

**Exploring the meaning for clients of  
the arts-related organisational  
consultancy offered by ABS.**

***What are we doing here?***

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# Abstract

The purpose of this study is to explore the relational territory between the arts-related consultancy organisation ABS (not its actual name) and sixteen clients, during a period of six years. The company set out, at the start of this period, to explore the potential of bringing together the practice of consultants who used a Tavistock, or system psychodynamic approach, to organisational consultancy with the practice of artists whose aim was to promote or facilitate creativity. The motivation for the study was the frustration felt by the researcher (the co-founder and CEO of the company) and her colleagues that clients didn't seem to take the work seriously and wanted to book ABS to do something other than the combination of consultancy and creativity being offered.

An approach based on Grounded Theory was developed and adapted to fit the specific kind of data used in the study – mainly the researcher's own process notes, email communications with clients, and accounts of various sorts of meetings.

The study discovered a series of unconscious roles to which consultant, artist and client were assigned in this context – ultimately exploring a dynamic of three in which the consultant was excluded from a pair consisting of client and the artist in-the-mind of the client. The study explores the possibility that the partnership was set up unequally at ABS and this may have pre disposed the pair, of consultant and artist, to splitting - and played a part in attracting a particular set of clients, at a particular time, pre disposed to make use of such an unequal pairing. The potential for developing the dual technology originally imagined is re-examined in the light of these findings.

Accounts of consultancy in other contexts are reviewed. The researcher suggests that her *whole context* approach to assessing the work of her company is unusual and adds to the field a particular sort of account which differs from the more usual case study or review of themes in client organisations.

# Introduction

The object of study of this doctoral research is the relational territory between ABS, a consultancy company which I co founded in 2000, and clients of ABS who responded to what I will describe as its dual technology.

What was distinctive about the company's approach to organisational consultancy during the period covered by the study, was that it combined a system psychodynamic, or Tavistock, approach to consultation with the practice of creative artists.

The focus of the consultants was on the understanding and relief of anxiety and its effects in organisations. We envisaged that artist practice, if adopted by clients alongside the work of the consultants, might enhance clients' capacity to generate creative ideas in response to organisational challenges and opportunities.

However what was originally envisaged changed as we engaged with clients. and as artists began to work inside a consultancy framework rather than offering a distinct practice alongside the work of consultants. It is this combination, of artists working inside a consultancy framework, and clients' engagement with this offer which is the subject of the study.

The study also considers the company's marketing approach and its influence on what was offered to clients. We invited potential clients to large scale interactive events at the Soho theatre to try out the ABS model of working. We were then asked by clients, and began to offer, this 'large group' experience as part of our work.

The motivation for the research was twofold. I was interested in exploring and documenting ABS's dual technology and assessing its usefulness as a potential variant of a system psychodynamic model of consultancy. The second motivation was the experience of frustration that, more often than not, we seemed to attract clients who wanted something from us which was different to the service we thought we were offering – the 'What are we doing here?' of the thesis title.

The data I have used to study our relationships and interactions with clients are a variety of informal and more formal documents generated as part of our contact with sixteen clients during the day to day running of the company over a six year period up to 2008. I wrote the majority of this data myself. I have therefore evolved, and propose in the methodology section of this thesis, an adapted methodology designed to provide me, as researcher, with a sufficiently reflective position – one from which I have attempted to give an account of the work which, alongside my Masters and doctoral studies, was the principal focus of my professional activities for over six years.

Hypotheses which emerged from a study of the data are presented. I propose that the consultants may have been drawn into a series of unconscious roles in response to the organisational dynamics of our clients. The significance of ABS proposing, and clients requesting, away days for large groups (eighty plus) is discussed in relation to these roles, and ideas relating to ABS artists becoming phantastic objects in the minds of our clients. Data relating to the working pair of consultant and artist seem to suggest that the pair may have been used defensively as projection receptacles of 'good' and 'bad' projections from some of our client organisations. A dynamic of three in which the consultant may have been unconsciously excluded by a colluding pair formed by client and artist is explored in relation to the idea of primitive Oedipal splitting.

I evaluate, from a consultancy perspective, the implications of the findings for ABS and its client relationships - exploring both systemic and individual valences which may have pre disposed clients and ABS to combine in the ways they did so consistently. I make proposals, in the light of this understanding, regarding how things might be organised differently for future consultancy work involving artists' practice.

The study's two contributions to the field of system psychodynamic organisational consultancy are proposed as:-

1. The addition, to accounts of consultancy in the field, of a study of a whole context in which consultancy took place over time,
2. An exploration of the potential value of artist practice to clients in combination with organisational consultancy.

# Chapter 1

## Background to ABS consultancy – Theory and Practice Related to its dual technology variation.

### Introduction

This review of related theory and practice will link the dual technology developed and piloted at the company, ABS, to two traditions of practice.

1. The practice of a system psychodynamic approach to organisational consultancy, with a particular focus on the psychoanalytic ideas of Melanie Klein which underpin it.
2. The practice of various forms of improvisation in the arts

When ABS was formed two of the three founding partners were working as organisational consultants using a system psychodynamic framework and, soon after, I (the researcher) began training as an organisational consultant using the same approach, starting a two years Masters in October 2002 at the Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust. The title of the Masters degree was *Consultation and the Organisation: Psychoanalytic Approaches*, the precursor programme to the professional doctorate of the same title, of which this research forms part.

This emphasis in terms of the professional orientation of two of the three founders, and my own direction of travel, provided the early discussions with a dominant framework, that of system psychodynamics. In this context the arts became a variation to the consultancy model.

Though there is literature from a wide range of perspectives and paradigms, this thesis will focus therefore on literature from the systems and psychodynamic perspectives.

This is partly a developmental choice. Having found the system psychodynamic thinking of my two founding partners very useful I decided to study the

framework in depth – so this Research project and Literature Review, in combination with my masters, has provided me with an opportunity to explore and develop my own understanding of system psychodynamic thinking and practice. Further, in terms of the starting point for the study, it was the *dynamics* of what was happening between ABS and its clients which had both troubled and interested me originally. The decision to concentrate, in terms of theory, on system psychodynamic thinking therefore is also a response to the phenomena discovered. I didn't set out blindly to give an account of the field however. The detail of this Literature Review, in keeping with a Grounded Theory approach, was undertaken after I had identified the principal findings of the study (evangelist, pimp and spy as a dyadic phenomenon and then, later, as part of a dynamic of three). Such findings related to artist practice in only the broadest sense, as will be explored. I therefore decided to explore the framework which seemed to offer the most likely explanation for what was occurring and not to concentrate on a review of arts-based consultation - interesting as that may have been.

This review will start with the practice of a Kleinian approach to psychoanalytic psychotherapy, where system psychodynamic consultancy has its roots, then give an account of the application of psychodynamic thinking and practice at the level of groups and organisational systems.

Ideas from the work of Christopher Bollas (2002) and others in relation to the 'receptive unconscious' and the technology of free association will be explored in relation to ABS's work with artistic improvisation.

The relevance of my background in improvisatory theatre and free associative writing practice, as well as my role as arts festival director for eight years will then be considered.

This will be followed by an account of a pilot consultancy I undertook with the two founding consultants of ABS working with three artists who were recruited to take part.

## **Consultancy - A System psychodynamic Approach.**

In *A Review of Current Methods of Consultation* Czander describes organisational consultancy as:-

*'one or more persons from outside the organisation who are called in to change or add to the efficiency or effectiveness of the client's system.'*(Czander 2000 p147)

Since the 1940s system psychodynamics has provided consultants with a working method in relation to this core task. It is this working method, developed by the social scientists and consultants of the Tavistock Institute (formed in 1946) and related organisations, of which the ABS dual technology was proposed as a variation.

In system psychodynamics systems are viewed as the projective terrain of psychodynamics. This differentiates the system psychodynamic framework from other systemic approaches in the same tradition which focus on the interconnectedness of people in a system but not on projective processes. (Campbell, Kinsella and Caldicott 1994)

System psychodynamics(i.e. psychodynamics at the level of organisational systems) has its roots in the psychodynamics of individual development and the work and ideas in this area of Melanie Klein. I will review aspects of Klein's ideas on the breast/feeding relationship and on the 'Oedipal situation', as she called it, before going on to think about how these ideas and processes may apply in groups and organisations.

### **Melanie Klein – theories based on the breast/feeding relationship.**

Melanie Klein added to Freud's beliefs that individuals were fundamentally driven by instincts and drives, the theorisation of the breast/feeding relationship during the first few months of the new born infant's life, phases of development described by Klein as the paranoid schizoid position and the depressive position.

The infant, according to Klein, enters the world with an internally generated profound anxiety. The milk, delivered by the breast, provides comfort to the new born and the breast becomes its first 'good object'. The process of relieving anxiety begins. When the breast, inevitably, is turned away the infant's innate fear of annihilation attaches itself to the breast, now transformed into a 'bad object'. This splitting of experience by the infant into two different 'part objects', a good breast that feeds and guarantees survival and a bad breast that turns away and threatens annihilation, forms what is meant by a paranoid schizoid response.

Klein describes the unconscious content with which the infant creates such good and bad objects as *phantasy* and the process through which these are *projected into* others as projective identification (Klein 1946). The *identification* part of this latter description relates to the way the *projected into* object becomes *identified* by the infant as if it was entirely composed of the good or bad phantasy sent its way.

The relief of anxiety through the unconscious creation and projection of such phantasies helps with an understanding not only of early infant development but also the working methodology of the analyst, psychodynamically informed manager, consultant or coach who, in receipt of such phantasies from their clients, seek to understand them as a process through which clients try to rid themselves of organisational (as well as personal) anxiety, whatever its source. (Halton 2001)

Developmentally it is the bringing together of the good and bad objects of the paranoid schizoid position which heralds the arrival of the more realistic depressive position response through which more complex 'whole objects' are understood, and taken in by the infant. According to Klein oscillation between a version of these two states continues throughout life however - informing our capacity for action/survival (paranoid/schizoid position) and complexity/development (depressive position).

## **Melanie Klein – the Oedipal situation**

Theories differ about the nature of the Oedipus complex and the period of development during which human beings are supposed to 'resolve' it, or not. Classical Freudian theory on the Oedipus complex focused on resolving rivalry with an individual's 'same sex' parent and occurred between three and six years of age. (Freud 1924)

Klein's views on the 'Oedipal situation', as she called it, brought forward, and therefore changed the nature of, the developmental moment when awareness of the father was considered to become important to the developing child. She locates the onset of the envy at the heart of the Oedipal situation earlier, in the first few months of life, during the paranoid schizoid phase. (Klein 1945 and 1952)

As David Bell put it:-

*'The primitive Oedipal conflict described by Klein takes place in the paranoid-schizoid position when the infant's world is widely split and relations are mainly to part objects.'* (Bell 1992 p174)

The nature of what is represented by the father in this situation, therefore, is splintered and primitive – and the awareness of his arrival is coterminous with the infant's battle to come to terms with his/her perception of an alternately punishing (absent) and idolised (present) mother.

Klein wrote that:-

*'In the baby's mind when he is frustrated (or dissatisfied from inner causes) his frustration is coupled with the feeling that another object (soon represented by the father) receives from the mother the coveted gratification and love denied to himself at that moment.'* (Klein 1952 p49)

In other words the father, arriving on the boundary of the dyad formed by mother and infant, may become the bad object, or denigrated half of a paranoid schizoid split, fuelled by envy.

Erlich describes vividly the infant's perception of this primitive Oedipal 'enemy' as: -

*'perceived monolithically and in black-and-white terms as totally bad., mad, and destructive.'* (Erlich 2001 pp. 128-129)

He contrasts it with a perception of what he describes as an Oedipal enemy, i.e. when the intruder on the boundary is transformed into a different, more complex object and the relationship between the maternal and paternal 'objects' can be borne. He writes:-

*'The Oedipal enemy, on the other hand, is experienced ambivalently, yet as sharing a commonly valued "third".'* (Erlich 2001 p129)

Such splitting by the infant of his/her experience of the breast/mother into good and bad objects (paranoid schizoid position), the process whereby such good and bad objects become understood as whole objects (depressive position), and the processes whereby the Oedipal situation evolves and it becomes possible to bear the 'unknown other' on the boundary, are not simply historical phases in development but continue to inform the individual's relationship to other individuals and groups throughout life. Main describes as reality testing – the constant anxiety-driven projection of phantasy into others, and the containment and return, or not, of such phantasy which provides us with a fundamental process for assessing the world and our position in it. (Main 1985)

### **Wilfred Bion**

When this process takes place in groups, which it often does, the possibilities of projecting and being projected into are multiplied and the risk of being in receipt of multiple projections (in the form of the idealised or persecutory phantasy of others) is increased. Wilfred Bion proposed that, as individuals, we may evade such risks, at least temporarily, by forming an unconscious alliance with other members of a group, to contribute to a particular sort of projection, collectively, and to collectively project this group phantasy elsewhere. (Bion 1961)

Bion observed what he described as three basic assumption behaviours of groups, as it were, in the grip of such unconscious agreements to collectively pool and project – Bion's three basic assumptions. These are basic assumption dependency (BAD) when group members appear to project their capacity to think into a single individual or idea, basic assumption fight flight (BAF) when persecutory phantasy are projected into an enemy who is then fought or fled from and basic assumption pairing(BAP) in which a group seems to invest its potential for creativity into a pair in the group as if they might produce together the solution to the issue in hand. He also noticed a state of mind he described as the 'work group', perhaps equivalent to the depressive position in individual development – in which groups were able to work to a more complicated task with an appropriately task-focused (as opposed to survival focused) leader.

Bion did not take such theories beyond his study of small groups at the Tavistock however. It was left to others to extend his theories about anxiety in groups, to the even more complex realm of both large groups and organisational systems.

### **A note on large groups.**

Large group dynamics are important in the context of ABS's work as the company's clients seemed, increasingly, to want consultants and artists to work with larger and larger groups. 'Reality testing' is particularly difficult in large groups because the potential number of transactions is multiplied exponentially. Main describes the process whereby large groups take on/get stuck in 'single entities' in order to protect people from the realisation of the multiplicity of competing relationships (Main 1985).

### **Consultancy**

The scaling up of Bion's work and the proposal that sense could be made of psychodynamics at a whole organisation or multiple work group level happened in the 1950s and 60s.

Organisational consultants and social researchers Jaques and Menzies Lyth were employed to do complex pieces of research and consultancy building

directly on Bion's ideas, the former consulting to a major change process in the Glacier Metal company and the latter commissioned to help throw some light on the dwindling retention rate of trainee nurses in a large teaching hospital.

Both Klein's theories relating to splitting and projection of uncomfortable parts of the individual psyche and Bion's basic assumptions, relating to the 'pooling' of these unwanted parts (as opposed to their introjection by a single 'other' in individual development) in the life of adult groups, were key to their work.(Krantz 2001)

Jaques believed that individuals project:-

*those impulses and internal objects that would otherwise give rise to psychotic anxiety and pool them in the life of the institutions in which they associate.*(Jaques 1955 p479)

In Menzies Lyth's study at the hospital it was the task of nursing itself which was proposed as the source of the anxiety via a process of projective identification from patient to nurse.

What emerged from Menzies Lyth's and Elliott Jaques' consultations was the discovery that such projections seemed to result, in work organisations, in the constructing or distorting of social structures to form a social defence system in order to meet the primitive needs of groups i.e. in order to relieve such groups of anxiety of one form or another. As a result the task of the organisation sometimes suffered. For example in Menzies Lyth's study when the anxieties of ill or dying patients were projected into frontline nursing staff a social defence system was constructed which shielded the nurses by minimising their contact with anxiety-provoking patients, and the life and death decisions which were sometimes required as part of their care. With these defences in place, she argued, the anxiety might be relieved but the task of the organisation might suffer. Ever since these seminal studies revealed their findings it has been a core pre occupation of consultants using a system psychodynamics model to help clients understand the defensive purposes of some of their organisational

practices and to try and put in place structures to help understand and relieve anxiety by 'de-toxifying' rather than defending.

To the focus on the projection of pre-existing primitive anxiety (Jaques 1955) and anxiety associated with task (Menzies Lyth 1960) the theorists and practitioners who developed the socio technical concept of organisations added the anxiety and defensive behaviour evoked when the technical system of a manufacturing organisation was considered in isolation from the social system of the organisation i.e. the workers responsible for operating the technology. Their approach focused on re-structuring and re designing organisational systems with a view to ameliorating defensive behaviour. They described the ways of working they proposed as 'joint optimisation' – the principles of which were self-regulating groups who managed a whole task collaboratively with a degree of autonomy. (Trist and Bamforth 1951, Rice 1958)

Eric Miller and colleagues brought the thinking behind the socio technical and social defence systems approaches together through the concept of open systems. (Miller 1959, 1993, 1997. Miller and Rice 1990) The ideas were informed by the congruous ideas of general systems theory which the scientist Bertalanffy (1950a and b) had extrapolated from a study of biological systems and the social scientist Kurt Lewin's ideas from the field of social science (Lewin 1946, 1947a and b). Contemporaneous with each other and with the early Tavistock work described above their ideas provided the Tavistock framework with a rich new root metaphor for organic whole systems with three defining qualities

1. tendency of systems to reach a steady state
2. whole systems or group as a whole behaviour
3. an evolution of the concept of boundary as a containing membrane

These developments represent the furthest reaches of the system psychodynamic paradigm towards pure systems thinking though Miller, in his 1998 paper, *A Note on the Protomental System and 'Groupishness' Bion's Basic Assumptions Revisited* proposes that groups may, indeed, have a life of their own independent of the pooled projections of their members. The majority

of Miller's and his colleagues work, however, rests on the same underlying proposal as the earlier practitioners that what animates organisational systems is the anxiety driven projections of unwanted parts of individual psyches, pooled and re distributed around organisations in what Krantz (2001) calls 'systems level psychodynamics'.

## **Background to the ABS variation**

The working method of the two system psychodynamically oriented consultants who joined with me to form ABS also rested on this underlying proposal. They considered their task, as consultants, to be that of working to enhance client understanding of organisational anxiety and of the social defence systems constructed to defend against it.

As consultants they were often used by clients as receptacles for both persecutory and idealised projections. Insofar as such projections into consultants belonged elsewhere (i.e. they often belonged to relationships inside the client organisation) they were understood as 'transference' (Klein 1952) and, as such, a communication - much as an analyst might understand that which is projected into him/her by the analysand as transference (and a communication) from other/earlier situations in the analysand's life. The consultancy task was similar to that of the analyst i.e. Bringing together the good and bad projections emanating from the paranoid schizoid position in order to achieve depressive position functioning.

What emerged from our initial discussions at ABS was a question around emphasis in the consultancy practice of consultants A and B. Both had experience of clients whose depressive position capacity had been enhanced through consultancy. Such clients, on moving for example from a *them and us* position with regard to leadership in their organisation (where leadership may have been denigrated and the home team idealised for example) had managed to develop a more complex, depressive position capacity

However, in terms of ABS's offer, we had begun to ask if it was enough to help clients achieve a more depressive position functioning or whether it was

possible to also actively promote creativity, in our case through practice associated with the arts.

Others in the field have explored similar questions. Ralph Stacey described the Tavistock, or system psychodynamic approach to consultation, as lacking in actions which might help promote creativity in the organisational systems with which consultants work.(Stacey 2001)

Creativity is, of course, a very broad field. I will focus here on a psychoanalytic perspective and, in particular, a Kleinian perspective, which I contrast with the work of Bollas.

Creativity in a Kleinian context has been understood traditionally as reparative, relating to the losses and guilt of the depressive position which the individual (artist, carer, nurse, helping professional) sought to repair (Segal 1974, Klein 1959, Freud 1910, Halton 2004).Halton added to 'reparative creativity' the idea of 'evolutionary creativity' related to the need to develop further, beyond the challenges of the depressive position.

Such developmental analyses of creativity help the analyst or the psychodynamically oriented coach or consultant to understand the origins of creativity and to differentiate between different categories, as it were, of creativity, but could creativity, so we asked at the beginning of ABS, be actively encouraged beyond helping clients achieve a state of mind (depressive position) conducive to it - and if so by what means?.

Christopher Bollas (2002) was exploring similar questions. His interest was in correcting the balance (as he saw it) between a pre occupation with the repressed unconscious and what he described as the receptive unconscious which, he claimed, had a fundamental role in creativity and was about a quest for transformation rather than the putting right of damage or assuaging of guilt. This corresponded to Milner's view (1955) who suggested that it was not just about re achieving what had been lost through anxiety but about the possibility of something new being created.

Practitioners of psychoanalysis, according to Bollas, focused on the 'selected fact' of transference treating it as if it were the whole truth. In 'The Freudian Moment' (2007) Bollas wondered if interpretation of transference had become a defence against the more challenging activity of free association, which he linked to creativity, as follows.

*'The work of reception can be distinguished from the work of repression in that reception is the desire to receive and organise impressions in order to have deeper access to the pleasures of life, while repression reflects the work of anxiety [...] If repression seeks to banish the unwanted, reception gathers the desired.'* (Bollas 2002 p.p. 49-50)

Such gathering of 'the desired' through free association is identified by Bollas as more 'challenging' than working with transference. I will return to this in the Discussion chapter of this thesis when I propose that it may only be possible for clients to work with 'challenging' free associative creative practice if they have already developed a capacity for functioning in the depressive position. The gathering referred to above requires a capacity to 'take in' which may be absent in groups dominated by paranoid schizoid functioning.

I will now give an account of the development of my own free associative creative practice starting with my experience at university.

As part of a degree in English Literature and Politics at York University (1975-1978) I studied a module on Twentieth Century Theatre. I subsequently joined the university's Theatre of Improvisation - Shoestring Theatre, the brainchild of tutor and theatre director, Richard Drain. I took part in two Shoestring productions - Due Preparations for the Plague, based on the book by Daniel Defoe of the same name, and Housework, which explored the politics of gender. The working method of the theatre company was improvisation. A focus of the Twentieth Century Theatre course had been the work of the Polish director Jerze Grotowski, considered the founder of improvisatory theatre. He eschewed the dominance of the auteur model of theatre – actors responding to a pre-existing text – in favour of his famous teatr laboratorium in Wroclaw.

His work directly influenced the *agit prop* street theatre of the 1970s and 80s in which I was involved, and is acknowledged as a major influence on the work of mainstream directors in both theatre and film such as Peter Brook, Mike Leigh, and many others, including Richard Drain, who all worked with improvisation.

In terms of the two productions cited above I was most involved in the creation of *Housework* which toured in Europe and in women's prisons in the UK. I then went on to produce a French version, *Le Ménage*, which toured in community centres in the South of France. The working method for the productions was a form of free association, or improvisation. The director provided props and a theme. The actors worked initially without direction playing with and exploring the props, and interacting to create scenarios which were, eventually, woven in to an overall performance. Returning to the UK in 1982 I created other productions using the same working method. (e.g. *The Yellow Wallpaper*, Battersea Arts Centre 1982)

By 1986 however, I had taken the decision to focus on writing and pursued a career as a writer, writing scripts for both TV and theatre (1986 – 1994). Towards the end of this time I found myself unable to write. This situation lasted for several years and spans the period of my involvement with a large community arts festival in North London (described in more detail below).

It was not until I was on my way out of the festival(2001) and involved in preliminary discussions about ABS that I rediscovered a capacity for working with improvisation/free association, this time in the form of 'free writing' to which I was introduced through the practice of writers Julia Cameron (1994) and Natalie Goldberg (1991) whose way of working was based on the automatic writing of, amongst others, Andre Breton(1933).

In her book, *The Artist's Way* (1994), Julia Cameron popularised 'morning pages' – a daily practice of writing three A4 pages, by hand, on waking. The method involves the writer keeping the hand moving, writing about what may seem to be mere trivia, the first thing that comes to the mind. I have now followed this practice myself for some ten years and have found it very useful in

helping to surface both that which might be pre occupying (but not consciously so) and also for finding solutions to problems – seemingly unbidden.

It is these sorts of artist practice (improvisation and free writing) which I discussed with the two ABS partners when we started to explore a variation to a system psychodynamic approach to organisational consultancy in 2001, a variation which had the intention of introducing a second emphasis, to do with the creative work of the receptive unconscious, to the emphasis on anxiety and its relief, in organisational systems. This intention is clearer looking back, however, and the research has helped to clarify it.

As will be described the process of adding such a second emphasis to a system psychodynamic approach to consultancy was one of trial and error influenced by many factors – not least our clients.

A significant early decision taken by the founding partners, for example, was to create the working pair of artist and consultant – to *personify*, in other words, the proposed second emphasis by inviting artists to work alongside us, with clients. An alternative approach might have been to work with artists to help consultants develop a second emphasis to their practice but without creating a working pair. We chose instead to begin by forming the pair. The context in which this significant decision was taken will now be explored.

## **Background to the Consultant/artist pair at ABS. Context, Company Roles and Pilot consultancy.**

In this section the context in which the working pair at ABS was formed will be explored in relation both to the consultants and artists who formed the pairs, in relation to my own background as leader of the company and in relation to a societal response to creativity at the time. The section ends with an account of the first consultancy undertaken by the company – a pilot project with client A.

## **The researcher**

As described, at the time of meeting the two other ABS founding partners, I had recently discovered the writing practice of morning pages and was finding it useful as a tool for thinking. I had not, however, re engaged with my former profession as a writer or indeed written anything for some time. Further, I had not done any theatre improvisation work for nearly fifteen years and felt out of touch with it as a working practice. Therefore, despite considerable experience as a creative artist myself I chose, initially, to look elsewhere for artists to provide the artists' practice for the developing model.

I was in touch with many artists from the large community of artists who had exhibited or performed at the festival of which I had been director and it was to this community of festival artists that I, and the other founders, turned to help create the working model in practice.

I had been one of the founders of the Festival and its first director (1993 -2001). By 2000 the festival had grown exponentially from a community street festival organised through a network of parents from local schools to a multi arts festival with a programme of commissions and performances involving over two thousand artists and drawing audiences to the central street festival of fifty thousand. Neither the infrastructure nor funding of the festival had kept pace with its growth however. Despite its size and success it still depended largely on a volunteer workforce – a situation which put considerable strains on its small core staff, particularly me.

In July 2000 a difficult situation in my home life developed (possibly related to the pressure of work) and led me to re assess my role at the festival. In the autumn of 2000 I reduced my involvement to a three day week in order to create more space, both for my family and to re assess my role and its effect on my life. In July 2001 I resigned from my role and a new director was appointed. During the following year (the year in which we undertook the ABS pilot project) the festival organisation succumbed to funding shortfalls and closed. This double loss, of both role and organisation/legacy, amplified my difficult home situation and contributed to a general sense of catastrophe in my life.

Although others, as well as myself, had a part to play in the development of the ABS dual technology from my perspective, in leading role at the centre of the organisation, the creation of the ABS pair of artist and consultant may have represented something of my hope for the future – where the past (the artists) could be joined with the as yet unknown future. Something might be brought together in other words.

There was an additional, contradictory, element which may be relevant in terms of my intra psychic world and its effect on early decisions. As well as the hope represented by the pairing of artist and consultant there was also, in my mind, a *bad artist* – a maternal uncle – a professional artist who had enjoyed brief success in the early 1960s – and whose severe mental illness, unrecognised by the family, badly impacted on me when I was a small child. I wasn't aware of the potential 'transfer' of my own bad experience on to the artists at the time but in the light of the findings it now seems significant and may have influenced the decision to create the pair in the way we did.

By contrast, I seemed to have something akin to a 'good' consultant in my mind and, as described, started my own training as a consultant in October 2002, just after the pilot described below. It was consultants, not artists therefore, with whom I met in the early days and with whom I formed the company.

Artists were not included in the process of decision making at ABS. The moment this was decided is clearly documented in notes following a meeting early in the formation of the company which had considered, amongst other things, who should be at the next meeting. The notes were written for circulation to ABS consultant partners only:-

*who to come? artists aren't (though could argue they should be) involved in core decision making at ABS so we think consultants only. (Data Bank/Consultants A and B/post 23rd march meeting)*

In other words, ABS became a consultancy company which worked with artists, rather than a joint enterprise. The consultants group was prioritised in terms of decision making and developing the model. There was also a large differential

in payment between consultants and artists.

## **Company roles**

The legal Company was eventually constituted, with two directors – consultant A and me. The third founding partner, consultant B, decided against taking up a formal role in the limited company but continued as part of the working team, retaining the option of buying in to the Limited Company should she decide to do so. My own role developed over time. Initially I took up the role of co-ordinating contact with artists. Consultant A took on the role of head of consultancy - a parallel role in terms of leading and co-ordinating the consultancy side of the partnership.

During the early period, the period in which ABS carried out its pilot with client A my leadership of ABS was acknowledged but informal. When I left my role as festival director I moved into a more central role at ABS. My leadership role was formalised with the incorporation of ABS Consultancy Limited in January 2002, when I became the CEO.

I was, by far, the most involved of the three partners each of whom continued to have substantial roles elsewhere – consultant A had a part time organisational role and consultant B had her own practice. Further, as a beginner in the consultancy world I found it difficult to take up a leadership role in what was essentially, a consultancy company. My expertise was in the arts and, as discussed, the team at the core of the emerging ABS organisation consisted of consultants, not artists. The combination of being a newcomer to the consultancy world and the discrepancy in time available for the project often led to disputes, particularly with the co-director, consultant A.

## **Consultants**

Consultant A led on recruiting other consultants to join ABS as associates and the first consultants meeting was held in July 2002. The consultants met approximately every six weeks. They functioned as a research and development team, discussing the developing model. When there was work, they functioned as a supervisory team.

There were nine consultants in total, including me (I began to take on a consultancy role from November 2004). Of the six recruited in 2002 three (E, G and J) had a clinical psychology background similar to consultants A and B and worked, or had worked, or studied, at the Tavistock clinic. Their preferred framework for consultancy work was that of system psychodynamics. A fourth consultant (C) had a research background and, again, trained at the Tavistock Clinic, on the same MA programme which I undertook myself. Consultant F originally trained as an occupational psychologist. Consultant D was an accountant and had a financial services background which included a role at client E. He had attended several short courses at the Tavistock Consultancy Service run by consultant A.

The consultants shared and were able to frame a joint approach to their consultancy work and put this in writing as follows.

*In an ABS Consultancy the consultant.....*

- *Aims to facilitate sustainable change in an organisation.*
- *Believes that the proposed partnership between creative artists and consultants will be a powerful tool toward achieving sustainable change.*
- *Seeks to get 'beneath the surface' of a client's presenting issues facilitated by the artists' creative interventions.*
- *Is able to reflect on their own experience of being in the consultancy to understand the experience of the client and take account of unconscious communication.*
- *Aims to create a context of containment in which, for example, the clients' stress or anxiety, direct or projected can be held and worked with rather than responded to in an immediate or solution focussed way.*

- *Will pay particular attention to boundaries. For example it would not be expected that a consultant would consult to an organisation with which he or she had a pre-existing relationship.*
- *Does not bring 'content' or 'expertise' directly to bear on the client's issues, rather helps the client 'own the solution'.*

(ABS framework.master 2002)

Most of the consultants also shared, along with consultants A and B, a personal interest in artistic creativity. Consultant A was an amateur musician and consultant B had published a novel. Consultant E painted, consultant G had recently rekindled an interest in percussion and consultants J and C wrote poetry. Consultant D, having left a position at client E, had been consulting in the finance sector but had recently sacked half of his clients because of their unethical behaviour, as he saw it, and made a fresh start - deciding to work only with clients who shared his values

Amongst the consultants there was, therefore, an energy for developing something new and the idea of focusing on creativity was well received.

### **Societal context**

It was a state of mind shared by a wider community at the time. The corporate and consultancy context in which the ABS model was developed was a context in which creativity as a commodity was in demand, or rather a context in which super creative individuals (Prichard 2001) were in demand.

In a paper focusing on Apple Computer's Steve Jobs as epitomising such individuals Prichard describes what he calls an 'economy of identity' which had created an 'age of creativity' to follow the 'information age'. Contemporaneously Andersons Consulting carried out a survey amongst CEOs, which found that their principle concern was finding and retaining talented individuals, potential versions of Steve Jobs to transform their business. (Prichard 2001)

Companies positioning themselves as *selling creativity* in this period did well, at least for a while. In the UK the quango Arts and Business was set up explicitly to create links between the arts and the corporate sector. They ran programmes for artists of all sorts to help them position themselves with regard to the business world. A raft of projects were funded aimed at bringing together the arts and business in various high profile endeavours designed to go beyond old fashioned sponsorship of the arts and develop working partnerships around creativity. In the last two years before I left my position as festival director I applied for, and received, funding for several such projects.

At Unilever, a former theatre director – Alastair Creamer - was employed with a wide brief to introduce artistic creativity into all aspects of Unilever's work. When I visited the project in 2001 they had a programme of events for Unilever employees which included a team of visual artists working on product design, comedy workshops where participants could learn to bring humour and improvisation skills to their presentations, a poet in residence, and a committee of employees buying and exhibiting the work of contemporary visual artists in the Unilever staircase.

Another type of offer was that of the inspirational speaker. Richard Olivier, for example, offered lectures on leadership with reference to various Shakespeare plays. Dominic Alldiss, briefly involved in early ABS meetings, was creating an offer which compared jazz improvisation as an alternative model for creativity, to the somewhat cumbersome model of the symphony orchestra.

In 2002 Greg Dyke was reported to have spent £200,000 on a series of workshops run by the company What If whose offer involved a deconstruction and re packaging of the creative processes of various successful artists.

One of the early ABS artists started a company in this period selling percussion classes to the corporate sector. It was taken up so successfully as a *team builder* that within six months he had expanded to a second office in Geneva.

This market context, focused on 'super creatives' may have influenced both consultants in their desire to work with artists, and clients in terms of their responses and projections in to the artist/consultant pair.

## **Artists**

Whilst potential clients of ABS (and ABS consultants) may have had, at some level, an artist in their minds fuelled by a market milieu which privileged 'super creative' individuals, the lived experience of many of the artists who worked at ABS was very different from that of such 'super creatives'. (Prichard 2001)

As described I had first turned, in my recruitment endeavours, to the community of artists associated with the festival I had directed. Though the festival was large and fairly high profile, it was nonetheless a local festival and lacked the resources to pay substantial fees to artists. The artists it had attracted tended to be either artists at the start of their careers or those who, for other reasons, were prepared to work for no fee or a low fee – as follows. Of the nine artists who became regular contributors at ABS three were singers, one of whom, artist D – a talented soprano – had, during her most successful period, nevertheless barely made a living from her work. A second singer, artist A, was relatively successful on the festival circuit but still earned very little. The third, artist H, after years of auditions and free performances, had given up trying to earn a living as a professional musician and was re training to be an executive coach. There were two instrumentalists. One, artist B, had led a successful piano ensemble but had never earned more than £15,000 a year doing so. The other instrumentalist, artist F, did occasional teaching in schools and earned about the same amount. There was a sculptor, artist C, who ran life drawing sessions in the local area to make a living whilst seeking funds for his own work, and a movement specialist, artist G, who was the education lead for a well-known (but not main stream) dance company, earning around £20000 pro rata for a three day week. There were also two improvisation artists, one, artist E, who specialised in theatre improvisation and one, artist J, in comedy. Neither earned enough to support themselves, despite the fact that the comedy improvisation artist sometimes toured with well know national comedians. The fees ABS was offering to pay for client work (between £600 and £800 a day) were a strong incentive for such artists. The consultants, however, all had

regular employment which, in contrast with artists' wages, was well paid, very well paid in the case of those consultants who worked in the corporate sector (D and F) who attracted fees of £2000 plus per day. To retain such consultants, and to match the market rate of the corporate environment in which much of the early work of ABS took place, ABS paid consultants between £1500 and £2000 per day. So, whilst the fees paid to artists were very attractive for them, there was also a wide differential in payments made to consultants and artists.

Regarding choice of artists, festival practice had been to select artists on the basis of the work they produced rather than seeking to understand how artists went about their work. At the start of ABS I seem to have followed a similar route, selecting artists whose work (finished products) I had admired.

As a result there were widely differing practices within the group of artists and few shared my own background in improvisation. Faced with such a diversity of practice amongst the artists I seem to have bonded, instead, with the consultants group, where there was a greater level of shared practice, and a framework, system psychodynamics, which interested me.

This may have contributed to the creation of a consultant group with a tendency to work in isolation from artists. The artists met with consultants only when there was work in hand. Had consultants and artists worked in a more consistent partnership with each other, practices which emerged unchallenged, and which later proved significant, such as consultants working alone in introductory meetings with clients, may not have evolved.

### **Pilot Consultancy with Client A**

The previous section describes the context, including aspects of my personal and professional experience, various professional dissatisfactions experienced

by the consultants and artists who joined me, and the broader societal setting, in which it was decided that the working pair of artist and consultant would be the *modus operandi* of ABS.

This section will focus on the development of the working method of this pair through an account of a pilot consultancy, with client A.

As described, consultancy was the practice from which the model of working was developed and, in particular, consultancy based on a system psychodynamic approach – an approach derived, partially, from a Kleinian approach to psychoanalysis and sharing with it, a focus on the understanding of organisational anxiety. Finding what might or might not be enabled by introducing, into the consultancy mix, *artist practice*, was complex.

Looking back it is possible to see that the consultants leading the development of the model, faced with a multiplicity of approaches from an eclectic group of potential artist partners, and encouraged by me, may have reverted to what they knew best. Early attempts to work in partnership with artists included them as elements within a framework of practice already familiar to consultants A and B, based on Group Relations training.

Both of the founding consultants used elements of Group Relations design in their work. Group Relations conferences have provided a background, training context, and source of ideas for consultants working with a system psychodynamic framework since the first Leicester Conference was held by the Tavistock Institute in partnership with Leicester University and the Tavistock Clinic in 1946.

Over the past six decades such conferences have attracted members from many different employment contexts to work together intensively over periods of one to two weeks, usually in a residential context, in what is often referred to as a temporary organisation. Conferences are designed to mirror organisational arrangements such as role differentiation (the most important being 'member' or 'staff') and authority structures. Members are given somewhat open ended tasks to perform such as exploring the relationship between groups in a system

– known as an inter group event. The following brief from *Working In Organisations* (a conference held in Cambridge in 2009) is typical. Members were given the brief of ‘studying organisational behaviour as it happens within and between small groups’(Moylan 2009a p3) or, in the Institutional event of the same conference, ‘studying organisational behaviour as it happens between members and staff in both management and consultant roles’ (Moylan 2009a p7). The role of consultants or staff of the conference is to offer interpretations of the dynamics they observe as the conference unfolds with an overall aim of developing the effectiveness of members in organisations. In early discussions at ABS consultants A and B described how they used elements from Group Relations training in their practice. For example, they might invite a client group to perform a task while the consultant observed the team’s dynamics. What was often observed both in Group Relations and in consultancy were the various ways in which anxiety is passed around organisational systems. In conference contexts groups often develop an idea of other groups in the system and the system as a whole based on their own fears or aspirations. Thus one group may be labelled ‘potent’ by another or ‘stand offish’. In a consultancy a team asked to complete a task might struggle with the task and blame management.

The first proposal put forward by consultants at ABS, following in this tradition, was that arts based workshops would replace the more usual tasks in which they invited clients to take part. Instead of observing clients taking part in a version of an inter group event for example they would observe, and consult to, the art workshops in which clients were invited to take part. Looking back this seems like a crucial decision – to decide to include the artists’ work, as it were, as an element in another framework of practice, rather than exploring more openly what might be contributed by the potentially different modalities which the artists may have brought in terms of creativity.

The rest of this chapter details the process of the pilot consultancy on the ground, as it were, a process of trial and error.

The active recruiting of artists for the pilot started with a meeting of seven artists in October 2001. In January 2002 a larger meeting of thirty artists was held.

Several artists from these two meetings were invited to provide the ABS partners with an opportunity to experience the way they worked. At this stage these opportunities took one of two forms, as below.

1. An ABS consultant or I attended and took part in an existing workshop run by the artist, for example a percussion workshop at the Place dance studios attended by me in January 2002.

Or:-

2. The artist designed and ran a workshop specifically for the ABS partners, sometimes with other interested artists, or consultants also taking part.

The specially designed workshop (option two) was soon adopted as the preferred way of selecting artists and additional elements were added to the process. At each demonstration workshop one of the consultants would take up an observer rather than participant role, for example, and offer observations of group dynamics as the workshop unfolded, sometimes interrupting the auditioning artist to reflect with participants on something he or she had noticed. Artists were chosen, in other words, on the basis of their willingness and ability to relate to a pre-existing framework of practice, based on Group Relations.

Regarding selecting artists for the pilot Artist L was selected on the basis of method one above. Artist N, on the other hand, ran a specially designed workshop for the partners (method two), A third artist, M, was recommended and the partners chose to work with her on the basis of this recommendation only, as we ran out of time. The pilot took place with Client organisation A, a small technology company undergoing considerable expansion. The brief for the consultation was to help the company understand the implications of and cope with the changes which would be necessary. Consultants A and B conducted initial interviews with the CEO of the company, his two partners (both of whom were old friends of the CEO), two other senior managers, and an internal consultant who was retained on a weekly basis by Client organisation A to offer advice. From these interviews it was evident that the CEO was under a lot of strain due partly to his

lack of confidence that his two partners would be able to cope with the imminent expansion of the company following a large government grant.

Following these interviews consultants A and B and I designed the consultancy intervention.

The proposal was that each of the selected artists ran a series of workshops for one of three hierarchically mixed groups of employees, with consultants A or B working alongside the artists and offering interpretations based on their observations of group and organisational dynamics. The rationale for the division of the company's employees in this way was twofold:-

1. To create a space in which the CEO's two founding partners might take up their authority away from his gaze. It was proposed that the three founding partners work in separate groups.
2. To give employees from all parts of the organisation access to one of the three partners who were, increasingly, viewed as out of touch with their organisation.

In fact this did not work out as, because of schedule clashes, one of the partners ended up working in the same group as the CEO, whilst one of the groups ran without either the CEO or either of his partners.

Regarding content, artists were asked to run what was described as an 'open creative process' and not to feel constrained by what consultants A and B had told them about the company or be influenced by this in their design of workshops. The only other instruction was that they worked with participants towards the creation of a piece of work for possible presentation to the wider group. The workshops were envisaged to take place over a six week period after which a review was proposed to bring together themes from the work.

In retrospect it is clear that, from the beginning, the artists' workshops were included as elements in a design based on Group Relations training, i.e. the workshops were part of a design intended to provide a context in which (anxiety driven) unconscious phenomena relating to the organisation might emerge and

become available for consultation, with an overall intention of improving organisational effectiveness but without an emphasis on promoting creativity.

Regarding the former i.e. the surfacing of unconscious phenomena in a way which made it possible for consultants to engage with clients, the pilot helped clarify which sorts of artist practice were most compatible with this aim, which will now be detailed.

In response to the brief given to the artists theatre director, Artist M, provided participants with a set of guidelines for developing a play set in a restaurant kitchen. She took participants through a highly structured series of choices, such as deciding the sort of restaurant, size of enterprise, number of employees, characteristics of the principle characters and, eventually, deciding on a dispute or event which would provide the dramatic conflict for the play.

The second artist (N) used his own writing to organise the contributions of the participants – a book on common myths in organisations. He asked participants to work from the myths he had identified and relate them to Client organisation A.

Neither approach worked well. Participants struggled to engage with the material and in both cases consultant A found it difficult to choose moments to share her observations. When she did share an observation in artist M's workshop, the artist felt that the intervention interrupted the flow of her workshop and depressed the group.

Artist L, a visual artist and sculptor, worked differently and influenced the next stage of development of the model. In his initial workshop he briefed the group about the practice of *mark-making* – describing the difference between drawing using symbols (such as smiley faces) and mark-making. He explained that mark-making was about connecting with emotions and making a mark, without explicitly thinking how to make that mark, or even what it might mean. His hypothesis was that symbolising happiness, for example, as a smiley face, distanced the emotional connection. He supplied a range of materials with which mark-makers could make their marks such as charcoal, various

household brushes, scrapers, scourers, rollers with paints, crayons, pastels, chinks etc. and asked participants to explore various scenarios or journeys together using marks on a large piece of paper. An example of the sort of dynamic which emerged was at a point of negotiation between the CEO and one of his partners. Artist L had given participants a brief that if they came across another mark on their journey of mark-making they should negotiate a solution without speaking but using further marks as a means of communication around what to do about the encounter. In the process of his journey the CEO, whose mark was strong and determined, came across the much lighter, more delicate and tentative mark of one of his two founding partners. Instead of negotiating, the CEO simply drew over the mark, an act that had an evidently negative effect on his partner, who stopped drawing. The CEO's explanation was that his partner's mark was too faint to see properly. This exchange gave consultant A, who was observing, the opportunity to begin to help the CEO and his partner to start exploring what their painful encounter might have meant.

