingness”(Watson,1999) in social construction.

An important source of these commentators is from the study of the philosophy of history. One such commentator is Carr (1991:4), who arguing similar issues within the context of the philosophy of history cites Dilthey (1968:277-78): “we are historical beings first, before we are observers [*Betrachter*] of history, and only because we are the former do we become the latter...The historical world is always there and the individual not only observes from the outside but is intertwined with it [*in sie verwebt*].”



Chia (1996:17) calls for attention on “fundamental social organizing processes”. The problem herein is the use of the word fundamental. This implies that this may be construed as some ultimately more desirable or “truthful” facet that should be considered. And, it seems somewhat at odds with statements like “Many now concede that both their own accounts and the accounts generated by those they research are first and foremost imaginative linguistic constructions.” (Chia, *ibid*) in which “Theories are better understood as products of “disciplined imagination” (Weick, 1989) or “self-justifying, intelligible narratives”. (Chia, 1996: p.17)

An issue here is a possibility of relativism and solipsism. A consequence of these positions is that at some point in such an argument a claim is reached in that everything is social construction and that nothing “exists”. All and any reality is a social construct. Chia (1996:10, following Nietzsche, Freud, Heidegger and Derrida) illustrates the consequences of such a position when he refers to writers who talk of sawing off the branch on which one is sitting and being able to do so because they may chose to believe that there is no ground. Parker (1995:556) contributes: “While solipsism is rarely explicitly argued, it clearly underwrites much of postmodernism and seems to me to be counterintuitive.” The argument is approaching an important statement of belief with regard to its engagement with social construction. More will be said on this shortly below.

Some commentators challenge relativistic approaches suggesting that there must be experience of *something*. Arbnor and Bjerke (1997:158) reiterate at a juxtaposed position that: “In strictly empirical thinking, people are seen as passive experiencers and objects in external reality”. However, they also propose the possibility of developing an interpretativist position that creates meaning around the “somethings”.

However, here there is a *caveat*. To make sense of an artefact or “thing” is to imply the existence of some observer independent of, and objectively viewing, it. It is such suggested separation that is problematic for a social constructivist



position. James, (1892 cited in Gergen 1971:16) argues that there are: “not two separate phenomena: the knower and the known but one. This single phenomenon [is] the stream of consciousness in which images, emotions, and sensations constantly flowed.” Equally, Kohler-Riessman (1993:4-5) suggests that “Informants stories *do not mirror* a world ‘out there’. They are constructed, creatively authored, rhetorical, replete with assumptions and interpretative.”[Emphasis added] It may be entirely appropriate to suggest that people “mirror”, and thus relate to and “act” out, a perceived reality or set of realities. Various authors have suggested that people do seek to mirror images or create particular impressions in an array of contexts. Morgan (1986), presents ideas on the role of images and the process in which they are created (i.e “Imaginization”). Furthermore, Giacalone and Rosenfeld (1991) have considered the role of “impressions”: their existence, process of creation and significance in organizations. Thus one driving energy here appears to be: “Like all social actors, I seek to persuade myself and others that I am a good person. My narrative is inevitably a self representation.(Goffman, 1959 in Kohler-Riessman, 1993:11)

Parker (1995:556) is concerned regarding claims that it is only “language, discourse and metaphor that shape our world”. He senses that this is lacking in certain respects. “I suggest that there are limits to the power of human definition – just because someone claims that this journal is made of green cheese does not mean that it is.”(*ibid*) Parker, underlines that he cannot affirm this and that implicitly the language *per se* contains assumptions: “I simply state it because to me it seems a sensible reflection of my own beliefs and experience. Stating this thesis more generally, I do not believe that the world is infinitely pliable and would want to assert that physical, biological and social constraints exist in a real sense outside of whether I want them to or not.”(*ibid*)

Watson makes a useful statement that clarifies the discussion and provides the beliefs according to which the arguments in the present thesis are marshalled:

“There is a world which exists outside to our selves but it only becomes a ‘reality’ to which we can relate when we bring language to bear upon it.



Rain does fall from the skies. Food grows or fails to grow in our fields. And there are buildings of wood, brick and metal in which people live and work. But all of these things are only realities, in the sense that we can connect them with our lives, when they have been 'socially constructed' by human interpretation through language. There have to be words and concepts which define what is rain and what is mist, what is weed and what is corn, what is a home and what is a workplace. The only way we can 'touch' these realities is through talk. And there is no way we can avoid the implication of that very talk in the making of these realities."(Watson, 1999:20-21)

Parker (1995) and Watson (1999a,b) draw together the beliefs espoused within the present argument concerning social constructive processes. It is in this light that subsequent commentaries on OMD (later on) will be construed.

Prior to moving the discussion on, there is value in amplifying the debate to consider further the role of language in social construction. This was mentioned a number of times above and some understanding needs to be generated in relation to it so as to provide a nexus with the commentary on narrative that is the next step of the argument. Parker (2000: 83) Makes social constructive links for the role of language and interaction within a cultural context:

"Translating this [linguistic] argument into cultural terms suggests that any competent person can perform practices that are meaningful only because culture provides a grammar within which they can be understood. Douglas (1987) and Watson (1994) apply this kind of argument to organizations by suggesting that they effectively provide ways to think, that is to say memories, identities, analogies that structure the lives of the people within them."

But language and culture also emerge in relation to time. Because it has relevance for the ensuing discussion on OMD it will be useful to consider a number of critical perspective comments regarding the relationship between



“epoch” and “nomenclature”. Because narrative emerges from the use of language within social constructive processes, terminology and nomenclature are seen as being of paramount significance. Language, and its use, are closely associated with power and the role of power in the organization.(Boje, Gephart and Thatchenkery, 1996) The conceptual assumptions of postmodernism involve a “rejection of univocal interpretation of forms, words and images.”(Hassard, 1993) Furthermore, Chia and Morgan (1996:41) on Foucault surmise that:

“Since knowledge is associated with some formulation of truth about things, its nature will significantly depend upon the *period’s construal of the signs* used to formulate such truths... since the most important signs used for knowledge formulation are linguistic ones, the status of knowledge must depend on an *epoch’s conception of language*”. [Emphasis added]

Josselson and Lieblich (1993) also underline the linkage between “life as lived and the social times”. Herein, there are echoes of Knights and Willmott’s (1995) concept of “lived experience”. The relationship of life and epoch merits brief allusion to the existence of a sociology of literature perspective. Essentially, this embraces a number of dimensions including the concept of social realism where fiction seeks to portray, often in satirical format, social “events” and “atmospheres” of the period in which it is set.(Hickey, 1984:9-44) Naturally, there is potential for interplay between the written or commentated ideas to the extent that in turn they provide a stimulus and script to be played out in life rather than just a commentary on it. This thought is supported by the reflection that:

“...within philosophy, approaches to narrative have been concerned with truth value. Is there a “true” story or are all stories reconstructions? In a postmodern sense, we may view narrative as dynamic and changing, as itself the product of psychological, *sociological and historical influence*.”(Josselson and Lieblich, 1993:xiii)[Emphasis added]



Period, and perception of it, clearly has consequences for the construction of narrative and, moreover, narratives apparent *buttressing* or *dependency* on a given time or era. All words become referents, referring to the environment around them for understanding and semantic significance.(Hassard, 1993) Moreover, Deetz (1992:29) rejects the view that notion of “meanings of signs [being]... *fixed* as conventions of a speech community”.(*ibid*:p.29)[Emphasis added] Rather he suggests that conflictual meaning potentially resides in every sign. Issues concerning signs and labels, and the role of time in ascribing values, may become important when examining the plethora of labels that has been attributed to the Outdoor Management Development approach. It may well be possible to discern meaning from the way in which these are constructed and applied and this will be discussed in the subsequent chapters concerned with contextualisation in OMD.

#### **1.8.4 Social Construction and Emotion.**

Before leaving this discussion on social construction, there is now a useful opportunity to expand the notion and to consider within a social constructive frame of reference the topic of emotion. Any discussion regarding people that seeks to gain a greater understanding of the way in which they may create meaning through social construction and narrative cannot avoid discussing the role of emotions. Equally, care has to be taken not to afford “emotions” some objectified representational status. When applied in an organizational context it might be suggested that emotions receive relatively little attention. Such an extension of argument is valuable for later discussion of OMD. Hochschild (1993 in Fineman, 1993: ix) sets the scene:

“To be sure, social psychologists who study organizations have explored such issues as worker satisfaction, job-related stress and attitudes towards the workplace. Yet often they study opinions and attitudes that exist ‘on top of’ an *emotion free machine*. To the extent that the emotion enters at



all, the social psychologist imagines it to appear in *idiosyncratic and not routine ways, to be disruptive not constructive in its consequence, and to be basically marginal, not central to life at work*. Paradoxically, in assuming all this, analysts of the workplace seem to convert to the belief that the workplace holds of itself.” [Emphasis added]

Hochschild cites Gabriel’s concern over how employees ‘feel’ about where they spend substantial periods of their lives. In turn Gabriel seeks to translate these ideas into metaphors that seem relevant and helpful to individuals: “Does he see it as a football team? A madhouse? A family? A conveyor belt?”.(Hochschild, 1993 in Fineman, 1993: *preface*) This provides insight into how individuals socially construct meaning. Moreover, Fineman (1993:31) has noted that within the debate the terms ‘feeling’ and ‘emotion’ are often used interchangeably in the literature. In the case of OMD what feelings are generated here and how might they be portrayed through social constructive processes?

Moreover, Fineman (1993:9) demonstrates how a large number of accounts of organizational life portray people who are: “emotionally anorexic”. They have ‘dissatisfactions’ and ‘satisfactions, they may be ‘alienated’ or ‘stressed’, they will have ‘preferences’, ‘attitudes’ and ‘interests’. Often these are noted only as variables for managerial control.” Again, the ensuing discussion seeks to demonstrate the extent to which this “anorexia” may have occurred in OMD.

Equally, to live within organizations it is important to be able to understand the organization’s “emotional map.” He talks of a process of learning “to trace patterns of emotional attribution”.(Hochschild, 1993:xi) Thus:

“The mindlessness and affect and emotion perspectives offer an alternative to the cognitive, quasi-rationalistic perspectives that have come to dominate the social constructionist approaches to organizational analysis just as they have been so strongly represented in the dominant individual rationality approaches.”(Pfeffer, 1982:224 in Fineman, *ibid*:p.14)



“We are left with the image of an actor who thinks a lot, plans, plots and struggles to look the right part at the right time. But we do not hear this actor’s anger, pain, embarrassment, disaffection or passion and how such feeling relates to actions - except when it forms part of the organizational script.”(Fineman, *ibid*)

In addition, Fineman (*ibid*:p.2) points out how “social constructionism opens other emotion doors: such as to gender rules of emotional display, and the way that specific social roles determine what we should or should not feel, or show we feel.” Putnam and Mumby (1993 in Fineman, *ibid*:p.36) consider further the idea that emotions are often regarded as ‘inappropriate’ for business being considered ‘disruptive’, ‘illogical’, ‘biased’ or ‘weak’. In contrast, *rationality* is generally viewed as being preferable to *emotionalism* in an organizational context (*ibid*:p.39) :

“Rationality is typically seen as objective, orderly and mental while emotionality reflects the subjective, chaotic and bodily drives. Feelings are physical and chaotic as evident in such phrases as ‘her stomach was tied in knots’ and ‘he’s falling apart’. Data acquired experientially or through personal interest are suspect and potentially distorted. This system of dualities also treats certain concepts as masculine and others as feminine. Hence, *rationality, cognition and order are descriptors of masculinity while emotionality, affect and chaos depict the feminine. Thus rationality evokes a positive, masculine image while emotionality is linked to a negative, feminine world view.*(Lutz, 1988; Mumby and Putman, 1992 in Fineman, *ibid*:p.40)[Emphasis added]

Within a consideration of emotion, it might be possible talk of “emotion work” and “emotional labour”.

“Emotion work is the effort we put into ensuring that our private feelings are suppressed or represented to be in tune with socially accepted norms - such as looking happy and enthusiastic at a friend’s party, when we



actually feel tired or bored. Emotional labour is the commercial exploitation of this principle; when an employee is in effect paid to smile, laugh, be polite, or 'be caring'. An essential feature of the job is to maintain the organizationally prescribed demeanour or mask. This can be fun; an exquisite drama. It can also be stressful and alienating."(Fineman, 1993:3)

"Emotional labour.... is unavoidable and is often pernicious, because the very nature of corporate life as we know it marginalises our personal feelings. Feelings get in the way of organizational effectiveness. But what if we reverse the reasoning? What if we assume that work feelings are central to effective human interaction, and the expression of 'real' feeling is quite consistent with corporate excellence?".(Putnam and Mumby in Fineman, 1993:3)

Flam (1990) makes an emotional critique of Peters and Waterman (1982:10) work suggesting that "their organizational '7-S' (structure, strategy, systems, shared values, skills, staff, style) model left out the eighth crucial 'S' - the sentiments of the homo- sentiens." If emotional work and labour can be related to the organization then they will have powerful influences and consequences for both the processes of social construction and narrative. Flam, advocates acknowledgement of the central role of emotions in organizational life. However, even though commentary on emotions is gathering momentum Putnam and Mumby (1993) in Fineman (1993:43) regrettably note that at best organizations treat emotions as "commodities".



## 1.9 Management Development Literature: Conclusion.

The above argument has provided an account of the way in which wide areas of the management development literature may be seen as representationalist couched in positivistic and modernistic frameworks. The latter stage of the discussion has focused more on the individual and emotional aspects of managerial and organizational experience.(Fineman, 1993) Within this latter strand, the argument has also illustrated the extent to which social construction and narrative approaches have the potential to provide rich insights into life, both managerially and at a broader level also. These approaches contest, or review, some of the more conventional conceptualisations regarding managerial experience:

“Social constructionism presumes no natural order to social arrangements. It draws attention to the *fragility of many social patterns*. Not surprisingly, given the sense of instability and unpredictability that this conveys, we find texts for managers and primers on organizational theory tend to stress more deterministic approaches to organizational life. They take for granted an organization confronted by an environment of competitors, suppliers, markets and governments.”(Hellriegel *et al.*, 1988)

Indeed, the world is not easily or readily categorised.(Zucker, 1987 in Fineman, 1993:11) As Fineman (*ibid*) notes “organizations so construed, are in the head fictions, which are taken as if they had material existence”. The positions of theory and practice are frequently embodied (however stereotypically) in the roles of academic and practitioner respectively. At the same time, “practice”, with a tendency to be driven by a predilection for positivist corporate imperatives (discussed above), has looked regularly to theory and academia for guidance as to what may constitute “best practice” as a means to ensuring optimised “effectiveness”, “efficiency”, and “productivity”. Equally, due to the empirical nature of much of the research carried out, it would seem that practitioners are, in turn, looked to (and at) by academics in order to provide insights into how



management development *is lived*. A wide range of commentators have expressed grave concern regarding the conservatism that may be fundamentally responsible for bringing about this purported “imaging” or “mirroring” effect.

Husserl argues “for a notion of living in or intending a life-world (*lebenswelt*) - a condition quite opposed to the disowned, abstracted ‘real’ world of scientific methodology”.(Husserl cited in Curt 1994:34) This is supported by Lyotard’s (1984) concern regarding the dangers of subscribing to a *unitary or linear* progression narrative. It has been stated that this serves only “to suppress the possibility of multiple voices.”(Hassard, 1996) In summary, what are likely to be the consequences, for OMD, of these initial reflections? The subsequent chapters construct an argument that evokes many of the above concerns. In particular, there are concerns over conservatism and the incorporation and mirroring of perceived “best practice” and “leading edge” management theory in OMD programmes. It will be argued below that one of the implicit narratives within OMD is the subjugation of much of “OMD” experience to a paradigm that is rooted in both a positivistic and modernistic ethos. This has led to a powerful representationalist mirroring effect whereby OMD has sought to incorporate a particular strain of changing management language and trends into its programmes.

The next chapter considers narrative in a number of respects. The arguments in this chapter have provided very valuable context for developing that discussion.



## **CHAPTER TWO: Considering Narrative Processes**

### **2.1 Chapter Two: Overview.**

Narrative offers a complex phenomenon for discussion. That consideration will be undertaken in this chapter. The discussion in this section argues a case for viewing narrative as emergent from social constructive processes. Such processes relate to “everyday” constructed forms and structures with which people engage in order to make sense and relate experiences. Referring back to the earlier discussion on social construction it can be seen how an account of such processes is, in part, provided by the conversation concerning social constructionism.(Berger and Luckmann,1971; Fineman, 1993; Parker, 1995; Watson, 1999a,b). As an initial step it will be valuable to develop an *a priori* idea of some of the concerns and commitments of narrative commentary.

### **2.2 Views of Narrative.**

In a first instance, narrative can be discussed as a linguistic or textual process undertaken by a given person or persons. Such a process may be undertaken for a wide range of reasons and purposes. The expression “narrative” is often used synonymously with the term “story”. Carr (1991:4) illustrates this as “narrative – or, more humbly, stories and story-telling” (although the current argument does not see stories as a “lesser” idea). Watson (1999a) develops an understanding of narratives as:

“accounts of the world which follow a basic form of ‘this, then that, then that’ and which, when applied to human affairs, typically take on a more developed story-like form involving characters with interests, motives, emotions and moralities. It is the interaction of these characters together with the interplay of the variety of motives, values, feelings and which moves the story forward and shows human beings interacting with the cultural and material worlds and the contingencies which arise.”(Watson, 1999a:6)



This discussion will argue that social construction, discussed above, and narrative processes are inextricably intertwined. It is also implied that it is quite possible for varying constructions of experiences by different people to lead to the development of differing narratives and interpretations in attempts to generate understanding and meaning. Illustrations of such processes are provided by Gabriel (1995:477-501) (three perceptions of office incidents) and Watson (1999a:7-15) (negotiated meanings in business school lectures) wherein, stories may require adjustment *as* they are being told.(Gabriel, 1995:495)

Fineman and Gabriel illustrate some of the linguistic and constructive processes through which narrative concerning organizations can be created: “There are different ways in which we convey experiences of, and learn about, work life. Telling stories is one of them. Exchanging gossip, jokes, anecdotes is often central to the way we make sense of our experience.”(Fineman and Gabriel, 1996:1) Additionally, Gabriel (1995:477-501) discusses ways stories within dream and fantasy contexts enable people to live in a space that is less susceptible to supervisory control (sic: “the unmanaged organization”.(*ibid*:p.477)) He implies that processes of social construction influence the development of such experiences: “... a kind of organizational dreamworld in which desires, anxieties and emotions find expressions in highly irrational constructions.”(*ibid*:p.478) Dreams, he suggests are not a “loud social process”.(*ibid*:p.494)

The discussion on narrative in relation to management and organization studies is relatively recent but is one that is gaining momentum. This is due in part to the idea that: “By learning about these individuals, we can see the [constructed and emergent] phenomena more clearly in their context - *we return to study people rather than variables.*”(Josselson and Lieblich, 1993:xiii)[Emphasis added] Josselson and Lieblich’s concern to focus more clearly on “people” is also a concern of the present thesis with regard to OMD and this section of the discussion seeks ways in which narrative constructive processes might assist in this. The argument is thus stretching and expanding the perceptions of “people” generated by conventional or mainstream corporate imperatives of optimised performance. It is moving towards a view that seeks to encompass a more *lebenswelt* or holistic appreciation of the human



experience of managerial situations through the experiences in an OMD context. The debate now needs to construct an appreciation of various approaches to narrative.

Historically, commentary on narrative is constructed from a number of directions and literatures.(Josselson and Lieblich, 1993:xiii) An important epistemological resource is the philosophy of history including commentaries from, for example, Mink (1978) Ricouer (1984, 1985) and Carr (1991).

Within this sphere Carr (1991:9) highlights the inherent debate on narrative. Interestingly, it can be seen how the debate echoes and pre-empts, to some greater or lesser extent, the debate in organization studies. Carr points out narrative writers and philosophers such as Mink (1978) and White (1973). Mink sees narrative as a “creative act” whereas White sees narrative as “wishes, daydreams and reveries”.(Carr, 1991:12) Perhaps there is also scope for mixing agency and accident. Narrative and social construction conflate in these views, neither one nor the other but emerging in all these respects. It is created or constructed as the result of social interaction. Experiences, such as daydreaming for example, are part of this. Josselson and Lieblich (*ibid*) indicate that:

“In the past, there have been many approaches to the narrative study of lives, coming from different fields and research traditions. Within clinical psychology, the case study method has illuminated issues of etiology, diagnosis and treatment, but has focused [on] the pathological. The tradition of Allport, Murray and White, which had tried to use similar methods in the study of “normal” people, is now on the verge of a renaissance in the United States. From this vantage point, one may look at people who represent either a process or a group”.

Adams (1991:1) points to the “power of stories” and how this has been recognised over history in terms of the images they enable people to construct together and share. Carr shows how narrative approaches are heavily criticised by positivistic commentators like Mandelbaum (1967) and Goldstein (1976) in that narratives concentrate too much on “literary presentation rather than the hard work of observing, explanation and evaluation of sources”.(Carr, *ibid*) Contained within this perspective



is a long-standing tension between positivistic and interpretivist perspectives. It should be noted that it is a similar tension that informs the discussion on narratives in the management sphere and, more particularly, the debate concerning OMD.

Such debates generate a range of responses. A potential pitfall in such confrontational stances is that commentators seek to authenticate and legitimate the interpretivist nature of narrative against more representationalist and normative constructs, Josselson and Lieblich illustrate the former position but compound and confuse it with the second. In seeking to develop the concept of what constitutes a “good” story Josselson and Lieblich provide a number of points:

“What is a good story? What must be added to a story to make it good scholarship? How do we derive concepts from stories and then use these concepts to understand people? What, precisely, would have to be added to transform the story material from the journalistic or literary to the academic and theoretically enriching?”(Josselson and Lieblich, 1993:xi)

They discuss a range of possible criteria in response to the question.(*ibid*:pp.xi-xii) (It is encouraging to note that the editorial board of the publication had substantially differing opinions over what might be included in such criteria (but did not seem particularly concerned regarding the representationalist nature of the project)):

(a) *Breadth of Material*. In order to feel that someone can be understood, how much needs to be known about that person?

(b) *Coherence of Material*. “..the way different parts of the story add up to a complete and meaningful picture... balanced against problems of human complexity and contradiction.”(*ibid*)

(c) *Aesthetic Appeal of the Presentation*. Here it is suggested that the flow of the narrative and its very form may be vitally important to the creation of meaning. Josselson and Lieblich (1993) suggest that it is this characteristic which “has most stymied making narrative ‘scientific’ in the logical-positivistic framework. Good narrative analysis “makes sense” in intuitive,



holistic ways. The 'knowing' in such work includes, but transcends, the rational."(*ibid*)

(d) *A Story's Interdependency*. It is unable to stand alone entirely. It must have a theoretical premise or be rooted by some means to prior awareness or knowledge.

(e) *The Relationship Between the Author and the Subject*. How does the story fit into the writer's life - what role does it play or contribute?

However, there is a strong sense of prescriptiveness or set of rules in this formula. Perhaps a more interesting reflection would be 'what if one of these aspects were lacking or missing?' How might this influence, or impact upon, the narrative if at all? Equally, how are terms like, for example, "good", "breadth", "interdependency" to be considered? The suggested model is also a strange conflation of representationalist and interpretivist paradigms. In one sense there are the discrete boundaries of the variables made ready for analysis. Then again, the authors invite discussion of more reflexive issues as alluded to in point "(e)" above.

It should be noted that narrative has been used in relation to modernist concepts. Modernism has been associated with offering a "narrative of progress" and a "narrative of welfare".(Lyotard, 1984) This is the building of meta-narratives which are seen as all-embracing and generic.

In summary of this part of the discussion, a number of points on narrativizing have been considered. For the purposes of the present discussion narrative involves a socially constructed or negotiated way of developing meaning and sense of experience. These processes draw on familiar forms of narrative and it is understood, and will be discussed further below, that notions of "structures" in narratives are, on occasion, consequences of habitualization, typification and externalization.(Berger and Luckmann,1971) In this they can be accorded an objectified, independent existence.

Some opening statements have been made concerning story-telling. In order to enhance this appreciation, the discussion will now look at three particular aspects. The



first is the relationship between “fact” and “fiction” in narratives. The second concerns the ways that “time” functions in a narrative context and, thirdly, roles and relationships between “time”, “structure” and “language”. Underpinning all these debates are tensions concerning representationalist, as opposed to interpretive, social constructive views of narrative. Narrativizing is a rich and emotive experience and the argument below considers this in several respects. To refer to “structures” is to remind the discussion of the need to use such labels reflexively whilst underscoring the temporary nature of their ontological status.(Parker, 1995:553-564) After this point, and in the light of the arguments constructed, the discussion will consider the relationship of narrative within a context of social construction.

### **2.3 Narrative Fact and Fiction.**

The commentary on, and the relationship between, what are commonly termed “fact” and “fiction” in narrative are important in narrative arguments and this, in turn, is associated with debates on representational and constructive processes. Narrative is often compartmentalised or categorised into “factual” narrative or “fictional” narrative with no suggestion of overlap, or coincidence, between various aspects of each. The argument considers the usefulness of a separation of these two as clearly identifiable states or, alternatively, the extent to which fact and fiction are better considered as interwoven and blurred.

Narrative is often discussed in terms of fiction and non-fiction. Phillips (1995:630) goes further suggesting a possible matrix of Non-Narrative and Narrative versus Non-Fiction and Fiction. For example, Non-Narrative/Non-Fiction constitutes “survey data” or “laboratory data”. Alternatively, examples of Narrative/Non-Fiction include case studies, biographies and ethnographies are seen as particularly relevant to the present debate.

Cohen (1998:166) offers a useful and interesting definition of fiction as “*intentionally* imaginative work, in the literary form of prose or poetry or drama”. [Emphasis added] This raises an interesting debate concerning creative acts as deliberate or inadvertent.



Knights and Willmott (1999) consider how intent may not always be apparent. They point out that Lodge exercises: “full advantage of his licence as a novelist to condense a variety of experiences which he translates into a dramatic narrative”. For the current debate how do social constructive processes engage the notion of intention? Further ideas will evolve in relation to this in the ensuing discussion.

Gabriel (1995:480) indicates that various approaches have been adopted within organization and management studies. He details morphological studies (focusing on deconstructing words used in narratives – citing *inter alia* Martin *et al.* (1983; Reason and Hawkins, 1988) and interpretive studies (citing *inter alia* Mahler, 1988; Martin, 1990) as two (among others) key approaches to the literature. This is not to limit possibilities to these two options. As Gabriel notes there are other aspects which are in anticipation of being developed further.

Narrative in its “institutionalised” (Berger and Luckmann, 1971:65) status suggests a range of representational (Chia 1996) or “typified” (Berger and Luckmann, 1971:45-8) forms or structures. Adams (1991:xii) acknowledges that narrative emerges in a range of forms. There are stories that seek to relate “facts” and offer a view or construction on past “events” and historical episodes. Equally there are stories that offer themselves as fiction. In this latter genre, the events, characters and places may all purport to be creations or constructions. Or, they may suggest that they are mixtures of these two apparent states (“fact” and “fiction”). Given the commentary on social construction above, it can be seen that the present argument finds such a categorical delineation problematic. As Adams (1991:2) intimates, people are always engaged in a process of constructing meaning. Interestingly, he shows how such processes of social construction also operate reflexively during the selection and production of a given text (i.e. the role of societal values, the authors wishes, and what publishers, censors and other “gatekeepers” think is appropriate for a wider reading). As such, Gabriel (1995:480) indicates that: “omissions, exaggerations, shifts in emphasis and licence to ride roughshod over “the facts” are central qualities... [of narrative]”. In relation to these ideas on structuring, Gabriel’s statement that narrative is capable of recreating “reality poetically” (Gabriel, 1995:480) echoes Ricouer’s (1984) sentiment that narrative is implicitly connected to a process of “poetic ordering”.



## 2.4 Narrative: Fact, Fiction and Management.

The “story” in the context of work situations is a “typical” form. As a consequence various typologies have emerged from these. For example, Gabriel (1995:485-491) develops the following: “cock-up stories: the subject as hero”; “humorous stories: the subject as heroic survivor”; “gripes and tragic stories: the subject as victim”; “romantic stories: the subject as love object”. Such “labels” (or quasi-representational forms) are quite common in the narrative commentaries on management:

“Some of the stories are *comic*, others *traumatic* or even *epic*, encompassing a broad range of emotions: joy, despair, frustration, pride, anxiety, fear, relief and amusement.”(Fineman and Gabriel, 1996:4)[Emphasis added]

In association with a discussion of such typologies, the consideration of fiction in relation to understanding management and organizations has been proposed by a number of commentators (Czarniawska-Joerges and Guillet de Monthoux, 1994; Knights and Willmott, 1995; Thompson and McGivern, 1996; Cohen, 1998; Hassard and Holliday, 1998; Watson, 1999) A number of these extend the above ideas of narrative and social construction and discuss the notion of the portrayal of “lived experience” in a managerial context. For these purposes they turn away from “non-fiction” narratives, like the examples above, and utilise *the novel* as a source. The novel is a classic form of narrative and it comes with a strong body of commentary in the form of the general critique and sociology of literature.(Lukacs, 1979; Hickey 1984; Czarniawska-Joerges, 1995) However, this is an epistemology that some writers feel has not had a firm or long-standing relationship with management writing. As Phillips (1995:626) notes: “The relationship between social science and narrative fiction (i.e. novels, plays, short stories, songs, films) has always been equivocal.” This may be so but Cohen (1998:166) proposes that the use of fiction in management education is less recent than often stated to be. She cites the role of liberal studies, metaphorical references and quotations from “literary works (e.g. French, 1992)” as demonstrating a pedigree in this respect. Others agree:

“novelistic techniques generate an excitement, intensity and emotive power that orthodox reporting or historiography do not aspire to...The novel itself is a



literary form evolved out of early journalism - broadsheets, pamphlets, criminals' confessions, accounts of disasters, battles, extraordinary happenings, which were circulated to an eagerly credulous readership as true stories, though they almost certainly contained an element of invention."(Lodge, 1989:203 cited in Knights and Willmott, 1995:3-4)

By way of illustration, Knights and Willmott (*ibid*) find "Vic", the manager-protagonist, in David Lodge's (1989) "Nice Work" a particularly poignant character who offers insights and lessons on the "reality" of managing. They suggest that many "conventional" accounts of management do not portray the experience of the manager well: "Management entails the common experience, challenges, disappointments and pleasures of *being human ....students and practitioners of management are, first and last, human beings*".(Knights and Willmott, 1995:3)[Emphasis added] They cite Watson (1994) as corroborating this perception. Importantly, they also suggest that the "realities of the lived experience of management get smothered by concepts, theories and key points."(Knights and Willmott, 1995:2) In turn, Hassard and Holliday (1998:1) suggest that organizational representations in "popular culture" are "more dramatic, more intense, more dynamic". The usefulness of the modern novel as a resource for teaching and learning management should not be overlooked: "The modern novel serves both to condense and "bring to life" features of people and situations rarely conveyed by case studies."(Knights and Willmott, *ibid*:p.3) Novels, they propose, belong to the world of leisure and entertainment. Invoking novels for management learning is of interest to OMD experiences and activities. They could, for example, assist in a nexus which could be seen as an illustration of crossing the representational and traditional work-leisure divide - an issue to which, in relation to OMD, the discussion will return. It would seem that established academic texts and writings are trapped in conventions "located in the realm of science and education".(*ibid*:p.4) It is suggested that such texts contain "bloodless" and "patronising descriptions" aimed at non-existent "bloodless - super-rational agents". It seems, therefore, that there is value in drawing on literature for the experiences of being human.

Moreover, "novelistic techniques" contrast sharply with sterile "lists of key points" (*ibid*:p.2) and accounts whereby "the complexities and dynamics of organisational



behaviour are reduced to a set of abstractions (e.g. different 'leadership styles')".(ibid:p.6) Knights and Willmott draw little comfort from the writings of so-called popular "gurus" (for example, Peters and Waterman (1982)) which: "can appear no less absurdly idiosyncratic and idealistic than textbook theory can seem bizarrely mechanistic and mundane."(ibid:p.8)

A consequence of much "conventional" work in management is that overall the perspective generated is one that is "narrow technical" rather than a "*fully social practice*" (ibid:p.8) where "the personal and the political are inextricably intertwined".(ibid:p.11) In this light, Knights and Willmott, again, make use of Vic from David Lodge's "Nice Work" to demonstrate that sex scenes and extra-marital affairs find no place in standard texts but do in "real" life. Hassard and Holliday make the point:

"Organizational texts present rationality, organizations and monolithic power relations. Popular culture plays out sex, violence, emotion, power struggle, the personal consequences of success and failure, and *disorganization* upon its stage".(Hassard and Holliday, 1998:1)

Knights and Willmott are not unswervingly claiming that novels are "more accurate" or "realistic" (in positivistic terms) than management texts but that novelistic techniques, as located in narrative forms, can be "a relevant but neglected resource for illuminating the approach".(ibid:p.5) But, importantly, the point could be argued more forcefully than this. Novels are produced from life experiences and life emulates novels, stories and films etc. Within this there is something akin to a conversational effect which draws parallels with Widdershoven's (1993:1-20) exposition regarding continuity and discontinuity theories discussed immediately below. People are inspired to emulate or act out what they read in novels yet novels themselves are drawn from people's lives and experiences. The parodying effect is reciprocal and very much in line with the premise of continuity theory.

The discussion is now in a position to consider an idea that will be revisited a number of times during the ensuing thesis. It relates together a number of strands running through the discussion up to this point. It is a concept that seeks to commence an



understanding of the relationship between narrative and social constructive processes. Its dualistic state premise is problematic in representationalist terms but nevertheless provides a number of insights into the relationship between “fact” and “fiction” as mutual social constructions.

Widdershoven (1993 in Josselson and Lieblich, 1993:1) suggests that the linkage between life and story can be viewed in one of two ways. Essentially, these are that human life can be portrayed via stories: “life is the example literature is supposed to follow.” This is in essence a descriptive mode or paradigm. Alternatively, stories could be viewed as ideals people should follow. In this instance “literature is the example according to which we should live”.

“...Carr, claims that life is not just a succession of events.(Carr, 1986). Our actions are structured by our anticipation of the future. Like elements of a story, human actions derive their meaning from their connection to prior and later events. Life already has a meaning, before it is a subject of stories. Life is narratively structured, and as such it anticipates historical and literary stories.....Carr claims that stories are both lived and told.”(Widdershoven, 1993 in Josselson and Lieblich, 1993:3-4)

Continuity theory sees the historical past and the provision of any subsequent account as parallel and interwoven narratives. Carr also sees social construction of meaning as preceding narrative processes. He sees narrative as a portrayal or additional process of sense-making. On the other hand, the discontinuity theory is clearly stated and delineated: life, as lived, and story, as told, are separate entities. “Stories are not lived but told”.(Mink, 1987:60) Similarly, White (1981, *ibid*) states that “narratives are not fit to represent reality because reality has no beginning or end.” This particular notion is discussed further in the section on “Time, Structure and Language”.

Related to the discussion is the issue of *narrative identity*. Narrative identity is “the unity of a person’s life as it is experienced and articulated in stories that express this experience”.(Widdershoven,1993:7) Certain commentators talk of people as living their lives within a given script or narrative.(MacIntyre, 1981 in Widdershoven, 1993:6) However, Widdershoven also notes that “Ricouer [1990] criticises MacIntyre



for overaccentuating action as enacted narrative and underestimating the role of narratives outside the action.(Widdershoven in Josselson and Lieblich, 1993:8) Ricouer suggests that a “detour through fiction” (1990:188) has its advantages by viewing literature “as a laboratory” (in Widdershoven in Josselson and Lieblich, 1993:8). However, Widdershoven comes down on the side of the argument supporting the continuity theory position and underpins the understanding adopted in the present argument:

“From a hermeneutic point of view, personal identity is dependent on a mutual relation between lived experience on the one hand and stories in which this experience is articulated on the other hand. Personal identity is the result of a hermeneutic relation between experience and story, in which experience elicits the story, and the story articulates and thereby modifies experience.”(Widdershoven , 1993:9)

Continuity theory has broad implications. “Story telling, to put the argument simply, is what we do with our research materials and what informants do with us.”(Kohler-Riessman, 1993:1) The emergent stories intermingle. It can be seen that this may have important reflexive consequences for the evolution of a research methodology. As such, Husserl argues “for a notion of living in or intending a life-world (*lebenswelt*) - a condition quite opposed to the disowned, abstracted ‘real’ world of scientific methodology.”(Curt, 1994:34)

In summary to this part of the argument, it has considered the relationship of fictional and factual narrative. It has sought to show how narratives, whether purported fact or fiction, emerge through and are imbued with social constructive processes and consequences. As Gabriel (1995:477-501) reflects it is useful not overlook the “factual basis” of stories but at the same time not to view them as the “elaboration of facts”. In relation to these processes it will now be useful to consider the notions of fact and fiction in relation to the notions of time, structure and language in narratives.



## 2.5 Narrative: Time, Structure and Language.

This section of the discussion attempts to show that notions of time may be socially constructed both generally and in narratives. Story-making and story-telling invoke particular perceptions and constructions on time. It is valuable to consider time in relation to structure and language. It has been suggested that: "Narrative is the fundamental structure of the experience of time".(Ree, 1991:74 in Wood, 1991) It is, thus, the way in which the passage of time is constructed. Butler (1995) in his paper "Time in Organizations: Its Experience, Explanations and Effects", talks persuasively regarding a distinction between the concept of "clock time" and "perceived time" i.e. other conceptualisations and constructions of time. Butler is not alone in this concern and it is noted that "Ricouer is tempted to deconstruct assumptions regarding the unity, unidirectionality and unidimensionality" of concepts associated with time. (Wood, 1991:2) There are interesting implications here for narrative and social constructive processes at play. Time becomes perceived more as "time frames" or in Ricouer's terminology *shelters*.(Wood:*ibid*) By extension it might be argued that the concept of the story itself and the manner in which it reframes time and experience constitute *shelters*. Both Pfeffer and Fine suggest that time is *ether* in which narrative is constructed:

"As action - doing work, speaking collaborating, negotiating - unfolds over time, interpretations and meanings also evolve which coalesce into a system of taken-for-granted rules and structures, and a sense of 'the organization'.(Pfeffer, 1982; Fine, 1984 in Fineman, 1993:11)

Carr provides an interesting insight into the relationship between social constructive processes, narrative and time. (Carr, 1991:150) He makes the observation that

"... a notion of social or historical temporality which... makes possible an account of that temporality from within rather than from without, that is, a view of the community not as an object or entity in the world but from the perspective of the communal experience itself."



Thus, Carr seeks to talk up a more acknowledged role for social constructive process in relation to an emergent view of history (as opposed to clearly delineated and unequivocal events and facts). If history can also be discussed in terms of story, then time cannot remain “objective” and “outside” perceptual processes. It can be seen how Carr’s view is attractive in the context of narrative. It can be seen how narrative relates experience and a concept of time but that this is inevitably interlinked with processes of social construction.

Having considered time it will be useful to discuss the issues that emerge in connection with structure. Narratives may offer a range of formats and structures in their sense-making processes (and these are not unrelated to conceptualisations of time). Again, issues of normalisation and representation emerge here. However, Ricouer points out that the notion of a narrative having a beginning, middle and end is: “not taken from experience: they are not traits of real action but effects of poetic ordering”. (Ricouer, 1983:67 cited in Carr, 1991:15) Moreover, Carr (1991:49) points up further architypal forms of “temporal configuration” and “closure” these being:

“closure or beginning, middle and end, [constituting] the most general designation of the phenomenon; then as departure and arrival, departure and return, means and end, suspension and resolution, problem and solution”.

In effect these forms imply the creation and objectification of certain representational structures. Structure may often suggest the presence in a narrative of a commonly used pattern or format. Within a social constructive context it can be seen how this process of habitualization operates something of a convenience in apparently facilitating shared meaning:

“All human activity is subject to habitualization. Any activity that is repeated frequently becomes cast into a pattern which can be reproduced with an economy of effort and which, *ipso facto*, is apprehended by its performer as that pattern. Habitualization further implies that the action in question may be performed again in the future in the same manner and with the same economical effort.” (Berger and Luckmann, 1971:71)



Kohler-Riessman applies this to language and structure in story-telling:

“Narrativization tells not only about past actions but how individuals understand those actions, that is, meaning. Plots vary in type: tragedy, comedy, romance and satire. Tellers pour their ordinary lives into these archetypal forms.”(White, 1973 in Kohler-Riessman, 1993:19)

Such structures may provide something of a “shorthand” for tellers and listeners who, in large part, are familiar (or “socialized”) with the representational processes and structures being employed and the sorts of meaning that are intended to be created by engaging with such structures. This process of creating meaning is supported by Josselson and Lieblich (1995). They also revisit the cultural context in the creation of meaning within any given narrative. But they are not beguiled by structure, seeing it rather as a “means to an end” in the process of the social construction of meaning:

“Although they disagree about what constitutes narrative and develop divergent approaches... most scholars point to the *ubiquity of narrative* in Western societies and concur that *all forms of narrative* share the fundamental interest in making sense of experience, the interest in constructing and communicating meaning.”(Josselson and Lieblich, 1995:1)[Emphasis added]

However, Carr (1991:49) wrestles with the problematic of whether “the events of life, experiences and actions [in spite of these conventional and traditional representations] have any *inherent* structure or whether or not this is imposed” through interpretation and narrative. He postulates that such structures “inhere in the phenomena from their inception, at the very lowest level...”. In contrast, Mink (1978:147) suggests that “stories are not lived but told. Life has no beginnings, middles and ends”. Yet at the same time Carr interjects (quoting White, *ibid*:p.145):

“Yet narrative structure, particularly the closing off of a sequence of events provided by the story’s beginning and end, is a structure derived from the telling of the story itself, not from the events it relates. Even the ‘events’ as real occurrences of the past, become cognitively suspect when we realize that “we cannot refer to events as such, but only to events “under a description”.



This echoes a representationalist posture to the extent that it suggests description of the artefact or event. But, there is equally an attempt to deconstruct the concrete notion of “event” alluded to earlier in discussing Ricoeur and earlier debates. Clearly, the discussion of such forms is an important representationalist conundrum in an appraisal and understanding of narrative. Vanhooser considers how the ontological status of narratives and stories coincides with the “events” it seeks to construct and relate that: “stories are not unreal or illusory... [but] means of an ontological exploration of our relationship to Beings and being.” (Vanhooser, 1991:51) Summatively, Chia (1996:13) underlines the point that form and argument are essentially the outcome of “social organizing processes rather than the result of accurate matching of words with things and events in the world”.

The difficulties surrounding language from the perspective of “upstream thinking” (Latour, 1987) are valuable and important in a discussion on narrative. It seems all too easy to write the person or human experience out of narrative and already this has emerged as a danger. This section of the argument will develop the idea of talking about human experience as socially constructed human and interwoven with the socially constructed nature of narrative. Linked to this issues of reflexivity and language will receive increasing attention in the discussion.

Kvale (1990) argues eloquently that there is a dangerous focus on the importance of language in understanding the modern human condition. A consequence of this is that the individual is, yet again, potentially lost. He states: “There is today an emphasis on narratives, on telling of stories. With the collapse of global systems of meanings or narratives there takes place a re-narrativisation of the culture...” (Kvale, 1990:38 in Curt, 1994:43) This results in a crucial need to acknowledge that language [ultimately] “speaks through the person”. (*ibid*) Equally, he suggests in a reflexive turn that it becomes vital to determine the role of the “story teller”. These issues will be borne in mind during the development of the current argument on OMD.

Carr (1991:20) indicates that: “what stories and histories represent or depict is not purely physical events but human “experiences”, actions and “sufferings”, including the human activity of projecting meaning onto or finding meaning in physical and other events.” In broad terms, Chia finds the notion of discrete “event” problematic in



that it pertains to a representationalist and modernistic perspective. But this tension concerning “events” opens an interesting perspective on a relationship between social construction and narrative. Following writers like Chia (1996), Carr appears to be strongly representationalist in suggesting that these emotions are cast upon pre-existing “events”. However, Carr implies that human behaviours also contribute and create the shape and “experience” of such phenomena. Thus, Carr offers an ambivalent posture concerning the role of social construction. He relates concerns that some writers (for example: Mink, 1978):

“are sometimes unclear on exactly what it is in their view that narrative tries, but is constitutionally unable to represent. ‘The world’, ‘real events’ are terms they often use. But this way of speaking introduces a very misleading equivocation. Narratives, whether historical or fictional, are typically about, and thus purport to represent, not the world as such, reality as a whole, but specifically *human* reality. But when the term “reality” is left unqualified, we are tempted by the strong natural prejudice that what counts as reality must be physical reality.” (Carr, 1991:19)

These are interesting perspectives on the representational debate in relation to social constructivism and narrativization. MacIntyre adds to the discussion when he suggests that “stories are lived before they are told”. But lived how? Physically or in the mind. A particular futuristic account may not yet have been lived in the experiential sense but has certainly been lived in the imagination and mind of the teller or author. This might be interpreted as situations are socially constructed and then socially reconstructed as narratives by one or several narrators. (Moreover, it is a challenging concept for the hard delineations of fact and fiction in relation to texts.)

Concerning structure, Arbnor and Bjerke (1997:158) add the idea of “intentionality”. This “refers to the structure that gives purpose to the experience”. There is a link here to the notion of “emplotment” in Ricouer (1984;1985a,b) Ricouer’s notion of emplotment can be argued to be at play in my stories as perhaps any other: “process that creates a plot (or narrative) out of ‘multiple incidents’. The narrative is a synthesizing effect. (Wood,1991:20)



The discussion has now made a number of introductory comments on self, identity social construction and the processual nature of narrative construction, structure and language. Connected to these is the idea of *textuality*. It will be valuable for the discussion at this stage to consider what textuality may provide to the argument. Textuality seems to pose interesting questions concerning how narratives relate to social construction. Textuality seeks to “explore how, where, why and out of that, certain texts are storied into being”.(Curt, *ibid*:p.11) Textuality sees itself as “unmaking and remaking texts upon texts - or to put it another way, listeners to and retellers of stories” (Curt, *ibid*:p.9): “No story operates in isolation but in dynamic interplay with others.” Additionally, in relation to textuality, tectonics is the:

“narration of how and why that which is presented as textuality is produced, moulded and changed and the notions of agency such accounts employ to account for bringing about such forms and changes.”(Curt, *ibid*:p.59)

A central tenet of tectonics “is an acknowledgement that, once produced, stories can only endure if they are actively maintained.”(Curt, *ibid*:p.12) Things can be written down but without people to read the texts how can they live? This notion is strongly connected with preconceptions as to the nature of lived experience. It seems to imply that the text only exists when we are reading it or experiencing its effects. Moreover, tectonics “assumes new stories never rise spontaneously, rather they are crafted out of existing ones”.(Curt, *ibid*:p.12) In turn, Curt (*ibid*:p.9) raises concerns about the construction of social phenomena - “How they are storied and knowledged into and out of plausibility”. It is concerned with descriptive practices - “how stories are represented, maintained and promoted”. Many of these ideas will serve Chapter Four below: “OMD – “History” and “Origins”: A Story of Stories”. Therein will be examined how a particular narrative regarding the origins of OMD has been textualised or “storied into plausibility”. Moreover, it will be interesting to note how this account has been “actively maintained”.

In discussing narrative form and situation it is important, for example, to acknowledge the extent to which the narratives we consider are particularly centred on a Western epistemological approach and concerns and the consequences for the nature and presentation of narrative. Festinger (1957) and, Brehim and Cohen (1962, cited in



Gergen 1971:21) discuss the impact of “dissonance theory” within the social construction processes of narrative. They suggest that: “inconsistent cognitions or thoughts are intolerable for human beings.... Western culture simply does not seem prone to accepting both a proposition and its antithesis simultaneously”. Hence a blurring of “fact” and “fiction”, of text and life is seen as problematic. Putnam and Mumby (1993 in Fineman, 1993:40) point out the extent to which Western culture “privileges rationality” at the expense of other processes (i.e. social construction). Narratives broach both fiction and non-fiction (Philips,1995:626) and this has hindered their adoption or acceptance in certain arenas where competing paradigms prevail and preclude them. It will be contested below that this has been the experience in OMD because although narrative accounts are offered within OMD commentary the multifaceted nature of stories has seen them condemned as “poor methodology”.

## 2.6 Narrators Narrating

It is now a useful juncture to consider more clearly issues surrounding the roles of the story-teller(s) or narrator(s). Many issues concern the relationship of the narrator to the story. In particular, there is a series of reflexive questions associate with issues of narrator remoteness and anonymity and also appropriation of participants voices and objectification of the narrator “role”.

Gergen (1971:14) considers the issue of “self as fact or fiction”. He is critical of philosophers who talk of “self” in a substantive manner. Related to “self”, Gergen (1971:2-5) notes four important concerns in the human condition: concerns over “identity”, “self-evaluation”, “self and society” and “restrictions and limitations”. He suggests that “self” is “that process by which a person conceptualises (or categorizes) his or her behaviour - both his or her external conduct and internal state”.(ibid:p.22-23) Clearly, in considering a perception of self (inextricably associated with an overall process of social construction) the role of narrative becomes important as a way of constructing experience and meaning.



Reflexively, what are the privileges afforded the narrator? Carr (1991:57-65) notes that the telling of events by the narrator implies a sort of “superior knowledge”. Wood (citing Carr (1991:165)) privileges the idea that the narrative voice is also the “voice of authority”. The narrator knows where the narrative is directed and its “end” point. He sees the narrator as involved in a “selection process” – the narrative is “constructed” in a certain fashion. He stipulates that: “... perhaps here life and narrative art really do diverge. Life admits no selection process; everything is left in; and this is because there is no narrator in command, no narrative voice which does the selecting.” Barthes (1966) reinforces this division between life/narrative and fact/fiction and states that an action of the narrator is to eliminate “all the extraneous noise and static” and to relay only what is required to move the story on. Nevertheless, this raises some issues in relation to the previous discussion. It seems to play down the earlier ascribed role of social constructive processes in the emergence of meaning through human interaction. Also, “everything left in” suggests that there is only one veracious account. Rather than seeing life and narrative as something separate and able to be separated, the current argument adheres more to a continuity theory (Widdershoven, 1993) view whereby life and narrative are not inseparable aspects of experience. Indeed, surely social construction processes involve some processes of selection and choice in how constructions are undertaken. Life can be related through some form of narrative and this will always originate from an individual or group socially constructed perspective.

Equally, not withstanding ethnic or cultural considerations, *gender issues in relation to stories* are an important aspect to encompass. Rosile and Boje (1996:225) support this with the view that the “fields of management and organisation theory are awash with the rhetoric of change.” The exclusion of various groups from the available or “malestream”(ibid) narrative has important implications for the appearance of the narratives ultimately generated. An ignorance of gender or ethnic issues is also evidenced in OMD commentary although, as will be illustrated, this is not necessarily reflected in experiences in the field. Though it is not the intention of this thesis to focus substantially on a gender or ethnocentric issues, it is recognised that they are an integral part of the social construction of narratives.



Throughout this thesis various narratives and stories are presented as illustrations to points made. In turn, reflexively, it would be myopic not to suggest that this thesis (or any document) constructs a narrative of its own. Indeed, I suggest in the work that the emergence of this narrative is the emergent consequence of a social construction embracing aspects of my private life and professional activities. This coincides or runs parallel with a plethora of social constructions occurring with other individuals and groups with whom I relate (and do not relate.) By way of illustration, in her writing (on textuality) Curt (1994) goes as far as to use dramatic and narrative techniques speaking directly to the reader(s) as if the text is an ongoing commentary on which she is commenting reflexively. This is an interesting theatrical, and almost melodramatic, technique. As with much postmodernist theory there is a reflexive effect. Mulkay (1985:74 in Curt, *ibid*:p.19) points out: "If our project is a study of textual production in all its forms, we can hardly refuse, by analytical fiat, to include our own texts within the scope of the project." The work will remain mindful of it.

If life is narrative (Widdershoven, 1993) and not independent of it (Mink, 1978) then a key issue, therefore, is who is currently narrating in any given context? Essentially the omnipresent and omnipotent narrator writer cannot be said to exist.(Curt, 1994:41) Therefore in some greater or lesser respect are we not narrators of our own lives? This is not to assert an existential proposition where individuals jettison *idees reçues* and create novel identities at every turn. However, clearly, within processes of secondary socialisation many people may take part in any given constructive processes. As such Kohler-Riessman, reminds the discussion that the focal point for the generation of meaning is the human mind:

"Human agency and imagination determine what gets included and excluded in narrativization, how events are plotted, and what they are supposed to mean. Individuals construct past events and actions in personal narratives to claim identities and construct lives."(Kohler-Riessman, 1993:1)

Carr is quick to offer a *caveat* concerning individual and group, or community, experience. He assists again:



“... we must ...avoid the tendency to portray the group simply as a person “writ large.” When I tell myself a story in order to act it out, it is one person who is performing this reflective act of narration. If we say, by contrast, in the case of the group, that we tell, we listen, and we act, it is legitimate and appropriate, precisely because of the plurality of the group, to ask: who tells, who listens, who acts? We must not forget that what was *only a quasi-intersubjectivity of narrative structure in the individual is a real intersubjectivity in the group.*” (Carr, 1991:150)[Emphasis added]

He sees groups as functioning through “mutual recognition” and “conscious participation” of its constituent members.(*ibid*) This is interesting given the manners in which groups are built up on OMD programmes with preconceived titles and objectives. Carr implies that these will become an irrelevance as self-selecting, emergent “groups” develop their own narratives and stories by which to live. Wood (1991:1-19) highlights the instability of identity based on processes of social construction and narrative: “many stories can be woven from the same material”.

As part of the question on the *act* of narration, a temporal and moral aspect re-emerges:

“A teller in a conversation takes a listener into a past time or “world” and recapitulates what happened then to make a point, often *a moral one.*” (Kohler-Riessman, 1993:1)[Emphasis added]

The moral or ethical point is an important one. Is there an attendant duty relating to the construction and telling of stories? This argument believes that ethical considerations are important and this is an issue further discussed in the methodology chapter.

Moreover, in relation to earlier discussions on structure, narration and narrators although not necessarily constrained, often do socially construct meaning in predictable or already familiar patterns or ways as discussed above through Adams (1991); Fineman and Gabriel (1993) and Phillips (1995). Perhaps linked to this is an acknowledgement that postmodern perspectives “tend to us extended descriptions of



space or place to replace themes and plots.”(Boje, Gephart and Thatchenkery, 1996) In talking about narratives it is common for writers to discuss “roles” (even though such representations are problematic). But by extension to a discussion on narratives, drama and acting can equally be identified in organizational life:

“...people are not mere performers but actors who *play characters, moving from character to character and audience to audience* with a ‘theatrical consciousness’ which enables them to retain a concept of an acting self.” (Mangham and Overington, 1983:221)[Emphasis added]

Although “actors” are associated with theatrical settings it is also a term that has been employed in the broader “corporate culture” literature and also writing on methodological approaches.(Foote-Whyte, 1984; Arbnor and Bjerke, 1997) Hopfl links these “actor” comments on narrative and social construction into a broader management development context:

“Management development, in practice, leads to the construction of managed roles and managed performances. ‘Professional’ behaviour requires that contradictions are concealed by an acquired persona - the professional mask...*The individual is the site of the concealed ambivalence.* Discretion is, therefore, limited merely to the repertoire of options which attach to a particular role and its interpretation. In other words, management development is a significant part of the process by which managers acquire a professional identity and rehearse their roles.”(Hopfl, 1994:471-472)[Emphasis added]

Indeed some writers argue that managers are bound up in a process of “imaging” or the creation of operational metaphors that ape expectations and canons of conventional management wisdom or orthodox management wisdom.(Gephart, 1996a) Managers, in effect, become “entrapped” by their images of themselves.(Morgan, 1986) Furthermore, Gephart (*ibid*) suggests that this adoption process can partially be sourced in the modernist identities including: traditional roots, classical modernism (Fayol, 1916; Taylor, 1911) and bureaucracy (Weber, 1947). He suggests that a process exists whereby these are “traditionally transmitted” - a process that will also be witnessed in OMD and is readily associated with social construction



arguments that see society in both subjective and objective “reality” terms (Berger and Luckmann, 1971). Nevertheless, Gephart (1988) points up a malaise concerning the nature of images and the manner in which images are produced.