Both the CEO and his partner seemed to feel responsible for, or connected to, their marks (albeit painfully in the case of the partner) in a way the participants in the theatre and writing workshops had not. Conflict had emerged, during the mark making process, and Consultant A had found it possible to usefully engage with clients around this.

In the third workshop Artist L changed his approach to a more structured way of working, more comparable to the approach of artists M and N. Being able to compare this with the workshop above helped clarify the differences in approach. In the third workshop the group were to produce a sculpture from willow to represent the future of the company. To be able to do this they had to be taught specific skills and were guided through a step by step process by the artist. In my account of the workshop I noted the following:-

*The sculpture was great – and great collaboration. I would say the person who seemed to value their contribution least was CEO – very self-denigrating then opting out a bit but couldn't – he loved the result though and was full of feelings by the end of the session – said he felt a powerful positive emotion and that the sculpture had been easy to do because A and C (his 2 founding partners)*

*weren't there.* (A, who had been in the mark making workshop with the CEO was absent)(Data Bank/Clients/Client A/14<sup>th</sup> june sculpture 3 and theatre)

Two things seemed to be happening in the workshop, for the CEO at least. He was excited about something represented by the sculpture about the future of the company whilst at the same time openly stating that this future was easier to envision in the absence of his two founding partners. Reflecting on the workshops afterwards the partners felt that, although building the sculpture had been a positive experience, it seemed to have been split off from or in denial about the reality of the organisation's future, i.e. the need to resolve the issues regarding two out of three of the founding partners who were underperforming but still owned two thirds of the company between them. It seemed to have allowed the CEO and others to indulge in a fantasy about an unlikely future.

The hypothesis regarding the way artists were working was that there seemed to be something about structure and the teaching of techniques which got in the way. The more the artists structured the work with participants, the more participants seemed to be able to cut off from experience. The partners, therefore, took the decision to work with artists comfortable and skilled in working with various versions of improvisation, of which we considered mark making to be one. This approach related to my own original theatre practice and recent practice of free writing. The decision was taken to ask artists not to teach participants the words of songs, the steps of particular dances, or the techniques of drawing/sculpture -but to work with improvisation.

There was some evidence, as described, that workshops conducted in this way were more useful for surfacing (anxiety driven) unconscious phenomena in a way which could be owned by the participants and that unconscious phenomena surfaced in this way might be usefully engaged with by clients (e.g. the discussion with the CEO, his partner and consultant A following the mark making workshop).

## Client N

Regarding the active promotion of creativity however, the case was untried. It was not until working with client N (an NHS Deanery team) in 2007 that, working with artist G, I tried an approach which combined the work of consultant and artist in a different way. The request for consultancy from client N was to address a problem of team morale following the sudden departure of a newly appointed employee. My role was that of consultant. The difference was the role of the artist, Artist G, a movement specialist and dancer. Instead of running what had previously been described as an open creative process I asked her to help clients work directly, through movement, in response to a question of importance for the organisation, rather than run a workshop, unrelated to specific issues -the aim of which had been to provide a context in which (anxiety driven) unconscious phenomena might surface, and be made available for consultation. I asked the team to work in two groups and for each group to formulate a question they felt the team as a whole needed to address. Each group then had the opportunity to work with Artist G to develop responses to the other group's question through movement.

The question formed by one group was 'How do we create a recruitment system which is not about 'fingering' people into positions but matching role holders to roles for the good of the organisation?'

In the performance in response to this question six *recruiters* danced a 'recruitment dance' around a recruitment pool of 'candidates'. Each dancer held a different aspect of what might be required for the post under consideration. The dance was complex and rich and in discussion afterwards the team were very taken with how working through movement seemed to have allowed aspects of the recruitment process to be brought to the surface in a way which had been eluding them. They planned a new recruitment process in the session and subsequently used it.

In terms of taking up the consultant's role, I was struck by something else, which I shared with the team. In the performance there were six *recruiters* and only two *candidates*. I invited them to reflect on this, what sense they might make of it, that in their dance there were far more recruiters than candidates.

Perhaps it represented a risk (unconsciously expressed through the dance) that the same problem might happen again – that the pool would remain small. This led to further discussion about their fears of what an outsider might bring in to the team – a team who had worked together virtually unchanged until recent events, for fifteen years.

I am aware that this vignette does not provide sufficient evidence that ABS arrived at a definitive way of working which allowed consultant and artist to work in tandem, or that something more pro actively creative was thus added to consultancy. Significant further research would be needed. The vignette is presented because, as will be described, client N, with whom it seemed possible for the pair of consultant and artist to begin to work more equally in this way, was different from other clients in two significant ways – both in terms of the presenting issue of the client, and in terms of the route through which the client was referred to ABS, both of which proved significant in the findings of this research.

The study will return to the relevance of client N later. For the moment suffice to note that it was whilst working with this client that I found a way of working as a consultant/artist pair which seemed potentially to make best use of both modalities – the creative practice brought by the artist and the stance of the consultant.

## **Situating the study in relation to other accounts of consultancy**

My original intention for this research was to explore the value and efficacy of the model which had been developed at ABS and document its potential contribution to consultancy. At first, motivated by the sense of frustration described, I anticipated doing this through setting up the equivalent of a laboratory or controlled experiment to prove, as it were, the value of the model.

The approach changed when, in the early stages of the research, I came to understand my desire to study the ABS model, as it were, in isolation - as a

defence against the trauma of acknowledging that things had not worked out as planned.

My research supervisors encouraged me to think about what had happened more systemically. The result is the current research which attempts to study the ABS model in the context of a wider projective system formed by clients, their organisations, the contexts in which they were working and ABS as an organisation consisting both of consultants and artists – the whole observed through interactions recorded, as will be described, in hundreds of emails and other written documents produced during the course of the company's activities.

I will propose that the resulting study may have a contribution to make at two levels – both in terms of its exploration of a potential variation to the system psychodynamic model and in terms of the sort of account which it has become.

Potential future development of the model will be explored in the discussion of findings. The rest of this section will attempt to situate the study in terms of its potential contribution to the field, as it were, of accounts of consultancy practice.

What are meant by accounts of consultancy practice in this context are accounts of system psychodynamically oriented consultancy – regarding which the dual technology of ABS was intended to be a variation. So it is on accounts of such consultancy that this review will concentrate, giving an overview of the sorts of accounts currently available and describing the potential relevance of this account/study.

Part of the motivation for setting up the professional doctorate in *Consultation and the Organisation* for which this research will be submitted, was to provide a context and structure in which research into system psychodynamically oriented consultancy might take place including, potentially, outcome studies.

Judith Trowell's study (2007) on childhood depression, which is a study of outcomes, pre supposes a well calibrated field where both symptoms

(depression) and models of working (individual psychoanalytic psychotherapy or family therapy in this case) are clearly defined and outcomes, therefore, can be compared.

This is not the case in the related field of organisational consultancy where such outcome studies are almost none existent. Clearly evaluations of outcomes in the field of organisational behaviour pose complex problems. It may be possible in the field of psychotherapy, though evidently not straightforward, to agree a definition of depression and what sort of indicators might imply that a patient is no longer depressed. It is more complex and illusive to measure dysfunction or the equivalent of depression in a team or organisation or when an organisation might be deemed to be no longer suffering from it. The paucity of outcome studies in the field may speak to this difficulty. Further, the models of practice employed to relieve, as it were, the symptoms in organisations are also difficult to classify and vary, I propose, more than do models of psychoanalytic psychotherapy. What is meant by a consultation may vary widely from context to context, making outcomes difficult to assess or compare.

Lack of funding may also have contributed to the paucity of outcome studies. The Tavistock Institute had its moment in terms of funding in the years following the second world war where, briefly, studies such as those of the early Institute in the UK and India (Jaques 1955, Rice 1958) and those undertaken by Kurt Lewin in America (Lewin 1946, 1947a and b), attracted substantial funding either from the state or from benefactors such as Rockefeller. The funding dried up however and the early studies were not followed up or their findings systematised despite perseverance on the part of practitioners such as Eric Miller who reported in his paper *Experiential Learning in Groups 1* (1990) that a project intended to study the effect (outcomes) of Group Relations on the back home organisations of participants had been abandoned because the funding did not materialise. A series of in depth clinical interviews had been planned but the study had to be dropped.

Some, but not many, studies have been funded. Stein's (1997) study into the effect of envy on group life, for example and Lawlor's PhD which was an outcome study of a consultancy at the Tavistock Clinic (Lawlor 2006).

Lawlor meets the same difficulties as others in trying to categorise the field of system psychodynamic organisational consultancy in the literature review chapter of his thesis and, ultimately, opts for a series of inclusive tables clustering sets of concepts rather than defining the whole. Few accounts which attempt to give an overall picture exist. Those that do (Menzies Lyth 1988 1989, Klein and Eason 1991, Miller 1997, Krantz 2001, Palmer 2002, Gould 2004) highlight differences as much as consensus regarding both what it means to work systemically and psychodynamically, and certainly lack overall agreement of what it means to work system-psychodynamically as a consultant in organisations. This 'not yet fully disclosed third' (Armstrong 1995a) may still be taking shape but until it has, until both theory and practice in the field are better calibrated it may remain difficult to undertake outcome studies as it will be difficult to judge success, in a field which remains ill defined.

Two sorts of accounts in which the field abounds will now be looked at – applied psychoanalytic concepts and case studies.

There is a rich array of papers and books in the field of system psychodynamic consultation which could be described as applied psychoanalysis. Constructs or themes from both the theory and practice of psychoanalysis are related to organisational systems, usually illustrated with vignettes from a consultant's own practice. There are papers on containment (Cooper and Dartington 2004) dependency (Miller 1993, 1999, McCaffrey 1998), projective identification (Moylan 1994a), Oedipus (Moylan 2009, Dartington 1996), difference (Mosse and Roberts 1994), narcissism (Schwartz 1990a 1990b, Cardona 2010), shame (Hunt 2000), envy (Stein 2000), perversion (Long 2008), risk (Hirschhorn 1999) anxiety (Obholzer 2002) and creativity (Halton 2004, Lawrence and Armstrong 1998).

The position from which such accounts are written is that of the consultant or academic sharing thinking and hypotheses about his or her findings. They choose which aspects to share of their work and how to share it. The accounts are unapologetically partial in terms of the whole field of endeavour of the consultant and any organisation to which they belong. The clients in the

organisational situations being described function as *dramatis personae* to illustrate the hypotheses of the consultant, such as the managers and board members in Dartington's account of Oedipal dynamics in voluntary organisations (1996) or the anxious public sector employees in Obholzer's account of public sector organisations (2002).

By far the most abundant type of account in the field, as in the field of psychoanalysis itself, is the case study – a practice which started with Freud's classic studies (for example 1914), was continued by Klein (for example 1961) and many others, and has been adopted as the preferred method of those who have been applying psychoanalytic thinking in organisational systems for the last seventy years. Case studies are produced for a variety of reasons. Students produce case studies as part of their training. Each student on this professional doctorate, for example, will produce eight. Case studies are published if, for example, they are deemed to contribute new methods such as Lawrence's social dreaming (1998), or Sama's application of Opus listening posts in an organisational context (2007) or if they are judged to have discovered something about contemporary organisational themes through their work such as Long's work on perversion (2008). Consultants in the field typically publish a series of studies over the course of a career documenting the development of their thinking and practice as they work with clients and discover new patterns of organisational behaviour. (For examples see Huffington 2004, 2006, Jaques 1955, 1995, Armstrong 2005b, 2010, Miller 1959, 1990, 1993, Cardona 2006, 2010). They offer a rich account of client work over time and document the changing preoccupations of consultants in the field.

However in neither of the above sorts of account is a whole context, in which consultancy took place over time, analysed. For example, although Jaques gives us a vivid account, through his case study, of some of the seminal work taking place at the Tavistock Institute in 1955 and similarly Hoyle (2004) and colleagues give examples of work at the Tavistock Consultancy Service in 2004, no one offers an account, as it were, of the projective system in which the Institute might have been working as a whole, or the Tavistock Consultancy Service, or the Grubb Institute etc.

There are some accounts in which an individual attempts to do this – to study the overall context of their work. Tim Dartington gave an account, at a workshop called ‘The Personal and Political’ (Tavistock Clinic February 22<sup>nd</sup> 2007) of his pre disposition to identify with and defend the ‘underdog’. He describes as ‘Rapunzel consultancy’ his tendency, in his early career, to side with individual clients against the ‘bad’ organisation and to rescue them, relating this to Gordon Lawrence’s similarly oriented account of what he describes as Salvation politics (Lawrence 2000). Similarly Neumann (1994) discusses the effects of her political persuasions on her work and the difficult beginnings of a range of consultancy projects where she was vulnerable to certain projections from her clients. Cardona (2006) understands a tendency in herself over time to collude with an outsider role. Such accounts, which pay attention to the part played in a series of contexts by particular consultants are useful but they are accounts of just that – the individual consultant and his/her particular valency and how it gets used by clients in the projective systems in which they have worked together.

The potential contribution of this research to the field of accounts of consultancy practice is the nature of its object of study which is not solely a client or several clients, nor the experience of one or more consultants working with particular client themes, but the whole enterprise (albeit small) of a consultancy context, the processes of mutual selection (co creation?) and engagement between a consultancy organisation and the clients who were attracted to work with the organisation over time.

## The Research Questions

The research questions evolved in order to carry out the sort of account described are as follows:

1. Which sorts of organisations approach ABS consultancy and what are their expectations and intentions (conscious and unconscious) in using ABS? What are the processes of mutual selection?
2. Why do some organisations approach a consultancy with a known practice of involvement of artists? What do they hope for in this? How do they respond to this kind of intervention?
3. What sort of organisational dynamics can be observed in these client organisations and what similarities and differences are there in this respect between our clients?
4. What sorts of description or classification of ABS's consultancy work might be developed from these findings?
5. What are the impacts on client organisations of ABS's interventions and how do these relate to the expectations and intentions of these clients?

# Chapter 2

## Evolution of a Research Methodology

### Introduction

In addressing these questions, which were exploratory in nature (rather than proposing pre-existing hypotheses for testing) I was pre-occupied by two broad considerations - how to collect relevant data, and how to analyse it.

In this chapter the object of study will be described followed by a rationale for the innovative use, as primary data through which to study this object of study, of many short texts generated during the day to day running of the consultancy company ABS – texts such as emails, minutes from meetings, proposals to clients, and my own process notes.

The analysis of such texts, produced without research protocol in mind, required both a robust qualitative approach and one which would enable the assessment and interpretation of a large number of different types of text.

With these considerations in mind I chose a Grounded Theory approach to my data analysis - an inductive, rather than hypothetico deductive approach which allowed theory to emerge iteratively from a study of the data (Glaser and Strauss 1967, Charmaz 2006). The constant comparative method used in the later stages of a Grounded Theory approach suited the large data set and would allow for the possibility of maximum movement around this data, sampling and re sampling the many repetitive fragments.

However, before I could engage with a systematic analysis using a Grounded Theory approach, the following considerations needed to be addressed:-

1. The suitability of the data available for the initial line by line coding typical of the first stages of a Grounded Theory approach.

2. The imbalance in the data between texts written by the client (mainly emails) and texts written from an ABS perspective (the majority).
3. Epistemological considerations. Whilst starting the research without specific hypotheses in mind I was nevertheless explicit about the theoretical framework within which the research was taking place i.e. that of system psychodynamics. I needed, therefore - at least to an extent - a method which was theory driven, or conceptual – in order to develop psychoanalytic and systemic ideas.
4. Practice Near research and the researcher as insider. As researcher I was studying my own practice and engagement with clients. I was also, as CEO of ABS consultancy and the writer of the majority of the texts, an insider. I needed to find a position from which reflexivity might be possible and from which I could analyse the data with enough objectivity.

An account will be given of the rationale for and design of nine panel readings developed in response to these considerations, and of the secondary set of data which was thus produced, enabling the research to move forward.

The account will be prefaced with a description, including an excerpt from my research journal, about the frustration I felt during this period. Such evidence of my 'self-reflexivity' (Wren 2004 p476) will be used throughout the methodology and findings chapters and constitutes what could be described as a chronological approach which tracks my emotional journey as I worked through the process of engaging with the study of my own organisation and its clients. As co founder and CEO of ABS, I was deeply invested in its future development and success. I found undertaking research into what happened between ABS and its clients, and particularly taking in the emerging findings of the research, challenging. At times I went in to a retreat and the research stopped. It seemed important, in the writing up of this insider research, not to ignore this emotional journey but to record the process, as it were, of how I, as insider, was gradually able to find and sustain a 'good enough' position from which to look back at the

organisation which I had co-evolved and led, and to learn from the process.  
(Winnicott 1953)

This learning will be made explicit in the discussion at the end of this thesis where I turn back, as it were, as consultant to myself, and discuss the implications of the findings for ABS as an organisation.

The ethical considerations of using the data from interactions with clients and studying my own organisation will also be explored, at the end of this chapter, as will the steps taken to disguise the identity of both clients and ABS colleagues.

## **Object of study**

In chapter 1 I described the personnel of ABS, their roles, practice, some of their motivations for joining ABS and, in my own case, some aspects of my personal history.

Less is known, evidently, about our client organisations, relations with whom form the object of study of this research. This is partly about the nature of the work undertaken with these clients. Data relating to seven of the clients is about the contracting stage only for example. Work undertaken with the other nine was short term work.

The characteristics of the territory in which relations took place, will now be described through the presentation and analysis of two tables (1 and 2) which contain information about the consultancies.

Table 1, *Information regarding consultancies*(pp 47/48) categorises each client organisation in terms of sector and function, notes the gender and organisational role held by the person who was the principle contact with ABS, whether a member of the client organisation had attended an ABS taster event, and who introduced the client to ABS. Table 1 also states the proposed date of work and whether the work proposed eventually went ahead, as well as noting the size of the group with whom it was proposed that ABS work.

Table 2, *Information regarding consultancies continued*(pp 49-52), repeats, for ease of reference, the column which categorises each client organisation in terms of sector and function, and then describes the reasons the client gave for contracting ABS. Column 4 describes both the number and type of meetings which took place with the client and who, from ABS, was involved in the work. The final column describes the role taken by me. I am coded either as consultant H or artist P.

Both tables 1 and 2 are arranged chronologically from the top, starting in March 2002 and ending in February 2008. Each lists the two marketing (taster) events which were held at the Soho theatre in London (Creativity Risk and Return in October 2004, and Achieving the Impossible in Teams in November 2005). A third event (Event for Teams), which was planned but did not recruit and was cancelled, is also listed in table 1.

Table 1 shows that eleven of the sixteen organisations in the study were from the for profit sectors, two were NHS teams, one a state secondary school, one was a government department and one a London Council. In terms of the negotiating phase of the consultancies twelve of the organisations provided us with a single point of contact. On three occasions we had two contacts and, in one case three – twenty one contacts in all. Of these three were CEOs, two were internal consultants, and sixteen were team or departmental heads. Twelve were female and nine male.

ABS was introduced to ten out of sixteen of the organisations in this study by one of the consultants, consultant D. Three of these ten introductions resulted in paid work.

The other six clients with whom work went ahead were introduced as follows. Two were introduced by me, three by consultant A, and one by Artist G. Representatives from six of the sixteen client organisations attended the taster events.

The nine consultancies which went ahead were spread over seven years, with one in each year apart from 2003 and 2007 in which there were two each.

Table 1 also shows that the size of the working group proposed changed significantly following the first marketing event *Creativity Risk and Return*. The average group sizes are listed below for three periods of work : -

- Period 1, March 2002 to October 2004 – i.e. up to the first marketing event. Average group size twelve.
- Period 2, November 2004 to November 2005 - between first and second marketing events. Average group size two hundred and eleven.
- Period 3, November 2005 to February 2008 – after the second marketing event. Average group size thirty four.

Before the first marketing event ABS had worked with smaller groups of employees sequentially over a period of time (Client organisations A and B) or with a slightly larger group for a whole day (client organisation C).

At the first ABS marketing event four artist/consultant pairs worked with a large group of seventy clients at the Soho theatre. The design of the event involved all participants gathering in the auditorium for an introduction, then dividing in to four groups to work in break out rooms – each with a consultant/artist pair - before re convening in the auditorium to perform or exhibit the work they had created, followed by a discussion which focused on application, linking the experience to their work place experience.

It seems of note that of the six proposals that have resulted in paid work since the first marketing event five have involved working in a similar way to that of the marketing event i.e. with a large group of clients in the same space at the same time. (Client organisations D, E, L, P, Q)

ABS also held a second, larger marketing event during this period. In effect the focus seemed to shift, following the creation of the ABS event, from smaller sequential work with groups over time to larger one day events with multiple consultant/artist pairs. The exception, i.e. the sixth proposal which resulted in

paid work since the first marketing event, was client organisation N, where one consultant worked with one artist and a group of twenty participants. This was the only one of the six which was contracted without the client having an awareness of ABS as an organisation. It was a Tavistock Consultancy Service contract which was subcontracted to ABS. The client had no ABS 'in the mind', as it were, (Hutton, Bazalgette and Reed 1997) unlike other clients who had either attended, or heard about, the marketing events at the Soho theatre and the large group format of the events there.

Table 2 shows that the reasons clients gave for approaching ABS could be described, broadly, as fitting one of three categories. Six clients (O, K, G, F, B, and E) explicitly mentioned creativity or innovation in their initial requests. Six clients (M, J, H, D, C, and Q) made requests for none specific team work. Four clients (A, L, N, and P) approached us with specific organisational issues. In terms of the number and type of meetings, table 2 shows that ABS held fifty eight face to face meetings with clients over the period of study. Consultants were present at all these meetings whilst artists were present at twenty one of them. Table 2 also shows the various roles taken by me with regard to the consultancies. I once took the role of observer (client A), once that of the artist (client B), five times that of consultant (Clients D, L, N, P, Q) and was, in addition, always the organiser and/or proposer i.e. I wrote all of the client proposals and held the principle organising role in all of the consultancies.

**Table 1. Information regarding consultancies.**

Client	Sector/description of organisation (or event)	Organisational role of primary contact in organisation	Gender of main contact/s in organisation	Previous attendance at ABS taster event	Client introducer	Date of work or proposal	If work went ahead	Size of client group proposed
Client A	Small private technology company	CEO	1 x Male	Contact before the taster events	Consultant H	March to July 2002	Yes	6 x groups of 8
Client B	Business technology unit large Publishing House	Female team leader, male deputy	1 x male 1 x female	Contact before the taster events	Consultant D	Sep - Nov 2003	Yes	9
Client C	Successful small private PR company	CEO	1 x Female	Contact before the taster events	artist G	Dec 2003	Yes	20
ABS marketing event 1.	Creativity Risk & Return					Oct 2004	yes	70
Client D	NHS CAMHS team	Team leader	1 x Female	No	Consultant A	Nov 2004	Yes	40
Client E	Multi national financial consultancy	Chairman's business manager and one of the partners.	2 x female	chairman's business manager	Consultant D	March to May 2005	Yes	Planned 600. Final no. 30
Client F	Large multi national IT company	Internal consultant. Commercial and Innovation Director. External consultant.	2 x male 1 x female	External consultant 2004	Consultant D	June 2005	No	200 + 500
ABS marketing event 2	Achieving the Impossible In teams					Nov 32005	Yes	80
Client G	Air industry	Head of Environmental leadership team.	1 x Female	Yes 4 - Nov 2005	Consultant D	Nov 2005	No	12
Client H	Large bank	Head of Change Man. Treasury & Fixed Income Group	1 x Male	No but had planned to come	Consultant D	Nov 2005	No	12

Table 1 continued. Information regarding consultancies.

Client	Sector/description of organisation	Organisational role of primary contact in organisation	Gender of main contact/s in organisation	Previous attendance at ABS taster event	Client introducer	Date of work or proposal	If work went ahead	Size of client group proposed
Client J	Govt dept.air safety	<b>Team leader</b>	1 x Male	Yes, Nov 2005	Consultant D	Feb 2006	No	8
Client K	Research &development of pharmaceutical Co	Manager, Business Process Improvement	1 x Male	Yes, attended Nov 2005	Consultant D	Feb 2006	No	30
Client L	Secondary school London	Headmistress	1 x Female	No	Consultant A	July 2006	Yes	130
ABS event teams						Nov 2006	no	
Client M	London council parking division	<b>Directorate Co-ordinator</b>	1 x Female	No	Consultant D	Feb 2007	No	12
Client N	NHS deanery	Dean of Postgraduate GP Education	1 x Male	No	Tavistock Consultancy	Oct 2007	Yes	20
Client O	Partnership of ten CEOs	Consultant	1 x Female	No	Consultant D	Oct 2007	No	10
Client P	Private company delivering large Govt. IT contract	Director	1 x Male	No	Consultant H	Nov 2007	Yes	80
Client Q	Large Bank	Team leader, internal consultant,	2 x female	team leader + 1 Nov. 2005	Consultant D	Feb 2008	Yes	30
Totals			9 male 12 female	6 clients attended taster events	10 – Consultant D 1 – Tavistock 2 - consultant A 2 - consultant H 1 - artist G		9 contracts went ahead 7 didn't	

Table 2. Information regarding consultancies continued

Client	Sector/description of organisation	Stated reason for contracting ABS	Number and type of meetings with clients/client organisation, and record of which ABS consultants and artists took part	Role taken by consultant H
Client A	Small private technology company	Series of team sessions to help the company cope with far reaching changes and re structuring involving rapid growth	4 x scoping meetings with individual directors (ABS consultants A and B) 1 x scoping meeting with senior management team (ABS consultant B) 9 x consultant/artist led workshops (ABS consultants A,B,H. ABS artists C,L,M,N) 1 x review meeting ABS consultants A, H	Organiser Observer
Client B	Business technology unit of a large Publishing House	Three half days to help team be more creative and persuasive with a presentation to the board. Understanding what inhibits creativity in the team.	2 x scoping meeting with two managers. ABS consultants B, H. 3 x consultant/artist led half days. ABS consultant D, ABS artists O, P. 1 x follow up meeting with two managers. ABS consultant D, ABS artists O, P.	Artist Organiser
Client C	Successful small private PR company	Away day exploring how they work together.	1 x scoping meeting with CEO. ABS consultant A 1 x consultant/artist led away day. ABS consultant A. ABS artist G.	Organiser
ABS marketing event 1. Creativity Risk and Return		To explore capacity for creativity and risk-taking, and to understand better what may help and what may inhibit that process.	1 x consultant/artist led half day event. ABS consultants A, B, D, G, F, H. ABS artists C, D, G, Q.	Organiser

Table 2 continued. Information regarding consultancies continued

Client	Sector/description of organisation	Stated reason for contracting ABS	Number and type of meetings with clients/client organisation, and record of which ABS consultants and artists took part	Role taken by consultant H
Client D	NHS CAMHS team	Away day to celebrate team success and prepare for future challenges.	1 x scoping meeting with senior management team. ABS consultant D. 1 x consultant/artist led away day. ABS consultants D, H. ABS artist D. 1 x follow up meeting. ABS consultants D, H.	Consultant Organiser
Client E	Multi national financial consultancy	Session at Partners conference to provide a creative and reflective component which will be fun for participants whilst exploring the key organisational challenge of collaborative competition.	3 x scoping meetings with one or both of key organisers. ABS consultants A, H. 1 x consultant/artist led creative session at a conference in Portugal. ABS consultants A, B, C, D, F, G, H. ABS artists A, C, D, E, G, H. 1 x follow up meeting. ABS consultants A, H.	Organiser
Client F	Large multi national IT company	Series of training days to promote innovative ideas generation	1 x scoping meeting. ABS consultant H.	Proposer
ABS marketing event 2 Achieving the Impossible In teams		To help teams understand what helps and what hinders their effectiveness.	1 x consultant/artist led half day event. ABS consultants A, C, D, F, G, H. ABS artists A, C, E, F, G, R.	Organiser

Table 2 continued. Information regarding consultancies continued

Client	Sector/description of organisation	Stated reason for contracting ABS	Number and type of meetings with clients/client organisation, and record of which ABS consultants and artists took part	Role taken by consultant H
Client G	Air industry	Away day to clarify purpose of environmental leadership team in context of 'Responsible and profitable growth in air traffic.' Creative team building exercise.	2 x scoping meetings. ABS consultants A, H.	Proposer
Client H	Large bank	Team mobilisation day.	1 x scoping meeting	Proposer
Client J	Government department air safety	Away day to explore different preferences in how team worked together and improve team work.	1 x scoping meeting. ABS consultants A, H.	Proposer
Client K	R& D of pharmaceutical	Session at away day exploring innovation and creativity as the team moves forward following review.	1 x scoping meeting. ABS consultant H.	
Client L	Secondary school in London	A one day event to celebrate achievements, explore meaning and impact of current changes . provide a transitional space.	3 x scoping meetings with headmistress and two deputies. ABS consultants A, H. 3 x staff steering group meetings. ABS consultants A, B. 1 x consultant/artist led event. ABS consultants A, B, C, E, G, J, H. ABS artists C, D, E, F, G, H, R, S. 1 x follow up meeting. ABS consultants A, H.	Organiser Consultant
Client M	London council parking division	Session at away day to provide fun, fulfilling and focused team performance opportunity.	1 x scoping meeting. ABS consultant H.	Proposer
Client N	NHS deanery	Away day to explore impact of recent resignation, reconnecting the team, planning for the future.	1 x scoping meeting with dean and his deputy. ABS consultant H. 1 x away day. ABS consultant H. ABS artist G. 1 x follow up meeting. ABS consultant H	Organiser Consultant

Table 2 continued. Information regarding consultancies continued

Client	Sector/description of organisation	Stated reason for contracting ABS	Number and type of meetings with clients/client organisation, and record of which ABS consultants and artists took part	Role taken by consultant H
Client O	Partnership of ten CEOs of private companies.	Three day retreat focusing on development needs, especially growth and innovative thinking	1 x scoping meeting. ABS consultant H	Proposer
Client P	Private company employed by government department to deliver large IT contract	One day event to facilitate understanding of company value 'Trust and respect', aid understanding of conflict, with a possibility of some work with suppliers and senior management.	2 x scoping s. ABS consultants B, H. 3 x planning meetings. Kube consultants B, H. 1 x away day. ABS consultants A, B, G, H. ABS artists J, T. 1 x follow up meeting. ABS consultant H.	Organiser Consultant
Client Q	Large Bank	To help reduce barriers to working together in new temporary team, promote getting to know each other. Stimulate the team.	1 x away day. ABS consultant H. ABS artist G.	Organiser Consultant

## Primary data

Regarding collecting data to enable further study of this consultancy work it was quickly evident that collecting data through recently developed methods for Practice Near research such as in-depth biographical (BNIM) interviews (Wengraf 2001) would not be appropriate or possible in this context. I did have access, potentially, to the artists and consultants who had worked at ABS and may have been able to interview them, but the object of the research was the relationship between ABS and its clients, and it felt important to access the voice of the client. Interviewing clients after a gap of up to six years felt problematic. Finding those with whom contracts had been negotiated would have been difficult (I knew at least four had left their organisations) and, had they been available, the risk that they would recall very little of their contact with ABS was high, especially those clients with whom contact had been limited to preliminary negotiations which did not result in work (almost half). A different way of collecting data was needed

A large number and wide variety of written texts generated during the course of the work of ABS existed and had been stored, by me, on a computer in my office. I had stored all of the email communication with clients and potential clients, for example, except for some of the communication with Client organisation B which had been lost in a computer failure. Further, the ABS team were, essentially, a group of freelance practitioners and many conversations happened on line. Much of this had also been stored, along with my accounts of conversations and meetings which had taken place.

It is these texts, generated during the day to day running of ABS over seven years, which I proposed as data for the study - if a method of studying them effectively could be found.

The first phase of data collection in this context became therefore a question of data selection and de-selection. There were thousands of texts and, clearly, not all of them could be studied in detail within the scope of the project. I developed criteria incrementally for selecting texts to form a useful set of data. For example, as the research questions related to interactions with clients, I made

an early decision to concentrate on data relating directly to these interactions and to de select all the texts which related to such activities as financial management of ABS, business planning, strategy and marketing, and recruitment of artists and consultants. However a directory was included which contained seventy one texts relating to early meetings between the ABS partners when the company was being formed, and a second directory containing one hundred and sixty seven texts relating to the planning and running of three ABS marketing events, the design of which influenced the way the ABS model evolved. I mainly referred to these latter two directories to remind myself of early stages of development of the company and the evolution of the ABS model, rather than studying the texts in detail. They could be said to constitute a sub set of the data in this respect, or background data.

My computer contained thirty eight client directories. Client directories had been created, and data stored when, in my opinion, (in CEO role), the client had become a potential paying client. Of these thirty eight directories sixteen were selected for the study on the basis of whether a proposal had been written for the client - whether or not this proposal was, ultimately, accepted by the organisation.

In these directories there were four hundred and forty four texts. The number of texts available per client varied from four to one hundred and thirty one. Only six texts were available for client D, for example, despite the work with this client, a child and adolescent mental health team, going ahead. There were also gaps due to computer error such as the data lost in relation to client B, mentioned above.

Table 3, *Selection of Primary Data Texts*(p56) shows the spread of texts across the sixteen client organisations and the number of texts remaining for each after a process of further de-selection. The principle by which I chose, at this stage, which texts to retain in the data set and which to de-select was inclusion. This principle was adopted in order to help keep a sense of the whole enterprise and resist 'unconscious de selection' on my part. Texts were de-selected only if there were multiple copies or similar drafts of the same text, or if they were

primarily administrative texts such as schedules. In the case of Client E, for example, this resulted in the de-selection of fifteen texts and the retention of twenty four texts as data. Notwithstanding this process of de-selection one hundred and ninety nine texts spanning seven years of activity in the company were included as primary data in the study.

Of the one hundred and ninety nine texts which remained after this process one hundred and fifty seven were written by me, twenty two, including the texts collating email correspondence, could be described as jointly written by ABS (usually me) and a client, and twenty texts were written either by other consultants or artists or came from the client organisations – such as briefing documents.

Table 3 – Selection of Primary Data Texts

Client	No. of primary data texts available per client	No. of primary data texts selected for the study per client
A	131	30
B	24	9
C	7	7
D	6	6
E	38	24
F	18	14
G	5	5
H	7	4
J	5	7
K	6	7
L	67	13
M	5	5
N	11	11
O	12	8
P	83	37
Q	19	12
	444	199
<b>Additional primary data texts</b>		
Relating to early meetings of the ABS partners	71	
Relating to the ABS marketing events	167	

This process of selection resulted in an exceptionally high rate of de selection of texts related to work with Client organisation A, the pilot consultancy. In addition to forty seven documents related principally to administration, data related to contact with this organisation also included thirty two questionnaires designed to compare how clients saw their level of creativity at work and outside of work. Such texts did not exist for later organisations as the practice of sending questionnaires to clients was stopped early in the development of the model so I decided not to include them for client organisation A either. Data related to Client organisation A also included twelve texts documenting auditions for artists which I perceived to be less relevant to the research than texts related directly to contact with clients.

## **The texts**

Once a set of primary data had been selected I turned my attention to the question of classification. All of the data was text of one sort or another, but what sort of texts?

The texts can be described as naturalistic insofar as they were not composed with research in mind (unlike BNIM interviews for example) but produced in the course of undertaking everyday practice – the practice of consultants, artists and managers as they went about their business and interacted with clients.

The texts were written for different purposes and in different styles. They ranged from formal to very informal. Examples of the latter were note taking after meetings, free writing in preparation for meetings, and some emails. It is in the email correspondence that the client voice was heard directly.

More formal texts included proposal letters to clients (usually sent by email), briefing documents from clients, briefing documents for artists and consultants, and minutes of ABS meetings for wider circulation than my immediate colleagues (the partners).

To give an example of the range of texts a description of all the texts related to Client organisation E follows (Table 4), regarding whom twenty four texts were

included as data in the study. Twenty four was mid range in terms of number of texts per client.

Table 4, *Description of texts relating to Client organisation E*(pp 59-61), describes the texts in terms of their content, lists the titles under which the documents were saved on my computer, and the word count of each. Table 4 is followed by excerpts from texts 10, 7, 12 and 4 from table 4, in order to show, in more detail, texts which were typical.

Table 4 shows that of the twenty four texts nine were texts relating to contact between me and the client, such as proposals, and emails. Eight were my own notes – not intended for reading by anyone other than me, and five were notes or minutes of meetings – written by me and intended for circulation within ABS. One of the documents was written by artist H and one by consultant F. By far the longest document (nine thousand nine hundred and twenty seven words) is the narrative document, compiled by me, of all the email communication with client E, cut and pasted into a continuous document starting with first contact. I compiled such a document for each client. The shortest document shown in table 4 is a short *to do* list of thirty five words.

**Table 4 Description Of Primary Data Texts Relating To Client Organisation E**

Name of text	Description of text	Word count
1. Creative exploration master	Description of the ABS proposal for work for inclusion in the brochure relating to the client's conference. Written by ABS (me)	201
2. Wording for welcome pack	Drafts of text 1 above with process notes included as the draft passed back and forth between client and ABS.	526
3. doctoral conference march 2008 excerpt	A text recording a conversation with ABS consultant D about Client organisation E and their conference. Researcher's reflections.	352
4. email narrative from start	All of researcher's email contact with the client from first contact until February 2008	9927
5. email to consultants re follow up from ABS consultant A	Email suggesting how ABS consultants might follow up different contacts at client organisation E following work with them at their conference.	317
6. email to Client organisation E partners post event	Generic email to all participants in the conference work with ABS asking for feedback and inviting future contact.	523
7. Emails - 1	Email correspondence relating to the cancelling of the morning session at the conference due to pressure on the agenda.	678
8. ABS artist H reflections	Reflections about the work from one of the ABS artists	463
9. Client organisation E notes	Record of first contact with the organisation	44
10. letter of agreement master	Detailed proposal letter sent by email	665
11. narrative starting 22nd march	Researcher's own process notes from a conversation with KN, commissioning partner for the work at client organisation E.	353
12. nerves NN 23rd march	Researcher's notes as she moved through the negotiating process with client organisation E.	488

**Table 4 continued. Description Of Primary Data Texts Relating To Client Organisation E**

Name of text	Description of text	Word count
13. notes 26th april conv NN	Notes for researcher's own record after a conversation with NN at client organisation E. She was the principle contact there and worked in parallel with partner KN to get the work contracted.	393
14. notes 31st march CC, NN, KN phone	Notes following a conference call between researcher, ABS consultant A, the commissioning partner KN, NN, and the project manager of the conference CC. Includes an action list.	217
15. notes after the event	Long personal account of the work, notes regarding preparation for a follow up meeting with client organisation E, a record of this meeting and difficult situation with ABS consultant A following the work. Further notes regarding researcher's own working through of this conflict.	2250
16. notes from 25th may 05 meeting	Notes from ABS consultants meeting including a debrief of the work with client organisation E.	2203
17. partners email	A different, simpler, draft of text 6 above	215
18. prep for initial meeting 15th march 9am	Briefing document written for ABS consultant A regarding the first meeting with client organisation E.	786
19. prep meeting ABS consultant D and NN 26th april	Notes made prior to a 'rescue' meeting planned with ABS consultant D and his colleague NN at client organisation E at a point where she was doubting whether it was a good idea to do the ABS work at the conference.	79
20. prep planning meeting KN, NN, CC 31 march	Researcher's notes to self in preparation for the conference call described in text 14	275
21. Proposal	A different draft of 10 above	894

**Table 4 continued. Description Of Primary Data Texts Relating To Client Organisation E**

Name of text	Description of text	Word count
22. to do	Researcher's short practical to do list.	35
23. ABS consultant F response to proposal	Feedback from ABS consultant F on receipt of the draft proposal for the work with client organisation E, sent by email to the researcher.	797
24. Letter of agreement 4 <sup>th</sup> april 2005	First draft of 10 above	665
Average document length		973

Excerpts from texts 10, 7, 12 and 4, relating to Client E, from table 4, are reproduced below. They have been selected to give a sense of the range of documents included regarding client E and are reproduced without alteration or editing.

From text 10, table 4

This excerpt is the beginning of a proposal letter to client E, sent as an email attachment.

*Dear KN*

*I'm writing to outline and confirm our revised agreement regarding your Partners conference.*

*Brief: - To provide a creative and reflective component to the conference, which will be fun for participants whilst exploring the key organisational challenge of collaborative competition.*

*The work will be facilitated through the ABS method which involves artists and organisational consultants working together - the former facilitating participants in a creative experience and the latter helping them to think about group and organisational issues that emerge during the process and which might relate to the organisation as a whole.*

*Schedule – Mid Morning:-*

*During the one and a quarter hour period leading up to the mid morning break of the conference consultant/musician pairs will work with groups of up to 65 Partners in separate spaces in the conference facility, exploring the themes of collaborative competition through the creation of a 7 (or nine) part piece of music, using voice and percussion.*

*Immediately after the break (ten minutes) the 7/nine parts of the piece will be put together and rehearsed in the main conference room.*

Afternoon :-

*Five groups of up to 25 Partners each will work in greater depth (for up to 2 hours) exploring organisational themes through one of the following art forms – percussion, voice, theatre, dance, visual art. These sessions will build towards a short evening ‘performance’*

*It was suggested at our meeting that, for practical reasons, Partners sign up in advance of the conference to take part in this creative process but that the decision regarding which workshop they go to should be taken on the day as part of a process which consultants will facilitate to encourage participants to think about the components which make for a successful creative collaboration at work, including risk taking.*

(Data Bank/Clients/Client E/letter of agreement master)

From text 7, table 4

This excerpt is from a less formal email exchange (of which there were many) between me and KN at client E.

*Do give me a ring if you want to talk any of this through. I'm in meetings now till 4pm but you will get me on my mobile after that or tomorrow morning. Really looking forward to working with you.*

*Cheers*

*KN*

*Hi KN*

*Couldn't get you on the phone so am sending you an email as we are at the stage in our planning where we need confirmation regarding how many groups you would like us to facilitate in the morning session of the Partners Conference. I have currently lined up extra consultants and artists so that we can run 7 consultative/musical groups in the morning break out session. I can expand this to eight groups if you wish (it would mean Lince*

*(name of a room)*

*being free in the morning for the eighth group). Running eight groups would reduce numbers to approximately 55 per group - the smaller the better for this work, but we are happy to work with group sizes of 63 (7 groups). I need to know as soon as possible, realistically by the end of tomorrow (Tuesday) at the latest, so that I can confirm rehearsal schedules with musicians and consultants - the first of which is pencilled in for later this week.*

*consultant H*

*I'm so sorry to have been elusive. Please do proceed with 7 groups.*

*Many thanks, KN*

*Will do KN, and if there is anything you want to talk through just give me a ring.*

*H*

*I'm sorry to have to say that the Executive have this morning added a number of items to our morning agenda which mean that we won't be able to do the morning session as planned. I realise that you have done a fair amount of planning for this session and that you have committed people and hence cost associated with it - and clearly we will meet all these costs in full.*

*KN*

*(Data Bank/Clients/Client E/Emails - 1)*

From text 12, table 4

The following is an excerpt from notes recording my own thinking. The style is free associative, unstructured. It was written with only my own reflection in mind and not for sharing with anyone else.

*Post consultant A chat.*

*Don't panic*

*We sort of both agreed that perhaps the differential in the experience of the partners in the morning was too big but how to address that?*

*I now feel it will be cleaner to dispense with the 2 groups the same morning and afternoon and to work out how we can get an experience for everybody.*

*Too many consultants and artists to bring the groups down to 25 – it would need 18 consultants 18 artists*

*We don't have them*

*It feels like too much anyway though maybe...consultant A wondered if large group/s could work just with artist but then break down into smaller groups to reflect – still need lots of consultants though*

*Concentrate on percussion and singing and construction of a chorus of some sort. Then build in a process of reflection which is based on them working in groups of 3 together. Perhaps with a crib sheet or instructions*

*Could consultants move from group to group?*

*She wants a nugget.*

*(Data Bank/Clients/Client E/Nerves NN 23<sup>rd</sup> March)*

From text 4, table 4

The following was written for consultant A. It is informal, though evidently written for a reader.

*just spoke to N who said she thought breaking down into groups of fifty worked better. she thinks they would like to put it in the middle of the morning slot with the groups ending with the break and the 'rehearsal' starting the second half. it's 'how they do things' (rather than starting the day with something challenging - would they turn up etc - I can see her point)*

*she said KN's concerns would be around the sorts of questions/issues consultants might raise in the groups. she hasn't done one of your sessions N said and she doesn't know. could we be prepared to talk about that?*

*i then got a call from KN's assistant saying that she wasn't well and would join the meeting at 9.30am by conference call.*

*so we don't get KN on her own. or in person.*

*i suggest we really need to meet each other at 8.30 anyway and think about our approach*

*i will do some more work on preparing the practical questions which are beginning to surface like when to do the reccy and deadlines for confirming plane bookings, contracting etc.*

(Data Bank/Clients/Client E/email narrative from the start)

Such was the style and content of texts available for analysis at the start of this study. A qualitative approach was, evidently, required and the intention was to develop a Grounded Theory approach if the questions highlighted in the introduction to this chapter could be addressed.

### **Rationale for secondary data – the panel readings**

This section will describe how considerations about the nature of the data, their weighting toward an ABS perspective, other epistemological considerations, and the meaning of Practice Near and insider research in this context were taken into account before I could engage with a systematic analysis using a Grounded Theory approach. As a result a series of panel readings were developed to aid reflexivity and help make sense of counter transferential phenomena – the detail of which will be described in the next section.

Qualitative researchers have approached the analysis of text differently, depending on the sort of texts being studied and the nature of the knowledge sought. The approaches can be thought of broadly as twofold : -

1. Detailed - line by line coding (Charmaz 2006, Strauss and Corbin 1997, Glaser and Strauss 1967)
2. Holistic (Silverman - 1993)

In keeping with the initial stages of a Grounded theory approach I embarked on the former – i.e. a line by line coding, shown in table 5 (p67).

Table 5. Excerpt from Panel Reading 1. Example of Line by Line coding relating to Client P

Column 1	Column 2	Column 3
<b>My process notes/memos and questions as I attempted to code the data from column 3</b>	<b>My attempt at coding data from column 3 Notes relate to the data.</b>	<b>Data – cut and pasted sentence by sentence into the table.</b>
		<i>DA (initials of manager) notes from phone call 17<sup>th</sup> jan</i>
	Noting the time	<i>Twenty minutes on the phone</i>
Am I my own research subject. Is there another way of doing this which will let me get to the client and the research questions more directly?	Date up in the air Client citing money as an issue	<i>I followed my plan and suggested talking through email then emailing him a short proposal – no date but probably march, as budgetary restraints are easing</i>
	Group size Including a wider group	<i>At least 60 people – maybe including partners up to forty more</i>
	Client flagging that getting to know each other important component Previous events cited as too task focused	<i>Logic of split between work and enjoying themselves/getting to know each other was following the dragons den event which went well but people found it very task focused and would like to make sure there was an ‘off duty’ bit dedicated to having fun and getting to know each other.</i>
	Pushing for consultant to be involved Fear of between arts and consulting How the client may have set up expectations in the wider group citing past events as too task focused. Wanting fun Planning a part of the day without consultants	<i>I argued the value of planning whole day together and making full use of consultants but I can feel the same split coming on that they might just want the art or get resentful at consultants. It sounds heavy he said. Why was group size max at 15 He wants to get people up and excited He has sort of set expectations up a bit like that He said, For example, that he felt ‘fun’ bits always ended up being about the themes of the day. Maybe we should split it and have a promises focused arts and consultancy thing in the morning and then a more free thing after the business stuff</i>
		<i>To be addressed</i>

Table 5 shows an excerpt of the text from Panel Reading 1 (pp 201-203) cut and pasted into the right hand column of the table. The text was an account, written in note form by me in 2006, of a phone call with the director at client P, a private company employed by a government department to deliver a large IT contract. The text was four hundred and eighty one words in length. The central column of table 5 shows my coding and the left hand column my process notes and questions as I attempted this coding.

Following this process I had some misgivings and recorded the disquiet I felt in my research journal, from which the following is an excerpt: -

*This made me feel a bit mad... Did some free writing. Took it to supervision I ask*

1. *If the data is rich enough.*
2. *Whether grounded theory is appropriate as a methodology and what the alternative approaches might be.*
3. *How to select what to analyse in detail.*
4. *How to work through the disturbing feeling as I delve back into the material, that I am my own research subject.*

These notes described my concerns as I have indicated in the introduction to this chapter and will now elaborate below.

## **1. The nature of the data available**

The volume of texts available, variety of purposes for which they had been written, difference in style and inconsistent spread across the field of study meant that it was important, from the start, to find a method of studying them which was geared to the whole rather than an immersive approach. By immersive I mean studying a narrow selection of data in depth. Whilst the constant comparative methodology of a Grounded Theory approach would allow for maximum movement around a large data set later in the process, the line by line coding typical of the approach in terms of initial analysis had left me with questions about suitability for the sort of data available. A more holistic approach, at the early stages of analysis, needed to be found.

## **2. The imbalance of the data in favour of ABS**

The intention of the research was to study relationships between clients and the consultancy organisation ABS. However, the majority of the texts had been written from the perspective of ABS. The equivalent texts, written from the clients' perspective, didn't exist. Could relationships be studied effectively through data which was single perspective i.e. through accounts of meetings, phone calls, conversations which were one sided? An approach was needed which might maximise the potential for picking up the client's perspective from the data available.

## **3. Epistemology. What kind of knowledge is being sought?**

The research questions of this study (p40) assume the existence both of the individual unconscious and the possibility of unconscious processes in the work place and between groups and organisational systems at work. I assumed the existence of, and was interested in exploring, for example, the projective system in which ABS was interacting with its clients.

The research questions are exploratory, and inductive, but in this context. There was an explicit starting position to explore a series of relationships with a particular framework in mind – i.e. that of psychoanalysis in the context of organisational systems, or system psychodynamics. The knowledge sought, in other words, was of a particular kind.

In *Growth and Risk in Infancy* Briggs (1997) writes about the need to match methodology with epistemology and about the impossibility of studying certain phenomena (such as the development of an infant) in an artificial or laboratory setting. He describes a method where psychoanalytic concepts are 'operationalised' or made visible in order that certain inferences can then be made. There were similar issues regarding this study. I needed - at least to an extent - a method which was theory driven or conceptual – and which might similarly operationalize psychoanalytic and systemic phenomena.

#### **4. The nature of insider and Practice Nearresearch in this context**

Lawlor (2006) gives a vivid account of insider considerations in his account of research into consultancy undertaken by colleagues in his own organisation, the Tavistock Clinic.

I was, similarly, an insider– researching consultancy undertaken by my own organisation. However, unlike Lawlor, the consultancy I was studying was consultancy in which I had also been integrally involved either as consultant, organiser, or artist – and sometimes all three. This *double insiderness* made it particularly difficult for me to find a position from which the detailed line by line coding could be undertaken.

The question of narcissistic attachment also needed consideration. I was both co founder and leader of the consultancy company ABS. Having created my *baby* would I be prejudiced in favour of ABS when studying the data and unable to see phenomena about which I felt uncomfortable? My experience in supervision seemed, initially, to be quite the reverse. I seemed prone at times to what Patrick and Davenhill refer to as the ‘swift poisonous retribution’ of a punishing all seeing super ego in terms of the research (Patrick and Davenhill 1998 p51). Rather than being able to see it as a useful process linked to the possibility of review and improvement I was more often subject to persecutory anxiety which sought to undermine both the ABS model and the research. I came to understand this as the flipside to a high level of narcissistic attachment and just as likely to get in the way of gaining a perspective from which to carry out the research.

Another aspect of my insider status related to the passage of time and the change in my own practice between 2002 and 2008 when I started to analyse data from ABS’s work. At the time of starting the research some of the data was already seven years old. During those seven years I had been undertaking training as an organisational consultant at the Tavistock Clinic. As I acquired skills and became more experienced as a consultant I found it frustrating to look back at the *there and then* nature of the data. There was a strong temptation, in

presenting the data, to explain the gap but if I wanted to find out what may have happened in the relationships I was studying I would need to keep a perspective on how my more sophisticated, more trained self felt about the data. I was an insider to my own experience in other words and I had moved on.

Wengraff (2001), Froggett and Briggs (2009) and others describe the importance of undertaking Practice Near research – i.e. research undertaken by staff who are near, in terms of their practice, to the object of study rather than research undertaken by policymakers, think tanks etc. (See Munro 2011) who might be considered ‘practice distant’ (Froggett and Briggs 2009)

Regarding the need for Practice Near research Froggett and Briggs (2009) describe the negative effect of evidence based practice on the research field:-

*‘the demands generated by the new context of evidence based practice (EBP) introduced a particular kind of external and ‘practice distant’ discourse into social work research... There was an identified need therefore to explore and evaluate approaches to social work research which reduced the gap between practice and research and which could demonstrate robustness and benefit to practitioners and practice.’ (Froggett and Briggs 2009 p377)*

Such Practice Near research, whilst providing front line access to the area of practice to be studied, presents issues in terms of objectivity. Reflexive methods have been developed to address this such as the Biographic-Narrative Interpretative Method (BNIM) which provides a framework for undertaking and analysing in-depth biographical interviews and engaging with and understanding the complex layers of counter transference phenomena involved in such attempts to understand the Practice Near psycho social field. (Wengraff 2001, Wengraff and Chamberlayne 2006).

Looking back I can see that the texts which made up the data for my research had similarly complex layers of counter transference phenomena with regard to

ABS's clients. The responses of the panel readers helped me to understand and process this in various different ways, as will be described.

To summarise therefore, the panel readings were developed as an adaptation to a Grounded Theory approach in order to:-

- allow for a more holistic (rather than immersive/line by line) response to the multi-faceted data from the beginning.
- help redress the balance of the overly one-sided data so that the client's voice became more audible.
- provide a context in which systemic and psychoanalytic concepts could be operationalised.
- provide me with a position from which I could gain a perspective on data related to my own insiderness and practice near status vis-à-vis the research.

In the next section I will give a more detailed account of the research and training practice on which I drew (including BNIM) when developing the panel readings to help analyse the data in the early stages of the research.

## **Account of the panel readings**

I will begin by describing the genesis of the panel readings in supervision, then describe how I recruited members for further panels, and the method of selecting the excerpts of primary data, to which the readers responded.

As described (p66) I began the research by trying to code a text written following a telephone conversation with client P. The process was not easy. It felt difficult to find a position from which to analyse the text and so I took the part-coded data to a supervision session to discuss a way forward.

In response to the part-coded data I had brought to supervision, and to my doubts, one of my supervisors suggested that they read the data, before looking at my coding, or hearing further explanation from me. They would respond to the data, offering their own associations.

I found the results challenging. The responses of my supervisors to the data revealed a different perspective. One of them commented that I seemed to get drawn into a management role, for example.

Following this experience two further readings were arranged with readers who had little/no prior knowledge of ABS or its clients. They were presented with an excerpt from the data and invited to offer a response. The usefulness of these first three panel readings (as I then started to call them) led to six further panel readings being undertaken, providing me with a secondary set of data.

The readings took place between February and July 2008. The choice of data excerpts for the panel readings was based on providing readers with data :-

- from organisations in different sectors
- from organisations with whom work went ahead and those with whom it didn't
- of different types e.g. a proposal, email correspondence, an account of a phone conversation, process notes from a meeting

In early sessions the readers' responses were noted by me and in later sessions recorded and transcribed by me.

Table 6, *Panel Readings Distribution In Relation To Clients*(p74) shows the distribution of panel readings across the range of client organisations and the revised totals in terms of texts available for study. Two readings of different data excerpts relating to client G took place (panel readings 2 and 4) and two readings of the same excerpt relating to client K (panel readings 3 and 8). One reading of data excerpts relating to organisations D,E,J,P, and Q took place (panel readings 6,7,5,1 and 9 respectively) giving a new total for the main data set of two hundred and eight texts.

Table 6. Panel Readings Distribution in Relation to Clients

Client	Number of primary data texts available per client	Number of primary data texts selected for the study per client	Secondary data – distribution of Panel Readings per client	Total texts in study per client organisation
A	131	30		30
B	24	9		9
C	7	7		7
D	6	6	1	7
E	38	24	1	25
F	18	14		14
G	5	5	2	7
H	7	4		4
J	5	7	1	8
K	6	7	2	9
L	67	13		13
M	5	5		5
N	11	11		11
O	12	8		8
P	83	37	1	38
Q	19	12	1	13
	444	199	9	208
<b>Additional primary data texts</b>				
Texts relating to early meetings of the ABS partners	71			
Texts relating to marketing events	167			

Table 7, *Panel Readings Details*(p76), describes each data excerpt, the context in which each reading took place, and how many readers there were. Table 7 also documents whether the work with the client went ahead, who wrote each data excerpt, and the word count of both the data excerpts chosen and the transcripts of discussions of the data excerpt (the readings). The table also shows that I was involved in writing all of the data excerpts, and was sole author of six of them. Three of the excerpts were process notes produced for my own purposes (panel readings 3,5,8), and two were accounts of phone conversations, parts of which were written for sharing with other consultants (panel readings 1 and 9). Two of the excerpts include email correspondence with clients (panel readings 4 and 7) and two include email correspondence with consultants (panel readings 4 and 6). Two of the excerpts include proposals to clients (panel readings 4 and 6) and two are narrative documents recording various sorts of contact with clients (panel readings 2 and 6). Of the seven organisations represented in the data excerpts work went ahead with three of them whilst contact with four of them didn't get to contracting stage.

The data excerpts ranged in length from four hundred and forty seven to one thousand two hundred and eighty one words. The write-ups of the panel reading discussions ranged in length from two hundred and twenty seven to five thousand nine hundred and ninety eight words. The write-ups constitute a secondary data set of fourteen thousand one hundred and forty two words.

Forty one readers have been recorded responding to the data in different contexts ranging from a group discussion with twenty readers present at one conference to single readers responding alone. Forty of the forty one readers responded verbally, in my presence, to data they were reading for the first time. One reader responded by email (Panel Reading 8 p260). This reader included a copy of a painting in her response. Of the forty one, four were my supervisors, three were colleagues studying on the same professional doctorate programme, one was an acquaintance of a colleague, and thirty three were students studying at the Tavistock Clinic in various different contexts. Most readers had had some psychoanalytic training though their professional backgrounds were varied and included social workers, therapists, mental health workers, business consultants, academics, artists and anthropologists.

**Table 7. Panel Readings Details**

Panel reading	Client to which the data relates	Description of data presented	If work went ahead	Description of readers	Number of readers	Word count data	Word count readers' responses
1	Client P	Written account of phone call with director (author = researcher)	Y	Researcher's Doctoral supervisors	2	501	Not transcribed
2	Client G	Narrative document chronicling various sorts of contact with the client as follows:- (author = researcher) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initial Phone call with manager, JC</li> <li>• Second phone call with JC</li> <li>• Meeting with JC</li> <li>• Planning process</li> <li>• Phone call with a consultant, LW, employed by client organisation G</li> </ul>	N	Colleagues studying on the same professional doctorate as the researcher	2	1187	338
3	Client K	Process notes from a meeting with client (author = researcher)	N	Students at doctoral conference at the Tavistock Clinic	20	447	2187
4	Client G	Email correspondence between client and researcher. Email correspondence between ABS consultant A and researcher. Proposal to client (author = researcher)	N	Researcher's Doctoral supervisor	1	1281	219
5	Client J	Process notes from first meeting with client (author = researcher)	N	Practice supervisor	1	1016	426
6	Client D	Narrative document recording the process of engagement with client (author = researcher) Email correspondence with ABS consultants A, D. (authors = researcher and ABS consultants A and D) Proposal to client. (author = researcher)	Y	Colleague studying on the same professional doctorate as the researcher	1	1140	579
7	Client E	Email exchange with client (author = client and researcher)	N	Colleagues studying on Social work professional doctorate at the Tavistock Clinic	5	1168	5999
8	Client K	Process notes from a meeting with client (author = researcher)	N	Artist responding to data by email	1	447	1141
9	Client Q	Account of conference call with client and consultant working for client (author = researcher)	Y	Workshop funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) at Tavistock Clinic	8	597	2660

The methodology developed for the panel readings relates to aspects of the Biographic-Narrative Interpretative Method (BNIM) and in particular to BNIM research data analytic panels using future-blind procedures to analyse data (Wengraf 2001). In these panels members study short data excerpts, in a context in which they have no knowledge of what happened next/in the future, and try and imagine the meaning of events described. They then generate possible hypotheses to help the researcher understand data. I sought to create such conditions in my research panels.

However, although BNIM was developed for purposes comparable to the research in this study, data presented for analysis by such panels usually takes the form of highly structured and in depth interview transcripts - rather than the varied notes, fragments and email correspondence which make up the data for this study.

I have therefore also drawn on seminar groups at the Tavistock clinic, developed to help trainee professionals think about and make sense of the emotional significance of their experience when taking up various roles. Data presented to these panels was often less structured and the approach more holistic. I will now describe these in more detail.

Infant observation seminars (Bick 1964, Briggs 1997), work discussion groups (Rustin 2008) and consultancy skills groups (Bridger 1972) developed at the Tavistock Clinic share a working assumption that the observer, consultant, manager or front line worker bringing material is an *insider* to the situation she is observing, consulting to etc and needs help understanding how unconscious emotional forces can both affect the ability to take up such a role and be a source of information about what is going on in the situation. To these ends the groups share two sets of practice which : -

1. help minimize the effect of what the professional brings to the situation as a member of the group she is observing (or working with), in order to maximize the possibility of observing and understanding.

2. help the professional understand and use her own emotional experience of an observation as a source of information about the situation i.e. countertransference.

In terms of minimizing what the professional brings as a member of the group three practices were used in such seminars/groups. These were : -

1. Presenting notes in an unstructured manner
2. Adoption of a *listening only* mode on the part of the presenter during the discussion which follows the presentation of material.
3. Seeking consistency over time before moving to hypotheses

Re the presentation of notes in an unstructured manner Michael Rustin writes about infant observation seminars as follows : -

*'The observer is asked explicitly not to prematurely hypothesise or code his or her experience but to bring it to be worked on and understood in an unformed way...'*

*(It is) important that the experience and evidence is made directly available to the supervisory seminar in which the observations are discussed and not prematurely 'coded' into theoretical interpretations and categories. '(Rustin 1989)*

By bringing texts which were raw or unprocessed for analysis by reading panels I similarly hoped to maximise the potential for making sense of unformed experience.

The second practice, of adopting a listening only mode on the part of the presenter during discussion of their material, helps create a space - again according to Rustin - in which to listen to and take in the discussion of colleagues regarding more difficult emotional aspects of the material brought for discussion. He writes:-

*'it is what the observer cannot bear to see, is unable to see, but is emotionally affected by which is used to understand what is going on.'*

The third practice, of seeking consistency over time before moving to hypotheses, helps the presenter build up a picture of what may belong to the presenter and what may belong to the observed context or work situation. I presented material from my research nine times.

The membership of the seminar groups is usually also consistent over time. The presenter thus has the opportunity to assess if the seminar group itself, as it responds to the presentations of different trainees, has its own valency (Bion 1961) to see certain things or construe them to a particular framework.

This aspect, to do with consistency of membership of the group, seemed less relevant for the research and, in fact, I perceived advantages in having a range of different people respond to the material. I felt skeptical of early responses to the data, as will be reported in the findings section. Finding consistency of response across different groups of readers challenged this and helped minimize the effect of what, as a double insider to the research context, I may have otherwise brought to the situation and which may have inhibited my capacity to see with fresh eyes – those of an outsider.

In terms of helping the professional to understand and use her own emotional experience as a source of information, the panel readings shared with the training seminars a focus on transference and countertransference. Both shared a working assumption that the professional may be transferring to the seminar group something which belonged to the system being studied much as the behaviour of an analysand may be construed by an analyst to have a transferential component.

The importance of making sense of subjectivity and anxiety in research has been written about by researchers such as Hunt (1985), and Giami (2001). In 'From Anxiety to Method in the Social Sciences', Devereux (1967) prioritises such transferential phenomena which he describes as 'disturbances' (his

quotes) as the most valuable source of data for understanding social phenomena. As follows : -

*'When treated as basic and characteristic data of behavioural science they (the disturbances) are more valid and more productive of insight than any other type of datum.'*(Devereux 1967 p.p. 16-17)

More often, he continues, they are warded off by what he describes as : -

*'a countertransference inspired pseudo-methodology; this manoeuvre is responsible for nearly all the defects of behavioural science..'*(Devereux 1967 p.p.16-17)

He warns that, when such material is ignored or warded off they becomes the source of uncontrollable error. In the panel readings such transference phenomena or disturbances were able to be made visible and provided material for hypotheses regarding what may have been operationalised between ABS and its clients. These are described in the findings chapters (Chapters 3 and 4).

## **Summary Of The Grounded Theory Approach**

A grounded theory approach has been used for this research, with the following adaptation. The panel readings described above substituted for the line by line analysis and coding used by grounded theorists in the first phase of data analysis - a part of the process which I had found difficult to do because of my closeness to the material. Instead panel readers commented on words and phrases used (by me) in a manner comparable to the way a researcher might in an initial analysis. An example of this would be the following from panel reading 3 where the reader might be considered, for example, to be coding the data with the labels 'gender issues' 'power and authority' or 'analytical clients' : -

*E sorry yeah. We talked about hierarchy and power also and just linking to what you were saying that idea about bringing a woman into a male organisation to*

*somehow bring things together to join things up and also both women and perhaps this bit of the organisation. I don't know – it's just an idea are – feel less powerful than this kind of this quite large analytical sciency organisation and how people kind of er try and introduce something to bring in some new ideas in to that but actually that's quite a struggle and quite difficult. And perhaps painful potentially.*

(Panel Reading 3 – Reader's responses)

The panel readings thus provided a way in to analysing the primary data without a line by line analysis in the early stages. They also provided a secondary set of data.

The decision to undertake the panel readings corresponds to Glaser and Strauss' steps for deciding on appropriate data collection for research in the social field – as in the three steps below.

1. Identifying a phenomenon, object, event or setting of interest
2. Identifying a few local concepts, principles, structural or process features of the experience or phenomenon of interest
3. Making decisions regarding initial collection of data based on one's initial understanding of the phenomenon

(Glaser and Strauss 1967, pp. 28-52)

Having identified a context for study (ABS and its clients) I asked myself what sort of data would help the study of the phenomena which I wished to study. When this question was asked it revealed that a further data source was necessary to help access the phenomena in which I was interested and so I set about collecting it – i.e. I undertook the panel readings.

I then progressed to the cycle of analysis, data collection, and theoretical sampling typical of the later stages of a grounded theory approach.

Through this process (as will be illustrated in the findings chapters) tentative analytic categories emerged which were then compared with evidence from other data selected for theoretical sampling. As the research proceeded

categories both coalesced and became more theoretical as I engaged in successive levels of analysis.

As regards the collection of new data following each iteration of the cycle the approach followed differed slightly, again, from a classic grounded theory approach. Apart from the generation of new data through the panel readings I did not collect further new data. The data was extant at the beginning of the project though, within the large data set, there was much to explore in terms of new, or unanalysed, data from within the overall extant data.

This extant data set to which no new data was added (apart from the panel readings), and the panel readings themselves as substitute for a line by line coding, represent modifications to an otherwise coherent Grounded Theory approach to the research. Theory was generated inductively from an analysis of data rather than a hypothetico deductive practice of testing existing theories (Glaser and Strauss 1967, Charmaz 2006). Finding a discipline which kept theory and/or premature hypothesising at bay was important in this context where so much was known by me and so much unknown because of my closeness to and involvement in (part of) the object of study – ABS.

The aspiration was to achieve as much of a *tabula rasa* as was possible holding potentially relevant facts and hypotheses in the background for some time in the interest of obtaining emergent diverse categories at different levels of abstraction before beginning to generate a *grounded* theory. The constant comparative method allowed for maximum movement around a large data set sampling and re sampling with theory emerging in an iterative process from many repetitive fragments.

## **Ethics**

Ethical approval for this study has been sought and granted by the Ethics committee of the University of East London.

Where organisations are referred to in the study they are anonymised, identified only by a letter. Regarding sectors I have changed anywhere there was any

chance an organisation, despite being anonymised with a letter, might still be recognisable – if it were the only regulatory body in a particular sector for example. In this case, as well as anonymising the organisation I also changed the sector, from car industry to ships for example. Names are similarly changed to letters. The work with clients was short term, often consisting of a one day event with, sometimes, (but not always) additional planning meetings and feedback meetings before and after. My knowledge of any organisational system or of its dynamics was based on these encounters and was not, I suggest, of sufficient detail to make it likely to be recognised.

Regarding the anonymisation of key players at ABS, particularly one of the consultants who is involved as a tutor in the professional doctorate for which this research will be assessed, the names of all artists and consultants are substituted by letters and the name ABS is also a substitute name for the real company. All members of ABS have, in addition, given consent for me to use material related to exchanges with them, as have the members of the nine reading panels who read and responded to excerpts from the data.

The following two chapters present the findings of the study chronologically as 'Findings First Phase – Evangelists, Pimps and Spies' (chapter 3) and 'Findings Second Phase – Something about Threes' (Chapter 4). The findings in chapter 3 are based on an analysis of the data excerpts and readers' responses to these excerpts which constitute the nine panel readings. Regarding findings second phase - returning to the panel readings and wider data set to test the initial findings and look for other themes was driven by a wish to test more deeply the kinds of relatedness I was beginning to identify. The three consultant behaviours *evangelist*, *pimp* and *spy* are shown, in the second phase of findings, to be specific manifestations of the relationships between the three parties, consultant, client and artist rather than the two way exchange (between consultant and client) understood in the first phase.

# Chapter 3

## Findings first phase: Evangelists Pimps and Spies

### Introduction

This chapter will begin with an account of my resistance to the responses of the panel readers. I will then describe how I was able, eventually, to engage with the readers' responses and locate three panel categories -*evangelist*, *pimp* and *spy* relating to the behaviour of consultants, which helped in understanding the data. I give an account of these panel categories and the themes of which they were composed, providing examples both from the primary data studied by the panel readers and from their responses, as evidence for the three panel categories of the chapter title.

The chapter finishes with an account of how phenomena associated with the panel categories, seemed sometimes to be mirrored in the process of the panel readings themselves. This mirroring is presented as potential evidence of the sort of psychoanalytic phenomena I sought to study - transferred, as it were, to the panel reading context.

When reproducing parts of the data presented for panel readings I have purposefully not corrected any spelling mistakes or typographical errors but left the original data as it was written. I have followed this principle also when quoting from my research journal, or any other data from the wider set. I have transcribed as accurately as possible the panel readers' responses, without editing.

### Evangelists Pimps and Spies

Having completed seven panel readings I decided to ask an artist whom I had met through a colleague to respond to an excerpt of data. It was an excerpt to which a group of participants at a Tavistock doctoral conference had already responded (panel reading 3). This was the first time I had asked a panel reader to respond to data to which I had already had a response. Looking back I

realise that I may have thought, unconsciously, that the artist was likely to be more sympathetic to my position. I sent her the data by email – another difference and perhaps an attempt to give her the time to really consider her responses rather than responding in the moment, like the other panel readers. Her response (panel reading 8) was, indeed, more considered but her reading brought up similar issues to the readers in panel reading 3 and identified similarly uncomfortable themes. It was not what I wanted to hear and I believe the response of panel reader 8 sent me into retreat for a number of months. In notes just after I had received the artist's feedback I wrote the following:-

*The panel readings always include comments on me in management role, in negotiating role, as a leader as a consultant, as a researcher – full of this...I guess the panel readings have served, as doctoral supervisor 1 says, to introduce a champion for the client*(Research journal June 30<sup>th</sup> 2008)

I then made a decision – unusual for me, to embrace technology. I decided to use the software programme Max QDA. It now seems a strange choice given the number and style of the texts. In my research journal I wrote : -

*30<sup>th</sup> june – I obsess about Max QDA and its mathematical possibilities. ..I have...loaded two hundred and forty eight texts on to Max QDA.*(Research journal June 30<sup>th</sup> 2008)

Using the programme did not work for me. I had difficulty thinking and spent hours working through on line tutorials and working out and trying to remember the various formulas and manoeuvres for sorting and coding data. It was September when I realised that I had become rather hypnotised by Max QDA and may have made use of it defensively. On September 23<sup>rd</sup> I abandoned Max QDA – printed out both the Panel readers' responses and the panel reading data excerpts in hard copy and began to read. As I did so I realised that, in the light of what panel readers were saying about the data, I had been finding it difficult to re read the data myself – as reflected in the following from my research journal.

*What I need to do next. I realise I have got stuck reading just what people doing the panel readings said and not re reading the data myself .... I need to include myself in the reflective text, which I feel needs to come next. I re read the data (painful) and the comments about the data from the 'panel readers' and then generate a document or long memo . (Research journal September 23<sup>rd</sup> 2008)*

I managed to move, in the end, to what I describe as a three-handed position – i.e. not ignoring the panel reading responses, not ignoring myself but holding a three part conversation with the data, as I record:-

*I'm sort of settling on a method which seems to be reading data which was presented to particular readers really closely – much more deeply than I have, taking my time over phrasing and really treating it as data to be understood at many levels. I wanted to record that it has taken me a long time to get here. I have read the panel reading data many times – on Max QDA, on screen, hard copy. Over a period of months, only now do I feel I can sit down and treat it as data, interrogate it, use it robustly. I am then reading the readers' responses. Going back to another reading myself etc. (Research journal September 24<sup>th</sup> 2008)*

Having managed to re connect to the research after this period of disengagement I produced a series of memos, reflecting on the panel readers' responses. I discovered that their responses had provided me with a robust initial coding of the data from which to begin working. I eventually located, and will detail below, three categories describing the perceived behaviour of consultants in what I understood, at the time, to be a dynamic of two, between consultant and client. These categories I labelled as follows :-

- *Evangelist*
- *Spy*
- *Pimp*

The *Oxford Dictionary On Line*(2012) gives the following as definitions of evangelist.

- A person who seeks to convert others to the Christian faith
- a zealous advocate of a particular cause

Bebbington (1989), writing about evangelicalism, identifies what he calls a quadrilateral of priorities as follows:-

- Conversionism - the belief that human beings need to be converted
- Biblicism - a particular regard for the bible (e.g. all essential spiritual truth is to be found in its pages)
- Crucicentrism (a focus on the atoning work of Christ on the cross)
- Activism - the belief that the gospel needs to be expressed in effort

It is the rigidity (all essential spiritual truth is to be found in the bible) and the zeal, as well as the ineffability and mystery associated with the beliefs of an evangelist (or evangelical) which informed the choice of word to describe a category of behaviour in the primary data noticed by panel readers.

The *Oxford Dictionary On Line* (2012) gives the following as definitions of spy.

- A person who tries to get secret information about another country, organisation, or person, especially someone who is employed by a government or the police.

The same source defines the related activity of espionage as:-

- the activity of secretly getting important political or military information about another country or of finding out another company's secrets by using spies.

In terms of the research the term *spy* was chosen to describe a behaviour identified by panel readers as intrusive and critical as if, at times, consultants were spying on an enemy who had something to hide.

Wikipedia (2102) describes pimp as follows.

- A pimp is someone who finds and manages clients for prostitutes and engages them in prostitution in order to profit from their earnings

The *Oxford Dictionary On Line*(2012) describes a pimp as gender specific:-

- a man who controls prostitutes and lives on the money that they earn

I will describe how, in the Panel readings, readers identified a *sexualised artist* whose services clients, as it were, wished to purchase. I have chosen *pimp* to describe the role of the consultant in relation to this (unconscious) transaction – a controlling, sometimes punitive, gatekeeper.

The three panel categories, *evangelist*, *pimp* and *spy*, were made up of six themes in different combinations, which emerged from an analysis of the panel readers' responses. Two of these themes – common to all three panel categories - describe a projective territory between client and consultant, based on difference, and used by clients to project (so I proposed) an unwanted moral sensibility on to consultants. The other four themes differentiate the behaviours *evangelist*, *pimp* and *spy* from each other.

The six themes are listed below, and the combinations which formed each panel category are indicated. The rest of the chapter will detail examples from either the primary data excerpts given to panel readers or panel readers' responses as evidence of these themes, before moving on to explore the mirroring referred to in the introduction to this chapter.

All three panel categories had in common two themes:-

- The use made of difference
- The location/projection of a *moral high ground* into ABS consultants

The panel categories were then differentiated from each other by the following themes :-

- Collusion around the mysteriousness of ABS's methodology – *Evangelist*
- Consultant response to clients feeling shame about aspects of their work –*Spy*
- Artist as Sexual Object and Consultant as Gatekeeper - *Pimp*

The distribution of these themes is illustrated in Table 8 (p89)

**Table 8. Distribution of Six Themes across the Three Panel Categories Evangelist, Pimp, Spy**

<i>Evangelist</i>	<i>Pimp</i>	<i>Spy</i>
The use made of difference	The use made of difference	The use made of difference
The location of a moral high ground in ABS	The location of a moral high ground in ABS	The location of a moral high ground in ABS
Collusion around the mysteriousness of ABS's methodology	Artist as sexual object	Clients feeling shame about aspects of their work
	Consultant as gatekeeper	

## **The use made of difference**

Panel readers often emphasised the use potentially made of difference in our work with clients.

In the examples below panel readers describe differences between ABS and its clients. At this stage of the research I had an emerging hypothesis that clients may have used these differences to project, and ABS consultants to absorb, unwanted *psychic contents* which, in turn, resulted in the behaviours referred to as panel categories.

The following examples are from panel readers' responses number three. The data to which readers were responding was a short account, written by me, of a meeting with NN and his boss at Client organisation K, a pharmaceutical company. The readers were a group of approximately twenty participants at a Tavistock Doctoral Conference.

In the first example from the readers' responses reader D identifies ABS as female and the client as 'primarily a male group':-

*D I was thinking that there was a real feeling that they were not confident that they could do it on their own, that there was something missing, and one of the questions I had was whether it was primarily a male group and whether something about the ..they felt quite stuck actually and impotent. Maybe that's one of the expectations they had of bringing in consultation – a hope to be able to access something which they thought they couldn't do themselves. (Panel reading 3 – Readers' responses)*

In the dialogue below reader E identified ABS as 'not' analytic, 'not' sciency, 'not' powerful, unlike its client.

*E We also talked about a hierarchy and power*

*B Can you speak up a little bit?*

*E Sorry yeah. We talked about hierarchy and power also and just linking to what you were saying - that idea about bringing a woman into a male organisation to somehow bring things together, to join things up and also both women and perhaps this bit of the organisation. I don't know – it's just an idea - are – feel less powerful than this kind of, this quite large analytical sciency organisation and how people kind of er try and introduce something to bring in some new ideas in to that but actually that's quite a struggle and quite difficult. And perhaps painful potentially. (Panel reading 3 – Readers' responses)*

Below reader F identified a difference between the organisation and ABS which could be described as the difference between doers and 'emoters'.

*F I think there is the gender aspect of that but also in terms of your particular question of why they would approach an arts based or arts informed organisation I was thinking of how, throughout, they were defining themselves as hmm, sort of analytical thinking – wanting doers and not maybe emphasising the more emotional experiential side and how this manager is struggling with a lack of trust and the fearfulness about giving something away and whether he had an assumption that art could in some way bi pass some of that – you know that it would be a shortcut to something that he felt he couldn't get to .(Panel reading 3 – Readers' responses)*

Below reader G suggests that clients were 'logical' and 'analytical' whereas the consultant in the meeting(me) was 'emotional' and 'creative'.

*G I think that was a shared feeling that we had - that this was a group that was selling itself as being logical, very analytical, managing things - a very male group, and that they were talking about - at the very core - hurting animals, talking about sexual issues and wondering if perhaps somebody who had a more direct link to the emotional and creative could somehow contribute to their thinking about that – what their organisation did. (Panel reading 3 – Readers' responses)*

In a note following the completion of all nine panel readings I developed the theme of difference.

*As I know that NN has now left client organisation K to be an independent consultant I might wonder what his unconscious intention might have been in getting us in. Perhaps to express difference. (Research Journal)*

Differences were highlighted elsewhere in the panel readings, for example in the readers' responses to Panel reading 9 below. The data was an account of a three-way phone conversation between the leader of a project team in client organisation Q (a large bank), a consultant who was working with them, and me. The reader compared the 'grand' and 'masculine' client with ABS which she perceived as 'feminine', 'artistic'.

*It's this emphasis on major too – it's quite grand – I would imagine it is quite masculine kind of environment though these are women. It's money. It's bank. It's finance. It's trying to marry something very kind of masculine with something which is quite feminine which is artistic and kind of what is going to kind of come out. (Panel reading 9 – Readers' responses)*

Such differences, with regard to the panel categories *evangelist*, *pimp* and *spy*, may have formed a fertile territory for projection between us and our clients,

### **The projection of a *moral high ground* into ABS consultants**

As well as 'the use made of difference' the three panel categories also shared a further theme which I have labelled 'the location/projection of a moral high ground into ABS'. This theme was identified from panel readers' comments, as will be illustrated from data below, who described ABS consultants as 'police', as 'anti corporate', or pre occupied with a 'moral question'. Readers also commented that clients sometimes seemed 'fearful' of consultants.

I will also illustrate that there was evidence in the data of an inflexibility and idealisation in our dealings with clients, as if we knew best.

These are the sorts of behaviours I have clustered and described as ‘the location/projection of a moral high ground into ABS’ and which I will now illustrate with examples from the primary data presented to panel readers and from their responses.

In response to data related to client Q (an account of a phone conversation between the leader of a project team in client Q (a large bank), a consultant who was working with them, and me,(as above) the reader below suggested that the client may have been using ABS as a symbolic cleansing process, as if we did, indeed, occupy a moral high ground, in contrast to the client’s ‘corporate’ context.

*A sense that the client wanted to by-pass something shameful or difficult by bringing in the artists and/or the female consultants – as if it was cleansing somehow. Sort of anti corporate.*

(Panel reading 9 – Readers’ responses)

The reader of an account of a meeting with NN and his manager, TT, at client K (a pharmaceutical company) amplifies the theme of moral superiority :-

*I am looking at the first paragraph and thinking there is almost a, completely from not knowing the situation or you at all, there almost felt like for you there was a moral question a moral question almost – who do I consult as much as much as who wants to consult me,*

(Panel reading 3 – Readers’ responses)

The artist (panel reader 8, who responded by email to the same data) identifies consultant H (me) as critical. She writes :-

*Issues of mistrust and secrecy figure strongly. TT makes a statement – you doubt its truth or at least you cannot see evidence to back up what he says (You as Doubting Thomas)...*

*- secrecy important in relation to outside world. ‘Fair cop’ (you as police) – all quite jokey.*

*Animal experiments associated with 'covering up', embarrassment, shame. Interesting that you describe them as 'naughty boys' – suggests that they do not feel and/or do not want to be seen as responsible as if they were adults. How, potentially, misunderstood do they feel by 'outside' world?*

...

*Now that they are working across the department, people fearful about giving data – don't trust what others will do with it. Can understand why it was important to leave in the typographical errors– 'cross department'. Fearful, angry, at the thought of what you, consultant H, will do with information about them?*

(Panel reading 8 – Reader's response)

Data excerpt five was a document I put together for my own reference following a first meeting with manager GT at client J, a government department concerned with air transport safety. I attended this meeting with consultant A. The data excerpt was presented to a single reader who commented on the projective system he surmised might have been in operation in the meeting, as follows : -

*Yeah I think there is quite a lot of projection going on in the theme of troublesome individual. Is it MR?(the employee)? Is it GT? (the client)? Is it you? (consultant H)? (Panel reading 5 - Data)*

During the period of analysis following the panel readings I revisited Panel reader 5's response, and the data to which he was responding and found further evidence of the troublesome individual 'as consultant' and a sense that the moral high ground may have been located in ABS, as follows.

*Eye of the storm in between the govt and the public – no risk allowed (unlike road safety) 24/7 pressure when there is an accident. Insistence that his team is not 'broken'.*

(Panel reading 5 - Data)

It is in the final phrase, 'Insistence that his team is not 'broken' that I thought there may have been an indication of an unconscious accusation from us as

consultants, that his team was broken. I remember the conversation – GT was talking of the devastating effect of air crashes on the air safety team and the lack of tolerance (unlike road accidents) of such inevitable accidents, on the part of the public. In his role as manager he was struggling to be effective with an employee who he believed was compromising safety in air traffic. GT may have felt responsible for this. The assertion that his team was 'not broken' may have been an unconscious invitation to evacuate a moral sensibility around a sense of guilt, which he felt, that accidents had happened on his watch – an unconscious invitation for us to criticise him which seems to have been taken up – in the notes at least. A moral superiority?

Panel reading 7. Two readers, in response to email correspondence with client E (a large financial consultancy firm for whom ABS was proposing workshops at an annual partners' conference) commented on an inflexibility in ABS, a sense that we *knew best*. Both readers empathised with the client who had written the following in response to an email I had sent.

*Hi Consultant H - thanks for this.*

*I think we should discuss, as I don't want / won't be permitted an 'enforced' session of this length. I guess my key question on timing is why the time required for the group work is now so much longer than an hour and what would be required to bring this back in. I completely agree that some form of 'show and tell' is required - it would be helpful also to understand why you've concluded this is only possible in a single group.*

*I'm not sure from your note whether you're saying that performance in the evening should not be an option open to groups or just that it carries 'risk' - it would be helpful to understand this also.*

*Re dinner - whatever you'd rather do is fine, your choice. The nature of our audience is that they will want the conversation with someone, so we'll still need to agree what you'd like the party line to be. I agree that in any event we should meet up on site and introduce you to some of our key people. If you're planning an on site briefing of your team, it would be great to come along and meet them. Does this mean you don't think participants should be given any info in their registration packs? I need to finalise these on Friday.*

*And finally for now, could you let me know how the 'clothing request' is to be resolved - I need to be specific with my sponsors.*

(Panel reading 7 – Data)

One of the readers from panel 7 commented.

*..my reading of will you let me know how the clothing question is to be resolved is 'do you ever answer questions? you know – is there ever anything you answer with a straight, that you can give me a straight answer to, that actually is along the lines of what I have said that I want and so that, you know, saying 'tell me the answer to something'.*

(Panel reading 7 – Readers' responses)

A second reader amplified the theme

*I suppose I found myself wondering if you are actually offering what the client wants in a sense. You cut the numbers down, you extended the length of time of the sessions and it doesn't sound like that is something they are terribly keen on – certainly not to explore it further... . there are things they don't quite understand – the rationale behind that needs to be explored further.*

(Panel reading 7 – Readers' responses)

This inflexibility, or rigidity, picked up by panel readers may have communicated a lack of interest in client needs, as if we knew what was best for them.

Other readers commented on a self-idealisation of the method, or of our own potential as consultants - as in the example below from panel reading 3. The reader of the data - an account (written by me) of a meeting between NN and his manager TT at client K (a pharmaceutical company) – commented that there was an unrealistic :-

*expectation that you are going to be able to bring together something quite oppositional like science and art.* (Panel reading 3 – Readers' responses)

She was responding to the data excerpt below, where I seem to be in collusion with NN to persuade his manager of the power of the experience of life drawing.

Given the difficulty of what was being described to me at the meeting, it now reads as an idealisation of what might have been able to have been achieved through the consultancy/art workshops.

*NN and I encouraged him (TT) to keep it (life drawing) as a possibility because of the powerful material which could emerge. (Panel reading 3 – Data)*

The sense, noticed by panel readers, of self idealisation, inflexibility, and the implication in some of the data that we *knew best*, along with the observation that clients seemed to sometimes regard ABS consultants as ‘police’, ‘anti corporate’, or pre occupied with a ‘moral question’ - constitute the theme ‘the location/projection of a moral high ground into ABS’. The process whereby this ‘moral high ground’ was ‘located’ with ABS was, I proposed, a projective process – as in the example of client J above (air safety) who may have projected an unwanted (by him) moral sensibility into the consultants.

I will now describe the four themes which, combined with the two themes above, differentiated the panel category behaviours from each other.

### **Mystification of ABS’s Model - Consultant as Evangelist**

What distinguished the panel category, *evangelist*, from *spy* and *pimp* – with which it shared the two themes so far described, was a theme I described as ‘collusion around the mysteriousness of ABS’s methodology’. Readers suggested that something ineffable was communicated as if taking part in the workshops was a question of belief, as if we were spreading the gospel, evangelising.