It is now perhaps timely to illustrate a narrative. It may be useful to consider a story in an organizational context from Fineman and Gabriel (1996:23-25) by way of an example:

*“Performance and Impressions: Paul’s story: Faux Pas”.*

*“The incident in question occurred during the annual Accountancy Students’ Dinner Dance for all students in the area. The chap at the centre of the incident, Eric Minton, was an Oxbridge graduate recently appointed to the firm along with myself. These dinners are always attended by students who have yet to qualify as chartered accountants, and by senior management and partners. As is usual at these events it was ‘open bar’ and wine was flowing with the meal. One might forgive a man for getting rather loud and boisterous when drinking excessive quantities of alcohol, as Eric was. If things had stopped there nothing would have been remembered of the event.*

*It so happened that the invited guest speaker at this event was Jonathan Fox, the well-known TV Weatherman. He delivered a very entertaining and enjoyable speech which pleased Eric very much - he laughed and cheered. All pretty normal behaviour you may be thinking. At the end of Mr Fox’s speech he asked his avid recipients if they had any questions that they would like to put to him. Eric, with an excited look similar to that of a nine-year old school boy who knew the answer to teacher’s very difficult maths question, thrust his hand into the air. Now Jonathan, who it has to be said, was rather lacking in the hair department, looked across at Eric. Eric, in an eardrum-bursting voice, shouted: ‘Jonathan does the glowing sheen on top of your head reflect the current economic climate?’*

*The room fell silent as 400 unamused accountants looked first at Eric and then Jonathan. The look on the faces of all the partners, students and senior*



*management from the company said it all. It was than worsened by the fact that five seconds later Eric clapped his hands and laughed, with rather more gusto than was strictly necessary, at his very funny joke (as one imagines he supposed it to be).*

*Earlier in the evening we had all taken part in a sweepstake guessing how long Jonathan Fox's speech would last. Just after Eric's' slight blunder one of the senior managers turned to me and said 'the next sweepstake will be on how long Eric Minton will stay on Branfeld's payroll'. It was said in jest but contained a strong element of threat.*

*The incident, although extreme is a prime example of how everyone, in all aspects of life, is being judged in Branfeld - and the effect this has on their career. During the incident, I could not help the overwhelming feeling of embarrassment at our table, or for that matter the whole room. It was as if I was willing Eric to stop because I was realizing that, from this moment on, he will have been judged. People who have worked with Eric will lose respect for him, and people who have yet to work with him will have preconditioned ideas.*

*From the moment one enters Branfeld as an organization, every move you make is being observed, whether it be academic, in work, or social. I would liken it to being back at school. Academically you are being observed closely, penalized for failing exams, rewarded for passing. Failure can also result in being asked to leave the company. From the results of formative academic examinations, high-flyers are already being plucked out. Weekly judgements in the form of staff reports render this monitoring a constant aspect of one's position. These reports contain grading systems and a space for personal comments from seniors. This staff reporting-system is pay-related and continues all the way up the hierarchical structure.*

*In the incident above, Eric was being judged in the social aspects - as indeed we all were - at the dinner. I was sitting with partners either side of me. Hopefully I was being positively judged, unlike Eric, surely. During the*



*incident, it was so obvious from the reaction of senior members of staff that his behaviour was not producing positive thoughts: 'Eric Minton is not fitting into the Branfeld Culture'. When a student's whole career within Branfeld places upon their ability to 'fit in' to this culture, or way of life, one can see the importance of not breaking the mould."*

Fineman and Gabriel's account, above, provokes them to make a number of brief comments. They observe that although the event is ostensibly "social" it is, in effect, a "work" setting.(*ibid*:p.25) They note also that the socialization process of the company has already affected Paul. He has learnt the 'rules' of that particular context: "Already, it seems, this process had taken hold of Paul at an emotional level...".(*ibid*:p.26) Additionally, from such a narrative it is possible to suggest remarks relating to Foucauldian concerns over power and the use of self-surveillance control mechanisms in organizations. There is also scope to examine the reflexivity in the scene. Paul relates the tale as if he were a "fly on the wall". Is it possible to separate Paul's presence as an influence, however remote or backdrop-like, on the events and their meaning? These are brief indicative comments but already it is possible to see the potential in story-telling for creating possibilities for understanding and meaning.

Historian, Richard Holmes, demonstrates the power of narrative forms.(Holmes, 1997) Holmes is one example among many whose work illustrates the varied effect of the narrative forms. In his writing Holmes provides accounts of major European campaigns and battles within which he is interested in portraying the human experience of war. He provides an interesting blend of (modernistic) meta-narrative and of individual narrative moving within a narrative non-fiction stance.(Philips, 1995) There are three "accounts" within the overall story. The first is an account through the eyes and "voices" of individuals like generals who might envisage and present broad and sweeping movements of *anonymous units of troops*. Usually such voices can only be broad rationalisations or social constructions of the chaos and confusion in an overall battlefield situation. This account seems akin to the broad texts and commentaries found in management writing (i.e. As mentioned above they lean towards representation and meta-narrative.(Lyotard, 1984)) Certainly, within OMD epistemology there exists a plethora of such narratives. Balanced against this,



Holmes also focuses very much on the *personal narrative* (Josselson and Lieblich, 1993) i.e. an individual soldier's experiences. The impression and narrative received through the work is one of a "lived experience" of an individual.(Knights and Willmott, *ibid*:pp.1-18) First, Holmes narrates but rapidly appropriates Geoffrey Bishop's voice:

*"War at First Hand.*

Sometimes Normandy was more than flesh and blood could stand. Lieutenant Geoffrey Bishop of 23rd Hussar's saw a friend's tank destroyed in their first action. He was buried in an orchard: 'Suddenly and silently all the regiment is gathered round. They have all known and loved Bob, and this simple tribute brings a choking feeling to my throat.' Bishop soon discovered that death had uglier faces. He watched a self-propelled gun burn while men tried to remove ammunition: 'in a flash there are two blinding reports - I have my glasses on them and can see quite clearly - a body shoots high into the air; the others disappear in a cloud of black smoke.... That night ... there is a lurid glow from the gun and the smell of a burnt offering to the God of War.' Trooper Ken Tout of 1/Northamptonshire Yeomanry saw that a fellow gunner had failed to escape from a blazing tank, but: 'The explosions of ammunition.... served as a humane killer before the furnace began to grill him where he sat. Something in my being revolts more against the low grilling of my flesh after death than against the sudden swift shattering of mind and body in a massive explosion.'"(Holmes, 1997:198-199)

Holmes continues with a blend of meta-narrative (the omnipresent and omnipotent narrator with purported detachment and objectivity) leading into an individual-centric socially constructed account:

"The battle went on, although without the saturation bombing of Bourquebus which O'Connor had called for. He hoped to use 7th Armoured division to join 29th Armoured Brigade in a two-pronged attack on Hubert-Folie and Bourquebus, but it was so badly delayed crossing the Orne [River] and percolating its way through rear areas raided by the Luftwaffe, which threw its remaining strength into the battle, that it was not clear of the bridges until



dawn on the 19th. Private Robert Boulton, in a Bren-gun carrier platoon of the Queen's Regiment remembered that:

*'When we did get across, tanks and trucks were on fire all over the place. The dust was absolutely choking.... There was a poor lad who had had most of the bottom of his back blown away. There was nothing to be done for him so he was just put outside on a stretcher. That poor devil screamed for about two hours; morphine seemed to have no effect. He was pleading for someone to finish him off. Our sergeant had been in the war from the start, and even he was white and shaken'.*"

(Holmes, 1997:214)

Holmes' narrative, and the appropriated narratives of Geoffrey Bishop and Robert Boulton, provide evocative, disturbing, thought-provoking even shocking images of the experiences they portray. They show personal narrativizing as powerful talking for "creating" experience. In turn, they provide potent material with which to reflect on the meaning or significance of the experiences. Although containing stark images, these military examples are appropriate to the current argument. Military and business situations are frequently discussed and considered, however inappropriately, as mutual metaphorical reflections. In the case of narratives in OMD it will be seen that military imagery has contributed significantly to narrative construction.

## **2.7 Moving on.**

In conclusion, a discussion on narrative and social construction soon makes apparent the extent to which they are interlinked. It can be seen how processes of constructing self are likely to be implicated in narratives. "Manager" as self is only one aspect of human experience and the critical perspective writing has been eager to portray a more "full-blooded" (Knights and Willmott, 1995:1-18) holistic managerial or human "self".(Fineman, 1993; Fineman and Gabriel, 1996) It has been said that: "Instead of describing the world, it re-describes it" and in some respects this marries well with social construction and stories. Metaphor is the capacity of 'seeing as'. Narrative



opens us to the realm of the 'as if'.(Ricouer 1983:101 cited in Carr, 1991:15) Such ideas will assist in developing a more penetrating insight into the experiences of OMD.

The above discussion has commenced the preparation of the argument for a narrative consideration of OMD. This concludes Part I. Part II discusses OMD in a number of respects. Initially, this will involve providing a *prima facie* appreciation of (modernistic) conceptualisations of OMD and its *popular* images.



## **PART II:**

### **Outdoor Management Development: Predominant Paradigms and Alternative Insights.**



## **CHAPTER THREE: Conceptualisations of Outdoor Management Development (OMD) – the Problematic of Contemporary Representations**

### **3.1 Chapter Three: Overview.**

This Chapter discusses *popular and mainstream* conceptualisations of OMD. It considers a range of contemporaneous images and constructs and the various forms in which they emerge within the context of OMD (relating to management development). It argues that, to a large extent, OMD has allowed itself (willingly or unwittingly) to be presented and conceptualised in positivistic and modernistic patterns. Reasons are considered why this may be so. The Chapter commences with a consideration of OMD's self-perception as an "industry" (argued here as a modernistic meta-narrative (Lyotard, 1984)). The concept of "industry" in OMD provides a context against which to review the (positivistic) concept of isomorphic transfer - a concern over the "effectiveness" of OMD in order to benefit corporate performance. In turn, the Chapter provides the opportunity to illustrate the *modernistic* appearance of OMD programmes. As such, the Chapter is a platform from which the development of ideas in the subsequent chapters is made possible.

### **3.2 Outdoor Management Development (OMD) - An Introduction.**

In the United Kingdom, OMD as an activity has attracted increasing attention during the last sixty years. Its popular image has played an important role in shaping the commentary: managers struggling up hills under heavy sacks, surmounting obstacles, building rafts and undertaking other physical tasks are the prevailing pictures for many people. During that period of evolution much of the debate has considered how much, or how little, "evidence exists" to confirm that the *effectiveness* of the approach in achieving desired *training and development outcomes* is superior, or at least equivalent, to purported alternatives. (*inter alia* Clifford and Clifford, 1967; Hopkins, 1982, 1985; Hogg, 1988; Lucas, 1992, Bank, 1994; Krouwel and Goodwill, 1994) Within this concern, some



commentators claim, benefits for particular aspects of development. For example, Bronson, Gibson, Kichar and Priest (1992) cite a range of commentators who claim and examine OMD's impact on teamwork including Krouwel (1980), Long (1984), Van Zwieten (1984), Wagel (1986), Galagan (1987), Gall (1987) and Malcomson (1988). In addition, Jones and Oswick (1993:10) cite more than 200 benefits that are claimed by various writers to be associated with OMD.

However, Bronson *et al.* (1992) equally portray something of a credibility crisis relating to the approach. Whilst, there appear to be a significant number of supportive or even promotional efforts by *a priori* convinced OMD practitioners and writers, elsewhere, others argue that OMD "benefits" have not been "proven". In this light, appeals for additional research (almost always positivistic) have been made by, *inter alia*: Hogg (1988), Crawford (1988) and Bank (1994).

Moreover, many commentaries on OMD are reluctant to acknowledge value in the research carried out to date. This is experienced in two ways in particular: firstly a call for yet more "meticulous" (positivist) work and, secondly, a denigration of commentaries viewed as not complying with that perspective (for example storytelling and narrative). Cole (1993:12) has expressed concern over the "anecdotal" nature and the "paucity of research data [used] in attempts to evaluate the outdoors". This is a sentiment echoed by others. Irvine and Wilson (1994:25) note: "the evidence in support of managerial and management learning through OMD regrettably is little more than anecdotal accounts." There is, thus, the clear implication that positivistic research is the only really valuable work carried out in relation to OMD. Moreover, given the above-discussed conventional methodological and epistemological affiliations of OMD, it can be seen that there have been few contributions from critical perspective or interpretivist approaches.

Alternatively, Beeby and Rathborn (1983) suggest that the incorporation of the outdoors into management development programmes is widely misunderstood by many people involved in the development and learning spheres. They state that this is due to an "interplay of several factors which include the nature of the media coverage of particular courses; the character of the existing literature; and the



indiscriminate use of certain 'labels' by those active in the field".(ibid:p.170) Although, they too generally espouse positivistic views their comments raise issues which are concerns of the ensuing debate.

Given these initial reflections it is perhaps no surprise that OMD approaches have attracted, and continue to attract fervent detractors and supporters and therefore engender considerable polemic:

“Supporting evidence is most commonly in the form of personal testimony of those providing the training, or selective, positive accounts from participants. The views of those who write in this area appear to be highly polarised: For advocates... [OMD] appears to hold an almost mystical power to promote revolutionary, performance-enhancing changes for those experiencing it.(Jones, 1993:12) For the sceptics, OMD is at best a series of contrived, irrelevant and superficial attempts to create organisational metaphors away from the workplace, and at worst, OMD represents a highly discriminatory form of training fraught with unjustifiable physical and psychological danger.”(Jones, 1996:209-210)

The discussion will now seek to understand at greater length the current conceptualisation and contextualisation of OMD. The argument considers the construction of the concept of “industry” in OMD as a modernistic meta-narrative. This is considered in relation to the alleged key impetus of “corporate effectiveness”. In addition, some of the “usual suspects” in OMD commentaries (“teams”, “facilitators”, “participants”, “tools and techniques”) will be discussed as representations that may not be as useful or meaningful as originally desired.

In summary, contributions from social constructive and narrative approaches to debates on OMD have been much overlooked, ignored or even misunderstood and derided. This Chapter is a necessary prelude to contextualising, understanding, encouraging and negotiating the emergence of a greater appreciation for the commentary they offer on experiences in OMD.



### 3.3 OMD: An Industry?

The generic concept of an “industry” can be argued as a modernistic attempt to negotiate a meta-narrative. It embraces the concept, albeit broadly, of associated organizations, employing similar practices for a common customer set. “Industry” may be a difficult notion around which to generate understanding. Devices seeking to be comprehensive and exhaustive, such as the Standard Industrial Classification (*SIC*), inevitably provide only a prescriptive approximation of comparable activity. Moreover, in young or emergent “industries” (sic:OMD) Aldrich and Fiol (1994:645) underline a “relative lack of cognitive and socio-political legitimacy”. OMD is a case in point. This first part of the Chapter discusses attempts to construct an “OMD Industry” narrative that counters these “lacunae” (as they are perceived by some individuals). This is dually important for the argument. Primarily, these concerns have persuaded OMD to seek approbation (“socio-political legitimacy”) from the broader management development community through adherence to a perceived “business-like” normative modernistic and positivistic meta-paradigm. Unfortunately, this rigidity has eclipsed opportunities to complement that perspective with narratives that provide accounts of individual “human” experience. Secondly, the use of the outdoors by providers for development, and the consequent experiences, remain persistently idiosyncratic. It does not sit readily within the “industry” concept presenting more “exceptions” than conformities. This seems to reinforce a case for processual and socially constructed accounts.

Initially, it will be useful to consider what modernistic images of an “industry” have been constructed? In seeking to answer this question it will be possible, further below, to associate the consequent notions to important ideas on narrative. Certain writers refer to OMD as an “industry”. (Campbell, 1990:218; Sewell, 1991:15; Krouwel and Goodwill, 1994:52; Symons, 1994:7) However, there is little debate concerning the nature of that “industry” or that, alternatively, OMD is viewed as a collection of firms operating with a set of related practices.(Ibbetson and Newell, 1996) Nevertheless, overall, the tacit image persists of a unified body of practitioners and a commonality of practice and experience. In association with



a discussion on “industry”, it will be helpful to provide an impression of the scope of the OMD phenomenon. Crucially, OMD is conventionally placed (or certain OMD commentators wish to negotiate it) within the sphere of management development. As a consequence, OMD is considered to be part of an overall \$7 billion market.(Business Life, 1994:27) These are difficult figures to assess with precision and significant variations can be found in the literature. Elliott (1996:18), for example, estimates the management development market at no greater than £2 billion per year.

Considering the number of OMD firms in operation, Calder (1991:21) notes an increase in OMD-providing organizations during the 1980s and by 1990 some 249 companies were registered in the United Kingdom.(*ibid*) This period of expansion is corroborated by Butcher (1991:27) with Everard (1988:18) suggesting that “the fashion” for OMD actually began circa 1988. In a slight variation it has been suggested that: “The marketplace itself is confusing, with over a hundred providers jostling for their piece of industry’s externally provided training budget of over 200m per annum”.(Campbell, 1990:218) Contemporaneously, it has been proposed that “as many as” 200 OMD companies were in operation in 1995.(Burlington and Grint, 1996:191) In spite of these above purported movements Krouwel and Goodwill (1994:52) note that a recent encyclopaedia on management development contained only half a page on OMD.

The above points provide an impression of the scope of the OMD “industry” phenomenon. What images are constructed in the literature relating to its recent provenance? Discussing OMD’s recent chronological development, Sewell (1991:15) proposes a representationalist diachronic model of OMD’s growth into four discrete periods:

“1. A handful of providers throughout the UK working to develop the usefulness and *relevance* of outdoor programmes and the use of *experiential learning* from the mid 1970’s to the early 1980s.



2. 1983 - 87 was the *period of acceptance*, as organisations began to realise the potential value of this for learning.

3. 1987 - 89 saw a *rapid increase in the number of provider of management development outdoors.* [Emphasis added]

The usefulness of such a delineation is debatable however the alleged “fourth period”, in the early, 1990s witnessed recession and ironically the end of a difficult period for quality as many “bandwagon” providers exited OMD. (Sewell, *ibid*) Associated with the debate on the number of firms, Hannan (1986) notes that augmentation of a number of firms in a sphere is a “[*de facto...*] primary force raising the legitimisation of a population.” The simultaneous events in broader management development over the period of Sewell’s model are important. As discussed earlier there was, during the 1980s, an emphasis on theory expounding “excellence”, “effectiveness” and the increasing role of “competencies”. (Peters and Waterman, 1982, Boyatzis, 1982) Within Aldrich and Fiol’s (1994) thesis of sought “legitimization”, it can be suggested that OMD borrowed much of this work, building on the prevailing “experiential learning” movement (Revans, 1983; Mumford, 1982a, 1982b; Pedlar, Burgoyne and Boydell, 1986, 1988, 1991) to rationalise (and legitimise (Aldrich and Fiol, *ibid*) its activities. The legacy of these ideas still contributes to accounts of OMD’s contemporary conceptualisation (discussed in the latter part of this section).

The argument up to this point has focused primarily on the *United Kingdom* “industry” experience of OMD. Various accounts show OMD-type programmes in operation outside the United Kingdom. The United States (Long, 1984), Australia (Cacioppe and Adamson, 1988), New Zealand (Elkin, 1991a,b) and South Africa (Calder, 1991) all have large numbers of providers. This begs a question: is OMD a phenomenon particularly constructed in an “British/Anglo-Saxon” context? This point contributes in the next chapter to an important contextual commentary on the historical emergence of OMD in relation to aspects of contemporary OMD experiences.



A familiar occurrence in an industry or business sector is the establishment of an *industry representative body*. Hogg (1988) and, again, Jones (1996:18) indicate that there is *no* OMD industry standards body, building codes of practice or offering an industry “voice”. Such bodies can make important contributions to how an industry is portrayed or narrativized. However, Everard indicates the existence of the Development Training Advisory Group (DTAG). This is “a consortium of those providers that (apart from the armed services) have had the longest experience in the field”.(Everard, 1988:12) Fieldwork during the present study indicated that the impact of DTAG on the sector is minimal. Beeby and Rathborn (1983:174) state that DTAG was founded in 1977 and member organizations include: Lindley Lodge, Endeavour Training, The Industrial Society, the YMCA, Brathay Training and Development and Outward Bound. Equally, Bank (1994:128) indicates the existence of the Development Training Users Trust (DTUT). This is a body of employer organizations that use OMD and:

“who recognize the value of personal development training. They joined together to help define and set standards for development training. DTUT aims to encourage the development in people of the personal qualities and self-knowledge, positive attitudes and skills required in the workplace through experiential learning primarily in the outdoors.”(Bank, 1994:128-129)

What is interesting in the above examples is how a particular self and peer-perceptual, socially constructive process has played a role in the emergence of such organizations. It might be viewed very much as a process of institutionalisation (Berger and Luckmann,1971:65) as a self-selecting (or habitualized (*ibid*:p.70) and typified (*ibid*:p.45) group. However, in so doing they, in the first instance, seek to create forms of harmonization (sic:normalisation) and, in the second, exclude many “other” providers. It might be suggested that DTAG does not succeed in its attempt to construct a generic “industry” representative body. The narrative its members seek to construct and negotiate does not relate to the socially constructed experience of so many other providers.



To this end Dixon (1985:139) recognises that it is difficult to “classify” firms and organizations in the *industry*. Perhaps more support might be found for shifting “clusters of organizations” - that readily perceive comparable identities (like the DTAG group) - rather than an objectified and externalized “industry”. Examples of clusters might be claimed to exist around a number of shared typifications (Berger and Luckmann, 1971), for example, location, image, legal status (i.e. trust or charity). It is possible to assert that these clusters are a consequence of processes of social construction and narrative building taking place through various meetings, interaction and commentaries and debates in publications (- the “talk” of language (Watson, 1999:20) through which social construction takes place). Nevertheless, it is important to point out that the literature is argued in a manner that lends itself to generic references to, and representations of, the OMD industry. Rather, it might be useful to see it alternatively as an imaging process (Morgan, 1986) in order to construct a particular impression (Giacalone and Rosenfeld, 1991) in response to the powerful influence of the modernist perspective strongly present during the formative years of many OMD programmes. Ralston and Elsass (1991:241-258) indicate the power of “conformity” as a “negative” or “positive” force (and outline the threatening consequences of the former on “innovation” and “creativity”). In this sense “industry” can be seen to generate a modernistic theoretical model seeking to *represent* a panoply of potential experiences related to OMD and, as such, it becomes part of a convenient *lingua franca* between business customer and OMD provider. It can be viewed as an attempt to bridge Aldrich and Fiol’s (1994) concerns over the cognitive and socio-political legitimacy of a new industry in response to a perceived orthodoxy of “best-practice”.

The profit motive is, *prima facie*, a central feature of the modernist “industry” paradigm. (Nellis and Parker, 1997) Whatever idealism or altruism can be claimed in personal development it is very hard to “get away from the need for a return” (Campbell, 1990). Yet, this is an ambivalent relationship with “industry” for some OMD providers. However, even the few organizations founded as trusts (for example, Brathay, Outward Bound, Leadership Trust) need to market and build turnover. In the present market economy it seems impossible to deny the



importance of this. However, it is nevertheless valuable to underline that *profit* is a concept not an unquestionable given and equally prone to processes of social construction.(Caulkin, 2000:9)

The preceding section of the argument has illustrated consequences relating to the concept of an OMD “industry”. The argument now moves on to consider, in greater detail, how OMD processes are conceptualised predominantly within a set of corporate imperatives. The *leitmotiv* of this imperative is the nebulous concept of “effectiveness” and its relationship with the equally elusive “efficiency”. The extent to which experiences in OMD have been shoehorned predominantly into this positivistic perspective and conceptual template will be debated. It will be seen that, certainly within the majority of the OMD literature and many aspects of practice, OMD has been accounted for predominantly through this vision.

#### **3.4 OMD and Corporate Imperative - The “Effectiveness” Debate.**

This section debates in detail how OMD is conceptualised in relation to positivistic and modernistic frames of reference. In particular, it discusses how the representational notion of *isomorphic transfer* has emerged as a dominant rationalisation of OMD process.

Campbell (1990) notes above that most company-client relationships require “evidence” of a “payback” from a development programme. The implication also seems to be that any such “benefit” needs to be quantitatively measurable - an aspect pointing to the presence of a positivist perspective. In the previous Chapter, a number of ideas in writings on the practice of management development were discussed. These patterns are prone to a large degree of fad and fashion. Although such emergences might be argued through various processes of social construction, within that literature it is possible to underline a strongly repetitive positivist trend in the key arguments of large tracts of the epistemology.(Storey, 1989a,b) In particular, this positivistic quest manifests itself as a search for



optimised performance in the form of maximised profit, added-value or heightened competitive advantage through the medium of a preoccupation with efficiency, effectiveness, outcomes, results and measurement. This, then, is seen by many as constituting a corporate “imperative” for the contemporary organization. This “appearance of things”, or image, seems to exist widely in many theoretical accounts and practical examples.

OMD has brought the conceptualisation of the outdoors for the purposes of development very much under the aegis of commentaries from management development (often to the exclusion of the experience of using the outdoors in other spheres, for example Outdoor Pursuits, Outdoor Education). In particular, it is insightful to consider the manner in which OMD has subjugated itself to positivistic strands of that literature, in contrast to perspectives of what Storey (1989a,b) describes as the broader contextualisation and conceptualisation of management development (something of particular concern to critical perspective writing). Crucially, this thesis is *not concerned with confirming or rejecting the effectiveness of OMD*. As already indicated above, that is a representational debate that has preoccupied, even dominated, much of the prior discussion and writing in the area. (*inter alia*: Butcher, 1991; Lucas, 1992; Ibbetson and Newell, 1996). Moreover, it appears that the trend is not tiring. Ibbetson and Newell (1996:167) in concert with Falvey (1988) state surprisingly (given the plethora of work in the area) that it should continue to do so since: “... there are few studies that have been done which systematically attempt to evaluate how effective [OMD is] and why”. In concert, Lowe (1991:42) remarks that yet further evaluation of the approach is urgently needed.

“Effectiveness”, as a term and a concept, has been the subject of a considerable literature in wider management and management development. By many commentators, OMD (like many other management development approaches) is judged in terms of whether it offers substantive or questionable effectiveness. One of the ways this is debated is the apparent need to achieve “added value”, measurable in terms of increased “profitability” and “performance”. This generally seems to be a strongly desired outcome in broad areas of OMD



literature. Handforth (1993:15), for example, states that the activity must contribute to the “bottom line” particularly during adverse economic periods: “With the backdrop of severe recession every penny of a training budget has to have a direct and positive correlation to bottom line performance.” Moreover, this is harshly underlined when Alder (1990:17) observes that: “More important than this, however, is the need to recognise that purchasers of training are buying outcomes.” Campbell (1990:218) concurs:

“A marketplace [for management development] of £200m is a sizeable one and industry rightly wants a return - a measurable improvement in managerial performance.”

Associated with the notion of effectiveness there is a felt need to define *evaluation* among a broad range of writers. Burnett and James (1994:18) suggest that: “Evaluation denotes measurement of achievement against preset objectives.” In order to evaluate effectiveness they employ a positivistic questionnaire method. This typically consists of assessing “participants” (company employees attending the course) and related individuals (i.e. facilitators, employers) before-and-after events on various scales of intra-personal and interpersonal self-perception. The participants complete “before-and-after” questionnaires on which statistical analyses are conducted. The issues surrounding the application of such methods are discussed further in the chapter below expressly dealing with methodology. Interestingly, it appears to be the case that many researchers seem to see the evaluation of effectiveness, and the questionnaire technique, as the only aspects meriting discussion in OMD. At best for those researchers, other “extraneous” considerations of the OMD experience seem interesting or useful only in so far as they can be appended and subordinated to the effectiveness thesis.

Nevertheless, in spite of their earlier definition above, Burnett and James (1994:18) acknowledge implicit problems: “Although objectives such as ‘increased self-awareness’ or ‘enhanced ability to empathise with others’ can be ‘preset’ they pose a variety of problems in their measurement before-and-after developmental interventions.”(*ibid*) There is therefore a range of questions



concerning not only the use of the before-and-after questionnaire approach but perhaps the whole attempt to “evaluate” *per se*. Jones and Oswick (1993) seek to develop the argument by making the point that many studies supporting the claim that OMD is “effective” are carried out by providers and this, for them at least, in turn raises the question of “subjectivity” in the work. They see studies from more “independent” sources as providing a solution. The issue of objectivity and subjectivity is, of course, perspective driven and the above authors indicate their objectivist-positivist preference (and reflexive oversight) in this statement i.e. that “independent” researchers would be recommended to retain the same research question and method in order to “refine” and “validate the data”. It might, however, be argued that alternative tools such as Myers-Briggs (1962) and Belbin’s (1981) Team Roles fulfil similar functions. These tools utilise a similar style of question, and from the complete set of replies to the questionnaire, a statement of preferred behaviour style or team role is generated.

Beyond the questionnaire evaluation approach, alternative commentaries are treated with suspicion. Jones (1996:209) notes that this “evidence is most commonly in the form of personal testimony” involving “selective and positive accounts from participants”. In addition, Irvine and Wilson (1994:25) point out that much of the supporting “data and evidence” from “examinations” of the OMD approach are “anecdotal”. It is also suggested that the underpinning rationale is vague or not present at all. (*ibid*) Bronson *et al.* (1992:50) state “...the company wanted evidence of outcomes, preferring not to rely solely on enthusiastic testimonies and anecdotes as in the past”. Similar concerns to these have been expressed by Beeby and Rathborn.(1983:171) It has been suggested that: “Outdoor Development [sic:OMD] is different to other forms of training and development in having little empirical validation to substantiate users impressions of its effectiveness of ineffectiveness” (*Industrial Relations Review and Report-Employee Development Bulletin*, 1992b:5) A commentary provided by Gall (1987:58) on an American programme helps to provide a more (vivid) narrative image of these concerns:



“Let’s not kid ourselves. Unless upper management can see that your sailing adventure in the Florida Keys paid off in a big way, there aren’t going to be any more tanned work groups in February. Evidence of these programs’ return on investment falls into two very distinct categories: the *hard* dollar-and-cents figures and the *soft*, but no less important personal impact. David Lindenbaum of NTW says that in his case, the company more than doubled its profits in the year following its adventure training experiences. Oliver Porter reports similar outcomes at AT&T: ‘We’ve shown significant improvements in our revenue-to-expense relationships; we’ve dropped our cost per order; we’ve improved our quality, accuracy and timeliness of orders; and we’ve improved our collection results.’”

The above discussion has sought to illustrate the importance placed on a particular conceptualisation of the evaluation of effectiveness in a majority of OMD literature. This literature *does* relate to OMD practice and influences the setting of atmosphere on programmes - the fact that practitioners contribute so extensively to the literature underlines this. Additionally, many people engaged in OMD commentary are students of the discipline of psychology – replete with natural-science based studies using experimentation, cause and effect methodologies. In contrast, alternative research questions and methods are viewed as less useful or “valid” and “reliable” than those predominantly in use. The legacy and influence of particular hegemonic veins of management development writing provide an account for this.

The next step of the argument discusses the concept of *isomorphic transfer*. This is a very amorphous concept yet in the literature it acquires seemingly palpable qualities. Moreover, it is central to the *effectiveness* arguments in OMD.



### 3.5 OMD: Isomorphic Transfer.

The process through which the creation of effectiveness allegedly takes place is commonly referred to, in the OMD literature, as “isomorphic transfer”. Isomorphic transfer, simply stated, is believed to be a process whereby it will be possible for course participants to “take” their learning from the programme back into the *workplace*. Isomorphic transfer is widely commented in the OMD literature. (*inter alia*: Gall, 1987; Gass, 1991; Jones, 1996) This is a controversial concept. Many OMD providers claim it exists. Other commentators, among whom are found both employers and writers in the field, have questioned the “validity” and “feasibility” of operationalising the concept. However, it should be noted that such writers do not perceive these issues as lacunae in the underpinning paradigm or perspective, rather it is more likely to be suggested that the “correct variable” has not yet been isolated and measured.

In the case of those providers and sponsors more sympathetic to OMD and its concepts it is considered that if an OMD course is to be effective then isomorphic transfer must be present. Alder (1990:17) mentions that for isomorphic transfer to be accomplished there is a need for “sound training principles”. However, “sound” by which and by whose judgement? Again, this evokes an air of orthodoxy and there are positivist echoes. By discussing “measurable results” and saying it must be compared to other forms of management development she, like many of her peers, is placing OMD clearly as a strand appended to “mainstream” management development.

Isomorphic transfer emerges as the generic concept and process through which effectiveness is achieved. In turn, this purportedly takes place via a range of traits, skills or competencies. It has been commented that in seeking to achieve effectiveness, OMD concentrates on three main areas:

“There are three broad uses to which outdoor-based courses are being put. First, to foster *broad personal qualities* such as self-confidence, self-awareness and assertiveness. Second, to improve *work-related but still*



*generic skills* such as planning, organising and delegating. And, third, to consider and heighten the more *specific skills* of working with, or leading, a particular group of employees. In fact, teambuilding and leadership appear to be two prime aims of organisations use of outdoor-based courses.”(*Industrial Relations Review and Report-Employee Development Bulletin*, 1992b)

In addition, as noted above, Jones (1996 in Oswick and Grant, 1996:209) has catalogued over 200 individual and team attributes that are potentially developed through OMD programmes. Equally, Cacioppe and Adamson (1988:90) cite what they consider to be the fourteen key human skills or traits on which OMD concentrates. More specifically, typical “skills” or “attributes” that are claimed by the approach include: “leadership”, “teambuilding”, “problem-solving”, “interpersonal skills”, “planning”, “decision-making”, “organising”, “delegating”, “assertiveness”, “risk-taking”, “time management”, “networking”, “self-confidence”, “self-awareness”.(*Industrial Relations Review and Report-Employee Development Bulletin*, 1992a:4)

Hogg (1988) provides a list of training outcomes that OMD allegedly achieves including the above but also adding: “personal control”, “communications”, “coping with stress”, “flexibility and ability to deal with ambiguous situations”, “re-energising” and “encouraging creativity”. Numerous authors re-iterate or add comparable categories.(Alder, 1990:17; Arkin, 1991:50; Tuson, 1993)

However, as already noted the competencies, in many instances, are not necessarily easily delineated or measured. Nevertheless, such difficulties are something that many providers constantly wrestle with in an attempt to tailor them to the corporate imperative and discourse. This aspect of isomorphic transfer is a potent example of the difficulties and vulnerabilities of employing competency frameworks.(Boyatzis, 1982; Fuller-Good, 1998) Many of the traits and competencies mentioned above might be anticipated in any usual or conventional list within a management development context. However, distilled from the lists and categorisations are some unusual aspects and characteristics that seem to sit



less readily within a positivistic framework. Examples include “creativity”, “re-energising”, “self-awareness” and “self-confidence”. These dimensions involve human experiences which seem difficult to define or encapsulate in such a manner.

Furthermore, isomorphic transfer is strongly associated with *metaphor*. This is strongly advocated by Jones (1996 in Oswick and Grant, 1996:209-225). In his presentation, Jones (*ibid*:p.222) employs Gass’ comments:

“How might OMD training result in participants learning to learn? If the processes which constitute OMD programmes were able to act as metaphors of a learning process, then they might conceivably result in OMD participants learning to learn. An explanation of how this could happen is outlined by Gass (1985, 1991) who suggests that the transfer of learning occurs on one of three levels: *specific transfer*, *non-specific transfer*, and *metaphoric transfer*: *Specific transfer* occurs when the actual products of learning (e.g. skills such as canoeing, belaying, map-reading) are generalised to habits and associations so that the use of these skills is applicable to other learning situations. *Non-specific transfer* occurs when the specific processes of learning are generalised into attitudes and principles for future use by the learner (e.g. parallel processes in one learning situation become analogous to learning in another different, yet similar situation.”(Gass, 1991:6)

Jones suggests therefore that metaphoric transfer has a role to play in isomorphic transfer. In effect, his model is yet another twist on the same principle. However, there is potential to see metaphors as part of the processes of social construction. It is perhaps all too easy to see metaphors as yet another “management tool” rather than expressions and accounts of individual human consciousness and experience.

Again, Jones (1996:212) binds competency and process together in a paradigm. This suggests that OMD comprises: a *means-end* criterion (sic:effectiveness outcome), a *management* (sic:target group) criterion and a *development* (sic:



positive change) criterion. Expressed in this way Oswick and Jones' model seems to be a representation built on the usual positivist premises.

The Outdoor Adventure/Education sphere was alluded to above. This shares both a parallel and intertwined experience with OMD but overall there is a commonality of experience. Many commentaries exhibit similar positivist and modernist agendas: "To concentrate on *competences* within the control of individual, increasing *normalization* leading to *progressive development*".(Chapman, 1988:31)[Emphasis added] However, isomorphic transfer is hardly mentioned in commentaries from these areas. Alternatively, the theory employed is the notion, from psychology, of Self-Concept.(Gergen, 1971; Bannister and Fransella, 1971) The concept is engaged by many observers, including, *inter alia*: Clifford and Clifford, (1967); Livesey, (1982); and Hopkins, (1982, 1985). Self-Concept is concerned with the perception of an individual of him or herself across a *range of behaviours and self-descriptors*. Typically Self-Concept may seek to determine changes in personality dimensions such as, for example: ambition, aggressiveness, friendliness, irresponsibility, maturity, sensitivity or tolerance.(Clifford and Clifford, 1967:149) These traits are measured by asking participants to score themselves on forms of self-rating scale. These scales include point values to be awarded to questions like: "I am [not] entirely self-confident", "the things I do are[n't] very useful" , or "I do[n't] consider myself a very mature person".(*ibid*) Depending on how a particular person feels about him or herself, at a specified point in time, regarding a particular question, he or she chooses the point on a given scale that reflects this. This is normally conducted before-and-after a programme. The comparability and inter-relationship of the ideas of isomorphic transfer and Self-Concept become very apparent. Both approaches, assuming an objectivist, hypothesis-building approach.

Nevertheless, the absence of Self-Concept in OMD is an interesting example of how OMD has not directly transported forward to the *managerial criterion* (Jones, 1996:212) part of the Outdoor Education/Adventure literary tradition (discussed below). Regrettably, the cross-dialogue or cross-fertilization of the two



experiences is negligible. Many aspects of the commentary and literature of each domain seem to operate in parallel, each construing benefits to its own theoretical ends. Research in both areas shares similar methodological approaches. Contrastingly, however, OMD seems to subtend *individual* development to *organizational* benefit. Alternatively, perhaps, Outdoor Education focuses on the *individual development* claiming potential benefit for a larger notional construct, for example, *community* or *society*. Both are contestably engaged in social engineering agendas but the angle of approach differs. For example, in the case of the latter Abbott (1987:25) argues that Outdoor Education reduces recidivism rates. Although, in some sense the notion of recidivistic (mis)behaviour is far from divorced from corporate experience. (Ackroyd and Thompson, 1999)

Doughty (1990:7) draws attention to the fact that frequently the organization requires the participant to leave the training with “‘hard’ management skills” whereas the trainer/ facilitator tends to see effectiveness in terms of “personal” development within the team environment. Furthermore, Alder (1990:17) suggests:

“I do not believe you can separate individual or team development from organisational development. Changes in individual or team behaviour (which are evidence of learning) inevitably influence organisational development.”

Alternatively, Peckham (1993a:13) states that the objective must be the maximum transfer to [both] the individual *and* the organization. Also Burnett and James (1994) suggest that organizational change can be accomplished more effectively *through* managing personal growth. Gall (1987:58) comments:

“An outcome of adventure learning that [is] ... not easily quantified is the *positive psychological effect it has on participants*. Of course, some really hard-line managers would argue that *how employees feel is not management’s concern* - how employees perform is. American Hydrotech’s Dave Spalding strongly disagrees: It’s my philosophy that if



an employee feels good about himself, feels good about his family and feels good about his community, he's probably going to feel good about his work too. I'm confident that the money spent is going to be paid back in spades, either through higher commitment, better teamwork, or better energy."

Yet, as was examined during the discussion above on management development a number of writers would challenge the fact that personal development and organizational development are automatically linked in a causal fashion.(Mumford, 1994) The extension of this argument raises questions concerning the processes of social construction in relation to narratives for individuals and narratives as construed for the organization.

In summary, the discussion in this section has thus far sought to illustrate the expression of the corporate modernistic-positivistic paradigm through the concept of isomorphic transfer. What processes might contribute to, or be important in, the notion of isomorphic transfer at another level? A focus on solely skills and competencies such as teamworking, personal skills development etc. appears too stunted and somewhat too glib and seems to deny the potential for more holistic and richer images. There are accounts of human behaviour that are suppressed, constrained or deemed as marginally relevant by proponents of doctrines associated with a modernist corporate imperative ethos. Cross-referencing to the outdoor education sphere, Abbot argues that there are differences in the way the two domains relate to the outdoor experience.(Abbot, 1987:23) He cites the notion of "enjoyment" for youth groups as resulting in many of the benefits that the outdoor experiential approach can offer.(*ibid*:p.25) "Enjoyment" is not a term automatically attributed to the discourse of the modernistic OMD corporate programme and this has been underlined by a range of remarks above. Thus, there is still a felt need to consider what Gall (1987:58) refers to as "soft aspects". However, as a necessary preliminary step it is essential to review the *prima facie* conventional, or commonly presented "state of the art" and *physical* nature of OMD programmes. Within a social constructive perspective this is a consideration of "the world which exists outside ourselves".(Watson, 1999:20) It is in relation



to this that, through language and talk (Watson, *ibid*), processes of social construction and sense-making (Weick, 1995) emerge.

### 3.6 OMD Courses: Images and Impressions.

This is the next step in a discussion to consider the constructive influences on the *modern* condition of OMD. The first section of the Chapter discussed attempts to portray the narrative significance in an *industry* picture. The second section moved into greater detail and illustrated the trend towards modernistic processes that have generated commentaries on OMD experiences in the form of particular representations (corporate imperatives and isomorphic transfer). These two preceding sections have prepared a necessary context. Both have indicated and underpinned an attempt, by OMD, to portray itself in what it perceives to be an “industry” and “business” light. This tertiary step employs several sections to show, at a detailed level, the look, appearances or representations of OMD programmes created within this prevailing atmosphere. The overall effect is to provide a necessary impression of OMD *today*.

Consequently, this section of the discussion focuses on what may be considered a *conventional* or, *popular* perception of the conceptualisation of OMD. As will already have begun to become apparent from the preceding discussion, approaches involving non-positivistic or non-objectivistic outlooks seem to have had little influence over work carried out in the area. *The Industrial Relations Review and Report-Employee Development Bulletin* (1992a) provides a conventional but particularly helpful and succinct overview of how OMD is *commonly understood*:

“These [OMD programmes] are known by a variety of names, but all hold in common the use of *physical, open-air activities*. Nearly all are *residential* and most *emphasise group work*. There is rarely any obvious resemblance between the task and life back at the workplace. Raft



construction, canoeing, climbing, abseiling and orienteering are common. Trainers give instruction on the *goals* of each activity, the *safe use* of any equipment, and generally observe that safety guidelines are being adhered to. *Review sessions* with *facilitators* may take place after each activity, either back in the classroom or partly on site immediately afterwards. *The sessions are crucial* in both drawing out learning experiences and in constructing parallels with work life. Some trainers advocate that 50% of course time be devoted to reviews.

There is a wide variation in the demands that courses place on participants. Most progress from short, relatively simple activities to longer, more demanding ones. Most aim to convey an *atmosphere of challenge* and *apparent risk* so that participants treat the experience seriously, and retain a *vivid memory*. At one extreme, a course may be largely classroom-based with only one or two short outdoor exercises at low level and on dry land. At the other, lies the survival-type programme where participants spend several days and nights in the open, camping, trekking and undertaking a variety of challenges en route.”(*Industrial Relations Review and Report-Employee Development Bulletin*, 1992a:16)[Emphasis added]

“[Furthermore] Such programs vary considerably, but most consist of a series of perceived high-risk activities - such as rock climbing, river running, or sailing - that stress individual self-assessment and risk taking. Most programs also involve activities that require team effort and problem solving. Interspersed with the physical activities are debriefing sessions in which participants share their experiences and insights with fellow trainees.”(Buller, Cragun and McEvoy, 1991:58)

Some commentators have argued that there are only three kinds of programme. These are: “endurance training”, “outdoor training” and “development training”.(Krouwel and Goodwill, 1994:35-51) For Krouwel and Goodwill, “endurance training”:



“is about pushing people to the *limit of their physical, psychological and emotional stamina*. Proponents of this approach, which is partly rooted in *military-training* mythology, claim that by these means delegates discover that they are capable of achieving much more than they believed possible, that they form close *emotional bonds* with their fellow delegates, and therefore are able to work more *effectively* together.”(*ibid*)[Emphasis added]

In the case of the “outdoor education” model they suggest that the activities are more complex than “mere survival” (*ibid*:p.40), trainers are less confrontational and more “nurturing”, “there is an attempt to review the activities and there is a body of non-military theoretical work underpinning the approach”. Finally, “Development Training” associates with organisational/corporate programmes which have been elaborated above.

Many OMD suppliers offer both standard courses and programmes purportedly tailored to a given company’s development needs. However, in many instances these are reorderings or reconfigurations of regularly used activities. Additional constructs for programmes have involved the juxtapositions suggested by Cacioppe and Adamson (1988:82), namely: *individual* versus *group*, *physical* versus *emotional* and *outdoor* versus *indoor*. Alternatively Calder (1991:21) citing Wagner, Baldwin and Roland (1991:53) suggests a span of courses covering *wilderness*, *outdoor centered* and *high/low rope course* programmes. Beeby and Rathborn (1983:174) also develop a typology for OMD programmes. They categorise programmes as *Outward Bound(OB)*, *Adventure Education(AE)* and *Development Training(DT)*. The latter is seen as relating to management whereas OB and AE are typically more focused at youth groups. *Development Training* (sic:OMD) they declare as exhibiting three key characteristics: “(i) use of the outdoors; (ii) incorporation of process reviews; (iii) application of experiential learning methods”. It is nevertheless difficult to see how this is meant to differentiate DT from many of the potential experiences of OB and AE.



It has been noted in the above comments that OMD encompasses experiences spanning classroom-based discussion through to survival. Within, the above programme “types” it is possible to witness a range of activities. Krouwel and Goodwill (1994:54), following the route of a populist set of writings on OMD, provide what they consider to be an illustrative range of available “outdoor media”. For context and understanding it will be useful to cite them:

“Rock-Face Activities

Climbing , Abseiling, Mountain “Rescue” Tasks

Underground Activities

Caving, Mine Exploration

Water-Based Activities

Raft Building

Open Canoeing

Navigational Tasks

Expeditions - Wild Country

Expeditions - Low Level

Orienteering

Grounds Activities

Interactive but ‘exposing’

(e.g. ‘high ropes’ tasks)

Medium-Complex Tasks - ‘Across the Gap’ type tasks.”

The list is basic in that it provides an impression of what might be considered the core, typical, physical elements of an outdoor approach. Within individual programmes any range of scenarios can be set to “problem-solving” situations. For example, participants might have to recover a canister of “lethal gas” on the slopes of the Brecon Beacons.(Arkin, 1991:49) Alternatively, Blashford-Snell elaborates setting participants the task of capturing pythons in darkened rooms!(Blashford-Snell, 1991). And, Doughty (1998:7) describes how executives are set the task of redecorating a school. Peckham (1993a) categorises three types of programme experience. He cites these as “Mountain Top Experience”, “Now Get Out of That” and “Games and Simulation”. He suggests



that the best programmes are those that combine “the best” elements from each. Interestingly, this might be argued as constituting a positivistic approach in that it seeks a *one best way* with which to optimise performance. Using the term Outdoor Based Experiential Training (OBET) (sic: OMD), Wagner and Roland (1992) employ the terms “low-impact” and “high impact”. This highlights *risk* in the process (an issue dealt with at length below). “Low-impact” activities involve groups and are generally “low risk”. On the other hand, “high-impact” programmes are said to emphasise individual activities and contain elements of high risk. What is particularly interesting regarding this model is the association of individual or group to particular kinds of risk. No reason is provided for this linkage. What is apparent however is the importance attached to the *individual-group* relationship. Alternatively, many programmes describe more generally the use of “multi-layered problems” to develop participants. (Wagner and Campbell, 1994:4) These are problems that have a network of scenarios and solutions possible for the trainer to employ. The direction or experience of a given programme is contingent on the reaction of a group or individual to a particular situation.

So far, the argument has discussed a range of possible programme typologies and activities. Within the aforementioned commentaries on OMD there has also been a range of attempts to distil what the writers believe to be the “essential characteristics” and process of the approach irrespective of programme “style” (similar to that proposed by Peckham, *ibid*). It has been suggested that, essentially, all training events have three dimensions: *task* (what must be done), *process* (how it is to be done) and *environment* (the context in which it is done):

“The successful *manipulation* of these *three dimensions of reality* is seen as critical in determining what is learnt and what can subsequently be transferred into the work environment.... The model proposes that where reality on all three is high (such as on-job training) the learning will be primarily about the *task*. It suggests that it is only when the reality of both the task and environment are low that there will be significant *process learning*.”(Crawford, 1988:18)[Emphasis added]



It is suggested that OMD has high process reality but low task and environmental reality (i.e. it cannot be said to be similar to a work situation).(Jones, 1996:215) The interesting phenomenon in the debate here is “reality”. The model offers reality as a given or absolute rather than a construct. Alternatively, Mossman (1982) constructs five categories of *outcome or objective* that seem to be apparent in the literature: 1. Personal Growth; 2. Manager Development; 3. Team Development; 4. Management and Organisation Development; 5. Assessment.

It might be proposed that all the above definitions and categorisations offer bland or generic descriptions (possibly even modernistic meta-narratives) of what might present a meaningful beginning to a richer conceptualisation of OMD. They limit themselves to discussing aspects of the approach(es) that are compatible with the broader picture of management development (especially within the modernist paradigm). Within these representations there does not appear to be any apparent rupture with that tradition.

The next stage of the discussion will seek to illustrate ways in which the “process” (the dynamics and flow of OMD experience) has been discussed and constructed in literature and practice. Models extensively commented in the literature subtend themselves to representational forms of *cyclical*, *linear* and *dualistic*. This positivistically-related categorisation, although omnipresent, is not overtly acknowledged in the literature.

The first category of models that seek to fulfil that remit is a range of, what are in positivistic representational terms, *cyclical* models. Kolb’s (1984a) *Experiential Learning Model* is clearly the most heavily cited model in the OMD literature (*inter alia*: Alder, 1990; Campbell, 1990; Hopkins, 1985; Ibbetson and Newell, 1996; Lowe, 1991; Peckham, 1993a,b; Bank 1994; Krouwel and Goodwill, 1994; Tuson, 1994)

“Providers’ literature is notable for the prominence given to the theoretical bases upon which courses are said to be founded. Kolb’s learning cycle in particular is often called in aid of outdoor activities. It,



and variations of it, say that effective learning takes place when an individual puts an idea into practice.”(*Industrial Relations Review and Report-Employee Development Bulletin*, 1992a:16-29)

There are a number of models employed that are similar to Kolb’s experiential learning cycle. Perhaps one of the most frequently witnessed is the *Do-Review-Apply* framework.(Arkin, 1991, 1995) Moreover, Alder, (1990:18) provides a cycle proposing that managers go through a process of “Adhering - Adapting - Relating - Experiencing - Experimenting - Connecting – Integrating”.

The literature more closely associated with outdoor pursuits and adventure activities, rather than directly with OMD, also has strong dependency on Kolb-type models. Nevertheless, *The Four Fallacies Model: Risk-Character-Friendship-Competition* (Donnelly, 1981b) suggests an interaction between these experiences and the way in which they contribute (or do not) to constructing “the outdoors” as a “meaningful” experience. It deconstructs some of the tenets on which OMD is built and suggests that favourable interplay of the factors does not always occur. This is not a cyclical model in the kinetic sense of the term however it is presented in this way. By cyclical repetition the intention is clearly that some form of progress towards (a positivistic) optimised achievement, learning or performance is accomplished.

OMD “process” is alternatively presented as *linear* experience. The *Comfort-Stretch-Panic* (Arkin, 1995) model is one that seeks to chart individual self-control during experiences. A person is considered as normally residing in *Comfort* but can be *Stretched* in certain situations and circumstances. A key point of the model is not to push or pull the person into *Panic* as this would be perceived as being unproductive. The model can be seen as driving people towards some form of *optimum* position accepting that all three stages in the model will be completely relative and dependent on the individual. Moreover, a common pattern in the linear structures is a “before, during and after experience” temporal aspect. As already illustrated above, the adaptation of “mainstream” management commentary is common. One such instance is the “Skill Pre-



assessment, Skill Learning, Skill Analysis, Skill Practice and Skill Application” (originally from Whetton and Cameron (1991)). This is cited in Buller, Cragun and McEvoy (1991:58) and adapted to: “Needs analysis, Pre-Outdoor, Outdoor, Post-Outdoor and Evaluation”. Again, this embodies certain linear assumptions concerning the perception of time and the flow of experience in relation to it (both key issues in relation to narrative). Calder (1991:24) provides further examples. In summary, it should be noted that linearity is strongly associated with a modernistic perspective. (Burrell, 1997:8)

Conversely, *Dualistic models* (i.e. 2x2 box/grid form) are also popular in the OMD literature. Examples constitute, for example, Burnett and James (1994) “Loosely/Tightly Defined Activities” versus “Low/High Intensity”. In this model, the authors suggest that “Loose” Activities involve less technical activities with less risk. Alternatively, “Tight” activities involve technical input and some risk (for example, rock-climbing requiring instructors and “safety experts”). Activities that are “less intense” tend to deal with “general issues” whereas “high intensity” activities are often confrontational. Snell and James (1994:324) advocate a Hard/Soft Teaching versus Tangible/Intangible Subject. Here, examples of “Hard” teaching on a “Tangible Subject” are given as dealing with and mastering “specific techniques.” This is as opposed to, for example “Soft Teaching” on an “Intangible Subject” which is “Helping People to Learn to Think for Themselves... Self Awareness, Discovery Learning.” This is an interesting model because, to some extent, it begins to point at areas of experience that really do not respond well to quantification. Again, dualisms (and their implicit modernist-positivistic perspective) are widely employed in OMD.

It was mentioned above that there has been a tendency for OMD to depend heavily on well-known paradigms in the broader management literature. Adair’s (1983) Leadership model has been particularly heavily employed. This illustrates an interlinking of concepts relating to “team”, “task” and “individual”. Its representation, diagrammatically, is in the form of a Venn diagram. It is generally seen as appropriate for an approach like OMD which notionally associates itself



with developing “teamwork”. As the situation changes between these three aspects one or two may become more important or interlinked to a greater extent. Equally, popular is the Belbin (1981) Team Roles model. This model charts individual team members aptitude to perform or conduct themselves in nine behavioural types, for example, leader, “shaper” of projects etc. It stipulates that it is quite possible that a given team member will possess a number of “types”. However, it is (purportedly) not possible to exhibit all nine types since some are mutually exclusive by the model’s definition. The model recognises less well that the *deliberate, rather than the innate adoption, of a behaviour* may be contingent on a given situation, i.e. a view that allows participants scope also to be *actors who perform* to fulfil particular images or construct certain impressions and identities. Again, as with the cyclical and linear style models a number of writers import models of a general nature and adapt them to the OMD experience. An example of this would be the dualistic “Problem Known/Unknown” versus “Solution Known or Unknown”.(Cacioppe and Adamson, 1988)

The argument up to this point has sought to demonstrate various ways in which a majority of OMD literature conceptualises the *experiences* of the approach. Perhaps a key summative point to reiterate regarding the models is that they are reductionist, exhibiting positivist, deductive characteristics. While they are tools that supposedly enable one or two factors to be analysed, *ceteris paribus*, they simultaneously exclude a richer shifting picture that emerges. It should also be recognised that while many of the models appear to consider the development of individual or individuals from an altruistic view, the implicit ethos is one of corporate effectiveness. The models, therefore, reside more comfortably within the modernist and deterministic perspective. Statements that suggest that OMD should be based on “*sound learning theory*” (Buller, Cragun and McEvoy, 1991:58) seem only to serve to confirm this conclusion as the question is posed “sound for what?”.

Very few notable exceptions have come forward to challenge this hegemony.(A rare example is Burlington and Grint’s (1996) “The Deracination of Politics in



OMD”.) Other, existing models (Snell and James, 1994) seem to underline that certain aspects (which they term “intangibles”) of the OMD experience may be difficult to present as neatly packaged conceptualisations. An idea that emerges as a consequence of such a debate is that other forms of discussion and experiencing OMD and its processes may be possible. Of particular interest is the value of narrative and *stories* (Long, 1987, Teire, 1994) to construct alternative accounts of experience.

### **3.7 OMD Process: Reviews, Participants and Facilitators.**

“Reviews” are gatherings organised by participants on OMD courses in order to discuss ideas, feelings and perceptions of experiences subsequent to undertaking activities or programmes. Importantly, for the current discussion, they are about people and their relationships. Indeed, in a literature replete with representations of “industry”, “programme type” or “activity type” the individual is in danger of being obscured or overlooked in the OMD experience. In seeking to generate an impression of contemporary OMD experience it is vital to consider people in reviews and, the individuals who “manage” them (often termed in the literature as “participants” and “facilitators” respectively.)

Banks (1994:41-42), supported by Barton (1994:16), stresses that reviews - whether conducted by facilitators or participants themselves - especially at the end of a programme are the most important part of the OMD process: “Debriefing periods are the best times to draw out the *personal, industrial and organizational relevance of the physical experience*”.[Emphasis added] Reviews might be convened and prepared for in advance, or alternatively, they occur spontaneously. In the case of the latter, Kirk (1986b) points at chatting and gossiping in evening gatherings at the bar after the day’s activities. Reviews can take place in both indoor and outdoor settings although Cole (1993) notes a trend towards the former with a shift from “the hard physical to the cerebral”.(*ibid*:p.12) In many programmes reviews will include the presence of a



*facilitator*. This person may also be called, *inter alia*, the *tutor* or *course director* and will usually be an employee of the OMD-providing organization. Facilitators, seem to come from a range of backgrounds, however, many have a strong interest in outdoor pursuits or some background in psychology or related discipline.

It will be valuable to consider all the individuals and processes that develop within the context of an OMD programme. For the course participant the alleged uniqueness of the approach and the outdoor environment in which it is set is said to account for the fact that “all of the participant is engaged in the process: physical and mental.”(Burnett and James, 1993) In spite of this, in many existing research accounts, OMD course participants are virtually asexual and anonymous. This reflects Scott and Hart’s (1989:50-57) concern over the apparent “worthlessness of individuality” to the modernistic experience - an ethos already associated (above) with OMD literature, and to some extent practice. The reader is told little about participants either professionally or as individual personalities. Yet, participant observation in the field and subsequent narrative accounts demonstrate human experience is far from “bloodless” (Knights and Willmott, 1995:3) and that participants are richly complex and, above all, “human”.

Equally valuable for a greater understanding of OMD is an appreciation of the facilitators, trainers and centre staff. These people contribute significantly to the process as it is experienced. As with participants, course personnel are portrayed in a relatively opaque manner. Such approaches have potentially arrested a fuller appreciation of OMD experiences. In practice, some OMD programmes separate the roles of the various trainers. This is typically into the categories of *technician* and *facilitator*. The technician is in control of the outdoor elements of the programme, including safety aspects of conducting a project activity based around, for example, climbing or sailing. Conversely, the facilitator is responsible for monitoring and guiding the *learning processes* in the programme: “the role of the facilitator is to assist in reflection.”(Campbell, 1990:219) In addition, Elkin (1991a) creates a model that seeks to link learning, risk



management (the perceived role of the technician) and facilitation placing the role of facilitator at the heart of the process.

However, some writers express reservations. Cacioppe and Adamson (1988:90) and Calder (1991:25) warn against the use of *unskilled* facilitators. Such commentaries subscribe to the familiar positivistic-modernistic frame of reference in other aspects of OMD commentary. Calder offers a list of “good” facilitator traits (based on competency approaches). He is supported by Buller, Cragun and McEvoy: “The outdoor initiatives are vehicles for generating *relevant data* for discussion. For trainees to get the most out of the experiences they need *skilled* facilitators for those discussions.”(*ibid*:p.60)[Emphasis added] They suggest a series of questions to be employed in the “debriefing period”.(*ibid*) Following a given activity candidates are asked to respond to a series of questions: “What happened?, How did you feel about it?, What principles did you learn? How does the learning apply to your situation?, What do you intend to do about it?”(*ibid*) However, all this appears rather delineated considering the human interaction potentially taking place. Banks (1994:41-42) broaches this issue recognising the role of the *talented* facilitator in managing the more “messy” aspects of strength of *feeling* and adrenaline levels that can be present at reviews. Moreover, Burletson and Grint (1996:194) underline the power invested in the facilitator role:

“As another development manager said at the course introduction: ‘We will only be observing, not assessing. Have a good time - I’ll be watching’. Foucault would no doubt smile”.

Challenging the facilitator might lead to a covert isolation or victimisation of a participant. Through Gephart (1996a:31) this (often undiscussed) facilitator role can be seen as akin to a “fiefdom” in which an “oath of fealty” ensures protection for participants. For this reason Hunt (1988:25), among others, has raised the question of ethics in OMD facilitation.



Reviews presuppose an attempt to create or construct a *unitary* perspective or understanding among participants. The (modernistic) purpose is to build an *effective* “team”. However, there is also scope to relate some of the “chaos” and *pluralism* of perspective. Social construction provides an alternative way of making sense of reviews. Although writers on OMD do not explicitly relate to social constructive processes a number of allusions are made. Teire (1994:258-275) says how twelve members of a programme undertook twelve *individual learning journeys*. Indeed, in what way, as Fineman (1993:13) has reflected, do people construe such images of experience in relation to OMD, for example: a sauna; torture chamber, pressure cooker or a stage on which to perform? Reviews are often portrayed as “getting at managers’ *feelings*”(Teire, 1994:285) and, contrary to modernistic representations, reviews can be highly emotional arenas. Putnam and Mumby (1993:43-44) underline the difficulties of the concept of *emotional labour* which can be related to the context of OMD:

“The process that reduces emotion to a form of labour treats the mind and the body as separate entities. This mind-body split alienates and fragments the individual. As Ferguson (1984:54) notes: ‘Like prostitutes, flight attendants often estrange themselves from their work as a defense against being swallowed by it, only to suffer from a sense of being false, mechanical, no longer a whole integrated self.’”

Facilitators and participants are prone to experiencing emotional labour in that they also may seek to control and construct the sense-making through the use of rehearsed behaviour and language. As Mossman (1983:192-196) has suggested, many reviews may consequently be conducted in an unhelpful or unuseful manner.

Reviews, both in the literature and in the field, presuppose the obtention of some *objective reality* regarding OMD *experience*. However, reviews are exemplary of *post-hoc rationalisation* (Pye, 1994:168), with participants tending to *generalise* from their experiences.(McWilliam, 1994:iv) Moreover, the power of *nostalgia* to irradicate the “nasty bits” of an emergent narrative in order to create a unity of



account is underlined by Gabriel.(1993:118-141) Clearly, if the review process becomes a vehicle through which reality and meaning are socially negotiated (Eden, 1989b) and constructed, this offers a fresh narrativizing way through which to view the experience.

Burletson and Grint (1996:191) suggest that competitive behaviour in participants is difficult to overcome and that there is an overriding momentum to “maintain face” and *image*.(Giacalone and Rosenfeld, 1991) Moreover, McWilliam (1994:iii) reminisces on such an instance: “Above all the debrief was unwelcome. We all knew we’d failed and most of us could have provided some pretty cogent excuses. What we didn’t want to do was to dwell on our mistakes and ineptitudes.” Rosenberg (1990 cited in Fineman, 1993:16-17) accounts for this in the form of “emotion scripts”:

“There are subtle codes of emotion which connect all interpersonal encounters. Learned facial movements, body postures and voice intonations offer a constant stream of messages about feeling, which makes human interaction possible. Our judgements of these are key to the quality or continuation of our relationships-work or otherwise. They also test our skills at *disguising private feeling with a public face* (Ekman, 1985), key to many a commercial exchange. Cognitions and emotions intertwine: ideas are laden with feelings, feelings contain ideas. The unique reflexivity of human beings means that they can ‘work over’, alone or with others, consciously or unconsciously, some of their internal states. They can observe their own experiences, and add meaning to them from a cultural armoury which contains, as already suggested, *emotion scripts - stocks of knowledge which provide socially acceptable guidelines for feeling*.(after Rosenberg, 1990; Fischer and Frijda, 1992; Hochschild, 1983)[Emphasis added]

But this suggests that a cool, calm and collected rationale is always at play controlling the construction of desirable images. Hearn (in Fineman, 1993:145) draws attention to the idea that the process of restructuring emotions can be a



process of great emotion in itself. Hearn (*ibid*) suggests that the “routine” is “unemotional”. As such, non-routine is, therefore, emotional. For many people OMD is far from routine.

### **3.8 Thematic Representations in OMD**

The modernistic frame of reference further constructs OMD writing in a number of additional representations or what might be termed “thematic representations”. These are: OMD and *reality*, OMD and *the outdoors*, OMD and *novelty*, OMD and *risk*. The words “reality”, “outdoors”, “novelty” and “risk” are regarded as quite unproblematic in most OMD accounts. Although not previously acknowledged or discussed in these terms, these four themes are almost exclusively viewed through a rather macro-positivistic-objectivist approach rooted in the modernistic corporate imperative. Doughty (1990:7) opens this part of the discussion with the (implicit and unwitting) allusion that:

“Almost without exception the same words and images are used to describe what appears at first glance to be the same products with the same outcomes.”

Here then, is an opportunity to blend and complement these ideas with a more voluntaristic, idiosyncratic and subjective narrative perspective in order to create an enriched commentary on these ideas in OMD experiences.

#### **3.8.1 A Thematic Representation of Reality.**

*Reality* in OMD is conceptualised and represented as an objectified “artefact” rather than a socially constructed perception. In undertaking OMD tasks, Cacioppe and Adamson (1988:177) talk of “real situations where the



consequences are important for everyone". For managers, Keslake and Radcliff (1988) state that the "individual faces real consequences of his or her own actions". In turn, Calder (1991:24) mentions a necessity for "real" training. The fact that the "outdoors" provides a "real" environment in which to learn is also frequently stated in the literature and is discussed below.

However, little comment on the nature of reality is undertaken. Due to the positivistic influences (discussed above) at play, the conceptualisation of reality is taken as a *given* associated with the corporate effectiveness imperative. Lucas (1992:15-16) focuses on "participant reality" but links it to: "the degree to which the *programme approximates the workplace*." [Emphasis added] Cacioppe and Adamson (1988:77) corroborate this thinking:

"The fundamental purpose of a course that *places people in a natural environment* during their learning experience is to increase the magnitude and extent that the *key elements* of personal development, successful leadership and *effective* teams become *real* aspects of their behaviour".

Kirk (1986b:86) links "Management learning objectives" and "Management learning events" through the interfaces of "theoretical *reality*", "resources *reality*" and "participant *reality*". He acknowledges that "theoretical reality" may need to embrace notions about managers that are thinly addressed by certain strands of management writing. He cites work by Mintzberg (1973) and Kotter (1982) as going some way in seeking to redress this. He suggests that:

"managers *are* interested in how people think, in what they believe, in what they do and how they behave. They are, in particular, *concerned with their own behaviour*, and acknowledge that their *behaviour is shaped not just by knowledge and information but by feelings and emotions*. How managers deal with their own emotions and feelings and those of others will have an *impact on the effectiveness* of their own behaviour and that of others." (Kirk, 1986b:90) [Emphasis added]



Kirk, in citing the model adopts its tenets of “high reality” and “low reality” in an unquestioning manner: “...perception of the learning event will *change from one of low reality to one of high reality* and with it will come the prospect of increased learning transfer available in the *high reality* model of learning.”(Kirk, *ibid*:p.88)[Emphasis added] Again, notions of “high” and “low” are offered as unquestionable givens. Butcher notes a concern on artificiality:

“The syllabus for this training is mainly rescheduled by the tutor, with the programme’s content consisting of tutorial sessions, case studies and short ‘set piece’ exercises. To many of today’s high-tech managers, whose everyday operational environment is absorbed with stress and pressures - both external and internal, *this approach to training is often perceived as realistically impotent and artificially choreographed with the ‘set pieces’ becoming no more than a game.*”(Butcher, 1991:26)[Emphasis added]

In summary, reality has been the subject of one particular conceptualisation. Viewing reality as a consequence of social construction based on social interaction seems equally useful. There is allusion enough in the passages above to the idea that human behaviour and emotions do construct meaningful “realities”. Perhaps, ethnocentrically, the objectivist conceptualisation of reality can also, in part, be contextualised as a strand of the Anglo-Saxon cultural experience which is said to feel more comfortable with the “practical” rather than the “theoretical”.(Pye, 1994) In support, Knights and Willmott (1995) clearly note the “British/Anglo-Saxon” drive to pragmatism. Nevertheless, acknowledging that the issue of reality is voluntaristic, idiosyncratic rather than deterministic and generic implies that a narrative interpretation can potentially provide insights beyond existing objectivist approaches.



### 3.8.2 A Thematic Representation of the Outdoors.

The *Outdoors* is a powerful *generic* and *macro*-concept or theme in OMD. This narrative is often constructed with regard to the relevance of the outdoors to the corporate imperative. Teire (1994:28) suggests that outdoor management tasks cannot be matched by the indoors. Furthermore for some observers the outdoors are seen as overcoming the limitations of the indoors.(Creswick and Williams 1979 and Mossman, 1982 cited in Beeby and Rathborn, 1983:174-175) In this light, Dainty and Lucas (1992) propose that "...the outdoors provide one of the most powerful mediums for the development of the self and other awareness."

But, Lucas (1992:27) goes on to ask the question of why is a frightened colleague on a mountain relevant to the workplace? To obviate such concerns Irvine and Wilson (1994:27) suggest the use of indoor climbing walls as a substitute for the outdoors and Darwent (1990) is categorical in stating that "there is no particular magic in the outdoors". This is an interesting point in the light of Burletson and Grint's (1996) remarks on deracination. They are concerned about OMD claims regarding the power and role it ascribes the environment:

"By making use of the "difference" between OMD and traditional development environments that in the apparently more co-operative, novel and authentic nature of the "great outdoors" - OMD allegedly reaches parts of the management that other development formats do not."  
(Burletson and Grint, 1996:187)

"The traditional approach to OMD is premised upon the assumption that the displacement of the participants from their conventional Machiavellian (warlike) environment to an alien (peaceful) one generates an entirely different form of interpersonal dynamics that operate as if they were isolated from normality; indeed OMD operates as if it were hermetically sealed off from the normality by a natural boundary device."*(ibid:p.188)*



Burletson and Grint suspect that the claim by OMD to “deracinate” or to transplant participants from their conventional organizational grounds is difficult, if not impossible, to accomplish. In addition, in their research they determine as unfounded a number of preoccupations concerning the role of “nature” in the OMD programmes. They discount claims that perceive “nature as co-operative”, “nature as transparently authentic” and “nature as novelty”. In discussing nature as co-operative they suggest that there are many instances and situations where co-operation is present at a *prima facie* level, however, covertly they find evidence of *inter-personal conflict*. Equally, in viewing nature as an “authentic” medium, Burletson and Grint argue that it is perhaps closer to the office and its politics than most participants would dare to admit openly. (*ibid*:pp.197-198) Needless to say, Burletson and Grint have serious reservations regarding the degree to which the context of the outdoor environment plays a role in the development process (and hence perhaps the narrative constructing process). Equally, for the present thesis, they atypically (in relation to most of the literature) problematize a unitary and mono-perspective of the outdoors. As Watson (1999:21) suggests it seems silly to deny that a house has bricks and mortar but that rather these meanings are negotiated through social interaction and talk. Drasdo (*ibid*) talks about a cliff “floodlit by human effort” and Price (*ibid*) discusses “romantic aspiration and vision” transforming a “plod... into an adventure”.

The above contrasting views lead Gahin (1988:44) to infer that the popular “image” of the outdoors is at odds with the “reality” of the experience. (Gahin, 1988:44) However, Lucas (1992) offers ideas on the characteristics of *outdoor* development. She suggests it is: conducive to the *creation of an environment; experiential; removal from the familiar; and most importantly for the present argument, unfreezing of constructs*. This later idea leans on Kelly’s (1955) work and leads Lucas to comment:

“An individual’s behaviour is often *clearly visible* during outdoor development programme. It is *impossible to hide behind organisational norms in an environment where these no longer exist.*” (*ibid*)



With the alleged removal of “organisational norms” this may give rise to the emergence of an alternative behaviour. Such arguments are supported by Long (1984) and Galagan (1987). Partly due to this purported effect, other writers claim that the OMD process *accelerates learning*. (Bank, 1994:16; Jones, 1996:212) This is supported by Alder (1990:17) who states: “The *outdoor* learning environment brings the *question of values* into sharp focus...”. [Emphasis added] Hogg (1988) (citing Creswick and Williams (1979)) suggests that it is because the environment in which many of these [OMD] programmes takes place is so different that “*underlying management processes are laid bare*”. (However, as mentioned above, Buletson and Grint (1996) challenge this effect.) Moreover, the implication, once again, is that change will be for the “positive”.

In the discussion on “origins” it was pointed out that experiences framed in an outdoor adventure or education manner tend to be overlooked. However, they can provide an alternative perspective. Adventure and climbing literature has possibly influenced the perception of some participants in OMD. However, in theory no one dies in OMD whereas this is far from the case in outdoor adventure contexts. There is thus an interesting linkage to the notion of the possibility of “killing” or “being killed” associated with outdoor activities (and military experiences later on). In OMD death is “scripted out”. This is discussed at length further below in the next chapter. In outdoor adventure writing this idea is encapsulated in seminal articles like John Menlove-Edward’s (1939) “Scenery for a Murder”. This is a rather abstract and esoteric account (in contrast, for example, to the humour in Darwent’s (1995) writing). Menlove-Edward’s writing is as much a commentary on social judgement of behaviour in the outdoors. Moreover, not conditioned by the corporate imperative of effectiveness, such accounts (from a different, but related sphere) provide an alternative portrayal of the outdoors:

We kept to very short pitches, he did the harder bits. Once, close behind me, he was swept clean off by a small snowslide. I fielded him. He gasped, got a footing, and held on. Are you hurt? he said. Me, no, me?



Not me, no, I said. He said nothing. His face was rigid and he did not look quite full at me. We went on again. The wind hardened and set round more to the north, blowing right into the grove, colder than ever. Climbing at this rate we didn't get on much, we didn't even keep warm. But we went on steadily rather desperate. The details of it will not come to my mind now; I doubt if they were ever taken into it. At about five o'clock it looked as if things were getting easier, but the weather was worse than ever, blowing really hard now. We hadn't a chance though we must be getting near to the summit. I looked at Toni and suggested a rest. The storm increased in violence. It might blow itself out at any time, but meanwhile it was not possible. Toni was not breathing properly damn it. I supported his head. He looked at me but could not speak. Toni, Toni, I thought; Toni, why did you always listen to the sounds of the mountains and to those things; and if you had listened some time to me also, and to my voice. Then his eyes went wild a little, they were a little wild always, and then he cried, sobbed out aloud on my shoulder. Not long after that he died.

But murder you say. There was no one else present, you say, no murderer. So? Nobody else? Have you forgotten the singing, *have you forgotten the scenery, the wild scenery? And how are you here to tell the tale, you ask? How! Do you not understand?*

But the boy himself, Toni, my friend? Did he die? Was he killed? Or I, or was I alone. Well, those are quite different matters, and really I must confess I don't know. *But take it which way you like, that does not alter the facts; and make no mistake about it: that does not justify that very wild scenery; nor does it justify murder.*"(Menlove-Edwards, 1939)[Emphasis added]

To summarise, much of the conceptualisation relating to the outdoors has sought to *construct* and sustain an *image* of the outdoors as a *resource* to be *consumed* for personal and professional *effectiveness*. However, the above commentary also



underlines a range of contrasting views concerning how potent the outdoors can be in assisting individuals to generate a plethora of imagery and experience in addition to this corporatist view. That certain writers challenge or negate the outdoors as having any role at all alludes to the idea that the outdoors cannot be said to be generically affective for all individuals since different people are just as likely to construe their own unique impressions. There is a forceful role for myriad emergent secondary socialisations (Berger and Luckmann, 1971:157) as created by individuals as they experience and construct identities for, and in relation to, the outdoors. As such Gahin (1988:44) talks of “fleeing to the wild” within OMD and, more broadly, McAulay and Sims (1995a:13) extol the “mystery, beauty and excitement” of experience. Outdoors as a categorised modernistic commodity has been shown to be problematic.

### 3.8.3 A Thematic Representation of Novelty.

The representationalist term *Novelty* is a further generalised term within OMD commentary. Within OMD writing “novelty” is employed in association with the *introduction of newness*: frequently associated new activities (Irvine and Wilson, 1994:28) with a “different” physical environment; and, the *removal of the familiar*: for example, office facilities, systems and cultures. Various writers talk of the: “removal of rank, functional expertise and managerial support system” (McWilliam, 1994:iv), and that the “uniqueness of the experience emanates from individual and group response to the alien situation”. (Hopkins, 1985:7) In addition, Blashford-Snell (1994:28) describes the “conceptualised novelty” of capturing a python in a darkened room. Moreover, Gearing (1986:21) relates an instance where executives slept in “Spartan buildings”, ate “in the [*former*] cow shed” and washed “in the [*former*] pigsty”. [Italics inserted] Cole (1988:70), in a very similar vein to Hogg (1988) (mentioned above) proposes:



“These are examples of the laying bare of the underlying management processes because, rather than in spite of, the tasks being so different from the normal work situation.”

Burletson and Grint (1996:196) concur with Livesey (1982) in that they suggest that there is “no real novelty” in the OMD “environment”. They find that it is very like the office in that it is *dominated by men*, that the *pedagogical manner* of the facilitators is often *traditional rather than novel* and that the range of activities tends towards the *conservative* rather than the unusual.

However (it is perhaps no surprising paradoxical statement) novelty, rather like spontaneity, is difficult to define or control. Thus seeking to do so as a factor of effectiveness will be difficult. Harrison (1995:51) suggests that relaxing and enjoying natural environments may be novelty enough:

“And finally, have fun! Lots of people seem to be able to remember lessons they learnt down a cave on Dartmoor, but very little of subsequent training in some of the most expensive real estate [*the City*] in Britain.”[Italics inserted]

Dixon (1985:37) adopts a more serious tone and proposes that:

“The real purpose is very different. It is to teach people that they *are spiritually stronger than they thought they were*. In a few days of sometimes uncomfortable, really boring, frequently gruelling, often exhausting and occasionally hair-raising experiences, grown men and women discover for the first time that they possess not only muscles but more importantly character traits *never guessed at, let alone experienced*.”[Emphasis added]

“Fun” and “spiritually”, then, seem to link back to the ideas of “mystery” and “beauty” commented on by McAulay and Sims.(*ibid*) Perhaps, it can be suggested that lack of novelty may lead to a lack of “creativity”, “discovery” and



“spirituality”. Is it something peculiar about the purported novelty of the OMD process or environment, concept or contextualisation that makes this the process that can reach parts that others cannot reach? Novelty as a concept in OMD is then kow-towed, or appended to the cause of corporate effectiveness. But, in another light, unfamiliar physical environments may encourage individuals to reconsider and renegotiate meanings and interpretations. In this sense it can be seen how such changes are akin to “interruptions” that underpin the re-initiating by individuals of sense-making processes.(Weick, 1995:4)

#### 3.8.4 A Thematic Representation of Risk.

*Risk* is a further recurrent theme in the conventional portrayal of OMD. What can be read in commentaries, and seen in practice, is a process of the objectification of risk rather than a view based on individual perception. Risk may be defined “as the probability that some harmful event or “hazard” will happen.(Irwin, 1996) Risk is a part of everyday life (for example, we may have little say over whether or not we are involved in a road accident). This is recognised, for example, within chaos theory.(Stacey, 1996) Equally, prevalent are individual perceptions and constructions pertaining to the likelihood of risk. In OMD, the debate on *risk* has focused predominantly on the ultimate potential for *physical harm*. People have died or been injured whilst undertaking OMD activities. A 46 year-old Citroen employee died of a heart-attack while attending a course.(Cole, 1993:12) Cacioppe and Adamson (1988:86) state:

“over 42 years in Outward Bound courses in 32 schools in 17 countries there have been 40 fatalities among ... half [a] million people....In Britain, Outward Bound has reported six fatalities out of... 200,000 people.”

These figures invoke some fairly ludicrous self-righteous and justificatory counter arguments: “[however there are] positive benefits reported from outdoor



programs such as increased fitness, reduced weight, giving up smoking and reduction of stress which all reduce the likelihood of a heart attack”.(Cacioppe and Adamson, 1988:86) In turn, Galagan (1987) takes note of concerns over safety and suggests that many participants are surprised at the “high” level of safety actually present in outdoor activities on OMD programmes. This does lead certain commentators to make confident claims:

“These activities are also intended to make learning enjoyable, and, with safety always maintained by qualified staff, they are *never actually dangerous*.”(Arkin, 1991:50)

“On the whole EBTD [sic: OMD] programmes have an enviable safety record despite their *high perceived risk*.”(Neffinger, 1990:31)

As noted above, OMD writings employ the terms *real* and *perceived* risk. However, these tend to be discussed *only with regard to the extent they comment on a response to an “actual” physical danger*. Cole (1993:13) indirectly points to this issue suggesting that the mental and emotional levels of programmes are “dealt with in a shallow way” and that “it is limited to the participants fear of apparent danger”. Ewert and Hollenhorst (1989:126-127) illustrate this further through a model encapsulating “low” risk (synonymous with “perceived”) and “high” risk (connected with “real”). Moreover, Gahin (1988:50) discusses the idea of *calculated risk* again in relation to physical challenges with regard to which Calder (1991:21) mentions the “outdoors” can *improve the participant’s approach to risk-taking* but provides little discussion as to why this should be the case.

It has been pointed out that “danger” or risk in outdoor pursuits-type events can be very “apparent”. Again, however, it is very much an individual perception.(Mortlock in Livesey, 1982:7) It is suggested that if there is *only* a perceived risk (as opposed to any “real” risk or “consequences”) it soon becomes transparent to participants.(*ibid*) Livesey notes that Price (1974) and Donnelly (1981a,b) concur with him. This is important according to Hunt (1988) who



states that “pretend” risk is deception and verges on the unethical. Irvine and Wilson (1994:29) elaborate this issue in a discussion on top-roping, the practice of rock-climbing with a rope being held from above (i.e. following the leader), rather than taking the added risk of putting the route “up” as the first climber. On Hunt’s remarks Irvine and Wilson (1994:30) comment:

“Perceived risk has led authors such as Hunt to discuss the ethics of whether participants should be made aware of safety systems or not. Therefore, encouraging the notion of perceived risk is to deceive the participants and has the potential to undermine the credibility of OMD. How can a management training package be considered valuable when it relies on misleading the participants? *Exaggerating or falsifying the level of risk in the activities devalues OMD and therefore should be avoided because of the intrinsic dishonesty of such behaviour.*”[Emphasis added]

This dialectic concerning a *perception* of “danger” and a *reality* or “real” danger plays a role in generating a populist generic commentary in OMD. Empirically, it is common for discussions to reduce to whether or not OMD is safe. This was partly the basis of the outcry against John Ridgeway’s OMD courses.(*Channel 4*, 1993) The impression of danger, risk and damage conveyed by this programme caused strong reaction by many “training” and “development” organizations which refuted Ridgeway’s programme as being typical of the experience.(*inter alia*: Handforth, 1993:15; Harrison, 1995:51; Tuson, 1993) This *danger/safety* narrative is interesting with regard to how it has played a central role in constructing part of “the story” and wider perception (meta-narrative (Lyotard, 1984) and “popular culture” (Hassard and Holliday, 1998)) of OMD.

Nevertheless, within OMD experiences (as elsewhere), in spite of the above myopia in the commentary, physical risk cannot be dissociated from a *broader psychological* dimension. Risk, whether “real” or “perceived”, blurs a social construction of *physical* and *psychological* dangers. Burletson and Grint (1996) discuss this in relation to attempts to create the “right” impression and image in OMD programmes. Giacalone and Rosenfeld (1991) have underlined the central



role that the energies invested by people into creating particular impressions may play in organizational life. Moreover:

“Inevitably the organization will want some sort of feedback... There are all sorts of hidden agendas in trying to find out how a person did. Some clients specifically ask for written feedback on each individual and how they performed.”(Burlington and Grint, 1996:198)

Equally, fellow participants from the same organization may subject each other to such pressures. Burlington and Grint (1996:194) provide further notes:

“.....[it] is a very political environment with very political people... they are an ambitious lot - it's a rat race. People were concerned about being observed by their bosses and that the information was going to be fed back through the trainers, especially those who were seeking promotion.”

This is coercion at an overt level. It does not, however, preclude pressure being exerted in a more covert way. Such pressures play a role in the risks people may take. Calder (1991:24) notes that the main concern of some managers sending staff on courses consists of do “legal liabilities outweigh the benefits?” If the focus is on “safe but relevant” activities how might this change the debate? What about if a programme were not particularly safe but still highly “relevant” (for a corporate imperative of heightened job performativity), either physically or psychologically. There was an illustration of how OMD courses might effect such *physical* limits in the *Exposure* documentary.(Channel 4, 1993) Course participants “mutinied”, throwing instructors and facilitators overboard, when they were about to be forced to swim from the boat across the freezing loch to the shore - a not inconsiderable distance. Equally, in psychological respects, a participant who balked at a particular task in front of group members stated that he did not have a problem before going on the course but he had one after it.

For some individuals, a felt “real” risk is to drop one’s guard or usual “mask”. Indeed, the *Industrial Relations Review and Report-Employee Development*



*Bulletin* (34) (1992b:6) talks about the risk of loss of face as being very important to many participants. Further commentary of the psychological risk of failure is supplied by Ibbetson and Newell (1996). Equally, the risk of losing part of one's identity (through for example loss of face or image) has been analysed in an organizational context by Giacalone and Rosenfeld (1991). Yet, in spite of this it has been proposed that OMD offers: "... value in touching in a physical, mental, spiritual *inescapably real yet safe way*".(Wagner and Campbell, 1994:9)[Emphasis added]

From the above commentary, risk is discussed in terms of its "reality". But this "reality" is a consequence of processes of social construction. Indeed what may appear dangerous to one person might seem perfectly reasonable to the next. On such a premise the *delineation* between real and perceived, physical and psychological risk becomes, therefore, a matter largely of *individual perception*.

"Risk" and "danger" are seen as generating or stimulating very powerful memories and images. However, within the commentary on OMD, these "memories" are nearly always presented in association with (experiential) learning. Crawford (1988:18) suggests that: "meanings are more likely to be remembered than if they had been generated in a less stressful context". This echoes back to the very early work of Clifford and Clifford (1967:147) who suggested that benefits may be incurred as the result of a "vigorous experience". Crawford (*ibid*:p.19) reinforces his point: "[the] challenge of working with others *in risky activities prompts recall*". Creswick and Williams (1979) discuss the occurrence of 'many critical incidents' which 'in total' provide 'an *intense, clear and potent* means of learning'."(cited in Beeby and Rathborn, 1983:175) Thus, there is forceful implication that perceived risk allegedly contributes powerfully to the learning process.(Lucas, 1992:29) Neffinger (1990) supports this:

"There is potentially a need to have the task presented as intriguing, difficult or even dangerous. The challenging and or stressful aspects of



the task are designed to get the adrenaline flowing in order to catalogue the learning.”

In addition, an interesting idea is the use of *humour* in direct relation to risk.(Putnam and Mumby, 1993:46-47) For example, humour can be used to conceal danger or perceived risk. However, again, it is deemed relevant only in its connection to learning. Cawse (1993:69) summarises by stating that: “Laughter is an essential learning atmosphere”.

The tendency to associate such intense states of emotion so narrowly to learning is a legacy of the templating of the corporatist-managerialist imperative (discussed above) over OMD. In this, every experience tends to be harnessed with regard to how it may, or may not, contribute to heightened effectiveness. However, this is just one possible account or perspective.

In conclusion, the consideration of risk in OMD has lead to the development of an apparently unproblematic commentary composed of a number of strands: populist accounts of OMD’s “accident stories and statistics”, a reactionary safety movement, and, a marriage between risk and the adoptive positivist corporate effectiveness imperative that seeks to account for risk solely in terms of “management learning”. However, the underlying issue is clearly the scope to see “risk” as a socially constructed experience.

### **3.8.5 “Reality”, “Outdoors”, “Risk” and “Novelty” in OMD – Summary.**

The oft-commented “reality”, “outdoors”, “risk” and “novelty” seem to provide a stultified account of experience in OMD. To append further attributes would be to extend the representational process. However, it is apparent that insights for alternative or richer appreciations are available. Calder (1991:21) notes Thompson’s (1991:47) observation that the original *Outward Bound* programme had the intention of providing “educational and training systems for



strengthening an individual both *spiritually* and physically.”[Emphasis added] In turn, Everard (1988:12) cites the founder of Brathay Training and Development:

“Scott endowed Brathay to ‘open young people’s minds to the possibilities of living adventurously in the world of physical activity *as well as the world of spirit*’.[Emphasis added]

Similarly, Hahn, [the founder of the *Outward Bound*], believed in the development of the whole person through training. “Whole people think, know, can, feel, sense, will, do, value, and are....”. Moreover, there seems to be a clear *temporal* dimension to considering the role of intangible elements in OMD in relation to changing value systems: “[the] certainties of the 1940s replaced by the doubts of the 1980s”.(Cacioppe and Adamson, 1988:93)

OMD context is sometimes portrayed in *Utopian* or *Arcadian* language. Calder (1991:21) points to OMD’s power to change. He mentions features of bureaucracy disappearing. He talks of *peaceful natural environments* where participants readily “relax, shed inhibitions, rigid rules and stereotypes”.(*ibid*) As has been suggested in the section on the *Outdoors* above, *Pastoralism* (associated with issues of language) has often been an undertow within the commentary on OMD. Jones (1996:212) makes a link with human characteristics stating that all of the “sensory modalities” - learning by thinking, feeling and doing are engaged ...[in the activity and environment]”.

Jones and Oswick (1993:10) make a number of useful statements regarding OMD’s more ephemeral respects. They refer to the “powerful” effects of the training linking this to “clever imagery”. Long (1987) also finds a strong role for imagery in her narrative writing. *Imagery* is a key part of the “intangible”(Snell and James, 1994:234) domain and linkages can be seen with the role of *metaphor*, and the creation and reception of *impression* among other things. Peckham (1983a:14) talks of OMD programmes leaving participants “euphoric” but not being particularly useful. In addition, Ibbetson and Newell (1996:167) suggest that OMD can “generate drama and excitement”. Moreover, Elkin



(1991a:208) draws attention to the humanistic values that come through OMD: “listening well”, “tolerance of difference”, “acceptance of risk”, “ambiguity and trust”. Long (1987) also finds a role for the creation of a “common language” in the OMD approach. It has been suggested that:

“There is a *transformation in the quality of the person* because it is not just a little knowledge that the learner acquires but a *different way of approaching the world* and the challenges it presents.”(Cacioppe and Adamson, 1988:81) [Emphasis added]

Long (*ibid*:p.31) talks about the “magic” of the “wilderness lab”. She considers the principal value of physical events. She alludes to human behaviour that may have a role to play in learning and narrative when she discusses: “unfamiliar, graphic fun boarding on the silly, touching [experiences].” There is an opportunity to link this to Knights and Willmott’s (1995) earlier thoughts on the role of the personal and the professional identities. And, Doughty (1990:8) indicates crucially:

“Indeed, it is the aspect of *spiritual and emotional development that form the hidden agenda of so many development courses*. This is largely because the social consensus in industry and commerce until relatively recently has felt that such development was *outside the remit of industrial training and had no commercial value*”. [Emphasis added]

In the light of Boje, Gephart and Thatchenkery’s (1996) ideas concerning obedience being worth more than individuality in modernity and the organization being so planned that “spontaneity is suspended”, the above ideas have interesting implications for managerial sense-making and the stories arising from them.

The suggestion is perhaps that experiences in an OMD context have the potential to remind us potently of some basic human or humanistic values in management instead of a more usual practice of paying lip service to them. The implication



seems to be that certain processes have been neglected during the development of management into many aspects of its current paradigm. In turn, this has carried over into OMD. However, for a range of reasons OMD (and indeed wider managerial contexts) seems persistent in conjuring up experiences and moments that do not fit comfortably or conveniently into the imposed managerial paradigms. In this, the deterministic aspects of such paradigms subjugate the voluntaristic aspects of human beings. Mumby and Putnam (1992:478 cited in Fineman, 1993:50) are concerned that organizations create “emotional robots”. Indeed, management is: “continually subject to *unpredictable and intangible* external and internal factors as more of a *human art* than a science where the critical skills are *essentially intuitive and experimental*.”(Anderson, 1989:14)[Emphasis added] Moreover, Howe (1984:26), (echoing Widdershoven’s (1993) concerns with regard to discontinuity theory) notes that: “The problem [in using the outdoors] is *one needs to be receptive to that magic* and many youngsters and adults, just aren’t.”[Emphasis added]

Alternatively concepts surrounding ideas of risk, reality, outdoors, novelty therefore, are important catalysts for generating narrative and stories. Intangible (and human) aspects (Snell and James, 1994) like *memories, recall, intense, potent experiences*, mentioned above, imply this. People are constantly renegotiating meanings and as such: “The *intellectual, emotional, spiritual* and physical dimension of each individual is brought into sharp focus”.(Cacioppe and Adamson, 1988:179)

### **3.9 OMD Conceptualisation: Whither to...?**

In conclusion, the conceptualisation of OMD, at least as commented in the literature, relates powerfully to a modernistic meta-narrative (convention of generic and homogenous experience). This is couched within a positivistic corporate imperative concerned with the concept of effectiveness. This was shown through a discussion on the models commonly employed in OMD.



As a number of writers discuss, management development cannot, perhaps, be seen as an end in itself.(Storey, 1989a:5, Watson, 1999a:2) As a consequence, development is perhaps unjustifiable as simply a journey of self-discovery - it must be a “useful” journey in other respects. Within a modernist paradigm of management development this purpose is represented as modifying individual or group behaviour with a view to creating more *effective* and *efficient* managers for the benefit of the employing organization. OMD programmes frequently seek to be seen as adhering and replying to the above-mentioned corporate imperative. Yet, there is more to be considered within the OMD processes than this limited horizon. This may mean that on occasion programmes are not seen as responding to perceived corporate needs. From this tension is sourced, potentially, many of the charges of “irrelevancy” made against OMD:

“The support of top management is *critical for effective outcomes* from any training or organizational effort. Outdoor programs, *in particular*, run the risk of seeming *irrelevant*, so it is especially essential that top managers show their support”.(Buller, Cragun and McEvoy, 1991:58-59)[Emphasis added]

The word “irrelevant” here begs the question irrelevant to what? The evident answer seems to be - potentially irrelevant to objectives associated with heightened effectiveness:

“Some of these programs will be effective in developing management skills: others will not. As with many management development ‘fads’ - such as sensitivity training or management by objectives - outdoor training may be short-lived due to *poor application of otherwise good concepts and practices.*”(ibid:p.58)[Emphasis added]

Judging from the literature to date it is difficult for many people to look beyond such an “output” focused, “win at all costs culture” manner of viewing experiences in organizations (of which OMD programmes form a part). Fineman



and Gabriel (1996) are keen to underline that often it is only in these terms that many organizational members are able to behave. Burletson and Grint (1996:194) illustrate how this occurs in OMD:

“For all the co-operation that allegedly underlay the course, the idea of discovering who ‘won’ the particular exercise was a normal practice, and the participants were well aware of this; as one mentioned, ‘regardless of whether we were meant to be competing or not - we were! Of course, those who did not ‘win’ were then left to resolve their ‘failure’ - which they often did by rationalizing the task as unachievable”.

Herein lies an important tension for OMD in relation to management development and managerial activity in general:

“The *traditional approach* to OMD is premised upon.... the assumption that the displacement of participants from their *conventional Machiavellian* (warlike) environment to an alien (peaceful) one generates an entirely different form of interpersonal dynamics that operate as if it were *hermetically sealed off from normality by a natural boundary device*. Following Galagan (1987), Long (1987) and Dainty and Lucas (1992) Irvine and Wilson summarize the approach as based on: ‘the principle... that the outdoors provides activities and/or environments *devoid of traditional organizational and educational norms*.’”(Burletson and Grint, 1994:194)[Emphasis added]

Clearly, the above-cited writers feel that the possibility of OMD offering any *additional experience* to a “traditional” managerial experience is a difficult one to envisage. Yet, in spite of the above apparent predilections, the discussion thus far has illustrated alternative concerns and perspectives in relation to attempting to conceptualise experiences in OMD. There seems more to say. At this juncture in the discussion it seems reasonable to contend that other facets and perspectives of *those experiences* merit consideration. There is a concern that the



need for an alternative, for example, “socio-economic” study (Storey (1989a,b)) will continue to be overlooked.

It would appear that the OMD literature produced to date has displayed scant regard for attempting to place experiences in OMD in this broader context. This is not to initiate a process of exclusion or assertion of a neo-hegemony over an existing hegemony. However, neither can the *status quo* it claims be “complete” or achieved (within its positivistic frame of reference) in any way. Rather it is as McAulay and Sims (1995a:12) state concerning management learning “unfinished business”.

Thus OMD’s epistemology is charged with, by a small group of writers of providing a poor account of certain aspects of experiences in OMD processes. However, such accounts often only tease at the emergent issues whilst still courting the mainstream preoccupations (i.e “outcomes”):

“The possibility that *alternative, unplanned but nevertheless significant learning outcomes* may result from these training interventions *is largely ignored.*”(Jones, 1996:221)

Potentially rich experiences are configured into templates of preconceived rationale subjugated to the ends of “effectiveness”. As discussed above (and commented on further below) these points are interconnected with issues of methodology. Many writers who are staunch critics of “anecdotal”, “testimony” [sic: narrative?] approaches for their lack of “rigour” are, however, victims themselves of rhetorical or vague language associated with spurious “certainties”, “proofs” and repeatedly mechanistic methodologies. Examples of such approaches might include Lucas (1992), Irvine and Wilson (1994) and Wagner and Campbell (1994). In such “input-output” “before-and-after the black box” approaches it is possible to witness many of the drawbacks of quantitative approaches. Doughty (1990:7), to some extent, inadvertently underlines the malaise: “Validation seems to be the major problem which may be as much an indication of unclear aims and objectives of methodology as it is the validation



process itself.” Useful clues and cues with which to access or embark on such a journey are planted in such commentaries.(Beeby and Rathborn’s, (1983:177) work is such an example as is Jones’ cited above) An alternative but potentially complementary perspective may be useful. But, why has this work not already been undertaken? There appear to be fears regarding certain reactions:

“[OMD possibly] ... allows the inclusion of activities as bizarre or extreme as ‘knitting in the woods’ in that the activity and/or environment are likely to be novel. But will knitting in the woods increase managerial performance? Common sense suggests that the obvious answer would appear to be no.”(Irvine and Wilson, 1994:28)

However, who can claim to be the arbiter of ‘common sense’ seems to be an equally poignant question. Rather, concerns should relate to “sense making” (Weick, 1995) in an idiosyncratic and socially interactive context. Looking from a broader conceptualisation of the experience of managing it might be quite possible to argue a case of relevance for a given individual participant in a given circumstance of “knitting in the woods” style activities!

“Those involved in the outdoor development training industry know that behind the *uniform face* that we inadvertently present are *a wide variety* of products, styles and standards. We also know that we could achieve much more if there was clarity about what it is we are offering and what it is our clients wanted. Perhaps we are clear in some instances but fear our ‘*conservative*’ clients would be inhibited by some of the more ‘*off the wall*’ processes and outcomes that we could offer with a resulting loss of business, hence the ‘hidden agendas’ of practitioners in certain circumstances. Perhaps some of the *discontinuity* between the understanding of providers and clients lies in the confusion over the differing outcomes of management development and personnel development.”(Doughty, 1990:7)[Emphasis added]



In support, Spender (1994) states that all forms of knowledge commence with the experience of the individual. The power of issues relating to concepts of risk, reality and metaphor is underlined equally by Teire's (1994) remark that "most problems are [only] in people's heads". There is a case, therefore, for seeking to understand managers as first and foremost human beings - human beings involved in experiences as Calder (1991:21) postulates (although he offers that as self-evident representations for analysis) like: "risk-taking", "self-esteem", "trust", "creativity" and "fear reduction". Campbell (1990:219) also alludes that there may be more to consider: "outdoor programmes can provide an intense and relevant learning experience" But the processes of secondary socialisations (Berger and Luckmann, 1971:157-165) should assist in generating such contexts:

"learning always relates to what has gone before. There is never a clean slate on which to begin; unless new ideas and new experience link to previous experience they exist as abstractions, isolated and without meaning."(Boud *et al*, 1993:8)

The next section of the thesis considers, within the overall social constructive approach, that contemporary images and impressions of OMD are, in some part, a consequence of important *historical influences*. Demonstrating how these influences may play a role in OMD narrative is a vital stage of the discussion yet, to date in the literature, virtually no serious regard has been paid to this issue. The next section will hopefully build a further contribution to knowledge and understanding in relation to OMD and, in particular, to socially constructed accounts of OMD.



## CHAPTER FOUR: OMD – “History” and “Origins”: A Story of Stories.

### 4.1 Chapter Four: Overview.

OMD has a rich relationship with a number of historical influences. The celebration, by certain audiences, of an “orthodox” account or meta-narrative of historical influences has both influenced and worked to draw attention away from alternative constructs and perceptions. In relation to this, the Chapter develops ideas for the debate by illustrating how such emergent influences affect the constructing and understanding OMD experiences by individuals.

### 4.2 Narratives: OMD “Origins” and Emergent Narratives - Introduction.

Time is an important aspect of narrative.(Ricouer, 1984) In particular, diachronic time, or “history” and experiences within a context of that “time” (Ricouer, *ibid*) potentially has very important relationships with regard to the way stories develop in OMD courses.

Much of the popular contemporary conceptualisations of using the outdoors for development are a consequence of the last hundred or so years (giving rise to a continued “maintenance” of “institutonalised” socially objective “realities” and constructions (Berger and Luckmann,1971:63)). As argued in the previous chapter it is only in the last thirty or so years that OMD has been developed in the corporatist and managerialist terms in which it is currently debated.

An *a priori* review of OMD literature provides the impression that *the* story of the “origins” of the approach is both widely known and uniformly accepted (- the reality is maintained (*ibid*)) by a majority of commentators. Virtually all the published work seems to adhere to a particular (meta-)narrative account or version - similar seminal dates, names and events are repeated in a range of texts. Much of this historical commentary is now portrayed in OMD writing as either subsumed



by, or culminating in, organizational development. The effect has been to marginalise as irrelevant or invisible wide spheres of “historical” commentary. Implicitly accompanying this is the assumption that a review would have few novel insights to contribute to the argument.

However, if the broader historical issues concerning the use of the outdoors for development are considered it is apparent that there are myriad influences that may shape contemporary perceptions of OMD experiences. Yet, those influences are little commented or discussed. Therefore, a more sustained consideration of current typifications (Berger and Luckmann, 1971:45-48) and ideas from a range of alternative perspectives of contributory sources of OMD raise fresh questions with regard to narrativizing OMD “history”.

### 4.3 “Orthodoxy” in Narratives on Origins.

In many accounts concerning the historical influences on OMD it is often stated that OMD has developed from six main areas.(Bank, 1994: 15-16; Cacioppe and Adamson.(1988:79-80):

- “- the military;
- outdoor sports [pursuits];
- *Outward Bound*;
- outdoor education through the school system;
- other youth activities, such as *Scouts* and the *Duke of Edinburgh Award*
- organizational development (OD).” (Bank:*ibid*)

It is important to point up the representational nature of these categories in that they seek to circumscribe and encapsulate wide ranges of experience. Nevertheless, they are so prevalent in the literature that their emergence and contribution has a certain facticity (or social objective reality). There is a need to understand the possibility of alternative constructs. Bank’s model also alludes to



a temporal account of the development pattern of OMD (i.e. military through to organizational development) although it does not overtly acknowledge it. The order in which he presents the categories suggests a *diachronic basis*, an “order of things”, or *linear development*, in the presentation of this perspective on the emergence of OMD.

This section of the discussion is, therefore, a “round-trip”. A consideration of the above influences is carried out with the purpose of better understanding how narrative is “made” or evolves through social interaction in *contemporary* OMD. Doughty’s (1990:7) “Three Generations of Development Training” relates to, and seeks to contextualise the last of Bank’s categories, (“organisational development”) and provides what Bank’s appears to consider some “end” point in a lineage of development. Doughty associates First Generation with “character building”, the “traditional” *Outward Bound* course, and “powerful experiences”. The Second Generation (i.e. the mid-1970s to early 1980s in Sewell’s (1991) model discussed in the previous chapter) concerned itself with the appearance of an “abstract intellectual” dimension within OMD. However, the contemporaneous Third Generation purports “overt aims and objectives [that] encompass physical, intellectual, *emotional, spiritual and ethical aspects* in balance with one another”. (*ibid*:pp.8-9) The model’s preoccupation is heightened organizational effectiveness but the Third stage introduces aspects and images that, interestingly, do not fit readily (as was illustrated in the first chapter) into that modernist ethos. Therefore, Doughty’s model, although problematic in representational terms is troubled by experiences it seeks to fit into predominant frames of reference.

The argument below discusses how the above linear developmental account may not be a particularly useful way to consider historical contexts in relation to OMD. It will be argued that in a broad sense modernistic meta-narratives have emerged in OMD writing which engender exclusive (and excluding) representations of historical “facts”. Alternatively, in contrast to such meta-narratives is a discussion of individual experience and social constructive and narrative processes to which commentaries such as Doughty’s (*ibid*) allude but do little to advance.



The argument now proceeds to consider and problematize certain ideas concerning the notion of the military as a contributory influence on OMD.

#### 4.3.1 The Military - An Influence of Fashion.

It could be argued that training for military and development for management purposes are quite different. This would be to dismiss and misunderstand the inter-relationship of military affairs with management in both physical and more abstract terms. It is not the place of this argument to consider in detail a dialogue between the military and management. However, there is a need to understand OMD's particular relationship with the military for a number of reasons. Currently, it is not fashionable for OMD-providing organizations to acknowledge military influence. This trend is in keeping with a general diminution of the use of the military as an inspiration source for the organization for civilian activities. (Symons, 1993:7; *The Sunday Telegraph*, 1997:29; Kingston, 1999:2-3; Toolis, 1999:26-36) Again it is difficult to appreciate fully the process of that demise but it can probably be related to gradual social changes and movements that emerged during the five decades since the end of the Second World War (and possibly even since the end of the First World War. (Davies, 1999:3)) Indeed, the pendulum has moved full swing with the military (like many other public entities) now seeking to incorporate business practices into military operations.

Nevertheless, military ideas were indeed influential during the 1950s and 1960s in shaping the format and structure of many early outdoor programmes. (Cook, 1974; Beeby and Rathborn, 1983) The military, in that period, was probably one of the few organizations with experience of outdoor activities, and structures with which to provide training and equipment to a large audience. Indeed, early non-military providers, such as *Outward Bound*, were inspired and modelled on military forms. Cook (1974 in Wilson 1978:463) underlines the role of World War Two in propagating military infusion into outdoor pursuits. He suggests that the first time many outdoor enthusiasts visited mountain areas was during military



exercises. A number, he states, gained a taste for the environment and went on to take up posts in outdoor pursuit roles. Cook underlines the military atmosphere in post-war Britain:

“In fact the average working class climber in 1952 would almost certainly have been kitted out in ex-WD [War Department] gear. His university brother would have worn equipment purchased in Chamonix or Zermatt.”(Cook, *ibid*)

In spite of its changing role the military has been, and (it will be contested) remains, a potent influence on OMD experiences. The discussion needs to consider why and how this might be the case. Initially, it will be useful to review two common and most tangible aspects between the spheres of management and the military: *activities* and *personnel*. A number of physical activities employed in military training are present in outdoor programmes. Obvious examples constitute team hikes in mountainous terrain or assault courses. This is not to say, of course, that they are conducted in a similar fashion, or for the same reasons, or that they are perceived and understood in similar ways. The potential act of killing in military experience is cited by some commentators as being the main difference from civilian activities. (Beaumont, 1999:12; Kingston, *ibid*) As such, Bonington (1994:23-27) talks about the use of such training in the military situation being used to “sharpen the hunt” and suggests that this does not occur in management. However, Butcher (1991) presents a particularly long comparative account of the value of “realistic” military training and “realistic” management development. He illustrates this by recommending the use of live ammunition in the training of the military and recommending the same (metaphorically) for managers. He provides an instance of managers on an OMD programme taking on the task of organizing a series of events culminating in a party for a group of disabled children.

Military personnel train in difficult physical situations because it is likely that soldiers will need to operate in similar circumstances. And, Veal (1988:166) acknowledges that these are special situations. Cawse (1993:69) constructing a particularly “entrenched” position in the debate notes: “Very strenuous and



seemingly ridiculous activities belong only to the military - they need to practise extremes, managers don't." Cawse takes for granted the expression "practise extremes" however "extremes" are relative and may be perceived in many contexts and environments. Albeit that Bonington's idea of the "hunt" or killing the enemy is not physically present in management, or in the development of managers, the impact of failed business activity can have, if not life-threatening, then certainly devastating personal consequences for those individuals involved. Burrell is more adamant (and rather dramatic) on this point:

"The successful [business] barons 'know' *that business is war and their real death - not some metaphorical disappointment - is at stake*. It is at this time [1929] in US business history that people start to talk of strategy, for the military analogy takes on a potency that all recognize. Failed leaders expected no golden handshake from shareholders distant in time and space. The market was 'red in tooth and claw' and 'strategy' and 'war' became ways of dealing with 'opposition'.(Burrell, 1997:199)[Emphasis added]

Military metaphors therefore are important in OMD and the business domain overall (Bonington, 1994:23; Jones, 1996:222; Wee Chou Hou, 1997:40):

"The very vocabulary of business has been invaded by military terminology - strategy (the art of generalship), tactics, raids, targets, penetration, outflanking, ambushes, predators, sieges, flak, piracy."(Fineman and Gabriel, 1996:73)

Burletson and Grint (1996:200) suggest that conflict in OMD programmes rather than being resolved is, in fact, never very far from the surface. They create an amalgam of military allusions to demonstrate this point citing Machiavelli's and Clausewitz's famous statements (the latter actually taken from his work *Vom Kriege* (About/On War)(1832):



“If the pseudo-Clausewitzian claim - that business is the pursuit of war by other means [author’s note - the statement is actually *war is the pursuit of diplomacy by other means*] - is accurate then we might consider whether conventional OMD courses are actually appropriate for challenging competitive forms of organizational politics.”

Beyond activities there is also the question of *personnel*. OMD companies are an apparent source of employment for ex-services personnel.(Cawse, 1993; Bank, 1994) In more recent years it has been possible to find ex-military personnel working in OMD organizations although they are by no means in a majority (as mentioned above if there is an employment trend then it is towards individuals with experience in outdoor pursuits and psychology related backgrounds). Moreover, field experiences carried out in the course of this study provided the impression that there tends to be a reluctance by them to discuss their military experience extensively. This may be for a number of reasons. Among these, the popular social constructions of the military stereotype (for example, shouting, blindly obeying orders, harsh disciplinary regimes) does not always sit comfortably in the contemporary OMD constructs as construed by some individuals. Nowadays, OMD programmes purport an overt focus on ideas concerning exchange of views, persuasion, facilitation and mutual respect and understanding and so these two stereotypes seem at odds.

Outdoor activities are also cited (in the OMD literature) as being used for military selection purposes.(Fraser, 1970; Krouwel and Goodwill, 1994; Bank, 1994) In addition, Burlleton and Grint (1996) elaborate a covert, Machiavellian dimension involved in using OMD programmes for selection processes. Importantly, Shepstone (1989:19) makes a key point that many people still associate the overall OMD experience with a military style trial or test.

Perhaps an important point stemming from a potentially mundane consideration of military personnel and activities is the emergence of popular media images concerning organizational lives and the ways in which they are constructed and the manner, in which people construct meanings around them.(Hassard and



Holliday, 1998:1) These constructs have implications and consequences for the way individuals construct meaning and sense in relation to OMD experiences. Key influences in the construction of popular images in OMD are dramatisations about OMD on television (*Hamish MacBeth*, 1997; *Taggart*, 1998; *Neville's Island*, 1998; *The Bill*, 1999); in film (*She'll be Wearing Pink Pyjama's*) and articles in national newspapers (Clouston, 1994:6; Dugdale, 1996:2-3; Showalter, 1998:2-3). Hassard and Holliday (1998:1) term these genre "filmic, literary, televisual and journalistic portrayals". The emergent picture is often one of camouflaged, ex-military "types", leading feckless participants in a "bulldog" style into situations and crises leading to inevitable rescue by the hero protagonist or the emergency services. Interestingly, a series of recent documentary television programmes (*Behind the Lines*, 1997 and *Who Dares Wins*, 1997) have striven to present an alternative atmosphere of co-operation and partnership in which, certainly at least elite, military teams frequently need to operate. Overall, the power of these media in contributing to the construction of images cannot be underestimated. And, it can be postulated that some participants and commentators relate to these constructions in viewing and experiencing OMD. Frequently, these *fictional and factual narrative accounts* contain drama, emotion and a very human account of the experience. It is these aspects of human social constructive and narrativizing processes between military and OMD experiences that blur the distinctions between fact and fiction, drama and documentary.

A recurrent modern military theme concerns stories of ex-Special Air Service (SAS) personnel running programmes and providing daunting or harrowing experiences for participants. Mant (1981b) exemplifies this populist thrust and perhaps exaggerates when he states that many of these [OMD] programmes are directed by ex-SAS personnel. However, empirical work would suggest that this is simply not the case. Although written in 1981, Mant's illustrative remarks still seem relevant to the current populist constructions. Clearly, this *created* or *generated* image of OMD is only fuelled by articles of the ilk: "Death renews charge of SAS style training" reporting on the death of a 39-year old ambulance employee who suffered a heart attack whilst engaged in an OMD hike-style activity. (Welch, 1997:7)



An important strand of contemporary commentary on OMD personnel was generated by Channel 4's (1993) *Exposure* programme. John Ridgeway, an ex-soldier with SAS associations, was portrayed by the film crew as providing harsh experiences for participants. Moreover, participants were frequently misled or tricked about the true nature of the tasks to be undertaken. This programme can be assessed as vitally important for its contribution (whether positive or negative depending on perspective) to the evolution of OMD. In terms of its influence on many people's perceptions of OMD it could be discussed as something of a *watershed*. This was due to the strong public reactions it generated. Many OMD providers immediately sought to distance themselves from the programme and its experiences - their experiences of OMD being purportedly very different. Equally, there was a series of scathing articles in a range of professional journals. (*inter alia*: Handforth, 1993; Symons, 1993; Bank, 1994; Harrison, 1995; Taylor, 1996a) The effect of the television programme was dramatic for the OMD "industry". As a consequence, many providers were keen to reduce or play down outdoor aspects of courses. Therefore, in this respect, it can be seen to what extent the particular viewing public's experience and perception of "Exposure" potentially directed the practice and conduct of programmes to be constructed in a particular way. Reflexively, within this the social constructive gestures of the film-maker and editor must not be overlooked. Clearly, the editor and producer had a range of material that might have been cut in a number of ways. It might be argued that the programme set out to highlight certain aspects of Ridgeway's programme in order to make engaging television. Of all the aspects that made a lasting impression it seemed to be that of Ridgeway as an ex-military "type" providing the experience. In summary, this particular "story" provides an illustration of how, in general, powerful sources for individual narratives can be generated not only by social interaction between small numbers of individuals but also by wide-scale one-off presentations. Moreover, in spite of attempts to "negotiate out" military experiences from OMD programmes they appear to continue to play an influential part in the emergence and re-negotiation of secondary socializations (Berger and Luckmann, 1971:157) among participants trying to make sense of experiences in OMD contexts. More compelling



illustrations of this phenomenon in process will be discussed at length in the next chapter.