The data for panel reading 7 consisted of email exchanges between myself and KN, a partner of a large Financial Consultancy (client E) for whom we were planning an intervention at their annual partners conference. A reader in the seminar group which responded to this data commented that I seemed intent on perpetuating: -

*...a collective fantasy on all sides, that we are doing something which can't be explained, say that it is too ineffable ...acquires a slightly religious kind of aura*

*....can't spell it out because you destroy the mystery. (Panel Reading 7- Readers' responses)*

When, at a later stage, I re read the data excerpt, I could see clearly to what the reader was responding, as below, which is part of an email response to KN, refusing to join her and the partners (who were, perhaps, seeking re assurance about taking part in the workshop) for supper. I wrote :-

*Regarding Thursday evening - and the invitation to attend your welcome buffet - we also had some thoughts. .... I suppose you could also call it keeping our powder dry. The more people know about the experience in advance the less powerful it will be.*

(Panel reading 7 - Data)

The 'slightly religious' aura was evident elsewhere in the panel readings, for example in the data presented for panel reading 4, a formal proposal for an away day sent to JC, the head of environmental awareness at client organisation G, who were involved in airport building. In describing a visual art component of the day I wrote that clients would find themselves: -

*...freed from the constraints of language to develop their vision in a more creative way*

(Panel reading 4 - Data)

Panel readers picked it up elsewhere, for example in the following in response to the data in panel reading 9: -

*As if something magic is being created. It appears something magic could happen (Panel reading 9 – Readers' responses)*

This sense of ineffability, and mystery, in combination with the themes - 'the use made of difference' and 'the location/projection of a moral high ground into ABS' constituted the consultant behaviour *evangelist* and differentiated it from panel categories *spy* and *pimp*

## **Consultant response to clients feeling shame about aspects of their work – consultant as spy**

What distinguished the panel category, *spy*, from *evangelist* and *pimp* – with which it shared themes ‘the use made of difference’ and ‘the location/projection of a moral high ground into ABS’ was a theme I described as ‘consultant response to clients feeling shame about aspects of their work’.

Data from the panel readings seemed to suggest that some of the clients who approached ABS were struggling with a sense of shame in relation to compromises involved in their work roles. I had noticed this myself after the completion of panel readings 2 and 3, when reflecting on the data:-

*Taking a step back from the experience of both panel readings I realise that there are surface similarities between the data..*

*In both cases the data related to highly morally charged issues: - i.e. the environmental impact of new airports and runways, in the first, and the use of animals for drug testing and experimentation in the second. (Research journal)*

I further noted that both readings shared: -

*A sense of both key contacts having a sense of shame about what they did. The animal testing. The expansion of a major airport. I know that one of them has since left his job. (Research journal)*

The panel readers seemed to share this observation. Returning to panel reading 3 and the account of the meeting with NN and his manager, TT, at the pharmaceutical company - client K, one of the readers picked up on a sense of shame as follows :-

*I – I just felt that the issue of animal testing was quite dominant .....core need to be doing something creative perhaps to be able to deal with an issue that they perhaps feel guilt and shame about .(Panel reading 3 – Readers’ responses)*

And reading the same data some time later the reader (reading panel 8) below made a suggestion that the shame felt about the animal testing may have got exported, via a politically correct defence of vegetarianism, in a dismissal of life drawing as offensive or *'too much like looking at live/dead meat'* as below: -

*A Matter of Life or Death. Vegetarianism ('picky' and shame). Americans on moral high ground – vegetarianism – fish film. Makes me think of 'A Fish called Wanda'. Fish tank broken and fish spilling out – sexual release. Steamroller at end of film – destruction. Veggies out of touch with their aggression – all that is bad is in meat – something outside of them. Were the fish, in the film ... being killed, eaten – what sort of film would be that offensive? Life drawing – too much like looking at live/dead meat.* (Panel reading 8 – Reader's response)

In panel reading 2, a narrative account of contact with JC, head of environmental awareness at client G, who built airports, I wrote, of JC :-

*(she) left a message asking if 'basket weaving' Artist L could do a workshop with them at one week's notice.'* (Panel reading 2 – Data)

My sense after reading this data several times was that JC may have been expressing a desire to be in the state of mind of someone in need of occupational therapy - 'basket weaving' serving as a cultural shorthand for mental illness or *basket case*. Might she have been expressing a desire to be in such a defended state of mind that she did not need to carry the feelings of shame which she associated with her difficult role of head of environmental awareness?

A similar dynamic may have been present in the data presented in panel reading 7 (Client Organisation E, the large financial consultancy firm). Finishing an email response regarding final arrangements for the partners' conference company partner KN referred in passing to a different sort of day she would be having the next day.

*Many thanks. I will try to call you today, failing which I am on a team challenge doing something useful (!) in a wood near Wormwood Scrubs all day tomorrow and will be able to take a breather and ring you then.*

*Rgds, KN (Panel reading 7 - Data)*

One of the readers responded as follows, highlighting what he called the 'deficit' which may have been experienced by employees of companies such as Client Organisation E and which might have motivated them to get involved with a company such as ours (or to do something useful in a wood near Wormwood Scrubs) :-

*There is a question about what these organisations are doing in the first place in creating these types of exercises, these kind of days. And what kind of organisation is it that feels the need to do that? And why? So it seems to me there is an underlying really interesting question about what that is, which is to do with I suppose – what are the deficits in their every day life as organisations or as groups of people which they feel activities like this fulfil. I mean you could say if you were a charity department of a big company then the deficit is 'we are too selfish' and therefore we will have some people who are giving money to, you know, the disabled and we will create a structure and that will be seen to be done so we don't have to feel so bad about ourselves and we gain a bit of good repute and recognition – if we give away some of our money to helping people. That's one of the reasons why companies have charitable functions. A good thing but you can see it as relating to the fact that their primary mission drives them down roads that they would rather wish they weren't going in. Now you aren't talking about a charitable organisation you are talking about an organisation whose members from time to time ... do some work of a creative unquote kind with artists ... what do they get out of it... all those questions about what they get out of it... I regard it all as quite beneath the surface in terms of the rhetoric of your consultancy world. (Panel reading 7 – Readers' responses)*

Regarding the same client (E) a different reader from reading panel 7, who had a social work background, reflected back her associations to the phrase 'Show and Tell' – a phrase used by ABS to describe the feedback process at the end

of some of our events when clients who had been working with artists in small groups, shared both the performance or artwork they had created and spoke about the experience. She said:-

*The 'show and tell' – it just dawned on me. I would think that is most commonly used about games that children play around sexual exploration which is kind of risky stuff – is it safe – what is going on? How exposed are people?* (Panel reading 7 – Readers' responses)

This was a surprising moment for me, partly because, once she had said this, it seemed an obvious association to make. We had been using the expression with clients for some time and it had never occurred to me either that it evoked intrusive/risky sexual games or, as it occurred to me at the same moment, the image of a doll used, in a social work context, for children to demonstrate what they could not talk about in terms of abuse. It seemed to suggest the idea that there might be an unconscious wish to expose or shame our clients.

In panel reading 9, an account of a 3-way phone conversation between the leader of a project team in client organisation Q (a large bank), a consultant who was working with them, and me, a reader commented that the account reminded her of her teenage years, roaming around discos in a pack of girls. She likened the threat of a proposed contemporary dance workshop at the bank to :-

*The girls at the disco getting ready and terrifying the few sad men prepared to play*(Panel Reading 9 – Readers' responses)

Another reader at panel reading 9 found himself pre occupied with the style of the notes. They read, he said, as if I were conveying a conversation to someone else. This was true. The purpose of my note taking was often to update colleagues on meetings I had been at. The reader was also commenting on the style however, identifying a revelatory or *gossipy* quality, as if something shameful were being communicated/revelled in.

What constituted panel category *spy*, therefore, were the two themes common to the other two categories - 'the use made of difference' and 'the location/projection of a moral high ground into ABS' and a third theme, which was our response, as consultants, to the shame felt by clients which sometimes resulted, I proposed, in an intrusive, prying edge to our relations with clients.

### **Consultant as pimp**

What distinguished the panel category, *pimp*, from *evangelist* and *spy*— with which it shared themes 'the use made of difference' and 'the location/projection of a moral high ground into ABS' were two themes 'artist as sexual object' and 'consultant as gatekeeper'. It is the latter, the consultant as gatekeeper, to which the panel category behaviour, consultant as *pimp*, referred— a persecutory and controlling response on the part of consultants, toward clients we perceived to be focusing avoidantly on the artists.

### **Artist as sexual object**

I use 'artist as a sexual object' to describe this avoidant behavior, as will now be explored.

I will first illustrate it with an extended reference to panel reading 9, the data for which was the account of a three-way phone conversation between the leader of a project team in client organisation Q (a large bank), a consultant who was working with them, and me. Readers thought the transactions and exchanges seemed to have the quality of 'sex without relationship.'

A reader of the data commented that the client wanted :-

*to have something but not have a mess*(Panel Reading 9 – Readers' responses)

She was referring to the client's reference to not wanting to make a mess with visual art. The client seemed to want creativity, but without making any mess, she said. A sense of quick copulation without true connection was evoked.

Below is a more extended passage from the panel reading 9 data, followed by further readers' reactions : -

*this can't just be fun as they have persuaded the client organisation Q to let them do something 'out there for client organisation Q (refers to the art) – they need to demonstrate the learning;. This in the context of whether people would like to try two different(arts- based) things – GG doesn't want to miss out on the reflection (LL in the background saying she wants it to be fun)*

*There was a sense of collusion between us ... Part of a women's support group. I joked when she said she would pay whole fee up front and trust me that we would turn up and she said she'd kill me if I didn't*

*Ha ha*

*8.30 coffee – wants us to mingle. 9.15 intro by GG then over to us for the morning. Until lunch – max three hours.*

*She doesn't*

*The team will work together until November so it really is about quick formation Maybe I should talk to consultant D (who introduced us to the client) about it Get his steer on it*

*The project is at the creative stage she said when we discussed the other(arts) possibility i.e. writing and (visual) art. Of writing she said everyone was writing the whole time and of the art she didn't want to make a mess*

*She finished back on the rooms – said they were beautiful high rooms well kitted out.*

*6 or eight people know each other of old the rest mixed and lots of strangers to each other – so organisational boundaries and professional boundaries*

*And a false start last year*

*Everybody knows what they are doing but doesn't know enough about everyone else or how they work how it all fits together*

*GG and LL are to pre assign the groups*

*And come back to me about numbers*

*I quoted 500 extra if we needed another facilitator – rooms will be the thing (Panel Reading 9 – Data)*

A reader responded as follows, here describing the avoidant coupling between client and artist as 'hit and run.'

*It feels a little bit like a hit and run kind of thing doesn't it, feels very kind of as if something is supposed to be created just to ...something that is kind of disembodied or something and half formulated and can't be too messy. There is something uncontained isn't there about ...I think there's dynamics between the teams or something that the woman wants her ...you know there's some underlying reason for doing this – the dynamics between teams but she doesn't want it to get too out of control. But it's kind of how would you do that? It does feel like a little bit kind of hit and run – what are they expecting you to do?*

(Panel Reading 9 – Readers' responses)

The discussion continued.

*it is as if there is this whole phew kind of thing – an explosion and then.*

*Zen everything can function.*

*An evacuatory thing isn't it?*

*Like a crisis or something.*

*Well that is a good point because there is no seduction is there – there is all this talk of the fear of getting to know each other - thinking we know each other – this is just associating to it but how is this in between place created between two people? It has to happen in relationships. Though I think the point about premature ejaculation or creating something without the relationship foundations being in place for the seduction to take part and all of that ....*

(Panel Reading 9 – Readers' responses)

Listening to the readers of this data, during the panel reading, I began to remember a feeling of sadness I had felt during the phone conversation to which these discussions refer. The two women, the manager and internal consultant, began to discuss their male bosses and the fear which they felt. They seemed to forget I was on the phone at this point and talked between themselves more quietly.

In my notes I had written:-

*They did quite a bit of talking between them – about b7s (organisational salary band) – about two guys who I assume are the bosses further up the chain and how GG would feel intimidated to have them there at the beginning. I assume they are not taking part in this. They are doing serious stuff in the second half of the day.*(Panel Reading 9 – Data)

I felt that this quieter part of the conversation had allowed something to emerge about power relationships in the company and a sense that the two women felt side-lined, as if the real power was with the male bosses who were doing something serious elsewhere. I felt it was an indication of the sort of organisational pain for which they were seeking temporary relief through, as it were, an avoidant coupling with the artists..

A reader in panel reading 3, of data relating to Client K – the pharmaceutical company - was thinking on the same lines and wondered if the artist in the ABS pair might be used by clients explicitly to avoid the developmental tasks for which they had, apparently, sought help.

She suggested there might be: -

*a conscious wish to kind of work something out, actually cross what do they call it er,,,cross departments but an unconscious force against bringing things together*

(Panel Reading 3 – Readers' responses)

Reading data relating to Client K – the pharmaceutical company reader eight felt that whilst 'life drawing' may have represented the possibility of engaging with something painful at work (animal experimentation) the client (TT) opted for 'painting a vision of the future' – an abstract artform, she suggests, which he might have imagined would allow him to 'escape into a **private/personal** world'

(Panel reading 8)

Revisiting the panel reading data myself I found other examples of the potential use of artists as an avoidance of difficult issues. In the following excerpt from the data presented for panel reading 1 DA, from client P – a private company employed by a government department to deliver a large IT contract – eschews consultancy as ‘heavy’ but hoped the artists would get his team ‘up and excited.’ The sexual overtones are explicit.

*I can feel the same split coming on that they might just want the art or get resentful at consultants. It (the consultancy) sounds heavy he said*

*Why was group size max at fifteen*

*He wants to get people up and excited*

(Panel Reading 1 - Data)

In Panel reading 6, of data related to client D, a child and adolescent mental health team, the reader commented:-

*The team want to get away from pain by having a treat like going to the sweetshop. Pre occupied with artists which are what type of artist? Exciting. What is the cherry on the top? What’s the exciting part of this? Not consultative part. .*

### **Consultant as gatekeeper**

If the artists were seen, by clients, as a form of exciting sexual object, there is evidence in the panel readings that consultants were experienced as a sort of gatekeeper to the artists - spoilers of the fun – she or he who held the power over the artists and decided whether or not the client would or would not get to work with a particular artist, or any at all.

For example, in the excerpt from Panel reading 1 above, the consultant is experienced as ‘heavy’ by the client. His focus is on the exciting artist and he seems to want only that the consultant makes this possible and then leave.

The data presented for panel reading 4 was an email exchange with JC, head of environmental awareness at client G, an organisation involved in the building

of airports. The email exchange included a proposal for work from ABS and JC's response (she declined the proposal), along with a response to this news from consultant A. JC's rejection of the proposal came after several requests to book an artist to work with her team, without one of the ABS consultants.

She wrote :-

*...The bottom line is that I have lots of unanswered questions and not enough time now to shape this in a way I would be comfortable and it is too high risk for me as it stands!*

*Can I get back in touch in the new year? In the meantime, it would help if you could send me some of your consultant and artist CVs around working in this area. Many thanks again*

JC

(Panel reading 4 – Data)

Consultant A, writing (to me) in response to this email, wrote :-

*..She wants a sort of pick and mix (choosing her own artist & consultant) from the CVs - my sense here is that she would go for someone businessy rather than psychological but lets send them anyway (not sure about artists CVs)*

(Panel reading 4 – Data)

Consultant A seems to be guarding the artists with her bracketed 'not sure about the artists', as if she were the gatekeeper.

Before responding to the data the (single) reader in panel reading 4 asked if I had sent the CVs to the client. I had and, unlike in other panel readings where I had resisted answering questions until the end, I told him so.

He commented that I had 'given her what she wanted' (a bit like I had done with him perhaps, in answering the question) in a paranoid schizoid sort of way instead of a 'heads together' sort of way i.e. sent the CVs – she got what she wanted and then she went. It is this sort of fighting over access to the artists which I have characterised as consultant as gatekeeper.

The data presented for Panel reading 6 was a document consisting of a mixture of emails, and notes I wrote for my own reference documenting initial contact with different members of client organisation D, a child and adolescent mental health team. The excerpt ends with a proposal for the work, sent by email. Consultant D went to a first meeting with the client. Following a discussion with him after the meeting I wrote :-

*He (consultant D) came away saying he'd had to get them to stop thinking 'which artist?' and in a way I had to stop him –*

(Panel Reading 6 - Data)

The client group was excited and focused on the artists. The consultant was pulled in to a controlling or gatekeeper role.

A reader in Panel reading 2 thought the roles might be implicit in our business model. He commented on the potentially exploitative, or unequal, pairing between consultant and artist, reflected in the difference of payment (the artists got less). I recorded it, as follows.

*ST interested that artists get paid less than consultants – what it sets up....*

(Panel Reading 2 – Readers' responses)

What constituted panel category *pimp*, therefore, were 'the use made of difference' and 'the location/projection of a moral high ground into ABS' and two further themes – 'artist as sexual object' and 'consultant as gatekeeper'. The latter described the consultant behaviour *pimp*– in which the consultant got drawn in to a controlling, sometimes punitive role - rationing clients' access to the artists.

The significance of the artist (as sexual object) in panel category *pimp* was to lead to further hypotheses but, at this stage in the research, my hypothesis was as follows:-

I had located three consultant behaviours, predicated on difference (between us and our clients) – a difference on to which clients projected an eschewed moral

sensibility which was sometimes introjected by ABS consultants and enacted in one of three panel category behaviours – *evangelist pimp* or *spy*.

### **Mirroring - Dynamics in the Panel Readings**

I will now give an account of incidents from Panel readings 2, 3 and 9 to illustrate what I propose were counter transferential phenomena in the panel readings, phenomena I used to help me understand the data and construct the panel categories.

In the following example the dynamics of espionage seem to come alive amongst the readers in Panel reading 3. The data presented were my notes following the meeting with NN and TT at Client K, the pharmaceutical company.

Reader A was the first to speak to my invitation to share associations to what I had described as ‘the raw data’, which had been presented. She said: -

*A: I don't know if it is an association but my first thought was a different interpretation of raw data. Raw data for me would have been a transcript of your interview and who said what when so literally a transcript of who said what to whom and in a sense this is more your interpretation of...your kind of process notes from that interview so I guess that was my first thought*

The sketchy unconventional form of the data seemed to provoke a desire to know more in reader A. She did not speak again until near the end. In the interim the following exchange occurred between two staff members involved in running the conference.

*Conference organiser: I was just wondering. I'm certainly not wanting to introduce it if it is not in people's minds ...but the sort of ...on the one hand people really responding to bringing up themes but there is also the question of broadly what kind of data is this? And I wondered if there is a sort of way of bringing those two questions or those two issues together. Whether you have got any thoughts about that – that's what was in my mind when I heard people speaking.*

*J: ...I find it very refreshing to find a researcher researching with data that is available – archival material – rather than thinking they have to go out and interview, they have to go out and get something fresh and I think to realise that very often we have an enormous amount of data which we can actually use for, very successfully for research. Very important.*

A little later in the discussion reader A came back as follows.

*A: Sorry I feel a little bit confused because it seems as if J knows more about this than – I don't know. You've obviously got something written down about the process and the panel reading and the..*

*K: No*

*A: ok ...because I wasn't. yes. Is the process that you are going through then – it sounds like it is just taken from your notes so far. Over 7 years and picking out some bits*

*K: that's where it is at the moment - how to pick the best bits to get the best range of data and the most and approach to that data is really where I am at.*

*A: and are you going to be the person who is approaching the data*

*K: yes*

*A: and writing it up*

*K: yes ....but not for the panel reading obviously. That's how I use my seminars. And colleagues and this seemed like an irresistible opportunity really to get people who I felt could engage you know with the material.*

Another reader, M, then commented on what she thought was an insider/outsider dynamic which she had noticed in the material and which seemed also to have been demonstrated in the room.

*M: I thought. You know it is only a thought but there are issues of inside and outside because you just said you go inside this company.*

*Conference organiser: Could you speak up a little bit?*

*M: I wonder if there is an issue from inside and outside – one thing that made me think this is your comment and that they say they have now the problem that they have finished the work*

*now and now they have to work across departments and I think also that there is some reality for a scientific person to be very cautious with the data because sometimes there are people who try and take your data.*

(Panel Reading 3 – readers' responses)

During the course of the panel readings there were several times when a dynamic was noticed amongst the readers. In this case I felt that the dynamics of espionage which were being discussed were also being mirrored in the workshop. Reader A seemed to be holding both a desire to know more and a paranoid sense that she was being excluded/persecuted in some way. I felt this mirrored a dynamic in which the consultant wanted to know more and in which the client may have felt persecuted or spied on.

This provided early evidence, via the transfer of phenomena to the Reading panel, of panel category *spy*.

The data presented for Panel reading 9 was the record of a three way telephone discussion between a project team leader at Client Q (a large bank), an internal consultant, and me. One of the readers responded as follows: -

*Going right out on a limb – is there something ejaculatory about it? (laughter)  
That's me getting kind of too kind of tavisstock – a bit Freudian about it. But it is as if there is this whole phew kind of thing – an explosion and then. (Panel Reading 9 – Readers' responses)*

The laughter became infectious. Looking back I made the connection with the material, as if something of the sexualised nature of the transactions they were discussing had been transferred.

There was a similar atmosphere in Panel reading 2. The data presented for Panel reading 2 was a narrative, written for my own reference, chronicling various sorts of contact with client organisation G, a company involved in airport construction. Readers' responses seemed to mirror the sexual dynamics they (but not I) felt were indicated in the data. I will first present excerpts from the

data presented to these readers followed by their responses and an account of what I propose may have been the transference phenomena. First the data :-

*thinking working with Artist E in the afternoon could be good and Artist D in the morning...*

*There is an away day with the same team on feb 1 followed by an evening session where she wanted ABS to provide a bit of fun.*

*She was interested in the artist only as they have a facilitator on board – LW. And didn't want to risk too many cooks....*

*She asked the price and I said it would be between 6 six and seven hundred for the artist and plus a thousand for the consultant. She said it was expensive for an evening activity but she is getting LW to call me and discuss whether or not to have just the artist or the artist and consultant combo...*

*Later*

*JC put me in touch with LW – a consultant running their 2 day workshop to discuss whether it was better to have the artist or the artist and consultant for the middle night of their workshop. I explained to LW that I was happy to book an artist to do a class oriented toward group work but that is what it was. It felt confusing to go for the full ABS offer and an inappropriate time – also Artist E is not just a bit of fun. It needs to be entered with a fresh mind and not as a pre dinner distraction.*

(Panel Reading 2 – Data)

The following is an excerpt from the readers' responses. The responses were delivered, as they are written - short sentences, rather breathless, accompanied by giggles.

*SH People so excited so fascinated...*

*ST They are just teasing – we don't want this, not this...*

*ST We want to be with these creatives*

*SH We want sex but we don't want to pay for it.*

*ST These organisations do approach for the flirtation but never get into bed – not 'the full ABS offer' don't get to stay till after dinner. (Panel Reading 2 – Readers' responses)*

At the end of the reading the readers described how they had felt flirtatious with each other. The readers were fellow students and, at first, I felt irritated with my colleagues. My peers did not seem to be taking me or the data seriously. The session had been rushed, both of them turning up late, and then they had seemingly got distracted (by the flirting). On reflection I wondered if their flirtatious behaviour had mirrored something (as had the laughter in Panel reading 9) of the dynamic they had observed - a dynamic I later described as 'artist as sexual object' – a theme of panel category *pimp*.

### **Summary of findings first phase**

The three panel categories *evangelist*, *pimp* and *spy* enhanced understanding of the psychodynamics of consultant client exchanges in this context, as manifested in the three consultant behaviours – based on difference and the projection *into* this difference of an eschewed moral sensibility, absorbed by the consultant and manifested as one of the three behaviours. The limitation of these categories was that they focused on only two of the three parties involved in the consultancies. Identifying the theme *artist as sexual object*, as part of the panel category *pimp* focused the possibility that the relevance of the artist to the dynamic discovered between consultant and client was under explored.

This absence of the artist in the first phase of the findings was highlighted when I presented the first phase of my findings to a workshop attended by alumni of the Masters programme 'Consultation and the organisation: Psychoanalytic approaches' (Tavistock Clinic). The findings-so-far of the research presented for discussion focused on the three unconscious consultant roles I had identified. The audience expressed frustration at being deprived of the artists promised by the description of my research in the invite to the workshop. On reflection I felt this was important information. The alumni group, like the client in panel category *pimp* had experienced me as a 'gatekeeper' to the artist. There was more to discover about the inter relatedness of client/consultant and artist.

## **Chapter 4**

# **Findings second phase: Something about Threes**

### **Introduction**

In this second chapter concerned with the findings of the research I will describe how fourteen new themes were located through further analysis of the Panel readings. I will then give an account of how another five themes were located following a reading of all the available data relating to one of the client organisations in the study. I will discuss and illustrate the process whereby these themes— twenty five including the six themes which made up the panel categories *evangelist*, *pimp* and *spy* - were allocated to three overarching clusters for which I then sought illustrative examples in the wider data set. I will describe the effect on me of finding much evidence of one of these clusters – *Fighting with Clients*.

I will then relate findings from a review of the sixteen organisations in the study during which I found a high level of similarity regarding two organisational themes amongst clients.

I will describe a further period of resistance, during which I was unable to continue with the analysis of the data, offering an account of what I think contributing factors may have been, including a resistance to the realisation that the object over which we were fighting with clients was often the signature ABS event which had become our preferred way of working.

This second chapter on the findings will finish with a conclusion elaborating a three way dynamic between client, consultant and artist, in which, I propose, the ABS pair may have been used by clients to mitigate or dispel certain organisational dynamics common to our clients which may, unconsciously, have played a part in the processes of mutual selection in the first place.

### **Further analysis of Panel readings**

The six themes which formed the three panel categories *evangelist*, *pimp* and *spy* were :-

- The use made of difference
- The location/projection of a 'moral high ground' into ABS consultants
- Collusion around the mysteriousness of ABS's methodology (this theme differentiated *evangelist*)
- Consultant response to clients feeling shame about aspects of their work (this theme differentiated *spy*)
- Artist as sexual object (this theme differentiated *pimp*)
- Consultant as gatekeeper (this theme differentiated *pimp*)

Returning to the Panel readings after this initial period of analysis I noted fourteen further themes, listed below. The list is followed by examples, either from the data presented to panel readers or from readers' responses to them, as evidence for the theme:-

*Fourteen Further themes from Panel Readings :-*

- Conflict with clients
- ABS as a persecutory object
- Clients using ABS interventions as escapism
- Art used to represent risk
- Use of ABS as reparation following negative organisational changes/recent losses
- Redundancy in client organisations
- Individual clients lost or marginalised
- Situations in client organisations which are split
- Engineers or 'left brainers' in client organisations wanting something different
- Leaders and managers in client organisations who feel under attack
- Individuals in client organisations feeling trapped in risk averse or otherwise constrained environment
- Insecurity and newness at ABS
- Lack of trust between colleagues (at ABS)
- Confusion of leader at ABS (me)

I will now present examples from the data presented to panel readers, or from readers' responses to the data, to illustrate these fourteen new themes:-

- Conflict with clients :-

A re reading of all the Panel reading data and readers' responses revealed a low level, but consistent, argumentative tone in my correspondence with, and writing about, clients.

For example, in the data for Panel reading 1 - an account, written for my own reference, of a phone call with manager, DA, from Client organisation P – a large for profit agency working on a government IT contract I wrote that I :-

*argued the value of planning whole day together and making full use of consultants*

(Panel reading 1 – Data)

The tone is argumentative.

In Panel reading 4 data, in an email exchange with manager JC at client organisation G, a company involved in airport construction, JC implies that there was conflict at a meeting she had with ABS, citing this as she turns down the proposal for work, as follows:-

*The main reasons for deciding against it at this stage include my nervousness around using performance theatre with this particular audience. As I said at the meeting, it was the artistic method I was least at ease with.*

(Panel reading 4 – Data)

The tone of the following excerpt from my email response to KN (from client E, a large financial consultancy) indicates conflict about arrangements and finishes with an assertion from me that a particular format is 'crucial'.

*Whenever we use performance as part of an ABS intervention, the 'audience' is made up of fellow participants (like at the Soho theatre and as it would have been in 'Plan A' for the conference) who also get to show and tell their work. It*

*makes for a very focused and contained situation where everyone is 'in the same boat', knows the score, and is taking a similar level of risk. Performing to a large group who have not been involved in the experience would set up an inappropriate difference and detract from the experience of those taking part. For this reason we think it is crucial to include the 'show and tell/performance' aspect of the work in the afternoon session, so that the audience is made up of fellow participants*

(Panel reading 7 - Data)

The data for Panel reading 8 were my notes from a meeting with TT and his manager NN at client organisation K, a large pharmaceutical company. The reader highlights simply what she observed to be a conflictual tone in the account.

*TT makes a statement – you doubt its truth*

(Panel reading 7 – Reader's responses)

- ABS as a persecutory object

On re reading the Panel data for Panel reading 4 (Client G – airport construction) I was struck by the amount of dense detail in the proposal and some of the language which, I could now see, might seem unnerving(or persecutory) to clients not used to dance or theatre. I wrote :-

*By the end of the workshop the aim is that the leadership team will put together an ensemble performance piece.*

(Panel reading 4 – Data)

I was also surprised at the way I described the cost – none of the numbers were rounded up or down. For example there were the following amounts in the quote for the work. £3163, £577. I felt the document was exacting and might have generated anxiety - ABS as persecutory object

The reader of the data agreed. In my notes following the reading I wrote :-

*He found the proposal scary – might she be someone..who needs warming up slowly? The proposal generates anxiety(Panel reading 4 – Reader's response)*

- Clients using ABS interventions as escapism

In Panel reading 1 the data was an account, written for my own reference, of a phone call with manager, DA, from Client organisation P – the large agency working on a government IT contract. According to the account DA was pre occupied from the start with ABS providing something ‘off duty’ or ‘fun’, as follows:-

*Logic of split between work and enjoying themselves/getting to know each other was following the dragons den event which went well but people found it very task focused and would like to make sure there was an ‘off duty’ bit dedicated to having fun and getting to know each other.*

(Panel reading 1 – Data)

In response to the data presented for Panel reading 6 - a document consisting of a mixture of emails and notes I wrote for my own reference detailing initial contact with different members of client organisation D, a child and adolescent mental health team, the reader associated to the research questions of the study:-

*Why do organisations approach ABS? Escapism? Holiday while at work. Reparation. Guilt of managers giving staff a treat. Play therapeutic. Something a bit different, quirky. Play is reparative.*(Panel reading 6 – Reader’s response)

Another reader, in Panel reading 8 (Client K, the pharmaceutical company) wonders :-

*Does ‘art’ provide the promise of a safe space, which is less charged than the ‘everyday’*

(Panel reading 8 – Reader’s response)

Collectively I have described these responses as ‘clients using ABS as escapism’.

- Art used to represent risk

However, the same reader (above) also felt that art might represent risk to TT, at client K (the pharmaceutical company). She asked :-

*are they looking for what they feel is lacking, such as intuition, imagination, mess, experimentation, freedom, playfulness, different way of conceptualising.*  
(Panel reading 8 – Reader's response)

- Use of ABS as reparation following negative organisational changes/recent losses

The reader of data presented for Panel reading 5, a document I put together for my own reference following a first meeting with manager GT at client organisation J, concerned with air transport safety, suggested GT was using the meeting symbolically to imagine a reparative space.

*It's possible he might be looking for some sort of aesthetic harmony by working with artists. Organisation is chaotic. ABS could provide an external objective correlate. Yes. Some sort of aesthetic whole which would somehow apply to his organisation. It's almost as if..he needs some external feedback..Pat on the back - as if he wants you and/or ABS to offer some sort of validation.* (Panel reading 5 – Data)

- Redundancy in client organisations

Widespread redundancies had been a recent problem in at least two of the seven organisations represented in the Panel readings. They are referred to in the data, as follows.

The data for Panel reading 1 was an account of a phone call with manager, DA, from Client organisation P – the agency working on a government IT contract. My references to promises not kept refers to the wide scale recent redundancies over which DA had presided in his first six months in role.

*– the problem may not be keeping promises but what makes that feel difficult – in a company which may be perceived not to have kept promises itself (I didn't say that) but that's the rub really (redundancies).*

(Panel reading 1 – Data)

In the data presented for Panel reading 3 (pharmaceutical company) I wrote :-

*There is a problem with trust – when they ask for data it is given fearfully as if they thought it would be analysed and their position judged (job lost?)*

This refers to a programme of redundancies at client K which had recently taken place.

- Individual clients lost or marginalised.

Panel readers also picked up on a sense that individual clients seemed to feel, sometimes, lost and marginalised. In Panel reading 3 (client K, the pharmaceutical company) a reader said :-

*..they felt quite stuck actually and impotent. (Panel reading 3 – Data)*

In Panel reading 5 GT from client J (The government department concerned with air safety) is described as similarly lost or marginalised :-

*He comes across as either 'feminine man' playing mother, nurturing, then becomes this little boy lost. Nothing too silly tied in with little boy lost.*

(Panel reading 5 – Data)

- Situations in client organisations which are split

Whilst re reading the Panel readings looking for further themes I noticed in the same data excerpt as above that GT described the splits in his team as quite entrenched, as follows :-

*he said it had taken a lot longer than he thought getting two teams together*

*... A mixture of experts (who can't be managed) and team players (who know nothing) ... Old timers who know the history of all the accidents and newer younger people(Panel reading 5 – Data)*

- Engineers or 'left brainers' wanting something different

The 'experts' and 'old timers' referred to in the data excerpt above (client J – Government department concerned with air safety) were engineers, Similarly, in client organisation K (the pharmaceutical company) the 'process improvement people' for whom we had been asked to design an away day were described as follows by TT (reported by me) :-

*Most of the process improvement people have a scientific qualification (except HR! – they laughed) and will typically have worked their way into their current position from somewhere else in the company. TT described himself as a typical ISTP very logical person – NN chimed in with another sort of analysis using a colour circle which had put all but one of his team in the very analytical section. (Panel reading 5 – Data)*

There seemed to be a category of client from a particularly technical or engineering background who was attracted to working with ABS.

- Leaders and managers who feel under attack

There is evidence that many of the managers with whom we had interactions felt under attack. In Panel reading 2 data (regarding client G - airport construction) I report that manager, JC, seemed to be making a bid to be seen as an external stakeholder (i.e. an innocent party) rather than as head of environmental awareness, where she was attacked by stakeholders, about airport expansion. I wrote :-

*each centre has its own local agenda with communities and stakeholders. JC said she was a stakeholder .. in a way which made me wonder if she lived near there(the airport)(Panel reading 2 - Data)*

In Panel reading 3 TT, from client K (the pharmaceutical company) implied a problematic relationship with his bosses, 'the Americans', who he describes as if they were waiting in the wings to make irrational criticisms or attacks, at any moment. (objected to the fish film)

*TT thought the Americans, who had objected to the fish film on the basis of vegetarianism wouldn't like it (Panel reading 3 – Data)*

- Individuals feeling trapped in risk averse or otherwise constrained environment.

In Panel reading 2 (client G - airport construction) head of environmental awareness JC complained that her organisation was risk averse.

*1987 client organisation G privatised from government department. Now a risk averse culture with slow turnover (Panel reading 2 - Data)*

In the data presented for Panel reading 5 (client J – the government department involved in air safety) I wrote of an internal 'clash of cultures'. The manager, GT, with whom I had the meeting was finding the culture of the government department 'old style'. The excerpt below implies that the civil servant with whom he was in conflict had been unable to keep up with technological advances. GT on the other hand came from a corporate IT background and was suffering in his new role. He felt trapped in a regressive culture. I wrote :-

*old style civil servant, victim of IT? one end of the clash of cultures going on – of which GT might be at other end.(Panel reading 5 – Data)*

Both clients felt responsible for bringing about changes in resistant organisational cultures.

- Insecurity and newness at ABS

The reader of data presented for Panel reading 4 (Client G - airport construction) said, as I report in my account of the Panel reading :-

*He felt our needs as an organisation featured quite heavily. He also felt it sent an insecure message with all the detail. (Panel reading 4 – Reader’s response)*

One of the passages he was referring to was the following passage from the proposal where I offered to work for free, communicating, I now believe, insecurity.

*However ABS consultant A and I have been seeking an opportunity to consult as a consultant pair and, with your permission, this away day could present us with an opportunity to do so. There would be no extra costs involved for Client organisation G. (Panel reading 4 – Data)*

- Lack of trust between colleagues (at ABS)

In the data for Panel reading 2 (Client G – airport construction) a lack of trust between ABS consultants (me and consultant A in this case) was evident in two examples.

*Maybe I should do the initial meeting with whoever is available rather than these negotiations with consultant A only around her diary.*

and

*Found myself pre occupied with getting squeezed out – consultant A would get the work even though I know the decision wont be taken without me (Panel reading 2 – Data)*

- Confusion of leader at ABS (me)

Also in Panel reading 2 (Client G – airport construction) a panel reader commented that it seemed like I had no room to think as a leader and was insecure, as follows :-

*No space to think no creativity struggle of consultant H(me). What can she offer? (Panel reading 2 – Readers' responses)*

I echo this sense of confusion myself in Panel reading 6. The data excerpt was a document consisting of a mixture of emails, and notes I wrote for my own reference documenting initial contact with different members of client organisation D, a child and adolescent mental health team. I wrote that I was :-

*Very pre occupied with what was my role*  
(Panel reading 6 – Data)

As described the fourteen themes above were located during a second period of analysis of the nine Readers' responses to data excerpts presented for the Panel readings and of the nine data excerpts themselves.

## **Data relating to Client E**

The data excerpts for the panel readings represented only eight of the one hundred and ninety nine texts in the primary data set however (one text – presented for readings 3 and 8 - was used twice). I decided, as a next step, to read all of the data relating to one of the clients– client E (a further twenty four texts) to test if significantly different themes emerged. I located five new themes through this process as will now be described.

The themes I located were :-

- ABS used as a 'punch bag' by client
- Fear of failure of retention and recruitment of employees in client organisation
- Basic assumption meness (Lawrence, Bain and Gould 1996) in client organisation– if you don't like it you walk away
- Absence (and loss) of Consultant A
- Competition with consultant A

I will now present examples of data related to client E which helped me locate these themes.

- ABS used as a 'punch bag' by client

In notes after the conference at which we had provided a workshop for client E (the large financial consultancy) I wrote of the experience in the passage which follows. On re reading it there was a sense of having lived through a bruising experience, as if we had been used as a sort of 'punch bag' by the client.

*The pressure and the undermining – feeding back through people who don't have the authority but are simply reporting – KN change her mind – making us feel like they feel. All change to the very very end. You have to pull it out of the bag. Really tough.*(Data bank/Client E/Notes after the event)

- Fear of failure of retention and recruitment of employees in client organisation

In a debrief meeting following the conference N from client E shared the following, recorded in my notes:-

*They failed, they said, to pick up much of (rival consultancy)'s business. They need to improve their ranking now for fear of 'dropping off the end'. Also retention a key issue and need to recruit two to three thousand people. That's huge.*(Data bank/Client E/Notes after the event)

- Basic assumption meness (Lawrence, Bain and Gould 1996) in client organisation– if you don't like it you walk away

During the organising of the event for client E we heard a lot about the partners of the company. The culture was described by manager N as : -

*if you don't like it you walk away*(Data bank/Client E/Nerves N)

This seemed borne out by the experience of artist H who sent me her reflections after the conference.

*I felt well satisfied with what the music group accomplished and experienced. But was left with feelings of irritation/annoyance with i) the person who came to our group and then left after ten minutes (with a poor excuse),*  
(Data bank/Client E/Artist H reflections)

I have described this theme as basic assumption meness. Each behaves as if there were no group (Lawrence, Bain and Gould 1996). Just a collection of individuals.

- Absence (and loss) of Consultant A

On reading all the data related to client E I picked up evidence both of a sense of loss and anger I had felt as consultant A became less and less available for ABS and a sense of my own competition with her. The loss and anger is evident in the following note. I was writing about how consultant A had felt excluded from discussions :-

*part of me felt well 'A' you weren't there were you – in therun up, on the day before, on the plane on the way back so actually its fair enough*  
(Data bank/Client E/Notes after the event)

- Competition with consultant A

I wondered aloud about my competition with consultant A in the same set of notes recording the debrief meeting with client E, as follows :-

*She (consultant A) said that we'd gathered a lot of info about client E along the way. I added rather lightly 'a working hypothesis' – did I set her up?(Data bank/Client E/Notes after the event)*

## **Three new overarching clusters**

The five new themes located during a reading of all the data available for client E, increased the total number of themes to twenty five as follows :-

The six themes which formed the panel categories *evangelist pimp* and *spy* :-

- The use made of difference
- The location/projection of a moral high ground into ABS
- Collusion around the mysteriousness of ABS's methodology
- Consultant response to clients feeling shame about aspects of their work

- Artist as sexual object
- Consultant as gatekeeper

The fourteen new themes located during a further period of analysis of the Panel Readings:-

- Conflict with clients
- ABS as a persecutory object
- Clients using ABS interventions as escapism
- Art used to represent risk
- Use of ABS as reparation following negative organisational changes/recent losses
- Redundancy in client organisations
- Individual clients lost or marginalised.
- Situations in client organisations which are split
- Engineers or 'left brainers' in client organisations wanting something different
- Leaders and managers in client organisations who feel under attack
- Individuals in client organisations feeling trapped in risk averse or otherwise constrained environment
- Insecurity and newness at ABS
- Lack of trust between colleagues (at ABS)
- Confusion of leader at ABS (me)

The five further themes located from a reading of all the data relating to client E:--

- ABS used as a 'punch bag' by client
- Fear of failure of retention and recruitment of employees in client organisation
- Basic assumption meness (Lawrence, Bain and Gould 1996) in client organisation – if you don't like it you walk away
- Absence (and loss) of Consultant A
- Competition with consultant A

Following this I reconsidered the appropriateness, in the light of the further themes located, of the panel categories *evangelist pimp* and *spy*. Working with the twenty five themes I found I could allocate the themes, usefully, into three new overarching clusters as below:-

1. *Pimp-Evangelist-Spy*
2. *Anxiety in role (mine)*
3. *Fighting with clients*

Table 9 *Three New Overarching Clusters and the Distribution of Twenty Five Themes Amongst Them* (p 130) shows the allocation of the twenty five themes to these overarching clusters, following which the rationale for the overarching clusters is described.

Table 9 Three New Overarching Clusters and the Distribution of Twenty Five Themes amongst them

<b>Three new overarching clusters</b>		
<b><i>Pimp/Spy/Evangelist (now combined)</i></b>	<b><i>Anxiety in role (mine)</i></b>	<b><i>Fighting with clients</i></b>
<b>Original themes</b>	Insecurity and newness at ABS.	ABS as a persecutory object
The use made of difference	Absence (and loss) of Consultant A	ABS used as a 'punch bag' by clients
The location of a moral high ground in ABS	Competition with consultant A	Conflict with clients
Collusion around the mysteriousness of ABS's methodology – original sub category of evangelist	Lack of trust between colleagues (at ABS)	Basic assumption meness in client organisation – if you don't like it you walk away
Clients feeling shame about aspects of their work – original sub category of spy	Confusion of leader at ABS (me)	Situations in client organisations which are split
Artist as sexual object		Leaders and managers in organisations who feel under attack
Consultant as gatekeeper		Fear of failure of retention and recruitment of employees in client organisations
<b>Additional themes</b>		Redundancy in client organisations
Use of ABS as reparation following negative organisational changes/recent losses		
Individual clients lost or marginalised		
Engineers or 'left brainers' in client organisations wanting something different		
Individuals in client organisations feeling trapped in 'risk averse' or otherwise constrained environment		
Clients using ABS interventions as escapism		
Art used to represent risk		

## **Overarching Cluster *Pimp-Evangelist-Spy***

I merged *pimp*, *evangelist* and *spy* into one overarching cluster at this juncture as I felt that the identification of ABS as *different* and ABS consultants as receiving a projected moral high ground from clients (which all three panel categories shared) was more important at this stage in the research than whether consultants were operationalised as *pimp*, *spy* or *evangelist*. I added the following themes, describing aspects of difference between ABS and its clients, to the cluster and also themes which described how clients too felt themselves to be different from the organisations in which they worked.

- Clients using ABS interventions as escapism
- Art used to represent risk
- Individual clients lost or marginalised
- Engineers or 'left brainers' in client organisations wanting something different
- Individuals in client organisations feeling trapped in risk averse or otherwise constrained environment
- Use of ABS as reparation following negative organisational changes/recent losses

## **Overarching Cluster Anxiety in Role (mine)**

I allocated the themes below to an overarching cluster called *anxiety in role (mine)* :-

- Insecurity and newness at ABS.
- Absence (and loss) of Consultant A
- Competition with consultant A
- Lack of trust between colleagues (at ABS)
- Confusion of leader at ABS (me)

As will be apparent from the 'mine' of the title I had not yet made links between my own 'anxiety in role' or the competition and confusion at ABS, and dynamics in the organisations of our clients.