#### 4.3.2 *Outward Bound - Miscast Alma Mater?*

Bank's (1994) second category of OMD sources is *Outward Bound*. As will be discussed further below, this is not a generic synonym for OMD but the trading name of one particular organization with operations in various countries in the world. These tend to be predominantly English-speaking: United States (Gahin, 1988:44); Australia and New Zealand.(Cacioppe and Adamson, 1988; Elkin, 1991a,b) Importantly, *Outward Bound* has become the eponymous misnomer frequently (mis)applied to all activities and programmes that take place outdoors.(Kent, 1997:19-23)

“...employees are...sent on outdoor programmes as part of their development... *Intriguingly, most will say they are off on an “Outward Bound” course and whilst a satisfying generic reference for that organisation it bears little resemblance to the fact. Indeed, only a small, though growing part of Outward Bound’s turnover is in management development. The market place is confusing with over a hundred providers jostling for the industry’s training budget*”.(Campbell, 1990:218)[Emphasis added]

*Outward Bound* is of particular importance to understanding what has emerged as an almost folkloric account of the development of OMD. Indeed, it is unquestionably the most well-known “name” connected to the outdoors.

In order to place *Outward Bound* in some sort of context it will be vital to review the oft-cited and recited storey of its establishment. Founded during the Second World War, *Outward Bound* was established by a German-Jewish refugee, Kurt Hahn (also the founder of Gordonstoun public school) and Lawrence Holt, a



shipping line owner, principally to understand, emulate and extend the lessons of one repeated empirical wartime experience. (*Industrial Relations Review and Report-Employee Development Bulletin*, 1992b:2; Bank, 1994:17; Irvine and Wilson, 1994:25; Burtson and Grint, 1996:191) During World War Two, in the Battle of the Atlantic, when a merchant ship had been attacked and sunk, surviving crew would take to the ship's lifeboats. In the period spent on the open sea, before rescue, it was difficult to account for the fact that the survival rate was invariably higher among the older crew members than the younger contingent. This was in spite of the observation that the younger members were usually (as might be expected) in better physical condition. The higher survival rate among the older men in the face of this adversity was attributed (however inappropriately or appropriately) to their "mental stamina", said to result in their greater "will to survive". The *Outward Bound* movement was allegedly founded to reproduce and teach this ability.

The first school was established at Aberdovey in Wales in 1941. Many of the early *Outward Bound* training techniques were military in style. Rise at six o'clock in the morning, swim in an ice-cold lake, cross-country runs, marching, long hikes, drills, especially with boats. (Beeby and Rathborn, 1983:172) The approach was portrayed and celebrated in jingoistic 1950's films like "Blue Peter". The premise of the approach was that individual physical (and thereby mental stamina) would be drawn from these experiences and activities. As discussed above, the influence was in keeping with the merit and prestige attributed to military organization and approach in that period. The legacy of various attempts to achieve these outcomes became, for many, part of a way of talking about outdoor experiences:

"The hypothesis of this study stated in effect that changes in feelings about self-worth and competence would take place as a *function of a rather vigorous experience.*" (Clifford and Clifford, 1967:153) [Emphasis added]



“Thus the first *Outward Bound* School at Aberdovey aimed to equip younger seamen with those personal qualities (of confidence, determination and the will to survive), which were ascribed to older seamen for whom corresponding fatality rates were significantly lower... *Outward Bound* continued to provide courses for young men in peacetime with a view to increasing their maturity, confidence and experience and fostering in them an attitude of service to the community. Standard courses combined physical and mental activities, most frequently within a framework of group exercises for teams of twelve in the outdoors. Each course lasted four weeks, *alcohol, tobacco and swearing were prohibited and early morning runs and/or swims were mandatory.*”

(Beeby and Rathborn, 1983:172)[Emphasis added]

Moreover, Irvine and Wilson draw attention to Hahn’s ethos:

“An individual in today’s technological society [the year was 1941] needs the opportunity to test and challenge his basic human potential in order for the individual to realize and discover themselves .... Hahn added seamanship and mountaineering to the curriculum because .... ‘*it was necessary to introduce youth to danger (in a positive sense) and adventure to provide a learning environment that would provide the moral equivalent to war*’. And although Hahn recognized its value, he never advocated adventure as an end in itself, but rather as a training vehicle through which youth would mature.”

(Irvine and Wilson, 1994:25-26)[Emphasis added]

Given the circumstances in which *Outward Bound* originated an interesting cross-fertilization can be related to the earlier military discussion. This is underlined by Hahn’s now famous saying that *Outward Bound* constituted the “moral equivalent of war”. This statement is stimulating in the perspective it offers on (and the nexus between) war and its relationship to human experience. It suggests that if *Outward Bound* constitutes the moral equivalent than its war counterpart is, de facto the immoral counterpart. Yet for *Outward Bound* to be templated or modelled on war,



or at least situations of war, there is the implicit suggestion, no matter how contentious, that some valuable or “good” points must be present in the process and experience of war. This was, namely, that the comparable human psychology and emotions are evoked by both. Alternatively, there may be further issues of gender biased representations - *Outward Bound* and war often being discussed in terms of exclusively male spheres of experience.

Irvine and Wilson (*ibid*:p.26) are among commentators who express various concerns about how such values emerge in, and relate to, “today’s” experience. They propose that *Outward Bound* is “catalytic” in affecting achievement of “self-knowledge”, “understanding of others”, “personal development and preparation for life in society” and “citizenship”. In turn, they suggest that “the underpinning philosophy of [OMD] courses ..... *superficially reflects the tenets propounded by Hahn.*” But, they challenge “*the validity of this philosophy for modern day OMD...*”.(Irvine and Wilson, *ibid*:p.26)[Emphasis added] Given the premises or ideas on which OMD is founded - that older men survived in greater numbers than younger men due to greater maturity of character and self-awareness - was the idea ever completely, or in any degree ever useful? For example, maybe the older men carried more body fat. This would provide a food resource for the body and insulation against the cold. Moreover, how were stories on this harrowing experience heard and retold? In this light, Irvine and Wilson’s argument is pertinent to a certain extent but seems to miss a further point. In reply this argument raises the question - is it possible that a whole range of organizations and experiences have been launched and set into motion on the basis of a spurious cause-and-effect, experimentalist idea?

With the arrival of the late 1970s and 1980s onwards, *Outward Bound* seemed to be somewhat left behind as developments were made by a series of new entrants to the emerging OMD “market”.(Sewell, 1991:15; Campbell, 1990:218) This was a period of change in the “industry” where what had passed as “good” or usual practice moved towards using the outdoors as a smaller part of many courses. Indoor elements and review processes became increasingly important. Indeed, this is a trend that is still in process currently:



“Training provided by Compass Team-work Development and Assertiveness Training for Business and Industry is no outward bound [note the use of lower case] course..... “We use the outdoors, but we are not providing outdoor training”, says Michael Cawse, a former army officer and training adviser with the DRG group..... “*While outward bound-type programmes frequently aim to build character by forcing people to confront their fears, on this course outdoor activities are used to reinforce the more theoretical elements of the course and to develop skills such as problem-solving.*”(Arkin, 1991:49)[Emphasis added]

However, *Outward Bound* continues to provide, for many commentators, the stereotype or label of the story that embraces “the OMD experience”. Like the contribution to popular beliefs and stories on OMD provided by the television programme “Exposure” (mentioned above), *Outward Bound* has coloured the picture substantially. Its trade name has been both a blessing and a hindrance. On the one hand, a by-word for the popular perception of a healthy and robust involvement with nature, on the other hand, indicative of a faded glory within the “industry” of which it purports membership.

In summary, in many studies Outward Bound is often accredited with originating the use of the outdoors for personal developmental purposes. Many studies attest to this.(*inter alia*: Rice, 1979:66; Veal, 1988:166; Calder, 1991:21; Thompson, 1991:47; Burtleton and Grint, 1996:191) Indeed, Symons (1993:6) illustrates this posture: “The generally accepted genesis of contemporary Outdoor Development is Outward Bound...”. And, the *Industrial Relations Review and Report-Employee Development Bulletin* (1992b:2) similarly allude that “outdoor-based development has come a long way since the Second World War.” There is the implication that the last World War was a *watershed* in the story of the approach. Again, this contains a strong implication that the era of Hahn is the beginning of the development ethos, rather than a catalyst, albeit a very substantial one. The *Journal of European Industrial Training*(ed.) (1995:20) suggests that “Kurt Hahn is generally credited as the first person to use outdoor experience as a medium for the development of individuals and groups (in 1941)”. Calder (1991:21) talks, for



example, that the first “*Outward Bound* [type] school was started in Wales”. Lucas (1992:24) citing Cacioppe and Adamson (1988) clearly attributes the origins of development training to Outward Bound. And, Bank (1985:16) suggests the setting up of *Outward Bound* as something of a “starting point”. Similarly, Symons (*ibid*) offers Hahn as the originator of the “outdoors” approach.

But, this process of representation as “historical fact” seems problematic. The story seems to be typified, institutionalized, externalized and objectified as unequivocal “reality”.(Berger and Luckmann, 1971:63-145) This modernistic meta-narrative (Lyotard, 1984) is so influential that it is difficult to find alternative stories or accounts (certainly in an English speaking context). However, importantly and interestingly, in contrast Magnino (1994:18) states that the origins of OMD programmes in France are ascribed to Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s, *Education Nouvelle*, and little or no reference is generally made to Hahn.

Thus, major assumptions appear in operation that risk truncating and separating constructions of OMD from the potential full extent of its rich sources and influences. For example, it may be useful to refer to the outdoor adventure/education literature. Donnelly (1981a,b, 1982) and Livesey (1982) both provide reflections on the alternative interpretations that are significant in the use of the outdoors for developmental purposes and these contribute to the next part of the debate. Fineman (1993) discusses the role of nostalgia in organizations. In this vein, *Outward Bound* more than any other organization has played a role for the OMD providers. By way of conclusion, Burrell (1997:15-16) provides us with an interesting insight into the processes and mechanisms by which a new movement is set up and commences. He is talking about organizational theory but lessons may be found from the *Outward Bound* experience:

“...However, the *notion of a golden age is always suspect*, for when we look back we can see not only a much smaller field *but a mythical one in which the powerful agreed to ignore fundamental problems in addressing fundamental issues*”.(Burrell, 1997:16)[Emphasis added]



The next part of the discussion considers the influence of outdoor pursuits/adventure and outdoor education movements, philosophies and writings in respect of the emergence of OMD.

### **4.3.3 Outdoor - Pursuits and Education: An “Anglo-Saxon Attitude”.**

The physical activities of rock-climbing, canoeing, abseiling, mountain-walking, caving, sailing and ghyll-scrambling are activities of many contemporaneous OMD programmes (Krouwell and Goodwill, 1994:54) and further prevalent images of OMD.

Outdoor Pursuits and Outdoor Education in the United Kingdom, particularly mountaineering and rock-climbing, have their own rich and extensive histories and literatures. (*inter alia*: Livesey, 1982; Wilson, 1986) It is not the intention of this study to comment extensively on these literatures *per se*. However, it is possible to consider how these are not usually engaged in OMD debates but, nevertheless, may illustrate how a number of writings and experiences will assist in adjusting predominant and popular perceptions of OMD.

It is proposed that many values, images and social constructions in OMD continue to be built on impressions of earlier periods in the outdoors. Important influences might include the Lakeland writers and poets (for example, Wordsworth, Gilpin, Ruskin) and the popularisation of the concept of the “outdoors” in relation to the Lake District through their work and lives. (Newby, 1985, 1991) This combined with contributions from Romantic and Pastoral movements which were fashionable in the Victorian era in order to generate a certain context for subsequent human experience. (Taylor, 1997:228 and 267) Indeed, this evolution hailed a general notion of the outdoors as offering “beneficial” experiences for body and soul (the parallels of which seem to have continued into OMD connotations concerning the “outdoors” and “novelty” for example.) Such episodes almost certainly played a role in making certain groups of people in



(British) society construct a concept of the “outdoors” as some form of idyll or Arcadian wilderness generating “solace, consciousness and spiritual awareness”(Harrison, 1991:21). Climbing, a precursor of the more generalised concept of outdoor pursuits, developed in this context. Livesey (1982:4) notes:

“In utilising activities such as climbing the *Outward Bound* movement found an added advantage in that from its *Nineteenth Century inception climbing had been attributed the qualities of character building through struggle, challenge and co-operative effort together with the moral qualities* of other recently nascent sports. Added to this, climbing reflected the qualities of the popular Romantic movement where ‘communing with nature’ through climbing gave rise to *desirable spiritual qualities*”. [Emphasis added]

During the Victorian and Edwardian era climbing began to expand albeit on a relatively limited scale. With the growth of these movements a number of *ideas* began to evolve and develop that would imbue stories emerging in association with the outdoors:

“Only towards the end of the Nineteenth Century, when climbers began to venture out frequently together without the assistance of guides, do we begin to find a growing emphasis on the ‘kinship of the rope’. And because of the nature of climbing and its roots in the Romantic movement, the friendships were presumably endowed with *spiritual qualities* largely absent in other sports. Writing of the ‘Romantic Trust’ in North Wales during the early years of this Century, Hankinson notes that: “They sought not just the companionship of the rope but *social companionship* in the evenings and the intellectual exhilaration that comes from encountering keen and clear-minded argument...*the route they were seeking was the one that would take them close to their own souls.*”(Donnelly, 1982:45)[Emphasis added]



Donnelly (*ibid*) thus indicates the extent to which the idea that *Outward Bound* (discussed above) constitutes a starting point for OMD might be truncated. Morals, ethics and ideas on which later both *Outward Bound*, and the corporate effectiveness imperative in OMD could be constructed, were in fact already being considered:

“...we must look to the growth of organized sport in the mid-Nineteenth Century and to the *concurrent ideas of ‘muscular Christianity’ and character building*. It is no accident that *team* sports were favoured by the ‘muscular Christians’. These sports emphasised *group effort, team loyalty, team spirit and subservience of the self to the greater cause of team victory*. As Trevelyan noted: ‘In the microcosm of ‘public school’ life, wherein the boys were left to form and govern their own society ...intellect was less encouraged than sturdy schoolboy faithfulness to comrades.....Much of the heroic foolishness of the Crimean War reflects these values and the link between sport and war became very evident at the time - *sport as a metaphor for war.*”

(Donnelly, *ibid*)[Emphasis added]

Cook corroborates Donnelly’s account:

“Their [sic: the climber’s] life-style peers at us from a thousand murky photographs of moustachioed pipe smokers, dressed in tweed jackets and stout breeches and grouped around blazing fires, their faces exuding a *determined ‘muscular Christianity’ that is a thousand light years distant from the “moderns”[outdoor pursuitists].*”

(Cook 1974 in Wilson 1986:463)[Emphasis added]

Although Donnelly and Cook do not mention it explicitly, they suggest that team effort is based in a dialectic between *pluralistic* and *unitary perspectives* on organizational activity. Equally, there is a sense of prevailing *utilitarianism* whereby the objective of the team ethos is “the greatest good for the greatest number”. Cook (1974 in Wilson, 1986:462) presupposes that the attraction to



people of the outdoors was (and is) founded on a number of things: “Separateness from the rest of their lives; ability to face obstacles that can only be overcome by understanding the connections between the sport and society; and, acting on the implications of that understanding.”

Then there is a series of questions concerning social “class” and the primary and secondary socializations that they evoke. As noted above it is recognised that the issue of the construction of class is complex. Interestingly, it is mainly the literature on Outdoor Pursuits and Outdoor Education that has raised issues of class, gender and ethnicity.(Abbott, 1987; O’Brien, 1988; Humberstone and Lynch, 1991) The OMD literature has not been concerned with class and equally it has not paid great attention to the contribution that gender or ethnic issues may make. Although extensive discussion of issues relating to gender and ethnicity is not a central theme in this thesis it will be valuable to remain mindful of the extent to which it may contribute to “sense-making” (Weick, 1995) experiences in OMD.

During the initial period of climbing in the Victorian era, the activity was undertaken largely by many, for the purposes of the argument, “*middle-class professional people*”.(Cook, 1974; Livesey, 1982) Moreover, according to Cook (*ibid*) the role of the middle-classes (he suggests identities for this term) continued to be important after the early period of the sport:

“I think it is fairly widely agreed that the majority of climbers in the so-called ‘Golden Ages’ up to and including the 1930s were from *the wealthier sections of society, almost exclusively men, they came from a public school and a university background, with the professions, especially teaching, very strongly represented*. The very fact that they had resources in time and money to get away to the hills differentiated them from the majority of the population”.[Emphasis added]

It is argued that OMD (perhaps as with “management” in broader respects) perpetuates the predominance of its “middle-class atmosphere” as an activity both in terms of the people who operate programmes and the corporate executives



participating in them. Certain writers note that OMD is focused particularly at middle and senior management.(Cacioppe and Adamson, 1988:93) This point requires brief expansion. The rise of a “manager class” is a widely debated aspect of modern society. However, attempts to construct or deduce definitions of that class seem illusive and amorphous in many respects.(Reed and Anthony, 1990) In this respect managers are commonly commented as identifying with middle-class concepts and experiences. Watson (1999b:27-28) talks of people “crossing a social line” – that they are now recognised by others as managers. Furthermore, it might be argued that certain strands, albeit new permutations, however far removed, of “muscular Christianity” and “public school style” competitiveness and elitism are perpetuated in manager behaviour generally and also on OMD programmes.

In parallel, Cook (1974 in Wilson, 1986:463) also traces the emergence of a working class outdoor community that evolved around the Pennines in the late 1930s and 1940s. This has led Howkins and Lowerson (1979:48) to comment: “Concerns for health and the drives of much-distorted belated Romanticism made the ‘open air’ a partial panacea for squalor and the years of depression.” However, Taylor (1997:228) urges caution over such claims and advocates a more idiosyncratic account rather than broad and general statements. Moreover, Cook (*ibid*) suggests that during the 1950s the pursuit of outdoor activities was still mainly middle-class. Indeed, Cook notes the snobbery towards working class participants in established traditional climbing clubs. This is also commented on by Livesey (1982:2). However, Cook observes that subsequent to that particular period of social change: “Of course, [many] ‘proletarians’ have now become company directors”.(*ibid*:p.466) Cook’s account makes broad strokes across complex periods of social transformation. Nevertheless, his view is driven by his perception of experiences at that time. It perhaps assists in illustrating, from an outdoor pursuit perspective, the ascendancy of management as a grouping and how competing perspectives may have reflected, and to some extent continue to play a role, in OMD.



The discussion now moves on to consider a number of stories concerning well-known “hero” figures (often from the middle-classes) associated with the outdoors. The intention is to debate the influence they continue to exert on contemporary OMD experiences. Obvious, almost caricatured, examples of such figures might include *Livingstone in Africa* and *Scott of the Antarctic*. These individuals contribute to a “folklore” surrounding outdoor activities:

“The social climate of the mid-Nineteenth Century can be identified as causal in the growth of organised sport in Europe. Enjoying a parallel growth and imbued with the same moral qualities were what we could call adventure or exploratory activities. These were *based on the Victorian adulation of earlier ‘explorer’ heroes, men of action who had broken out of the narrow confines of everyday fields of experience.*”(Livesey:1982:2)

Not only as in inspiration, however mis- or ill-conceived that may now seem, such figures contributed to an imagery and atmosphere of battling against the odds in difficult outdoor settings. It may be suggested, that although society perhaps now offers more cynical or penetrating commentary on such figures, that they also have their modern day counterparts in the polar explorer Ranulph Fiennes, the mountaineer Sir Chris Bonington and even Sir Richard Branson with his powerboat and ballooning exploits. Illustrations of this phenomenon imbue daily life. In the recent obituary of Sir Vivian Fuchs in *The Independent* a large text read: “Exploration uncluttered by bureaucracy held an enormous appeal for Fuchs – expeditions in the ‘heroic’ mould”.(Stonehouse, 1999:7) Or, Overell (1999:11) reflecting in the *Financial Times* on lessons for management from Shackleton’s Antarctic expedition in his article: “Enduring lessons drawn from heroic failure”. There is thus an interesting blurring of fact and fiction in the extent to which these people are further representations of stereotypes. Indeed, Hassard and Holliday (1998:1) develop the point of stereotypes and images in “popular culture”: “...the ways in which such representations are presented carry with them some deeply rooted ideological persuasions ensuring that their audiences accept and conform to the values of the organizational society.” Other individuals prone to these effects



might include professional sports personalities, for example, football and rugby players, boxers and athletes. Individuals from these areas of experience are frequently seen as providing “role-models” for corporate behaviour. For mainstream OMD useful *isomorphic transfer* is believed possible from the *sports domain* into the corporate sphere. Bonington (1994:23) argues his case that mountaineering is in fact a strong metaphor for constructing the necessary images and messages:

“What has climbing mountains to do with running a business or any other organisation? On one level it is easy to seize on some powerful metaphors - of achieving a peak of performance or getting to the top. Sales charts look like a jagged mountain range, and the concern of standing on the highest point of earth is an image so powerful, so obvious, that it can easily become a cliché.”

There seems reason enough to suggest that such images, renewed and recontextualised may contribute to the development and construction of meaning in contemporary outdoor experiences.

Donnelly (1981b) suggests that many of the popular values and images commonly ascribed to, and perpetuated, by those undertaking experiences in the outdoors are unhelpful. He comments that the fallacies relating to outdoor activities have been incessantly reinforced since the Nineteenth Century:

“To the two principal fallacies concerning risk and competition may be added two others: climbing is *character building*; and, climbing leads people *to form close friendships*. The four fallacies derive from the ‘pipes and tweeds’ days of climbing, they are interrelated, and they have been strikingly persistent. Why are they only now being questioned? There appear to be two major reasons, one general and one specific. The first is the *recent generalised and fashionable tendency toward introspection, to the scrutiny of one’s beliefs and behaviour*. The second is a specific concern with the effects of outdoor education in Britain which *has*



*polarised climbers and the anti-outdoor education group to marshal their arguments* by examining exactly which aspects of climbing are threatened by outdoor education. Although the fallacies pre-date the post-war outdoor education movement, they have been adopted and propagated wholeheartedly by outdoor educators as a justification for the inclusion of climbing in outdoor education programmes.”

(Donnelly, 1981b:38)[Emphasis added]

He proposes that: “the fallacy [that “climbing is not really dangerous”] may have *originated from* [concerns for] *middle-class respectability.....*.”(ibid)[Emphasis added]. Donnelly’s supposition on fallacies is a direct challenge to Meier’s *Kinship of the Rope* thesis which contends that, in fact, risk, competition, character and friendship are all *favourably enhanced* by involvement with outdoor activities.(Meier, 1976) These tensions raise interesting points regarding the social constructive forces that are simultaneously at play intra-actively and interactively within the context of OMD. Price (1974) supported by Livesey (1982:1) encapsulates this concern in his seminal essay “Adventure by Numbers”:

“The idea of adventure is now widely accepted in education, yet when one comes to think of it, it is extraordinary that something that is by its very nature so fortuitous *and uncertain of outcome should be harnessed and brought into the service of educational programmes*. I sometimes wonder, indeed, how adventurous courses really are, *for as soon as one becomes a deliberate purveyor of adventure, one is in danger of losing much that is fundamental to it. It becomes a packaged deal, with something false about it*, like the packages described by Jeremy Sandford and Roger Law in their book *Synthetic fun*: ‘synthetic fun is the smile, on the face of the holiday camp fun people, this Friday as every Friday, as they are ritually thrown into the blue, blue swimming pool’.[Emphasis added]

There are strong echoes here of Fineman’s ((1993:2) earlier comments (based on Hochschild’s (1983) work) on *emotion work* and *emotional labour*.



Up to this point, the discussion has focused attention on notional “British” experience. There is thus an important reflexive turn to be made in order to show how institutionalized social construction in relation to other national identities has constructed OMD experiences. These have not necessarily drawn on all the same sociological roots as the British context (elaborated above) on which Mant comments:

“One of the most *endearing qualities of the British is their eccentric tendency* to row boats across oceans, climb impossible mountains, and so on... *It is not surprising* , therefore, that a small but thriving industry has grown up around the *development of executives through confrontation with nature*. Many of these enterprises are directed by ex-military men, *especially members of the SAS...* the *back-to-nature movement* has to be seen in context as part of a shift to education and development based on experience, and is important for that.”(Mant 1981b:83 in Lucas, 1992:25)

Again, Mant (1981b cited in Burnett and James 1994:15) provides a critique of the British experience:

“At its worst the idea degenerates to ideas of “character building” for the regeneration of colonial elites. At its best, it does reflect a recognition of the *indivisibility of the cosmos, the necessary harmony of man and nature and need for struggle and revelation in the development of human capability.*”

Alternatively, OMD has been described by one commentator as an opportunity for those who did not go to Gordonstoun to find out what they had been missing.(Hilton, 1992:45) That Kurt Hahn founded Gordonstoun as well as Outward Bound is perhaps no coincidence. Mant’s concerns engage words and images in which there are powerful echoes of the “Strength Through Joy” ethos of National Socialism in the German Third Reich. The notions of struggle, superhumaness, elitism, survival through overcoming nature and obstacles, may readily bring charges of subjecting the individual to tests as part of building a



broader community through conflict. Taylor (1997:227) discusses the possibility of the influence of this ethos in the inter-war years. He urges caution against firmly suggesting a significant Fascist dimension in emerging outdoors movements in the British Isles during that period. Equally, in relating these ideas to the (soon after) establishment of Outward Bound (and to some extent the subsequent emergence of OMD) it is important to contextualise the fact that Hahn was a German Jewish refugee who emigrated from an increasingly oppressive Nazi regime just before the outbreak of the Second World War.(James, 1990) To what extent does it seem feasible that his ideas privileged Fascist ideas and constructs?

By way of contrast to the “British” experience Cacioppe and Adamson (1988) discuss differing atmospheres in an Australian context:

“The familiarity of many Australians with the outdoors combined with the rugged environment provide programs in this country with a *distinct character of their own. The bush is a natural and important part of the Australian character* and managers are attached to the adventure and challenge that these programs have.....They seem particularly *well suited for the Australian character* and the environment where the *outdoors has been an integral part of the Country’s heritage*”.(Cacioppe and Adamson, 1988:94)[Emphasis added]

Elkin concurs illustrating that early European immigrants to New Zealand had to find ways of surviving in the bush.(Elkin, 1991a:206) Interestingly, one aspect of influence that is perhaps missing from the Australian, New Zealand and United States experience of using the outdoors, particularly for OMD, is the militaristic influence that seems to have been much more powerful for the British experience. Finally, on a broader European note, Magnino (1994:18) underlines the particular ethnocentric impact of the outdoors in the United Kingdom and states that while the personal development ethos is present in countries like France and Italy it by no means receives the same emphasis.



#### 4.4 “Origins” and Influences: Final Thoughts.

In discussing “origins” and influences it is important to emphasise the term “account” because it is essentially Bank’s typology which is a typical point of departure in the literature (and empirically, in discussions in the field). At a *prima facie* level, Bank’s categories seem pertinent and comprehensive. However, it seems possible that their influence has been objectified as “fact” rather than construction. There has been little or no discussion in OMD writing on the potential influences and contributions of other sources that assist in generating contemporary OMD context and atmosphere. The account in the present thesis has sought to broaden and develop the possibility of a range of influences in OMD. But this is not to invite a meta-narrative. It is much more a question of what the individual makes of the experiences in relation to other individuals and their experiences and socialisations from prior experiences.

The roles of Victorian and Edwardian social values and history have been discussed in the construction of some of the images underpinning contemporary Outdoor Education and Outdoor Pursuits/Adventure (and, implicitly, associated fields like Outdoor Management Development). Taylor (1997:227) commenting on experiences in the outdoors goes some way to highlighting the predicament:

“The *collective* effect of the generally *superficial narratives* of (inter-war) open-air recreation has been to gloss over the full social and political importance of the boom and to ignore much of the *distinctively British cultural* significance.”[Emphasis added]

As has been attempted above, the sources to redress this situation (with regard to OMD) can be drawn persuasively from outdoor (non-OMD) contexts. In OMD commentary there has been little consideration of the influence of these spheres of historical experience on the sense-making processes of individuals.

Dialogue between military experience and OMD experiences has been largely marginalised in OMD commentary. This is not unrelated to the changing nature of



the role of the military in British society in general. Images and impressions of this intensifying process of separation were provided from a range of media. Connected to the above two points, the role of populist icons at various points in time has played a function in establishing role models. This is a tradition that has perpetuated into the contemporary era. Examples of personalities transporting sport or adventure experience into the management or educational domain are multifarious. They supply packaged, idealised and romanticised images that influence individuals to a variable extent, i.e. some individuals may live closer to, or emulate, such imagery more vividly than others.

In this context, Czarniawski-Joerges and Guillet de Monthoux (1995:15) commenting on fiction as a valuable resource make a point that underlines the arbitrary “line” between fact and fiction: “... to show how well known classics treat topics of high relevance for managers without flirting with stereotypes and without losing their narrative force in superficial prejudice.” Do such figures and the role of “popular culture” in creating them (Hassard and Holliday, 1998): “present only an idealized, sensationalized view then – one irrelevant to the lived experiences of organizational participants.”? They reply no to this question. The present argument also proposes that such subjective constructs (often perpetuated as externalized and objectified facticities), certainly in their re-construction and interpretation are important to the sense-making processes of many individuals.

Yet such images, or indeed representations, are not attentive perspectives relating to class, gender or ethnicity. Although not the central theme of (though not ignored by) the present thesis (but worthy of one in its own right) it seems unlikely that a successful discussion of OMD could be accomplished if this continues. This is probably linked to equivalent experiences in many other areas of management commentary. They are an essential context to the primary and secondary socialization processes that are influential in making sense of OMD. With particular reference to gender, a further consequence is that the approach is susceptible to being cast in a “macho” image.(Beeby and Rathborn, 1983:170; Crawford, 1988:19; James, 1989:18) This has been addressed to a limited extent by writers like Humberstone and Lynch (1991). OMD resonates as “British”



(white, middle-class, male?) in United Kingdom commentaries but this is usurped by alternative national experience.

*The Story of Hahn* and *Outward Bound* is the seminal historical representation in contemporary OMD. However, this is a key strand of a populist and folkloric narrative. A tradition, continued by Ridgeway's story in *Exposure*(1993). Social constructions and representations of such individual's ideas and actions are *the images* of OMD for many. However, ironically, perhaps this is particularly the case for those who have never experienced it. Moreover, Hahn's work was more a catalyst for a social process already exhibiting considerable momentum than some arbitrary and artificial starting point. Cook (1974) states that: "The Second World War *loosened social barriers in all fields* including climbing [sic: outdoor pursuits]".[Emphasis added] In this respect, Hahn can be contextualised in a tradition of social change in relation to the outdoors that can be related certainly back to the Victorian-Edwardian epoch.

The scope for stories emerging through OMD experiences has been constructed largely within a particular philosophical stance under the aegis of the management development umbrella. Whereas the early origins of OMD were associated with the ethos purported by *Outward Bound* and military influences, this has now diminished and the adoption of management development as a "home" is very much in the ascendant. As Lucas (1992:25) (following Mant) argues "the industry has *grown up* around executives' confrontation with nature". Contemporaneously, the provision of paradigm challenging accounts is just beginning to take place.(Irvine and Wilson, 1994; Ibbetson and Newell, 1996; Burlington and Grint, 1996.) However, even these writings pay scant attention to the context and socialisation in which OMD is set.

The above account has shown some of the historical and cultural influences and contexts that can influence commentary on, and sense-making of, experiences in OMD. Bank's proposed list of influences detailed at the outset of the Chapter needed to be considered at much greater length and in a more reflective manner. It is timely to see OMD in this broader context rather than the more constrained



perspective (modernistic corporatist and managerialist – as discussed in Chapter Three) approaches currently predominant in the area. The overall thesis argument has now discussed OMD and its representations in contemporaneous and historical respects. The argument has also considered how this notional (and arbitrary) separation of “old and new” is part of the story-telling in the area. This takes place in relation to individuals but it must be remembered that there are powerful “popular culture” meta-narratives that perpetuate hegemonic influence over such individual conceptualisations. These predominant representations have been shown, in many ways, as considerably problematic. This predicament has been related to a comparable malaise in certain areas of a host management development literature. The argument now needs to relate to the social constructive and narrative (sic:story) debate in the latter part of Chapter One and also in Chapter Two (which was expressly dedicated to a discussion on narrative). A consideration of narrative making through social constructive processes will emerge as a fresh way of making sense of OMD experience.



## **CHAPTER FIVE: Narrativizing OMD.**

### **5.1 Chapter Five: Overview.**

Chapter Five seeks to draw attention to narrative style accounts and approaches in OMD. Rather than disparaging and discounting these as a way individuals make sense of OMD it considers them as a useful nascent approach.

### **5.2 Narrativizing OMD: Introduction.**

At this juncture it will be useful to recapitulate the argument thus far. The preceding Chapters have portrayed and challenged OMD in its predominant conceptualisation and contextualisation. This was accomplished in a number of steps. Chapter One reviewed perspectives within OMD's neo-*alma-mater*, management development and showed a tension between representationalist, modernist paradigms and social constructive, critical perspectives. Chapter Two discussed narrative, in context with the latter perspective. Chapter Three and Chapter Four then embarked on a consideration of OMD in contemporary and historical contexts respectively. That part of the argument, by using the discussion in Chapter One, was able to show the positivistic and modernistic context and representational accounts predominant in contemporary contextualisation. Equally, it provided an insight into interesting truncations in relation to possibilities for the historical context of OMD.

Conversely, within the above constructs of OMD little attention has been granted to interpretivist approaches. In contrast, nascent social constructive or narrative accounts have been derided and denigrated. They have been considered an unworthy intrusion to the "proper" study of OMD. Labelled as poor methodology, attempts resembling narrative have been deprecated as being "anecdotal", "lacking rigour" or, alternatively "selective positive accounts".(Jones, 1996:209) In fact, narrative offers complementary and



alternative sense-making in relation to the predominant conceptualisations that wrestle with representations like “reality”, the “outdoors”, “novelty” and “risk”.

As Heritage (1984) has commented: “Context is made.” Heritage’s remark indicates that context is a constructed and negotiated experience. This construction takes place through various social interactions. Stories are a way in which this can take place.

### **5.3 Narrative and Methodological Considerations.**

The use of narrative in OMD has always been intertwined with an ill-tempered debate regarding methodological prowess. Narrative, subjectivist approaches (unlike objectivistic-scientific approaches) have often been viewed as inadequate by some observers. Deemed as “unsound” methodology they are seen as having little to contribute by many commentators. Commenting on OMD literature, Calder (1991:25) insists there is “little empirical or controlled research” thus detracting from the “credibility” of the approach. Jones (1996:209) mentions that much [‘evidence’]...“is *commonly* in the form of personal testimony, selective, positive accounts from participants”. Lucas, (1992:90) notes that the OMD literature is “*replete* with testimonials”. [Emphasis added]

Jones (*ibid*) suggests that many accounts of OMD programmes are “positive” (i.e. the tone and content of such accounts is often biased towards a favourable view of OMD as an *effective* training form providing positive i.e desired and beneficial outcomes). He states that at the end of the task, programme or experience, claims are made for the “improvement” of the individual or the team, or that the company makes more profit, or becomes more effective, as a consequence of the training. He relates this trait in many types of writing and presentation. A key comment is that such accounts also submit to the general positivist (an ironic coincidence of phrase given Jones’ inadvertent alternative meaning) approach in that they seek to demonstrate that OMD has succeeded i.e.



engendered participants *optimal* effective behaviour in organizational terms. Most stories or narrativized accounts in the literature also usually replicate this effect.

Jones' concern becomes apparent from a reading of the literature. What is perhaps less apparent is consideration of this phenomenon in *narrative terms*. The "*happy ending*" is a predictable outcome of the "story", bound up within many of the positivist accounts. For example, as was discussed above, a range of studies seek to "measure" and gauge changes in behaviour in participants as a consequence of experiences on OMD programmes. In looking for a particular outcome or consequence of the research there is always a danger that every effort will be made to ensure that it is found! The satisfactory *denouement*, or resolution of the story, is an anticipated outcome at the beginning of many storied accounts. Therefore there appears to be an interesting methodological juxtaposition in a range of articles. This occurs whereby narrative forms, a interpretivist constructivist approach, adopt patterns or aspects with positivistic-objectivist agendas within the writing.

Alternatively, the question must be asked where can alternative accounts be located. Notable few examples are available. Accounts providing negative outcomes or "unhappy endings", for example might include: Burletson and Grint (1996) claiming that OMD does not create a new environment for managerial learning; Darwent (1995) parodying, in a comedic style, the macho culture perspective of OMD; Ibbetson and Newell (1996) suggesting that OMD works if you are in the team that wins but not if you are in the "losing" team; and of course, Ridgeway's course in the *Cutting Edge* programme *Exposure* (Channel 4). But, not all of these develop narrative presentations, Darwent's being a rare exception. There are thus two summative points to be made here. Firstly, irrespective of the methodological condemnation from certain writers, narrative accounts in OMD writing tend to involve positivistic frameworks and structures. Secondly, there is scope for revisiting the notion of narrativizing OMD experiences through a social constructive (Berger and Luckmann, 1971; or, "Sensemaking" – Weick, 1995) frame of reference.



## 5.4 Narrative Accounts in OMD: Tradition, Style and Form.

There are a limited number of writers expressly employing narrative, or story-like, presentations. Although not in strict chronological terms, Long (1984, 1987) may be seen, to some extent, as an early contributor to narrative usage in OMD writing. Additional contributors to the approach include: Rice (1979), Reeve (1982), Van Zwieten (1984), Galagan (1987), Cacioppe and Adamson (1988), Crawford (1988), Petrini (1990), Blashford-Snell (1991), Leenders and Henderson (1991), Leonard (1991) and Teire (1994).

There is no doubt that the mid to late-eighties witnessed a trend for OMD articles using various forms of *personal narrative* (many not being “labelled” or “marked” by the authors as such). The 1990’s have not seen storied accounts particularly increase in popularity in OMD writing.

In spite of the reservations already made above regarding the methodological conflation of many stories in OMD, the accounts below develop social constructive and processual accounts of the experiences on OMD programmes. They assist in introducing the “I”, individuality and the individual into OMD accounts. They also suggest questions regarding the agency of narration and the narrator.

### 5.4.1 Examples of Personal Narrative in OMD.

The passages and accounts below are taken from the opening paragraphs of cited articles. They provide rare and interesting examples of personal narrative in OMD. The accounts will be followed by discussion and comment on a range of issues:

“I was standing waist deep and fully clothed in rank, murky water in northern Minnesota, my feet sinking in muck, my hands linked to a group



of business managers. We were just beginning a nine-day Outward Bound (OB) course and had started off on what seemed to be a nature walk when Robin, our *young blond instructor*, led us into a swamp. Our reactions varied from *reluctance to disgust to fear to shock*. The people who design OB courses consider such responses necessary for the swamp walk to have its intended effect. For each of us it meant *stepping off from firm, familiar ground into the unknown*. By *overcoming our reluctance and fear*, the theory goes, we would be *better prepared to face other challenges in life....*

After the swamp walk, we jogged half a mile or so to a lake at the OB camp and jumped in to rinse off the muck. Then, we headed for the sauna, where we sat silently steaming and *wondering why, really we had come here*. When Robin asked if we knew why we'd taken the swamp walk, no one came up with an answer. One fellow said, 'I saw that mud, and I asked myself, *'Why am I doing this? I don't want to walk around in this shit.'* But I saw Robin go in, and I just followed her." One businessman, who'd found the experience exhausting rather than enlightening, groaned, 'Has the bus left yet?'

Before dinner that evening, after holding hands in a silent circle, Robin tried to answer her own question with the first of several readings she shared with us during the week: 'It is this simple. If I never try anything, I never learn anything. If I *never take a risk*, I stay right where I am. If I hold myself back, *I trade appearances for the opportunity to find out what I am really like.*'"(Rice, 1979:65)[Emphasis added]

Here, is a further account from the American writer Van Zwieten:

"A moment of silence and held breath followed the first sight of Seneca Rocks' 300-foot buff-colored cliff. 'We're going up that?' asked someone behind me. Turning, I assured him that by the week's end we



would all be standing on top. As I looked at the group of eight men and two women, I wondered if any of them were feeling the same mixture of excitement and fear that I experienced on my first trip. Even after several trips I still feel a touch of it.

As the group sat in a grassy meadow beneath the cliffs a short time later, individual reactions to the impending challenge began to emerge. Some people clearly relished the coming challenge; it was as if every moment we had to wait before tackling the rock was one moment too long. As one intense-looking executive put it, 'I'm standing here waiting to get into it. I know we have to set up camp and all, but *I want to get moving up that rock*'. Others were more restrained, content for the moment to look at and talk about the rock. Two people were highly analytical, trying to figure out from our distant vantage point how we would climb the rock. Several people *told jokes about falling*. Finally someone asked the question everyone asks at some point during the week: 'what am I doing here?'"(Van Zwieten, 1984:27)[Emphasis added]

And, an account from Long:

"As the Cranberry River surged into the Gauley, I had the impression of entering a vast brown ocean with canoe-eating waves and shorelines that resembled distant continents. I quickly lost control of my canoe as it was swallowed up in the turbulence. 'This is it' I thought, coming up for air. 'You're headed for ocean this time. They can't even see you, never mind get to you'. Mechanically I struggled toward where I thought shore might be, dragging my useless canoe and paddle with me. Suddenly two boats arrived simultaneously - from the sky, I think. One was a kayaker who offered to tow me to shore. It would mean abandoning my boat and hoping that my weight wouldn't capsize him before we reached the phantom shoreline. The other boat was a canoe paddled by a *giant Marine* named Bob who had served as a one-man rescue crew for me



twice that day. Twice he had ripped my boat out of the water in mid-rapid, emptied it across his canoe and steadied it in the water while I scrambled back in. ‘Thanks. I’ll stay with my boat’, I said. The kayaker moved away to give us room....

Realistically, I hope not to view group process from a *life-threatened perspective too often*, but suddenly it seemed that the direct challenge of the outdoors is a natural medium for developing teams and building management skills...outside the comfort zone of our corporate arenas where both productive and unproductive behaviors have become firmly entrenched. ‘Surely someone has tapped that medium.’ I thought. ‘I wonder how well it works?’(Long, 1984:59-60)[Emphasis added]

A further example from Long:

“Tension pulsed through the conference room. Nine district managers grappled with a decreasing market share. The ‘problem-solving’ session had deteriorated into accusations, posturing, and a scramble for declining resources. The competitive spirit that kept this corporation alive in a volatile marketplace was undermining its management process with cancerous efficiency.

A frustrated pause in the discussion: nine adept mental masons were busy erecting walls when a year-old image diverted one. An intense, no-nonsense corporate veteran of 55 broke the silence: ‘Gentlemen, this is not the way we did it in the woods.’ Eight startled pair of eyes met his. Brows softened... a smile or two... couple of wistful nods. They could have referred to the list of standards for team interaction they had drawn up in the woods, but they didn’t need to. Each was visiting his own durable image - of boosting each other over a 13-foot wall, cheering one another past the mental dragons on the high ropes course, laughing together over their awkwardness and ‘process blunders’ as they solved



such weighty problems as crossing an imaginary alligator-ridden swamp with seemingly inadequate resources.”(Long, 1987:30)

Alternatively, Crawford (1988:18-19) uses a “statement” format. He contrasts three accounts of participants on a programme.

“They [the participants] were asked to specify whatever was significant to them. No guidelines were provided to standardise their responses. Four individuals responded to this request and their views are expressed below:”

He then provides the statements. *Statement 1* and *Statement 3* are provided below.

**“Statement 1.**

The first thing that comes to mind is that many events of that week have been a continuing source of conversation for those of us who were on the programme. The programme has had an impact on my personal life in that I’ve made an important decision about my personal aspirations and career plans. I’ve become more conscious of where I’m going in life. Because of this personal decision I feel more settled and confident about career prospects and personal circumstance.

I feel that I have learned to be more tolerant of others during the six-week period and I believe that the outdoor programme was instrumental in highlighting this personality problem. During the outdoor course my team would not let me ignore their views. This had acted as a strong and frequent stimulus to change my actions and behaviours.

Finally I felt the job placement had been somewhat of an anti-climax after the outdoor week. The work seemed rather mundane and did not involve the levels of risk taking or challenge of the outdoor experience. This caused a certain amount of restlessness.”



Interestingly, this contrasts with the next statement:

**“Statement 3.**

To be honest I was relieved at the end of the outdoor course. It seemed to me that it had been a week of hardship that had little relevance to my chosen career in personnel management. With advantage of hindsight, I now realise that there have been distinct similarities between my placement work and the outdoor events. Three areas spring to mind: I’ve discovered that it’s vital to establish personal relationships and trust before reliable information can be compiled for decision-making. Also I’ve come to recognise that inputs from others often throw more light on situations than individual ponderings.

Perhaps the most valuable lesson I’ve learned is that success can only be achieved through determination. Another of the most obvious learning points during my own outdoor course was that the resolution of problems could only take place when the team was operating “smoothly”.

One of my regrets is that I did not take more responsibility during the outdoor activities. I’m sure that I lost various opportunities along the way because I was over-influenced at certain times by my own negative attitudes and at other times by those of others. I adopted completely passive roles in several problem-solving activities. By remaining largely passive I didn’t really derive any benefit from the activities. I’m now firmly convinced that the more I put into my work, the more I will get out of it.”

Alternatively, a rather jingoistic style from Blashford-Snell:

“Take a few chairmen, some senior executives, a handful of seasoned adventurers plus a group of management trainees and dump them in the immense *Kalahari* Desert with a microlite, a fleet of four wheel drive trucks, a great pile of kit, a few cases of *Glenfiddich* and some specially



brewed extra strong *Guinness*, together with a Jack Russell. Add a sprinkling of local experts and shake together for four weeks and you have a most unusual expedition which indelibly marked the lives of all involved whilst making a significant contribution to extensions of knowledge of Botswana's earliest history.....An extraordinary quest in one of the world's most fascinating areas".(Blashford-Snell, 1991:15)

#### 5.4.2 Commentary on the Narratives.

Readings of these accounts give rise to some interesting points for further consideration. These are derived from a range of influences. In these few short passages it is possible to find comments relating to the social construction of *facilitator/instructor relationships, prominent emotions, reciting the corporate imperative, humour, images and metaphor*. All of these are rich constructs that assist in developing narratives or stories. However, the discussion will be reflexively mindful of not acquiescing to, or privileging, these representational forms. Nevertheless, in order to understand more fully it will be necessary to engage with them.

The authors of the narratives develop characters often with stereotypical (representational) *dramatis personae*. Certain characters cast images. This is as much in the gift of the author as any other individual. Robin, the instructor, subjects participants to trials (Rice, 1979): an image of an Aryan blond-haired figure is created with a certain moralising resonance of "Muscular Christianity" referred to by Donnelly (1982:45). Her tactics are initially portrayed as a Ridgeway-type ploy (*Channel 4*, 1993) giving participants a "hard time" reminiscent of Burletson and Grint's (1996) concern over the power invested in the facilitator role. Similarly, Long (1987) portrays Bob the "giant Marine" as appearing like a mythical figure to pluck her out of the water with Herculean powers. Both accounts echo warlike individuals with military (male) "prowess" at work and may appear to engage militaristic (macho) stereotypes.



Characterisation is thus important in personal narrative accounts. However, often these are essentially rapidly cast vignettes employing first names and one line character sketches. For example: “Richard - a shy and athletic type who looked like Clint Eastwood”. Glenn “a talkative, strong, black guy”. Images are projected to add context and emotional linkage to the narrative through (even this modest level of) characterisation.

These commentaries are robust with emotions. “Our reactions varied from disgust to fear to shock” states Rice (1979). In addition, Van Zwieten (1984) talks of experiencing a “mixture of excitement and fear” and wonders if other participants are feeling the same. This is often bound up in thoughts about how the narrator allowed him or herself to get into a given situation in the first place: “...wondering why we had really come here” (Rice, *ibid*); “What am I doing here” (Van Zwieten, *ibid*) and, more sardonically, “Realistically, I hope not to view group process from a life-threatening perspective too often...”.(Long, 1984) The authors wrestle with portrayal of secondary socialisation (Berger and Luckmann,1971:157) sense-making in process. Emotion is underlined in the narratives as an important consequence of (OMD) experience.(Fineman, 1993) It appears as central to the way in which people rationalise and socially construct the meaning of the experience. Let us be clear. It is not being suggested that this process is clinically and coolly rational. It is often panic and chaos strewn. Connected to this humour seems to be a further way in which narrative form can be found in OMD. “Has the bus left yet?” ponders a prospective “escapee”. People stare at the forthcoming cliff face and people “tell jokes about falling”.(Rice, *ibid*:p.65) In spite of this range of emotion and personal introspection, there are still shades of corporate imperative. Rice (*ibid*) relays Robin’s exaltation to become “...better prepared to face other challenges in life”.

Image, and the use of imagination are important strands of the above narratives: “trading appearances for the opportunity to find out what I am really like” states Rice (*ibid*:p.65) She draws out the conflict between the need to be seen to pursue an image of the “corporate imperative” yet a need to find self within that experience. Long (1987:30) talks of managers: “each visiting their own durable



image". Yet Van Zwieten (1984:27) notices the attempt to project the image and impression of the executive hungry to get up the rock. These narrative accounts provide poignant images reminiscent of Giacalone and Rosenfeld's (1991) commentary on "Impression Management". But, these "images" are processual and negotiable – not reality maintained objectifications.(Berger and Luckmann,1971:122) implied by the stories.

There is a range of ways in which the stories are put into the written form.(Adams, 1991:xii; Fineman and Gabriel, 1996:4) These typologies or typifications (Berger and Luckmann,1971:45-48) have already been discussed above. Each of these formats may have a purpose or intent in handling the ideas and stories in a particular way.(This alludes to Ricouer's (1984) notion of "emplotment".) Not all personal narrative is generated by the narrator/writer of the article (as seen in Crawford above wherein he appropriates the voices of his students to develop the account). Interesting in terms of presentation and format is an article by Cacioppe and Adamson (1988:77-78). They box in the narrative sections of their article in order to *separate* them from the rest of the article which covers factual topics such as "Purpose and Description of Outdoor Programs." Thus, they separate it from the *main flow* of the article which is presented in a conventional academic format. In a certain sense this serves to alienate the liveliness and spontaneity of action in the personal narratives from the more measured and modulated reflection in the main body of prose. In contrast, the example written by Blashford-Snell above seems to read like an adventure story. All the "crew pulling together" against alleged hardship and "overcoming the odds". There is a ring of a *Boy's Own Annual* style emanating from it. In this particular text, there is a sense of the stoic, good-natured fortitude that, conventionally, is associated with endeavours and heroes in the Victorian era.(Donnelly, 1981b, Livesey, 1982) Moreover, it reads like a "very British" account and there are echoes of Mant's (1981b) colonial elites (discussed above) storming round the Kalahari. But, in a reflexive turn it is valuable to note that as a "British" individual I decide to recognise the typification that has been objectified and "made real".



Moreover, the issue of studying Botswana's early-history and the idea of studying fauna and flora seem to be used as a *backdrop* or an aside. Much of what is written is descriptive narrative. Indeed, there appears to be little directly concerning the activity of training and development. Rather the outdoors fulfils, in this instance, a background characterisation as opposed to any other role. (Livesey, 1982; Irvine and Wilson, 1994) However, inevitably individuals develop alternative meanings in relation to scenery, setting or situation in association with programme experience. For example, if the scene were to be set in a run-down inner-city suburb how would the narrative differ, if at all? How would people construct their experiences. A number of articles use scene-setting drama which seizes attention, entertains and intrigues. Galagan's (1987:40) "out of the fog" passage and "the leap" ...passages. (*ibid*:p.41) relate the arrival and stay at a ranch in the United States and the consequent building of expectation. The construction of climatic tension is a key intent of the prose. This seems to be a common purpose in many of the accounts employing personal narrative. The examples provided above by Long (1984, 1987), Rice (1979) and Van Zwieten (1984) are all opening paragraphs of articles. As such, they secure the attention of the reader or seeks to (positivistically) "set up" the overall outcome of the story.

As already mentioned above, there is a tone of imperialism and colonialism (Mant, 1981b) in the way the scene is set in Blashford-Snell's account. Rather like a "tiger shoot" or "elephant hunt" without the (militaristic) kill or consequences. (Butcher, 1991:26; Bonington, 1994:23) There is potentially an interesting narrative linkage to be considered here in terms of story "resolutions" or "end points". The military influence on the activities and structures of OMD programmes was argued above. It was suggested that unlike army training the "kill" aspect or purpose of the work may be eliminated or missing. Thus the *risk becomes perceived rather than real in any sense*. In Blashford-Snell's account of *Operation Raleigh* the programme is missing *the final kill*. Is this substituted in some way? The kill becomes symbolic, translated into a victorious, successful, effective and possibly purported moralistic, outcome. Indeed, many of the narratives are constructed so as to arrive at this form of *end point* on a "journey".



This can be described here as a “happy ending” phenomenon. For example, Bonington constructs his account, or parable, as a step-by-step prescriptive account of his expeditions and the moral lessons to be learned from them:

“My satisfaction was obviously in a large part at the thought of having stood on the highest point of earth, but its depth was because of the spirit in which we had climbed the mountain. It was the sense of sharing, the fact that there had not been a single angry word in the course of the climb and that people had helped and cared for each other.”(Bonington, 1994:27)

Similarly, “Robin’s” end soliloquy in the passage from Rice (1979:65) above is a clear moral and didactic example. This echoes Kohler-Riessman’s (1993:1) comment that storytellers: “make a point, often a moral one”. And, as Watson (1999b:237) points out, building stories with people is not an innocent process. In one sense, in allowing individuals in narratives to make a moral point a powerful censoring aspect of the narrator’s actions is underlined.

It can be seen how the narrative structure of setting the scene, problem encountered - challenging blockage, final resolution through team effort closely templates a Kolb-type learning (positivistic) processes model. Indeed, Cacioppe and Adamson (1988:81) provide a clear example of this by *explicitly* templating Kolb’s model over narrative accounts. Kolb’s model, like so many process models commented on in Chapter Three, assumes a positivistic perspective that dovetails well into the corporate effectiveness imperative. But, by the measures and structure of the “happy ending” phenomenon, so do a large number of the narrative examples presented above. Hence, positivistic and phenomenological paradigms are perpetuated within narrative processes. This blend can be found in the language as well as the structure. Blashford-Snell (1991:15) presents his narrative in the language of the corporate imperative (possibly because “superiors did not appreciate how *the experience* might fit for responsibility”):



“What we need is the sort of experience you give the venturers, for some of our more senior people. We want something to stimulate and remotivate and provide opportunities to develop teamwork, decision making, problem solving, innovative and creative thinking, planning, controlling and time management - and above all give them confidence in their own abilities.”(Blashford-Snell, *ibid*)

Thus, by implication, chronological structure, like in narrative or stories in general, plays an important role in OMD.(Gearing 1986:21) Because, as suggested above, many OMD accounts feel they also have a pedagogical role to fulfil, this is relayed in many personal narratives as some form of “trial by fire”. Through the experience the participant emerges, phoenix-like, as a born again and renewed individual. Personal narratives frequently invoke allusions to death or ailing spirit and then rekindled hope and renewed perspective in the latter part of the account. Furthermore, through this aspect of OMD, narrative seeks to construct an experience with spiritual overtones. A lineage to the earlier debated *Muscular Christianity* is too tenuous to underline but the resonances are present.

The chronological structure is frequently *paralleled* by an *emotion structure*. Participants arrive at the place “of trial” or event with trepidation and anxiety. The task is undertaken producing sheer fear or exhilaration depending on the individual. Finally, enormous satisfaction and renewed confidence are extolled. Naturally, this form of structure is apparent only in the OMD-positive or supportive accounts. Chronology or sequencing moves in tandem with a different set of emotions in the case of a negative experience. Darwent (1995) provides an illustration (below) of this. His associate arrives with negative presuppositions. These are not only confirmed but turn out to be worse, finally escape brings relief and anger at having been subjected to the process in the first place.

The “happy ending” phenomenon seems juxtaposed to the “kill” aspect discussed above. In that sense, both terms are employed to indicate an end-point to a narrative. However, Burletson and Grint (1996) consider a potentially less-



happy outcome to OMD narratives. They challenge Bonington's (1994) contention that "the kill" is absent as an outcome in OMD programmes and narrative. The politics, tensions and gamesmanship are very apparent in programmes and, to a greater or lesser extent office politics victories marked up in this way might be argued as constituting some form of *kill*. Burletson and Grint provide dialogue and brief narrative passages to illustrate the role of insidious and veiled remarks by participants: "I hope it continues. They'll have a hell of a day if the weather's like this. It'll put them under even more pressure." and "I wanted more days as it would have been useful to have taken people apart, caused infighting, and then put them back together again." (Burletson and Grint, *ibid*:p.194) Certainly, the consequences can have very palpable impacts on the lives of those involved particularly those individuals, or groups, exiting less favourably from such conflicts. Weick (1995:5) states that such "interruptions" are moments of sense-making.

Equally, Crawford's (1988) accounts provide a less *positive* outcome of the experience. The language employed by the participant-story teller seems quite positivistic and instrumental. She seems to see trust and relationships and the fact that the "...team was operating more 'smoothly'" only as a precursor to more effective decision-making and "the resolution of problems" rather than any other *social* benefit. The sense of the corporate imperative of optimised effectiveness is particularly strong in this account. Yet, there is an allusion to the point that she may have missed something that others were able to create from the experience when she states that she may have "lost various opportunities".