## **Overarching cluster Fighting with clients**

I allocated the following themes to an overarching cluster *Fighting With Clients*:-

- ABS as a persecutory object
- Conflict with clients
- ABS used as a 'punch bag' by clients
- Basic assumption meness (Lawrence, Bain and Gould 1996) in client organisation – if you don't like it you walk away
- Redundancy in client organisation
- Situations in client organisations which are split
- Leaders and managers in client organisations who feel under attack
- Fear of failure of retention and recruitment of employees in client organisation

The first two themes above related to ABS consultant behaviour which could be considered as 'fighting' such as ABS consultants striking a persecutory tone in correspondence, for example, (ABS as a persecutory object). The third theme (ABS used as a punch bag by clients) related to something we felt was done to us by clients, as indicated in my account of the process leading up to the partners conference above where I felt ABS had been used as a 'punch bag'. The rest of the themes included under *Fighting with Clients* related to conditions, as I saw it at the time, which were likely to pre dispose clients to be in a 'fighting' state of mind and which might, in turn, have led them in to fighting with us, or others, such as widespread redundancy programmes or difficulties around recruitment and retention of employees.

## **Fighting with Clients – further analysis**

During November 2008 I re read the whole of the data, looking for illustrative examples of the three overarching clusters. I made a document for each organisation under the headings of each of the overarching clusters and then combined the examples into documents which each bore the name of one of the overarching clusters. I then re-read these documents in order to get a sense of the overall data in terms of the overarching clusters.

The document related to *Fighting with Clients* was the longest and had, by far, the highest number of illustrative examples across the data. I will now present findings related to this analysis of *Fighting with Clients*– in two sections:-

1. Use of the pair as projection receptacle for *fighting* – linked to client themes
2. Fighting over ABS events

### **Use of the pair as projection receptacle for *fighting*– linked to client themes**

Reading the document *Fighting with Clients* I had noted that, as well as many examples of us *fighting with* clients, I had also recorded a high level of fighting, usually between pairs, at ABS.

For example, I had made a note of the split between me and artist G following work with Client organisation Q. Client organisation Q was slow in paying and artist G became very angry about it. She had sent me angry emails, pushing me to apply pressure in what I felt was an inappropriately forceful way – as their late payment was not untypical of clients. In the document I noticed this and recorded the following regarding the email correspondence between us: -

*Why was Artist G SO furious about late payment? I mean incandescent...what had got exported into her and potentially not addressed in the work - silo a and silo b which GG explicitly didn't want addressed*

(Data bank/Illustrative examples/Illustrative examples  
*Fighting with Clients* page 1)

'Silo a and silo b' was a reference to an instruction from GG who had asked us not to address what she referred to as the 'splits' in her working teams.

This evokes, I wrote: -

*the possibility that if clients in some way use ABS to avoid engagement, to avoid issues or conflict, to distract, that the conflict somehow gets exported into*

*ABS? .. you could say the artist consultant pairing has an inbuilt valency for conflict and fighting.*

(Data bank/Illustrative examples/Illustrative examples

*Fighting with Clients page 1)*

I cited other examples – such as the fights between consultant B and me, whilst working as a pair, at client organisation P. We fought a lot and, in this document, I wondered if the fighting might be a projective export from the client who was in conflict with senior management of the team he had been appointed to lead and 80% of whom he had made redundant within six months of his appointment. This traumatic event had been given little processing time in the organisation according to the senior managers with whom we had contact. Our impression was that we were always working at the edge of a big fight about to happen with the director keeping a tight lid on proceedings. Perhaps the conflict had been exported. Perhaps the fighting and insecurity at ABS might be part of a projective process between us and our clients

In December 2008 I spent several more days trying to make sense of this material exploring the various ways in which ABS was *fighting*. I produced a long reflective document, which suddenly came to a stop in the middle as follows: -

*Thursday*

*Came to a sort of stop – which might be a gap I am now identifying. You could say I have focused on what I brought to the equation, at the expense of clients so far. And that is what was most evident from my note taking. I now have to reach back and think about the situation of each client with respect to the research questions. The ‘mutual’ part*

(Data bank/Illustrative examples/December 2008.

Making sense of *Fighting with Clients* page 6)

Looking back I can see that even though I had considered the organisational dynamics of our clients and wondered what the connections might be between our clients’ organisational dynamics and our own (such as the understanding that a moral sensibility may have been projected by our clients and absorbed by

ABS consultants) nevertheless the three overarching clusters at which I had arrived were described from the perspective of ABS, rather than 'mutually'. As follows : -

- *Anxiety in role (mine)*. This refers to my own anxiety in role.
- *Fighting with clients*. The language here suggests we were doing something to our clients as in we were fighting with clients rather than considering the possibility of a projective system.
- *Pimp/Evangelist/Spy*. Similarly these descriptions were of roles which I perceived we, as consultants, to have taken vis a vis our clients.

## **Client Themes**

Following this realisation I spent some time specifically concentrating on, and thinking about, what I knew about the sixteen clients in the study - thinking about the organisational themes and dynamics of each, what I knew or hypothesised to be the case, and put this together with what panel readers had said about them.

I found significant similarities between our clients at the level of dynamics - dynamics in which I perceived the individuals with whom I was interacting to be involved. I found that twelve out of sixteen of our clients (75%) were operating in contexts where they were trying to lead or manage in the face of hostile opposition. Evidently this might be the perception of individuals in many organisations but, as I reviewed the organisational themes and situations of the client organisations in the study, there seemed to be similarities of degree which I found potentially significant. I labelled this 'organisational theme 1'

Further, ten out of sixteen of our clients (62%) could be considered to be carrying a burden of organisational shame with regard to the task, or perceived task, of the organisation. Such clients either expressed their dilemmas directly to us (Clients G and K) or we inferred it from their comments, or activities in which they were involved such as potentially reparative charity work (Clients E, and C) I labelled this 'organisational theme 2'

Realising that ten out of sixteen organisations could be considered to be carrying a burden of organisational shame helped with an understanding of the sort of exchange around moral sensibility I proposed might have been happening between client and consultant in the panel category behaviours.

Having identified these themes in our client organisations I put the information into a table in order to analyse it further. Table 10 (p137) shows which of the two organisational themes identified (if any) were found in each of the sixteen organisations in the study.

**Table 10 Organisational Themes**

<b>Client organization and record of Panel Reading, if applicable</b>	<b>Organisational theme 1 <u>Managing in the face of hostile opposition.</u> Managers were facing the difficulties of bringing groups of people together across seemingly impossible divides.</b>	<b>Organisational theme 2.<u>Shame.</u> Evidence that managers experienced organisational shame either related to the controversial nature of their task or a sense of guilt about not completing the task well enough.</b>
A Small private technology	Yes	
B Publishing	Yes	
F Large IT	Yes	
L Secondary school in London	Yes	
P Private company employed by government department to deliver large IT contract (Panel Reading 1)	Yes	
C Small private PR		Yes
H Large bank		Yes
M London council parking division		Yes
D NHS CAMHS team (Panel Reading 6)	Yes	Yes
E Multinational finance consultancy (Panel Reading7)	Yes	Yes
G Air industry (Panel Readings 2 and 4)	Yes	Yes
J Government department concerned with air safety (Panel reading 5)	Yes	Yes
K Research and development of private large pharmaceutical company. (Panel Readings 3 and 8)	Yes	Yes
O Partnership of ten CEOs of private companies.	Yes	Yes
Q Large Bank (Panel Reading 9)	Yes	Yes
N NHS deanery		

Table 10 helped me see at a glance which themes were shared by which organisations and also revealed that client organisation N was the only organisation which could not be said to share either theme – not from our knowledge of them anyway.

As previously noted this organisation was the only one in the study not referred by one of our consultants or artists. They were referred by a consultant from the Tavistock Consultancy Service (TCS). None of the TCS consultants at the time were free to respond to an NHS deanery's request for help with a team in turmoil following the sudden departure of a colleague. As consultant I subsequently designed and ran an away day for them using the ABS model, working with Artist G.

Again the one referral which came to us, as it were, *blind* of our work with artists, differed from the rest and did not seem to share either of the organisational themes significantly present in the other client organisations in this study, which I will now detail, below : -

Client organisation A (pilot)

Organisational theme 1 - Managing in the face of hostile opposition: - CEO was trying to reconcile 'new management' demands for efficiency, with loyalty to 'less able' original partners and investors.

The company – a small private technology company had been started by three male friends five years prior to our contact with them. The CEO, one of the three, was energetic and charismatic and had grown the company to forty employees. At the point we approached them they had just won a large government grant to expand their premises and double their work force in order to deliver an extended programme of support to start-up companies. In early interviews we established that there were serious skill shortages amongst the senior management team of three and that the CEO was carrying a lot of the work load. His colleagues (and friends) did not have the skills required to take the company forward yet each had sold his house to make the original investment in company A and had to be retained. The company's newly employed senior managers were challenging the CEO to change this situation,

which he found impossible. His health was suffering. He had recently been in hospital with a heart condition.

Client organisation B

Organisational theme 1 - Managing in the face of hostile opposition: - Business development team under threat of closure from an academic board which did not want to embrace new technology.

The manager of the Business development unit of company B, a renowned academic publishing company, asked us to help them find a way of persuading their board to embrace technological changes which they believed vital to the future development of the company. The majority of the board were against the changes and, further, were actively in favour of closing the current business development unit whose future they saw as linked to the proposed technological changes.

Client organisation F.

Organisational theme 1 – Managing in the face of hostile opposition. Head of innovation trying to change the culture of the organisation, post takeover, in the face of opposition from the *engineers* who dominated the (perceived to be) failing culture of the original organisation.

The head of innovation at client organisation F, a big player in the international IT world, was commissioning a series of events through which he wanted to influence the organisational culture around creativity and innovation. He had been appointed (from inside the acquiring company) following a hostile takeover and was experiencing much opposition to his ideas, particularly from the engineers responsible for building the technology. What had previously been a healthy tension between the design and build parts of the organisation had become much more extreme following the takeover.

Client organisation L.

Organisational theme 1 – Managing in the face of hostile opposition. A headmaster of a challenging inner city school facing rebellion from staff who

perceived him to be neglecting the educational task of the school in order to concentrate on the school's investment portfolio to raise funds.

The headmaster of Client organisation L, an inner city London school, asked us to support the transition of the school in the period leading up to his retirement. Serious splits between the headmaster and staff became apparent in this period of transition and he was accused of neglecting the educational task of the school. The headmaster feared the new head might be appointed, unconsciously, to undo that which had been achieved at great cost.

Client organisation P (Panel Reading 1)

Organisational theme 1 – Managing in the face of hostile opposition. Manager trying to motivate a team to meet government target for new national IT system, in the wake of making 80% of the team redundant.

The manager of Client organisation P, a division of a private company employed by the government to deliver a large IT project, asked for our help in running team building events for his team, following large scale redundancies (80%). The employees charged with helping us plan the event were angry and fearful. The organisation had been damaged by the redundancies and trust was lost. Each employee lived in fear for his or her own survival.

Client organisation C.

Organisational theme 2 – shame. Silos in a small advertising agency. Fear of linking. Reparation for perceived privilege.

The CEO of client organisation C, a small but financially very successful, advertising agency asked us to design an away day to give the team, who worked very separately on projects, the chance to work together. On the day she was fearful of any interpretation or exercise which focused on making links between the groups. A month or so after we worked with them the company launched, at some expense, a charitable project, seemingly unrelated to their work, to do with forgiveness – a complex charity focused on raising money for and funding projects with a spiritual focus on reconciliation of opposing sides in warring areas of the world. Our hypothesis was that the resistance to linking

and thinking at the team day may have represented an unconscious desire to stay separate and not acknowledge the significant financial success of the company.

#### Organisation H

Organisational theme 2 – shame. Conflicted manager tasked with creating ‘unnecessary’ (client’s description) financial products and imposing tough performance targets on the department for which he was responsible.

The head of Change Management in the Treasury & Fixed Income Group of a UK bank approached us to run a ‘team mobilisation’ day. In discussion his dilemmas as a thoughtful manager in touch with what he called the ‘human’ side of work were evidently at odds with the task for which he found himself responsible. He did not reply to the proposal we submitted following the meeting and, in the light of the catastrophic break down of the company and revelations about its practices which followed, my hypothesis is that shame about the culture of the organisation may have played a part in this shut down of communication.

#### Client organisation M

Organisational theme 1 – shame. Manager embarrassed to be working in what she calls a ‘snooping’ culture of which she feels part.

The directorate co-ordinator of this London borough’s parking division was struggling with instructions, from her bosses, that she should force all employees to take part in the event she asked us to organise – an away day for the whole department. She said she was tasked with ‘breaking up drinking groups’ and enforcing a culture of participation about which she felt embarrassed. I felt her shame may have reflected a sense of ‘snooping’ on the public which would be one interpretation of the work of the parking division – sometimes referred to as ‘public enemy number one’.

#### Client organisation D. (Panel Reading 6)

Organisational themes 1 and 2 – ‘Managing in the face of hostile opposition’ and ‘Shame’

Having implemented stringent cuts, the manager of client organisation D, an inner city CAMHS team, found herself at war with the various disciplines in her department and wracked with a sense of shame and responsibility.

The reader of panel data 6 (related to this organisation) talked of 'guilt' and 'reparation' as an explanation for the booking, by a cash strapped department, of something perceived (by them) as 'fun', a 'treat', 'holiday at work' (Panel reading 6 – Data). The manager found it impossible to take up her leadership role during the away day. This was later understood as both a fear of retribution (from colleagues who had had their services cut by her) and a sense of projected shame from the client group.

Client organisation E. (Panel reading 7)

Organisational themes 1 and 2 – 'Managing in the face of hostile opposition' and 'Shame.'

I hypothesise that a sense of shame may have motivated a Company Partner to try and 'please everyone' – an impossible task.

We were asked to run an 'ABS event' at the annual Partners conference of client organisation E, a major financial consultancy. The pressures were apparent for the Partner responsible for organising this event in a culture which thrived on pitching partner against partner, team against team. The 'organising' partner seemed motivated to try and achieve the impossible by a sense of deficit or guilt about the work of the organisation, evidenced by her tireless, but potentially unrewarding volunteering in the charity sector on behalf of the organisation.

Client organisation G (Panel Readings 2 and 4)

Organisational themes 1 and 2 – 'Managing in the face of hostile opposition' and 'Shame'

Environmental leadership at odds with the primary task of growth in air traffic. Manager's shame at being involved in something against her values.

The head of environmental leadership, a newly appointed post at client organisation G, a major player in the designing and building of new airports,

found her role in implementing the organisation's vision statement - responsible and profitable growth in air traffic - an impossible task. She lived in the catchment area for a major airport and felt, as a stakeholder, a sense of shame.

Client organisation J (Panel Reading 5)

Organisational themes 1 and 2 – 'Managing in the face of hostile opposition' and 'Shame'

A manager stopped from fulfilling his brief by a social defence system, the function of which was to defend against exposing the department to risk, and shame, by not answering any questions.

The manager of client organisation J, a former government department, charged with advising on all safety aspects of the air industry, was struggling to get members of his team to share vital information, particularly an employee who was responsible for providing information to ministers answering parliamentary questions. He felt the lack of communication was putting lives at risk and he lived night and day with the fear of another shameful air accident which, if he could make the department more efficient, might be prevented. The department was split, he said, between old style civil servants who held the knowledge but would not share it, and team players who worked together but lacked the vital information and knowledge.

Client organisation K (Panel Readings 3 and 8)

Organisational themes 1 and 2 – 'Managing in the face of hostile opposition' and 'Shame'

The shame of animal experimentation, coupled with internal attacks and lack of trust.

At the centre of public demonstrations against animal experimentation in the pharmaceutical industry managers in this pre-clinical research and development department also had to deal with internal attacks from scientists who had lost 20% of their colleagues to 'efficiency savings' imposed by American owners.

Client organisation O

Organisational themes 1 and 2 – ‘Managing in the face of hostile opposition’ and ‘Shame’

The consultant charged with ‘herding cats’. The CEOs with an embarrassment of riches.

This partnership of ten CEOs of medium-sized private companies trading in a range of retail activities employed a consultant to address their mutual personal development needs. Each entrepreneur had his or her own ideas however and regularly at least half would reject each idea she proposed. She described them as having second homes and yachts and wanting now to focus on personal development. My hypothesis is that this collective desire for self-improvement, erring as it did towards the spiritual/retreat end of the spectrum, may have been motivated to some extent by shame at their embarrassment of riches.

Client organisation Q (Panel Reading 9)

Organisational themes 1 and 2 – ‘Managing in the face of hostile opposition’ and ‘Shame’

Rival teams tasked with working together. A culture in which ‘morality’ was left to the women.

The manager of this team in client organisation Q, a UK bank, was tasked with bringing together a short term project team from rival organisations to organise a project which had a cross industry regulatory brief. The team had failed to form some months before our involvement and the task of trying to manage this second attempt was considerable. The readers responding to the data in panel reading 9, an account of a phone conversation with this manager and a consultant employed by her, focused on the ethics of ‘high finance’ and a sense that the two women organising the event in which ABS was taking part, were trying in some way to compensate for the culture in which they worked, by undertaking something creative – as if in reparation for the ‘cut throat’ nature of the work of their organisation. The harder edge of the organisation was represented by two more senior male figures that we never met but who were discussed. My hypothesis is that the female manager, through the regulatory

project she was tasked with managing, may have been being asked to hold something for the organisation – a sort of moral sensibility.

I had carried out this review of client themes at this juncture because I was interested in understanding any potential relationship between the fighting pair at ABS and dynamics in our client organisations. I had found that 62% of our clients could be considered to be carrying a burden of ‘organisational shame’ with regard to the task, or perceived task, of the organisation and that 75% of our clients were ‘managing in the face of hostile opposition’.

### **Resistance.**

Despite this finding I seemed to hold the unfolding potential relevance separate from the research findings so far. I propose, as evidence that this resistance was the case, the following. I did something which, although a potentially useful exercise in terms of avoiding over simplification, I now think may have had an unconscious motivation, related to my own fears around the ABS pair and the extent to which it may have been split. I spent a lot of time adding detail about the twenty five themes back in to table 9, producing a lengthy and unwieldy document.

Confused anew by the volume and complexity of the data I ended this period of work with the feeling that the picture had, once again, become a bit overwhelming and I could not see a clear picture. I wrote: -

*It feels a bit unravelled though I expect this will be part of the process.*

(Research Journal 18<sup>th</sup> December 2008)

### **Fighting over ABS events**

It did not get ‘ravelled’ back together or understood by me until July 2009 when, after spending some months reading and taking notes in preparation for the Related Literature and Practice section of this thesis, I realised that what we had been fighting about with clients was particularly difficult for me to acknowledge.

The reasons which made it possible to move on in July 2009 and allow myself to more fully consider the meaning of such fighting between ABS and its clients, and to reconsider the meaning of proposals at the core of the ABS offer (the large event format but also how the consultant/artist pair was being used) may have been twofold:-

1. There had been a passage of time (December 2008 to July 2009) and time to digest the emerging findings. I had begun to understand that there were organisational dynamics which may have led clients to deny and project difficult conflict. I was beginning, in other words, to understand that something to do with client conflict may have been getting exported into ABS.

2. I had a new context for my consultancy work and was gaining confidence as a consultant which may have made it easier, and less threatening, to take up a more depressive position stance in relation to ABS work – neither idealising nor rejecting wholesale. From this more secure position I may have been able to consider both what had been done to the ABS pair at the core of our offer and, as I will now explore, the way the ABS event had been used.

I went back to the document where I had recorded the illustrative examples of fighting with clients and noticed that in a seven page document the word ‘event’ featured twenty seven times.

Regarding the large group event, which had become our most common intervention, I had noted previously what I called : -

*A mismatch between what we are trying to do and what it is possible to do in ‘this sort’ of large group. (Data Bank/Illustrative examples/December 2008. Making Sense of *Fighting with Clients*)*

Coming back to it after the passage of time I put together *fighting with clients* with this ‘mismatch’ - realising that what we were often fighting with them about was the ‘event’ proposed by ABS.

I think it had perhaps been too difficult or too soon for me, in the previous year, to be able to take in that the offer at the core of ABS seemed to be, in some way, getting in the way of our communication with clients.

Evidence is plentiful both from the panel readings and from the documents listing illustrative examples from the wider data, that there was, as it were, an ABS event 'in the mind' of our clients and an ABS event in our own minds which did not match (Hutton, Bazalgette and Reed1997). As consultants we seemed to have been drawn, at times, into a defensive, or fighting, position regarding the proposed events, rather than holding a consultative stance with regard to what the proposed events may have represented for our clients.

Even when I was reviewing the data looking for illustrative examples of when we had been fighting with clients I seemed to have been still full of the fighting, as in the following example when, reviewing email correspondence with client organisation L – a large inner city school - I furiously added a commentary in capital letters. I was re living the sense I had had that the client (headmaster) had tried to control the event as tightly as if it had been his own wedding.

CF is a consultant who introduced us to the headmaster, AT, and who had remained involved in the event planning. The email is from me to the headmaster and is in response to a proposal by him that he should monitor the work of the consultants by rotating round the groups assessing how they were working. The capital letters are my comments added in when re reading the data for this research.

*We met with CF today, partly to discuss her attendance/role on the day of the event, THIS FEELS LIKE MEETING THE VICAR WHO WILL OFFICIATE OR THE WEDDING PLANNER – YOU ARE ALLOWED TO BE 'TEMPERAMENTAL' AS THE BRIDE OR GROOM, and we may have come up with a useful approach to the tricky question of how to position yourself on the day of the event. I believe you are seeing CF tomorrow and she can fill you in a bit more, but our suggestion is that, following your introduction, the groups work with our artist/consultant teams undisturbed until 11.30am when they reconvene for the first Tell and Show in the main hall, when we hope you will rejoin us to*

*see the results of the morning's work. THE FIRST DANCE. CF will join at the end of lunch and be present for the whole afternoon. She plans to discuss with you an invitation for the afternoon (DON'T WORRY YOUR BRIDE AWAITS) which will allow you some space, with her, (QUALITY TIME!) to consider your own future plans, while the staff work, in different groups, on the process of change happening in the school. (PREPARE THE FEAST FOR YOU) We invite both you and CF to join us for the second Tell and Show after the whole staff group (including yourself) have been focusing on the different futures ahead. AND OFF ON HONEYMOON!*

(Data bank/Illustrative examples/Illustrative examples 'Fighting with Clients')

Through allowing myself to explore the detail of ABS fighting with clients in this way I began to notice a further detail - that our fights about the events were often about the role consultants would have in the events, as with DA from client organisation P who described the consultants' questions as the 'Spanish inquisition' (Data bank/Client P/Notes after 9<sup>th</sup> May meeting consultant B and DA). Why were consultants there, what sort of questions would we ask, why did consultants cost so much money etc. etc.?

It was as if the event in the mind of our clients, the event they wanted, was exclusively an artist's event – an event in which the artist played a lead role. To fight with clients about the event in their minds was to fight with them about the artist in their minds, and what the artist may represent.

It was as if there were some sort of idealised 'phantastic object' (Klein 1935 and 1946) with which we, the consultants, were interfering. They often behaved as if they would, ideally, have liked to get rid of the consultants so that they could have the artists to themselves, in the events.

I began to wonder what, if any, unconscious purpose might be being served by this dynamic around the events and if it might connect with the idea of the panel categories.

On 21<sup>st</sup> July 09 I wrote:-

*It seems to me that there are some complex and genuinely difficult situations brought by clients which get transformed through some sort of simplification process to do with anxiety in role, large group dynamics, objectification of ABS events, and client dynamics sometimes into these roles of evangelist pimp spy but it is not the whole picture...(Researcher's Research Journal p61)*

## **Something about Threes**

### **Introduction**

The observations outlined in the previous section could be summarised as follows:-

1. The ABS pair had been split. Consultants and artists often found themselves fighting with each other.
2. The ABS artist/event proposal may have been used defensively by our clients – becoming an idealised phantastic object in their minds.
3. We were often drawn in to fighting with our clients for, as it were, our own version of the artist/event.
4. The majority of our clients shared two organisational themes: -
  - Managers living with a burden of organisational shame.
  - Managers managing in the face of hostile opposition.

I will now present data to support findings which helped make further sense of these observations and brought a different understanding to the original panel categories, resulting in a new overarching cluster and three revised panel categories, amongst which it was possible to re distribute all the themes discovered in the study. These findings show that the splitting of the ABS pair may have been used by clients for two distinct, but connected, unconscious purposes related to the themes and dynamics common to their organisations.

These are :-

1. Relief from the burden of organisational shame
2. Evacuation of aspects of the conflict involved in managing in the face of hostile opposition

In this section I will first present further evidence that the consultant/artist pair was split in the minds of our clients before relating how, through further analysis of the data, I began to understand the importance of the artist in a dynamic of *three*, as I then began to see it - in which the burden of failing to consult, implicit in consultant behaviours *evangelist*, *pimp* and *spy*, might be attributed differently. It was a dynamic in which the nature of the bond between the artist and client (who desired/revered the artist) was potentially as important as the behaviour of the consultant in relation to the client, and gave the latter a different provenance.

I have described the bond between artist and client as 'phantastic' and will present further evidence that this was the case, proposing that the creation of such a phantastic object served to rid clients of shame felt in relation to aspects of their work. I will illustrate how the strong bond thus created may have provoked the consultant behaviours, *pimp* and *spy*, as part of a dynamic of three in which the exclusion of the consultant had a primitive Oedipal quality. I will then go on to explore how the third panel category behaviour, *evangelist*, might also be understood as a response to the excluding artist/client bond.

### **Evidence of the split pair**

I found much evidence to support the hypothesis that the pair was split. Further I found that this splitting could most commonly be described as the client excluding the consultant and, at the same time, including the artist.

The following are examples from the data, starting with notes which described a debrief meeting of the ABS team following one of our marketing events at the Soho Theatre. Commonly the feedback from the ABS team in sessions following these events was twofold as illustrated in this summary of feedback below:-

*Participants had given consultants a hard time but were very excited about having worked with the artists. (Data Bank/ABS events/Soho theatre event 03 11 05/feedback)*

At client organisation P (the organisation involved in a large government IT contract) the exclusion of the consultant was explicit. In a phone conversation DA expressed a fear that consultants were 'on the line' when I was speaking to him on the phone, listening in and prying. (Data Bank/Client P/Notes after phone conversation from Italy).

He later explicitly requested to work with artists and accused consultants of being responsible for the high cost of the work. On the day of the event at Client organisation P the artists were praised profusely and at a follow up meeting which I attended alone consultants were described at length as 'out of their depth' and 'incompetent' as in the following from my notes.

*The comedy impro people were great. The facilitators weren't good or confident, Seemed out of their depth. Making it up as they went along. And he singled out consultant B. Yeah it was consultant B who didn't have a clue.*

(Data Bank/Clients/Client P/Notes following feedback meeting with client organisation P)

At Client organisation L (the inner city school) the headmaster made much of his artistic knowledge seeming to want to identify with the artists and me as their leader whilst, regarding the consultants, he insisted on knowing every question which consultants might ask in the sessions. He bonded with me as the artist/leader and excluded consultant A and the others as unwanted consultancy - as shown in this email exchange with consultant A, where the double meaning of 'execution' may betray her feelings.

*I feel a bit like we're trying to plan the perfect event without asking any questions - just moving straight to execution. (Data Bank/Clients/Client L/email narrative from the beginning)*

At client organisation E (the large financial consultancy) I noticed a similar affinity with the artists and mistrust of/desire to exclude the consultants. In the following excerpt from notes following a phone conversation with representatives of client E the artist is accepted as the trusted 'expert' whilst the capacity of the consultants to judge their interventions appropriately is rejected in a denigrating tone.

*KN worried about sophisticated group being taught to 'suck eggs' If it's arts they (participants from client organisation E) won't be experts but they do know about teams and business and group dynamics. No laboured explanations etc.(from consultants)*

(Data Bank/Clients/Client E/Notes 31marchmtg C,N,KN phone)

The reader below, of data relating to a meeting at client K (the pharmaceutical company) commented on the perceptions she had picked up regarding how the artists and consultants were held in mind by the clients in question. She observed how the consultants were rejected and the artists preferred as follows:

*...if you did get this team together with some artists, the artists might be seen positively by this group as 'doers', and you (the consultants) might be lumbered with role of 'management' (i.e. not as well qualified as your workers and haven't 'worked your way' up – you can prescribe medicine but don't know how to make it.(Panel Reading 8 – Reader's response)*

In relation to data presented for panel reading 4 the reader's comments below led me to think that the client (JC from client organisation G – the organisation involved in building airports) had 'got rid' of the consultants, by ceasing contact with ABS, whilst taking possession of the artists through insisting on having their CVs sent to her.

In my notes of the reading I wrote the following, which related to meetings and email contact with this client.

*Eventually he (the reader) came back interestingly to the sexual language..... Commenting that I had 'given her (the client) what she wanted' in a paranoid schizoid sort of way instead of a 'heads together' sort of way i.e. sent the (artists') CVs – she got what she wanted and then she went. (Panel reading 4 – Reader's response)*

This did turn out to be the last contact with this client and the reader's thoughts, that she had bonded with the artists whilst dismissing the consultants, stayed with me.

In the examples above the 'great', 'qualified', 'expert' artists are praised in the same breath as the 'incompetent', under qualified, or 'out of their depth' consultants are dismissed.

Understanding the former – i.e. the importance of the use clients made of the artists/events led to what I consider to have been a liberating moment in the research.

### **Relief from the burden of organisational shame - Data relating to Pimp and Spy**

In the conclusion to 'Findings Phase One' I wrote that I had located:- three consultant behaviours, predicated on difference (between us and our clients) – a difference on to which clients projected an eschewed moral sensibility which was sometimes introjected by ABS consultants and enacted in one of three panel category behaviours – *evangelist pimp* or *spy*.

Re visiting the data in the light of the above I began to see this differently.

## The part played by the artist in consultant behaviour

### Pimp

As described, two themes ('the use made of difference' and 'the location of a moral high ground in ABS') were common to all three consultant behaviours, but each also had themes which differentiated it from the other two. The themes which differentiated *pimp* from the other two panel categories were 'consultant as pimp' and 'artist as sexual object'. At the time, however, I had understood 'artist as sexual object' to be a symptom of 'consultant as pimp' - part of a two way dynamic between client and consultant.

Looking at this data again I understood that the use made of the artists by the clients was more than as a cipher or indicator of this two way dynamic. What they wanted from the artists was distinct from what they wanted (or rather did not want) from consultants.

The reader of panel reading 6, of data related to client D, a child and adolescent mental health team, was explicit about the differentiation :-

*The team wants to get away from pain by having a treat like going to the sweetshop. Pre occupied with artists which are what type of artist? Exciting. What is the cherry on the top? What's the exciting part of this? Not consultative part.*

It is the getting 'away from pain', which the reader above identified with the 'treat' of working with artists (as opposed to the perceived pain of working with consultants) which indicated a potentially deeper use of the artist by the client, in an avoidant dynamic.

The data presented to the reader in panel reading 8 was an account of a meeting between me, NN and TT, at client K (the pharmaceutical company). On re reading the reader's response below it seemed explicit that the 'escape into a private world' which the reader identified with TT's choice of a less threatening art form, was to do with a transaction with the artist, rather than the consultant in TT's mind, He was making his own use of the artist – an artist introduced by

ABS but which had been taken up and elaborated by TT for his own purpose, as a means of escaping the difficult issues the organisation was facing (post redundancy, and in the face of demonstrations against animal testing), as follows:-

*In suggesting a painting of a vision of the future, I feel that TT is (thinks he is) going for a safe option – vague, abstract (he is choosing the most traditional art form). This would seem to contradict his stated desire to push boundaries and comfort zones. Painting from imagination may be seen as less ‘competitive’ (as well as less sexy etc.) than life drawing – in life drawing look at something ‘real’ (can assess how accurate and skilled people are in portraying the subject). If paint ‘vision of the future’ from the imagination, one can escape into a **private/personal** world, where such direct comparisons cannot so easily be made.*

(Panel reading 8 – Reader’s response)

In a 3-way phone conversation between the leader (GG) of a project team in client organisation Q (a large bank), LL (a consultant who was working with them) and me – an account of which formed the data presented to readers in Panel reading 9- readers were explicit about the use clients made of artists, describing it as:-

- Creating something without the relationship
- Hit and run
- Evacuatory

In my account of the conversation I wrote:-

*– GG doesn’t want to miss out on the reflection (LL in the background saying she wants it to be fun!) (Panel Reading 9 – Data)*

The phantasy, I propose, was that shame could be split off and evaded. A phantastic artist/object had been created in the minds of our clients to serve this purpose. All shame was banished (for now) and in its place was a phantastic object characterised by ‘fun’, ‘excitement’, ‘treats’.

## **The part played by the artist in consultant behaviour Spy**

Regarding panel category *spy*, a single theme, 'Consultant response to clients feeling shame about aspects of their work', had differentiated it from the panel categories *evangelist* and *pimp*. On looking again at the data related to this theme I felt that, as well as detailing the 'consultant's response' to clients 'feeling shame', the data also clearly indicated how the client made use of the artist in an exchange around shame to do with an imagined forgiveness or reparation.

In panel reading 3, for example, an account of the meeting with NN and his manager, TT, at the pharmaceutical company (client K), one of the readers described what he perceived to be the client's 'core need to be doing something creative'. The reader connected this with 'guilt and shame' about animal testing. The client seemed to be making use of the artist, of creativity, to assuage guilt in some way, as follows:-

*I – I just felt that the issue of animal testing was quite dominant .....core need to be doing something creative perhaps to be able to deal with an issue that they perhaps feel guilt and shame about .(Panel reading 3 – Readers' responses)*

In panel reading 2, a narrative account of contact with JC, head of environmental awareness at client G, who built airports, JC was explicit in her request for 'basket weaving' Artist L. The data was presented (in 'Findings First Phase – Evangelists Pimps and Spies') as evidence of an eschewed moral sensibility which was then absorbed by the consultant but, on re visiting the data, I became aware of another side to the dynamic. JC's focus was on the artist as if it was the artist, in JC's mind, who could provide a space in which she could find release from her feelings of guilt. She was intent on working without consultants and kept asking to work with different artists, as follows :-

*(JC) left a message asking if 'basket weaving' Artist L could do a workshop with them at one week's notice.'(Panel reading 2 – Data)*

The panel category *spy* had helped understand the data in Panel Reading 7. One of the readers identified what he called the 'deficit' (to do with work overly focused on financial gain) which may have been experienced by employees of companies such as Client Organisation E (the large financial consultancy). Consultant behaviour *spy* was, I had proposed, a response to this, involving consultant and client in a two way dynamic of eschewed and absorbed moral sensibility. However the reader also focused on the use made by client E of the artist. Regarding what he called 'work of a creative unquote kind with artists' he was interested in what clients got from this involvement with artists, suggesting there were powerful 'beneath the surface' motivations to do with the deficit referred to above. He asked:-

*What do they get out of (working with artists)... all those questions about what they get out of it... I regard it all as quite beneath the surface in terms of the rhetoric of your consultancy world.*

*There is a question about what these organisations are doing in the first place in creating these types of exercises, these kind of days. And what kind of organisation is it that feels the need to do that? And why? So it seems to me there is an underlying really interesting question about what that is, which is to do with I suppose – what are the deficits in their every day life as organisations or as groups of people which they feel activities like this fulfil.....*

As proposed in 'Further analysis of panel readings' the reader of data presented for Panel reading 5, a document I put together for my own reference following a first meeting with manager GT at client organisation J, concerned with air transport safety, suggested GT was using the artists symbolically to imagine a reparative space.

*It's possible he might be looking for some sort of aesthetic harmony by working with artists. Organisation is chaotic. ABS could provide an external objective correlate. Yes. Some sort of aesthetic whole which would somehow apply to his organisation. It's almost as if..he needs some external feedback. Pat on the back - as if he wants you ... to offer some sort of validation. (Panel reading 5 – Data)*

The phantasy, I propose, was that shame could be split off and forgiven. A phantastic artist/object had been created in the minds of our clients to serve this purpose. All shame was banished (for now) and in its place, in this case, was a phantastic object characterised by forgiveness, validation, harmony. An *artist* space was created in the mind of the client where actions about which they were conflicted (such as animal experimentation, the generation of excessive wealth, and the seeming impossibility of averting air accidents or the expansion of airports) could be forgiven.

## **Consultants**

I have also presented evidence that consultants who approached the boundary of this dyad formed by client and phantasy artist were perceived in a wholly negative way. Client interactions with consultants often had a primitive Oedipal quality as if the consultant on the boundary could not be heard or taken in at all by the client but only perceived as he who had taken the milk, an envied and denigrated third party, a phantasy of a different sort.

Consultants often found themselves violently rejected by the client – as I have illustrated - a radically different outcome in terms of how ABS had first thought of how the pair might operate.

Further the panel category behaviours provide evidence that consultants may have absorbed rather than consulted to the projections of clients in this three way dynamic. Consultant behaviour spy could now be understood as a response to exclusion from the client's phantasy of forgiveness, trying to break up the pair with behaviour that could be described as *not forgiveness*. Consultant behaviour pimp could now be understood as a response to exclusion from the client's phantasy of avoidance and denial, trying to break up the pair with behaviour that could be described as *not avoidance, not denial* - in this case a withholding or control of the artist, denying access to the safe haven they represented.

That the excluded consultants found it difficult to consult to their clients in this situation may have been exacerbated by what I believe was a second purpose

of the clients' need to split the ABS pair i.e. Evacuation of aspects of the conflict involved in managing in the face of hostile opposition - as will be described in the next two sections.

### **Evacuation of aspects of the conflict involved in managing in the face of hostile opposition**

In the section above I have illustrated how the ABS pair had been split and the artists/events used for the relief of organisational shame, through the formation of a phantasy artist/object by the client – a pairing which seemed to offer relief to the clients through the phantasy of either avoidance or forgiveness. Conversely, consultants were viewed by the client as a primitive threat on the boundary of this relationship and were drawn in to behaviours *pimp* or *spy* in response.

I will now present data to illustrate a further use of the split ABS pair i.e. the pair split and used for the evacuation of aspects of the conflict involved in managing in the face of hostile opposition.

I will present this in two sections:-

- Clients transferring aspects of the conflict involved in managing in the face of hostile opposition to fights with ABS consultants over the artists/events – relating to revised panel category *evangelist*.
- Clients repressing and projecting aspects of the conflict involved in managing in the face of hostile opposition into the split ABS pair who then fought on their behalf

Relevant to both was the analysis of client themes I had undertaken (revealing 'hostile opposition') and the following themes identified from the data, describing conflict in client organisations.

- Leaders and managers who feel under attack (identified in 'Further analysis of panel readings' -illustrated in data related to clients G and K

- Situations in Client organisations which are split (identified in 'Further analysis of panel readings' -illustrated in data related to client J
- Basic Assumption meness in client organisations – if you don't like it you walk away (identified in 'Further Data relating to client E')

I had subsequently analysed and presented a summary of client themes. In this summary I showed that a high number of clients in the study (twelve out of sixteen) could be considered to be 'managing in the face of hostile (internal) opposition'.

This analysis of client themes, together with the three themes identified above indicated that conflict was significantly present in our client organisations – conflict which, I will illustrate below, was sometimes transferred to fights with ABS consultants about events, or projected into the split ABS pair who then fought on their behalf.

**Clients *transferring* aspects of the conflict involved in managing in the face of hostile opposition to fights with ABS consultants over the artists/events –related to revised Panel Category Evangelist.**

In this section I will (re) present data to illustrate that clients may have used the split ABS pair to transfer conflict from their own organisations to fights with ABS consultants over artists/events, provoking a fighting response in consultants, an aspect of which may have been the 'mystification of the ABS model', the theme which had originally differentiated *evangelist* from the other two panel categories *pimp* and *spy*.

I have illustrated that our clients had much conflict which they may have wished, as it were, to transfer- albeit unconsciously. I have also illustrated, in the section 'the pair split and used for the relief of organisational shame' that the use made of the artist by the client resulted in a splitting of the ABS pair and the excluding of the consultant from a pair made of client and artist, providing a context in which consultants were prone to various behaviours aimed at

countering the pairing of artist and client. In other words the circumstances had been created in which consultants may have been drawn in to a fight.

Below I will re visit data to test that such fighting over artists/events did occur and to illustrate the ferocity of such fights, making links with panel category behaviour *evangelist* as suggested.

First I re visited the three themes which explicitly identified conflict between ABS and clients. These were:-

- Conflict with clients
- ABS as a persecutory object
- ABS used as a 'punch bag' by client

Looking again at the data presented in support of each of the themes I found that the conflict, in each case, was exclusively about the artists/events. It seemed to be the only topic over which we fought with clients.

I had previously noted that in the document 'Illustrative Examples Fighting with clients' the word 'event' occurred twenty seven times. I have already quoted a passage at length from this document which showed the anger I still felt about the experience of trying to work with the headmaster (client L) who was fighting with us about a planned event. Reconsidering this data I remembered the headmaster seemed to have taken ownership of the event and to have had very specific and detailed ideas about how it would be, as if he were designing it himself. It had to function exactly as the headmaster needed it to. Any attempt to change the event was attacked or resisted, as I had noticed. He was, as I have described, in the process of leaving the school and under attack for having neglected, as his senior team saw it, the educational task of the school. It was too late for him to resolve these issues inside the school (he was leaving). It seemed possible that he may have transferred his rage in to fighting with us about the event.

I had noticed this sense of intense ownership and control of the artist/event with other clients – with client E for example (the large financial consultancy). In my

account of a follow up meeting after the conference I described(below) how partner, KN, and NN were both still championing their own version, as it were, of the artist/event. One of the areas of conflict had been that KN wanted the consultants and artists to work outdoors which we had agreed to, after some resistance. I wrote:-

*KN said she was really interested in what we now felt, having worked outdoors, because she could see the (artists in the) garden from her room and thought it looked idyllic and 'just right'... (Then NN joined us and asked about the experience of the consultants – had they changed the way they worked after my briefing.)*

(Data bank/Clients/Client E/Notes after the event)

They were both aware that we had found their demands difficult – that working outdoors had been far from ideal and that asking if consultants had changed the way they worked was likely to be a provocative question.

The fighting was continuing, in other words, after the event. Given the difficulties both KN and NN had experienced in organising the conference, and the culture they had described which both found very difficult (if you don't like it you walk away) it seemed to me that they may have been using the event (still) as something over which they could openly fight, unlike the many different conflicts they had had to absorb from their colleagues in the course of organising the conference.

If this were the case it might also help understand the behaviour associated with panel category *evangelist* –i.e. 'mystification of the ABS model'. In illustrating this theme, which differentiated *evangelist* from *pimp* and *spy* I had used an excerpt from readers responses to panel reading 7 – regarding client E (the large financial consultancy – above). A reader had commented that I seemed intent on perpetuating:-

*...a collective fantasy on all sides, that we are doing something which can't be explained, say that it is too ineffable ...acquires a slightly religious kind of aura*

....can't spell it out because you destroy the mystery. (Panel Reading 7-Readers' responses)

I propose that such mystification was a third type of consultant reaction to the primitive Oedipal pairing of client and artist and one which facilitated the *transfer* of conflict by the client, from their organisation *to* fights with ABS consultants over the artists/events.

**Clients repressing and projecting aspects of the conflict involved in managing in the face of hostile opposition into the split ABS pair who then fought on their behalf**

In the section 'Use of the pair as projection receptacle for 'fighting'— linked to client themes' I presented examples of a fighting pair at ABS. However, despite these observations and the subsequent analysis of client themes, which showed that twelve out of sixteen of our clients could be described as 'managing in the face of hostile opposition', I had not quite made the connection that, viewed as a projective system, some of the fighting at ABS may have been part of a projective process. However, once I had understood, from the data, that the persecutory consultant was also the excluded consultant it helped me see the consultant/artist pair as particularly vulnerable to the reception of eschewed conflict.

I alluded in the previous section to having provided evidence that clients had, as it were, much conflict in their organisations of which they may have wanted to rid themselves. Some of this conflict, as described, may have been transferred to fights with ABS consultants over artists/events.

What I then wondered was if the data presented in support of the themes in overarching cluster 'anxiety in role (mine)' (of which much, on reflection, could be viewed as fighting within ABS) might also relate to client conflict i.e. if some of our 'anxiety in role'/fighting might have belonged to our clients and been enacted by us in a process in which clients repressed and projected unwanted conflict.

I looked again at data presented in support of the themes clustered in 'Anxiety in role (mine)' i.e.

- Insecurity and newness at ABS
- Absence (and loss) of consultant A
- Competition with consultant A
- Lack of trust between colleagues at ABS
- Confusion of leader at ABS (me)

In data quoted in support of the theme 'Lack of trust between colleagues (at ABS)' I expressed a worry that I might get 'squeezed out' of my own company:-

*Found myself pre occupied with getting squeezed out – consultant A would get the work even though I know the decision won't be taken without me (Panel reading 2 – Data)*

This pre occupation now seemed overly paranoid and I wondered if it was, perhaps, conflict which belonged in client G (the client concerned). Certainly JC, the head of environmental awareness at client G (involved in airport construction), had been worried about the tenability of her position. Perhaps consultant A and I were expressing the fight JC needed to have with her boss, around getting 'squeezed out' or not.

It was a proposal to this same client (G) that the reader of data presented for panel reading 4 felt communicated insecurity. In notes written after the reading I quoted the reader:-

*He felt our needs as an organisation featured quite heavily. He also felt it sent an insecure message with all the detail. (Panel reading 4 – Reader's response)*

The 'needs' in the proposal to which the reader was referring was my own expressed need (in the proposal) to work in a consultant pair with consultant A, as follows:-

*Hi JC*

*I attach a proposal for your away day as discussed.*

*The costs quoted are for one consultant working with one artist for the day. However ABS consultant A and I have been seeking an opportunity to consult as a consultant pair and, with your permission, this away day could present us with an opportunity to do so.*

(Panel reading 4 – Data)

It now seemed an odd request with which to start a proposal to a client. Reviewed in the light of the paranoid statement about being ‘squeezed out’ above (also related to the period of work with client G) I felt it indicated, rather, a need to muscle in and find my place – again a reflection, perhaps, of JC’s own need to enter such a battle.

The following data was presented in support of ‘absence (and loss) of consultant A’, regarding a sense of hostility which consultant A had picked up (toward her) at client E:-

*part of me felt well ‘A’ you weren’t there were you – in the run up, on the day before, on the plane on the way back so actually its fair enough*

(Data bank/Client E/Notes after the event)

On reflection it seemed that the words could have been spoken by NN at client E, about KN, who had left most of the negotiations with ABS to her. KN had absented herself from meetings, often opted out of conference calls with us. Perhaps some of the frustration had been projected and enacted by consultant A (absenting herself like KN) and me (fighting with her – as NN may have wanted to).

In describing the theme ‘competition with consultant A’ the fighting was explicit. I described how I had interrupted consultant A in her feedback to client E and wondered if I had ‘set her up’. Reviewing this now I wondered if, again, we had been used to act out, as it were, the sort of attack NN would not have dared (but unconsciously wished) to mount against her superior, partner KN, as below:-

*She (consultant A) said that we'd gathered a lot of info about client E along the way. I added rather lightly 'a working hypothesis' – did I set her up? (Data bank/Client E/Notes after the event)*

The data seemed to support the idea that clients may have repressed and projected aspects of the conflict involved in managing in the face of hostile opposition, into a split ABS pair who then fought on their behalf.

Further, unlike the examples of fighting pairs presented in the section 'Use of the pair as projection receptacle for 'fighting'– linked to client themes' the fighting pair in all of the themes in 'anxiety in role (mine)' was a pair made up of consultant A and myself. What was revealed was a more or less continuous fight between the directors of ABS.

### **Re distribution of themes**

Table 11(p 167) shows the re distribution of themes following the analysis above - into three re-calibrated panel categories (*Evangelist, Pimp and Spy*) and one new overarching cluster - *The Fighting Pair at ABS*.

Table 11 Three Revised Panel Categories – Evangelist, Pimp, Spy, and One New Over Arching Cluster – the Fighting Pair at ABS

<b>Pimp</b>	<b>Spy</b>	<b>Evangelist</b>	<b>The Fighting Pair at ABS</b>
<b>original themes</b>	<b>original themes</b>	<b>original themes</b>	
The use made of difference	The use made of difference	The use made of difference	
The location of a moral high ground in ABS	The location of a moral high ground in ABS	The location of a moral high ground in ABS	
Artist as sexual object	Consultant response to clients feeling shame about aspects of their work	Mystification of the ABS model	
Consultant as gatekeeper			
<b>re-distributed themes</b>	<b>re-distributed themes</b>	<b>re-distributed themes</b>	<b>re-distributed themes</b>
Clients using ABS interventions as escapism	Use of ABS as reparation following negative organisational changes/recent losses	Leaders and managers in client organisations who feel under attack	Leaders and managers in client organisations who feel under attack
Art used to represent risk	Individual clients lost or marginalised	Situations in client organisations which are split	Situations in client organisations which are split
	Engineers or 'left brainers' in client organisations wanting something different	Basic assumption meness in client organisation – if you don't like it you walk away	Basic assumption meness in client organisation – if you don't like it you walk away
	Individuals in client organisations feeling trapped in 'risk averse' or otherwise constrained environment	ABS as a persecutory object	Insecurity and newness at ABS.
		ABS used as a 'punch bag' by clients	Competition with consultant A
		Conflict with clients	Confusion of leader at ABS (me)
			Lack of trust between ABS colleagues
			Absence (and loss) of Consultant A
<b>Themes common to all 4</b>	<b>Themes common to all 4</b>	<b>Themes common to all 4</b>	<b>Themes common to all 4</b>
Redundancy in client organisations	Redundancy in client organisations	Redundancy in client organisations	Redundancy in client organisations
Fear of failure of retention and recruitment of employees in client organisations	Fear of failure of retention and recruitment of employees in client organisations	Fear of failure of retention and recruitment of employees in client organisations	Fear of failure of retention and recruitment of employees in client organisations

I re distributed themes to revised panel categories *spy* and *pimp* according to the use made of the artist/event by the client.

Themes relating to the use of the artist/event for escapism/avoidance were re distributed to *pimp* therefore. Regarding the theme 'art used to represent risk' I now understood this theme as clients not wanting to think about the importance of/need for experimentation and risk (at client K for example, the pharmaceutical company). They may have substituted, in some way, a pre occupation with artists/events as a representation of risk and experimentation, the complications around which, they did not want to think about. I thus included this theme in *pimp*.

Themes relating to the use of the artist for reparation/forgiveness or to create a sense of belonging or inclusion (for isolated 'left brainers', engineers, or risk takers for example) were re distributed to *spy* as below:-

- Use of ABS as reparation following negative organisational changes/recent losses
- Individual clients lost or marginalised
- Engineers or 'left brainers' in client organisations wanting something different
- Individuals in client organisations feeling trapped in 'risk averse' or otherwise constrained environment

Themes which described conflict between ABS and clients were re distributed to *evangelist*, now understood as a 'fighting' response to the primitive Oedipal pairing of artist and client, as described. Thus the following themes were re distributed:-

- ABS as a persecutory object
- ABS used as a 'punch bag' by clients )
- Conflict with clients

Themes related to conflict and fighting inside ABS were re distributed to the new overarching cluster 'The fighting pair at ABS', now understood (at least partly) as a pair in receipt of conflict (unwanted by our clients) which had been repressed and projected resulting in the ABS pair fighting on behalf of clients. The following themes were re distributed:-

- Insecurity and newness at ABS.
- Competition with consultant A
- Confusion of leader at ABS (me)
- Lack of trust between colleagues (at ABS)
- Absence (and loss) of Consultant A

The following themes, which indicate that conflict was present in the organisations of our clients, (irrespective of whether it was transferred to fights with consultants or projected into the ABS pair) are listed in both *evangelist* and 'The fighting pair at ABS' i.e.:-

- Leaders and managers in client organisations who feel under attack
- Situations in client organisations which are split
- Basic assumption meness (Lawrence, Bain and Gould 1996) in client organisation – if you don't like it you walk away

The following two themes are listed in all three revised panel categories as well as in 'The fighting pair at ABS':-

- Redundancy in client organisations
- Fear of failure of retention and recruitment of employees in client organisations

I saw these as underlying concerns in the organisations with which we worked, concerns which may have led to any of the behaviours of the three revised panel categories or 'The fighting pair at ABS'.

## **Summary of findings second phase**

As suggested in 'Summary of findings first phase' (p114) there had been more to be understood in terms of the role of the artist in the dynamics between ABS clients and consultants. A three way dynamic in which a primitive part of our clients annexed the artist and excluded the learning represented by the consultant was identified. The splitting of this pair then seemed to be used by clients to rid themselves of conflict either through deflecting fights from inside the organisation to fights between clients and consultants or exporting such fights to the consultant/artist pair who took up the fight on behalf of the client.

# Chapter 5

## Discussion

### Introduction

These findings, and their potential meaning, will now be explored in this discussion chapter.

The chapter will begin with a discussion of the research methodology used for the study, exploring the strengths and limitations of the Grounded Theory developed and adapted to fit the specific kind of data used.

I will then summarise the findings before discussing their possible meaning. I will link the phenomena discovered in the study to the wider context of the finance and related sectors during the time ABS was offering its consultancies.

The hidden or unconscious motivations of both artists and consultants at ABS will then be explored, and the ways in which these may have influenced the setting up of an unequal pair which, in turn, created a valency for a particular dynamic engagement with our clients, contributing to a defensive way of working which resisted rather than facilitated change.

The original basis for the model and its hopes that artists' practice based on improvisation might access a generative creativity will then be explored. I will first review the model as it evolved and then outline an alternative.

### Discussion of the methodology

The primary data for this research were 199 texts, mainly written by me, which varied from email correspondence with clients, to proposals for work, to private free associative notes following meetings with ABS clients, consultants or artists.

Initial attempts to code this data using Grounded Theory revealed:-

- the difficulties of analysing such voluminous and varied data, much of which was sketchy in nature
- the difficulty of my position as both a Practice Near researcher and insider to/founder of the organisation being studied.

In response to these concerns a method was evolved, based on practices drawn from both BNIM and training seminars from the Tavistock Clinic, which aimed to triangulate an understanding of the data through a series of panel readings.

How robust was this adaptation of the methodology, and did it work?

Regarding the readers, for example, most had a psychoanalytic background of some sort. I see this as both an advantage (they were able to work with the data and respond psychoanalytically) and a potential weakness. They were pre disposed to a certain way of seeing the world, a pre disposition which may have excluded other points of view. Within this frame however they had very different professional roles – some clinical, some academic. There were social workers, therapists, mental health workers, business consultants, academics, artists and anthropologists. Discussion in the panel readings was robust. The readers disagreed with each other, particularly about the process of the panel readings, as in the exchange below when panel readers were discussing what they thought the outcome may have been with client Q, regarding whom they had been presented with a data excerpt.

*I don't want to say anything because I am an ethnographer and I don't have enough.*

*Well I do a lot of stuff with the BNIM and we are always having to hypothesise.*

(Panel Reading 9 – Readers' responses)

I found such robust disagreement between panel readers about the validity of the panel reading methodology re-assuring when considering their responses to the data itself. The responses had a high level of consistency. Given the sorts of robust engagement above, which was typical, it seemed unlikely that such

attentive readers would be unduly swayed to agree with each other about the data.

Regarding the selection of data excerpts for the panel readings I had developed conscious criteria as described (P73) to ensure a mixture of data from organisations in different sectors, data from organisations with whom work went ahead and with whom it did not, and data of different sorts such as proposals, emails, and accounts of different sorts of communication. On reflection I wonder if another route might have been found to select excerpts to study or, failing that, whether more excerpts may have been chosen for any particular panel to study, thus broadening exposure to the data and reducing reliance on choices made by me.

As selector of the excerpts I was, inevitably, influenced by my own desires, conscious and unconscious. I was aware of wanting the excerpts to be interesting, for example, and cannot rule out the possibility of wanting to impress colleagues with my private sector consultancy in financial institutions and pharmaceutical companies. I would describe such desires as preconscious (Freud 1932. p22) rather than unconscious – I was semi aware.

At a more unconscious level however I noticed (after the event) that the first two excerpts chosen for public readings featured moments when clients were describing the shame they felt about aspects of their work such as animal experimentation or plans to increase the number of airport runways (p99). Had there been an (unconscious) invitation on my part for readers to join with me in disapproving of such behaviour? If there had, it was not taken up. Readers did comment that the writing communicated disapproval, but they did not join with me in this disapproval, rather fed it back, as in panel reading 3:-

*...almost felt like for you there was a moral question a moral question almost – who do I consult as much as much as who wants to consult me.*

(Panel Reading 3 – Reader's response)

Such feedback was difficult, not what I expected – it came from 'outside' and brought a different perspective. I was both surprised and disturbed initially and

the process resulted in several periods of resistance on my part before I could accept the emerging findings. The evidence was certainly compelling - both in the consistency of the themes across the nine panel readings and the way in which the themes had been experienced, transferentially, in the panel reading contexts (See Mirroring - dynamics in the panel readings (p 110)). As well as the consistency of themes across the panel readings the adapted methodology had resulted in the operationalisation of psychodynamic phenomena which provided a second level of evidence for the findings.

Regarding the primary purpose of the panel readings therefore i.e. to address concerns regarding my Practice Near and insider status as researcher, the approach does seem to have been effective both in terms of providing the voice of the outsider and authorising such voices, as it were, through experiential evidence that something needed to be understood. (Mirroring Dynamics)

Taking in this evidence required much on going self-reflexivity on my part. What was being said and experienced? What did it mean? What did I make of my resistance? etc. As more panel readings took place my resistance increased but so, eventually, did my confidence (due largely to the consistency of the themes emerging from different reading panels) that social phenomena between consultancy company and client were being discovered with some consistency through the research, however uncomfortable they may have been for me.

## **Discussion of the findings**

In this section I will first summarise the findings, then discuss what such findings might mean, before exploring the question of why the different individuals at ABS may have combined with each other in the ways we did and with our clients to co create the particular circumstances described in the study.

The initial findings of the study (phase one) suggested that there was a two way dynamic between consultant and client in which the consultant was drawn into one of three panel category behaviours - *evangelist*, *pimp*, or *spy*. These behaviours were demonstrated to be made up of six identified themes, two of which ('The use made of difference' and 'The location of a moral high ground in

ABS'), were shared by all three panel categories and described, between them, the territory for projections (the use made of difference) and the nature of the transactions (the location of a moral high ground in ABS).

The panel category behaviours were differentiated from one another by four further themes:-

- Consultant as *evangelist* differentiated by 'Mystification of ABS's model'.
- Consultant as *spy* differentiated by 'Consultant response to clients feeling shame about aspects of their work
- Consultant as *pimp* differentiated by 'Artist as sexual object' and 'Consultant as gatekeeper.'

Through a further period of analysis these initial findings, based on a two way dynamic between consultant and client, were discovered to be more complex. Fourteen new themes were located during a second phase of analysis of the panel readings and five new themes from a detailed reading of all the data related to client E. Along with the six themes which made up the panel categories there were now twenty five themes in total.

These themes were eventually grouped in three overarching clusters:-

- Pimp-evangelist-spy (now merged)
- Anxiety in role (mine)
- Fighting with clients

Detailed analysis of the cluster 'Fighting with Clients' revealed that what we were fighting with clients about were the artists/events. The word 'event' occurred twenty seven times in the seven page summary document of illustrative examples of 'Fighting with clients' across the whole data set. Further, the analysis also suggested that the artists/events had become a sort of unassailable phantastic object in the minds of our clients - used to mitigate organisational shame. Organisational shame was one of two themes found to be shared by a majority of our clients in an analysis of client themes carried out

at this juncture. The other was 'managing in the face of hostile opposition'. Re the former, the mitigation of organisational shame was achieved, so the data suggested, through the use of artists/events to provide either an escape from/avoidance of shameful issues or through the elevation of 'creativity' as some sort of higher order of activity which might repair/forgive shameful activity in some way.

Understanding how clients were using artists in this way revealed a different provenance for consultant behaviour. It now seemed to be behaviour based not on the projection of a moral high ground or sensibility (as I had previously concluded) but on exclusion – exclusion from a pair formed of client and artist. The artist seemed to represent something for the client that corresponded to an idealised phantasy of mother (all forgiving all assuring) with whom they wanted to merge. The consultant, by contrast, seemed to represent the indigestible threat of the primitive Oedipal father. The consultant behaviours described previously as persecutory could now be viewed as a response to this exclusion from a pair – a dynamic of three in which the consultant found him/herself excluded. The behaviour of the consultant excluded from, for example, the client's phantasy of forgiveness/reparation could now be understood in terms of an attempt to break up the excluding pair, with the persecutory behaviour associated with *spy* (i.e. not forgiveness, not reparation) and the behaviour of the consultant excluded from the phantasy of avoidance and denial, could be understood in terms of an attempt to break up the excluding pair with the persecutory behaviour associated with *pimp* (in this case a withholding of or control of the artist/event - denying access to the safe haven they represented).

Further, the behaviour which characterised the third panel category, *evangelist* i.e. 'Mystification of ABS events', could also now be understood as a response to this excluding pair- an attempt, through mystification, to retain ownership of the artists/events.

This 'evangelical' retaliation on the part of ABS consultants also provided clients with a crude but effective bad object on to which they sometimes seemed to transfer conflict they were unable to have with members inside their own organisations.

An important and final aspect of the findings was the discovery that not only had the splitting of the artist from the consultant provided clients with a route for transferring conflict from relationships inside their organisations to conflict with ABS consultants but fighting between the consultant/artist pair at ABS may also have been part of a transaction with clients.

The themes identified in 'anxiety in role (mine)' seemed to have provided a fertile receptive territory for the introjection of repressed and projected conflict situations from clients who felt unable, or unsafe, either to engage with it inside their organisations or even to transfer it in to fights with ABS consultants as in the process described above. Through an unconscious process of repression, projection and introjection the artist/consultant pairs at ABS sometimes found ourselves fighting, as it were, on behalf of our clients.

The clients who approached ABS were charged with effecting change, of one form or another, in their organisations. Sometimes the change sought was clear, such as the CEO of client A who requested help in adapting his organisation (and the roles taken by his two partners in particular) at a moment of rapid growth. Such requests, at least consciously, corresponded with the intentions of the consultants at ABS who saw effecting change as a primary focus, as written in the joint agreement.

*In an ABS Consultancy the consultant.....aims to facilitate sustainable change in an organisation.(ABS framework master 2002)*

The findings of this study, however, indicate that the outcome of the consultancies undertaken by ABS did not result in sustainable change. Quite the reverse was happening. Change was being resisted, unconsciously, in the ways described. The artists were annexed by the clients as avoidant phantastic objects and the consultants rejected, with the result that change was not possible.

I will explore below the characteristics of ABS personnel who, together, could be considered to have provided a system valency for this dynamic. But why was

the dynamic needed? What might this split pair have represented? The sort of splitting which happened was not something which could be worked with. It was extreme. Time and again clients rejected the thinking of consultants and idealised/desired something represented by artists – artists they had often not even met. The consistency of what happened between ABS and its clients led to the research ‘Exploring the meaning for clients of the arts-related consultancy offered by ABS.’ The emotional force of the experience, however, is expressed by the sub title of the research. ‘What are we doing here?’ The experience was intense and consistent - so much so that the only way of understanding it seemed to be stopping trading and analysing retrospectively what we had been doing. So why did it happen?

ABS was formed and undertook all its consultancy work in the period retrospectively defined by the collapse of Lehman Brothers in September 2008. Tuckett (2011) speaking at a Tavistock Policy seminar in 2009 described this period and the ‘new financial instruments’ which characterised it as a period during which ‘groups of economic agents’ were engaged in basic assumption group functioning (Bion 1961) where warnings about what was happening in the finance sector were repeatedly ignored – until they could no longer be repressed. The ‘new financial instruments’ were, he claimed, phantastic objects created by groups of traders and bankers who shared an unconscious belief in a transformation of ordinary reality. (Tuckett 2009/2011)

ABS was working during this period with managers, leaders and partners in some of the key organisations involved. Our experience, of thinking (represented by consultants) being split off and artists annexed in the service of such a ‘transformation of ordinary reality’ can be seen as a product *of its time*. We were engaged, on the surface, to provide consultancy but, unconsciously, we were consistently pulled out of role in the service of larger forces. When reviewing all sixteen clients I had found that the majority shared two organisational themes:

- living with a burden of organisational shame
- managing in the face of hostile opposition

The findings of the study indicate that artists were used, in two ways, for the relief of the first – i.e. for the relief of organisational shame. The findings also indicate that the second organisational theme may have led to the exporting of 'hostile opposition' to ABS - again in one of two ways. Why was it so difficult for the clients with whom we had contact to engage with the 'hostile opposition' identified in their organisations?

Tuckett's analysis of what was happening at the time describes a climate in which investment in magical thinking (new financial products as phantastic objects) was widespread and any opposition taboo. He describes a section of society in thrall to its own narcissism.

ABS, at the boundary of some of the organisations involved in the creation and propagation of such new financial products, represented both the sort of opposition which could not be born (consultancy) and (artists/creativity) a phantastic object briefly available for the relief of underlying shame.

Clients may not only have influenced how the consultant/artist pair were able (or not) to take up their roles as envisaged in the original model, but have influenced the original setting up of a defensive structure at ABS to suit their unconscious needs. The collusion to create and offer such a pair, prone to this sort of splitting, began early in the process of ABS forming and developing its dual technology model, as will now be explored.

### **Valencies at ABS**

In this section of the discussion I will review some characteristics (valencies) of artists and consultants at ABS which may have pre disposed us to joining with client organisations in the unconscious co creation of a particular model and structure.

Consultant D introduced ten of the sixteen clients in the study. Until shortly before he joined ABS Consultant D had been an employee of client E for whom we worked at the Partners conference in Portugal. He was seen by consultant A and myself as an important link to corporate sector clients – particularly in the

finance sector. I can now see that he was not only a link to such clients but may have served as a conduit through which the unconscious needs of such clients were brought inside ABS and responded to. Consultant D was very influential in the design of the first marketing event, for example. I would hypothesise that, to an extent, the ABS large group event which served to inhibit rather than facilitate change, may have evolved, and flourished, in response to projective processes of our clients/potential clients, imported into ABS by consultant D.

Certainly the evolving model was somewhat derailed following the creation of the large group event. Prior to the first marketing event we had been working with smaller groups, exploring the ways in which different artists' practice enhanced, or not, the practice of consultancy. Once the large group format of the marketing event had been created however, clients began to ask us to work with increasingly large numbers, as I have detailed. As well as the difficulties of working in such large groups organising work on such a scale took a long time - involving me and the consultants in protracted preparation discussions, site visits, and proposals. During these protracted contracting and preparation phases clients dealt exclusively with consultants and the conditions were created for the sustained use of the (absent) artist as idealised phantasy.

Consultant D's enthusiasm for the large group format may have served to fill the marketing events to capacity with potential clients but, on reflection, I can see that the clients who came and who subsequently explored holding such events in their organisations, may have been, as it were, unconsciously contracting with us to avoid rather than facilitate change. There was a 'phenomenal' primary task (Lawrence 1977) of which we were unaware.

The creation and characteristics of the working pair of consultant and artist had an earlier provenance than consultant D however. The pair, originally conceived as an equal pair contributing different aspects, had quickly become established as an unequal pair in terms both of practice (consultancy practice had been privileged), roles in the organisation (artists were not involved in key decisions) and remuneration (artists were paid half the fee of consultants). Why had this happened?

As mentioned all of the ABS consultants, apart from consultant D, were involved in the arts – as amateur musicians, creative writers, or visual artists. These interests no doubt played a part in what attracted them to working with ABS in the first place.

Consultant B had earned a living, however briefly, as a creative writer, for example, and had hoped to have a career as such. The reality had turned out differently however and, as explored, most of the ABS consultants found themselves working at the frontline of mental health, consulting to teams and individuals whose working lives were very demanding, which made them in turn, demanding clients. Their own artistic pursuits were very much on the back burner and neglected.

The proposal to work alongside creative artists may have provoked both excitement and envy therefore. The artists we worked with may not have been very successful but they were full time artists nonetheless. It is possible that consultants, frustrated with the difficult work with which they were engaged, may have used the ABS artists to manage this frustration, through a process of projection and denigration – projecting their own artistic aspirations into ABS artists and then seeking to control it through the creation of an unequal pair. As a consequence artists were kept away from clients in the early stages of the work – a practice which, coincidentally, contributed directly to the phantasy artist getting stuck in the minds of our clients, and the enhancement of their desire to work with artists, perhaps adding to consultant frustration.

For their part the artists may have been prepared to collude in this unequal pairing for other, more practical, reasons. As discussed the artists who joined ABS were, without exception, low earners. The potential to earn money three or four times higher than most of their other work no doubt contributed to them being prepared to work with a model which put the practice of organisational consultancy above their own. Their existential primary task (Lawrence 1977) could be said to be financial. They were there primarily to earn money.

The artist/consultant dynamic described above was epitomised in the leadership couple at ABS – a couple consisting, at the beginning anyway, of an artist (me) and a consultant (A). Consultant A, frustrated with her anxiety-provoking work in front line mental health, was attracted to working with me – an artist as she saw me at the time. I will explore my own valency to join what became a fighting pair below. Regarding consultant A, her valency for setting up the unequal pair may have had its roots in her own artistic aspirations. She may have been both excited by and envious of the creativity I represented and consequently played her (unconscious) part in the creation of a model which, whilst highlighting creativity, also sought to distance and control the artist in the pair. Evidently I was not distanced in the way the other ABS artists were, from the decision making at ABS, for example. Neither was I paid less. I was the leader of the company but, in reality, it was consultant A who held the in depth knowledge of the consultancy model which underpinned our work and who led the consultancy team. I may have dedicated far more time than consultant A to leading and managing the company but the consultancy which, from early on, became the essence of what the company wanted to offer, was something at which I was a beginner. The partnership did not evolve in the way I had hoped and consultant A, for the reasons described above, may have made an unconscious contribution to that process. We became the fighting pair which was then used by clients.

### **My own valencies and learning**

Evidently the hypotheses above about the conscious/unconscious motivations of artists and consultants are unproven. The evidence proposed for the hypothesis about the unconscious envy of artists by consultants, for example, is their collusion in the setting up of an unequal pair in which the artist was *one down*, but it does not prove the hypothesis.

Regarding my own contribution I feel clearer and will now discuss two aspects of my own experience which may have constituted a valency for setting up the ABS model in the way we did.

A tutor on the Masters degree I completed in 2004, with whom I was discussing my pre disposition (since childhood) to organise large scale events

described this pre disposition as:- 'When in doubt, organise an event'.

Following my departure from my role at the Festival, I hypothesised about my pre disposition in an essay for the same Masters degree. I wrote:-

'Looking back I can hypothesise that the role of such event organising may have been partly a defence against frightening or uncontrollable aspects of my life, that I may have been projecting unconscious 'phantasy-situations into objective reality' as Menzies puts it, as a 'technique for mastering anxiety' (Menzies 1960 p 442) - in this case projecting my own feelings of loss of control onto the communities for whom I organised events and then seeking to control those communities through the events I organised as a sort of maitresse d' of my own anxiety.'

I had a pre disposition, in other words, to respond to the unconscious invitation of our clients to organise large scale events. I responded readily to consultant D's invitation to hold marketing events for eighty plus clients at the Soho theatre for example, where others may have been more cautious.

Secondly, as I suggested in 'The Researcher'(p18),the creation of the ABS pairing of artist and consultant may have represented something of my hope for the future – where the past (the artists from the festival) could be joined with the as yet unknown future at a difficult period of change and uncertainty in my own life, both professionally and personally. Something might be brought together in other words.

But in my own story there were also, as indicated, unresolved issues to do with a *bad artist* - the mentally ill uncle who dominated my childhood. This tension between, as it were, the desire to bring together and the desire to keep apart was commented on in panel reading 3 where reader C explored the potential unconscious motivations of both Client K, the pharmaceutical company, and ABS, who she perceived as being in unconscious collusion 'against bringing things together'.

*C I think linked to that – according to your first question about what are their (clients') expectations and intentions - conscious and unconscious? I think in*

*terms of the transcript or you know, that approach, one might wonder how you get to the unconscious – what is the process that the unconscious comes to life in your experience and I ..I wondered a bit about there being a kind of conscious expectation that you are going to be able to bring together something quite oppositional like science and art and yet the unconscious intention might have been something to do with wanting to keep them separate and there being the kind of hiding, the shock, the shocking elements of either or – you know – the kind of life drawing, the penis in the life drawing or the animal testing but actually a conscious wish to kind of work something out, actually cross what do they call it er,,,cross departments but an unconscious force against bringing things together (Panel Reading 3 – Reader’s response)*

Without going inappropriately into my own personal or therapeutic journey, I link this dilemma to an important aspect of my own experience.

My mother was the keeper of an explosive family secret which, had she shared it with my father, may have broken the family apart. The information was kept from him and the imagined consequences of what might have happened if he had been told, may have remained as an explosive possibility in my mind, like ‘patient A’ in Britton’s account of parental sexuality in the Oedipus complex, of whom he wrote:-

*‘she could not allow the notion of parental intercourse to exist because she could only anticipate it as a disaster.’(Britton 1989 p 88)*

At a personal level, therefore, the pair of the ABS model may have represented something of this desire for and difficulty of the couple coming together in my mind.

## **Implications for the dual technology model of ABS**

The approach taken by this research has been to study the projective system in which ABS and its dual technology evolved i.e. the combination of circumstances, personal and organisational histories/dynamics and the broader societal context in which the relationships with clients took place. All of these

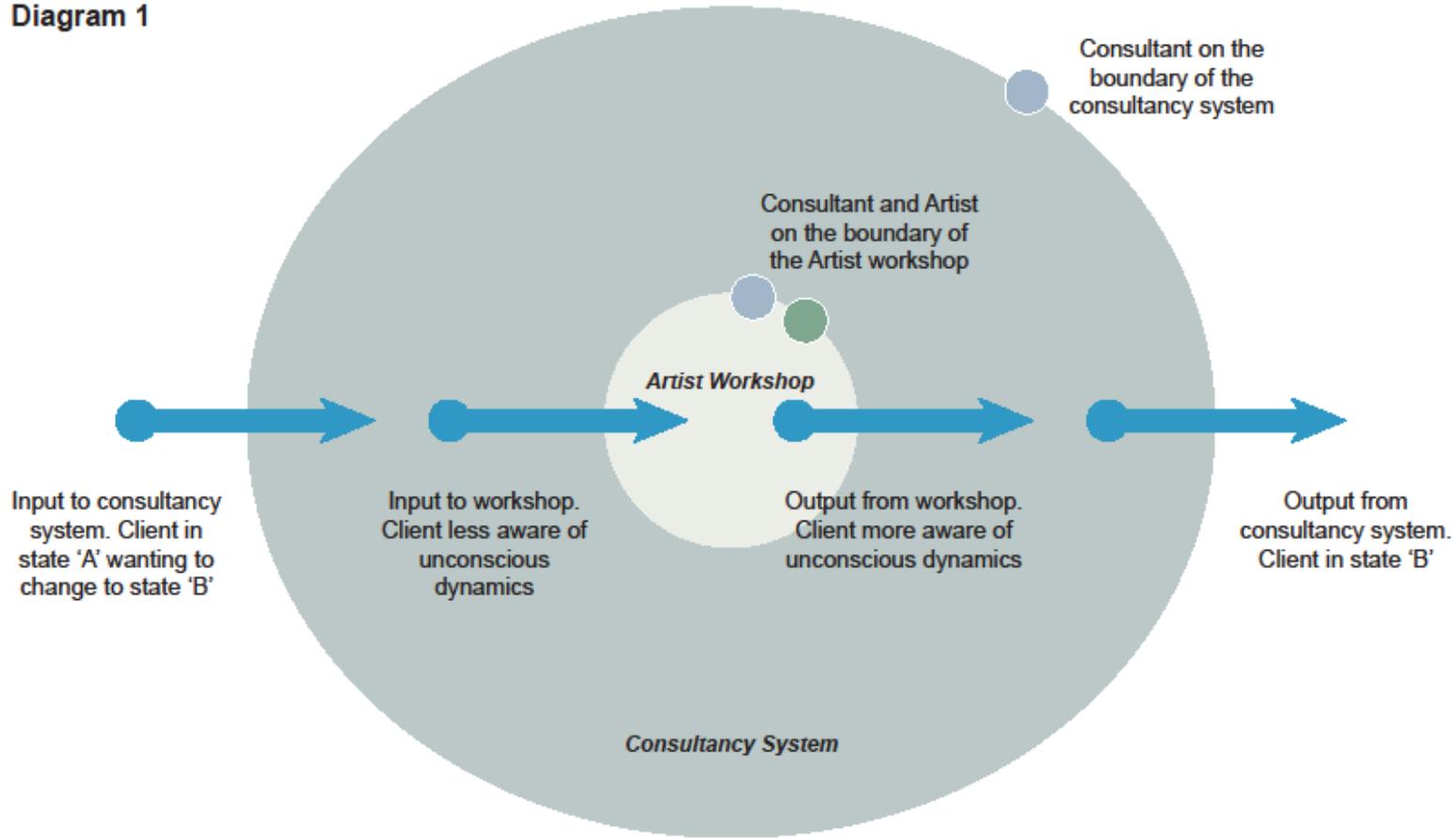
elements had a profound effect on the way the model developed, from the creation of the working pair of artist and consultant itself and the large group format which made it so difficult for them to work together effectively, to the positioning of artist practice inside a model of consultancy based on Group Relations - rather than as an equal but different practice to do with promoting creative thinking.

I have explored how a particular group of clients, at a particular moment, may have influenced the development of this defensive model. Under the sway of difficult dynamics (managing in the face of hostile opposition, carrying a burden of organisational shame) there may have been what could be described as a system valency to join with ABS in the co creation of the model which was developed, a model prone to paranoid schizoid splitting which in turn served to help clients resist, rather than facilitate change.

In this part of the discussion I will discuss the implications of the findings for the dual technology model of ABS in two sections. Firstly I will review the model as it evolved. I will then outline an alternative model, as I might now conceive it – a model which separates out the two intentions of the original model (consultancy and creativity) in a potentially more equal partnership with a dual task.

Diagram 1(p 186) shows the model developed during the pilot through the consultancy contracts studied in the research. The artist workshop, with both consultant and artist on the boundary, is shown as a sub system of a consultancy system where only the consultant is on the boundary – the 'included in' model. The input to the wider consultancy system shown was envisaged as 'Client instate A' wanting to change to state B and the output as 'Client in state B'. The input to the artist workshop is described as 'Client less aware of unconscious dynamics' and the output as 'client more aware of unconscious dynamics', the assumption being that the artwork would facilitate the surfacing of unconscious dynamics to which the consultant would consult, thus resulting in 'more aware' clients who would then return to the consultancy system with more understanding.

Diagram 1



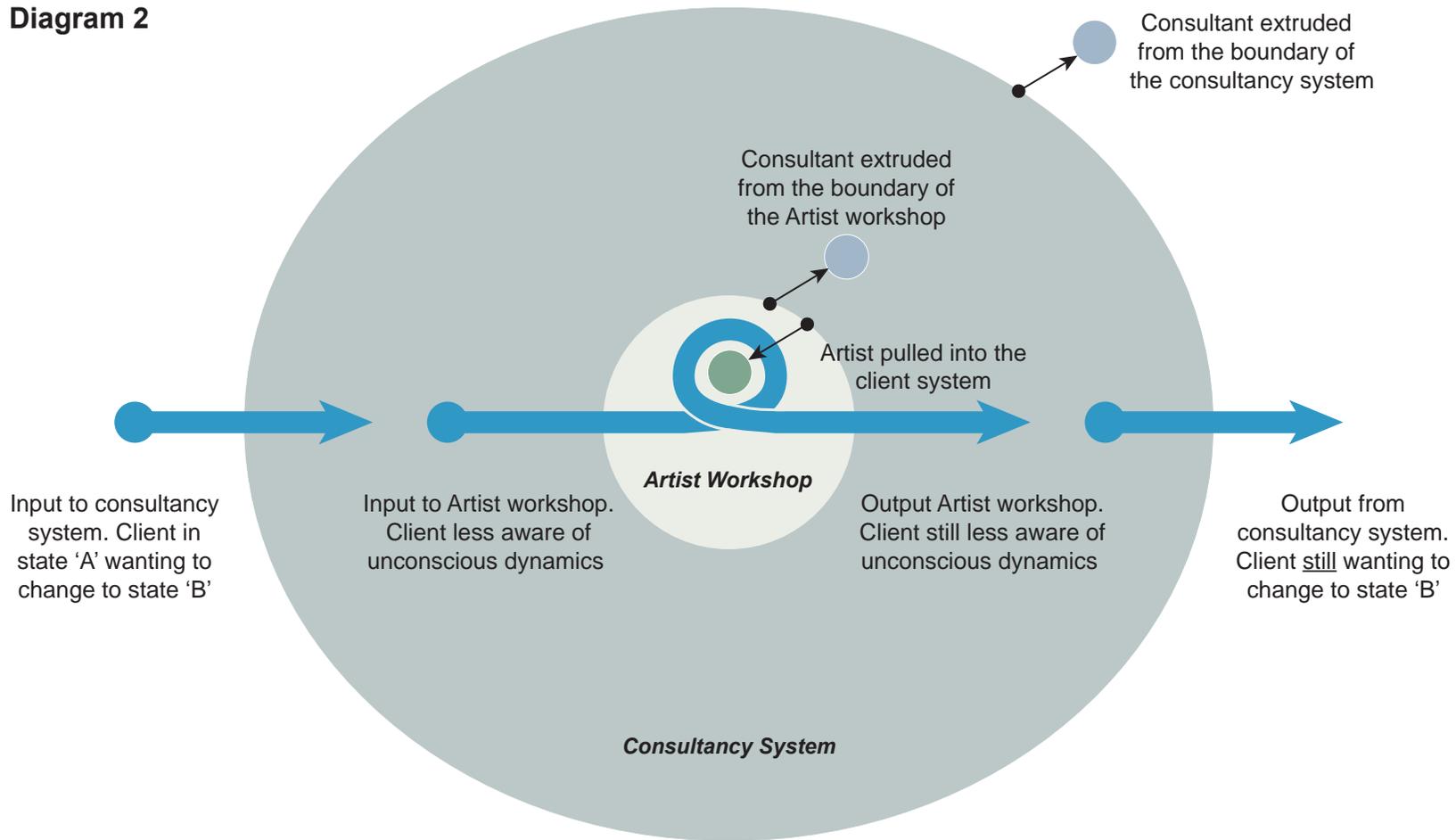
The 'Included in' model - envisaged change process

The rationale for this 'included in' model was based, partly, on the lack of consistency amongst artists in terms of practice. Compared to the consultants, amongst whom there had been enough of a shared practice to produce joint guidelines (p 21), what was shared or could be agreed with me as potentially useful for the developing model in terms of artists' practice was unclear. This confusion led, I now realise, to a demotion of artist practice in the crucial set up period of ABS.

Whilst the 'included in' model might be viable theoretically, one of the effects of this inclusion of artists inside a model based on fostering an understanding of the sources and effect of organisational anxiety was frustration on the part of the artists that activities/workshops were sometimes interrupted, in the service of this meta task, by consultants who wanted to share observations with clients. The potential for a split is apparent looking back.

Diagram 2 (p 188) 'The 'Included in' model - what actually happened' shows the results - as explored in the research. The artist could be described as pulled off the boundary into the client system and the consultant as extruded. This destabilised the overall potential of the consultancy system. The consultant, unable to work as intended in the artist workshop, was also extruded from the boundary of the consultancy system. The input to the artist workshop may have been 'Client less aware of unconscious dynamics' but the unintended output could also be described as 'Client still less aware of unconscious dynamics' and similarly the output of the wider system could be described as 'Client still wanting to change to state B'. As the research has shown, such clients could be described as bonded with the artist and estranged from the consultant who was drawn in to one of the three behaviours – *evangelist*, *pimp* or *spy*.

Diagram 2



The 'Included in' model - what actually happened

But why was this model so ill-suited to the purposes for which it was designed, and in particular why did the dually facilitated artist workshops result in the sort of splitting described?

I will now explore several possibilities. The introduction of the artist (albeit not physically present during the contracting phases) changed the pair, of consultant and client, into a three. This complicated the task of bonding (Bowlby 1988). In terms of attachment we asked the client to 'bond' with two objects simultaneously, a more difficult task than bonding with one.

Working in any three requires each of the three partners to be able to sustain a sophisticated (depressive position) capacity to tolerate a constantly evolving pair – in this case between client and artist, client and consultant, and consultant and artist without either individuals or pairs freezing in any one position. The creation of the phantasy artist in the mind of the client made this constantly evolving pair difficult to achieve and positions became frozen as described.

The creation of the phantasy artist had been due, in part, to the sustained absence of the artist during the long preparation period needed to organise large group events. Further, when such events finally took place the work was affected by large group dynamics. As referred to in the literature section of this thesis Main (1985) refers to the difficulty of 'reality testing' in large groups and the tendency of large groups to conform. Evidently the risk of basic assumption behaviour dominating a large group is strong and, consequently, the likelihood of the sort of depressive position thinking required to convert, as it were, the primitive-Oedipal threat represented by the consultant into an Oedipal threat which, whilst feared, can be engaged with - is much diminished.

However, it was not only the creation of the phantasy artist and the large group format of the events which lent themselves to splitting the pair, there was also a confusion of design.

As described, the practice on which ABS based its consultancy was that of Group Relations. Both Group Relations training and ABS consultancy involved the practice of studying organisational behaviour, in the 'here and now', with

the purpose of enhancing understanding of such organisational behaviour and effecting change where possible.

The purpose of design in such contexts is to provide a structure in which particular aspects of organisational behaviour can be studied, such as the study of inter group dynamics in an inter group event in a Group Relations conference, or the study of authority in an institutional event. In all cases as light a structure as possible is designed in order to provide maximum space for the emergence of the psychodynamic and systemic phenomena of the members group (or client group in consultancy) which can then be studied. In all of these events members are invited to work alone i.e. without the direct input of consultants. The role of consultants could be described as *lean back*. They brief the task and then, from the boundary, offer observations and comments/interpretations on what they observe.

What is often observed are the projections of unwanted feelings from one group to another, or on to the consultants. Groups often struggle with appointing task appropriate leadership and may elect an inappropriate leader, or no leader at all and thus may *fail* to accomplish tasks. All of this can then be thought about.

However, in our 'included in' model - instead of providing a structure and then letting clients make of it what they would we introduced an *artist leader* whose approach could be described as *lean forward*. The artist leader didn't work from the boundary but actively directed the workshops, often with a brief to help clients produce a performance or exhibition.

By introducing an artist leader into such a process we may have offered a distraction. Instead of members/clients having to struggle with their own internal dynamics and competition around leadership (for example) they were offered a readymade leader with whom to engage, and with whom they often chose to bond, splitting from and failing to engage with both the consultant on the boundary and, crucially, with their own dilemmas. I now consider this to be a confusion of design. The space in which we invited clients to consider their own team or organisational dynamics was fundamentally changed by the

inclusion of an artist leader, a leader often already imbued with powerful idealised phantasy, as discussed.

The proposal of the original model on the other hand - that artists' practice might contribute a means of stimulating creativity, whilst consultants worked to understand the sources of organisational anxiety - is, to a large extent, untested through the work of ABS thus far. As illustrated, artists' workshops were included as a sub system in a consultancy model based on Group Relations rather than in an equal partnership offering, potentially, two different things.

Over time we gradually stopped offering the dually facilitated artist workshops as part of consultancy at ABS and the main players went their separate ways – artists away from organisational work on the whole and consultants resuming a system psychodynamic model of consultancy – including myself. I had begun to feel bruised by what felt like a double negative effect of the dual technology we had developed. Neither were we able to consult to clients in this context, nor introduce them to artist practice as an aid to creative thinking.

However, alongside my developing practice as a consultant to organisations and at Group Relations conferences, I did continue to develop my own practice of free writing. As described I find this practice helpful in terms of surfacing both that which might be pre occupying (but not consciously so) and also for finding creative ideas/solutions to problems – seemingly unbidden.

I continued to explore the possibility of introducing free writing into my work with clients and was recently invited to run a writing workshop for an informal professional organisation with a view to exploring the usefulness of writing in helping them think creatively about organisational issues. I spent the morning with them and, for the first few hours, encouraged them to practise free writing about a series of topics written on pieces of paper which I had prepared and which they drew randomly from a box in the middle of the table. These topics were typical of the writing practice suggested by Natalie Goldberg (1991) such as 'the streets of my city', or 'my favourite teacher', 'autumn' or 'rooms I have lived in'. Everyone *freewrote* (i.e. without stopping/keeping the hand moving) for

an agreed length of time (typically ten minutes) about each subject chosen then read what they had written in small groups, then wrote again. The process was designed to attune participants to a free associative way of working, allowing ideas to surface rather than analysing their meaning. During a break, after several hours, I asked them to decide on an organisational issue they would like to work on and, after the break, asked them to write, without stopping, for thirty minutes – about this issue. They were not asked to read this piece of writing but to share, instead, if they had found the process useful in relation to the organisational issue selected and how. The feedback was very good. The majority of the participants had found the exercise very useful. A typical comment was... 'I have just got to a place in thirty minutes which it may have taken me months to get to otherwise, if I ever would have.'