Humour, in certain accounts, is a story-telling "device" in these accounts used especially to diffuse "unhappy endings" or passages. This is amusingly illustrated by Darwent's (1995) article "The Trial" in which the author paints a loathing and hateful picture of an OMD experience:

"Thus it was that my friend K found herself, not many weeks later, sitting on top of a cliff in some inconvenient part of rural Britain: a *Cairngorm*, perhaps, or a *Brecon Beacon*. K is a little unclear. Now, K is a woman of



the world, but there are three things that she cannot abide. One is anywhere more than two miles from *Piccadilly Circus*. The second is physical discomfort. The third is heights. The weekend had already proved rich in the first two. Dropped by dead of night into something that may have been a glen, K and her seven team mates were first encouraged by attendant gauleiters to go around the campfire introducing themselves. Then they had to go round again, pointing out each other's faults in a constructive, caring sort of way. Having sobbed themselves to sleep after the second of these exercises, the eight executives found themselves awoken at five to begin the busy task of turning themselves into a team. If K is to be believed, this involved the octet working out how to get itself from side A to side B of one of the moister features of glaciation - an ox-bow lake? a fjord? - using nothing but an oil drum, darning wool and team spirit. K spent the desultory hours that followed glumly crocheting a mulberry harbour and thinking of the bar at the *French House*, Soho.

Then something snapped. Day two was given over to personal fulfilment, and K had confessed in an unguarded moment, to a fear of heights. What could be more personally fulfilling, therefore, than to have her absail down a cliff? And K - thinking of England and a possible seat on the board - was about to when an admonishing transatlantic voice floated up from the abyss. "C'mon, K, " it said. "If you can't love yourself, how can you love your team?" And that, gentle reader, was when K found personal fulfilment. Unbuckling her safety harness, she walked down to the bottom of the cliff and demanded to be driven to the nearest airport. When a gauleiter offered to hug her, K threatened to knock him down. Within hours she was buying duty-free *Marlboros* and bottles of *Absolut*. Within days, her resignation was on her desk and she was filling in *UCCA* forms. Freud concluded, in *Civilisation and its Discontents*, that society is a perennial trade-off between human selfishness and communal spirit; or, if you like, between personal fulfilment and team building. I leave you merely with the thought. However, if anyone would like a



really good recipe for vodka stingers, please let me know.”(Darwent, 1995:4)

Blashford-Snell also invests his story with a certain “public school” *bonhomie*:

“Thus the *Raleigh Executive Expedition* was launched and within hours a secretary rang to ask if we would take “our Chairman to the North Pole for a year!”.(Blashford-Snell, 1991:15)

Humour is an interesting aspect of human character. It comments as much on the situation or the experience as the person’s perception and response to it. It seems to play the role of pointing to something or someone, or even concealing something (in the sense of “half-joking, whole truth”). Equally, it seems that it can be used with spontaneity or simply as a device for a particular motive of argumentation. Putnam and Mumby (1993:46-47) provide context:

“Humour, play and childish behaviour can also serve as acts of resistance to submissiveness and emotional allegiance. For example, when a boss was absent from his office, the secretaries debunked the company’s rigid hierarchy by eating their packed lunches on his posh carpet.”

Programme experiences often involve role-playing within scenario guidelines. The interplay of the roles and images being operated or acted out by people in their everyday lives and the roles portrayed by task or activity scripts is reflected directly in the aforementioned continuity theory and discontinuity theory (Widdershoven, 1993:1) discussed above. In the former, participants see strong relevance to the roles provided in a given story line - they play and live out the part. In the latter, the role provided remains separate from life and never overcomes a sense of artificiality. Many commentators advocate that such “story lines” or scripts” make events and experiences seem “more real”. Cole (1993:12) mediates that “suspension of belief in scenarios is not required, although most people enjoy some evidence of wit and storytelling... story lines are not limited to terrorists but “diverse sources such as classic children’s books, soap operas,



current city affairs” and other creations of “popular culture”.(Hassard and Holliday, 1998).

Metaphors, as part of a constructive process are often seen as useful, in OMD commentary, but usually only in as far as they “explain” *isomorphic transfer*. This is clear in a number of observers work.(Lucas, 1992; Wagner and Roland, 1992; Burnett and James, 1994) and underpins for Jones (1996:37) that: “Metaphors are necessary and not just nice”:

“Metaphors are necessary as a communicative device because they allow the transfer of coherent chunks of characteristics - *perceptual, cognitive, emotional and experiential* - from a vehicle which is known to a topic which is less so. In so doing they circumvent the problem of specifying one by one each of the innumerable characteristics; they *avoid discretizing the perceived continuity of experience and are thus closer to experience and consequently more vivid and memorable.*”(Ortony, 1975:53)[Emphasis added]

Ortony’s ideas provide useful linkages between a range of human feelings and experiences. The importance attributed to the avoidance of “discretizing” also contains significance for creation of understanding through narrative. In this sense Ortony offers the metaphor as a device that *interprets narrative* and reinforces narrative. But, this objectifies narrative processes rather than viewing them as processual. Drasdo reminds the debate that such notions are emergent from human constructions:

“But there is a limit to the reach of these metaphors. In fact it might be claimed that cliffs and mountains are facades without shape or dimension until they are floodlit *by human effort.*”(Drasdo, 1969 in Wilson, 1986:457)[Emphasis added]

The inference from Drasdo’s thoughts is that human experience is based on a perception or construction of “reality”. Price (1974 in Wilson 1986: 649-650)



reinforces this idea suggesting that: “It is romantic aspiration and vision that can turn a long hard plod over the Pennine Way into a real adventure”.

Darwinian prowess and Maslovian “survival to self-actualisation” paradigms can also be discussed in relation to OMD narrative. They are strongly associated with the interaction of humans with nature - be it in “battle with the elements” or in “harmony with nature”. Hilton (1992:46) exemplifies this: “decisions matter because you are playing around with basic needs and comforts”. These are, to a certain extent, hackneyed and rhetorical metaphors but this very reason is an integral part of their attractiveness to, and longevity within, story building. Moreover, it is also one of the circumstances which links continuity theory narrative with the role of historical heroes. Invoking the memory of a well-known historical figure provides a *ready-constructed plot* and narrative that can be related to an experience. This provides an objectified and institutionalised (Berger and Luckmann,1971) “plot”. Nevertheless, this can be reconstrued into ongoing subjective social constructive processes. Why do such a thing? In a broader context it might allow allusion to, and association with, perceived “great” chapters and figures of human history for example, *Scott of the Antarctic*, *Horatio Nelson*, *Livingstone of Africa*. Or, alternatively, the sought effect might be for humour in the experience, or a fictional character’s nature, for example, *Rambo* or *Crocodile Dundee* - each character importing the degree of seriousness, humour, toughness etc. to the given OMD situation that these characters portray in their own stories and films. Long’s (1984) account of Bob “the Marine” illustrates this. We read very little about Bob but reflexively, seeing ourselves as the reader, we introduce a broad range of stereotypical imagery” and constructions. Such allusions are frequently contextually bound and therefore ethnocentric. Peckham (1993b:17) also does this: “I doubt the degree of ‘team development’ in the struggle up hill under the weight of a pack that a *paratrooper* would have been proud of and a ‘*Sahara-like*’ sun. The scene was more reminiscent of a poor *Beau Geste* movie than a management development experience.”[Emphasis added]



In the contemporary era new military “heroes” have become available. Several articles refer to SAS style participants, activities or instructors. Bhogal provides a useful narrative example of this phenomenon:

“It was surprising that so many students attended, considering the unsettling rumours spread by one of them - that the course *instructors were ex-SAS commandos*, who came round for *dawn kit inspections* (it wasn't true)..After several members of the team had all but drowned, bravely hanging a few millimetres above the mighty river, a *Dunkirk spirit* prevailed and we retreated...*A lively imagination* was definitely a prerequisite for this exercise, given the briefing and tasks with such vivid titles as ‘*Escape from Colditz*’.”(Bhogal,1988:110-111)[Emphasis added]

Lowe (1991:42) also mentions rumours circulating of an ex-SAS officer on the course. In the *Channel 4* programme *Exposure* it was underlined that Ridgeway was ex-Parachute Regiment and SAS. Equally, Curry and Prickett (1996:41) mention that the centre where their course was based was owned by an ex-SAS lieutenant colonel. The inference to be drawn from this is the foregoing values and reputation (typified and institutionalised) attributed to the SAS “reality and myth”. In certain aspects or types of narrative building the mention of ex-military, especially SAS, is almost an essential *leitmotiv*. Overall, this is an interesting aspect of the changing narrative in OMD literature. It demonstrates the prone natures of people writing accounts to absorb ideas from wider society and popular culture.

Gender and ethnicity issues are also shown through narrative approaches. As noted above, in general terms, OMD has had little to say with regard to gender and virtually nothing on ethnicity. Gender has a role to play not only through notion of “political correctness” and equality arguments but because women are actors in their own right in social construction of narratives and as such may have unique perspectives to add to any story.(Friedrich and Priest, 1992:11) Moreover, Hearn and Parkin point out that the matter is potentially more complex:



“Gender rules are especially prevalent, signalling feelings that women and men ought to have and ought, or ought not, to display... The control of sexuality in public is often fine-tuned in organizations, lending the impression that organizations are *peopled by asexual characters*”.

(Hearn and Parkin, 1987 cited in Fineman, 1993:15)

It has been argued that OMD prejudices in favour of being young, active and male.(Cole, 1993) Moreover, Hogg (1988:1) supports the debate that suggests that OMD discriminates against women. This does not appear to be so in OMD written commentary. In particular, women writers are responsible for many of the personal narrative accounts. In terms of authorship, women (in particular American female authors) seem to have contributed a majority of narrative accounts in OMD. Clear seminal examples are *inter alia*: Janet Long (*ibid*), Adrienne Gall (*ibid*) and Patricia Galagan.(*ibid*) Gender and ethnicity aspects of narratives cannot be hermetically sealed from a wider and more intricate picture.

“As social glue, *feelings* will make or break organizational structures and gatherings. But the organization is also the product of a *wider social constituency*, a nation, where various ideologies prevail, ideologies which *shape norms or scripts on the do’s and don’ts of particular feelings*”... The rules are moulded and transmitted in our schools, families, ethnic groups and religions; film television and other media also play their part.”(Denzin, 1990)[Emphasis added]

Nevertheless, it is important to state that it is not being suggested that stories are principally a female experience. It is however, useful to consider some of the differences and similarities in various accounts. There is perhaps a need to reiterate that the narrator is omnipotent in presenting the story and deciding what is included and what is not.(Gabriel, 1995:480; Kohler-Riessman, 1993:1))

The next chapter discusses a methodology for storytelling in relation to participating in OMD programmes. It seeks to develop a reflexive awareness of the implications and consequences that this might involve.



# **PART III:**

## **Making Stories.**



## **CHAPTER SIX: “Doing” the Research.**

### **6.1 Chapter Six: Overview.**

The Chapter develops an interpretive, qualitative methodological approach. The development of this argument takes account of the points made in relation to social construction and narrative in the preceding chapters. As such it is discussed as closely associated with related experiences in my life as writer and narrator of the present argument and a more private and personal side of life.

### **6.2 Research Design: Preamble.**

Part of the framework of the research for this account takes the form of personal narrative.(Curt, 1994; Kohler-Riessman, 1993; and, Josselson and Lieblich, 1993, 1994, 1995 and 1996) In keeping with this approach, it is important to indicate that contrary to certain academic traditions in writing which insist on the use of the *impersonal third person form*, large sections of both the methodology and the stories later on expressly employ the first person singular and plural forms. In relation to this the field research employs participant-observer methodologies. Thus, the work does not subscribe to a detached objectification from experiences. Given the open invitation to personal influence on the study it is felt that a reflexive discussion of my perception of *my own* narrative journey is inextricably intertwined with that of the study.

In this vein, it also important to acknowledge that it is a “story”. This is significant because while such a methodological approach is extensively used in some areas of research, it contrasts with the approach adopted in many studies already undertaken in the study of OMD. Thus, this in the manner attempted, is itself a contribution to the knowledge of the domain. The research process has, therefore, been undertaken in an inductive manner. Given my interest in a socially constructivist and narrativized account, the appropriateness of an



emergent phenomenological, qualitative process will be made apparent. The words in the narrative do not seek to describe a “truth” of “factual” unequivocal account. (Watson, 1999b:19) They are not just a “device”. They do not seek to be representationalist. The words are the language and constructions relating to my experiences. And, it may be that others will empathise with my accounts. As such I am a “story-telling creature”.(ibid:p.20)

### **6.3 A Personal Narrative: Research as “lived experience”.**

There have been many points or critical incidents leading to the evolution of phenomena that have in turn generated the research context of this work. A key narrative starting point occurred with the viewing of the *Channel 4* programme *Exposure* in January, 1993. This programme showed a number of senior managers from a large multinational, Rockwater International, undergoing (the word is used euphemistically in this instance) an OMD programme at John Ridgeway’s Centre in Scotland. Krouwel and Goodwill (1994:35), discussed above, would, for example, see Ridgeway’s approach as “endurance training”. It might be imagined, though not excused by many critics, that the physical tasks (mountain climbs in dreadful weather, swimming under the keels of ships in the deep freezing water of the lochs) were rooted in Ridgeway’s prior military training and penchant for trans-Atlantic rowing feats. Due to the harsh physical (and consequentially psychological) demands placed on the participants there was an outcry in a range of media regarding not only Ridgeway’s programme but OMD in general. Up to that point the commentary on OMD had been produced principally in written form by predominantly certain people: OMD providers, academic researchers, executives and personnel managers. The particular medium of television cast its own particular texture on the OMD experiences. Nevertheless, both the texts and film offered socially constructed and richly subjective imagery. However, this important film, like much of the writing in the area, did not comment on issues implicitly raised.



The stimulus provided by *Exposure*, combined with my personal experience in using the outdoor domain for personal development purposes, prompted me towards wider consideration of the OMD literature. It is important to say that the seed of interest in conducting research into OMD had been sown in my mind over a period of some fifteen years prior to viewing *Exposure*. The programme was a prompt for my journey in relation to OMD, rather than a completely new beginning. From these initial impressions it became very clear that while the topic of management development may generate debate, OMD tends to cause polemics and heightened controversy and many article discussions relate this, for example: “Outdoor Management Development: A Fad or a Phenomenon?”.(Campbell, 1990), or “... The use of the outdoors as a development vehicle is the biggest con in management training...”.(Brian, 1998:21)

In considering the key influences relating to the early part of the process of the thesis, the first year of the research involved, *inter alia*, revisiting a number of widely commented and debated management and business paradigms and writings. This heightened a critical perspective of the phenomenon of development, and most importantly perceptions of the activity of developing managers and management. The predominant tone emerging from a large amount of the writings was one of prescription.(Storey, 1989a,b) Mechanistic and positivistic process models, lists and taxonomies were abundant and many of these appeared inflexible and theoretically detached from the individual experiences and accounts.

As I have changed so the research work has changed. In the early stages of the study, the initial phrasing of the research “question” had concerned some positivistic attempt to validate or evaluate OMD - to render it a “legitimate” adjunct to management development. Indeed, this appeared to be one of the immediate needs emerging from the *Exposure* programme combined with initial readings of the literature on OMD. Hence, there was a strong lure to marshal a legalistic argument for the defence of OMD. As the literature search progressed it became increasingly apparent that there already exists a significant number of



attempts to evaluate effectiveness and thereby validate OMD (largely for the benefit of practitioner and sponsoring organizations). Indeed, as this thesis now argues this constitutes a major, and almost, predominant theme (if not preoccupation) in the OMD literature. However, the five years of the research have seen me develop an affinity and interest in critical perspective accounts. This provides the study with a springboard for embarking on a narrative process. Moreover, as already noted above, there is therefore a heavy focus on *outcomes* in the literature. In particular, there is an emphasis on *positive* (i.e. in the sense of desirous or “happy”) outcomes (in association with the above discussed corporate imperative) whilst mitigating any perceived negative effects. This approach has tended to direct research into a deductive, positivist, hypothesis-testing model (examples provided by Clifford and Clifford (1967), Lucas (1992) and Ibbetson and Newell (1996)). It seems that in seeking to optimise, or to consider, the “effectiveness” of the process, many studies unquestioningly adopt a mechanistic-processual Taylorist and Fordist perspective on the activity of management. Almost inevitably, this in turn begs a quantitative and scientific “proof” to be “distilled from evidence gathered”. Typically, for example, many of the studies, employ statistical data and linear flow-diagrams in an attempt to demonstrate strong correlation between particular intangible variables in OMD programmes.

Concurrent with this reading of the OMD and management development literature, contacts were made with a range of individuals in OMD. These worked in OMD providing organizations, organizations in associated domains (adventure centres etc.) and as writers and commentators on OMD. This was achieved through meetings and discussions in the field, attendance at conferences and numerous lengthy telephone discussions. Of particular significance in this cathartic process has been the prevalence among these contacts of the “outcome focused” conceptual outlook outlined above. In terms of “baggage” I came to the research discontent and dissatisfied. I was, and indeed remain, weary with, and wary of, much of my experience of management practice and writing on the field. This is certainly the case with regard to the instrumentalist, modernistic and positivistic views that many consider important. This concern led me to relate to



certain aspects of critical perspective and postmodernist perspectives in an attempt to enjoin alternative debates to those of the nebulous concepts of “efficiency” and “effectiveness”. However, even the “honeymoon” period of this relationship changed as difficulties and challenges in relation to critical perspective ideas emerged (see Parker’s (1995) concerns over relativism and solipsism discussed above).

I learned about myself as I undertook the above processes. It was a rare opportunity to learn more about how I learn and how my mind works through emergent changes in my values and beliefs. In the preceding discussion I have mentioned the idea that as observers, researchers or participants we come to the work situation with “experiential”, “intellectual baggage” or secondary socialisations. (Berger and Luckmann, 1971:157) I thought a great deal about my “personal baggage” during the course of the research. For example, as far as “social class” is a meaningful categorisation I recognised that my middle-class “credentials” were a factor in the work. The discussion above provides an argument that teases out the middle-class atmosphere of the OMD experience. It was therefore perhaps not unusual that often I found myself with people with whom I readily recognised common (or “typified” (Berger and Luckmann, 1971:45-48)) experiences. They acknowledged me as a “professional” as much as they considered themselves professionals. I was quickly admitted to *the club(s)*. Also, as a male, I feel this too facilitated more ready access to certain programmes and experiences. There was generally a stereotypical response (usually from men) of assuming I would “fend for myself” and not need “caring for or protecting” in some of the more physical activities. On the other hand, such patronising attitudes were witnessed with regard to some female participants during the fieldwork.

I am also someone who perhaps has been fortunate to witness and experience the power of intense experiences in the outdoors. As a very active participant in a range of outdoor pursuits I have related personally to readings in the literature and the contacts in the field. I did not try to ignore my opinions and approach the field and the literature reviews “objectively”. Rather I approached with caution



and a form of, what is best described as, indifference. What would emerge or develop would do so and I would “go with the flow”. I knew I was not a blank sheet of paper nor an impersonal sponge just waiting to absorb “data” or experiences, as some writers suggest. I was, and remain, someone who is very interested in OMD, however, equally I am no “born again” OMD advocate.

The mountainous areas, where many OMD programmes take place, are a home from home for me. Certainly, in years past (prior to family responsibilities) I have been a very active mountaineer and hillwalker. As a Business Apprentice with Massey Ferguson between the ages of 17 and 21 I was invited to attend and lead OMD programmes in Wales, Derbyshire and Germany. Also, I was very busy undertaking difficult mountain initiative competitions which would match any military assault course. As a leader of a Venture Unit and an expedition organiser of three visits to the French and Swiss Alps, and a participant on Summer and Winter Mountain Leadership Programmes, I have lived a context for an appreciation of “experiences in the outdoors”. I have witnessed many aspects of human behaviour in a range of difficult, mortally dangerous and, also, humorous circumstances. I have been the subject of a mountain rescue (courtesy of the RAF helicopter rescue team who lifted me from the East Face of Tryfan in North Wales after a sixty foot fall) and I have led a mountain rescue (multiple fractures and crevasse lift) at 12000 feet on the Bossons Glacier face of Mont Blanc. I acknowledge the exposure to this experience for the impact it may have on the research. It constructs perspectives that I bring to the consideration of issues. I have seen people, friends and strangers relating to their experiences in the outdoors. Sometimes this has made them very happy and provided a sense of fulfilment (or so they tell me). In other instances, I have seen people shattered by the dramas to which they have been a party or simply observed. Camping, high in the Moelwyn Mountains of North Wales, a participant called me over, “Peter, talk to me, I feel so alone.” She had been ostracised by the rest of the group. “I only feel half the person I was when I began this course”, she declared. Or, the team member who found the bleak blankness of the North Yorkshire Moors in winter too “mind blowing” to be able to go on and so he had to retire. As a very



active football player he was not unfit. He said that he simply could not cope with his perception of the barren and featureless landscape and environment.

Clearly, I am not a machine-like or an emotionless robot. The evolution of the narrative of the research, the way I tackled various moments, seized or forced particular opportunities and so on was accompanied by a personal “non-research” life. I say “non-research” but it would be fallacious to suggest that it could be separated from a research life. (Denzin, 1989:16-17) During the, some, five years of the research I have got married, adjusted to promotions, changed jobs, undertaken a conversion to Judaism, moved house and relocated to the north of England, enjoyed witnessing the birth and growth of our two children, lost both my parents a year apart, witnessed far too many untimely deaths of young friends and colleagues due to pressures of work, fought in yearly bids for research funds to ensure the continuation of the project, and coped with an increasingly frustrating and crushing workload brought about by changes in the higher education sector in general, and my place of employment in particular. McLoughlin (1998: *foreword*) describes such maelstrom as the obligatory “soundtrack” of research within life. Nevertheless, if someone designed an OMD programme of such potency it would cause a media outcry akin to that generated by the earlier discussed Channel 4 *Exposure* programme. To construe the above comments as a plea for mitigating circumstances would be patronising and also it would misunderstand its purpose. It is a clear acknowledgement that the research activity and life cannot be objectified and delineated. People make sense of their lives through accounts and stories that do not necessarily respect such arbitrary divisions. Thus, managers too, seek to create managerial identities intertwined with private selves. And, we all make of it what we will. Yes, at times I have felt as though I were in a war-zone. At others, I have constructed some random notion of “control” over life only to have to, once again, cope with, and make sense of, fresh contributory experiences to the ever-emergent narratives of my life. (Josselson and Lieblich, 1993). In carrying out the research I have lived a narrative. Bruner (1987 cited in Flick (1998:205) would corroborate strongly the view that life is, *per se*, a narrative. Perhaps inevitably, I perceive myself very differently to the way I did at the commencement of the journey.



## **6.4 Contextual and Methodological Considerations.**

### **6.4.1 Contextualising Ideas in Relation to Previous Research.**

As already discussed above, the research conducted up to present in the OMD domain has tended to create, in the main, a pattern, or tradition, of a quantitative or heavily structured nature. (Examples of these are: Clifford and Clifford, 1967; Hopkins, 1985; Lucas, 1992) There has been a predominance of positivistic studies seeking to isolate a number of variables and scientifically measurable “findings” through the use of statistical techniques. These approaches have provided a number of insights. The usual pattern of results from these studies has sought to provide “evidence” that there is a propensity towards behavioural changes in a number of apparent intra-personal and inter-personal “traits” i.e. in participants and groups, as a result of an OMD programme. Comments from participants in many of these studies have been written down via the use of a structured or semi-structured questionnaires. Some of above studies also employ structured or semi-structured interviews (Ibbetson and Newell, 1996), even so, this type of positivistic-experimentalist triangulation is not frequently employed. The variables studied are often bound up in notions of self-esteem and self-understanding in relation to “team” concepts (sustained by the representation of “Self-Concept” in the outdoor education sphere). This is considered to be a consequence of self-perception by the participant and also, on occasion, by his or her peers.

Burgoyne (1994b:198) has argued that there are problems with such approaches. He fears it purports to be a qualitative approach yet it seeks to build firm cause-and-effect models. He fears that the opportunities for the researcher to learn about the chain of possible and interlinked consequences from a learning event may be stifled by such an approach. Associated with this, other writers have underlined that organizational behaviour in any context does not have “straightforward outcomes” but is more likely to generate a “gestalt” (plethora) of meanings.(Ashworth, 1994:5)



By extension there are a number of further limitations and restrictions within these methodological approaches commonly employed in OMD. These approaches, in seeking to discern particular variables, oversimplify complex and intertwined experiences. Equally, studies frequently neglect to provide contextual commentaries (ethnographic and physical setting) against which to place these “variables”. Many of the studies clearly embark on the research with the *hypothesis* in mind and that the *outcomes* are *likely* to occur. A clear illustration of the genre is found in Burnett and James’ (1994); “Using the Outdoors to Facilitate Personal Change in Managers”. A careful reading of that style of study is inclined to leave doubts in the mind of the reader who is seeking to visualise and think within a broader or alternative framework. There is the suspicion that participants are encouraged by many of the techniques (for example the question wording and layout in the structured questionnaires) to perceive that a “character change” and a “positive” change would be desirable. The impetus supporting a potential inclination for participants to want to see themselves as at least *holding their own* is powerful. (Burlington and Grint, 1996; Ibbetson and Newell, 1996) Indeed, many may anticipate an improvement from a programme of development and, thus, it is imagined unlikely that a participant will mark lower on the post-course questionnaire than in the pre-course questionnaire. In consequence, there is an in-built propensity for perceived “positive” or “real” change as discussed in the earlier chapters. The embedded nature of this mind-set with regard to methodological approach among writers in the domain is concerning. For example, it is studies such as Burnett and James’ above that are upheld by many contemporary commentators as casting illuminating views and understanding on the domain. Whereas, alternative approaches would highlight that many such alleged fresh and illuminating contributions to the above-described studies are, in essence, little different from what has preceded them. Comments and observations are “gathered” and “analysed” through methodological processes that are analogous to the “black box” input-output type model. Participants and information are fed into the beginning of a “process” (usually a linear representation) and apparently emerge from the process in a changed state. The inference is frequently that there has been an improvement, enhancement for the participant or that value has been added in some way.



Having commented on the trend towards positive (i.e. “happy”) outcome-seeking within the OMD literature, it is nevertheless significant to note a new wave of issues and challenges to the field, for example, Ibbetson and Newell (1996) sending out the message that OMD can “fail” some managers and participants. Equally, the *Channel 4* programme *Exposure*(1993)(mentioned above) reporting on Ridgeway’s endurance style course pre-empted (or perhaps even unleashed - at the very least had an encouraging effect on) the generation of this strand of the literature.

Moreover, it was mentioned above that the focus on “outcomes” in the research into OMD is likely to be aimed at the benefit of employer-clients or OMD providers as much as the participant. In keeping with this, a range of studies has tried to consider how any such “beneficial behavioural” changes are transported back into the workplace.(*inter alia*: Buller, Cragun and McEvoy, 1991; Wagner and Campbell, 1994)) Designing methodologies that remain coherent and meaningful is a particularly difficult task in this respect. Even from within a positivistic framework, it has been suggested that the multifarious factors likely to play a role in the work environment make it very difficult to identify influences attributable to a training programme. This is, contestably, more feasible where the training programme has been designed allegedly to develop discrete competencies or skills. However, where development processes are concerned it is more difficult to discern the moments where the process can be experienced subsequently in the workplace. Yet this concern and desire for *isomorphic transfer* (discussed above as conceptually problematic) remains a powerful impetus and influence in much of the research undertaken. Many develop or employ models (usually of the two-dimensional axial type discussed above) to portray the process in which the participants are apparently engaged. Moreover, some commentators employ the above debated quasi-quantitative methods and then accompany them with remarks that prompt questions of doubt regarding the approaches:

“Well what is the reality? Many of us run outdoor education because we have a gut feeling that what we are doing is valuable. Perhaps it isn’t a



universal panacea, but I suggest our intuition isn't far wrong!" (Abbott, 1987:25)

In summary, there seems to be a range of difficulties in large areas of OMD research carried out up to the present time. There is a tension within many studies in that they employ paradoxical methodologies and/or "tautological reasoning." (Neuman, 1994:106) Methodologically, these studies purport to employ qualitative methods. The alleged reasons for employing these methods relate to attempts to "capture a wide amount of data from the multiple interactions" and situational aspects of the research. However, by focusing studies on "variables" they are influenced towards a positivist, hypothesis-validating end result. The purported "data collection" for these studies is often through discussion and interview or questionnaires with participants. Observations regarding participant behaviour, under different conditions and situations, are offered as "data" but again, these are often condensed into a bi- or tri-variable model. While these studies may offer certain insights, this present argument believes that there are difficulties in this. The stress here is often on *a* model (or limited range of models) - absolutes that can account for most of the key aspects of the experience. Moreover, it seems quite improbable that a vast richness of experience concerning the complexities of human interaction on any given programme might be demonstrated in a useful holistic way by any one model or set of "variables".

Alternatively, there is also a smaller body of research that has broached alternative approaches. As already commented above, there are examples of narrative commentary and writing in OMD. (*inter alia*: Long, 1984, 1987; Gall, 1987, Blashford-Snell, 1991) A key method adopted in these studies involves attempts at the participant observer narrative (*inter alia*: Long, *ibid*) or participant observer diary. (Teire, 1994) This appears to invite phenomenological, inductive approaches. This seems *prima facie* more closely associated with the methodological approach adopted in this study. However, it has been shown the extent to which these accounts remain imbued with representationalist and positivistic underpinnings. The issue, therefore, is two-fold. Firstly, there is scope



for redressing the modernistic-positivistic frame of reference that templates OMD commentary through discussion of alternative approaches. Secondly, it is important to recognise that even in those instances where stories and narratives have emerged in OMD accounts that they are still heavily prone to modernistic-positivistic influences. There is, thus, potential for accounts which consider reflexively and at greater length the emergence and social construction of experiences in OMD.

On a final note to this part of the discussion. It is vital to be clear that the above argument is not concerned with wrestling and determining supremacy in long-standing debates between qualitative and quantitative hegemonies. Rather, it seeks to discuss and contextualise experiences in contemporary OMD research. As a consequence there is a contribution to be made by a narrative approach that may complement the work already accomplished. This is not to celebrate overly the positivistic work that has already been carried out. However, this is not a work of exclusion of particular methodological approaches. With these, and the above reflections in mind, the discussion is now in a position to consider the approach underpinning the present research.



## 6.5 Methodological Commentary Underpinning the Current Research.

Set against the earlier discussion, this section seeks to prepare the discussion for commentary on the fieldwork processes and approaches. In the discussion in the management development literature review chapter (Chapter One), important reference was made to Storey's major review of management development writing. (Storey, 1989a,b) Of particular interest was his representational model of four categories of writing in the management development domain. Mindful of his methodological stance it will nevertheless be useful to restate them.

Namely, there are writings on management development that:

“[1.]-define the nature of management development: its conceptualisation, its aims and perspectives;

[2]-relate to the practices of managers: what is done or should be done to managers;

[3]-[are] about the [experience of being a] manager but not the vast bulk of literature about management per se: i.e. textbooks on planning, organising and the like;

[4]-attend to management development in context, both in wider socio-economic context and the changing organisational context.”(Storey 1989a:4)

At the end of his lengthy study, Storey notes the following vital conclusions that have also emerged as key issues for the present research on OMD:

“Two main problems are abundantly clear and both present obstacles to understanding and therefore appropriate practice. The first represents a weakness in the first of the four categories of literature... that is, it concerns the very conceptualisation of management. Despite the talk of “integration” there is as yet, little evidence that the *relationship* between the way “management” is conceived, the way recruits are identified and the stock replenished, the way the stock is appraised, deployed, moved,



motivated and rewarded, has in fact been taken seriously. It may well be that, in practice, there happens to be little strategic integration, but this is a slim excuse for the evident neglect in academic analyses which fail to explain *implicit systems*.”

The second major problem derives from a weakness in the fourth category of literature. There is still a pressing need to develop explanatory accounts which adequately *contextualise* found practices. Understanding at the moment remains impeded by relatively *detached accounts* of “innovative programmes” and new training packages. The solid tradition of organisational analysis which can add a *historic* dimension and a *sociological* dimension *as well as an economic one* to current practice needs urgently to be brought to bear. For example, *a number of sociological studies using qualitative methods* have made a considerable contribution to the understanding of actual managerial behaviour.”(Storey, 1989b:7)[Emphasis added]

From the above it is immediately apparent that, even though a substantial time has elapsed, OMD cannot be exempted from Storey’s critical remarks. Discussion has been marshalled above on both historically and sociologically truncated and limited accounts in OMD that Storey notes in management development generally. Moreover, the several years since Storey’s commentary have witnessed substantial publication in the wider management arena that has sought to redress the type of contextualisation and conceptualisation issues underlined by Storey.(*inter alia*: Alvesson and Willmott, 1992; Watson, 1994, 1999b; Fineman and Gabriel, 1996; Hassard and Holliday, 1998; Knights and Willmott, 1999; Parker, 2000) It has been suggested in the argument above that although these writings potentially have had a powerful impact in the broader area of management development they have had less influence on OMD commentaries.

Hence, in many respects the conceptualisation of OMD, within management development, is both dated and simplistic. It might even be argued that important



or useful aspects of the wider management development debate have not been acknowledged or addressed by OMD. As noted above, attempts to conceptualise the domain have tended to focus on positivist, quasi-qualitative studies. They have focused more readily on “variables” to the exclusion of other potentially rich, valuable and informative contextual commentaries. The approach has produced research that would find a best fit in the second and third categories in Storey’s management development literature taxonomy i.e. what is done or should be done to managers, and the experience of being a manager. (The latter category seems to have an affinity with the concerns of the present argument, however, it is actually more concerned with the usual variable type preoccupations.)

The above-mentioned methodological predilection has been quick to criticise potential alternative approaches. It has already been stated that Irvine and Wilson (1994:25) talk of:

“The evidence in support of managerial and management learning through OMD regrettably is *little more than anecdotal accounts.*”[Emphasis added]

Here they refer explicitly to the writings of Long (1987), Galagan (1987) and Gall (1987). All of these are written in story-like or narrative manners. Irvine and Wilson’s remarks are a clear indication of the dismissive manner in which this approach has been treated. They continue, broadening their critique:

“Much of the research has only a *vague rationale, or nothing at all*, and in many texts OMD [here they charge Buller *et al.* (1991) and Butcher (1991)] *it is implicit that the reader [already] comprehends what is meant by anecdotal evidence.* When definitions are offered they tend to be so broad that almost any activity could be included. Rather than enlighten, these accounts suggest that their authors’ *understanding of OMD is perhaps limited.*” [Emphasis added]



However, the authors do not seem to recognise the boundaries that they have adopted for themselves. Theirs is a commentary constructed from the within the perspective of a positivist paradigm “looking outwards”. As a methodological framework it has its inherent logic and constructs. But, the approaches they condemn, equally, have their own contributions and perspectives to present. Concern over the outcome focus of much managerial development has already been cited above. Beeby and Rathborn (1983:171) state:

“Also, in the last four or five years the major management and training journals have between them published a plethora of course ‘write ups’ about this type of programme [sic:OMD].... This *more serious literature* is unsatisfactory in a number of respects, particularly for those management trainers with more than a casual interest in the outdoor approach primarily as it consists predominantly of ‘*single case*’ write ups which tend to be more descriptive than analytical. Two noteworthy exceptions (though not widely circulated [N.B Fifteen years on this is no longer the case] exceptions to this general trend are the papers of Creswick and Williams (1979) and Mossman (1982) which provide more analytical overviews of the field based on knowledge and experience of several courses for managers”.[Emphasis added]

Again, by “analytical” it is a clear reference to the use of models within a particular methodological paradigm with an inclination to build an argument of statistically derived results. Ironically, Buller *et al.* (themselves accused above, by Irvine and Wilson (1994), of lack of “good” or “strong” methodology (unwittingly used in the downstream Latour, 1987 sense)) suggest that “Despite the call for more rigorous evaluation of training programs, relatively few carefully conducted evaluations have been reported”.(Buller, Cragun and McEvoy, 1991:61) Thus, methodological myopia reigns in much OMD writing.

In this light, it is most important and useful not to replicate or perpetuate the work already accomplished. Rather there is a need to address shortcomings both in existing research or pointed out by that research. It has been demonstrated how



the justificative tendency of much of the existing research has created an “outcome” focused body of literature. This may placate those audiences looking for “answers”. This is very much what the current thesis is not. It is not seeking to “identify”, for example, key personal or behavioural changes that may have occurred in participants and it is certainly not attempting to measure the degree of favourable incremental behaviour change in participants as a measure of success. This work is concerned that rich and valuable insights, impressions and experiences are potentially excluded from contributing to accounts and sense-making (Weick, 1995) in OMD. Narrative approaches, although marginalised and denigrated, even to the small extent they have been employed in existing research work, have much to contribute in redressing these lacunae.

Equally, with regard to the contextualisation of broader management development and OMD there is a void worthy of research. There is a need for a concerted effort to understand sociological contexts of the various research situations. Too many studies have been hampered by a practice of treating research subjects as if they were a set of cardboard cut-outs. More comprehensive, less “discretely constrained”, research is needed to be able to provide a holistic and integrative study of OMD phenomena. The word “phenomena” is used advisedly. The research requires an, up to now, largely omitted sensitivity to the multifarious connections of the domain. In turn, its link to the broader domain of management development should not be overlooked or treated simplistically, as has often proved to be the case. In the present argument this has necessarily undertaken as a discussion of sociological (historical) emergence of the approach. This is an aspect glossed over by many commentators (for example: Bank, 1994; Krouwel and Goodwill, 1994; Lucas, 1992) (It is worth noting, by contrast, that Livesey (1982) writing from the outdoor education perspective provides a very thought-provoking account).

In summary to this discussion of the rationale for the current research, Toulmin (1990 cited in Flick, 1998) has provided comments regarding “qualitative research at the end of modernity” that seem to relate well to the present study:



- “the *return to the oral*, which is manifested in trends in the formulation of theories and in the carrying out of empirical studies in philosophy, literature and social sciences in *narratives*, language and communication;
- the *return to the particular*, which is manifested in the formulation of theories and in the carrying out of empirical studies with the aim not only to concentrate on abstract and universal questions but *to treat again specific, concrete problems* which do not arise generally but occur in specific types of situations;
- the *return to the local*, which finds its expression in studying systems of knowledge, practices and *experiences again in the context of those (local) traditions and ways of living in which they are embedded*, instead of assuming and attempting to test their universal validity;
- the *return to the timely*, manifested in the need to put problems to be studied and solutions to be *developed in their temporal or historical context* and *to describe them in this context and explain them from it.*”[Emphasis added]

The narrative accounts from particular experiences that emerged from this study seem to correspond closely and in a timely fashion to Toulmin’s observations.

## 6.6 Research “Activity”.

The research strategy followed the broad timescale indicated further below. However, on the whole, it proved very much a question of not being strait-jacketed by a rigid timescale. Rather it was the case of following up leads and contacts, remarks and experiences as they provided new openings and opportunities. One experience would lead to another and in this way the research constructed its own narrative and journey. Nevertheless, the strategy *did*



necessarily contain a time dimension. Remaining mindful of certain milestones assisted in ensuring that the study stayed on the research schedule for university institutional reviews and revisions. However, the approach engaged always retained flexibility to embrace the opportunities, if necessary, of unforeseeable events and matters as they occurred. These moments produced some of the most valuable aspects of the work.

### **6.6.1 Research Activity: Organizations and Individuals Contacted.**

Interaction with organizations and individuals in pursuit of the research raises a number of issues worthy of debate. At an early stage of the research it became apparent that decisions would need to be made concerning which organizations to contact. Firstly, in one respect there are the organizations that provide OMD. In another, there are the cohorts or groups of clients or programme participants. At yet a further level there is the issue of the changing personnel in the various research sites. These are traditional divisions within the OMD research methodology. However, equally such representational delineations may be viewed with caution and, thus, I remained conscious of the emergence of alternative constructions.

It was recognised that there potentially exists high instability in cohorts of participants. Many groups may visit a given OMD centre, or engage in this form of training only periodically. These periods may vary enormously from once in a lifetime, to months or years apart. Equally, even if client groups do return to the same centre, there is a difficulty in that employees change companies and many of the people who attended the earlier course may not be present at a later course. These staff changes are equally possible on the staff of the OMD providing organization. It can be seen, therefore, that the idea of working with a given group of people or community over a long period, not to mention the medium-term two or three years of the present research does not appear feasible. These



concerns precluded the use, for example, of a longitudinal ethnographic approach.

In a study such as the present one, that seeks to be qualitative and inductive, it seemed appropriate to consider individual(s) experiences in relation to each other. The interpretative intent of the research was to allow phenomena to emerge in relation to participants. In this light it seemed not to matter which organizations were contacted so I got in touch with “well-known” organizations. The organizations approached were selected from primarily two sources. Firstly, from a list compiled by Bank (1994) in his key text on OMD. The list incorporated approximately one hundred OMD providers across the United Kingdom and was slightly dated. However, this was the only United Kingdom list of its kind located during the research. Interestingly, the research conducted for the present thesis determined that other long-standing organizations do exist but are not included on the list. The second source was the Human Resource Development Conference held annually in London at Wembley. I managed to secure a free ticket and some funding to travel to the venue. A range of OMD providers occasionally exhibits and some of these were approached and initial discussions held on their stands.

As mentioned above, the approach adopted paid little attention to some of the widely acknowledged “fault-lines” invoked by many commentators on, and practitioners in, the OMD “industry” (a concept already discussed and challenged above). In positivist sample-building models such divisions are commonly used. For example, the OMD sector might be divided up along a number of lines. As discussed in the literature chapter, from the positivistic research conducted so far the factors identified tend to be:

- size (with regard to facilities, centre staff);
- geographical location;
- trust status versus wholly commercial ethos;
- course type offered (this refers back to Krouwel and Goodwill’s (1994) style typology - i.e. “survival”, “developmental” etc.)
- programme process and content.



However, it is difficult to argue to what extent any given programme respects all of these apparently clear delineations. Therefore, such representational criteria played no role in determining where fieldwork would take place.

A few organizations were contacted. A number of these are clearly “large” organizations with permanent staff teams ranging from twenty to over one hundred members. Within this large organization grouping there is a further difference to note in that a number are trusts. The remaining organizations are wholly commercial private companies. It has been argued by some commentators that this nuance may influence the atmosphere and process of the programmes delivered. It was impossible to avoid becoming aware of such notions. They are mentioned in conversation and certain individuals attribute significance to this.

Due to cost and logistical reasons all the OMD providers with whom the research was effected were located in North or Mid-Wales, the Pennines, South Yorkshire or the Lake District. The time and cost of travel further afield would have been too great for the time and monetary resources available to the research programme. This was an inevitable constraint for the work. In addition, with regard to programme-type some OMD organizations are clearly focused uniquely on the *adventure or expedition* aspect and use of the outdoors. It was imagined that these groups, although they do not ostensibly deal with management teams and personnel, would provide interesting and useful insights. Because of the role or differing origins it was thought valuable to look at an organization that purportedly came from a different tradition and origin. This seemed to be an omission that has occurred with previous studies.

Following extensive access negotiations and funding arrangements (discussed further below under Access Issues), I participated as a “complete participant” (Junker, 1960- see below) in week-long residential programmes at two medium to large providers. Assurances concerning confidentiality preclude the naming of the actual organizations. Given teaching and administrative responsibilities in my professional life these programmes had to be attended during small windows of opportunity in the summer non-teaching period. In addition, there were periods



spent variably as an observer and a participant-observer at two further providers (this imposed situation produced interesting ideas which are presented in the “Stories” Chapter). Finally, weekend programmes were undertaken as a “complete participant” with two Outdoor Education/Adventure companies in North Wales and the Pennines respectively.

Moreover discussions (although no observation of, or involvement with, programmes actually taking place) were conducted on-site with the directors and senior personnel of: *Endeavour Training* (Pennines), *Outward Bound* (Lake District), *EAST* (Yorkshire). All of these organizations tend to be known in the sector, certainly by the OMD-provider community if not so much by all OMD-subscribing employers. In addition interviews and discussions were conducted, again on-site, with the “less well known” *Action-Based Leadership* (Wye Valley), *APN Development* (Lake District), *High Force* (Pennines) and Jonathan Wright (Lake District). In contrast, the organizations *Whernside Training* (Lake District), *AC Associates* (Notts, Pennines) and *Arete* (Lake District) either failed to return initial calls or reneged on set appointments and therefore due to time pressures were not contacted further.

In addition, meetings were arranged and held with: Diane Amans (formerly of *React Training*, Stockport); Sue Newell (academic and OMD commentator at the University of Warwick), staff at the offices of *Adventure Education* (Penrith) and Karen Frost (Manager - The Leadership Trust). Moreover, Discussions by telephone were held with Cliff Oswick (academic at Kingston University and OMD commentator), and, Shirley Alikhan (Programme Secretary - Forum for the Future). Also, a number of useful discussions were conducted with staff at *Impact Training and Development* and at *Brathay Training and Development*.



*It is important to reiterate at this point that the views and ideas presented in this work are my interpretation of events and statements. In no way are they intended to represent official policy or positions of the aforementioned organizations and individuals. The field research was not necessarily drawn from any of the above-mentioned organizations.*

## **6.7 Research Methods and Approaches.**

For the reasons mentioned above it has been demonstrated that an ethnographic-longitudinal study would be difficult to develop and follow through. With this in mind, it seemed that another main approach in the qualitative domain, short field surveys, were well-suited to the study.

Most qualitative approaches are carried out within some form of *field-research or comparative-historical study*. In passing it is useful to note that the latter type of approach is not appropriate to the present research. Comparative-historical studies concern “cross-cultural social studies across time era”.(Neuman, 1994:30) Briefly described, the historical comparative approach employs a number of techniques, some quantitative, to trace social trends over significant periods (decades, centuries) to answer generally what Neuman (*ibid*) terms “big” questions, for example, substantial societal change. The current research is more concerned with the consideration of what occurs during OMD programmes than the development of the programme over long periods of time.

As stated above, the central approach will be the time spent on programmes. Within this fieldwork I carried out visits to several different sites. Field research: “...is more like an umbrella of activity beneath which any technique may be used for gaining the desired knowledge”.(Schatzman and Strauss, 1973:7) Other writers bind this general view into a more incisive perspective:



“Field-research is based on *naturalism*, which is also used to study other phenomena (e.g. oceans, animals, plants). Naturalism involves *observing ordinary events in natural settings*, not in contrived, invented or researcher-created settings. Research occurs in the field outside the safe settings of an office, laboratory or classroom.”(Neuman, 1994:335)[Emphasis added]

The decision to embark on field-research entails decisions relating to a range of further questions. These include: where or how to observe; overcoming objections from “gatekeepers” (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983:73) - (“gatekeepers” i.e. individuals with power of influence to block or interrupt the study - the practicalities of this in the current research are discussed below under “Access Issues”); decisions on disclosure; gaining trust; level of involvement; managing conflicts; note-taking policy etc.; approach to be employed within the field-research “umbrella” mentioned above; and, of course, exiting the field, and writing up the ideas.(Neuman, 1994:330-367)

### **6.7.1 People Watching..... and Being Watched.**

As suggested above, fieldwork, operating within the qualitative, interpretative, phenomenological domain, employs a range of methods in order to comment on and relate emergent experiences. The main approach employed in the current research will be that of *observation of participants*. There is a point of debate concerning which particular form of observation might be employed. Taylor and Bogdan (1984:15) define the participant observation approach as “involving social interaction between the researcher and the informants in the milieu of the latter”. Junker (1960) suggests that there are four types of observer:

“1. *the complete participant*, who operates covertly, concealing any intention to observe the setting;



2. *the participant-as-observer*, who forms relationships and participates in activities but makes no secret of an intention to observe events;
3. *the observer-as-participant*, who maintains only superficial contacts with the people being studied (for example, asking them occasional questions);
4. *the complete observer*, who merely stands back and ‘eavesdrops’ on the proceedings.”

Similar taxonomies in addition to that above have been developed by a number of writers including Gans (1982) and Adler and Adler (1987). As a general point it has been suggested that the accompaniment of groups in a close manner, and in different modes and situations, overall is very useful.(Waddington, 1994:120) However, it remains unclear how straightforward or valuable, such observer-related representational stances may be.

During the research I found myself mainly in a strange position hovering between *complete participant* and *participant-as-observer*. Reflexively, it was recognised that this might have a number of effects. Firstly, as a “complete participant/ participant as observer” there was the issue of reflexivity with regard to my own values, preconceptions, beliefs and agendas. What messages do “I” as “me” send out? How do “I” interpret, make sense, or approach situations and experiences? I had to bring to bear some of the reflections I have provided in the “Personal Narrative” above in order respond to these matters. Secondly, the complete observer role, and indeed perhaps any observer role creates an interesting dynamic for the facilitator or staff member (aware of my presence as a researcher) leading the course.

Equally, an alleged further difficulty for the complete participant approach is sometimes cited as the importance or concern of being in “the right place at the right time”.(Waddington, 1994:107-122) This sort of concern is based on a fear that “valuable observations” may be missed due to this. Some writers suggest that if it is not recorded (i.e. written down) it did not happen.(Taylor and Bogdan,



1984) However, the adoption of such stances raise their own methodological conundrums. Experiences and sense-making are ongoing, taking-place all the time. The notion that the “right” ones or “better” or preferable ones are occurring has positivistic overtones. However, here there is also a sense of trying to attempt a pan-optic (Burrell, 1997) approach. How, can anyone “see everything” even if the alleged events are taking place right in front of them. Such a belief is only possible if a total “best” and “complete” idea of information is espoused or if the relativism of social construction, as emergent from the individual, is rejected.

During the studies, I noticed that participants are frequently actively encouraged to participate and contribute to post-event feedback sessions or reviews. Participants would often comment on and discuss ideas outside of these sessions. Thus, there appeared to be various moments of feedback experience for the researcher as “participant observer”. Not necessarily in this order, there was involvement in the experience; then, the course facilitator-led feedback and finally discussion between individuals attending the course (coffee breaks, on-the-side discussions, in the pub or hotel bar in the evening). On many occasions, this staging of discussion and analysis was very valuable for identifying the influential moments, factors and experiences in the programme processes.

In the studies where I operated more as a participant-as-observer (Junker, *ibid*) I was asked by the OMD providing organizations to introduce myself as a participant on the course who had come to “self-develop” but who, by the way, happened to have a (research) interest in this type of training. I was never questioned further by any participant. Interestingly, however, my position was nearly compromised on two occasions. On one of these occasions an OMD organization had provided accommodation on-site whereas the other course participants were accommodated in a nearby town in a modest hotel. This caused brief, but uncomfortable, discussions as to why I was separated from the rest of the group. The reason was linked to a further issue, namely cost. As a result of the research negotiations, the OMD organization charged me only a small, notional cost instead of the full fee that the other delegates had paid. Obviously, it was cheaper to keep “the researcher”, on his budget payment, in an on-site



cabin chalet (albeit very comfortable) rather than the hotel. This was, nevertheless, a tricky situation which had to be explained away by simple logistical issues and comments like “Oh well, I’m settled in now”. I had to make a point of walking the two miles, in the pitch black, to and from the local town most evenings to spend time with the group both to be party to the casual, away from the facilitator, discussions and also to allay suspicions of the group regarding my research identity. In relation to these points Hammersley and Atkinson consider that reflexively:

“We are part of the social world we study... This is not a matter of methodological commitment, it is an existential fact. There is no way in which we can escape the social order to study it; nor fortunately, is that necessary. We cannot avoid relying on ‘common-sense’ knowledge nor, often, can we avoid having an effect on social phenomena we study”.(Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983:15)

Moreover, Cassell and Symon confirm:

“Because qualitative methods are frequently more interactive, more intensive and involve a longer term commitment, researchers are likely to build up a social relationship with the organizational members and therefore gain more insights into their collective understanding by actively sharing that experience.”(Cassell and Symon, 1994:7)

In this vein, further points emerged from the research and the readings on methodological approaches. Firstly, it was very important to subdue aspects of my identity, for example, from my educational background on an almost continual basis when in the field. I became aware that some participants felt uneasy about discussing an issue in a theoretical or conceptual way no matter in which forum. It was frequently necessary to disarm the situation with humour or jokes. This sought to diminish any “perceived” threat that might build up resistance. As “complete participant” over a period of time (the programmes examined sometimes lasted up to seven days) the researcher becomes deeply



involved in the ongoing experiences. It required a period of time to elapse after the course for the ideas and thoughts to settle and for the ideas to begin to emerge from my reflections on the experiences. It is true, of course, that I was living and jointly creating events all the time, trying to understand and make sense of emerging processes. Vital to this is the written account of impressions as soon after the given event as possible. A factor not to be overlooked here is sheer fatigue. Living, working and learning with programme members is a tiring process. It is, therefore, important to mentally pace oneself in order to try to participate. There is therefore a mixed experience of researcher and participant. Of course, it may be contested that this simply emulates the hurried nature of many individuals everyday lives. Spradley (1980:56-57) relates the notion of the “insider/outsider”. He talks about a study of poker playing:

“Hayano (1978) decided to become a participant-observer in poker parlours in Gardena, California. On an average weekend, six poker parlours draw several thousand people; Hayano played many thousands of hours of poker, listened to people talk, and observed their strategies for managing the game. *As an insider* he shuffled cards, dealt hands, made bids, bluffed, and both won and lost some hands. As an insider he felt some of the same emotions during the course of the game that the ordinary participants had felt. *At the same time, he experienced being an outsider*, one who viewed the game and himself as objects. He had the uncommon experience of being a poker player and simultaneously observing himself and others behaving as poker players. *He was part of the scene, yet outside the scene*”.(Spradley, 1980:57)[Emphasis added]

Spradley (1980:56) points out the need for the researcher to have a “wide-angle lens” permanently in operation. Waddington (1994) is very open and frank about the realities and difficulties of using participant-observation. It can appear disjointed and chaotic on occasion, especially for a researcher engaging in complete-participant or participant-as-observer role. This sentiment is readily appreciated within the current research.



### 6.7.2 Discussions and Chatting.

I engaged in a lot of conversations during the research. These took place in the general flow of daily life. Sometimes I started conversations and on other occasions, other participants initiated conversations. No form of interview, however structured or unstructured was attempted. Thus, although I may have sought to direct or push a particular point in a discussion there was no particular effort to invoke some of the usual schemes associated with qualitative work. For example, while I was aware of the usual considerations relating to varying structures of interviews, ranging from, very tightly structured (“yes/no” responses to pre-formulated questions) to completely open-ended, discussion-type interviews these did not play a role. King (1994:14-36) notes that interviews are used in relation to *a specific situation or action*. They are less applicable to broad general situations. But, who or what delineates or establishes the “representation” of the specific situation? This argument sees any notion of a situation in socially constructed terms. Overall, it was felt that a “casual” approach to conversations might constitute the most promising way of sharing and relating experiences with other people. Importantly, King reminds us that the relationship between the “interviewer” and the “interviewee” is an *unavoidable creation*.(King 1994:36) This underlines a perhaps inevitable process of social construction that must take place between the researcher and the participant or “interviewee” although to use such phrases implies role and behaviour boundaries that will be artificial and difficult to circumscribe. For example, in the present research, this was particularly so because I was, to a greater or lesser extent, a participant on the programme. Spradley (1979:59-60 cited in Flick, 1998:93) states:

“It is best to think of ethnographic interviews as a series of *friendly conversations* into which the researcher slowly introduces new elements to assist informants to respond as informants. Exclusive use of these new ethnographic elements, or introducing them too quickly, will make interviews become like a formal interrogation. Rapport will evaporate, and informants may discontinue their cooperation.”



There are a number of other considerations concerning conversations in the research. Issues of “organizational” power and control over people were also implicit in the research methodology. Also there were guidelines from the research host organization(s). Representatives from the organizations were not enthusiastic about the idea of any disclosure of research taking place, which of course interviews would have indicated that it was taking place. Such fieldwork preparations were handled through astute and careful negotiation. Fears of such representatives needed to be allayed in order to gain access to the programme. In the field the intention was to experience a wide breadth of responses and impressions from a range of people i.e. parties implicated in the research and their degree of influence in creating situations.(Burgoyne, 1994a refers to “stakeholders”) The process was kept as informal as possible and while I might have tried to create a situation where I could have a conversation with a particular person this was far from an all-consuming activity. Conversations “just happened” or emerged around me in many instances.

Flick (1998:98-113) also describes the value of narrative and episodic interviews. Because they concern ideas of narrative and story-telling they merit brief consideration in relation to the present study. Narrative interviews tend to be substantial processes in terms of time. They are commenced with a “generative narrative question”.(ibid:p.99) Flick provides an example from Hermanns (1991:182):

“I want to ask you to tell me how the story of your life occurred. The best way to do this would be for you to start from your birth.....and then tell all the things that happened one after the other until today. You can take your time in doing this, and also give details, because for me everything is of interest that is important for you.”

To some extent this particular example may seem simplistic and somewhat patronising. It contrives and seeks to construct the framework of the experience for the participant to some greater or lesser extent. However, it does also indicate how a platform is created for the individual to present a social construction of his



or her life. Flick (1998:98 again citing Hermanns, *ibid*:p.183) relates how such an interview relates to a narrative pattern:

“First the initial situation is outlined (‘how everything started’) then the events relevant to the narrative are selected from the whole host of experiences and presented as a coherent progression of events (‘how things developed’), and finally the situation at the end of the development is presented (‘what became’).”