As the artist in this context I was working freely, with my own model, based on writing and free association. I was not included in a consultancy system but worked alone. Indeed I held back from consulting, despite my training, when I noticed behaviours which, normally, I may have chosen to explore. One such example was a participant, one of the founding partners of the professional organisation, who suddenly stood up and, with much sighing, left the room. I could have chosen (as consultants at ABS had sometimes done) to interrupt the process and focus on understanding the source of the participant's anxiety, the meaning of her behaviour for the system etc. Instead I chose to stay with the process of free writing and there is some evidence that it helped stimulate a creative process.

Evidently it might be important to explore at some point the significance of the behaviour of the founding partner. Were this an ongoing relationship with this organisation the resistance she may have represented would need to be understood and worked with if the creative process were to fruitfully continue. However I made a decision, at that moment, to continue to work at a different level, to a different task.

The artists in the consultant/artist pairs at ABS, however, were in a different situation. Firstly they were not asked, as I had been in the situation above, to help clients use artist practice in order to generate possible solutions to

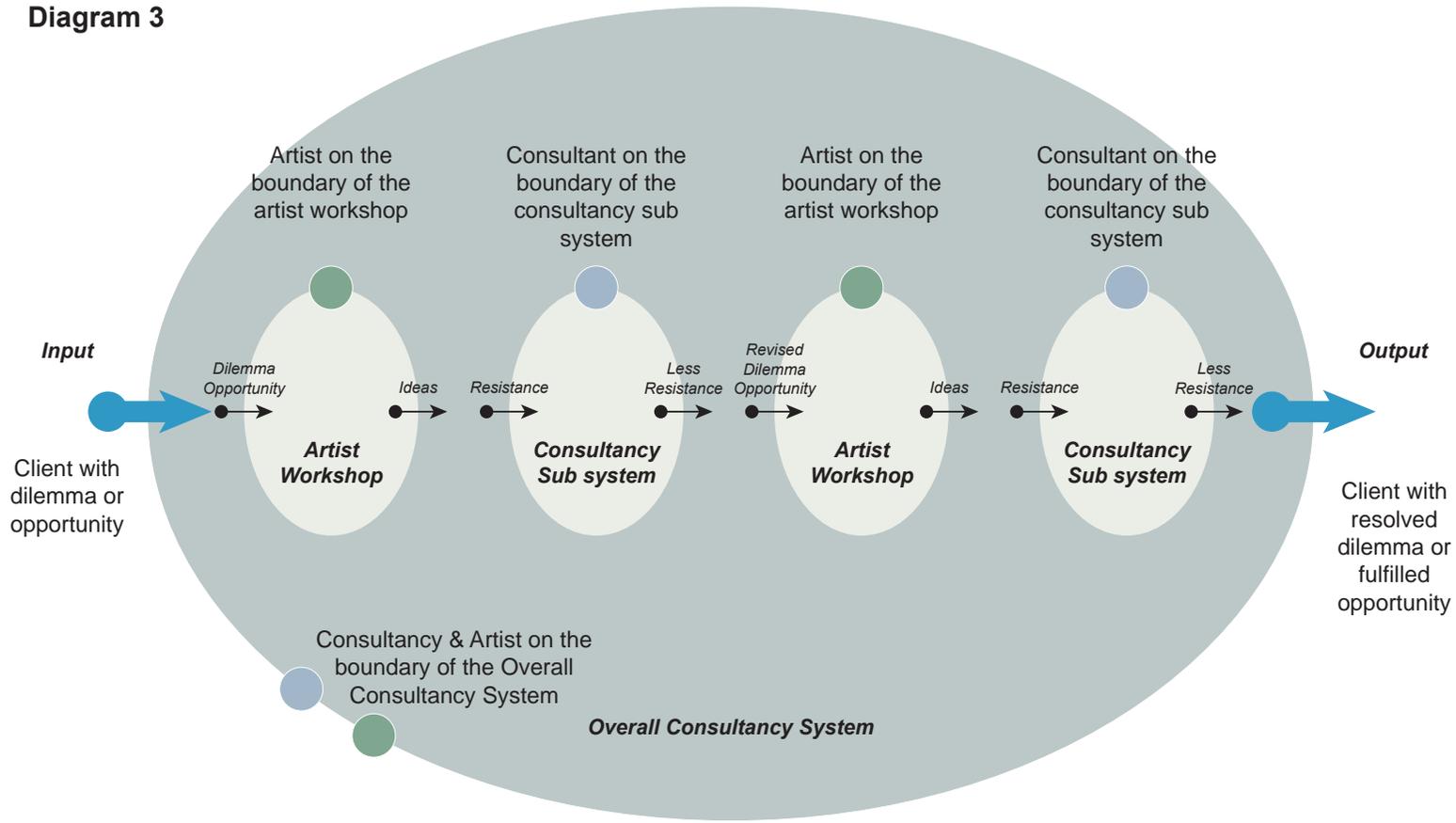
particular issues. The exception to this, as detailed, was artist G, working with me at client N, who was asked to help the client explore possible solutions to problems being experienced in relation to recruiting effectively. Unlike me in the example above, however, artist G did not have the option of choosing to stay working with her own artist practice, movement in this case. At a certain point I (the consultant) chose to change the focus and consult to an unconscious process I had noticed, to do with the size of the potential recruitment pool versus the size of the group of recruiters, as described.

Diagram 3 (p 194) illustrates a possible alternative way of working which would separate out the work of the artist from the work of the consultant more clearly, so that each were free to work with the client to different tasks, using their own practice (lean forward/lean back), whilst holding the potential of the other's practice in mind, as a resource for the client. In this dual technology model work with a client might proceed sequentially alternating a more proactive creativity/ideas generation approach (lean forward), with consultation (lean back), as required. In this system both the consultant and the artist are shown singly on the boundary of alternating task sub-systems and together on the boundary of the overall system.

The input to the overall system is described as 'client with a dilemma or opportunity' and the output as 'client with resolved dilemma or fulfilled opportunity'. The input into the artist sub system would be a client seeking to generate ideas in relation to a dilemma or opportunity (shown as 'dilemma/opportunity'). The output would be a client with ideas in relation to such a dilemma or opportunity (shown as 'ideas').

I propose that an additional potential output (or by-product) of the artist sub system might be 'resistance' and this is shown as the input to the consultancy sub system. The hoped for output from the consultancy sub system would be a client more open to change (described as 'less resistance'). Such a client might then be more open to work again with an artist on the creativity task. Hypothetically this sequence might then repeat and the client work sequentially and iteratively with the two sub systems to the overall task.

Diagram 3



Alternative Dual Technology System

Were this model to be trialled it may give the opportunity to explore the original idea of the ABS dual technology model i.e. that artist practice based on improvisation/free association might, as Stacey (2001) put it, help promote creativity, whilst consultants, working with a Group Relations-based consultancy model, might provide a range of interventions designed to help clients study and change anxiety-driven aspects of organisational behaviour which may inhibit such creativity.

Certainly the identified design confusion might be resolved through using this model i.e. the artist and consultant tasks would be differentiated and more clearly defined (rather than the artist included in a consultancy model) and the risk of trying to work with a *lean forward* and *lean back* model at the same time would be diminished. Each would be deployed when required, depending on the task. The artist wouldn't be kept 'in the wings' and therefore vulnerable to idealised phantasy projections becoming stuck. Initial contact could be jointly handled.

The artist and consultant would still be working with the client in the same system however and, evidently, potentially at risk of receiving different projections from the client. To help avoid the extreme, paranoid schizoid, splitting which occurred in the first model I propose two further considerations therefore.

Certain clients, such as the clients in response to whom the current model was created, may continue to be unconsciously attracted to such a differentiated pair. It might be necessary, therefore, to assess those teams/organisations that approach us in order to decide if they would be likely to be able to make a more depressive position use of the consultant/artist pair. The adapted model proposed above may help with this. By introducing the artist at the beginning an early assessment of whether the client were likely to annex the artist in some way might be made and also an assessment of whether it might be possible to work with and through such an annexation.

A further consideration is the use of the large group format. In any future work it

would seem important to uncouple the large group format from the ABS offer. The client groups working alternately with the artist and consultant would need to be sufficiently small to avoid large group dynamics which might, as described, make use of the artist consultant pair in order to split rather than engage.

The revised model would seem to offer more flexibility than the model studied, in terms of designing interventions in response to the needs of individual clients. Work in the sub systems might vary a lot in terms of timings for example. A client may work for a long time with artist practice before reaching a moment when consultancy felt necessary. On the other hand some clients may need a lot of remedial work before they are able to engage with creative practice.

It is untried however and therefore it is not possible to know how clients would engage with such a proposal or indeed how it might change as we began to engage with clients to whom it might seem attractive. It is the degree to which our clients seem to have influenced not only the design but the genesis of the idea of ABS's consultant/artist pair and dual technology which has so surprised me in the research – the extent to which we may have been involved in the unconscious co creation of a defensive model.

## Conclusions

The motivation for this study was professional frustration. The model of consultancy offered by ABS – which intended to combine a system psychodynamic approach to consultancy with the creative practice of artists – did not seem to be either understood by clients or of use to them in the ways I had imagined.

The object of study was the projective system in which negotiations took place between ABS and its clients, and the consultancies, using the ABS consultant/artist dual technology, in which some of these negotiations resulted. The data for the study were many short texts such as email exchanges with clients, proposals for work, and notes written for different purposes and stored on my computer during the running of ABS consultancy over a period of six years. One contribution of the study is a demonstration of how such data, drawn directly from practice rather than gathered once the idea of research is already in the mind, might be used for the study of social phenomena.

Studying such data, generated during the course of the running of my own business, required a robust qualitative approach however. A method was developed and adapted from Grounded Theory using reading panels in the early stages of the research at which readers read and responded to data excerpts – an emotionally difficult process for me, the researcher, and one which required much self-reflexivity in order to take in and understand the responses. This process of self-reflexivity has been documented as part of the adapted research methodology and makes a contribution to the field of reflexive research practice.

The findings of the study indicated that clients and consultancy company in this context were involved in the co creation of a defensive model of working which facilitated clients to psychically annex, through phantasy, the artist of the proposed consultant/artist pair and to reject the *reality* represented by the consultants. Three consultant behaviours, described as *evangelists* *pimps* and *spies* were understood as a response to this dynamic – a dynamic of three in which the consultants found themselves excluded.

These findings, shown to be consistent to differing degrees across all ABS client interactions (apart from client N), could be described as findings which relate to the behaviour and characteristics of the whole system in which ABS interacted with its clients, as well as to the interactions between ABS and any particular client organisation involved. The study of the nature of interactions with clients across a whole consultancy context was a distinctive feature of this study and differentiates it from other accounts of consultancy practice which have tended to focus, as discussed, either on individual case studies or on accounts of themes or concepts discovered in a number of client organisations. What was accessed through this study were the characteristics of a wider system (of which ABS was part) and an understanding of how this wider system influenced the development of a particular model of consultancy at a particular time. The valencies of the different parties involved to join with this system have been explored in the discussion.

Regarding ABS's dual technology an analysis has been offered both of what was envisaged and what went wrong with the model evolved during the period under study. In the light of the findings I have proposed a revised design for such a model, one which I would like to pilot and which, as consultant/researcher I now feel better equipped to attempt. As well as an evident need for enhancing understanding of organisational processes and resistance to change through the application of a systems psychodynamic approach to consultancy, there is also a need for a psychoanalytically informed model for helping clients generate new ideas.

Undertaking this study has helped the evolution of my ideas regarding creativity and has developed my practice as a consultant. In conclusion I would like to say something about where I now position myself, theoretically, with regard to creativity and about what I have learnt from the study and will take forward in my own practice as a consultant in other contexts – the transferable learning.

## **Creativity**

In the Literature section I cite a broadly Kleinian perspective on creativity, to do with repair, and contrast this with Bollas's ideas regarding the receptive unconscious and its role in creativity, or the production of the 'new'.

Bollas proposes that the receptive unconscious 'gathers the desired' i.e. images, sense impressions, experience (Bollas 2002 p.p. 49-50) and identifies free association as the neglected practice through which such images, sense impressions, and experiences might be accessed in the service of creativity in the psychoanalytic dyad (and beyond), contrasting it with the practice of interpretation (of transference), which focuses on understanding the banished/repressed.

In this brief statement I will link Bollas's idea of the 'new' with Halton's 'evolutionary creativity' (Halton 2004) then, building on Halton's three forms of creativity (initiatory, reparative, evolutionary), I will describe my own position on creativity in the light of the study.

I will then briefly discuss my understanding of the role of free association (and free writing) as facilitating a return to the Paranoid Schizoid position – a process conceptualised by Bion as fundamental for the sort of creativity which moves beyond 'repair' in his formulation  $Ps \leftrightarrow D$  (1962). This understanding of the function of free association differs from Bollas and has helped with a re-evaluation of how to position the 'dual technology' developed by ABS. I find Halton's (2004) three tiered, and developmentally related definition of creativity most useful as a starting point for elaborating my own and propose that in organisations, (as in individuals) evolutionary creativity (the new) may or may not be possible depending on capacity to bear what can be experienced as catastrophic disruption, as familiar containers are dissolved. This has implications for the focus of consultancy.

Halton starts with initiatory creativity and relates it to the omnipotence of the infant who believes s/he has created mother. He cites ambitious ideas such as

the rallying call for the paperless office as examples of initiatory creativity in the social sphere. Ultimately such ideas are out of touch with reality and will come up against a developmental moment where the truth must be faced; as does the infant.

Halton's second form of creativity draws centrally on Klein's ideas of reparation for damage perceived to have been done during the infant's developmental process of splitting mother into good and bad part objects. The realisation that good and bad part objects are one whole object triggers guilt and a desire to repair. Halton links creativity in this context to a move from the Paranoid Schizoid to depressive position ( $Ps \rightarrow D$  – one direction) where the depressive position is seen as the aspirational position. Damage is repaired through the production of a work of art or the care offered to a patient (for example).

Bollas's and others' pre occupation with the new (Bollas 2002, Milner 1955) is most in keeping with Halton's third definition – evolutionary creativity - which speaks to the need to develop beyond the depressive position. He equates evolutionary creativity to moments such as going to school or getting married – a point in development where a perfectly good state of affairs must be disrupted in order for further creativity to take place and something new to be created. This differentiation between reparative and evolutionary creativity is implicit in Bion's work, but not explicit, as follows. Bion describes the process of thinking in terms of a conversion process of raw unprocessed elements (beta elements) which require an alpha (containing) function in order to be converted/combined in to alpha elements – i.e. thoughts, new ideas (Bion 1962). He relates this capacity to the infant's ability to bring two objects together and is explicit that the nipple of the mother and the mouth of the infant are the site of discovery for this bringing together, as long as the frustration of the 'no breast' or bad breast of the sometimes absent mother can be borne. This equates, essentially, to the process described by Halton as reparative creativity ( $Ps \rightarrow D$ ).

It is Bion's further elaboration of  $Ps \leftrightarrow D$  (double arrow) which, in my opinion, relates to evolutionary creativity.  $Ps \leftrightarrow D$ , and in particular the  $D \rightarrow Ps$  part of the process relates to a dissolving of the maternal container caused by the

arrival of father on the boundary of the dyad, re exposing the infant to the confusion and terror of the Paranoid schizoid position. It has a primitive oedipal quality (see pp 8-9 of thesis), a maelstrom of feelings and disorientation unleashed, from which a new idea may be forged. The two objects which are brought together in this context relate to the parental couple rather than the nipple of the mother and the mouth of the baby. Evolutionary creativity depends on a capacity to bear the dissolving of the container and, eventually, the internalising of a creative parental couple in the mind of the infant.

Neither Bollas nor Halton focus on the violence/regression implicit in Bion's return to the Paranoid Schizoid position. In fact Halton regrets Bion describing 'creative flux', as he calls it, as:-

*a state of mind analogous to the paranoid schizoid position (Halton 2004 p 113)*

However, in reviewing my experience of free writing as a creative process, over the past ten years I find it corresponds closely to Bion's description of an oscillation between disintegration and re integration. Like free association, the 'fundamental rule' of which it shares (Freud 1904), it temporarily dissolves the container in order to enter a regressed (Paranoid schizoid) state of mind. I could provide many examples of this process from my own free writing.

Bollas, in his recruitment of free association as the process through which the receptive unconscious 'gathers the desired' rather glamorises the process and risks ignoring the disintegration which cannot but accompany the process of evolutionary creativity and the emergence of the new.

The implications for organisational consultancy and for any revised dual technology approach using free writing/ improvisation alongside consultancy are interesting. The model represented by the drawing on page 194 of the thesis needs further elaboration.

In the description following the drawing I write:-

*It might be necessary, therefore, to assess those teams/organisations that approach us in order to decide if they would be likely to be able to make a more depressive position use of the consultant/artist pair.*

In the light of the re integration, as it were, of Bion's  $Ps \leftrightarrow D$  thinking with Halton's notion of evolutionary creativity and specifically having linked free association (and related practices) with the part of the  $Ps \leftrightarrow D$  process which could be described as  $D \rightarrow Ps$ , a further assessment might be required regarding the capacity of any particular group to bear this process. The dual technology might be particularly useful for well-functioning organisations in other words who have reached a developmental moment in which a capacity to bear disintegration will be necessary for progress and can be borne.

## **Consultancy**

In addressing what transferable learning I will take forward into my own consultancy practice in other contexts I will focus first on how undertaking the study enhanced my awareness of the importance of thinking systemically and seeking understanding, as a consultant, at group, organisational and broader contextual levels rather than solely at an individual level or between, for example, a fighting pair. I will then say something about consulting to start ups and young companies and how the enhanced understanding of my own 'start up' gained from the study has better equipped me to work with such clients. I will finish with some reflections about large group dynamics, the methodology of the panel readings and, finally, the (painful) usefulness of understanding something about my own valency to take up a critical or inflexible stance with clients – whether its provenance was part of a dyadic dynamic (client and consultant) or as a result of exclusion in a dynamic of three (client, consultant, artist).

## **Systems thinking**

As the research progressed I gradually understood more and more about the inter connectedness between ABS, its clients, and the broader context of what was happening nationally and internationally in the period spanning the period of operation of ABS, from its formation in 2002 to February 2008, the date of the

final consultancy studied. In the Discussion (p 179\*) I go as far as to link the way clients made use of the artists at ABS with the societal collusion around the creation of unrealistic financial products during the same period. Having gradually broadened the perspective in this way has affected my work as a consultant, broadening the frame of my work with clients, to consider the context of the broader organisation and society when consulting to individuals and teams.

A particular example of this is the consideration I now give to the process of mutual selection between client and consultancy organisation. It would seem that there was a particular sort of 'ABS client', attracted by the consultant artist pairing. This was brought in to particular focus by 'client N' who could be considered to be 'not' an ABS client, unaware as they were at the point of contracting, of the dual technology. In terms of transferable learning, I focus more on the process of mutual selection in the beginning of a relationship with clients. How are they in the room? It is often a rich exploration, yielding much in terms of what the request for consultancy or coaching (etc.) might mean. Also, in working with particular clients, who often find themselves in conflict with colleagues, direct reports, or their own managers the study's findings around the dynamic aspects (between client and consultant in this case) of the 'fighting pair' have been useful. As a consultant or coach I have greater confidence in seeking a systemic understanding of what a particular conflict might mean for the broader organisation.

### **Start-ups and young companies**

Having analysed my own state of mind, that of my colleagues and the apparent state of mind of the clients with whom we collaborated at the outset of ABS I have developed confidence in consulting to young companies and start-ups, helping them explore and understand some of the forces which may have contributed to the birth of their organisations and the covert meanings forming such an organisation may have or have had.

### **Large group dynamics in action**

In the study I explored the contribution to the findings of the decision we took at ABS to offer large group experiences/events to our clients. Understanding large group dynamics from, as it were, a study of this front line experience has enhanced my understanding of the difficulty of working in large groups, which I now avoid or plan differently. In Group Relations work, however, where the large group is deliberately convened in order to study such large group phenomena, I find my understanding enhanced by the experience.

### **The panel readings**

As part of my consultancy and teaching work I often run learning sets/work discussion groups with clients and/or students. My confidence in the value of this approach has been much enhanced by the usefulness of the experience of presenting my own data to panel readers in the study. The data was often sketchy, in the form of rapidly written process notes or emails to colleagues, yet the response across different panels was surprisingly consistent, as was the seeming transfer into the panel reading situation of dynamics relating to the relationship between ABS and the clients being studied. This experience has given me enhanced confidence to work with a wide variety of data and to work more freely with the possibility that systemic and psychodynamic phenomena may be operationalised in such contexts.

### **Personal valency**

The study made me aware of a personal valency to take up a critical or inflexible stance toward clients (be it evangelist pimp or spy). A reader in panel reading 3 described it as follows:-

*there almost felt like for you there was a moral question... who do I consult ...as much as who wants to consult me.*(Panel reading 3)

Disturbing as aspects of this discovery have been I think it has been useful to surface and take note of. I relate it to Lawrence's 'Politics Of Salvation and Revelation' (2000) – a realisation about the particular nature of what, from my own psyche, I may have been bringing to the work; an ongoing project.

# Appendices

# Panel Readings

<b>Panel Reading 1</b>
<b>Client P</b>
<b>29<sup>th</sup> February 2008</b>
<b>Readers: doctorate supervisors</b>

**Context of the reading:** The following table was presented to my supervisors in a supervision session. The resulting discussion, which was not recorded, is described in Chapter 2. Evolution of a Research Methodology. This first reading prompted further readings by panels of colleagues and peers to whom the data was 'blind' (See panel readings 2 – 9).

**Data description:** The data (in italics) is an account, written for my own reference, of a phone call with manager, DA, from Client organisation P – a large 'for profit' agency working on a government contract.

<b>Column 1</b>	<b>Column 2</b>	<b>Column 3</b>
<b>My process notes/memos and questions as I attempted to code the data from column 3</b>	<b>My attempt at coding data from column 3 Notes relate to the data.</b>	<b>Data – cut and pasted sentence by sentence into the table.</b>
		<i>DA (initials of manager) notes from phone call 17<sup>th</sup> jan</i>
	Noting the time	<i>Twenty minutes on the phone</i>
Am I my own research subject. Is there another way of doing this which will let me get to the client and the research questions more directly?	Date up in the air Client siting money as an issue	<i>I followed my plan and suggested talking through email then emailing him a short proposal – no date but probably march, as budgetery restraints are easing</i>
	Group size Including a wider group	<i>At least 60 people – maybe including partners upto forty more</i>
	Client flagging that getting to know each other important component Previous events sited as too task focused	<i>Logic of split between work and enjoying themselves/getting to know each other was following the dragons den event which went well but people found it very task focused and would like to make sure there was an 'off duty' bit dedicated to having fun and getting to know each other.</i>

Column 1	Column 2	Column 3
	<p>Pushing for consultant to be involved            Fear of between arts and consulting            How the client may have set up expectations in the wider group            Siting past events as too task focused. Wanting fun            Planning a part of the day without consultants</p>	<p><i>I argued the value of planning whole day together and making full use of consultants but I can feel the same split coming on that they might just want the art or get resentful at consultants. It sounds heavy he said. Why was group size max at 15            He wants to get people up and excited            He has sort of set expectations up a bit like that He said, For example, that he felt 'fun' bits always ended up being about the themes of the day. Maybe we should split it and have a promises focused arts and consultancy thing in the morning and then a more free thing after the business stuff</i></p>
		<p><i>To be addressed</i></p>
	<p>Me very affected by client            Client attitude to failure            Outlining his approach to failure, his belief that people don't try hard enough            He wants us to address what he perceives as bad attitude to failure.            Ambitious client            Me unable to respond            I quote my mentor comparing myself to her            I quote my mentor to the client            Intervention – I suggest other people might feel like I do            I suggest keeping promises might be difficult in the context of wider system</p>	<p><i>Something burning at me – its what he said about wanting to address what he called a very british attitude to failure – I tried really hard – I stay late – I did my best – I nearly reached my target. He quoted the cricket and there is obviously something in it. he thinks the day needs to really address this – the start of a process. A fundamental psychological shift. My response when he said it – it was as if someone was holding an opaque screen in front of me. I didn't know what to say. It was a bit like MD (initials of tutor) saying she couldn't think when someone said 'be creative' – I fed this back to him – wondered if other people might be feeling the same thing – him maybe (didn't say that) – the problem may not be keeping promises but what makes that feel difficult – in a company which may be perceived not to have kept promises itself (I didn't say tha) but that's the rub really.</i></p>

<b>Column 1</b>	<b>Column 2</b>	<b>Column 3</b>
	Client agrees to deeper work	<i>He's cautiously prepared to go there.</i>
	Client describes his plans for the beginning of an event	<i>His plans for first two hours consist so far of presentations – one around keeping promises in marshall arts which he has studied a lot, one using a U.S film about a team forming in a sports context, some group discussion, or quick fire explorations of what keeping promises means to people.</i>
	Competition with the client? Explaining how we do it with artists	<i>I explained that we would probably explore experientially the same material with the artists – the integrity of the look, the word, the movement, can you keep your promise to yourself – be true?</i>
	Thinking about how consultants might work in this context	<i>Didn't go into it but can imagine consultants working with an exploration of promises in different contexts (what if – a bit) – personal passionate (and what happens when promises are broken?)</i>
	Claiming client was open to consultancy  Client commented on silo mentality Consultancy intervention about this being the aim of the day – to cross between silos	<i>He was very open to pre meet with team leaders - - HR finance, marketing, content management teams, project management international etc etc. he talked of stove piped (silo) set up and I commented that crossing between might be aim of the day</i>
One stage removed – I am analysing a summary of what went on – no attempt here at accurate process notes. They say most about me	Client described own process for booking venue I suggest a more creative venue	<i>Re logistics they have Client P events who will book 'central london hotel' and sort out technicals etc. I suggested maybe a more creative venue</i>
	I suggest at least getting off site	<i>Off site anyway</i>
	I return to the theme of wanting to explore what makes it difficult to keep promises in this context. Pushing consultancy	<i>I did brave with him that we would want to explore what makes it difficult to keep promises here. And that would be where the skills of our consultants would come in</i>

<b>Panel Reading 2</b>
<b>Client G</b>
<b>6<sup>th</sup> March 2008</b>
<b>Readers: doctorate colleagues SH and ST</b>

**Context of the reading:-** The following data was presented to two doctorate colleagues who were given fifteen minutes to read it. They then discussed their impressions of it. I took notes and wrote it up later – then lost the data due to a computer problem and had to go back to my hand written notes some six weeks later.

**Data description:** The data is a narrative, written for my own reference, chronicling various sorts of contact with client organisation G, a company involved in airport construction as follows:-

- Initial Phone call with manager, JC
- Second phone call with JC
- Meeting with JC
- Planning process
- Phone call with a consultant, LW, employed by client organisation G

### **Data**

*7<sup>th</sup> November 2005*

*took call from JC following the ABS event*

*thanking us for the day and wanting to meet to talk about doing something with a team this week (meet this week)*

*she had been in ABS consultant F's review group but didn't have his number (?) left message to phone me back.*

*Making me think about what the process should be. Maybe I should do the initial meeting with whoever is available rather than these negotiations with ABS consultant A only around her diary.*

*7<sup>th</sup> November*

*conversation with JC. This is for an away day to be held on 2<sup>nd</sup> december for the environmental leadership team of Client organisation G,. They want to do something creative and getting to know you (resisting using myers briggs or*

*belbin as basis for exercises as they are just another way of 'labelling people') the three of them (HH and JJ) were in ABS consultant F 's group and started talking about the issues the team faces. She asked for ABS consultant F on her message. If the first away day goes well it could lead to rolling it out with forty or so people which she obviously likes the idea of.*

*Because of relatively tight deadline she needs to meet this week and has limited availability*

*Tomorrow central london between 1 and 3 between 2 and 4 on Thursday at X road wher eshe has meeting starting at 4 or Friday when HH could be there too at Y centre 10.30 – 2 or is it 1pm*

*Worries – how to do it with small team with no choice for participants. Two art forms? Nervous they will revolt. These are the heads of environmental leadership from all the centres.*

*Can't piece together which group they were in apart from JJ in ABS artist E and ABS consultant A 's group. JC in art*

#### *Notes post first meeting with JC*

*JC head of environment for 7 different sized centres all of which have their own teams and own heads of environment*

*Also under her brief world X team*

*The leadership team, between 10 and 15, has only met together twice (meetings about structure?)*

*HH , head of corporate social responsibility and JC 's boss, has a background in od and is, according to June, an extremely good facilitator. she ran a very creative day using imagery and art, just this Friday I think.*

*1987 client organisation G privatised from government department. Now a risk averse culture with slow turnover*

*JC background in health and safety, worked her way up*

*big culture and structure change at the moment from a clear corporate vision responsible and profitable growth in air traffic. commitment to new airport capacity though*

*Changes particularly at X centre.*

*And each centre has its own local agenda with communities and stakeholders  
JC said she was a stakeholder in X centre in a way which made me wonder if  
she lived near there*

*they are working through OGSMT starting with purpose and vision*

*Client organisation G central office (JC ) perceived as out of touch*

*She drew the two ends of the spectrum – centre X (big) v Centre A (very small),  
like a league*

*But pooling collective intelligence important*

*She is 'what' and HH is 'how'*

*They have no centre but have used the energy centre in east london*

*Laban felt a 'long way from centre X' though JC seems to spend her whole time  
on a train*

*Environment is not a traditional function she said and as such has struggled to  
get established.*

*Process and planning following this – prep for JC meeting*

*I note that I felt hopeless during the above meeting as we gradually whittled  
away at the art forms – what wouldn't work, what couldn't be done, what people  
wouldn't turn up for. I wonder now if I may have been experiencing JC 's  
feelings*

*Found myself pre occupied with getting squeezed out – ABS consultant A  
would get the work even though I know the decision wont be taken without me  
and I was quite happy for ABS consultant F to get the work. Leadership – the  
difficulties of taking up authority. Wondering what was in JC 's desire for  
'corporate' ABS consultant F and not to have a woman.*

*Is JC a safe pair of hands with no real power and no real pazazz – an oik like  
me? There by hard work. An idealist.*

*Artists – thinking working with ABS artist E in the afternoon could be good and  
ABS artist D in the morning*

*Co consult and split the fees?*

*Or me consult and co plan?*

*23<sup>rd</sup> january new conversation with JC who left a message asking if 'basket weaving' ABS artist L could do a workshop with them at one week's notice. She hadn't then read my email including his cv.*

*Her message was left while she was walking on her mobile which she told me and that it was very cold. I found myself returning her call in the same state. And telling her – always in transit.*

*There is an away day with the same team on feb 1 followed by an evening session where she wanted ABS to provide a bit of fun.*

*She was interested in the artist only as they have a facillitator on board – LW. And didn't want to risk too many cooks.*

*I felt troubled. ABS consultant A said in passing – selling the soul of ABS I then did some thinking and decided it would be ok as long as we were clear that work with the artist*

*Would be serious*

*Would not be consultation Not that it is deeper but it is organisational business level*

*I don't ask consultants to be artists or artists to be consultatns*

*She asked the price and I said it would be between 6 and 7 hundred for the artist and plus a thousand for the consultant. She said it was expensive for an evening activity but she is getting LW to call me and discuss whether or not to have just the artist or the artist and consultant combo.*

*She sounds disappointed. What authority has she got to spend money I wonder as head of environment.*

*Later*

*JC put me in touch with LW – a consultant running their two day workshop to discuss whether it was better to have the artist or the artist and consultant for the middle night of their workshop. I explained to LW that I was happy to book an artist to do a class oriented toward group work but that is what it was. It felt confusing to go for the full ABS offer and an inappropriate time – also ABS artist E is not just a bit of fun. It needs to be entered with a fresh mind and not as a pre dinner distraction. Not exactly my words but writing this some time later anyway we agreed she would feed back to JC and that it might be better to save ABS for an appropriate opportunity. JC left a message saying she was taking mine and LW's advice and would get back another time. It felt like the right decision.*

### **Readers' responses**

I took notes while SH and ST discussed their impressions of what they had read. Direct speech is bullet pointed. My overview or summary of other things they said and did whilst responding to the data is not bullet pointed.

- Head nor tail disjointed
- No space to think no creativity struggle of kay. What can she offer?
- On the periphery. Does org really want her?
- They weren't ready
- got frustrated – rollercoaster
- Had something, lost it again. had to read two paragraphs twice. Couldn't focus. Merging together.
- Not understanding
- Most interesting 'process and planning' after meeting with JC
- People so excited so fascinated
- A sea change when she realised how much it cost
- Play should be cheap
- Basket weaving from psychiatric hospitals a day centre
- People sitting around

ST experienced it (data) as a free association not categorised into what happened, what I felt and think but just stream of consciousness

- Moving very quickly from one to the other
- Not categorised
- Whittling away
- They are just teasing – we don't want this, not this
- Do the organisations know what they want?

SH picks up 'flirting.'

- We want to be with these creatives
- We want sex but we don't want to pay for it - JC couldn't articulate this
- No sense of the organisation
- The woman couldn't authorise the money and its not big money
- sounds very cheap

ST interested that artists get paid less than consultants – what it sets up.

- JC putting Kay in touch with another consultant, LW, to get rid of ABS - that was the result in the end. Feels very messy. Organisational mess became Kay's mess.

ST had a sense of Kay's desire to make sense of it all

- These organisations do approach for the flirtation but never get into bed – not 'the full ABS offer' don't get to stay till after dinner.

And afterwards ST and SH found themselves flirting

<b>Panel Reading 3</b>
<b>Client K</b>
<b>12<sup>th</sup> March 2008</b>
<b>Readers: participants at doctoral conference</b>

**Context of the reading:-** The following data was presented to participants at a doctoral conference at the Tavistock and Portman NHS trust, along with a copy of my research questions. Readers were given a few minutes to read the data then asked to work in a pair discussing the content before sharing with the wider group. I taped this discussion and the transcript is below.

**Data description:** The data is my notes from a meeting with managers TT and NN at client organisation K, a large pharmaceutical company in. They were written to be shared with ABS consultant A.

### **Data**

#### ***Animal experimentation and life drawing – shame***

*After a long discussion about pcd (pre clinical development) being ‘good at paperwork’ (there didn’t seem to be a lot of paperwork around to me though he kept saying there was) and good at ordering things, and statements like ‘we’ve got as far as we can’ we got on to the subject of which art forms and their confession about being the animal experimenters came after a discussion in which TT said ‘no’ to a nude model in the life drawing (TT thought the americans, who had objected to the fish film on the basis of vegetarianism wouldn’t like it) but NN and I encouraged him to keep it as a possibility because of the powerful material which could emerge – possibly about what is difficult to talk about in organisations (penises in life drawing). I realised that I had been seduced by the friendly, open, psychologically aware, responsive, funny men who were ‘so nice’ and then, like naughty boys they suddenly said ‘fair cop’ or ‘we’d better level with her’ and they told me about the animal experiments which took place there.*

*Process improvement experts prefer to work with the 'doers' directly rather than through their managers. Or the hierarchy.*

*Most of the process improvement people have a scientific qualification (except HR! – they laughed) and will typically have worked their way into their current position from somewhere else in the company.*

*This may be a bit brainstormy from now on.....*

*TT said that, after three years, all the 'easy jobs' were done and that now they had to work cross department.*

*He wanted to push at boundaries and comfort zones*

*There is a problem with trust – when they ask for data it is given fearfully as if they thought it would be analysed and their position judged (job lost?)*

*TT is supposed to 'wrap up' the conference but was open to that being 'part of the workshops' – he wants a 'personal commitment' from people to the future even if it is 'private'. At first he said that perhaps they could produce a vision of the future ( a painting) in the sessions but he was open to other possibilities*

*TT described himself as a typical ISTP very logical person – NN chimed in with another sort of analysis using a colour circle which had put all but one of his team in the very analytical section. They will all be familiar with belbin myers briggs etc etc*

*TT said 'listening is something we are not very good at – maybe you can work on that.' I wondered if he was asking me if I had heard what he had said about animal testing*

### **Readers' responses**

I have given each new voice on the tape a letter to denote when they spoke. 'K' is me.

K interested in hearing what your associations are to this piece of very raw data

A I don't know if it is an association but my first thought was a different interpretation of raw data. Raw data for me would have been a transcript of your interview and who said what when so literally a transcript of who said what to

whom and in a sense this is more your interpretation of...your kind of process notes from that interview so I guess that was my first thought

B Impressions from it and themes that came up ....I'll just read them out. There seemed to be a lot of explanations and qualifications going on and that it's sort of a dance between going out into the unknown and pushing boundaries to going back to safer more standard definitions like the mmpi and seeing front of mind things a bit more. Hmm again a lot of pulling and pushing revealing and not revealing trust and mistrust hmm wanting to do something new but wanting to stay on safe ground. Not upsetting people yet trying to challenge them. Those were the things I kind of...

K for the client of for me as the writer

B I found that...again I go back to the last person's comment as I find it hard to do anything but think about it as your impression of what they were presenting to you

K ok

C I think linked to that – according to your first question about what are their expectations and intentions? Conscious and unconscious – I think in terms of transcript or you know, that approach one might wonder how you get to the unconscious – what is the process that the unconscious comes to life in your experience and I ..I wondered a bit about there being a kind of conscious expectation that you are going to be able to bring together something quite oppositional like science and art and yet the unconscious intention might have been something to do with wanting to keep them separate and there being the kind of hiding, the shock, the shocking elements of either or – you know – the kind of life drawing, the penis in the life drawing or the animal testing but actually a conscious wish to kind of work something out, actually cross what do they call it er,,,cross departments but an unconscious force against bringing things together

D in relation to that I was thinking that there was a real feeling that they were not confident that they could do it on their own that there was something missing and one of the questions I had was whether it was primarily a male group and whether something about the ..they felt quite stuck actually and impotent. Maybe that's one of the expectations they had of bringing in consultation – a hope to be able to access something which they thought they couldn't do themselves.

E we also talked about a hierarchy and power

Conference organiser: Can you speak up a little bit

E sorry yeah. We talked about hierarchy and power also and just linking to what you were saying that idea about bringing a woman into a male organisation to somehow bring things together to join things up and also both women and perhaps this bit of the organisation. I don't know – it's just an idea are – feel less powerful than this kind of this quite large analytical sciency organisation and how people kind of er try and introduce something to bring in some new ideas in to that but actually that's quite a struggle and quite difficult. And perhaps painful potentially.

F I think there is the gender aspect of that but also in terms of your particular question of why they would approach an arts based or arts informed organisation I was thinking of how throughout they were defining themselves as hmm, sort of analytical thinking – wanting doers and not maybe emphasising the more emotional experiential side and how this manager is struggling with a lack of trust and the fearfulness about giving something away and whether he had an assumption that art could in some way bi pass some of that – you know that it would be a shortcut to something that he felt he couldn't get to G I think that was a shared feeling that we had that this was a group that was selling itself as being logical very analytical managing things, a very male group and that they were talking about at the very core, hurting animals, talking about sexual issues and wondering if perhaps somebody who had a more direct link

to the emotional and creative could somehow contribute to their thinking about that – what their organisation did

H there was a weird ambivalence about that because when it came to the life drawing you know they pulled back with some kind of reference to the Americans who won't want to ...because they got offended with the fish in a movie and maybe they had a vision of perhaps drawing something that filled the page with neat squares or something or you know copying something and not getting to the real emotional core of what they wanted to express, I I just felt that the issue of animal testing was quite dominant .....core need to be doing something creative perhaps to be able to deal with an issue that they perhaps feel guilt and shame about .

K I'm aware of the time – can you give me a guideline conference organiser if we have a little leeway. At a certain point I want to shift into any general questions people might have out of ..and I'm just listening at the moment.

Conference organiser. Ok do you want to finish about ten to?

K ok so a couple more minutes on your associations which – you can imagine very interesting to hear and then I'll answer any or you know we can have a more general discussion

Conference organiser: I was just wondering. I'm certainly not wanting to introduce it if it is not in peoples minds ...but the sort of ...on the one hand people really responding to bringing up themes but there is also the question of broadly what kind of data is this. And I wondered if there is a sort of way of bringing those two questions or those two issues together. Whether you have got any thoughts about that – that's what was in my mind when I heard people speaking.

J I find it very refreshing to find a researcher researching with data that is available – archival material – rather than thinking they have to go out and

interview, they have to go out and get something fresh and I think to realise that very often we have an enormous amount of data which we can actually use for, very successfully for research. Very important. But I am struck by your seven years. And wondering how on earth you are going to decide which material you are going to use and which you are not

K well I mean maybe we should move on to that . I've been keeping in sort of listening mode but I'm happy to move on to responding to questions

Yeah well with difficulty and this sort of process- the process I followed for choosing this piece was interesting trying not to deep read it, almost to pick it at random but I couldn't quite do that – where I have got to with my supervisors really is thinking about dividing the data sort of that way so that with any one client I look at some emails, some records of telephone conversations, some processing, you know internal stream of consciousness stuff of me trying to work things out, and some records of meetings hmm and there are hundreds of documents but they are short so I am just beginning it really. And this seems like quite a useful document. I am surprised that how quickly people managed to read it in quite a sort of deep way. So I am quite encouraged by that. William Halton said you can't let six hundred and fifty documents speak to you. The process of selection is going to be key, so if you have any ideas. Where would you begin?

L So how were you thinking of how to place yourself in all of that ? I mean I am just responding to this little bit and you know I am looking at the first paragraph and thinking there is almost a, completely from not knowing the situation or you at all, there almost felt like for you there was a moral question a moral question almost – who do I consult as much as much as who wants to consult me, me to consult to them. And you know so that just made me think a lot about where are you going to place yourself with it?

K you mean as a researcher or as a consultant

L yes as a researcher

K if you mean the moral issue of consulting to a pharmaceutical company I wouldn't share that you know I'd be much more inclined to – just give me the chance – really I'd love to – this hasn't come to anything yet – to have a chance to be inside that system and to try and understand it

As a researcher I think it is more tricky and this question of blind readings is the first time I have felt liberated from the feeling 'god its all very well to have had the research proposal approved but do they really know what they are letting me loose with – it's not actually going to work and when I had this suggestion of setting up various different contexts for blind reading that felt very liberating that there would be a possibility of getting a perspective and obviously it has to be married with my contextualising and going back to the same document to you know – working up some sort of document which has much more in it because I have a very different sense of when I read it the meeting the building the rest of the job you know

Don't know if that ....Trails off

A Sorry I feel a little bit confused because it seems as if J knows more about this than – I don't know. You've obviously got something written down about the process and the blind reading and the

K no..

A ok ...because I wasn't. yes. Is the process that you are going through then – it sounds like it is just taken from your notes so far. Over seven years and picking out some bits

K that's where it is at the moment - how to pick the best bits to get the best range of data and the most and approach to that data is really where I am at

A and are you going to be the person who is approaching the data

K yes

A and writing it up

K yes ....but not for the blind reading obviously. That's how I use my seminars. And colleagues and this seemed like an irresistible opportunity really to get people who I felt could engage you know with the material

M I thought. You know it is only a thought but there are issues of inside and outside because you just said you go inside this company

Conference organiser. Could you speak up a little bit?

M I wonder if there is an issue from inside and outside – one thing that made me think this is your comment and that they say they have now the problem that they have finished the work now and now they have to work across departments and I think also that there is some reality for a scientific person to be very cautious with the data because sometimes there are people who try and take your data. And so I think these issues ..

K that's very interesting and I think you bring up a very important point for me as a researcher if you've got all these documents and knowledge and knowledge behind the document what is the process of selection of documents is an interesting route in itself to keep live in the research, without quite going mad but some sort of process of analysing and understanding with support – I feel that I need a lot of sort of people who aren't as involved in it, sort of looking at it at various points. Thinking about why I might have chosen data within the potential data is not something to ignore is it? you know, unless you really are blind picking pieces of data then you are already in a process and the unconscious is at work isn't it? why did I choose this piece...

J Any last questions then could we please thank kay – its' been very interesting, very stimulating

<b>Panel Reading 4</b>
<b>Client G</b>
<b>1<sup>st</sup> May 2008</b>
<b>Reader: doctoral supervisor</b>

**Context of the reading:-** The following data was presented to my doctoral supervisor in a supervisory session. I recorded his comments in writing and typed them up after the session.

**Data description:** The data is an email exchange with manager JC at client organisation G, a company involved in airport construction as follows:-

**Data**

*Hi JC*

*I attach a proposal for your away day as discussed. The costs quoted are for one consultant working with one artist for the day.*

*However ABS consultant A and I have been seeking an opportunity to consult as a consultant pair and, with your permission, this away day could present us with an opportunity to do so. There would be no extra costs involved for Client organisation G.*

*Regarding timing - we would appreciate your response as soon as possible as time is tight.*

*I am in meetings now for the rest of the day but you will get me on the numbers below tomorrow morning. Or by email of course.*

*Best wishes*

*Kay Trainor*

**Proposal** 14<sup>th</sup> November 2005

**Proposal for Environmental Leadership Team Away Day on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2005 - For the attention of JC**

**Brief:-** To prepare and facilitate an away day for Client organisation G's environmental leadership team with the aim of helping the team clarify its purpose in relation to Client organisation G's vision of 'Responsible and profitable growth in transport infrastructure.'