This story-like pattern might seem to echo many everyday conversations particularly in terms of the beginning, middle, end structure.(McAdams, 1993) However, in the current research the narrative interview *per se* did not play a role. Firstly, the time required to sit down in an uninterrupted manner and conduct narrative interviews rarely occurred. And, secondly, the somewhat overly imposed guidance suggested in relation to its structure seemed to run counter to the spirit of my approach. Nevertheless, the underpinning philosophy was useful in approaching relations with other people on the programme. It was interesting to listen to how they, as part of the usual “getting to know a bit more about you chat” provided accounts and stories of their lives away from the OMD programme.

Episodic interviews (Flick, 1998:106) played something of a role in the research although there are a number of questions and issues to be raised. Flick provides a powerful explanation of this approach which justifies an extensive quotation:

“The starting point for the episodic ‘interview’ is the assumption that the subjects’ experiences of a certain domain are stored and remembered in forms of narrative-episodic and semantic knowledge. Whereas *episodic knowledge is organized closer to experiences and linked to concrete situations and circumstances*, semantic knowledge is based on assumptions and relations which are extracted from these and generalized... The episodic interview yields *context-related presentations in the form of a narrative because these are closer to experiences and*



*their generative context* than other presentational forms. On the other hand, *they make the process of constructing realities more readily accessible* than approaches which aim at abstract concepts and answers in a strict sense. But the episodic interview is not an attempt to artificially stylize experiences as a 'narratable whole'. Rather it starts from episodic-situative forms of experiential knowledge."(Flick, *ibid*)[Emphasis added]

The episodic-narrative approach can be conducted very informally. Flick demonstrates how it relates to issues of context, experience, situation and the construction of realities - all central concerns of the present argument. However, it should be noted that Flick also tends to see "knowledge" in a rather discretized way and this detracts from what he seeks to do with the idea.

In addition, Swanson and Chapman (1994:66-93) have drawn attention to the dangers of consigning people to "zero-influence/non-stakeholder" groups. However, for the present work, the very concept of individuals not having the capability or possibility to contribute to a process of understanding relating to experience seems almost nonsensical. At the moment of entering a new organizational site it is difficult to say who may contribute in a substantial manner to the way meaning will be constructed for the various individuals present. For instance, people that Swanson and Chapman may be likely to "classify" in such groups would be the back-up administrative team or the cleaning staff at the centre who may, for example regularly overhear conversations relating to "behind the scene" events. Also, they may be people actually involved on the course who, for some reason feel disenfranchised or uninvolved. These situations actually arose during the fieldwork. On one particular programme, two particular group members were involved with the group less than other members. Conversations between myself and participants were particularly rich in portraying alternative, and not altogether positive, commentaries on the experience. In contrast, the support staff at the centre were generally detached from many of the activities taking place there. Despite a range of conversations with people in a number of roles very few engaged in conversations of any length. Interestingly, this seemed to happen particularly



where the company was a member of the “large” organization grouping. Staff at the centres seemed very well rehearsed in constructing and treating me as a “researcher” or “client” even when conversations by myself were undertaken astutely.

### **6.7.3 “Jotting it Down”.**

Cassell and Symon (1994:25) suggest rather categorically that there is no substitute for recording and transcribing interviews and conversations. This allegedly allows the “interview data” to be accessed by a third party (confidentiality issues permitting) and permits “verification”. However, this whole proposition raises a number of problematic issues; some logistical others concerning reflexivity. Logistically, recording interviews seemed very impractical given the adoption of the “complete participant” role. As already noted to some extent above, “interviews” were most likely to take the form of conversations directed at broad issues or topic areas related to an area of research interest. These occurred most frequently in social situations, for example, meal times, or when relaxing at the end of the evening. There was a reluctance to use tape-recorders during these encounters. It would have seemed to contradict the complete observer or participant-as-observer stance I had adopted and disclose my additional research intentions. Moreover, in practical terms the process of transcription can be arduous (or expensive if sub-contracted). With regard to transcribing, Hycner (1985:279-303) states that it is vital that the researcher puts aside any preconceptions that may impinge on the “data”. Reflexively, there are a number of issues here. Methodologically, it infers that recording confers the notion of objectivity: that it is possible and that the “researcher” can and should exercise it. Rather, this discussion has suggested that a more meaningful understanding is provided by considering that people make sense of any experience(s) through the social construction of subjective realities. (Berger and Luckmann,1971) As subjective constructors of meaning, people develop such meaning endlessly. The tape recording would not offer “truth” or a veracious



account. It would be prone to individual constructivist interpretation. Furthermore, it is important to consider that, reflexively, recording interviews may affect what a participant is prepared to say to the researcher and how the researcher undertakes the relationship.

Because of the above-mentioned points in tape-recording the key method of recording ideas was written notes. Observations, comments and thoughts were put down in writing as soon after the event as was possible. This was not because I was in pursuit of some “truth” or that I might forget some “facts”. Personally, I felt I wanted to write while my experiences seemed fresh and alive. Sometimes, writing would be a matter of minutes during a break, sometimes towards the end of the day if the group or I had been particularly hectic with various tasks and activities. On these latter occasions they would be written in my room. These occasions were in a calm, peaceful and soothing environment with beautiful views, low lights (in addition to a desk lamp) and pleasant decor. I frequently considered how the creation of notes (in such an environment) concerning my experiences with the other people on the programme emerged as a consequence. When I wrote notes in the seminar rooms, often with other group members present, the writing would be piecemeal and rapid. Other events would be taking place around me or I would be fearful that someone might lean over and see what I was writing at that particular moment.

The notes were written chronologically. A set of notes, or fresh sheets, would be started for a new task or activity. In this way some notion of the episodic narrative pattern (discussed above) is apparent. This took place shortly after they had occurred. During review sessions or planning sessions of programmes it would be normal for participants to be writing various notes and details about the programme tasks to be accomplished or undertaken. Thus, it was easier for me to record additional notes at these times even though the notes were on the events taking place around me rather than on the direct tasks.



The discussions and the accounts I wrote subsequently were used, initially, to reflect on what had evolved, as experienced by me as participant, and, secondly, how did other people seem to be “making sense” of their experiences.

“It is important to relate the events with sentiments or attitudes. If we do not, we are left with a picture of sentiments floating in the air with no connection to personal experience.....Even when two [participants] give us what initially seem highly contradictory accounts of events and relationships, by concentrating on the pattern of interactions in the events, we are able to resolve most of the apparent contradictions.”(Foote-Whyte, 1984:120)

However, although the initial lines of the work are interesting, Foote-Whyte seems to overlook the idea that there may be no desire or purpose to “resolve” anything in this way. Individuals do construct different views and perceptions. As a result of any discussion it was important to contextualise the person’s feelings concerning the issues or event undertaken. It has been suggested that it is important to consider a number of ideas in experiences. While these may suggest useful insights the representational nature also should be noted:

“(a) the current emotional state, such as anger, fear, anxiety or depression;  
(b) the values of the informant, that is, the feelings that may be presumed to underlie opinions, attitudes and behaviour;  
(c) the informant’s attitudes or sentiments, emotional reactions to the subjects under discussion  
(d) the informant’s opinions or cognitive formulation of ideas on a subject”.

(Foote-Whyte, 1994:121)

Alternatively, Brewer and Hunter (1989:104-105) offer categories as units of analysis: “Individual”, “attributes of individuals”, “actions and interactions”, “residues and artefacts of behaviour” (i.e. what is left behind after an individual’s actions physical and non-physical traces); “settings”, “incidents and space”,



“collectivities” (i.e. human behaviour *en masse*). More simply stated, Spradley suggests that participant observation revolves around three elements: “place”, “actors” and “activities”. Together these three elements form what may be described as the “social situation”.(Spradley, 1980:39-45) Equally, he points out that this pattern may be replicated to form “clusters of social situations”.(*ibid*:p.43) However, it is worth reiterating that all of these actions and processes involve a researcher reflexively relating to a given experience through processes of his or her social construction. It is quite possible that another researcher would feel that events other than those alleged by another researcher had “taken place”.

Given the reflections above, it can be seen how a narrative framework (Kohler-Riessman, 1993; Josselson and Lieblich, 1993) begins to provide an approach that may address many of these methodological issues and concerns. However, Foote-Whyte (*ibid*), Spradley (*ibid*) and Brewer and Hunter (*ibid*) seem to propose some process of cataloguing details and events. This may involve passages of dialogue interspersed with description. And, in this respect it can be seen how these approaches and a narrative approach have, in certain respects, similarities because they both lean on representationalist archi-typal forms and structures within, and with, which to construct and convey meaning. This was an issue discussed above.

Repertory Grids based on personal construct theory (Kelly, 1955) were also considered for the work. In a grid, meaning is a negotiated consequence of social interaction and dialogue. This may be described as “socially recognised construction adopted through a linguistic domain.”(Gammack and Stephens, 1994:74) The process, very briefly related, involves asking someone (through a particular assisted process) to create their holistic impression of a situation or issue. There are two important issues relating to the application of repertory grids and these are particularly pertinent to the current research. The first is that they can be time-consuming to perform. Secondly, they can appear unusual the first time a participant undertakes the exercise. This may make the participant cautious and defensive. In the ebb and flow of the participant-observer role,



carrying out repertory grids would be very difficult. It would probably have affected the other participants' perceptions of the researcher. In other words, an attempt to use this approach would risk jeopardising the overall study. Nevertheless, Kelly's Basic Theory (Kelly, 1963) and the corollaries he develops underpinning personal constructs, may well have useful insights with regard to the development of the thesis with regard to the processes of social construction and their role in the narrative building process.

#### **6.7.4 "Vigour" and "Rigour".**

Researchers and commentators espousing, explicitly or implicitly, a positivistic methodological approach see the processes of triangulation as useful not to say essential. This thesis sees the notions underpinning triangulation, *per se*, as highly problematic and somewhat irrelevant to its discussion however in the context of a highly positivistic OMD literature, and all the tenets of the doctoral process, it will be useful to consider why. Triangulation in methodologies involves the use of two or more "data collection" and "analysis" techniques. This allegedly enables the observations to be "backed-up" and "cross-validated" so that the conclusions are supported from a number of methods.

Because of the charges of subjectivity levelled by some commentators at qualitative and interpretive approaches, *triangulation* is often considered important. (Denzin, 1978) A range of well-known writers support this type of statement. Foote-Whyte (1984) considers that triangulation contributes to "verifying" and "checking" (the oxymoron) "qualitative data". When undertaking a qualitative study Waddington (1994) notes that there is a temptation, if not a pressure in some instances, to "corroborate" qualitative accounts with quantitative techniques.

Relating such viewpoints to the arguments and discussions in the earlier chapters a number of pertinent points emerge. Given the modernistic and positivistic



hegemony in OMD commentary it can be seen readily that the preoccupation with a search for “irrefutable” and “valid data” with which to confirm “effectiveness” in managerial and organizational contexts views triangulation as a useful concept in relation to such a project. In OMD and some of the related literature on management development a large number of writers expressly advocate triangulation or derivations of its tenets. (Layder (1993) suggests “maps” of elements and methods; Brewer and Hunter (1989) advocate a similar approach). On the other hand, stories and narrative accounts do not worry themselves with such concerns. Issues surrounding conceptualisations of objectivity and subjectivity raised initially in Chapter One are crucial to this debate. Where social constructs emerging from social interaction of individuals through language are valued, the “usefulness” and relevance of triangulation fades away. It can be argued that the “felt” need to triangulate results, especially qualitative results is, in effect, a positivistic preoccupation. If the notion of uniquely “authentic” or “veracious” accounts becomes unsustainable then triangulation becomes more than redundant – it is quite irrelevant. The “value” of the accounts constructed and presented herein is concerned, alternatively, with ways individuals and groups of individuals make sense (Weick, 1995) of experiences. This will almost certainly emerge as processual and ongoing. (Watson, 1999b)

Van Maanan (1988) reminds us that qualitative methodologies are essentially “an array of interpretative techniques”. Qualitative approaches have their own challenges of which the development of reflexive awareness and sensitivities is a response. In field work there seems to be a value in describing the research setting: i.e. the physical and social setting. (Neuman, 1994:332) In an interpretive study it is interesting and useful to talk about notions of atmosphere. But, this in turn may be constructed and construed differently by different people at different moments. Thus, it is not a question of accurately describing what I see or feel in relation to a particular “setting”. It is more an account of perceptions in relation to which stories are constructed. Even if a video were to be used it could not be said that a particular viewer would “see” or interpret the images the same way as I would or had intended. Yes, indeed, he or she or they would see rocks, hills,



trees etc. but human experience in relation to these physicalities or realities and how they are constructed into lives may vary considerably.(Berger and Luckmann,1971; Hassard, 1993; Watson, 1999b) Incidentally, the extent of the insidious nature of positivistic thinking is illustrated when Neuman (*ibid*) suggests, asking the participants to record their personal views on the setting so that these may be triangulated with those of the researcher. Neuman (*ibid*) also states, however, that it is important to make explicit important values or beliefs of the researcher and the rational underpinning any judgements contained in the research. Cautiously, this has been attempted by the present research, within the adopted narrative approach, in the discussion above. It is hoped that some the insights of my “world” “presented” above will assist the reader in constructing their meanings in relation to the text.

In spite of the problems discussed above, some writers like Silverman (1993) continue to raise a number of concerns relating to questions over the “reliability” and “validity” of qualitative data. He postulates six “rules”: “Rule 1: Don’t mistake a critique for a reasoned alternative...Rule 2:Avoid treating the actors point of view as an explanation... Rule 3: Recognize the phenomenon that always escapes... Rule 4:Avoid choosing between all polar positions... Rule 5: Never appeal to a single element as an explanation... Rule 6:Understand the cultural forms through which truths are accepted.”(Silverman, *ibid*:pp.196-211) While extensive debate of the type entered into above is possible regarding such “rules” (and the positivism they do or not entertain), the argument throughout this thesis will, nevertheless, seek to be mindful of the inductive (but not the deductive) issues they raise.

In a similar (quasi-positivistic) stance other authors raise issues linked to notions of *reliability* and *plausibility*. Kirk and Miller (1986 cited in Flick (1998:222)) suggest three issues surrounding the matter of “reliability” in qualitative work. Firstly, there is *Quixotic reliability*. This involves considering the repeatability of the results employing a particular method. However, within the participant observation, narrative-building framework of the present research this seems problematic. It purports to objectivise situations so that they can be “revisited”.



Secondly, there is *Diachronic reliability* which engages questions relating to the “stability” of environments i.e. their propensity for change. However, this presupposes a highly representative posture in relation to contexts. Thirdly, is the matter of *Synchronic reliability* questioning whether by using different methods similar results can be obtained. Again, as with the previously mentioned two “parameters” this seems more theoretically possible rather than actually useful or meaningful. These ideas appear misconceived and highly problematic. Again, there is the implication that somehow a “measure” of objectivity or normalisation can be achieved. This central argument to this thesis of social construction contests and rejects the usefulness of such a notion. Nevertheless, such conjecture is replete in even the most contemporary methodological commentaries:

“The question of validity can be summarized as ‘a question of whether the researcher sees what he or she thinks he or she sees’ (Kirk and Miller, 1986, p.21). Basically, three errors may occur: to see a relation, a principle etc. where they are not correct.... to reject them where they are indeed correct.....; and finally to ask the wrong questions.”  
(Flick, 1998:29-30)

Flick does raise a useful question, nevertheless:

A basic problem in assessing the validity of qualitative research is how to specify the link between the relations that are studied and the version of them provided by the researcher.”(Flick, *ibid*:pp.226-225)

It is contended herein that a socially constructed account assists in replying to Flick’s concerns. Other writers cast powerful doubts and remarks over the whole debate surrounding “reliability”, “validity” etc.:

“Mishler (1990) goes one step further in reformulating the concept of validity. He starts from the process of validating (instead of from the *state of validity*) and defines ‘*validation as the social construction of*



*knowledge*' (1990, p.417), by which we 'evaluate the "trustworthiness" or reported observations, interpretations and generalizations' (1990, p.419). Finally, 'Reformulating validation as the *social discourse* through which *trustworthiness is established elides such familiar shibboleths as reliability, falsifiability, and objectivity*' (1990, p.420) As an empirical basis for this discourse and the construction of credibility, Mishler discusses the *use of examples from narrative studies.*'(Flick, *ibid*:p.227)[Emphasis added]

Mishler's ideas, as reported by Flick have resonance and relevance for the current argument. Indeed, there may be scope to argue that in many respects, certainly within positivist studies in OMD, that a process of "selective plausibilization" (information is socially constructed to reply adequately to our mind-set, needs and questions) is just as likely to take place as in qualitative studies. It is not a question of conniving to manipulate accounts. It is socially constructed in a given fashion and in a processual and emergent context. And this, as Mishler proposes, ultimately makes a nonsense of any notion of "reliability" and "viability".

## **6.8 Making Sense and Presenting Ideas.**

In the argument thus far it was suggested that there has been an over-readiness, in certain quarters, "to explain" phenomenon in OMD and management development in rhetorical or superficial ways and terms. Above all, there has been predominantly one mode of "explanation", namely the positivist corporate effectiveness paradigm couched in modernistic and representationalist "umbrellas". Illustrative of such approaches are remarks like:

"All explanations are attempts to explain away impediments of some kind. They are efforts to derive puzzles, mysteries and blockages of their force and hence existence."(Brown (1963:41) in Brewer and Hunter, (1989)).



In contrast, it is felt that a number of insights will emerge from the current research. However, it is also an intention to avoid some of the pitfalls experienced in earlier studies. This alludes to the deeply seated positivism that pervades many of the narrative accounts in OMD. This study seeks to heighten reflexivity and awareness in writing narrative accounts.

The principal approach the field research resembled was ethnographic in terms of experiences of situations and patterns of behaviour. In this sense the study was inductive (sense making rather than sense taking) and not deductive (i.e. not seeking evidence to support a purported logic or cause-effect relationship). During the passage of the research it was not the intention of the research to move towards a positivistic model and begin to prejudge what type of experiences might emerge. The emerging and unfolding accounts have taken place through a process of reflection over the rich body of experiences that were undertaken in the field environment and elsewhere in my life. In this respect it should be noted that (Neuman, 1994:323) comments: “... interpretation means the assignment of significance or significant meaning”. It is important to be careful here because he is on the cusp of inadvertently slipping from one paradigm to another. Weick (1995) is also keen to alert researchers to this point:

“...sensemaking is about ways people generate what they interpret...The act of interpreting implies that something is there, a text in the world, waiting to be discovered or approximated... Sensemaking precedes interpretation.”(Weick, 1995:13-14)

With this in mind, Glaser and Strauss (1967:3) draw attention to the point that the issue is not about a choice between these two broad approaches (quantitative and qualitative) but rather how the adopted approach is used and how, reflexively, meaning is generated. These invocations lead to a number of “post fieldwork” options. Miller and Crabtree (1992) recommend four main approaches. Although, many of these are related to transcription they potentially have a broader value. The approaches are:



- quasi-statistical (quantifying replies);
- editing (“cutting and pasting” conversations to construct meaning);
- template (the creation of a code-book from conversations);
- immersion crystallisation (intuitive emergence of themes due to extensive exposure to the material).

If a choice has to be made here then the current research has affinity with the latter method of immersion crystallisation. This is in keeping with the inductive nature of the study. In a qualitative study, reflection will often take place through “first order study” (Neuman, 1994:323) which involves a *prima facie* examination of the behaviour of research participants in their given social setting. The research will then undertake a “second order study”. In this stage the researcher attempts to understand and attribute meaning to the behaviour and the events. In all cases, it is the researcher’s view or construction of “the world” in which the participants are carrying out their actions, although it may contain quoted comments from participants.

It has already been stated above, but it is perhaps important to reiterate, that by adopting the field-study approach the linkages between ideas, concepts and experiences will occur in a number of respects. These may well emerge “in the heat” of the fieldwork. Indeed, Bryman and Burgess (1994:216) confirm that understanding the research is not necessarily a distinct phase in any research project, it is more likely to be effected as a continuous process. Moreover, Morse (1994) proffers a strong caveat regarding being overly passive in teasing out meaning from research materials. Some aspects of those ideas are:

“Doing qualitative research is not a passive endeavour. Theory does not magically emerge... [it] is a process that requires astute questioning, a relentless search... , active observation.... making the invisible obvious, of recognising the significant from the insignificant... and of attributing consequences to antecedents. It is a process of conjecture... of suggestion and defence. It is the creative process of organising...”(Morse, 1994:25)



The presentation of work in relation to field research in this thesis is in the form of a series of narrative accounts. A substantial discussion was presented on this topic in the argument in an earlier chapter and further remarks, in relation to the methodology of the study, have been made above. In the narratives I have adopted the position of *narrator*. There are a number of reasons for this stance. Firstly, following the tenets of social construction theory it seemed impossible to be able to comment through anyone else's eyes except my own. At best, I as a researcher can only guess (and then possibly totally incorrectly) how a person perceives events and experiences. It appeared apparent that the "stories" or narratives would have to be my own accounts. It is because of this stance that, as part of the methodology section, I have provided a "personal narrative". Although it is accepted that this is a social construction in its own right it would be claimed that any account is the same. There is clearly no account "more right" or "valid" than another. Fineman and Gabriel offer a final *caveat* resonating social constructive processes at work: "Over-interpreting a story, like explaining a joke or dissecting a play can kill it; it is a sign of a good story that it will evoke different feelings and different meanings in each person."(Fineman and Gabriel, 1996:188)



## 6.9 “The Passage of Time”.

The overall timescale of the research has covered some five years. A table of the broad research programme is outlined below:

|                                   |   |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| <b>September 1994</b>             | Registration - Department of Management Studies, Brunel University.   |
| <b>September 1994 - June 1995</b> | First year modules successfully completed<br>Initial draft of literature review<br>Generation of thesis ideas and themes<br>Initial proposal drafted  |
| <b>June 1995</b>                  | Progress Review at Brunel University  |
| <b>September 1995-June 1996</b>   | Research modules successfully completed<br>Literature review reworked/ Identification of research questions<br>Proposal for pilot field-studies<br>Attendance at Institute of Personnel and Development/HRM Conference – Wembley<br>- establishing contacts for further discussions<br>Pilot field studies undertaken<br>Major week-long fieldwork programme in July 1996 |
| <b>July 1996</b>                  | Review Document (approx. 200 pages) generated and Progress<br>Review at Brunel University   |



**August 1996 - September 1997**

Continued literature search -existing areas

Exploration/ examination of related literature areas to the research - “learning” literature, aspects of Psychology/ sociology (narrative), Critical Perspectives

Maintaining access/contacts

Ongoing analysis of research materials

Major week-long fieldwork programme in July 1997

**(July 1997)**

Review Document (approx. 320 pages) generated and Progress Review at Brunel University

**September 1997 - August 1998**

Commencement of write up of initial drafts of thesis document based on draft produced in July 1997

Maintenance of field contacts

Continued monitoring, review and consideration of fresh literature

**(August 1998)**

Annual Brunel University review

**September 1998 - December 1998** Submission of modified drafts and final submission.

**January-March 1999** - Final reworking of draft prior to submission

**April 1999** – Submission of thesis to Brunel University



## 6.10 Access Issues.

For the study, issues surrounding access needed to be considered with regard to the way in which OMD organizations may operate and to the way individuals within such organizations perceive them. Moreover, the “levels” through which contact needed to be made varied according to the organization. As indicated above these can vary substantially. For example, an organization employing a number of people (5 - 20 many on short-term/part-time contract basis) would frequently consist of one to three founding members, who in turn have a small administrative backup (for example, a secretary). They tend to engage a substantial number of sub-contract staff depending on the client work being undertaken. These organizations often possess a base or office, however, alternatively they may rent facilities where client programmes were based. Some individuals operate organizations based on regularly available hired facilities. In turn, this creates a notion of socially constructed “virtual” OMD organizations.

Alternatively, the rest of the industry may be considered to fall into the “large” type of operation. In this instance, the organization is often based in a centre or complex at which the programme will be held. Accommodation may occasionally be located away from the centre and delegates will be transported to it from the hotel etc. each morning. There will be a permanent training staff at the site. This group could number between 10 and 100 individuals in many circumstances. There is usually a dedicated administrative, commercial or business development office.

The potential representational issues surrounding the above organizational typologies are acknowledged. However, as institutionalised, and objectified externalisations they are socially constructed in the sense that many people would recognise and associate with them. In this such structures are internalized to such individuals. The above two outlines are useful in discussing a number of issues relating to the methodology, but especially, when gaining access to the field-site. In the “small/medium” organizations, permission to enter the identified research site is wholly dependent on one or, exceptionally, two of the



owners/founder members. This contrasts with the larger units where initial contact is frequently made with a key member in the administrative support group. This person may have the authority to grant access to the site for research purposes however, often, they will relay the request to a member of the directorate or senior management grouping. In turn, the conversation may then be conducted directly with that director or the messages may be relayed through the administrative unit. Of the two organizational styles, the small/medium OMD organization is clearly a more direct communication environment and it is relatively easy to determine the mood of the reception to the research request. In the case of the larger organization, there can be a process of translation through the intermediary of the administrative unit. In these instances, written correspondence is vital to ensure that the messages remain clear. A difficulty here is that relationships built through correspondence perhaps risk remaining at a more formal level than may be valuable or useful for the research. For this reason, interviews need to be secured quickly with the appropriate person following initial contact.

Contacts with the OMD organizations took place in a number of ways. Sometimes, a telephone call was made and the appropriate decision-maker was located via discussion with the reception. On occasion, reception would determine who should be the person to deal with the enquiry. The suggested person might have been suitable or not. Where the recommended person was not a key decision-maker (or an important contributory decision-maker) with regard to allowing researchers on-site, generally there was an attempt, through careful discussion to refocus the enquiry to the person they considered to be the one responsible for taking the final decision. Where it was not possible to speak directly with a key decision-maker, an effective next step was to suggest writing a letter bearing the University College letter-headed paper directly to the person with a copy to the intermediary person. Although perhaps a relatively simplistic device, the letter-head has the institutionalized impact of “establishing credentials”. Moreover, it is important to respect all these contacts as valuable and important. As Foote-Whyte (1984) notes they are all “gatekeepers” and they



can re-emerge to exert their level of authority, or even influence higher levels of authority, at any point in the research.

It was mentioned above that the normal pattern of approach for access to research sites was a telephone call followed by a letter. The approach of sending a “cold” unexpected letter was avoided. Requests presented in this way seem to be at higher risk of being treated as circulars or junk mail. Even though the potential benefits of the research for a given organization may be stated clearly in the letter it does not build a relationship and the trust that is required for the research to be carried out effectively.

Attending conferences is a useful way of establishing contacts rapidly. For the present research this was been done with considerable success in terms of access. The Institute of Personnel Development HRD Conference at Wembley allowed some ten useful contacts to be made with OMD providers. Conferences are good places to talk since this is largely what exhibitors have come to do. Although exhibitors are primarily on stands to gain new business and meet existing clients, the fact that they are away from their everyday operational context means that they are more open to exploring new collaborative agreements across a wide spectrum, including, for example, researchers. Some of the above reflections are supported by other researchers in the domain. Burletson and Grint emphasise in some of their work on OMD:

“The programmes studied were not random choices [unlike the present study they employ a hypothesis-experimental methodology] but the result of *several personal introductions and much negotiation*”.(Burletson and Grint, 1996:190)[Emphasis added]

Most organizations have concerns that revolve around the protection of the customer business base. Although, the relationship between OMD providers and a given client company is often trusting, OMD companies are still very cautious to avoid losing customers to competitors. Some providers feel that the presence of a researcher may in some way endanger this relationship. This concern is



usually overcome in part by guaranteeing absolute confidentiality. Beyond this there is little else the researcher can do. The key sanction for infringement of confidentiality resides with the OMD organization which can terminate the research relationship at any point. One, *de facto*, safety measure exists in the fact that the OMD community is relatively small and many managers and owners often tend to know each other. An indiscreet remark would be quite likely to find its way back to the relevant party. Development centres know this and also feel comfortable that the sanction to terminate research at the site is a strong deterrent for the indiscreet researcher.

Once access to the site for research was granted, the next levels of access needed to be negotiated and ensured. This would normally involve relating to the staff, at the given centre, who would be delivering and facilitating the development programmes. Agar (1980 cited in Flick, 1998) raises the issue of “Strangeness and Familiarity”. He categorises the experience of entering an organization as being one of four representations: “Stranger”, “Visitor”, “Initiate” or “Insider”. The “Stranger” may be seen as a form of starting position completely fresh to the organization. The “Visitor” is more akin to a “planned” Stranger. The transition from these two states to those of “Initiate” or “Insider” forcibly mean the giving up of the former.

In most circumstances the development staff’s relationship with the centre management would be expected to be stronger than the researcher’s. After all, although the research relationship may be planned to last a long time, maybe a number of years, it is ultimately of a temporary nature limited by the duration of the research project. For this reason it is important that the researcher maintains a good relationship with the staff at the centre. This is potentially a difficult task since the trainer will feel that they too are under some form of scrutiny. For this reason it was important to follow approaches in the field that minimised the emergence of this potentially perceived threat. These might include not admitting that you are aware of a model, theory or particular knowledge so that the trainer/facilitator could feel more secure as being “in control” of the development environment. Clearly, issues of power arise here. Equally, in the role of



participant observer, one point that emerged from the pilot studies was the danger of over-theorising in a manner considered “over-academic”. Again, this seems to shift the sphere of control away from the facilitator. Within all of this, parallels may be identified with the “parent-child” structure of transactional analysis.

A number of firms are cautious about allowing researchers on site for a further reason. Their presence presented a particularly important potential barrier in the case of the present research. As already stated, during the current study preliminary access discussions took place with a number of providers. A prime concern was that competitors may gain confidential information, or that less sensitive but nevertheless insightful information, might be passed over. As noted above, only the foolish and imprudent researcher would do this.

All the above concerns having been expressed, there was a more positive selling point to be made in the process of gaining access. The conduct of research on an OMD company’s programmes, whilst a potential cause for concerns and anxiety, nevertheless at the same time may be considered by the management group or owner as adding kudos to their product. In this respect, research is often perceived as a prestige activity to have on-site for some companies. This point is perhaps less valid in the “larger” and more “well known” organizations. These centres do receive a large number of requests by researchers and, as such, there is little novelty value in agreeing to them. Thus, the research request often needs to be seen as being of value, in some form, to the organization. Suggesting that the research might assist their work in some way was often an inducement that excited organizational gatekeepers.



## 6.11 Some Comments on Ethics and Politics in the Research.

The employment of a “complete participant” (Junker, 1960) approach raises a number of ethical issues. If the research is to be carried out through this method then there are questions concerning the extent to which other participants on the programme are aware that they are being observed. In other words, should the presence of a researcher be disclosed, partially disclosed or made apparent and clear. There feels something innately unethical, due to the lack of candour, about a researcher operating in a covert manner with the participant observer role. Josselson and Lieblich (1996:xi) question: “What are the ethics we can hold to in order to morally defend our work?”.

Many of the initial access negotiations involved me stating that I would like to establish a long-term relationship with the OMD providing organization. This was absolutely truthful. In designing and carrying out the research it was felt that this was also a necessary “sales-pitch” used in order to gain access and place organizations more at ease. For most organizations, it is perhaps more comforting to hear that the person with whom they are dealing is not “yet another itinerant researcher” - a “here today, gone tomorrow” inconvenience. Indeed, in this respect McLoughlin (1980) in his paper “Confessions of an Apprentice ‘Red Indian’ - doing postgraduate research in industry” employs the image of the research-targeted organization drawing its metaphorical wagons in a circle against the assailing researchers. The implication is that the researcher should be a conscientious person, with a co-operative and collaborative nature who will contribute to the development of the organization. In this respect, it is important to state that it is my genuine intention to continue research and activities in the field even when the doctoral process is completed.

The personal experience of the participant should be borne in mind, especially when operating in a participant-observer mode. There are responsibilities towards the participant: “[These people...] are human beings with problems, concerns and interests.”(Spradley, 1980:20). Should participants be informed about the actual nature of the work? But how realistic are certain statements?:



“In research, a paramount responsibility [of the researcher] is to those he studies. When there is a conflict of interest, the individuals must come first. The researcher must do everything within his power to protect their physical, social and psychological welfare and to honour their dignity and privacy”.(Spradley, 1980:21)

If the research role of a participant-observer is not indicated at all there are very likely to be problems if this is discovered at a later date.(Lipson, 1994:345) There is always a very real danger that the researcher’s credibility will collapse. This may, in turn, stop the research in mid-process, disrupt or undermine the course, and upset the client - OMD provider relationship. Evidently, there should be an interest on the part of the researcher to protect the participant from any potentially adverse effects of the research. This has been underlined in several respects above, for example, in the creation and use of a range of pseudonyms. However, there are also the realities of operational situations which are not always simple or the ideal.(Waddington, 1994:116) Equally, the participant is not a passive dummy-like object to whom things are done or whose voice can be appropriated. He or she has a responsibility to play a role and engage in the process in his or her own right. The stories that emerge from the work underline this very well. No one person can feasibly or should be entirely responsible in every respect for everyone else’s experience on the programme. This includes the facilitator and researcher alike.

In summary, the preceding chapter has outlined a proposal for research into OMD and management development. It has laid out the methodological processes underpinning the proposed research and contextualised these against the range of approaches available. Above all, it must be borne in mind that: “You can plot and plan all you like but you must also be contingent and flexible.”(Foot-Whyte, 1984:35) Seeking to retain a consistently personal ethical stance within the above suggested flexibility seems to go some way to reinvigorating the spirit of the relationship rather than to construct it just as a matter of expediency.



## **CHAPTER SEVEN: Stories.**

### **7.1 Chapter Seven: Overview.**

The Chapter discusses three groups of narrative that emerged from a number of OMD programme experiences. These are considered as socially constructed accounts. They are, above all, my social constructions developed through interacting (“talking” and “doing”) with other people in various OMD contexts. The first collection offers three stories; the second set presents two narratives and the final group considers three more. Each story is accompanied by a reflection on the narrative in which consequent ideas are related to the commentary and discussion in the preceding Chapters.

### **7.2 “Thoughts About the Journey So Far and Next Steps.”**

The initial chapters of the thesis debated a range of literature on management development. A number of themes and patterns were discussed within those epistemologies. The journey embarked upon illustrated the presence of a predominant corporate paradigm with regard to the way in which much of managing experience had been conceptualised and contextualised. In response to this (or in parallel depending on the perspective adopted) a range of alternative perceptions were introduced and discussed. These concerned critical perspective, postmodernist thinking. This facilitated a consideration of how experience of management (or indeed any experience) is socially constructed. In turn, this highlighted the role of, or gave vent to, for example, ideas of emotion, creativity and spirituality.

Relating these images to the OMD literature, the extent to which the hegemony of one particular corporate imperative (embodied in a optimised performativity paradigm) had been adopted and templated over writings and practice in the area became apparent. However, people *have* told and wrote stories about OMD



experiences. Nevertheless, on frequent occasions, narrative accounts have been derided by some commentators as “anecdotal”, or “lacking rigour”. Interestingly and, indeed, paradoxically, in the face of such accusations many of the existing narrative accounts in OMD writing “look” positivistic in many respects. It was argued that the above mentioned corporate imperatives and hegemonies continued to pervade the narratives. For example, the “happy ending” phenomenon (associated with benefits for corporate effectiveness and performance) was discussed as one such effect. Thus, for me the realisation dawned that this sort of “packaging” was inherently problematic and very much at odds with my own experiences and the apparent experiences of others on courses in which I had participated. There seemed scope for “emergent”, “processual” and “ongoing” (Watson, 1999b:17-21) stories, critical incidents, “events” interactively agreed as “events”, experiences and gossip as accounts of OMD. Narratives evolving iteratively to illustrate that together in some extraordinary amalgam they might have something very fresh and vivid to say about OMD. These appeared to contrast starkly with some of the more dry and sterile representations that commonly pass for OMD commentary. There was also an opportunity to reconsider the representations (for example the modernistic meta-narratives (Lyotard, 1984) concerning novelty and the outdoors etc.) that had been postulated under the “Downstream”(Latour, 1987) atmosphere that has dominated thinking in the area.

As stated in the methodology, the stories, narratives and experiences were created as a consequence of participant-observer situations and contexts. As an influence on the social constructive processes giving rise to the stories it is important to reiterate that to other participants or team members I was someone *just* attending the given course or programme. They were aware that I was a senior lecturer in the university sector and that I was generally interested in OMD programmes and their role in developing management. However, they were not aware (as far as I am aware!) that doctoral research was my primary purpose for being in their presence. The implications of this dynamic have been discussed already in the preceding Methodology Chapter.



The approaches to writing the narratives relate to ideas in the work of Fineman and Gabriel (1996) in their story work *Experiencing Organisations*. Other very important influences include the work on narratives of Josselson and Lieblich (1993, 1994, 1995, 1996), Kohler-Riessman (1993), Curt (1994) and Watson (1999a,b). These influences will be invoked and discussed at appropriate points in the argument.

A number of stories follow. Forcibly, because of the issues outlined in the methodology, these are *my personal narratives*. Nevertheless, the meanings and significance emergent from these were socially constructed in ongoing and changing relationships with all the other people with whom I interacted during the fieldwork. Sometimes views of experiences seem shared and other times they do not. Reflexively, I have discussed (above) issues concerning the “soundtrack” (McLoughlin, 1998: *foreword*) of my life intertwined in a continuing way with the sense-making (Weick, 1995) emerging from fieldwork experiences. In a related manner, this Chapter considers written accounts generated by the participants about each other as a deliberate part of the given OMD programmes. Overall, the intention is not to build up a richer and richer picture to achieve some notional state of “completeness”. Rather, the wish is to portray the ideas and experiences as perceptual, socially constructed and above all never “finished”. Nevertheless, all the narratives are, to some extent, what Flick (1998:106), discussed above, would term “episodic narratives”. The express idea is not to emulate a form of fiction “in instalments”. But, a consideration of the blurring of certain notions of fact and fiction are definitely within the gamut of the project. It is hoped, among other things, that the narratives provide a workable form that will respond to Knights and Willmott’s (1995) concerns over “bloodless” accounts of management experience.



### 7.3 Stories: “Trying Times”.

The first three stories are: “Arriving at the Centre and Meeting the Group and the Facilitator”; “The Rowing Boat Clue Trail”; and “The Planned Mountain Walk”.

The entries made in the group generated end-of-programme report made the following comments regarding the team members. These were edited thoughts generated by the wishes of the person concerned but occasionally modified by comment from a fellow team member. They were written conscious of the fact that, once back at work, fellow managers (who may have also attended the programme previously) might ask to look at their report.

Tom: Thoughtful and aware of others. Independent with stamina, commitment and determination.

Clive: Quietly confident and very sociable. A natural leader with a strong intellect plus the ability to listen, advise and provide support, in a sincere level-headed and ethical manner.

Annette: Strong convictions and hard working. Once committed her approach is clear, concise and energetic.

George: Was viewed as a sensitive observer displaying a calming influence as required. An open, ethical and sincere style, was seen as a “nice bloke”.

Harry: Viewed as energetic, motivating and inspirational. Humorous and sociable with the ability to persuade and organise.

Mandy: Displaying a quiet assertiveness, Mandy was both dynamic and confident. The “have a go” mentality was complemented by consistency, goodness and a no fuss approach.

Peter(me): Hardworking, humorous and dependable. Seen as strong and broad shouldered with a breadth of accumulated knowledge.”

These reflections were tinged with a collection of “Memorable Quotes and Moments”:

Peter - “Check the kit [... again]”.

Harry - “Manic”, “Mega”.



George - "Mandy... this room will be the quietest one tonight!"

Everyone - "Where's Tom?"

George - "Where's the safety launch?"

Jane - "So what do *you* think?"

Peter - "Is that a noun or a verb?"

Harry - "Let's do lunch!"

A sensitive [and diplomatic] instructor - "He's got no hair!"

These summative comments from the course are interesting because they allude to the relationships being constructed through social interaction. The first set of statements provides "serious" reflections arrived at through conversation (between the person concerned and the team). The course participants/group members suggested additional meanings as part of this ongoing process. *Prima facie*, to a non-group member (hence uninvolved in their immediate construction) the remarks may seem relatively detached and innocuous.

The second set of statements employs humour. This seems to permit "half joking, whole earnest" and an alternative message to be suggested or implied. Humour seems to allow things to be said (often for reasons of conflict) that might otherwise be difficult to say. (Putnam and Mumby, 1993:46) The fact that there are no comments entered from Annette and Tom is potentially significant of the difficulties they experienced in relation to the rest of the team.

As such, the statements also show, in some part, how people seek to create, or socially construct, identities for themselves and other people - each party having a wish to see a particular identity portrayed.



## **7.4 Narrative Accounts.**

### **7.4.1 Arriving at the Centre and Meeting the Group and the Facilitator.**

I drove up the driveway. The battle-worn but reliable University College Astra I had taken for the journey, logo emblazoned on the side, rounded the corner and approached the front of the main house. It was an imposing mansion situated to command a beautiful view of the surrounding countryside. Strikingly an array of corporate cars - top of the line models sporting new registrations - nestled up against the walls of the south facade indicating that many of my forthcoming companions and group members had already arrived. Passing via reception, located in the main vestibule, I was shown into a Baroque-decorated morning room off to one side. At the far end of the room, a group of people shuffled around a table on which were pots of coffee, tea and digestive biscuits.

There was not much chance to talk before the door opened. A dark-haired woman (“thirty-something” commented Clive later), wearing training bottoms, trainers and an outdoor synthetic fleece top, entered. She asked everyone to gather cushioned low-level chairs into a circle and sit down. The woman introduced herself as Jane and announced that she would be the course facilitator for the week. In these first few moments people were cautious as to what would happen next. Her diction was very precise as if she was considering every word before releasing it from her mouth. She spoke slowly and quietly. “This person is speaking as if she is counselling us”, I thought. Frequently she would complete a sentence and there would be a silence as no-one would move forward to fill the vacuum. After a few moments she would let out a gentle and sliding “okay....”.

Then she produced the juggling balls. She picked one up and explained that we would receive the ball and we would say our name and one thing about ourselves. She asked for a volunteer to take the ball first. Someone volunteered to get things moving and tossed the ball to another group member. Each person revealed information like his or her job description or what was happening on their desk at work just before they had left it. Others expressed concern half-



jokingly about the rumours they had heard from colleagues about the experiences and rigours to come. The facilitator made no reply at any point. Before my turn my mind raced as to what I would say. This was partly my first ethical research dilemma with the group. Would I relate a general interest in research into OMD for example? The desire to want to blend into the group and not to appear to be distinct from their possible experiences pushed to the fore. I restricted myself to giving my job title and the fact that I taught in a management centre at a university sector institution. When the round had been completed each person had provided similar job, organisation name type details. Only Annette openly voiced mild anxiety over what the week would hold and she mentioned that she hoped she would “survive”.

The “ball” activity complete, Jane mentioned a few perfunctory details regarding domestic arrangements and then outlined what the day would entail. We had already received outline programmes and her comments did not overly elaborate on these notes. The day would include a series of projects on the lawn involving managing and negotiating obstacles together. It was made clear that nobody would be forced to do anything he or she did not wish to do. Each member of the group would be able “to find their own level”. In a tone to engender co-operation she politely asked if we could meet at the equipment-issuing desk in fifteen minutes.

The group stood up and began to move slowly towards the door. I stayed back a little to listen to the things the group members might say. One or two quips and side remarks were made along the lines of “here we go then” together with humorous thoughts about dangling from ropes. But, superficially at least, these remarks did not appear to be made in earnest.



#### 7.4.2 Arriving at the Centre and Meeting the Group and the Facilitator - Reflective Discussion.

At this first encounter the role of impressions, particularly initial impressions was paramount. The corporate environment and trappings set into (and *against*?) the natural environment seemed to convey the stereotypical images of “executives come to play in the outdoors.” The property and its setting made the impression feel rounded, integral and comforting. Was this because it felt very “middle-class” (Cacioppe and Adamson, 1988:93) and I am more “middle-class” than I would wish to be “categorised”? At the same time it was to some extent intimidating. Was this some reaction to me situating myself on the lower side of that social class? If asked openly, I would perhaps say that I am not interested in class and see no use in it. But, how deeply embedded or imbued (“internalized” Berger and Luckmann, 1971), are such values and how are they invoked when a person is placed in a new environment and experiences (sic: becomes involved in fresh and emergent secondary socialisations (Berger and Luckmann, *ibid*))? I tend to be the sort of person who will subdue anxiety in such circumstances and will, occasionally employ *humour* to defuse or release the tension from situations. Overall, the outdoors were in evidence as a “backdrop” and they seemed to play the “scene-setting”(Livesey, 1982) role for the sense-making.(Weick, 1995)

I felt aware that certain group members might have preconceptions regarding academics (a problem more in my head than theirs?) From this initial meeting and in the early exercises I would say that I threw myself into the activities in a manner I thought fitting to the environment - as I and others had constructed the experiences up to that point.

What was particularly striking was the seeming anonymity of Jane, the facilitator. From her behaviour this seemed to be a deliberate approach. There was some sense that Jane, as facilitator, had power that we did not possess. We, the group, had surrendered a portion of our ability to direct events over the next seven days. This is a dimension commented on by Burtleson and Grint (1996). This creation of an atmosphere “facilitative or benevolent authoritarianism”



develops a powerful covert image. But, equally, it seems strange that so much of the literature has left facilitators as anonymous and the processes by which this occurs seem interesting. This account is a start in addressing this particular point. As further stories are discussed it will be developed.

The use of the balls seemed to break the mould and provide a palpable image that we were in a *different world now*. Although this was perhaps a “strange” activity for managers to be undertaking it can be seen how it might be classified in various ways by mainstream OMD commentators (for example “Low Impact” activities (as opposed to “High Impact”) by Wagner and Roland, 1992). People tossed the ball awkwardly rather than fluently. Nerves showed through and one person dropped it. It was funny but it was as if you could tell that this was one of the most important things that you definitely did not want to do. The person who dropped it seemed very embarrassed as if the simple act of dropping a ball somehow cast doubts on his reliability or ability in other respects. Impression, (Giacalone and Rosenfeld, 1991) particularly at this initial meeting, seemed very important. But, could it be analogous to possessing a good golfing handicap or maintaining a high position on the company squash ladder? As such these activities are not typically seen as part of managing but they can contribute to building narratives of perceived success.

The guarded manner in which the group members managed their language and behaviour was pronounced. It seemed like only certain constructions were sought. The script was already mutually understood at that moment and in that context. We were on a course, from which the reports that might be written about group members by facilitators, might be considered important for careers. This dimension of impression management for career progression is commented on by Feldman and Klich(1991: 67-80). There was also a sense of an “unknown”. An “unknown” of the type associated with stories of ex-SAS personnel suddenly appearing and arranging endurance tasks. This is perhaps an unavoidable aspect given the popular “stories” that circulate round these programmes.



It is useful to make some comments on the writing of the account. The story is written with no or very little dialogue. This was a deliberate decision. It illustrates simple issues of choice in constructing and presenting stories. What are the consequences of dialogue (“direct speech” in textual terms) in narrative? For example, there may be (ethical) issues concerning appropriating the voices of others. Nevertheless, it might be related to finding partial expression for Knights and Wilmott’s (1995) pleas for “full blooded” accounts of experience.



### 7.4.3 The Rowing Boat Clue Trail.

The weather that day had been miserable. Light drizzle and grey strata remained overhead. Personally, the idea of going out onto the lake in a boat for a number of hours (involving some of darkness) was not appealing. Were the other group members putting on a bravado act? To my mind some of them were making far too many positive noises to be considered rational. Was this just bravado or did some members in the group have particular reasons that were spurring them on?

At approximately six o'clock, after dinner (just when going to the pub seemed ideal), we all walked from the mansion down to a nearby boat-house. I was tired and the thought of rowing around a lake was not what I needed. At the start of each activity a person was requested to volunteer to lead the activity. This group member in turn allocated roles to various group members. My heart sank when Clive (who had been allocated the role of leader for this activity) nominated me as map-reader. I really did not want the responsibility for getting us lost in the dark on a lake and I was soon to realise how prophetic this would prove to be.

Other jobs needed to be shared out. Clive took the rudder and the rest of the team were to row. There were not enough places for everyone to row and so Mandy sat in the bow section near to me. It was at this point that a fateful decision was made. I was also given the walkie-talkie radio to operate. As the evening drew in this was going to create more problems than we realised at the outset.

By this stage of the course we had already been out in the large rowing boat once before. I sat on the grass plotting the points on the map while the rest of the group launched the boat and equipped themselves with waterproofs and lifejackets. Jane, the facilitator, would be with an outdoor pursuits instructor in a motor launch that was to act as a safety boat.

As we readied ourselves to set off it was clear that it was going to be a long row covering several miles. Clive, decided that it was best to make everyone aware that it was going to be physically hard and potentially daunting. This speech from



the “leader” made the atmosphere focused but not overly serious. Clive had the presence to sound very solid and comforting. The humorous quips kept flying from one end of the boat to the other. Naturally, most had a nautical dimension and I felt that there was a certain innocence in the boat. Several people, particularly Harry, Clive and George seemed, in a light-hearted way, to adopt various nautical personae: pirates, sea commanders, imperious captains.

“Yo ho ho and the flavour of rum” cried Harry.

Within the jokes it was possible to discern allusions to former “glories”. Indeed, Horatio Nelson was even mentioned, fleetingly, by name:

“Oye ‘Oratio Nelson at the back, is this the right way?’” shouted Annette.

I knew from experience just how tough rowing this distance on an open lake might be. This was even discounting it being in the rain and at night. I was very anxious about how things would go but I did not voice or show these concerns. I tend to worry a lot anyway.

Rowing out of the natural rock lined harbour onto the open lake we set off for “clue number one”. It was a date set into the front of a stone and slate boathouse. As we made our way to the building it was becoming apparent to me just how difficult identifying features on land from a boat can be. I am an able navigator in the mountains but this was a completely new experience (or was I being mentally lazy, uninspired by the role I had been allocated?).

Clue number one gathered, we rowed on to clue number two situated at a jetty. Again the idea was to locate and read the date on the front of a building. This was done and it was decided to take a break on the jetty and get out the coffee and biscuits that had been provided in a pack. The rest of the group did not seem overly tired. Nevertheless, George mentioned in a quiet way that he had a slight pain in his back. From what I had seen of George so far on the course this probably meant that he was in fact in a lot of pain. Other team members read this and asked if he wanted to take a break with Mandy, Clive or me. He declined. “No thanks, I’ll keep going for a bit” he said. In a selfish way I was happy he had declined. In physical terms, I had a very easy job and I was not sure how I would



have held up under the rowing. I felt very humbled by group members who were self-confessed “pen-pushers” and “couch potatoes” achieving such a formidable physical effort. I did wonder to what extent ignorance was still shielding a revolt.

I was becoming perplexed. The light was fading and the next task was to row straight across the lake to the other side, a distance of about a mile. There we would find an elegant boat-house concealing the next clue. As we got closer to the shoreline it was very difficult to determine to which boat-house we were meant to be heading. We had to go right up to the first boat house only to see that it was derelict and not the right one. I began to feel awkward about this and I could hear a confused and slightly irritated conversation taking place between Clive, Annette and Tom.

“Is this it then? Why have we come here then?”

This calmed somewhat as we entered the mouth of the little bay (gratefully) revealing the walls of the boathouse.

By now the light was grey and the visibility was bad. Having been in the gradually failing light non-stop staring at the waters of the lake made me think that by rubbing my eyes I would be able to see more clearly afterwards. Of course this was not the case. The light failing made the atmosphere serious and threatening. We all disembarked and had some coffee from a thermos flask during which time night fell completely and we got out our torches. The clue turned out to be a Latin motto on an emblem attached to the wall. While I noted down the necessary details I could sense the indifference to the task of a nucleus of people gathered around Clive. He approached me “how are we doing?”

It was a half-hearted interest expressed in the question. The drizzle, building wind and increasing dark were beginning to change the atmosphere of the group. This was no longer the relatively jolly group that had stopped at the jetty earlier. This was a group of people with varying concerns about what was to come.

“How much further now?” said Mandy tensely

I wondered just how much we were technically and physically out of our depth.



We reboarded the boat with some difficulty because the jetty walkway was quite high relative to the moored boat. It was getting dark as we pushed away from the jetty into the centre of the cove. The shoreline on our port side was now little better than shadows. On the far side of the lake the lights of a few houses were visible. The safety boat had not been seen for some time now.

Clive exclaimed “where the hell’s that safety boat?”.

Annette and Harry joined in “Yes, it’s not on, being out of sight in these conditions”.

Clive suggested radioing to confirm the boat’s location and to inform them that we were leaving the boathouse clue. As the team ploddingly rowed on the radio crackled with Jane’s voice. The message concerning her and the instructor’s location on the lake was virtually impossible to determine in the now worsening weather conditions. “Well, go on to the final two clues” she stated in a matter of fact way. This caused some derision in the boat - what else were we going to do if we wanted to get back home!

Peering at the map, through the plastic wallet in which it was covered, I could feel anxiety building up inside me. Large spots of rain obscured the detail of the map. The torch darted around and I forced myself to catch the detail of our course. The next point was located at the back of a very large bay. Spotting a small rock island, about ten metres in width, I thought this would help me to be more certain about our position along the lake shore and would help in deciding when we needed to turn to the port side and into the bay.

By chance, I casually lifted my head from the map.

“Roooooocks dead ahead, stop! stop!” I shouted out.

Up ahead were shadowy jagged shapes protruding from the water. We were about twenty metres from the shoreline and in front of us was what appeared to be a shelf of rocks jutting out into the lake. There was no indication on the map since these must have been considered submerged. Considerable unease was present in the boat. Anger was expressed by George.

His back aching from the long row he exclaimed “bloody hell!”.



We backed up awkwardly and rowed out more into the middle of the lake to avoid the shoreline and then resumed our course

I was finding my new, additional, role of “rock and obstacle” look-out very worrying. Apart from Clive who was sitting at the back with the rudder, I was the only person looking over the bow. Naturally the rowers had their backs to the direction of travel and were now very concerned that we would come to a sudden halt against rocks or something else. I was now “navigator”, “radio operator” and “chief look-out” and I was far from sure that I was accomplishing any of them very well. We rowed steadily ahead avoiding one more obstacle but I was beginning to feel completely lost in the dark.

“Clive, can we stop for a while I need to sort out our exact location” I shouted. Communication from the front to the back of the boat and vice-versa was not easy. Rain coming down, the noise of the oars and hoods up muffled everything.

“What?” Clive barked back.

Someone in the boat repeated my request and we came to a disorderly halt oars clattering and splashing. The rowers were very weary and I realised that what I had just said was not what they wanted to hear. I had held onto it for as long as possible but now I needed to “go public”.

“I’m not sure where we are, hang on!”, I repeated.

I studied the map but the apparent line of our journey could not be squeezed into any pattern on it. This was a very lonely time. The rain pitter-pattered off the hood of my waterproof as I cocooned myself over the water-blurred map. There was relative quiet in the boat, people buried in their own thoughts. Ahead was a rocky promontory about forty feet high. Trees were rustling somewhere on top of its skyline. In this void the radio crackled Jane’s voice into the boat.

“Hello, where are you?”

“I think we’re at the mouth of the bay”, I said in questioning tone.

“Are you sure?” she asked rhetorically.

“We’re not sure, no” I replied. I could feel Clive’s agitation focusing on my back.



“Flash a torch into the middle of the lake”, Jane’s matter of fact tone requested. I flashed the torch and a flash was returned from very far away across the lake. “Is that you?” Jane asked, some bewilderment in her voice as she requested confirmatory flashes. “I believe so” I said sardonically. After all who else was going to be on the lake at night in these conditions?

There were now many mutterings in the boat - not particularly at me but rather at the distance of the safety boat. The group did not appreciate how fast the boat might travel when at full speed but it did seem a long way off. How would the rescue team have heard us if we had had an accident or fallen in and needed help?

Jane informed us that we had overshot the bay containing the penultimate clue and that we were in fact sitting in the mouth of the home harbour where we had started out several hours earlier. We rowed into the cove and up to the boat-house.

The motor launch came in shortly afterwards and we set about the mauling task of pulling the large rowing boat into the boathouse and carefully putting the equipment away. The atmosphere in the boathouse was sombre and tense. People had “failed”. It did not seem to matter when Jane said that we had done better than a lot of previous groups. Personally, I felt I had messed the group around with my poor map reading in the latter stages of the journey. Harry suggested that we all go to the hotel bar in the nearby village for a warming drink. It was clear that this would be *more than* a drink. It would be an opportunity to reflect and pull ourselves together again in every respect. I said that I did not have transport to get back to the main house and Clive *insisted* he would run me back in his car.

Jane dropped us off at the hotel in the mini-bus. In the hotel bar we gathered round a small table. We looked bedraggled and drawn. We looked like the survivors from a combat or some natural disaster. This felt like a council of war. Jane had declined to come. All the group members made chastising comments



about the task set, the distance of the safety boat, and above all Jane's manner. Jane was considered "separate", "aloof" "inexperienced in the real world". I wondered whether she was being used as some form of scapegoat that would build a common cause between the group. I felt that I should carry the blame. Clive and George would not hear of it. What happened on the lake that night was to cause a rift between Jane and many of the group, at least in terms of a group identity against the facilitator, for the duration of the programme.



#### 7.4.4 The Rowing Boat Clue Trail - Reflective Discussion.

The manner in which many members of the group seemed enthusiastic at the beginning of the clue finding row was interesting. Was there an element of bravado here or was their desire to carry out the task genuine? Reading Van Zwieten's (1984:27) storied account (in an earlier chapter) of the executive purporting his impatience to "get moving up that [Seneca] Rock" some parallel seemed apparent. Or, what role did a certain naiveté play in the experience? Was the initial conceptualisation of the journey by some group members measured against a paddle around the botanic gardens boating pond or a harbour? By the end of it the group looked like they had been in a battle and had survived (physically at least). Bank's (1994) comment about OMD participants having the vacant stares of shell-shocked and battle-fatigued soldiers came to mind. It was not only the mental environment but the physical hardness of the experience. This was something that was a shock to the members of the group. Echoes of Clifford and Clifford (1967) advocating the benefits of a "vigorous experience" came to mind. In terms of Krouwel and Goodwill's (1994:35-51) typology of course "flavours" ("Endurance", "Outdoors" or "Development" discussed above) it could be said that this experience resided in the endurance-outdoor domain explicitly while unplanned (implicit) "developmental" learning was taking place. Alternatively, these experiences seem to fall into Peckham's (1993a) activity categories of "The Mountain Top Experience" and "Get Out of That". But, how meaningful might that be? These representational models do not allude to the experiences and the way people sought to make sense of them. They reinvolve the positivistic treatment of experience in relation to OMD.

Also, it was as if a rite-of-passage had taken place - a notion that "this *is* serious". Thus, for me and some of my fellow participants the task had great *novelty*. But, this was a notional representation of the experience. As Teire (1994) notes in his diary account of OMD, how many accounts were being constructed in our minds? How did the apparent facticity of the situation (the undeniable cold, being in a boat etc.) affect us? There seemed little discussion among us at the time. Were we developing similar understandings of our experiences? There was



considerable novelty of environment. I found managing the water navigation very difficult. The multiple role was equally difficult. I was handling a walkie-talkie with a particular operating procedure. Novelty is widely reported as an important aspect of OMD. (*inter alia*: Cole, 1983; Hogg, 1988; Irvine and Wilson, 1994) This novelty was linked to the unknown and that was intrinsically linked to some sense of fear and anxiety relating to a perception of the “reality” of the risk. This is a further experience reported in OMD accounts. (Crawford, 1988; Gall, 1987; Neffinger, 1990) What did the experience say about the role of risk? The risk felt “real” (to me), particularly when the rocks appeared out of the darkness. Taylor (1996a) is among authors who have raised issues of “real” risk regarding this style of activity. The group’s feelings about the positioning of the safety boat were equally interesting whether substantiated or not. Perceptions of the situation were key energies at play. A narrative based on emotions of fear and anger seemed to be constructed by people in the boat was adjusted afterwards in the pub. The story of the evening was negotiated and renegotiated in an ongoing manner.

Unquestionably, errors made were immediately apparent and could not be camouflaged or glossed over. This is a further (positivistically) claimed *benefit* of OMD. While in a managerialist context this may be deemed useful, I actually experienced it as confidence sapping and unhelpful. I would have liked to have been “negotiated” into the activity more by the “omnipotent” figure of the facilitator. What was perhaps more interesting is how influential members of the group rationalised errors into relevance in the discussions following the event. It was as if there was some notion of the imperative to protect the group, or at least a sub-set of the group. This was to become very apparent by the time we undertook the planned mountain walk later in the week.

Linked to *novelty*, mentioned above, was inevitably the issue of being outside and in the fresh air. The weather conditions and the lake in the dark played a creative role in generating atmosphere and people were interacting with that environment. What would have been the effect if we had been rowing in the daylight with a pleasant breeze and gentle sunshine? Would the experience have



*felt* so serious? There was an interesting juxtaposition of civilisation and wilderness as we cast off from the jetty and boat-house. We rowed warily into the wilderness of the lake. It seemed to contravene common sense but we were *following orders* and *playing out the game*. This was the written narrative set for us. What would it take for the group to reconstruct such positivistic “given” stories? How would processes of secondary socialisation (Berger and Luckman, 1971:157) begin to facilitate the renegotiation of relationships and construct relationships. How would this affect the power and the politics in relation to such constructive processes? Would it lead to revolt or rebellion in whole or in part? For example, by the final day of this week-long programme this had changed. Clive, George and Harry decided that they were not going to script and perform a show on a raft (that they would have to build in the middle of the lake). They could not see how it would contribute anything “useful” or meaningful to them. This mini-revolt seemed to be in marked contrast to the compliance of this earlier part of the programme. There was a sense that they were engaged in generating their own narratives and realities charged by antipathy towards the facilitator as much as the task set. The supplied written brief (or story) for the task seemed to become ever less important as the course progressed.

Invoking figures from history seems to show the power of nostalgia as both a force of humour and inspiration.(Gabriel (1993) in Fineman (1993:118-141) Although it seemed unlikely that many of the people in the boat had been through similar experiences to Horatio Nelson or Winston Churchill it was if the narratives that had been generated regarding these famous people had force in the contemporary era (in a similar vein to the illustrations of Peckham, 1993b:17; Bhogal, 1988:110-111 and Lowe, 1991:42 cited above). Hence, “we” (used with the concern expressed above by Carr, 1991:150) seemed to experience transformation of our *adventure*. Initially, the rowing evoked the notion of adventure and was fun and almost child-like (re-engaging with primary socialisation experiences (Berger and Luckmann,1971:149) and empathising with Long’s (1984, 1987) reflections on experiences “bordering on the silly”.) In the latter part of the journey “adventure” conjured up associations with hazard and survival (not normally part of everyday experiences?). In this respect it was



interesting the way the clues and the grid references provided the framework for a formal narrative of the planned journey intermingling with emergent stories of the socially constructed “adventure”.

Moreover, there also seemed to be issues of power emerging. Clive evolved clearly as the *leader*. His views seemed to command respect from a very early stage. I also saw the “corporate player” in Clive and I wondered how much of his “charisma” was a well-rehearsed presentation and impression construction.(Feldman and Klich,1991:67) At one of our first gatherings at the hotel bar, Clive and I had found ourselves standing outside looking over the lake towards the mountains. “Would you ever tell a lie” he slipped into the conversation. I tried to answer honestly that, surely we all lie or at least misconstrue, sometimes for what we believe are the best intentions or motives. Clive refuted this, declaring “I never lie”. I was dubious about this point but let it pass. Smircich and Morgan (1982:262), from a perspective of impression creation suggest something of possible insight into Clive’s “leader” behaviour:

“Leadership is understood as a process in which *individuals attempt to define reality for others by managing the meaning of events*. In general, this refers to interpreting situations ‘in such a way that individuals orient themselves to the achievement of desirable ends’”.[Emphasis added]

Clive seemed to get himself into something of a power wrangle, never particularly overtly, with Jane, the facilitator. At an early point in the programme, Clive tacitly declined the “oath of fidelity” (Gephart, 1996a:31) that would afford him protection from the adverse aspects of the power invested in the facilitator. On the lake she and the instructor had seemed like absentee guardian angels (with the power of the walkie-talkie to remind us of their presence in “another world”). The tone of her voice during the exercise told us that there was little *novelty* in the exercise for her. Her story was perceived as interwoven in “emotional labour”.(Fineman, 1993:18) She seemed to be going through the motions. Indeed, in a later discussion she did reveal that she had recently returned to the organization after a period away. She stated that there was no way



that she would ever again put so much into an organization that she could be hurt by *its* almost unconscious actions and lack of gratitude. Furthermore, it is curious to consider the extent to which certain members of the group bonded in reaction against Jane rather than anything positive that they mutually displayed for each other. Surely this was simple expediency in alliance? However, overall, this “battle” for leadership, or the moral ascendancy, between Clive and Jane had potent consequences. Senge (1994:9) reminds us (however controversially):

“‘The first responsibility of a leader’ writes retired Herman Miller CEO Max de Pree, ‘is to define reality’. Much of the leverage leaders can actually exert lies in helping people achieve more accurate, more insightful, and more empowering views of reality.”

On reflection, it may well be suggested that Clive and Jane were challenging each other to present images of “realities” as they desired them to be shaped and portrayed in the minds of others. Perhaps inevitably, this had consequences for the identities and roles imparted on the rest of the group. Perhaps unintended in the context interpreted here, Buller, Cragun and McEvoy (1991:61) commenting on OMD, suggest that “it is difficult to isolate the effects of training” (ironically they speak as positivists). In such instances as those outlined above it is especially difficult to imagine what consequences or developments may emerge. Equally (and somewhat inadvertently) Cacioppe and Adamson (1988:82) employ a model paralleling “group” versus “individual” and “physical” versus “emotional”. The experiences on this particular programme seemed to show that such neat packaging is hard to respect. A struggle for meaning and identities appeared to wrestle constantly between, and irrespective to, these arbitrary boundaries – it all felt more messy and blurred. Campbell (1990:219) was cited above as saying that the role of the facilitator is to assist in reflection. The implication is that this should be a valuable experience but alternative experiences suggest that this will not necessarily be the case. Positivistic “happy endings” are *de rigueur*.



It is interesting to consider how humour contributed to the construction of experiences in the early part of the journey for many of the group members but not so much in the latter hours of it. It seemed that humour had a role to play where the illusion could be maintained or constructed in a way that the situation was not, or did not feel, serious. Humour seemed empty and irrelevant at those points where the construction could not be sustained. Indeed, again, emotional labour, in the form of stoicism (particularly George's rowing) may be argued as playing a role. Did he feel obligated to carry on the task even though aspects of humour had apparently disintegrated?

The programmed review with Jane the following morning was tame and anodyne compared to the passion, anger, and expressed fear in the hotel bar immediately following the activity. This "informal" session saw the reward of double whiskies all round to warm us up and anaesthetise, in particular, the aching rowers. People were in full flow. There was an air of plotting and scheming. It felt like revolutionaries licking their wounds before the next fray. Hunched over the table, still in our wet kit it was obvious that for some group members there was going to be a "return match - echoes of Machiavellian manoeuvres (Burlington and Grint, 1996).

In summary, was this whole episode something of a dramatic "tragedy"? (White, 1973 cited in Kohler-Riessman, 1993:19) But, how helpful and meaningful are such archi-typal fictional normative representations? In seeking to portray in a generic way the totality of experiences, do they not attempt to objectify and normalise experiences? And, to what extent are such forms institutionalized (Berger and Luckmann, 1971:65) in a "British/Anglo-Saxon" series of constructions? Perhaps such forms are culpable of such charges. However, this does not negate that individuals use them to structure and understand their own constructions. Moreover, this is not of course to suggest that individuals will perceive or use them, *a priori*, in the same manner since each person will have their own developmental context to relate with.



The next story is a lengthy account that is interesting in a number of respects. In particular, it draws attention to the various tensions that can emerge for the researcher. It will be seen that the notion of the “objective” (a positivistic concept) is highly problematic and unhelpful in coping with the “lived experience” of research.



#### **7.4.5 The Planned Mountain Walk.**

The whole course had been “billed” as leading to this - the major project activity. By now we had run round orienteering courses as part of running a fictional business; used rope slides and traversed ropes courses and engaged in blindfolded leadership tasks and “trust” exercises on the lawns in front of the house. The Planned Mountain Walk involved our group planning our joint, desired “ideal day” in the mountains. So, sitting in the art workshop (that’s where we had just painted our team T-shirts with a rather militaristic design of a boot sole print bound by the tongue-in cheek words “Pain” and “Pleasure”, the centre name and year) we gathered around a map to examine the local terrain. We had the option of staying in a mountain hut in the evening and the group thought this would be great – “real adventure” but with a buffer of comfort.

Harry burst into the room via the side entrance, holding a map flapping in his slipstream.

“I’ve got it! I’ve got it - an excellent walk. It’s ‘mega’” he said finishing the sentence with one of his standard expressions.

With considerable enthusiasm he outlined what he believed to be the best plan. Gradually, we all agreed (or stopped disagreeing!) and that was that.

The next morning found us outside the equipment storeroom where we were issued with kit for the “expedition”. The group then allocated roles to pairs of team members. One couple attended a safety-equipment briefing (Mandy and I), another pair received map and compass briefing and so on. With the kit thrown into buses, the team set off in the rain to the start point of the walk. A long drive took us up onto the mountainside and we got out near a gate at the end of the track. The drizzle was uninviting and we loitered around the van as if someone might suggest that it was all a joke and we would all get back in and go home. This wasn’t going to happen so somebody muttered, “Come on let’s get going”. With the wind blowing moderately, but continuously, the team, the facilitator, Jane and a member of the mountain guide-technical support staff plodded up the



hill in persistent rain. This was not quite how we had imagined the picture of our “great” day.

George had elected to be leader for this particular activity. He was mild-mannered and quietly spoken. A great reflector, it was immediately apparent that any decisions George took were going to be the result of protracted discussion and consensus. In the weather we were experiencing my heart sank at the prospect. I could not screen out from my mind my years of experience of going into the mountains. “Stuff the board meetings” I thought. Rather impatiently, I just could not see the point of standing for ten or fifteen minutes on the side of a mountain in what was fairly unpleasant weather in order to discuss a route finding question to which the answer seemed fairly obvious. In spite of this I retained my silence. Firstly, I was not the activity “leader” and, secondly, I was seeking to live my researcher identity (although this was slipping to the back of my mind as the water began to discover the weak points of my waterproof). Nevertheless, I was also conscious that if I became totally immersed in the map I would be likely to miss what was happening in the group.

Progress up the hill was painfully slow. The map-reading stops seemed to be lasting longer and longer. Harry, was becoming visibly “twitchy”. In a thinly disguised agitated manner he decided to walk on ahead in order to see whether or not we were on the right path.

“I’ll just have a look around the corner” he shouted over his shoulder as he walked away.

The group now seemed to be milling around in twos and threes. Jane, the facilitator, stood apart with the support mountain guide-technician. Once or twice she casually walked over to George, or another member of the group working with George, to discuss the issues.

The group had been on the mountain for approximately one and a half hours and it was becoming apparent that Annette was suffering physically from the slow uphill climb. It was interesting because earlier she had been talking about her lifestyle in London: very long hours at the office for both her and her husband -



Sundays were completely reserved for “collapse relaxing” by her husband and she felt tied into this pattern. In this mountain environment, Annette was looking increasingly like a fish asphyxiating outside of its other (“London”) water tank.

By general agreement, it was decided to find a place to settle and eat our packed lunches. Tom and I set off to find a place where we could place the KISU (Karrimor International Survival Unit) tent. This sounds rather dramatic but in fact it is a large shaped sheet of nylon that can be pulled into a rapid shelter. Team members stand around holding the edges of the sheet then in one single motion pull it over their heads and sit on its edges (an action akin to a children’s “parachute” game). Suddenly you are sitting in a nylon cocoon looking at the faces of all the other team members. The atmosphere in the KISU seemed surreal. The elements were shut out and all that could be heard was the buffeting of the wind and the rustle of crisp packets.

A new world had been created. It felt good to get out of the wet and windy world outside. Lunch was a rather bad-tempered affair. Clive insisted on fiddling with the doorway of the KISU and this let gusts of cold wind penetrate our little haven. He snapped back curt answers to people who asked him to close the gap (me included).

“I’ll shut it in a minute when I’ve sorted my lunch out” he rasped.

Something had riled him and he was making us all pay for it. Jane, the facilitator then raised an idea that seemed to have already been discussed between one or two group members. A conversation started in which it was obvious that Annette stated she had had enough and was keen to make her way early to the overnight mountain hut. The crux of the debate seemed to be who would accompany her down and miss out on the rest of the “expedition”. Clive and Harry were clearly the focal point for a “let’s *all* push on” campaign. There were some extremely uncomfortable long silences. George, as activity leader, stated that he felt he should go back with Annette as she was probably the team member most in need of backup at that time even though he declared that he would enjoy climbing the mountain as he had never done this sort of thing before. Clive, stated that Annette should go down with Jane, the facilitator. The rest of the team should



stick together because it was “obvious” that the major challenges lay ahead and not back down the track. I, personally, was not having a pleasant time physically. The waterproof I had borrowed from the centre was leaking down my front. A chilly damp patch was expanding across my upper body. Also, I was not excited by the prospect of climbing the mountain in this weather. Based on my experience of plenty of wet and cold days in the mountains I knew that the conditions on the summit would consist of very limited visibility and a “heads down plod” through a “maelstrom”. Even though I could sense Clive and Harry’s eyes on me I declared that I would accompany Annette and Jane back to the hut. Tom also declared his hand at this stage and said that he would make our group four in number. I sensed he wanted some time to himself anyway and this was a good point to break off.

The group went off in two different directions after lunch, the party continuing up the hill was accompanied by the technical support staff member. We returned to the hut and began to dry out in the eerily quiet atmosphere. The hut, an old cottage built for the Victorian mining nearby, had two floors and several rooms. The living room-kitchen had a small log fire. The four of us seemed to drift into corners and do their own thing. This seemed odd given the debate that had drawn us together. Tom went for his “constitutional” run for an hour (in the driving rain), Jane sat by the fire and occasionally talked to Annette. I went into the front room and read some old editions of *Climber and Rambler* magazine. For me it was a welcome break from the unrelenting contact and experiences of the programme. The magazines were editions I had read some ten years previously when I had been especially active as a mountaineer. Sitting alone quietly in a mountain hut and enveloped in the nostalgia of re-reading those articles, just for a short time, was sheer bliss.

After a large period of time the small group mustered together in the main room with the fire. There was a sense of unease as we waited for the rest of the group to return. Finally, on one of the occasions when I was standing in the doorway, watching the rain move horizontally in sheets down the valley, I caught a glimpse of red cagoules down a nearby track. Soon they were with us. They had



a dogged air about them. There was clearly something of an atmosphere. For most of the evening it seemed as though the group who had climbed the hill were talking as if everyone else was not there. Clive and Harry commandeered the kitchen and anyone else's suggestions were not particularly valued.

After dinner had been eaten Jane, the facilitator, suggested that we gather round the table and review the day's activities. Surprisingly for most of the team, and controversially for Clive and Harry, Jane invited Annette to chair the meeting. It was not long before a heated debate about why the group had split up in the manner it had was in progress. There was a clear antipathy towards Annette from the "mountain group". Their thinly disguised "charge" was that she had contrived to break up the exercise and had manipulated people to go back with her. Somewhat disingenuously (certainly in my case) Tom and I replied that we were trying to provide the support where it was most needed at that time. Clive, cried out "But we needed you on the mountain with us!". The discussion seemed to break up and it continued in a fragmented way. Some of these exchanges were now getting very heated. At one point, Jane told me to "shut up!" I got up to distance myself from the situation. I was pretty wound up inside and I decided that tackling the washing up might help. After this I was still very tense and I brushed past George out of the door as he entered the hut. I did this so quickly that I could tell from his remark to the effect that he was not sure if someone had passed him or not. I marched on in the darkness to the edge of the nearby mountain river. It was still drizzling but there were stars visible. I was so angry that I resorted to deep breathing to regain my composure. I was aware (certainly as far as Jane knew) that I was something of a "guest" on the programme and not a paying customer as such. What I really wanted to do was to tell Jane how outrageously I thought she had behaved towards me and other participants but I felt compromised to keep "diplomatic channels open".

Eventually, I returned inside. It seemed that the discussion had discontinued and people were shuffling around doing their individual little jobs and activities. The atmosphere was obviously unpleasant. That night, whilst in bed, I heard Clive and Harry, whispering downstairs about people in the group. Were they talking



about me? Or, was I beginning to exhibit the early symptoms of paranoia! The “bad-blood” between Annette and the “mountain group” did not really dissipate for the rest of the course.



#### 7.4.6 The Planned Mountain Walk – Reflective Discussion.

Again, power bases and power games seemed to be under negotiation throughout the day of the mountain experience in this particular programme. Burletson and Grint's (1996) supposition that Machiavellian tactics are never far from the surface in OMD programmes seemed very relevant. It is hard to gauge the extent to which "macho" characteristics played a role in forming the group that ascended the peak. (Cole, 1993:12-14; Darwent, 1995:4) Mandy was part of that group. It is worth noting that three people who climbed the hill, including Mandy, all worked for the same company. What peer pressures were at play here? This issue was not raised in the feedback session in the mountain hut.

What, was the role of Jane, the facilitator, in these situations? There was a sense that choosing Annette as the chairperson for the session was a deliberately provocative move. This seemed to be confirmed the next day when I quietly mentioned to Jane that Clive seem disgruntled about something (we both knew it was the mountain episode):

"He'll have to live with it" was her short reply.

Curious parallels seemed able to be drawn between Harry's and Annette's experiences and the "Statement 2" (quite a positive account) and "Statement 3" (a rather more negative account) narratives related by Crawford (1988:18-19) discussed above. In no way could they be offered as identical accounts but the phenomenon of the coincidence of experience is interesting.

In this experience, it appeared that gender and the experience of being female or male played a role in the dispute between Clive and Jane. The experience on the mountain was unquestionably physically difficult. We had all suffered but Annette seemed most visibly affected. It was not the first time. Earlier in the programme, she had requested to avoid difficult bits of a scramble up a stream gully and she had not been able to tackle the ropes "assault style" course very well. In fact in the latter she had broken into tears and run away to a quiet corner after slipping off a low-level log. Harry, had chased after her to assist. I sensed



that Jane saw Annette as a victim of the process. Kay James' (1989:18) words came back to me:

“Nobody would deny that OD [sic:OMD] is different. It is. And it may even be fun for some. But the difference means that some people may not be right for it physically, or in terms of their age.....If OD is truly worth its salt it must be prepared to promote its services amongst similarly disabled people, and those disadvantaged in other ways. Some would argue strongly that OD does discriminate: it discriminates in favour of the young, and active, and male - and against the middle-aged, and not-so-active, and female... It is no use whatsoever holding ‘women only’ programmes, or courses designed exclusively for sportsmen as such discrimination would not be countenanced in other areas of organisational life.”

Perhaps there was some identification of experience between Annette and Jane. Jane had the power to “protect” Annette and she seemed to use it in this way. A potential scenario regarding the idea of Self-Concept (Clifford and Clifford, 1967; Hopkins, 1985), discussed above, is useful here. Determining changes in Self-Concept is often achieved through before and after course questionnaires. I pondered what Annette and Tom, given their harsh experiences during the week, would have registered if that methodological technique had been employed in a more traditional project? Surely they would have wanted, in some way, to indicate that, overall, their various personality traits had been “improved” or enhanced. There seems an inestimable force to provide, ultimately, a positive impression of oneself, whether for self-esteem or for other motive.(Goffman, 1959) This was apparent to some extent in the compromised entries they ensured were made in the end of course report. More crucially, perhaps, is the question of what identities and images were certain members of the group keen to construct with regard to these particular individuals? This thought seemed to underline the manner in which OMD is as much about *group-construction* of identity as *individual construal*. Carr's (1991) thoughts on comparing intra-personal and inter-personal subjectivities seen pertinent here. Moreover, Hearn's



(1977 in Fineman, 1993:145) words that the process of restructuring emotions can be a process of great emotion in itself, seem pertinent in relation to this episode. It was reminiscent of Burletson and Grint's (1996) remarks in the field relating to: "taking people apart and putting them together again".

And, what of my role in the exercise? From a research point of view I had found the experience difficult and divisive. As a participant I was being pushed towards choosing adherence to particular camps. To elect one might screen out useful contact with another. Already, I was noticing "small groups" of participants forming as the course progressed. As an individual and participant I felt split loyalties. I wanted to be part of the success in climbing the hill and this was my heart, my intuition. My head told me that accompanying the weaker party down the hill would be the right thing to do in terms of mountain safety. I was one of the most experienced mountaineers in the group and it seemed superfluous to follow the team with the Guide up the mountain.

Being honest, I also felt no "novelty of task". This was equally the case for Tom. He had already climbed the mountain (and in better weather). For me, this supported Irvine and Wilson's (1994:28) conjecture that the impact of the OMD experience is diminished where participants have had a similar prior experience. In addition, I also wanted some respite of living with the group in order to "recharge my batteries". I felt I was living behind a mask for a lot of the time and this becomes draining during the course of the research experience.(Waddington, 1994:120)

Also, it seemed in my eyes that the "mountain group" was socially constructing a script for themselves of "fighting against the odds" and pressing on. (I pondered whether "institutionalized"(Berger and Luckmann,1971:65) "British" heroic constructions had emerged or been invoked as part of the experience – if not through talk then perhaps in the minds of the individuals) I did not hear many images related by them but it was sensed in the way they paced off into the rain and mist. Returning to the review, it is interesting to witness how Jane was keen to construct a "group" account of the mountain experience. This was even though



certain members of the group clearly had very different ideas. Different narrative accounts were alluded to. Because of the confidentiality of my participant observer role it was not possible to ask fellow group members to write down their own narratives, however the disparity of accounts was very apparent from casual conversation.

Of further interest was the way in which different “environments” emerged through interactions in the group. Environments emerge and were broken up in the mini-bus on the way, on the hill - in the muffled world inside the warmth of our hoods, inside the KISU shelter and ultimately in the hut before the arrival of the rest of the group, before dinner, and after dinner. They were like scenes in a play. All of these episodes (Flick, 1998:106-113) created environments with differing characteristics, degrees of “risk”, “novelty” (indoors and outdoors) in relation to varying perceptions of realities. It was not just a question that people had different views. They seemed to be “seeing” fundamentally different images. It might be said that discontinuity theory (Widdershoven, 1993) - a desire to see stories as separate from “lived” or “actual” life - was in strong play with regard to the formal story lines of the prescribed course activity briefs. Alternatively, it might be argued that continuity theorising processes (intertwining between life and narrative experience) were powerfully influential at a very idiosyncratic level.



## 7.5 Stories: “Postmodern Times?”.

### 7.5.1 Introductory Remarks.

The next two accounts were experienced on the same day in the same programme with various groups of participants. At the beginning of the day I was a “complete observer” (Junker, 1960) having permission (from the host OMD organization) simply to watch from afar. As the day progressed I was strangely drawn into the activities and the events by the participants until I became a form of participant-observer (Junker, 1960) and this will be commented on further below.

During the time spent in the seminar room, shortly after my arrival, I began to collect a number of impressions from the charts that had already been generated on flip paper and *blu-tacked* to the wall. In one column was a list of ideas on “problem solving: ownership, co-ordinate, time-keeping, quality, process, communicate, define-understand objectives, generate solutions, plans, execute plan, review plan objectives, action from review, listening, timeouts, risk analysis, brain storming, lateral thinking, trust” and finally at the end of the task/problem list was a note “to celebrate or commiserate”.

On another sheet were notes regarding feedback “receiving feedback - think of it as a gift - don’t be defensive” and “giving feedback - what you saw and what you felt”.

Next to this was a chart with a grid producing four boxes of high-low “challenge” and high-low “support”. Ways of giving support were listed: “overview, step back, physical support, hand holding, applause, taking time to think, concern for each other, keeping quiet”.

The group was composed of Dutch and British participants from two branches of the same company. Drawing the two offices closer together was a stated purpose of the programme. Interestingly, there was a note written on the chart by the



group to the effect that the English members should try giving more direct feedback and more negative feedback and the Dutch should give more positive feedback and remember to say thank you!

Finally there were more sheets detailing “Group Objectives”: “Have fun, trust in each other, teamwork-helping each other, getting to know each other, motivate each other.” There were also two diagrams commonly used in OMD programmes. These were the “Do-Review-Apply” cycle and the iceberg with the tip being “Task” and the hidden majority of the iceberg constituting “process”.

All of the above sheets seemed like the conventional diet of an OMD programme. The use of the task-process juxtaposition and the grid models appeared quite typical of commentary in the literature and fieldwork carried out elsewhere. I was interested to see how the group would behave and react to the ideas they had generated. The first story starts with my arrival at the hotel where the course was based.



### 7.5.2 Making a Deal with a Spy.

This was an unusual experience in that I arrived on a Sunday morning to observe a course that had already been running for two days. I pulled into the car park of the hotel where the programme was based. The mountain scenery surrounding the village was stunning and it was clearly going to be a beautiful day.

I entered the hotel through the rear entrance and very quickly found myself in a large open-plan seminar room. In it were a number of people who looked conspicuously like course participants. Nobody was talking. They were all reading the Sunday morning newspapers. The atmosphere seemed strange. Did these people like being with each other or did they communicate only when they had to? A brief enquiry confirmed that this was the group I was planning to meet.

The course director, Damien, arrived. He was a bald, bearded man in his mid to late-thirties. In a relaxed manner Damien called the group to draw up a circle of comfortable low-angled chairs. He made some remarks about the programme and that a message would arrive for them soon and this would begin to suggest a structure for the day's activities. Then he introduced me to the group. He allowed me to explain briefly to the group what I was attempting to do. I explained that I was a researcher and that I was interested in seeing such a programme in action.

“Are you going to join in with us?” asked one team member in a provocative way.

I hesitated and Damien interjected saying that we would see.

“Maybe he's a plant or a spy. We'd best keep an eye on him” said another.

This seemed all very light-hearted but I was questioned further at various points throughout the day by people seeking to confirm my “real” intentions and role.

A waiter brought in a briefcase. All eyes followed it across the room. There were humorous quips and remarks made as the case was placed on a desk in front of the group. Allegedly it had just been delivered by person(s) unknown at the reception. Damien, the facilitator, neither moved nor said a word. One member of the group finally decided to move forward and took the case, opened it and began



to read out aloud the instructions. Ironically, given the earlier quips, it seemed that the whole day would lead to the possibility of meeting a spy and making a deal with him or her. A number of people in the room were now convinced that I *was* that “spy”. With humour, I sought to deny this and deflect the attention.

In an atmosphere full of indifference and lacking momentum the group discussed the tasks. According to the instructions they had to complete a range of tasks in order to gather enough money to buy a final clue off a person(s) to be met in a location that they needed to identify during the course of the day. Money could be earned in two ways. These were by performing tasks in the seminar room or also by collecting clues in the surrounding countryside and in the grounds of the hotel. I decided to split my time spending some in the seminar room and then travelling in the van that was at the disposal of the group.

After some rapid planning the group had to plan and allocate within time constraints who would, or could, do what. They agreed to meet at a time just before lunch in order to take stock of progress.

A section of the group had elected to do as many brief hotel-based tasks as they could from a sheet containing many possibilities. These included activities ranging from: dressing up as authentically as possible as an ancient Roman; two male group members acting out the fake orgasm scene performed by Meg Ryan and Billy Crystal in a busy restaurant in the film *When Harry met Sally*; polishing Damien’s bald head and reading a short message backwards from the reflection; getting the whole team to graze like sheep (ultimately carried out on the rear lawns of the hotel). Damien had to approve and “tick” off each of the group’s activities. He rejected the group’s first attempt to dress up as a Roman using only items from the seminar room.

“Romans didn’t wear converse boots.” said Damien disparagingly to the first attempt.

The “Roman” was withdrawn for a major makeover!

“More commitment than that”, Damien muttered as he moved to another part of the room.



The activities away from the hotel involved physical aspects. All the group had to do one of two activities. They either had to travel to a nearby lake and conduct a canoeing exercise under the guidance of an instructor. Alternatively, they had to climb the “pamper pole”. (This is another story below.)

Damien, the director/facilitator was staying noticeably calm and somewhat aloof. He was being very careful with information about the activities and played a form of “cat and mouse” game with information releases. He was very much in control and feigning indifference to the group’s indifference. He had quietly briefed me in on some of the background and rationale for the day’s activities. Apparently, they had seemed to be running out of momentum and interest and he was determined to force them to dig themselves out of that mind-set.

“They find task very easy, no challenge at all but they virtually ignore the processes”, said Damien.

They had, he claimed, very little awareness of the processes of relating to each other. Many group members seemed totally insensitive to how their actions and comments would affect or impact on other team members. Damien’s stock remark to questions from group members seemed to be a reciprocally nonchalant: “It’s up to you”.

Finally, towards four o’clock in the afternoon the group had collected, as a result of the various activities, most but not quite enough money with which to rendezvous with the “spy”. Nevertheless, we all set off in the van to see what sort of deal might be arranged.

As we pulled off the road into the old quarry that now served as a National Park car park there she was: black fish-net stockings, black stilettos, a black thigh-length leather coat, sunglasses. She was leaning, with one foot crooked, against a red sports saloon car reading a copy of the *Sud-Deutcher Zeitung*. She would have not looked out of place in a cold-war Berlin bar but we were in a car park in the Lake District surrounded by day-trippers on what was now a rather grey day.

“What do we do now?” said Dominic, one of the group members.



These fateful words seemed to nominate him to approach the spy and negotiate the information. This took place at a distance from the rest of the group.

Having cautiously approached the “Contact” or “Spy” she turned and snapped: “Get in the car!”

He did so and the wheels of the car skidded on the gravel as the car roared out of the car park and down the road.

“What now?” was the question on everyone’s lips.

“How would James Bond, or Michael Caine handle this one” a voice laughed.

It was not long before the car returned. A deal had been struck. The “Spy” demanded that all the team take off their trousers in the car park in order to make up the “monetary shortfall” and complete the deal. This done, the “Spy” turned to look at me. I had been standing apart from the group with Damien, the Facilitator. I didn’t hear what was actually said but it was obvious that my trousers were part of the deal too. I laughed nervously in a hopeless attempt to diffuse the situation. The group members walked slowly towards me across the car park.

One of the group members said “They [the trousers] come off “voluntarily” or....”.

“Now hang on a moment folks...” I pleaded.

The trousers came off quite readily, the deal was concluded and the final clue was identified as being located in the garden of the hotel.

Back at the hotel, a quick search revealed a detonation device under a bush in a rockery and a set of instructions. The attached cable was unwound and a loud detonation of a charge revealed a sword bearing an inscription that provided the final answer to the challenge. A bottle of sparkling wine was also found at the site. This was not drunk but poured over the facilitator’s head after a short chase. Back inside a toast to the experience was drunk with “real” champagne. Only the end of course dinner and review was to come.



### 7.5.3 Making a Deal with a Spy - Reflective Discussion.

One of the aspects that seems salient in this account is the role of “imagination”. It struck me that that this group of engineers and technicians were unconvinced and unprepared to be engaged by many of the “games” and simulations they had experienced up to the point I arrived. Also, because of the mystery or nature of the day some of them seemed more motivated. Maybe, as Ibbetson and Newell (1996) have argued they were releasing a deeply ingrained desire to “win” by accomplishing the event. Damien’s acted nonchalance seemed to make them concerned. He was playing the upset school teacher with whom the “pupils” had to win back favour. Maybe some members of the group put more into the day because it was the last one of the course.

It is hard to say the extent to which the course participants were fired up by the fantasy world that had been created. As an observer, my mind was in full play as we entered the car park. Here was a role-play being played as completely “real” by the staff member dressed up as the spy. This included a gravel-showering wheel spin out of the car park. This is mad! This is too much! Over the top, I thought.

“What do we do here?” mumbled a few stunned voices.

Humour and jokes alluding to spy films and books were plentiful. It seemed like each reference was weaving the “shared” narrative and the atmosphere in an ever more enriched fashion. Given that no one admitted to such experiences previously, it was interesting how the group’s only bank of experience might be stories from one source or another (for example, James Bond). (Hassard and Holliday (1998) - “popular culture”.) The act of this leather clad spy demanding all the participants to remove their training bottoms was an interesting act of humiliation. It is interesting to ponder to what extent this was a challenge to their self-images and identities. By extension, it might even be important to underline a certain sexual or fetish dimension to the experience. How did the one woman participant feel about the situation?



Hopfl (1994) has commented on the relevance of drama and the arts to creating vivid imagery for management learning. Again, the use of the scene from “When Harry Met Sally” was interesting. This raised further gender issues in the group when the only woman in the team said straight away that she was not playing Sally. Great humour was generated when two men played the parts, even though the acting was appallingly bad, mistimed and “laddish”.

The image of the spy in the car park had surreal qualities. It provided such a disjointed image in the context of the mountain scenery and other visitors that it verged on the postmodern. “Normality” seemed to have been dispensed with. Any construct was admissible and possible. It was unpredictable and exiting. This creative and fun aspect of the experience seemed to reinvigorate the response and spirits of all the team. It was akin to being in a theme park - a place where the boundary between fact and fiction blurred. The reflections of Hochschild (1993 in Fineman 1993:x) came to mind. How does a person view his/her workplace, or of equal importance, his/her OMD experiences?: “Does he/she see it as a football team? A madhouse? A family? A conveyor belt?”. The presence of the “Spy” was a recognised image but dislocated into another context. The images of the national park, the work context of the OMD participants seemed utterly disconnected and disjointed. In this sense, Cacioppe and Adamson’s (1988) grid of problem/solution versus known/unknown comes to mind. But how well does such a representation account for experience. “Unknowns” in relation to boats, caves and climbing are perhaps one thing. This experience seemed to offer a completely fresh kind of uncertainty. The team were quite thrown by the twist of novelty being introduced not only in the task but a very different context.

In research terms it was interesting how the group felt that they had to use the opportunity to remove *my* trousers. I took this as something of a compliment recognising that they were acknowledging my right to join their “club” but the trousers would be the rite-of-passage. I had chatted to many of the participants during the course of the day and had become very friendly with them. The trouser removal might also be construed as some form of “revenge” or



“balancing the books”. This was potentially intended in the same way that Damien had sparkling wine poured over his head. It was “you’ve dished it out and been comfortable - now it’s our turn [to take some of the power and control]”. It was a comment on the adoption of the role of complete-observer rather than participant-observer. I was seen as separate but nevertheless welcomed in - on the team’s terms.

Finally, linked to the penultimate point above, the degree to which narrative transfer (sic: continuity theory rather than the oft-commented isomorphic transfer *inter alia*: Jones, 1996) was in operation in these experiences was intriguing. It is difficult to imagine that immediate lessons on how to deal with leather-clad spies or climbing telegraph poles (see the subsequent narrative) would be useful back in the company. However, Long (1987:30), in her narrative (cited above) probably shows the way in which it might function. She portrays people at loggerheads in a meeting when one of them says: “Gentlemen, this is not the way we did it in the woods.” Perhaps, the emergence of a novel *lingua franca* would be a potential new and ongoing creation and secondary socialisation. (Berger and Lukmann,1971:157) Such consequences seem a long way from the OMD outcome-competency skills lists purported by Cacioppe and Adamson (1988:90) and Hogg (1988:90).



#### 7.5.4 The Pamper Pole and Trapeze.

This story is really related to the above narrative about “Meeting a Spy”. As part of a series of tasks the whole group had to divide into two. Half would carry out a canoeing task and half would attempt to climb the Pamper Pole successfully.

Mark, short stocky and vivacious, volunteered to go first. Nervously, he connected a rope to a harness. All of us had put these on at the adjoining equipment shed situated in the wooded grounds of a large hotel. Deep breaths at the base of the pole and then Mark set foot on the first foot hold. Slowly he moved his hands from grip to grip. As he moved up nervously the hand-holds slowly became foot holds. He stopped.

“Are you guys okay with the ropes down there?” he asked

His voice invited us to display unity, support and empathy for the experience we were all about to go through.

He reached the top of the pole. The Pamper Pole is a telegraph pole standing vertical in the ground forty to fifty feet high. There are metal grip holds up the pole for hands and feet. At the top is a dish shaped piece of wood on to which you have to precariously mount and stand on. Having stood up, you are then faced with a trapeze bar suspended from two metal wires overhead. A leap and grasping of the bar ends the task and you are lowered to the ground on the safety ropes. The activity, is in principle, perfectly safe. There are several safety ropes held by fellow team members.

“I’m not sure about the next step”. His voice contained a tremble.

He said that he was not sure if he would be able to bring his right foot up onto the top platform of some eight to ten inches in diameter in width.

He was moving slowly body slipping cautiously out of balance to take the final step. He faltered, gripped the pole tighter and stepped back down. The group members spoke the usual reassuring sounds from below.

“Your doing well Mark”, “Take your time mate”.



“I’m going to just go for it”, said Mark in a “last ditch attempt” voice.

The safety ropes were gripped and went a little tighter. Mark moved up. The right foot stood on the platform and then, very slowly, the left foot slid up alongside the final section of the pole and onto its top. A few seconds pause and he coiled down and then sprung toward the trapeze. He gripped it and hung on cheering.

Mark was lowered to the ground and he immediately shook hands and then hugged the other team members and me.

“Fantastic, fantastic, I didn’t think I could do it!”



### **7.5.5 The Pamper Pole and the Trapeze – Reflective Discussion.**

The Pamper Pole is used in several OMD programmes in the United Kingdom and many more in the United States of America. This story struck me as poignant in several respects. Firstly, it is a regular event on OMD programmes. Secondly, it seems completely dislocated as a (common-)“sense-making” activity. The sense or logic of climbing a pole to jump onto a trapeze, a priori, seems to verge on lunacy. At least these are the common reflections of participants. However, why is this any more “lunatic” than any of the other activities regularly undertaken on OMD courses? There seem to be some forms of separation or partition working within participants’ minds. Thirdly, the Pamper Pole has attracted a narrative account in its own right. In retrospective comment on the experience Galagan comments:

“Finally she bolts for the trapeze and our collective hurrah releases as much tension as it conveys our joy. Our necks ache from craning upward, but no one minds. We are cheering her determination and her success, which is clearly ours.....

All 15 of the Phoenixes, who range in age from early 20’s to mid 60s, try the pole. Even the most height-fearing manage to get close to the top rung. What prods most of us is the group’s support and the realization that we are perfectly safe. Even if you fall off the pole or the disk, or miss the trapeze, as I did, your safety lines keep you from bodily harm. The risk you imagine is much greater than the real risk, and understanding and controlling this imagined peril is at the heart of what the pole teaches. You’re left with the ability to concentrate on making decisions about what action to take next and on what you are feeling at each moment.”(Galagan, 1987:43)

The issues of risk as a “real” or “perceived” phenomenon and as a device or mechanism in OMD are underlined by the pole stories. The risk is theoretically removed because trust is placed in the person who has arranged the equipment. This is a strange matter however because that person is never met. So trust is



vicariously transferred to the host OMD provider: They wouldn't kill us, would they?" The rational answer, of course is no. However, the calculation of any risk, as discussed above, is based on a favourable probability that a given event will not (or will) occur. In this the approach to risk, fear and anxiety is witnessed as a process of social construction. Nevertheless, its effect is powerful in generating feelings and stories based on the experience. These are not just the narratives that we have read above but also narrative as a "lived text" (Knights and Willmott, 1995) and one that can guide and prompt behaviour in subsequent experiences.

On a final note, in the text Galagan (*ibid*) uses story-telling language and style. Nevertheless, it is worth highlighting the representational themes of "risk" and "novelty" being invoked. Also, Galagan, sees the experience as culminating in an enhanced ability to make decisions. The positivistic underpinning of the corporate imperative of effectiveness is thus apparent in the construction of the story.



## **7.6 Stories: “Happy Endings?”.**

The next four tasks took place on the same course over a one week period. They do not comprise all the tasks that were undertaken however they are indicative and illustrative of the experiences. They assist in portraying some of the stages on which the narratives of the programme were created and played out.

### **7.6.1 The Arrival and People Talking at the Finish.**

The driveway was curved and swept down to the front of the manor house and training centre. It had the look of a French chateau. The compact but splendidly decorated entrance hall took me to reception, registration and then I was courteously directed to my room. This freshly and tastefully decorated, “room with a view” with en suite bathroom would be my base, my personal space, for the next seven days. This was a long way from the “sleeping in the barn” style experience.

There were four groups of, approximately, eight person teams participating in the week-long course. Each team had a colour assigned to them and so would become known as Red, Blue, Black or Green team.

The final review session of the course relayed useful information to me on the effect of my behaviour. These comments are relayed below with regard to myself. I have not included these highly personal comments on anyone else in the final review. Given the precondition on mutual confidentiality applying to that particular session it seemed unethical to breach such an undertaking. Nevertheless, I am able to relay the other participants comments regarding me. These provide an indication of the form the feedback could take. Also, as discussed in the Methodology Chapter, given that the narratives are from my perspective, and therefore personal narratives, it is interesting to use the comments offered on me to assist in contextualising any narratives. These



comments were made at the very end of the programme. Given this knowledge it is possible to read the narratives with the “in hindsight” perspective they provide.

Margaret on Peter:

*“Strengths*

Strong personality...very strong leadership. Intelligent, well read. Very assertive. Very self aware.

*Development points:*

A tendency towards flippancy that might lower the morale of the team. Might offer too much information so that the power of the message gets lost - strength and direction gets lost.”

Alan on Peter:

*“Strengths*

Very deep thinker ... never in all my life known such a deep thinker. Generates good respect as a leader. Very high and hard work ethos...very high standards set and meets them. Does listen to others. You’re a passionate person, caring genuinely about the team.

*Development points:*

Need to watch out for setting too high a standard. Punish self - take on smaller goals. Sometimes be more precise in what you state - lose the argument ... too much meat in the argument. Be more flexible. Sometimes you run a tight ship... a bit too tight I felt a bit squeezed out. Delegate more. You can be so clear in giving instructions - let people get on with it.”

Jim on Peter:

*“Strengths*

Thoughtful. Your opinions are considered and balanced. You make good contributions that are valued. Willing to admit mistakes. Plenty of input and ideas - there wasn’t anything left in the pot...you weren’t holding back. Humour and a wide range of skills.



*Development points:*

You're willing to admit to mistakes but don't take the blame on yourself. You tend to say "I" when talking about your mistakes when it might be better to say 'we'. Once or twice you said 'I really did my best' but without real commitment in the way you said it. Your feedback contributions in reviews often seemed too nice or do you see only positive in people. Remember to get to the point."

Gordon on Peter:

*"Strengths*

You cite goals and lead in a way that is likeable. You exude feeling that you are an intelligent person and everyone in the room would recognise that I think. You're thoughtful and you don't shoot your mouth off. I respect the way you lead. It's genuine and honest. You're a great motivator. Leading as a member of the team. Good rapport. Strong and very likeable person - great.

*Development points:*

The positives can have a flip side. Try not to over-intellectualise. It might be okay with academics but you need to take other groups into consideration. A couple of times in the week I heard things that I felt you could have accepted criticism better ..for example "Yes, but...". You have confidence about yourself but in some parts of you, deep down, you're not so confident."

David on Peter:

*"Strengths:*

Strength....you are very strong. Wide deep knowledge and intelligence. Good practical usage of your knowledge. Very well organised .... very conscious of own goals. Great confidence as a leader and very supportive. Extremely brave.

*Development points:*

Develop the ability to handle people. There are times when you have to squeeze people".



Sharon on Peter:

*“Strengths:*

Confident ... very confident. Very rational person .... working with everything in little boxes. I felt completely safe with you. When you were around I had one hundred per cent trust in what you were doing.

*Development points:*

Beware of flippancy. Once or twice I thought “was he really serious about that?” Intellectualism might be a bit off-putting - wondered if you’d walk away if I talked about the weather.”

It is hoped that the above accounts have provided some useful context for the four narratives that follow.



## 7.6.2 Narrative Accounts: “Experiences for a Week”.

### 7.6.2.1 The First Task and the Review.

We gathered in the Green Team room - an airy room with a table in the centre and seating around it. On the walls were whiteboards and clip rails for suspending flip chart paper. Ross, the facilitator, gave us a very brief introduction to the programme. He explained that during the course of the week we would receive a series of assignments. Some would be longer and more complex than others. All of them would be detailed on yellow plastic coated card.

After he had finished the briefing he sat back and remained quiet just staring into space. We just sat fiddling with our pencils and looking at each other. I then noticed that a yellow card was sitting in the middle of the table. I bent forward and picked it up. On the card was a list of instructions relating to a site outside on the “activity field”.

“You might as well read it out” suggested Alan.

It seemed that we had to use metal poles to get all the team members together with pairs of us starting from different sides of an area covered in gravel and slabs. We decided it would all make more sense once outside. We asked Ross if that was okay and he replied using a phrase that was to become a stock answer during the week:

“All the instructions are on the yellow card”, he said nonchalantly.

Once out in the field we took up our positions around the gravel square. At various points on the gravel, paving slabs and poles were laid. The idea seemed to be to lay one end of the poles on the edge of the square and the other end of the pole onto a slab or piece of vertically protruding scaffolding. We had hardly begun when Jim and I felt Ross’ hand take our arm gently and remove us from the rest of the group. He did not speak a word. The rest of the group had not noticed our removal.

“Err.. We’ve done something wrong guys. Let’s read that card again” said Gordon worriedly as he turned around and noticed the team had reduced in size.



Ross retained a powerful silence. The rest of the group struggled with various ideas and permutations of poles. Ross eventually removed another two members of the group in a similar way. When the majority of the team was standing on the sidelines he temporarily halted the activity.

“It might be an idea to reread the yellow brief”, he remarked unemotionally.

With this he allowed us back on site. It was not too long before the thirty minutes was up and we were requested to return to the seminar room without exchanging views on what had happened. The silent return to the seminar rooms was a standard pattern for the week’s activities.

Drinks had been provided on the table of the seminar room and we thirstily shared them out. Ross asked us to say in one word that would encapsulate our feelings at that point in time. Around the room came “frustration”, “disappointment”, “indifference” and so on. The review of the activity then drew out how we had not understood the task before starting it, how we had not communicated as a team, how people had not listened to other people’s ideas and contributions. There was a sense that it did not really matter because it was just pipes, paving slabs and gravel. This was to change substantially towards the end of the week.



### 7.6.2.2 The First Task and the Review - Reflective Discussion.

During this series of activities, the continual use of yellow plastic backed cards became an interesting symbol. The cards contained instructions, advice and diagrams to indicate the tasks to be attempted. As such they provided the *props*, sometimes the *scene* and occasionally *critical incidents* or *moments* of a possible *narrative process*. The reminder from Ross that all the guidelines were on the yellow card made them become very powerful parts of the week's experience. *Positivistically*, "everything" we needed to know was, allegedly, on these cards. This elevated these documents into a very potent narrative instrument. Thus, these were the supplied story lines but the interplay of the actor-participants ensured that they were interpreted and played out in a wide range of manners. Even at this early stage of the programme it seemed apparent that there was more than "problem-solving" at stake. Another given part of the narrative was that the programme was designed to focus on leadership. Interesting stories would be generated from this.

It transpired that the programme we had just commenced had been originally designed by an ex-SAS officer and his wife who was a psychologist. To me, this seemed ironically stereotypical given the stories that circulate regarding such programmes.

Interesting points emerged about how people behave together in the absence of a "usual" management structure. We were all very polite and not particularly directive at all. Everyone seemed reluctant to try to impose their own particular construction on events or activities. This led to some painfully slow actions - a process whereby the stories were built as the characters found out a bit more information about each other.

In addition, the imposed silence on the way back from the activity to the briefing room had consequences for the way in which both personal and group narratives were generated. Not having discussed a recently completed activity at all until a facilitator was present placed him or her in a strong position of influence. Not all



of the other groups seemed happy with the perspective or interpretation their facilitator would put on events.

As part of the programme, it was usual practice to begin each review, or debriefing session, by presenting our feelings in one word and writing them up on the board. This drawing out of emotion felt powerful. Rather than going straight into the strengths and weaknesses of the technicalities of the task, attention was focused on feelings. This seemed to be a useful approach in setting the atmosphere from inside ourselves rather than from some problem solving corporate imperative of effectiveness.

Our remoteness from the tasks “actually mattering” at this stage of the programme was noticeable. In a task early on in the programme several of us had missed a bus pick-up time after collecting clues on a trail near the centre. We all stated how we had done everything we could to achieve the task i.e. that we were not culpable for its non-completion and were not prepared to accept responsibility. Herein lies a key aspect of the power of story as a “supplied artefact” (yellow cards) and narrative as a freshly created vision of shared experience among participants. Through being brought to task by the facilitators over non-completion of tasks the group seemed to “buy in” to the narratives and want to be successful *together*. They wanted to have a happy result and the sweetness of success. By the end of the week our group members were throwing themselves into the supplied story lines - perhaps trying to uphold and develop some narrative of temporary unitary perspective within the “team”.



### 7.6.2.3 Writing, Directing and Acting Out a Satirical Sketch.

We had been at the centre for five days and by now we had tackled a whole series of “yellow cards” . We had had a busy day. That evening after dinner we were convened in the seminar rooms and provided with the next, now familiar, yellow card. It invited us to create a performance, or series of short sketches, on the experiences up to that point at the centre but by using a medical, judicial religious or military context. The choice of this context had to be negotiated with all the other teams. We wanted and successfully negotiated the “judicial” theme.

Margaret elected to lead this particular activity. We started playing around with ideas for funny lines and scenes. There was an appeal to anyone with some experience of theatre and plays. I put myself forward having been involved in various amateur dramatics. I told the group that probably what we needed to do was “block” our script roughly. In other words, we would run it through with everyone entering and speaking as they might in the actual show. We would “block” it into sections with beginnings and ends so that we would all know where we were up to at any given point.

Essentially, and perhaps somewhat predictably, we decided to put the Centre on trial for the dreadful experiences and mental trauma to which we had been subjected. Jim played the judge, I played the prosecuting solicitor, David played the Polish speaking defence counsel and the rest of the group played witnesses who had been participants on the course.

The play began. Sharon was escorted into the “courtroom” groaning and in “obvious” pain. To each piercing question she just let out an ever-increasing groan. The prosecution made full use of this accepting the unintelligible gibberish as agreement with the prosecutions questions:

“Now, Miss, Miss...er Smetherbridge could you please relate to the court the events of the 16th July 1997.” declared the prosecution in pompous tones.

Miss Smetherbridge let out a long, dull and agonised groan.



“Thank you Miss Smetherbridge. A most illuminating and erudite account of a heinous conspiracy to inflict torture and pain on honourable citizens.” replied the prosecution counsel.

The defence lawyer interjected ranted and raved in Polish. Each interjection would be completely unintelligible but would end with an English phrase such as “good chap” or “bloody idiot!”. The audience of the other teams and their facilitators were in hysterics. It was going well.

Each group performed its play. Many mimicked staff and facilitators at the Centre particularly a characteristic bottom wiggle the overall course director allegedly exhibited when writing material on the large whiteboard.

“What’s this about a wiggle?”, he chided jokingly later.

Our team was declared the best and we drank the victory gift of sparkling wine back in our seminar room.

We did not know it as we celebrated but it was the lull (of false security) before the storm. The “project from hell” as it would later humorously become known was about to be unleashed on us - “The Major Project”.



#### **7.6.2.4 Writing, Directing and Acting Out a Satirical Sketch - Reflective Discussion.**

This narrative is curious because it employed a conventional narrative form, namely, the play. Performing the play evoked a number of impressions and emotions. Firstly, it was an act of creation in the most explicit sense.

The four themes of medical, judicial, religious or military seemed to relate to middle-class professions. Perhaps this was inadvertent but perhaps it might be assumed that most of the manager class present would identify with, and relate to, these character roles. It is interesting to refer back to the issues of class in OMD raised in earlier parts of the thesis argument. Here was a piece of experience that seemed to illustrate how comfortable we all were creating narratives in this “middle-class environment”. Equally, we were quick to adopt a range of popular cultural stereotypes.(Hassard and Holliday, 1998) and quite able to construct impressions of them.

It is not uncommon for OMD programmes to employ this kind of activity. However, it does constitute an interesting blurring of the lines between fact and fiction and the merging of the social construction forces of narrative building at the individual, group and organizational level. The effect of forms like fiction, poetry, novels and plays etc. is pointed up by this story as by other commentaries concerning them in relation to management. (Hopfl, 1994; Cohen, 1998; Knights and Willmott, 1995,1999)

Moreover, it is interesting to note that all the groups employed humour to make their points regarding the programme. Perhaps this was to be expected however it does underline the power of humour especially in a satirical guise. As a footnote, these types of activities are quite popular on OMD courses. For example, the show on the raft in the first set of stories (which participants declined to do). Also on a further course, participants dedicated two days to erecting a marquee, scripting and rehearsing the previous four days of the programme. They performed the show to their own company training and development managers.



#### 7.6.2.5 “The Major Project”.

It was about ten o'clock in the evening and the sparkling wine had barely been finished when Ross, the facilitator, approached me:

“Please, could you collect an envelope from the main lecture theatre?”

I thought it was just some general information to do with the administration. I entered the lecture hall and saw three other participants, one from each team, sitting at desks reading through the details.

The course director invited me to sit down and open the envelope. This revealed some twelve yellow cards full of information about a series of tasks, PSTs (Project Start Times) and PFTs (Project Finish Times), other deadlines, role allocation and available resources. The day would involve travelling to some nearby river gorges and cliffs where caving and climbing for some team members would take place. I had been allocated the role of “Chairman” of this activity. Jim, who I would have to find and talk to, had been allocated the role of “Chief Executive”. The yellow cards informed me that planning could begin straight away but would stop at half-past midnight when the cards would be taken away by the facilitator. We were informed that this was because some teams would be tempted to plan late into the night for the trials of the next day and as a consequence would be dangerously tired for some of the physical activities. I had a feeling in my stomach that must have felt a bit like the eve of a big event – a kind of “D-Day”. This was the big one for the team. We had grown remarkably close during the course of the various reviews. We wanted to show that we could help each other. I began to get that feeling of weight and concerning responsibility on my shoulders.

I went back to the seminar room, checking first that the small print instruction on the yellow cards did not forbid me to discuss certain matters. I could see no restriction and on this basis I began to tell the team what I had learned. Gordon stood up:

“I’ll get writing this down” he said



And he began to chart the timings and possible breakdown of the following day so that we could gauge how the events would be likely to flow. People were tired and I sensed that attention spans were drifting even before we had started the briefing. I suggested that we all do a communal shout to start waking us up. Awkwardly everyone participated. This would have been unimaginable at the beginning of the week. However, the moment we had done it I felt that it had been, inappropriate and misjudged.

I pointed out that we needed a common vision on the complexity of the tasks and we talked about what we all wanted to achieve from the event, from me as leader, and what they as participants wished to accomplish. We were very motivated.

“We want a big hit” I said.

People nodded keenly. We talked about the fact that it was going to be a long day and that we would all need to parcel up the “business” into little chunks.

“Above all please tell me it straight at any point during the activity. Please do not bullshit me. If something’s not working, tell me”, I said.

At half past midnight we broke up and went to bed. We agreed that we would rise at seven the next morning to spend some time planning together before the activity start time of nine o’clock came into operation.

That night I stayed up late. I look through the notes I had made and some of the models we had examined on the course. I drew up a list of points to remember that would guide my behaviour during the day to come.

In the morning, after breakfast, we found ourselves in our Green Team Room.

We had not been in there long when Ross appeared at the door.

‘Good morning all’, he said, handed me an envelope, turned and left.

‘Here we go again’, someone said humorously.

The new envelope contained changes to some of the times and resources available. There was information about a new “mini-bus service” that would help get equipment and people to various sites. We studied the material. I was longing for the mid-morning deadline when I would be allowed to share executive responsibility with Jim.



There was considerable confusion about where our “base camp” would, or should, be. It seemed that most of the action would take place in and around the river gorge area but it seemed that information kept being issued into the seminar room. I then had the horrible job of packing Alan and two other team members into the mini-bus simply because it was about to leave. However, because of the lack of information I was unable to brief them extensively about why or where I was sending them. We just had to use the transport when it was available even though we were not fully prepared.

“I feel really alienated from the team” Alan told me as he stepped on the bus. I lied and said that I would do my best to make things better as soon as we could. It was a promise I was never really able to keep. I was annoyed that Alan could not just get on the bus and go with the flow of activity. What did he want me to do - get my crystal ball out!

In various pairs and threesomes we all arrived at our sites along the steep cliffs of the river valley gorges. But, contact between the groups using mobile phones was not good and messages kept breaking up. I began to feel like a unit commander trying to control a fire-fight in a Vietnam war film like *Full-Metal Jacket* or *Platoon*. I felt I was at best trying to manage sheer chaos. The only thing I could do was to hope that the rest of the team were making sense of the clues and tasks that had been available when we had left the Centre.

In a car park in a wood next to the gorge precipice, Gordon and I gathered our caving gear. We started to run down paths to the rope ladders we had visited earlier in the week. On that occasion we had been invited to do an outdoor pursuit that we believed would be the most challenging to us personally. The choice was sub-aqua diving, climbing or caving. I chose the latter. I have something of a claustrophobia so it seemed like a good choice. Besides, climbing and sub-aqua were two activities in which I had already accomplished quite a lot.

“Stop running!” came a cry from somewhere in the wood. “1000 points deducted for running and infringement of prescribed safety procedures”, shouted an elf-



like bearded figure whom we recognised as one of the caving instructors. He laughed roguishly.

“Shit” we said in unison and began walking at a strangely and artificially fast past to the abseil point that would take us down to the cave entrances.

Gordon and I were standing at the cave entrance. Johnny, the chief cave instructor informed us that the “gold bars” that we were collecting as part of the team effort were in the cave. We set off, Gordon leading. In order to enter the cave we had to crawl on our stomachs through a hole that resembled a slightly flattened U-bend waste-pipe on a toilet. Then, we heard grunting from the other side. Terry’s broad northern accent and a fellow team member from Black team burst out of the cave entrance. We sat quickly to one side and tried to exchange humorous quips with them.

“Hello Terry, having fun”, we quipped.

Their faces were stony serious. It was immediately obvious that things had not gone well in the cave and that Terry was badly panicked by the oppressive cave atmosphere and darkness. This was unnerving for me. If Gordon was bothered he did not let on.

Gordon powered his way through the small entrance. I followed and promptly got stuck. It felt like the weight of hundreds of tons of rock was pressuring my shoulders into the dirt. The previous occasion when I had entered the cave with the instructor it had seemed enjoyable. *This* was not fun.

“Give me your hands” Gordon said encouragingly.

I can’t, can you reach them?” I pleaded.

Grunting and puffing he hauled me through the space. We set off, our torch-lights reflecting crazily off the walls of the three foot high cave. In theory the route through the cave was safe and you could not get lost providing:

“You always take the left hand bends...”. The words echoed in my head... “left bends, left bends...”.

Things were going well but I reflected on the fact that there was no way I would have been in the cave without having Gordon to rely on.



We had been moving through the cave system on all fours for about thirty minutes when we arrived in a chamber which seemed to have a number of exit possibilities.

“Ah, which way?”, Gordon said.

I realised that we had already passed through that part of the cave. Somehow we had doubled back on ourselves. Gordon had been my tower of strength up to this point. He had demonstrated confidence in route-finding and assisting me to negotiate the obstacles. Suddenly, the tone of his voice became slightly more shrill. His movements became more jerky and less poised. Something inside me said that he had hit some kind of barrier and he had left his “comfort” zone had gone through and beyond “Stretch” and was now entering “Panic”.

From my mountaineering experiences I know that I tend to be a competent but quite nervous person and rely on others to display sang-froid. However, when those people are not present in spirit or body, something inside me clicks into operation. I become more calm and composed. I become the leader by default.

“Wait here in the centre of the cave and I’ll check these two exits” I said.

Gordon seemed to acknowledge that we had mutually read the situation. He had done everything for me up to that point. Now it was my turn to take the “lead”. Speaking calmly and positively I retraced our steps to a section of the cave that Gordon recognised. We saw daylight.

“Thank God for that!” we declared in unison.

Back on the surface we climbed up to the car park. We had a tremendous sense of satisfaction that we had done our bit for the team effort. We ran along the cliff-top to join up with the Alan, Sharon and Margaret who were performing climbing tasks. Alan was nervously abseiling over the edge as we arrived. We stamped their cards which gave us bonus points because we had managed to link up two activities.

By late afternoon we had all regrouped on the car park. Teams in various states of chaos were running around the area. Cars were stopping on roads to pick up



and drop off team members. Information was traded illicitly at various rates! We ate some sandwiches from a cold box as we studied a complex list of clues that would enable us to complete the third phase of the project. Jim sat quietly studying the clues. Everyone else was half-heartedly trying to help. As “Chairman” I felt a great conflict. Should I get involved in this level of detail or was there a bigger picture I should be trying to make sense of? I felt desperately inadequate. After what seemed like an eternity we set off to find some final clues. Most of us planned to take a mini-bus but a small group (Margaret, Sharon, Andy and David) took my car to find some green garage doors that contained a clue answer.

The mini-bus arrived to take us to the final all-teams rendezvous. It had seemed like a long day of chaotic running around that had really started at ten-thirty the night before. I was feeling jaded. As the mini-bus pulled out of the woods I realised that I had given the car team the wrong map reference for the final rendezvous. We tried to telephone them on a mobile.

After a few attempts someone at the rear said: “There’s a phone ringing inside one of the sacks at the back of the van”.

“Bugger, they’ve left their mobile here” said Gordon.

There was a serious silence and then we all burst out laughing realising what idiots we had all been.

At the turn round point I stayed in the van and we drove back to catch the team heading for the wrong location. Back at the cliff-top car park I saw my car. I jumped from the van and asked Alan to quickly get into the back lurching into the driving seat myself. We raced out of the wood, quickly onto the road via an “unorthodox route” and roared down the hill. It was seconds to the Project Finish Time. We screeched to a halt on the gravel, all jumped out and began ripping equipment of team member that needed to be back in the centre van by the deadline.

“Come on, come on” shouted someone to Alan.



Semi-humorously he retorted “ You bloody take it off and kiss my ass at the same time if you want to”. Everyone laughed whilst still roughly removing the last articles of equipment.

Back at base we learned that we had scored five million points to the other teams million point scores. So, we had “won”. The excitement bubbled up. Ross wrote up the scores on the whiteboard in front of our sweaty and exhausted team.

“But , this is tough, this is really tough...” He was serious. “You, in fact, got zero because you were seventy seconds overdue on a twelve hour activity”.

Deflated, I also discovered that in being accompanied by Margaret in my “unorthodox” dash for the line I had been sitting with the wife of one of the most senior police officers in the County. She was not going to make an issue of it.



#### 7.6.2.6 The “Major Project” - Reflective Discussion.

The military analogies (in the narrative above) might appear unseemly however it is in no way intended to be insulting. Rather, it was in the sense of the *task of managing* such complexity. It seemed like a logistical chaos and there were going to be metaphorical casualties. It is interesting to reflect on the military associations of the activity. I believe we all experienced the sheer confusion (not necessarily the “killing”) of what it must be like to direct troops in battle. Communications were very fragmented and knowing if we were doing the right things, let alone co-ordinating activities was difficult. From the film *Platoon* one empathetic moment stood out above all others. The US marine unit commander of a fixed defensive position located in the rain forest and under heavy attack (and being overrun) at night receives a call from a young lieutenant in a perimeter fox-hole requesting permission to fall back. His drawling accented reply summed up my feelings completely: “Godamit! Lieutenant where are you goin’ to fall back to! They’re [enemy troops] all over the perimeter.. now be advised you will stay in place and you will fight...that means you lieutenant, you! Bravo Two Six out!” (The commander then orders his men into the nearest available cover and calls for a U.S air strike on *his own* over-run positions, clicks the radio off, followed by the jaundiced and cynical aside: “It’s a lovely f\*\*\*\*\*g war!”.)

There is no doubt that many of our team exhibited courage in various ways. We had all been asked to undertake tasks that we believed we would find challenging. What role does courage play in management and is it a valued aspect of behaviour? What opportunities exist to show this apparent quality?

It could be said that real comradeship and friendship were present between many members of our team. To what extent had the palpable, tangible and physical nature of the activities played a role in creating this bond. Meier (1976) suggests that experiences in the outdoors can ensure that this is often the case. However, Donnelly (1981b) contends that such bonds are expedient or fleeting. Although we all exchanged addresses at the programme end we have not been in touch since. We talked about friendship and liking each other but it might be argued



that this was a case of not actively disliking the other group members. I still have confused feelings about the impact and the cliché of the “group shout”.

The activities seemed important and perhaps the part of the process that was the most easy to understand. In this respect, we were very managerialist and positivistic in the manner in which we responded to the set objectives. As a group we talked a great deal about “teamwork” and “effectiveness”. Moreover, it could be said that processes of continuity theory (Widdershoven, 1993) played an important hand. Each “yellow card” that we were dealt we followed to the letter. At no particular point did our group challenge this “supplied narrative”. This was not true of other participants. Thus it was a shock when the participant sat out of a bridge building activity. Also, it was also a shock when, rushing around one day, I bumped into a delegate who was exuding nonchalance and indifference. I asked him if his group had accomplished a particular stage and he shrugged his shoulders. I suggested to him that he did not seem particularly bothered and he said “Nope!”.

We were out in “big” scenery. Rock pinnacles and cliffs, gorges and rivers. The “outdoors” was playing a major part in my individual experiences. Perhaps more than many of the other OMD experiences undertaken, the use of the outdoors felt like “commodification”(Willmott and Alvesson, 1992) in process. But, for the group being outside was often associated with adventure and fun. In this experience there were few real shades of death (as in Menlove-Edwards (1939) story) or despondency and dejection, albeit with humour.(Darwent, 1995) This programme seemed to exemplify the “happy ending” phenomenon and “emotion structure” that was argued as possible to template over Kolb’s (1984a) learning cycle. But we created this. As such it points up the influence of the paradigm.

As a facilitator, Ross was quite paternalistic. He was a strange combination of guardian angel and, on occasion, a *Monty-Pythonesque Large Foot or Ten Ton Weight*. He seemed omnipresent and omnipotent. Because of this, more perhaps than during other OMD experiences, his role raised the interesting idea of the potential function of a facilitator as *narrator for narratives*. This is an intriguing



idea and one that recasts the facilitator part in a very fresh light. It is not without its difficulties (as seen in the relationship between Clive and Jane). But, in one sense, when Bank (1994:41-42) refers to the need for facilitators to be “talented” the narrator role may constitute part of that acumen. Of course, the danger here is that a facilitator as narrator may work towards a uni-vocal voice for the experience of a given group. Alternatively, he or she will maintain a series of varying narratives and social constructions with different participants. It might be argued that most people do no more or less than this anyway everyday of their lives.



## 7.7 Stories: Final Thoughts.

White (1973 cited in Kohler-Riessman, 1993:19) discusses the idea of story types: tragedy, comedy, romance, satire etc. and investigates how “tellers pour their ordinary lives into the archetypal forms”. “Playing” the positivist, what would the narratives relayed above be classified as? Perhaps the *Rowing Boat Clue Trail* might seem suitable for a Shakespearean trial, a tragedy or a Comedy or Errors? On the other hand, *The Major Project* might fit more readily into an adventure story and even a growing “romance” of friendship between the group participants. A concern of this study, is that once a series of events or a programme become viewed like this to what extent do events follow a self-fulfilling prophecy? (i.e. objectified, externalised and re-internalised (Berger and Luckmann,1971) If the team has decided to be a happy or unhappy team then it is always possible that events will be socially constructed into an appropriate narrative. Within such a notion there is a recollection of “emotional labour” - in such circumstances participants find it increasingly difficult to challenge the emerging narrative pattern.

Widdershoven (1993) raises issues about narrative being concerned with the unity of a person’s life. The implication is that it is a “sense-making” process, with a propensity towards being constructive. In the case of Annette it was demonstrated that this process is not always a “positive” construction of that identity. It can equally be a dismantling of self-esteem or a held set of values. This is something alluded to in the OMD process. It is a task placed firmly within the review process. However, review processes and their associated facilitators may not always be the appropriate place for people to begin to rebuild themselves.

On a summative point, in interpreting the above stories, Fineman and Gabriel’s (1996:188) *caveat* regarding “over-interpretation” should be borne in mind. The interpretations may be seen as constraining in that “they will [always inevitably] send out different messages to different people”.



## **CHAPTER EIGHT: Overall Conclusion – Ongoing Stories.**

The intent of this part of the discussion is to revisit a number of important issues dealt with by the argument above. Its purpose is also to conclude arguments which postulate contributions to knowledge in relation to OMD and to see how these ideas may be moved on. I say “closing artificially” because in spite of the typified and institutionalised (Berger and Luckmann, 1971:65) narrative forms and structures (for example “beginning, middle and end”) the stories carry on – unfinished, continuously emerging, and being constructed – and irrespective of the efforts of any document (including this one) to seek closure.

### **8.1 Revisiting the Arguments.**

The early part of the argument reviewed a range of perspectives within management development writing. In particular, it drew attention to modernistic and positivistic leanings in much management and management development writings giving rise to corporate imperatives constructed around the notions of optimisation (of “effectiveness”, “efficiency” etc.).

Indeed, much of the review and commentary in the early management development section of the discussion was potentially familiar ground to many observers and commentators in the area. The task therein was to focus this literature on the concerns of the current thesis. As such, within the doctoral process, it constructs what Phillips and Pugh (1994:57) term “background theory” - “the [overall] field of study”. The arguments evoked in commentaries such as those by Storey (1989a,b); Baldwin and Padgett (1993) and Fox (1994a,b) assisted in this work. In particular, Storey’s insightful remarks on the paucity of work on the conceptualisation and contextualisation of management development is a useful introductory discussion. The argument provided a response to these lacunae in a complementary manner, by considering ideas from critical perspective writings. In particular, the perspectives of social construction



and narrative building have emerged as valuable in providing insights into managerial experience. These perspectives have been widely discussed in broader and general management commentary for a number of years. However, as shown this has been less so the case in OMD writings. In summary, this initial section discussed the context, in relation to which, *contemporary* OMD has emerged. Moreover, it also considered perspectives and approaches (social construction and narrative) that will assist in developing fresh discussion on OMD.

The next part (Part II) of the discussion engaged with what Phillips and Pugh (1994:58) suggest is the “focal theory”. In the present argument this turns attentions to writings and commentaries on “outdoor management development” (OMD). Here, a number of contributory ideas to assist in developing understanding of OMD were developed. In the first of these, the mooring of contemporary OMD to a positivistic and modernistic management development pedigree was overtly underlined. It related to a broader concern raised by Boje, Gephart and Thatchenkery (1996:4) that modernism seeks to: “colonize new sectors of the state in particular government and socio-cultural sectors”. This was associated with an equally insidious concern regarding “representationalism” (critiqued by Chia, 1996) as underpinning “deeply rooted ideological persuasions” (Hassard and Holliday, 1998:1) that influence processes of construction for many individuals. This is not commented on elsewhere in the OMD literature. That section of the argument considered the consequences, on OMD, of this “mooring”. And, the argument discussed attempts to construct the modernistic concept of an “industry”. Whilst acknowledging the operation of social constructive processes within this, the point was made that the positivistic aim (of many OMD providers and commentators) was to engender legitimation in relation to shared concerns over modernistic meta-narrative imperatives.(Aldrich and Fiol, 1994) In other words, to be “seen” as part of the world of business rather than outside (and hence irrelevant to) it. Associated with this a desire to escape the cachet of outdoor pursuits and outdoor education and an attempt to be embraced by a perceived orthodoxy and establishment of management development was noted. This part of the argument also debates



how the above-mentioned positivistic patterns are operationalised within programmes (i.e. the appearance and impression of programmes working in relation to this construct). In particular, this involved how the concept of isomorphic transfer has become the vehicle for a corporate imperative associated with optimal effectiveness and efficiency. This perspective and the linear “before-after”, “input-output” methodologies it has invoked have had a propensity to perpetuate a constrained and myopic approach to discussing experiences within OMD. Moreover, the persistent use of a particular range of ‘popular’ (reductionist) models and (modernistic) structures (i.e. linear, grid and cyclical) within the conceptualisation of OMD underlines this point. Up to this moment in time, commentators on OMD have simply not addressed issues in these terms. As such these ideas constitute useful contributions to knowledge and understanding in relation to OMD. This is equally the case with the next stage of the argument.

The discussion at this point also drew attention to a number of representational “themes” recurrent in OMD writing. These are the representations of “reality”, “outdoors”, “novelty” and “risk”. The notions they seek to discuss have been appreciated mainly from a modernistic and positivistic standpoint in OMD experiences i.e. they are “gauged” in relation to the extent that they enhance “programme effectiveness” and are deemed by many writers to offer no problematical ontological issues. Ideas concerning social construction and narrative suggest that understandings of “reality”, “outdoors” etc. are more likely to be understood through sense-making processes effected by individuals socially interacting. Certainly, debates surrounding conceptualisations of “reality” pervade, or underpin, consideration of the debates concerning “outdoors”, “novelty” and “risk”. Let us make some final reflections in relation to these notions bearing in mind that there is no wish to continue privileging these long-standing representations. Rather the wish is to blur boundaries and reconsider the frame of reference in which they reside in relation to a socially constructed perspective.



In the case of the “outdoors”, it has been discussed as a spiritual, energy-filled (Price, 1974) and recreational space. Its function simply as a less intriguing, yet nevertheless crucial, “backdrop” (Livesey, 1982) to human activity is also suggested. In many ways the “outdoors” as conceptualised in OMD remains enigmatic. It can be concluded that within an argument that champions social constructive perspectives it is difficult to see a separation, or discretization, of “the outdoors” from the creation and imagination of the holistic experience. To “offer” the “use” of the outdoors as a “tool” or resource to be consumed seems perhaps reductionist and moving towards an ethos of commodification.(Alvesson and Willmott, 1992) As cited above, McAulay and Sims’ (1995a:13) concern for an acknowledgement of the “mystery”, “magic” and “beauty” (in learning) echoes well in a discussion on working outside in OMD. The outdoors is not automatically annexed as part of the “work” domain. It is, at best, “borrowed” by programmes but not readily or easily tamed or managerially controlled. In this context, it becomes less easy to engage in positivistic “predicting the plot” of what are emergent social interactions in relation to the changing dynamics of the physical environment (weather, ease of terrain etc.) The narrative accounts sought to portray some of these experiences. During the “Major Project” story, there was a sense that the climbing, caving and diving were commodities and resources being “used” for the programme. But, the intensity of the experiences, imagination and emotions seemed to push this thought aside. It was as if they had been “storied” into a something of greater significance. “We” were not behaving that way because “we” were becoming better managers, “we” were becoming friends who trusted each other as much as anything else (- my perception?). As Steffy and Grimes (1992 cited in Boje *et al.* (1996:29)) suggest “people are not part of a well-oiled machine” (even when the “outdoors” is attempted to be marshalled as part of that machine). Equally Scott and Hart (1989 cited in Boje *et al.:(ibid)*) counters a popular view underpinning certain perspectives in management development that “people are essentially defective and malleable”. Perhaps processes relating to human interaction in “the outdoors” work powerfully against such postulations. It is not just a question of recasting our view of human behaviour. Livesey (1982) raises the idea of the “artificiality” of the outdoors in training and development contexts where the intention is to



prepare people for experiences in environments other than outdoor pursuits activities. This is curious given that the office may be construed in the same manner. Although the building and furniture etc. have facticity, meanings associated with such physicality are consequences of social construal. Why should it have any more validity or authenticity for human experiences than outdoor spaces and environments? As suggested above, in terms of the activities when I was a participant the sense of commodification of the environment dissipated as stories emerged and were constructed. Yet when operating as more of an observer this commodification appeared more prescient. Perhaps ironically, management learning seems accused of commodifying the environment for its own ends whereas outdoor pursuits are more automatically associated with pleasure, enjoyment, self-development and harmony in relation to the outdoors. However, these experiences also occur in OMD. It is as if the management objectives can be suspended or superseded by alternative narrative-making: narratives about friendship, comradeship and temporary respite (or not – sic: Ibbetson and Newell, 1996) from the “serious” business of corporate politicking.

“Novelty”, in representationalist terms, was associated with the emergence or engendering of creativity and renewal in some form or another. Novelty in OMD thus appears linked with the idea of “difference”. But, different to what? Novelty throws us back to the discussion above on “outdoors”. An idea seems to be a contrast with the office-bound, urban-based stereotypical image of corporate experience. It might be construed that this is an allusion (however crude) to modernistic imagery and semiology: i.e. the stressed corporate executive battling his or her way through the concrete corporate jungle and certainly one that popular culture (Hassard and Holliday, 1998:1) has pointed up. In this, echoes of romanticism and *pastoralism* - a flight from environments of late twentieth century modernism to an alternative “life” are part of the stories unfolding. It might even be suggested that there is something primeval and primitive surrounding individual construction of novelty in OMD. Something that makes defenders of “middle-class”, “professional” and “civilised” meta-narrative conceptualisations of “management” feel distinctly ill at ease.



Not disconnected from these ideas on novelty are conceptions surrounding the thematic representational presentation of *risk*. While risk is an inherent part of life it is not necessarily drawn as sharply into focus as on OMD programmes. However, the preoccupying commentary concerns logistical and health and safety dimensions. Controlling and using risk for (allegedly) heightening the effectiveness of a given programme are modernistic and positivistic imperatives. Control of events and people, over-riding corporate imperatives, preconceived notions concerning the middle-class credentials of the historical influences and, more recently, managerialist values have assisted in constructing a managerialist approach to risk. It has been suggested in the arguments above that the heightening of imagery surrounding “risk acts” provides a powerful spur for generating and stimulating stories. Within this, the oft-cited idea in OMD of ‘real’ and ‘perceived’ risk can be argued as wholly dependent on individual processes of social construction - risk is always a matter of perception of degree. Price (1974), among others, goes as far as saying that in most “managed” experiences in the “outdoors” risk has largely been minimised. Thus the dialectic between perceived risk and artificial risk is diminished. With risk operating only at the level of imagination it emerges as a process of social construction. In this it seems to both initiate and “flavour” ongoing stories. OMD programme “risk management” can be seen as part of a modernistic discourse that suppresses “unmanaged” notions pertaining to ideas of creativity, emotion and spirituality. Gabriel (1995:477-501) alludes to this idea with the concept of the “unmanaged organization”: “a kind of organizational dreamworld in which desires, anxieties and emotions find expressions in highly irrational constructions... [it includes] ... myths, jokes, gossip, nicknames, graffiti and cartoons”.

In summary to this part of the discussion, the argument calls for a social constructive perspective to be appreciated in relation to OMD experience. To pretend a focus on the “outdoors”, “risk” or “novelty” is an unhelpful representationalist contribution. It purports discrete variables which of course marries well with the positivistic pedigree of much of the research and writing to date. Rather, meaning emerges in relation to a rich, complex and ever-dynamic interaction by people as their subjective “realities” are maintained and



transformed in relation to myriad influences. It is timely to forget the delineations of “outdoors”, “risk” or “novelty”.

The next stage of the argument undertook a diachronic perspective. This was a new contributory argument for OMD commentaries and as such portrayed a series of unfamiliar (sic: “unconventional” and “untraditional”) insights in relation to more commonly accepted ones. As a consequence of that discussion it is important to restate the concerns raised over an institutionalised and objectified “account” that culminates in OMD. This modernistic meta-narrative of “OMD history” is unhelpful in developing a more involved (less simplistic) understanding of how meaning is created by people on programmes. Many of the perceptions relating to militaristic, mountaineering, “adventurous”, literary, popular cultural (diachronic and contemporaneous) influences are constructed into individual meaning in an institutionalized social objective reality - reified and externalized as “facts” and unequivocal accounts and images. (Berger and Luckmann, 1971) But, individuals are sense making rather than sense taking. A greater appreciation of the multifarious and ongoing ideas associated with OMD in relation to primary and secondary socializing processes will sustain richer and more meaningful accounts of OMD experiences.

What will future discussion hold for these problematic broader meta-narratives? Boje, Gephart and Thatchenkery (1996:25) have underlined debates concerning difficulty in sustaining the macro or “*grand* narrative”. They have noted a tendency to fragmentation and disconnectedness in macro and meta-narratives pertaining to science. In this respect, the notion of “industry” or sector in OMD has been of questionable value, certainly in terms of sought legitimisation or credibility. (Aldrich and Fiol, 1994) With reference to OMD, the term “industry” serves more as a pejorative or negative term more often associated with, or employed in, the reporting of unfavourable, tragic or derogatory news (i.e. accidents or fatalities in the “outdoor industry”). Even by its own corporate imperative terms this meta-narrative has not been “effective”. Almost certainly (although perhaps regrettably), movements and efforts will continue by certain



organizations and individuals to construct and control some form of representations that adhere to this attempt.

Equally, how will accounts of OMD history be constructed, and by whom, in the years to come? How, and to what extent will they coalesce, make sense or become meaningful? The argument demonstrates the extent to which various activities (for example, the military and outdoor pursuits) have contributed to the experience of OMD but have now waned (or been transformed – the “SAS stories”) to some extent. What spheres of activity will be overtly courted by OMD providers and emerge a part of a fresh modernistic meta-narrative maintained into the symbolic universe (Berger and Luckmann, 1971:110) of an institutionalised OMD? Will Hahn continue to be designated as *the* founder of this form of outdoor experience or will an adjusted narrative come into play? One of the important arguments and conclusions in this section of the thesis is the limiting effect of the rigidity, yet frailty, of the “story” (or meta-narrative) of Hahn and *Outward Bound* as the moment of conception of work in the area. A wide range of influences, that pre-date and run concurrently with Hahn (and the “managerialist epoch”), have been suggested. It seems, in hindsight of this discussion, that this particular institutionalised meta-narrative (both *per se* and in terms of its claims) has been long overdue for questioning. As Curt (1994:12) has aptly noted: “stories only endure if actively maintained” and, indeed, Hahn’s has been strongly (in the “downstream” sense (Chia, 1996:1)) propagated. These matters have been underlined as important in the argument above by Josselson and Lieblich (1993:xiii) who talk of: “narrative [seen] as dynamic and changing, as itself the product of *psychological, sociological* and *historical* influence”. The Hahn *Outward Bound* “story” is an arbitrary representationalist “timemarker” imbued with the commensurate effects of ephemeral “Golden Age” nostalgia. Curt (*ibid*:p.59) talks of the “making and unmaking of texts” and stories. It can be seen that this is better considered as an everyday individual organic process. It is as a consequence of such processes that individuals undergo the experiences of “sense-making” according to which Kohler-Riessman states: “Individuals construct past events to claim identities and construct lives.”(Kohler-Riessman, 1993:1)



How and to what extent will individual and group accounts and stories generate a different debate to that of the predominant meta-narratives in OMD. Stories and narrative are no novel “optimum solution” in response to all these concerns. This would be to reinforce the positivism that is endemic in research concerned with the area. Narrative is not a panacea, nor is it intended to suggest herein that it will provide some halcyon moment in the study of OMD. Alternatively, it discusses the construction and meaning of experience in a fresh way. And, hopefully, ideas related to the “humanness” of managing will be part of that understanding.

Nevertheless, the methodological predilection of OMD appears to have suppressed, or eclipsed, contributions from approaches such as narrative (testimonies, diaries, anecdotes, stories etc.) and this remains problematic. In spite of this occurrence these forms of commentary, written personal narrative, do exist in OMD literature. In particular, the argument noted that there was a cluster of narrative-type work in the mid-to late 1980s (for example, *inter alia*, Van Zwieten (1984); Long (1984, 1987); Galagan (1987); Gall (1984); Crawford (1988)). It was suggested that such accounts have often been dismissed (within the predominant positivist and quantitative environment) as “anecdotal”.(Irvine and Wilson, 1994; Jones, 1996) For such critics narratives have little to contribute. OMD narrative writing has been disproportionately effected by American and Australian women writers. This is interesting given that women (and ethnic groups) are so obscure and eclipsed in OMD commentary (comparable to many “mainstream” areas of management commentary) and yet it is they who have been the main exponents of the narrative form. The thesis made a range of comments (following *inter alia*: McAdams, 1993; Philips, 1995; Fineman and Gabriel, 1996; Gabriel, 1998) on the form, structure and style of these stories. This afforded a novel (within OMD) reflective commentary that sought to understand the composition, characteristics and themes exhibited in these attempts including: style, image, emotions, structure types, agentic characterisation, historical symbols and personalities, metaphor, and, the role of chronology and humour. It can be surmised that, many of these considerations barely received attention in many other reports and accounts of OMD experiences.



The written narratives highlight insights into personality, character, emotions, images humour and metaphor. It has been demonstrated that the actual written form can be presented in a number of ways. The argument also showed the role of types of stories (tragedy, comedy etc.), the part to be played by agentic characters (McAdams, 1993:133-161) and the way in which various devices such as scene-setting (Galagan, 1987:40; Blashford-Snell, 1991:15) are brought to bear. However, in creating or observing such categorisations it is important to be wary of generating fresh artificial delineations or representational frameworks.

However, having located articles using stories and narratives in an OMD context it is apparent that many accounts are underpinned by positivistic thinking. The hegemony of the heightened effectiveness for corporate benefit is a powerful and almost insidious influence. The stories I have written seek to be reflexively aware of this. They respond to a feeling that something in the rich potential of narrative has been overlooked or affected by positivistic thinking. They share a concern to avoid “losing their narrative force in superficial prejudice”. (Czarniawska-Joerges and Guillet de Monthoux, 1994:14 quoted in Domagalski and Jermier, 1997:290)

It seems important nevertheless to state, once again, that narratives cannot be deemed to be intrinsically “good”. In one form, the weakness presented by the “happy ending” phenomenon was underlined. Perhaps of particular interest in the present thesis have been ideas initiated and developed above on emotion-experience structures, chronology of emotions in narratives (for example: the “happy-ending” phenomenon) and the discussion of these with regard to more traditional models (for example: Kolb’s experiential learning cycle). In respect of writing on OMD these are novel comments.

Moreover, the Stories Chapter underlined the point that narratives relate unpleasant dimensions and the arguments herein have been at pains to make this clear. The “Planned Mountain Walk”, for example, conveyed a strongly negative experience for many, if not all, members of the group. Low morale, dejection, anger and frustration were the emotions apparent in people’s behaviour. In



relation to this it is interesting to consider the extent to which unitary modernistic concepts (for example, the effective and efficient team) can be seen as variably portrayed in operation or even undermined. In the case of the *Major Project* the *perception* or social construction was one of common cause or purpose. But this secondary socialisation was sustained over a short period of time. Would there be an inevitable parting of the ways or disagreement if the time span of courses were extended? Rather, for example, like the conflicts in *Castaway 2000* (BBC1, 2000) where people spent a year on the Hebridean Island of Taransay. The suggested reply is only alluded to here since, given the time spans of the fieldwork, such discussions are beyond the scope of the current study.

Interestingly, a storied or narrativized consideration comments interestingly on experiences during programme reviews in OMD. The argument illustrated how socially constructed subjective realities (Berger and Luckmann, 1971:147) are significant within this context. Moreover, such an approach places on an equal footing the (modernistically) perceived “informal” and “formal” moments and processes within programme experiences. For some facilitators (who are seeking to build and control unifying visions for teams or are pursuing some other agenda) reviews are “risky” situations

Nevertheless, in the narratives generated it was recognised that social construction would allow me to present narratives from *my own viewpoint only*. It would be very difficult, if not impossible, to enter, in a comprehensive manner, the holistic mind and experience of another person. It did however, afford an opportunity to comment (from within the programme) on *my perception of the other participants’ experiences*. (And, hopefully other individuals experiencing in relation to an OMD context will have empathy with my accounts.) But, it is useful here to note Hassard’s (1995:143) reflexive turn when he refers to the researcher as mediator and “not the core of authority”. Equally, Wood (1992:165) cites Carr’s idea that “life admits no selection process – there is no narrator in command”. (However, a facilitator as narrator may well be “in command”.) For this reason the drawing up (by myself and fellow participants) of a series of personal narratives or statements relating to me was valuable. This provided



some context for my processes of social construction and subjectivities. Many previous studies have sought to comment from alternative stances (for example: observer, provider, overt researcher). Accounts relating the experience from an experiential viewpoint have long required more humanistic and phenomenological attention. There has been little reflexive concern to “structures” unwittingly engaged and anonymous authorship. Too little is known about authors and the contexts of research projects (often in the purported interests of “objectivity”). As a case in point, where are all the rich stories from facilitators and trainers? There is a void in the literature in this regard. It is suggested that the argument presented in this thesis has, inductively discussed fresh and invigorating insights in relation to a (non-positivistically influenced) narrative approach. So, I have been careful to acknowledge that these are *my* narratives.

Harking back to Cole’s (1993) reflections above on the seminal *Channel 4* programme *Exposure* and its devastating commentary and impact on Ridgeway’s OMD programme, he offered a rare voice of empathy within the “industry” for Ridgeway’s plight. He wondered what the producer of the programme had left on the floor of the editing suite as the images and impressions were constructed. Reflexively, I might ask myself a similar question with regard to my work: “What have *I* left on the cutting room floor”. My narrative accounts are *my* accounts, nothing more, nothing less. What is present in the stories is what I have deemed important in the experiences as experienced. But *I*, and the next person, are inevitably different. For this reason the personal narrative seeks to inform and present an image of some of the context in relation to which I try to make sense. (Weick, 1995) It cannot be comprehensive (and, moreover, how can it ever be as *I*, like anyone else, perpetually reconfigure accounts and stories) but it does constitute an array of substantially informed, and reflected upon, images. I have sought to leave the positivism behind in order to write reflexively aware stories that do not perpetuate a privileging of positivism. This is problematic because many of the very structures that a story uses to tell its “this, then that” (Watson, 1999a:6) might implicitly be queried as positivistic. Stories usually “head” somewhere in some way (Ricoeur’s notion of “emplotment” (Wood, 1991:10-



11)) and this prior knowledge discloses what is afoot. So what have I done? I have tried to see the story as emergent relating to Weick's (1995) idea that sensemaking precedes interpretation. As narrator-writer this is difficult. I have tried to show that the stories are a convergence of social interaction and construction. I have tried to underline and draw attention to the idea that the other people constructing my story are not "actors" boxed in. They have lives in other secondary socialised contexts that hitherto may not have played a part in the ways we make meaning of our experiences. Nevertheless, making this point, regarding this view of society as subjectivity reality (Berger and Luckman, 1971:147) I have not overlooked the extent to which experiences may have been perceived to have been constructed through a perspective of society as objectively realised. (*ibid*:p.62) For example, the influence of institutionalised (*ibid*:p.65) and representationalist aspects of popular culture on managerial identities. (Hassard and Holliday, 1998:1)

My stories are idiosyncratic. Through the framework of social construction and participant observation there is little else that they could acceptably be construed as. They are repeatable in as much as all people construct personal visions of the world that they experience. In this way, these experiences are unique. The act may, in broad terms be repeatable, the experience can never be. The "same stone can never be cast into the same river twice" - even were the stone to be retrieved. The stone is older, and at the very least changed, even in the smallest way, and the water has moved along its course.

The stories generated engage a broad range of styles, formats and effects in an attempt "to give life to the experience". The reflective narratives that follow them have been an attempt to draw out meaning and learning from the experiences. These have referenced the material elaborated in the preceding chapters of the thesis. However, as Josselson and Lieblich (1995:1) comment this should be a process involving "sense making" rather than the oft-lauded "common-sense making" (pointing up the objective reality – subjective reality tension noted by Berger and Luckmann, 1971). This is supported by Deetz (1992) and Weick (1995). Deetz sees that "the hegemony of modernism resides in everyday



institutional activities and purported common sense.” Hence common sense and received wisdom become seen as aspects that potentially suppress or conceal further dimensions of experience. Within the narratives above, ideas concerning humour, fun, spirituality and emotion were introduced and discussed. Such concepts do not, perhaps, sit comfortably with certain images or castings of “common-sense”. Within a managerial or management development setting acknowledgement of their presence and role seems increasingly pressing. Few opportunities are as powerful and versatile as stories or narrative in providing ways for portraying these experiences.

What of the lives and experiences of managers within OMD as shown by narrative? It has been noted above that in recent management writing increasing attention has been focused on ideas such as creativity, innovation, spirituality, ethics and emotion. Employing a method of fieldwork and write-up that concertedly seeks to relate, and comment on these ideas also fulfils the role of contributing to a movement of legitimisation for “talking about such things”. This is something clearly alluded to by Fineman (1993) and Fineman and Gabriel (1996).

## **8.2 Thinking About Methodological Contributions.**

It has been discussed and can be concluded that, methodologically speaking, narrative is a valuable means by which chronology and history can be contextualised and allowed to provide a contributory focus. The effect of diachronic influences and changing social values (class, Victorian ethics, Muscular Christianity, the move from military-*Outward Bound* influence to a managerialist ethos, outdoor pursuits, hero figures and symbols - both historical and contemporary) have all played, and continue to play, a role in OMD. The effect of diachronic influences is inextricably bound up with the present.(Sartre, 1948) These influences purport stereotypes but it cannot be denied that such forms have played (and continue to play) a role in shaping the constructs and



images (Hassard and Holliday, 1998) of OMD on individual perceptions and groups of individuals interactions.

Is this thesis exclusion work? And, in so doing would it not purport a neo-hegemonic paradigm to usurp the currently predominant modernistic-positivistic paradigm? Narratives may be seen, however contestably, as positivistic attempts to “reveal” in a “more effective and efficient” manner certain aspects of human behaviour in a managerial context. This does heighten awareness regarding the dangers of advocating a new hegemony in OMD commentary. This returns to the point of whether or not this research has been involved in “exclusion work”. By this, one paradigm, or set of ideas, is given heightened importance (and validity) over another paradigm composed of alternative tenets. The thrust of the present study has been to demonstrate how subjectivist approaches such as narrative building may complement, as much as challenge, the existing paradigms. The difficulty has been a reluctance by experimental-hypothesis building schools to admit or acknowledge stories as valuable and useful. (Neither is this a quasi-triangulation argument.) These seem short-sighted and, thus, it can be argued that there is further scope for developing individual narrative in OMD experience. By doing so, it is hoped that it will continue to be possible to refocus attention away from the constructs and dictates of the corporate optimisation imperative and towards some of the human aspects of the experience.

Burnett and James (1993), as mentioned above, have suggested that OMD engages the participant both mentally and physically. Through the methodology of participant observation, involving personal experience and narrative building, the research has a profound concern with portraying people as managers but also managers as people. Prior studies of the ilk of Burnett and James’ work have been useful but not particularly probing or reflexive. It is hoped that the employment of narrative, in an OMD context, has moved these ideas forward. The social interactions of people, and how they conduct those activities of their lives that are “work-related”, seem vitally important. Narratives potentially introduce a more powerful lyricism (“poetic ordering” – Ricouer, 1984) that is less apparent in the structures and presentations of models like those examined



above (for example) of tangible and intangible learning (Snell and James, 1994) and Binstead's (1981) notions of "inner" and "outer" worlds - both from similar pedigrees to that of Burnett and James. From the fieldwork it was commented that many of the models of conceptualisation employed on programmes, whilst offering some insight and sense-making (Weick, 1995), do not seem rich in talking about broader contexts. Some commentators may contest that neither are narratives. However, the differing conceptualisations and approaches cast a multifarious set of images that hopefully, while not finishing (this is perhaps never possible) assist in rendering yet more potent account OMD experiences.

### **8.3 Thinking About Thinking and Experiencing.**

Darwinist aspects of narrative seem heightened in a melodramatic fashion within narrative accounts. Yet the physical aspects of survival - rowing a boat, climbing a hill in the rain - are mitigated because risk is reduced by the presence of guides or rescue equipment (e.g. rescue boats). This is, nevertheless, a major aspect of the social construction. The perceptions in OMD of pace and vividness open up pent-up issues - they release feelings, generate social constructions - "the genie is out of the bottle" and it may be difficult "to facilitate it back in". But, so might, for example, a few drinks during an office party or "night out". OMD should not seek hegemonic claims on human experience and behaviour. Overall, does OMD lend itself to Darwinist narrative? Indeed it has been argued that the *outdoors* seems to provide an obvious and "natural" (in many senses of the word) habitat or "wilderness" for OMD activities.(Long, 1984, 1987)

Useful for any future evolution of thinking narratively for OMD are the tenets of continuity theory and discontinuity theory.(Widdershoven, 1993:6) Implicitly suggested by these concepts is an individual's capacity for imagination and whether or not they can imagine into "a reality" their own roles in any "given" story or narrative. As Boje *et al.* (1996) comment, a valuable question is "how they [experiences] are storied and knowledged into and out of plausibility" (a



concern shared by the concept of “textuality” (Curt, 1994)). Ultimately, it is impossible to ignore the idea that this is a human process and experience and construct above all. OMD contestably *merely* supplies story lines and contexts for participants. These range from explicit written scenarios, simulations and role-plays to the physical setting in which they are performed or acted out. A central aspect of the OMD experience is the degree to which any given participant “buys in” to the prescribed stories. Or, even if they do, to what extent are people in apparently similar situations actually engaging in differently perceived events due to the operation of forces of social construction as suggested by continuity theory? Alternatively, some participants might not “buy in” to the experience at all. They retain existing realities, or create new realities, in a realm seemingly aligned with discontinuity theory. These are no less relevant to the individuals concerned than the realities constructed under continuity theory but the presence of differing conceptualisations, in any given programme (perhaps more often the case than not) is likely to create potent tensions and emotions. There is a resonant linkage or parallel here between the tenets of continuity/discontinuity theory and Berger and Luckmann’s (1971) postulation of society as subjective reality (*ibid*:p.63) and society as objective reality (*ibid*:p.147) respectively.

Equally, extremes in any respect of engagement with the prescribed narrative may create powerful events. For example, in Ridgeway’s programme participants mutinied when they were requested to swim a considerable distance across a freezing loch to the shore. They simply threw *the instructors and facilitators* into the water. Conversely, people may even become reckless in attempting to accomplish a particular task in accordance with a supplied brief. A further example occurred during my car drive back to base after the *Major Project* (discussed above). Why did I (and my fellow team members) not say “it’s just a game”. (Maybe somebody did but I was too engrossed to listen). This happened in another memorable occasion during the fieldwork. Gordon was appointed as temporary leader of another team during a bridge-across-a-river building exercise. One member of his team simply refused to participate (or “play the game”) and sat on a nearby rock for the duration of the activity. Clearly, given



the above arguments emotion and imagination play important roles in experiences (and not as “variables” (Josselson and Lieblich, 1993)). However, hitherto their potential contributions are poorly commented in OMD.

As alluded to in the previous Section, many OMD programmes and experiences, claim a propensity for the release of emotions. This can perhaps be perceived in a number of respects. Firstly, that the expression of emotion is not usually considered a part of managerial behaviour in a wide range of texts. This is a contention that has been pointed out and addressed by a number of commentators, not least Fineman (1993). Secondly, that there may be a “British” aspect to this issue (in a positivistic, generalising, stereotyping manner). Are many British people less inclined to express emotion except in particular circumstances? This would indeed conform to a particular stereotype and generalisation. Mumby and Putnam (1992) state that emotions are often portrayed as negative. This is something that needs to be addressed and surmounted if narrative is to be allowed to play a more useful and apparent contribution. Clearly, it seems implausible to make generalisations relating to emotional behaviour. Idiosyncrasy must always play a role. Here, it may be concluded that OMD assists people in generating particular contexts and seems able to provoke people to express emotions in a more visible manner. (However, not in the way many accounts are currently positivistically construed.) The narratives emerging from the fieldwork have furnished a valuable means with which to portray this and to move beyond “emotionally anorexic”(Fineman, 1993:9) accounts. It is not being said that the narratives express any notion of “truer” emotions in such circumstances but certainly that presentation becomes more emotional and vivid. Ultimately, any range of images may be presented through those emotions.

Associating Festinger’s concern, stated above, that two thoughts are difficult to hold simultaneously in Occidental thought this has interesting consequences for Widdershoven’s declarations with regard to continuity and discontinuity theory and the expression of feelings and emotions. There are implications for the extent to which individuals see stories as being “real” and the extent to which people



live out stories or believe they live a “real” life independently of such narratives. This is vital with regard to the future development of narrative accounts in OMD. One of the underlying implications is that some participants will never acquiesce to imagery, imagination or emotion playing a role within OMD experiences. They will seek to live “objectively” outside the experience - they will not commit or “buy-in” to what is taking place (discontinuity theory). This is not just an issue of intra-social construction but also an issue of buying into externally provided story lines and hence issues of ownership of power and control. Given the above arguments, there is also clearly the concern that the above reflections are constructed from within a Western reference of thought. As noted above Festinger suggests that Western writers find it difficult to hold two juxtaposed perspectives in mind simultaneously. It is interesting that he locates it as an occidental phenomenon. If it exists it must be suggested that for a more holistic development to take place this issue should be addressed. Certainly, the argument above suggests that OMD has been a victim of dichotic and myopic thinking. As Boje *et al* (1996) contend it is timely to reject the overriding validity of the “univocal voice” and to seek myriad and multifarious accounts. Various influences contribute to these constructions and show that they are contextually related. Domagalski and Jermier (1997:291) note that: “Czarniawska-Joerges and Guillet de Monthoux consider literature as having the ability to expand the reader’s range of knowledge by offering access to the value systems of different cultures and historical periods; it is these deep-seated and long standing values which profoundly shape present day business behaviour”.

The reasons and processes accounting for how prescribed narratives (i.e. as supplied written and oral briefs within a given activity on a programme) work cannot be separated (“objectively”) from a process of building personal stories. These, in turn, are bound up with interwoven ideas of both managerial and personal Self-Concept (Hopkins, 1985) and identity. The argument has made considerable efforts to underline that even though a range of insights and perspectives on the activity of management have been suggested, many managers may feel that behaviour models desired by most organizations still centre around *effectiveness* and *efficiency*. And so, some participants construct their



engagement in the course as “effectively” as possible within those contexts. Evidently, this does not preclude personal journeys of other kinds (fantasies and dreams within the “unmanaged organization” (Gabriel, 1995). Harry’s participation was perhaps a good example of this. Although he performed tasks with his everyday efficiency, his mind and heart could not stop wrestling with his concept of the “outdoors” as a place of leisure and escape. Desperately he seemed to think through how the two might come together (a reflection of Festinger’s concerns outlined above).

#### **8.4 Facilitation and Control: Consequences for Sense-Making.**

Issues of power and control may be important in relation to many respects with (“orthodox”) OMD having prided itself on providing environments containing novelty, risk (real and perceived) that generate a panoply of human emotions and behaviour. Nevertheless, this altruistic and Utopian image (when and wherever it is proposed or constructed) needs to be challenged. In particular it needs to be questioned in respect of the role of facilitators and the OMD providing organization *per se*. A number of commentators have reflected (albeit briefly) on this issue. Burletson and Grint (1996) have moved the concern forward, however, there is much more work to be carried out with regard to this. Facilitators can be *effective* or *ineffective* in their role. By these terms they can all too readily play the role of poor surrogate, or temporary, line managers. If OMD has a propensity to nurture, *inter alia*, creativity and spirituality (although it cannot be suggested that it has exclusive propensity to accomplish this) then facilitators are powerful gatekeepers in such processes. Arbnor and Bjerke (1997:160) focus on the potency of the act of creation or construction in review: “carrying out a dialogue is the basis of the act of creating knowledge and all the participation of the creation of knowledge in the world”.

Accounts, stories and narratives assist in discussing this aspect of the OMD experience and the behaviour of facilitators within it. The thesis suggests that



there may be scope for reviewing or recasting facilitators as *narrators* and discussing them in this respect. The omnipresent and omnipotent behaviour that facilitators have the power to assume within the construction of a programme suggests many comparable characteristics. As narrator, this may impart a powerful influence on the “creation of realities” every level. Attention has been drawn to the facilitator as a “constructor” and negotiator of experience. They should not be preoccupied with competencies but rather consider the value of story-telling and as partners in story-telling – interacting through discussions to see others construct “their” stories.

My stories are not intended as a “story of stories” (an issue raised by Watson, (1999a:14)) However, much of the writing in OMD may be viewed as such. Are some facilitators engaged in attempting to create a story of stories. This could be associated with a modernistic unitary, power-maintaining, teamwork conceptualisation. Where this is the case, surely, a pluralistic approach may have more value for the individuals involved. Of course, there is no need for anyone to “play along” with a given facilitator’s efforts. Moreover, facilitators are anonymous or stereotypical at best. There is scope for discussing their experiences and accounts of their experiences. They seem to be objectified and remote – cast in the role of the detached and omnipotent “professional”.

OMD seems to have some scope for drawing out suppressed or less “controlled” feelings. As already mentioned, Gabriel (1995:477-501) considers ideas relating to “the unmanaged organization”. He sees dream and fantasies as ways of obviating or usurping supervisory (sic:facilitator) control. The control of spontaneity, the power of obedience over individuality (Boje *et al.* 1996) seem to force their way through the images and masks. In an obverse form of argument what about seeing the facilitator as “powerless” or relatively “impotent” in processes that assist in creating meaning? This, of course, happens in everyday managerial life. However, as a form of management development, OMD seems to offer rare opportunities for experiences that give rise to the creation and negotiation of situations. These may not necessarily be actions that sponsor the key practitioner paradigm of optimal effectiveness and efficiency. Rather, it is



likely to draw out aspects of the individual which may not find ready expression in many other facets of “managerial life”. But, as Knights and Willmott remind the discussion, it is important to view management in all its respects as a: “fully social practice”. (Knights and Willmott, 1995:8)

## 8.5 The Onward Journeys.

One of the implicit questions, perhaps, is where might subsequent work on OMD story-telling lead? Some general comments might be made on this issue for management development overall, however, the key focus here is OMD. In looking ahead, there are a number of points to consider. Firstly, it must again be remembered that the actual amount of writing on OMD, *in toto*, is neither particularly large nor extensive in comparison to other literatures. And, as noted above, it has frequently been conducted within one particular methodological perspective (i.e. positivism). Moreover, the emphasis of many accounts (principally prepared by OMD practitioners) has been to underline the “benefits” or “effectiveness” of OMD experiences. This has combined with conformity (Ralston and Elsass, 1991) to appear “business-like” perhaps unavoidably connected to what Jones (1989:18) describes as a fear of killing off “the goose that lays the golden eggs”. Any narrative presentation and writing (present or future) in OMD may be set counter to the flow of this history. Or, by “history” is it appropriate to say, equally, predominant meta-narrative? In so doing Habermas (1975) cited in Boje *et al.* (1996:29) underlines that “people constantly feel obliged to replicate normative structures”. A consequence for future studies on OMD of the thesis is a desire that this is recognised and that responses are sought.

Is there a need for OMD to consider ideas and not just the corporate imperative of heightened effectiveness? The desire is perhaps to blend the “narrow technical” with aspects of a more full “social practice”.(Knights and Willmott, 1995) Isomorphic transfer seems to have descended into an unhelpful concept in



this respect. It has become a piece of jargon that seeks to reinforce and legitimise the links with the wider world of business (in a similar vein perhaps to the construal of the “industry” narrative.) Equally, there seems to be value in challenging or surpassing a dependency on linear, dualistic or analytical reductionist representations. For example, the thesis proposes that it might be concluded that the idea of isomorphic transfer might alternatively be conceived of as a process of *narrative transfer*. Whereby individual stories built up through OMD experiences weave into the holistic entity of an *individual’s* organizational experience. This may have absolutely nothing at all to do with rendering a person more effective or more efficient. The forces of continuity theory that are in operation within a programme link the constructions, narratives, simulations and role-playing to the professional and even (very importantly) the private spheres. The critical perspective literature has provided an opportunity to embark on such a task. Rich material is available with which to consider OMD. However, in the case of narrative in OMD, it does not really seem to have been permitted (at least up to present) to play a significant or expansive role.

A further idea might be to attempt to write more ambitious and varied stories that challenge the representational forms of stories and story-telling. As “difficult” literature might be read in Joyce’s *Ulysses* (Hickey, 1984) so might unusual and paradigm challenging accounts be constructed henceforth. This is a big step. In considering it for OMD, the initial attempts to “try to overcome the logic of linearity and modernism” (Hassard, 1995:43) must be undertaken.

In addition to the above conclusions, several areas worthy of further research, emerge from the present arguments. It has been argued above that it is more than timely for OMD to reconsider the narratives that it has pursued and allowed to predominate its conceptualisation over recent decades. This thesis has argued that the meta-narrative building tendencies within OMD narrative overall, for example: “industry”, the narrative of the pursuit of the corporate imperative and those relating to historical representations are in need of review. This has developed at the expense of personal and idiosyncratic narrative. Once this is acknowledged there are many directions in which future study can be pursued.



Implicit in the loosening of the ties of the predominant narratives in OMD is a possibility that the experiences of OMD may have fresh, possibly even unique, comments to make on the managerial life and its images and identities. Moreover, the main thrust of this work has been to demonstrate the role that narrative can play in relation to OMD and the extent to which this may offer alternative commentaries of people behaving within a managerial context in OMD settings.

Additionally, the discussion herein on the historical contributions has provided a context for the narrative considerations within this work. The ideas and leads developed within that Chapter provide many fruitful prospects for research directly on that issue. In particular, there is scope for closer biographical examination of Hahn - *the* “Founding Father” of outdoor development. A pluralistic account of the diachronic influences on OMD needs to take these ideas beyond a set of unchallenged givens and perhaps seek the construction of individual narratives in relation to it (Holmes’ (1997) approach to doing this (as already shown above), for example, in the context of military history is an interesting example in this light).

The potency of the review sessions has also been underlined in that they play a powerful role in generating narrative at a range of levels. Whether from a psychological, sociological or management learning perspective, understanding of this underdeveloped phenomena can only develop with greater attention. The review is a moment where stories are worked, reworked and propagated. As already noted, the facilitator as narrator is an important contributor to (and “manager” of) realities in this sphere. Furthermore, the argument has commented on the British context of OMD experiences. Definitions of terms such as “British” are fraught with representationalist and constructivist difficulties. If an argument can be sustained relating to particular ethnic responses and behaviours to (written accounts of) OMD experiences, then it would be interesting to consider, for example, one national or ethnic group with another national or ethnic group. Equally, what role would the roots and origins relating to a particular national experience play in portraying narratives in that setting? Some



insight was provided in the study in relation to France, South Africa and Australia. However, as already stated such work is complex and the work carried out in the literature thus far is minimal and simplistic. The debates merit undertaking at the very least.

Linked to this issue, the invisibility of social class, gender and ethnic identity within OMD writing was underlined. Within the thesis comment has been made in the light of narrative relating to these constituencies. These issues and their relationship with OMD, are rich areas for commentary and probably constitute thesis length studies in their own right.

Finally, the remarks that OMD can make on experiential learning are important. Much of the commentary in the field is overdependent on positivistic and modernistic frames of reference. The templating (albeit within a modernist construct) of an emotion structure – the “happy ending” effect – over Kolb’s well-known provided a reconfiguration and example of this.

In overall conclusion, Kohler-Riessman (1993:1) indicates that tellers and their stories take listeners (readers) into “past worlds” in order “to make a point, often a moral one”. If so are there any moral points presented in this thesis? Certainly, the arguments, narratives and stories express a concern over attempts to contort experience into a unitary perspective or narrative. This is a concern over the hegemony of a particular way of viewing the experience of management. Kohler-Riessman points out that human agency and imagination result in what is incorporated in narrative. What is my role in this moralistic tale? As Goffman (1959) suggests do I ultimately wish to be, as he claims we all do, seen as a “good person”? In this vein, it is important to ensure that *all* our own texts are within the scope of the project subject to examination. (Mulkay, 1985:74 in Curt, 1994:19) But, as a further thought, it is important to remember Fineman and Gabriel’s (1996:188) recommendation not to over-interpret stories (looking for essences and truths). And, Mangham and Overington, (1983:221) remind the discussion that “people... are actors who play characters, moving from character to character” and as such the effect on narrative is osmotic. Gabriel provides



some thoughts: “There was always a fear that modernity would eclipse story-telling” (Benjmin, 1968 in Gabriel, 1995:497) Gabriel goes on to reiterate that “Stories are not peripheral, but central” (*ibid*) and that “stories are not trifles” (*ibid*:p.481). OMD needs to take account of these ideas and the supporting arguments discussed above. Doubtless, the stories will continue.



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