To provide, as part of the day, a team building experience using the ABS method of consultant and creative artist working together.

**Proposal :-**

**Creative workshop:** - As the team does not meet together very often, and team building is an important part of the day's purpose, we propose starting the day with a creative workshop with one of the ABS artists who specialise in getting teams to work together effectively. By the end of the workshop the aim is that the leadership team will put together an ensemble performance piece. For this, a process based on creative movement or theatre techniques would work well or, addressing your request that an element of choice should be included, a workshop using both voice and percussion might be ideal. With the option of percussion as part of the workshop no one would feel obliged to sing. The 'take away' from this part of the day would be the experience of performing together and the insights this might lead to in the discussion.

**Discussion :-** Following the workshop the consultant will work with the team to draw out themes and reflect on the process of the creative experience and how it might have mirrored the way the team works together. We find that, when undertaken with a team from one organisation, workshops such as the one proposed often mirror the state of play of the team itself and enable the team to see challenges which they might not otherwise have seen so clearly. The consultant is then able to address these issues with the team.

**Your agenda :-** *In the second part of the day, and building on the morning experience, the ABS consultant will facilitate the team to address its OGSMT agenda. This part of the day will need to be prepared in tandem with you (or you and HH) to make sure that the process proposed addresses your needs in detail. The consultant will meet with you before the away day to ensure s/he is fully aware of your business issues and would work with your agenda for the afternoon.*

*As the purpose of the day is to develop vision, objectives and goals, we propose kick starting this process working with 'organisational pictures' where members are freed from the constraints of language to develop their vision in a more creative way.*

*The second element would focus on how your team communicates, with the expectation that our intervention would deepen the capacity of team members to communicate effectively with each other and with others in the wider context. Once some of the barriers to communication have been addressed we would focus on what blocks and what enables the vision to be followed and/or goals to be achieved.*

**Creative finale :-** *Before the day ends we propose a final session with our artist, revisiting the performance prepared in the morning and noting any changes in the way the team works together.*

**Preparation:-** *We've currently included a one and a half hour meeting for this purpose in costs.*

**Follow up:-** *Once the day is over we propose a similar meeting for the purpose of feedback and a review of the different themes which emerged during the work.*

**Venue :-** *We have done some research regarding venues. There is a studio available at the Laban centre in Greenwich – cost £1200 plus VAT. And RADA*

*have a large room (9.34 x 9.71m) available in Chenies Street W1 for £20 per hour plus VAT. Catering is bookable in either.*

**Cost estimate :-**

**Background**

- *We have given estimates for different components of the work - on the day costs, and preparation/follow up meetings. Please allow a 10% variable for extra costs which, if incurred, we will discuss with you beforehand.*
- *Costs are inclusive of preparation work ABS may do.*
- *Costs do not include venue hire or catering.*
- *If you would like us to arrange the venue and catering we are happy to do so for a one off administration fee of £200 to cover site visit and phone calls.*
- *All costs are exclusive of VAT*

**Costs**

- *On the day costs £3163*
- *Preparation/follow up meetings £577*
- *Total £3740*

**Response from JC two days later**

*Kay*

*Many thanks for getting this back to me within the time frame we agreed on Monday. I have been pondering on it since and have decided not to pursue this approach for this particular meeting. I am still very keen on the principle, however, and would definitely like to explore it for a future event.*

*The main reasons for deciding against it at this stage include my nervousness around using performance theatre with this particular audience. As I said at the meeting, it was the artistic method I was least at ease with. Secondly, I was keen on the idea we discussed at the meeting about building the "how" into the creation of the "what". For example, using the technique from the visual arts piece to inform the development of our purpose and vision. I can see value and*

*some real synergies in creating a piece of art together as a team, even better if this links back in some way to our purpose/vision. I think this is something we could still pursue for another event but I don't think I have time now to plan for this.*

*The bottom line is that I have lots of unanswered questions and not enough time now to shape this in a way I would be comfortable and it is too high risk for me as it stands!*

*Can I get back in touch in the new year? In the meantime, it would help if you could send me some of your consultant and artist CVs around working in this area. Many thanks again*

*JC*

### **Response to the above from colleague ABS consultant A**

*My first thoughts:*

*we maybe should have listened more carefully to her plea for low risk - she's afraid she will frighten off her team ? says something about her authority in this roel she hasn't been able to convince HH - is this because we have strayed into HH's territory of facilitation?*

*We are not proposing performance theater*

*She wants a sort of pick and mix (choosing her own artist & consultant) from the CVs - my sense here is that she would go for someone businessy rather than pschological but lets send them anyway (not sure about artists CVs)*

*Would like to have a conversation with her about the process (perhaps best with you in role)*

*suggest we get in touch in the new year*

*more later speak soon*

### **Reader's response**

He felt our needs as an organisation featured quite heavily

He also felt it sent an insecure message with all the detail

Noted that the data could be described as 'polished' and 'none polished' in terms of categorising it so far. – another category to think about

He found the proposal scary – might she be someone, like my supervisor, who needs warming up slowly? the proposal generates anxiety

He said he identified with the client

Eventually he came back interestingly to the sexual language which I had outlined to him in the prep for this supervision, commenting that I had ‘given her what she wanted’ in a paranoid schizoid sort of way instead of a ‘heads together’ sort of way i.e. sent the cvs – she got what she wanted and then she went. This is interesting

He also picked up on the client wanting to keep a secret with ABS and asked if this was often the case – it could be persecutory he said – to potential participants.

I undertook to record readings in future.

<b>Panel Reading 5</b>
<b>Client J</b>
<b>14<sup>th</sup> May 2008</b>
<b>Reader: professional practice supervisor</b>

**Context of the reading:-** The following data was presented to my professional practice supervisor in a supervision session, along with a copy of my research questions. I listened without comment, recorded his comments in writing and typed them up after the session. Towards the end of his feedback I asked a question, which I have also recorded.

**Data description:** The data excerpt is a document I put together for a mixture of purposes – for presentation at a professional practice workshop where my consultancy was being supervised, and for my own reference. Both parts were written following a first meeting with manager GT at client organisation J, a government department concerned with air transport safety. I attended this meeting with ABS consultant A. The first part, down to ‘*DATA CHANGE*’ was originally written for presentation of the case at the professional practice work discussion group. The second part was written for my own reference.

### **Data**

*GT attended a half day workshop run by ABS at the Soho Theatre at the beginning of November 2005. He contacted us again at the beginning of February 2006 wanting to explore how we could work together with the team he had now more or less put together at Client organisation J. He anticipated the rest of the team being in place and the work taking place mid April 2006. The current team work well together he said but he wanted to explore how they might work better together and explore each others preferences in the way they worked. I phoned him and arranged to meet him.*

*GT is the manager of a civil service team (currently 7) which advises government ministers on legislation regarding standards and safety in the air*

*traffic system. They have strong links with their European counterparts as European standards are key.*

*He has been in post for seven months and previously worked in the airline industry in a distribution role in a private company. There are 1700 people working at Client organisation J, 250 of whom work in air transport.*

*Structure – there are six groups run by six managers under the overall director of the air group, MG. CB is the director of the Air Technical and Professional group and under him are a series of divisional managers of which GT is one, running the Air Standards & Safety division.*

*There are five other divisions at his level.*

### ***First impressions***

*GT's PA sent two maps by email, which were confusing, showing Client organisation J in two nearby but different locations. In addition one map showed the over view of the area including tube stations but not the relevant street name. One showed the street names but no overview from tubes.*

*I thought the building was a bit downtrodden – not like (name of other government department) which is 'flash'. The entrance which looked like the main entrance was on the corner and labelled 'corner entrance'. I was told it was the wrong entrance and to go along to the main entrance or we'd have to walk miles inside the building. Worrying that now I would be late I made my way to the main entrance which proved to be just a few yards away tucked between pret a manger and costcutters.*

*In both entrances there were prominent displays about how safe the airways were.*

*Once in the meeting room with GT my first impressions were of a very kind man. He was poised over a tray with refreshments and announced that he was getting ready to 'play mother' which he did, making sure we had coffee or tea as well as water before the meeting started.*

**DATA CHANGE**

***GT, the team and the wider frame what he said***

he said it had taken a lot longer than he thought getting two teams together  
Under GT are the three 'team leaders' referred to above.

CC who is standardisation across Europe and has two temporary people  
working for him (recruiting)

KR – safety across Europe – she currently has no one in her team (recruiting)  
And AD who is safety advice manager and manages MR who is parliamentary  
questions and Angela (may be leaving) and being replaced or a third being  
recruited

There is also GG who is administrator and who GT really rates

And L and PA Freda

(notice in office) Procurement – every supplier has a price below which they  
cannot go – find it!

The incompetence cycle – which I take more seriously because I could get out  
of it in the meeting – it passed between us we noted afterwards but could  
definitely be resisted. This troublesome person (refers to MR) became me? GT  
must be questioning his competence to deal with this none team for which he  
has responsibility but not really authority (to cut dead wood) – the old guy cops  
it (refers to MR)?

Was around in first conversation (on the phone)

He had never talked to anyone about this problem before

GT background – pieced together afterwards – a distribution (?) role in X  
company (who ABS consultant D says make trains). In shock.

In the session he had done dance but felt attracted to the art group – working  
on each others easels. Little bit little boy lost about the experience for him until  
he realised it was a taster he said. We had to re sell the arts side. About the art  
he said he was a typical 'boxed' engineer. That he wouldn't want anything we  
did to be 'too silly'. We discussed the possibly consultancy approach to  
planning an away day – as above – and he felt more comfortable with this side  
of things – my impression it was then that he started talking about the problem  
person.

A mixture of experts (who can't be managed) and team players (who know  
nothing)

*Old timers who know the history of all the accidents and newer younger people MR – old guy – waiting for retirement, classical education, old style civil servant, victim of IT? one end of the clash of cultures going on – of which GT might be at other end. We think his responsibility is parliamentary questions though*

*The civil service is too big to be bothered about individuals so you can't influence but you won't be picked on (oh no?)*

*Certain freedom with the scale – he could do this (ABS intervention) with his team he said*

*Moving on (around discussion of troublesome individual) from notion of*

*No or slow feedback loops – no rewards – pat on back at most*

*If it is anything like distribution in the film industry (and he did mention the success of targets achieved, when you have got 'parts' to a venue in Europe) then it is tight team work to short deadlines, a sense of achievement and then a party. Eye of the storm in between the govt and the public – no risk allowed (unlike road safety) 24/7 pressure when there is an accident  
Insistence that his team is not 'broken'.*

### **Reader's response**

easy going until 'procurement' then had to work a bit harder.

incompetence cycle...meeting...took a while. I assume you mean projection of incompetence, taking it to mean that. Incompetence from client to consultant and then back.

He comes across as either 'feminine man' playing mother, nurturing, then becomes this little boy lost. Nothing too silly tied in with little boy lost.

Not quite sure why the film industry came in, what the parallels were unless it occurred to you.

Something significant about the two maps.

Confused about why he wanted to engage ABS whether it was really a therapy for himself disguised as an organisational intervention.

Research questions...

It's possible he might be looking for some sort of aesthetic harmony by working with artists. Organisation is chaotic. ABS could provide an external objective correlate. Yes. Some sort of aesthetic whole which

would somehow apply to his organisation. Draw a picture which made sense rather than the images which don't make sense. Literal and metaphorical maps. Yeah I think there is quite a lot of projection going on in the theme of troublesome individual. Is it MR? Is it GT? Is it you?

Its almost as if (non sequitur) he needs some external feedback. No rewards. Pat on the back - as if he wants you and/or ABS to offer some sort of validation.

Research question 2. By being more right brain is he more open to artistic interventions, though he describes himself as a 'boxed in' engineer. Obviously trying to break out of that box.

Paragraph I don't understand about I think MR as a problem person. Implicit in some of the notes ....don't understand why he is such a problem person.

The only other thing is that an ABS intervention might be a bit of a displacement activity - not necessarily unhelpful. In a way it might end up addressing the problem you are trying to avoid. Something to hope that ABS intervention would give a sort of external map

At this point I asked the following question to JJ.

What do you think happened next?

He thought GT not sufficiently together and looking for a disguised therapy so doubted we would have got project

<b>Panel Reading 6</b>
<b>Client D</b>
<b>15<sup>th</sup> May 2008</b>
<b>Reader: doctoral student ST</b>

**Context of the reading:-** The following data was presented to a doctoral student, along with a copy of my research questions. I listened without comment, recorded his comments in writing and typed them up after the session. Towards the end of his feedback I asked a question, which I have also recorded.

**Data description:** The data excerpt is a document consisting of a mixture of emails, and notes I wrote for my own reference documenting initial contact with different members of client organisation D, a child and adolescent mental health team. The excerpt ends with a proposal for the work, sent by email.

### **Data**

*Email from ABS consultant A some time early in 04*

*Title of email:- Manager MC*

*Quick notes:*

*Facilitator required for away day for approx 30 people. Child & Adolescent Mental Health service Previous issue has been the merging of 2 (or 3?) teams, now they operate a unified service for the whole borough.*

*Current issue: Burnout or how to safeguard against it. Their referral rate has risen from 400 pa to 1300 and although staffing has increased this is nowhere near at the level required to provide a quality service. They therefore have to make priorities.*

*MC and another staff member are looking for facilitators. He is keen on using the Tavi, she is open to something a bit different and I think had the idea that this would be a bit of a treat for them. We didn't talk money (sorry, forgot...why?). She took the ABS is ... doc. It is probably pitched quite well for them.*

*She will get back to me asap*

*ABS consultant A*

*Didn't see above before speaking to her 16<sup>th</sup> Sep 04*

*Same scenario but interestingly she pretty much quickly brought up money and I said approx 3000 but could be more with more artists – I tried to say it would depend and I wish I'd said I was sure we could work something out*

*Anyway she's gone to check with manager before I get someone to phone her november 30<sup>th</sup> is the date*

*30 people same history*

*this time about consolidating and team building*

*feelings. Very pre occupied with what was my role – gatekeeper or consultant –*

*I want that guy to work with us to do sales*

*so she phoned bck next day and wants to go to next stage – manager didn't balk too much.! At £3000*

*phoned Friday 17<sup>th</sup> but she is not in today*

*Friday conversation with ABS consultant D – modest – wants me to come with him. Glad we've asked him then worried he won't have date. Worried about representing ABS. Suddenly thought he knows nothing about the health service (neither do I – good – but it may make him nervous) how I left it – I will phone MC then email ABS consultant D with outcome – I will aim for him phoning her then deciding next step ie it might be we go together or he goes alone. he likes the idea of having the dynamic in the room from the beginning like at Company X but it could be nerves.*

*Expensive to send two each time but this is not setting a precedent. So we could. ABS consultant A phoned him about something else – didn't mention the job – good, but odd to phone.*

*Shit lost rest of notes*

*Spoke (in a panic) to MC Monday then contacted ABS consultant D as follows*

*Hi ABS consultant D*

*Just spoken to MC. Very brief.*

*I told her you would be doing the work and that she should expect a call from you to set up a meeting. If you want me to come with you maybe we should synchronize our diaries before you speak to her. She's on (phone number) ok?*

*Kay*

*It is now Wednesday and despite text to ABS consultant D yesterday no word  
Just left message on mobile asking him to contact me*

*19<sup>th</sup> oct – ABS consultant D saw MC and her team of 5 (one was missing who should have been there) 15<sup>th</sup> oct – he saw them alone because it was an hour after I'd discovered (refers to personal difficulty) and I was in a state so I told him and we decided it was ok that he went alone*

*I have notes in the book about this but further thoughts walking*

*The away day has no purpose – no identified issues - tricky*

*Maybe the purpose should be to see if there is anything – build an agenda by the end (sets us up for consultation as well)*

*Work with art in morning – reflection in the afternoon? Nice to finish with art though*

*Build in feedback meeting*

*Definitely need two consultants – all the different groups*

*If ABS consultant D did a good selling meeting rather than consultative – build in more reflection???*

*He came away saying he'd had to get them to stop thinking 'which artist?' and in a way I had to stop him –*

*I've recorded – get them to commit to one artist/artform*

*Hi L*

*Could you pass this on to MC and the team? Thanks*

*Dear MC*

*Following your meeting with ABS consultant D last week we're writing with our proposal for your team day for approximately thirty three people, on Tuesday*

*30th November - from 10am to 4pm.*

*We understand that what you hope to get out of the day is to take stock and celebrate the success of the team in coming through recent challenges, and to prepare yourselves as a complete team for your upcoming challenges. With that overall purpose you also want to ensure that every member of the team has room to bring their own needs and that the activity in the day reflects something of the difference that you value both inside the team and in your client group. You also want something that creates a rich experience, ideally in a way that is not simply verbal.*

*Considering these objectives, we propose working with our specialist in African rhythm and voice – ABS artist D. In order to ensure proper attention to the needs of all individuals, this requires working with two consultants - and we propose that these be ABS consultant D and myself.*

*ABS artist D will arrange and run the rhythm and voice component with you throughout the day which I am sure you will find inspirational. ABS consultant D and I will work in partnership with ABS artist D, helping participants to reflect on the process they are going through, making links to the organisation and drawing out issues relevant to the way in which people work together in groups and teams as these opportunities emerge during the creative work.*

*The outline costs I initially discussed with you were based on one consultant and one artist as you know. We understand from discussions that your budget is fairly tight however and would like to offer a discounted price which we hope will keep the costs affordable for you, and viable for us. The cost, inclusive of all preparation work, would be £3,355 - a reduction of 25% on our usual costs. And, to confirm, the workshop would take place in a venue for which you would make the arrangements. In terms of dimensions, the bigger the better but there would ideally be room for thirty six people (including facilitators) to move around, as well as sitting in one or more circles. We will not need tables in the room.*

*Do let me know if these proposals are acceptable. We look forward to working with you.*

### **Reader's response**

The word which strikes is 'treat' and we don't talk money and my thinking was the complete polarity - an overwhelmed organisation want to treat staff. Even the email at the end didn't mention about stresses. Feels very very positive. Avoidance. The team want to get away from pain by having a treat like going to the sweetshop. Pre occupied with artists which are what type of artist? Exciting. What is the cherry on the top? What's the exciting part of this? Not consultative part.

Interesting money wasn't talked about in the first session. Something seductive in the offer. The ABS offer. On the one part it offers a treat then something much harder and in touch with reality, but this didn't come across. It was very much the artistic side of things. Why do organisations approach ABS? Escapism? Holiday while at work. Reparation. Guilt of managers giving staff a treat. Play therapeutic. Something a bit different, quirky. Play is reparative. Mental health organisation. Guess they have lots of ideas about mental health. Consultation is how they would think about their own work with their clients. This - ABS - is something different - a model, an approach that would seem very different. Is it too different? Don't get a sense of where they are coming from. The away day has no purpose.

I work in a mental health team - am aware of the targets. Perhaps having no purpose is a way to emerge from the day to day process of clients. Had the team lost its purpose in that it could find no purpose for the day?

I'll go through the questions now. Mutual selection - something a bit different wanted by the buying company in terms of ABS. It was not expertise in mental health, neither consultant had expertise in mental health. Does the organisation have to buy both sides. Have a good time, holiday at work. Time out. Reparation. Sounds like they weren't quite sure what they were getting. What they were getting with the consultants felt like a bit of a mystery to them though

they had identified the tavi. The tavi is a bit different, a bit of a dance going on in between the client and organisation and the consultants within it as well. I wonder about different groups in the staff team but also in the consulting groups. The other associates.

Is right brain and left brain and how professionals use more and more - how they engage with clients bringing their intellect to try and understand quite complex things like madness and that ABS offers something different which may stop them going to right side of their brain in terms of stress. By using other parts of their brain functioning a certain relief involved in that. Panksepp's stuff about neuroscience and probably the bit they do want is the consultancy but in a way which makes it different from what they offer clients - a different model - something a bit adolescent about it in terms of what may be required. something a bit exciting about play time.

At this point I asked the following question to ST.

What do you think happened next?

Summary of ST's response.

What happened next? Three hypotheses. They said no, balked at the price. Yes but no consulting. Maybe they went ahead but not enough info here. He thought as the dates were included it probably went ahead.

<b>Panel Reading 7</b>
<b>Client E</b>
<b>22<sup>nd</sup> May 2008</b>
<b>Readers: Social work doctoral seminar group including my doctoral supervisor who was one of two supervisors running the seminar.</b>

**Context of the reading:-** The following data was presented, along with a copy of my research questions, and the 'Notes' in bold at the beginning of the data, to a seminar group of three students studying for professional doctorates in social work. My own supervisor, SB, who had recommended the group, was present, along with another supervisor, MR, and myself. I presented the data and recorded the dialogue which ensued, into which I was drawn quite often (KT). I then transcribed this, below.

**Data description:** The data excerpt is an email exchange between me and KN, a partner in a large financial consultancy firm, Client organisation E. The emails are part of a planning process for an intervention we were asked to provide as part of a conference of the firm's partners in Portugal. 'Soho Theatre' refers to a try out morning at the Soho Theatre organised by ABS for potential clients, which N, from this company, attended but not KN

**Data:**

*Hi KN*

*I am getting back to you following further planning at our end, as agreed. This message is also attached as a document for better printing if you prefer.*

*It took us a while to re jig our thoughts from the larger proposal involving all 400+ partners, to the more contained experience we are now planning, with up to 120.*

*Whenever we use performance as part of an ABS intervention, the 'audience' is made up of fellow participants (like at the Soho theatre and as it would have been in 'Plan A' for the conference) who also get to show and tell their work. It makes for a very focused and contained situation where everyone is 'in the*

*same boat', knows the score, and is taking a similar level of risk. Performing to a large group who have not been involved in the experience would set up an inappropriate difference and detract from the experience of those taking part. For this reason we think it is crucial to include the 'show and tell/performance' aspect of the work in the afternoon session, so that the audience is made up of fellow participants.*

*After the performances we propose to prepare those who have taken part for 're entry' into the conference, and anticipate that they may come up with fruitful ways of sharing their experience with the wider group which doesn't involve the potential exposure of an open public performance to a large group, the majority of whom have not taken part in the afternoon.*

*In terms of the afternoon session, including the 'Show and Tell' slot, we now need to work with participants till 5.15pm. Difficult to get it much below this. Would that be ok? I've included a proposed running order below.*

*Proposed time-tabling and description of sessions.*

*14.00 Participants meet ABS artists and consultants in Neptuna for a prompt  
2.15pm start*

*14.15 Introduction to the ABS method and what participants can hope to achieve through the application of the consultancy/creative arts mix during the afternoon.*

*Selection of equal sized groups.*

*14.25 Participants move to their workshop rooms led by artist consultant pairs*

*14.30 Consultants lay ground work for creative exploration by asking questions which focus individuals on their personal experience of the morning conference and then which encourage them to surface - quite quickly - what they perceive to be the predominant issues and challenges they face in their own work at the moment. Each consultant will approach this differently but each will encourage*

*participants to 'think behind' their initial answers so that a deeper understanding begins to emerge.*

*14.40 Creative workshops. Consultants hand over to the artists. Artists lead the workshops and consultants consult to the process. Each consultant/artist pair will plan the way they wish to handle the balance between reflection and art work but each group is likely to finish with a short consultative session designed to make the links between what has emerged through the art work and the organisational pre occupations at the start of the session.*

*On a practical note can we request that cold refreshments (or coffee in flasks) are in place in each room from 2pm so that each group can best plan and judge the moment for the break in this part of the session rather than having to wait for the arrival of refreshments, which might interrupt the flow.*

*16.10 Participants return to Neptuna for 'Show and Tell'*

*16.15 Show and Tell. Each group will perform or exhibit their work to the other five assembled groups. Each group will have been asked to select someone to feedback on behalf of the group. The groups will have considered such questions as 'What does your group want to say about the experience and its relevance to organisational life at Client organisation E? And - What do participants think they might do differently at work after their experience?'*

*17.10 Crossing the boundary. The discussions and performances over, the group will be encouraged to think about how the rest of the day might go having had the individual and collective experience they have had. How is it going to be back in the conference? What will they share? How?*

*17.15 Ends*

*Regarding Thursday evening - and the invitation to attend your welcome buffet - we also had some thoughts. We understand the intention in inviting us but, on reflection, think that having us at the buffet could increase anxiety, not the*

*reverse. I suppose you could also call it 'keeping your powder dry.' The more people know about the experience in advance the less powerful it will be. However if you would like ABS consultant A and I to come and meet with the organising team or to meet members of the executive committee or X let us know and we will make ourselves available.*

*I think that's it for the moment. Could you get back to me before Thursday (next planning meeting here) if you have any feedback or further thoughts. I'll liase with C re practicalities Thursday p.m. otherwise*

*In due course would it be possible to have a copy of the revised conference agenda to share with our consultants? Thanks KN. Hope your plans are going well.*

*Hi Kay - thanks for this.*

*I think we should discuss, as I don't want / won't be permitted an 'enforced' session of this length. I guess my key question on timing is why the time required for the group work is now so much longer than an hour and what would be required to bring this back in. I completely agree that some form of 'show and tell' is required - it would be helpful also to understand why you've concluded this is only possible in a single group.*

*I'm not sure from your note whether you're saying that performance in the evening should not be an option open to groups or just that it carries 'risk' - it would be helpful to understand this also.*

*Re dinner - whatever you'd rather do is fine, your choice. The nature of our audience is that they will want the conversation with someone, so we'll still need to agree what you'd like the party line to be. I agree that in any event we should meet up on site and introduce you to some of our key people. If you're planning an on site briefing of your team, it would be great to come along and meet them. Does this mean you don't think participants should be given any info in their registration packs? I need to finalise these on Friday.*

*And finally for now, could you let me know how the 'clothing request' is to be resolved - I need to be specific with my sponsors.*

*Many thanks. I will try to call you today, failing which I am on a team challenge*

*doing something useful (!) in a wood near Wormwood Scrubs all day tomorrow and will be able to take a breather and ring you then.*

*Rgds, KN*

### **Readers' responses**

L Two bits – I was thinking about what D just said about can't get used to the language. Because you've got quite a bit of what seems like shorthand in terms of things like in the same boat. Hmm... 'show and tell' which sound like they were phrases which would be accepted shorthand in the communication.

I was struck by that alongside just the scale of having to engage with an audience..how complex the task is to try and meet these peoples' needs appeared to be. I was struck by phrases like at the end the thing about the 'clothing request'. What the hell is that? And your exclamation mark after 'doing something useful' as to whether it is quite hard to know what change you effect or I guess, what people are looking for.

MR I think it might be quite helpful if people did ask a few questions. just have a bit of clarification. We almost need a kind of glossary. Like what is the clothing requirement? some of it is s very condensed summary of a lot of things , in the sense that you and the people you are talking to know what you are talking about. The reader doesn't know what you are on about. There is no reason why we should. Where people aren't sure about what something refers to why don't you just tell them? So that we can fill it out a little bit? Like that. Like what is the 'clothing request'?

KT Well, not to be deliberately obtuse, but I have found that it's been possible for people to read the data without knowing all that detail ..and I get lost in ...something happens to the data...

L I guess one of the difficulties about sharing data is that in a way when you are making notes to yourself – if that is the source of the data – its not always transparent to others. So I guess that is partly what we are experiencing. I guess some of the questions I had and you can choose whether you answer

these or not - I was interested in the first thing about four hundred plus partners and now planning to do a more 'contained' experience, to be a planned 'hundred and twenty' and I was interested in how that process happened because it seemed to relate to (research) questions two and three about what were they hoping for. Their response to the intervention and what the dynamics of that were. They were the sorts of questions I had.

SB I mean it's quite an interesting word to use isn't it? You write it is a more contained experience which maybe actually betrays something of your feelings which are crikey thank god it's not four hundred. Or maybe it also has another kind of possibility which seems to come up in the material which is – ok you said you were going to give us 400 now it is only 120. This operation is being cut. It's a kind of ambiguous communication. The word 'contained' means quite a lot to us. As it were. As a concept.

L But how far that tells you – I mean in a way about some of the task is about on the one hand you began by using the word to play – is that part of what they are looking for? To have a playful experience which then is quite anxiety provoking or do they, is part of the task to kind of manage some of that so that it becomes that they can play in a safe way?

B I suppose another fantasy about er the four hundred numbers is what happened to the other two hundred and eighty? Have they gone off to do this team challenge? You know. Is that the kind of thing they do?

SB Wormwood scrubs

B Is that the kind of thing they do because one of your questions is what sort of organisations approach you so there is a group of them who are going off to do this team challenge. So I wondered whether - would they be part of this? Are they doing that as a separate level of staff who go and do that? You get a different level of staff or ...

KT I suppose one container here is that I have set up the reading of this data in a particular way with my supervisors and I am feeling pulled to answer questions but I think there will be some value in learning if I don't. I may alter it. but I am making the comment because you know I don't want to hold unduly to a particular format

SB We've all got different takes on this haven't we? It may be worth going with it for a bit as long as we then do leave ourselves time to think about some of the methodological issues involved. That's what the seminar is about really. It's partly about the way the data is set up – it is also partly about the data. We're not used to looking at emails as data for a start. And you do have a particular model in mind which comes from discussions with WH (my second supervisor) and myself from a particular form of process consultancy. The teaching model inhibits questions for the first period. It doesn't mean anyone is right or wrong.

L I was just wondering if the same thing happens with the client in a way because I mean the thing about emails is you bang them out half the time without ..you ...somehow don't re read them in the same way that you might re read a letter. So often they are kind of – this is more free association but I guess my thought was whether or not that was also part of what happens between two quite different organisations that's accustomed to doing this work and an organisation that is wanting to dip its toe in the water. I guess it would be interesting to look at the other bit of this data which would be the approach from the company. Because there is a trail isn't there for each client there must be a trail of data

SB Hmm

L Of which this would be one part. And presumably whether or not...some of your shorthand may be between or whether – is that shorthand between you and your colleagues the other consultants or is it a shorthand that has become established between you and the client as some kind of form of rapport or shared understanding?

SB It's quite interesting what we have got into in a way because my reading of will you let me know how the clothing question is to be resolved is 'do you ever answer questions? you know – is there ever anything you answer with a straight, that you can give me a straight answer to that actually is along the lines of what I have said that I want and so that, you know, saying 'tell me the answer to something'. So it's really quite interesting that we have got into that. And also the ending really made me laugh you know. I am away doing 'something useful' – exclamation mark – rather than spending any more ...rather than getting into email exchanges with you kay and she is at wormwood scrubs which is not exactly everyone's idea of an interesting venue as well as taking the other two hundred and eighty people, or two thousand eight hundred toes – it's quite - there is something that kind of seeps out – we've found this before. Something seeps out of this material in a funny kind of way.

C I suppose I found myself wondering if you are actually offering what the client wants in a sense. You cut the numbers down, you extended the length of time of the sessions and it doesn't sound like that is something they are terribly keen on – certainly not to explore it further... . there are things they don't quite understand – the rational behind that needs to be explored further. .

L I don't know if this ...I work with children's charities and about once a year we get big banks that have this way of holding people together which is that they go out for a day and do something useful in the community and the amount you know – people like Goldman Sachs – I mean you learn a bit about what their lives are like. But the amount of effort somebody actually puts in in terms of getting them all together. And they all come – they arrive with t shirts which make them a team for the day. And it kind of feels like what they are doing for us is incidental – it does give them permission to play or to come and do something they are not necessarily that good at. But that involves the most amazing detail about things that seem a little strange.

C The choice of the word 'enforced sessions' seems interesting to me.

SB Glad you picked that up C

C You were just waiting there were you SB

L I guess in that communication – there is loads of conflict there isn't there?

SB My thought's around – well, what happens next? And there is a terrific sense of urgency – I've got to give information to people and I don't know what is going to happen. You're not giving me what I wanted. We've got to get these packs out – we don't even know what clothes we are supposed to wear. And oh I'm doing this work tomorrow so...but also then he is saying if I have got time to phone you I might phone you, if I have got a moment for a breather. I am speculating around the idea that he doesn't phone, that a silence descends. Wondering if it actually took place.

Long silence

MR The thing I am slightly puzzled by actually is the elision between what might be thought of as the implicit method that is disclosed in the memo which involves to some degree keeping everybody in the dark in order that the event itself will have the maximum impact and keeping us in the dark as if we were part of the project whereas we are actually trying to do research on the project. So I am quite puzzled about why it would be a good idea not to be as explicit as possible. In making everything as explicit as possible. And if it is part of the strategy of consultancy that it is not helpful to do that – I take that from the idea of we don't want to have a meeting beforehand...we don't want everybody to find out about the experience itself – now there might be good reasons for that in research terms but it is the opposite of what one might normally expect which is to say here we have a highly indexical communication. What I mean by indexical is that a small number of words stand for quite a lot of shared assumptions – some of which are genuinely shared between you and the particular people you are involved in this particular negotiation with - obviously some of them they might not know about – so surely – I would have imagined

that one of the things that one might need to do in the context of the research to make x as explicit as possible , especially since the data you have got requires to be spelt out because of the way it has been constructed as – either for reasons of practicality – no one has got much time – need to get on with the job – or for reasons of strategy – we don't want to spell everything out because we want the event to have a life of its own – it's not spelt out so that's just a question about at what point making explicit, i.e. making manifest what is later going to take place – that's what I was puzzling about.

SB I think you probably should start to go down that route if that's ok. I think one of the things we have been kind of grappling with really is how to work with material that you know – I mean you know what comes before and after so how do you get yourself back from that a bit and see what other people might make of it. is just a kind of thought . I mean I thought, particularly before this session, that that is how this kind of reflection stuff for want of a better phrase – you know, is so strong. And it doesn't seem so strong.

MR What do you mean reflection stuff?

SB Well you know that we are somehow being subjected to the same process as the consultee and that actually more of the comments are in sympathy with the consultee in this instance. You're not going to tell us what we are going to do and indeed in all the specific detail around the clothing request. They must have been pretty fed up is my hypothesis – I don't know about anyone else's certainly in this specific example. What you say MR is entirely right that what has happened here is well, crikey, we need to know a bit more. You need a bit of distance from the data so then to come to a view of what sort of data is this. It might be that this is a highly indexical piece of data which might mean something to the person who has written it but not much, that there is too much space to conjecture.

MR There is just another theoretical point that I might make out of the subject of indexicality. The idea of indexicality arises from the methodological school whose principle contribution to the social sciences was to demonstrate that the

business of performing every day life is full of,, and that spleen out what the taken for granted assumptions are is often quite interesting and though a lot of the ethno methodological studies unpacking the taken for granted assumptions of every day life don't have any ...are quite trivial, some of them aren't. I.e. some of them do disclose routines that when they are made manifest make you realise what is actually going on. I think myself that part of the logic of this kind of investigation – quite a lot is potentially gained by trying to unpack what is taken for granted in this process, by everybody. I mean what do people think they are doing? And spelling out and getting beneath the kind of rhetoric of what they think they are doing into what they are actually doing. I am quite struck by the question of what you might call manifest and latent functions of this. What are the latent functions of this activity? You have told us about one latent function in your introduction – I work with artists and one of the good things about this is that it provides artists with work – I agree with that. It is a good thing. I know that actors and artists – they have a bloody hard life. So if somebody can find a way of finding them work that will be a good thing for my book as it were so you might think that that is one of the things you know. hmmm ...so there is a latent function on the production side – your loyalty to a community of artists and finding a way in which they can work in a context where there is some kind of interest and reward, when often they are faced with a very stark choice between neither interest or reward etc but the other interesting question is what is the latent function for this organisation? L raised that when she described organisations that come and do stuff and she feels that what they are doing is only tangentially related to what they think they are doing. They are coming to help working with the children – actually they are not very good at working with the children so they are not really doing that - they are doing something else. Well then what are they doing? And why are they doing it? So there is a question about what these organisations are doing in the first place in creating these types of exercises, these kind of days. And what kind of organisation is it that feels the need to do that? And why? So it seems to me there is an underlying really interesting question about what that is which is to do with I suppose – what are the deficits in their every day life as organisations or as groups of people which they feel activities like this fulfil? I mean you could say if you were a charity department of a big company then the

deficit is 'we are too selfish' and therefore we will have some people who are giving money to you know, the disabled and we will create a structure and that will be seen to be done so we don't have to feel so bad about ourselves and we gain a bit of good repute and recognition – if we give away some of our money to helping people. That's one of the reasons why companies have charitable functions. A good thing but you can see it as relating to the fact that their primary mission drives them down roads that they would rather wish they weren't going in. Now you aren't talking about a charitable organisation you are talking about an organisation whose members from time to time – time being scarce – and there's a lot of bargaining about how much time there is going to be – etc etc but nevertheless there is this commitment to do some work of a creative unquote kind with artists and so the underlying – why on earth – what do they get out of it? Or think they get out of it? And they might be different things – they might think they get something out of it which is different from what they do get out of it. They might get something out of it anyway – all those questions about what they get out of it... I regard it all as quite beneath the surface in terms of the rhetoric of your consultancy world. I think there is a considerable kind of uncertainty about whatever people describe as the purposes and what the latent purposes are which isn't to say that there aren't latent purposes which aren't served but I don't they are all that easily described in terms of what people say they are doing

KT Yes and interesting that all that has come out of you looking at data from which you felt very deprived of, you know. First time I have felt the dynamic in the room – this sized group – without shouting etc. Size and context seems important.

MR When I was asking questions I wasn't asking for theoretical explanations I was only asking for details. What is this? What is that? What is the other? So I wasn't wanting to change the level of the discussion.

KT It's not from deep in me not answering questions. And so I am slightly nervous of holding it because I can hear SB and WH going 'Just don't answer any questions. See what happens.' And it has been very interesting.

MR You see that raises another whole question. Which I will raise. How does the logic of not answering questions in the context of group relations, which is somewhere hovering on the horizon, then create a set of emotional expectations blah blah from which things can be learnt -from the experience of not knowing, is one of the logics of that. There is another possible explanation for that - not answering questions to these people, in that there is an element of conning in the whole process, that people are being offered something. They are not to know what it is because if they did know what it was they wouldn't necessarily want it. So you create a kind of set of expectations and uncertainties – some kind of experience happens in that kind of context. People go away disturbed, interested, etc etc and the whole thing is that it is not spelled out because if it were spelled out people might, for reasons which are not altogether satisfactory, might in other words enable a collective fantasy on all sides, that we are doing something which can't be explained, say that it is too ineffable ...acquires a slightly religious kind of aura ....can't spell it out because you destroy the mystery. So we are dealing with ritual and the evocation of emotion and feeling and the essence of that process is that it does remain implicit and not talked about. So that is another hypothesis about what is going on.

KT I thought you meant methodologically here in terms of not answering your questions

MR No no. All that's going on there is a bit of a spillover – a bit of a genre switch between the modalities of work and the way the research has been exposed to the modalities of the work, which might be instructive as a learning exercise. It might just be a mix up.

SB It does in fact spill over and mix up in this particular instance – but not in other ones – and it may be the size of the group and it may be....There are different ways of going about this intellectually. Take an ethno point of view as we did or actually think of applying a bnim approach where you set off and, to use Tom Waingraph's phrase you 'free associate as wildly as you can' and

therefore generate as many hypotheses as you can and then you test them by checking if they turn up later in the material. So this is predicated on that there will be more material. There will be answers to questions and it might entirely justify some hypotheses or exclude others. And that's a reasonable kind of intellectual approach to take with them.

(follows a discussion about 'play' which was difficult to hear. MR cuts in.)

MR V was going to say something

V I was just thinking about all this wanting more information and feeling a little bit irritated that I wasn't getting more information and trying to understand what was happening here. And I wonder to what extent this KN felt that, because she hadn't been part of your original taster session. And so you know, someone has a taster session – you are told about something and then you start out based on someone else's experience, not having full understanding of what is going to happen. And you know when I first read it it didn't strike me but as I re read it I thought yes there is a slight irritation in that response from KN.

L But that leaves me wondering about two things. One is that during that conversation it drew me back to this – a part of the paragraph where it says 'It makes for a very focused and contained situation where everyone is in the same boat, knows the score and is taking a similar level of risk'. My thought was - is that what the company are looking for? Are they looking to have an experience where people get evened out and take some level of risk? And does that mean they are the issues in their business? About the difference between people and something about risk and exposure?

L How hard it must be this notion of a taster session and in a sense how hard it is to contain that experience without it spilling out into everything. You have a taster session to give people a sense of what you might do and then you have to contain it and really protect it in order for it to be a defined experience rather than it flowing into everything else.

V       Where you say each group will perform or exhibit their work to the other ...you know each group will have had some understanding about working together so I am wondering are they going to talk about work here? And are you expecting each of those twenty people in each group to be coming from similar problems, you know, similar kind of issues ...for me those are the questions you know. What exactly are you going to do? How are you going to do this? You are getting twenty people to talk about certain things and then getting the twenty people to choose someone to then tell the bigger group what they have done. But twenty people....? in no matter how large an organisation. Will you be able to get twenty people with similar issues because ....

L       The 'show and tell' – it just dawned on me. I would think that is most commonly used about games that children play around sexual exploration which is kind of risky stuff – is it safe – what is going on? How exposed are people?

SB      My association is primary school.

MR      What is the underlying conceptual theory about what this experience is going to give to this organisation, that it doesn't normally have? I mean one hypothesis is that this is an organisation whose individuals are all into individualism and it's rather difficult to retain a sense of the organisation, the whole entity at all because people are so privatised that therefore you have to create some kind of experience to actually make people feel together. And also that it might be rather ruled by divisions and hierarchy and therefore you want to find a way to break down some of these kind of boundaries and therefore you create an experience in which people are just thrown together in some sort of emotional intensity. So they come to feel more like the together. That's one hypothesis of what is going on. You might think that an organisation that is organised as an organisation of partners, which places quite a lot of emphasis on people being, as it were, self financing, self organising, which has lots of problems when you do that in terms of people not caring about the organisation but only caring about themselves - is this process meant to create a stronger sense of group exposure and group identification? That could be a version of

what their problem might be. I do think that in the course of trying to figure out what this consultancy is doing, how an organisation defines its deficits is interesting. No kind of continuing professional development that you can imagine could be less instrumental than this. Cf university demanding that everyone be trained in health and safety, running boards and chairing committees – our university has the most instrumental notions of a delinquent staff who don't follow the rules and if we don't follow the rules we'll get murdered by quality assurance etc. You couldn't be further away from that in this kind of – you are not interested in the rules you are interested in creating an anarchic free space. Why? That's the question. Why do universities and schools obsess themselves with rule following and your organisation wants to create a space in which people are going to be free of rules. There are questions about why an organisation chooses this rather than something else. Very very interesting.

KT What do you think happened next?

MR This is a particular kind of communication between you and the other organisation at the interface. If you looked at a lot of these you would discover a series of common factors, one of which is bargaining because there is bargaining going on ..plainly the constant comparative method will tell you quite a lot when you look at ten of these. And you can see the similarities and differences. It isn't a free text - it is actually a highly structured text, in that it is very elliptical and has several things built into it, like get the bloody day arranged, make sure it happens, make sure people are there at the right time. Make sure there is an agenda which both sides understand. It is actually quite an instrumental document, even though produced...I mean it doesn't look like a legal contract. But it is actually a negotiating document. It is not like a record of what happened at one of the sessions which is a different kind of document. If you were to record that it would be a different kind of text.

SB I have a strong feeling that they pulled out of the consultancy then.

KT I would be interested in what happened next.

D I was wondering if they were persuaded. They had quite a clear notion .  
But 'I won't be permitted' is also quite a strong statement and I wondered who is  
it who is not doing the permitting. And how much influence do they have?

SB We need some answers KT

KT We did do the work. with about forty partners. In a couple of hours in the  
afternoon. They made us do it outside. Mutual pressure continued to the very  
last moment. And the clothing was just that they don't wear shorts in this  
country.

MR. Very interesting how the pairing down of the offer to the minimal leaves  
the artists in the same position as they are often in in the wider world which is  
that there aren't enough audiences - curiously reproduced here.

V So it wasn't enforced in the end.

KT It wasn't enforced.

V From what you are saying it wasn't enforced.

KT There were other ways of it not being enforced. I was laughing – they  
went to play golf. We had mainly women.

? So the forty were mostly women?

KT Not exclusively.

V But that is what I meant – in the end it wasn't an enforced session.

SB Did your fee go down?

KT No.

SB So the artists ...

MR. All this goes to show that if you treat this as data such as grounded theorists analyse – if you imagine writing, as it were, a whole series of memos arising from the data, rather interesting themes aren't there? Women not men. Playing golf. The bargaining process. The situation of the artists and how they feel about it. You could amplify this very slender bit of text into quite an interesting window into this thing although you would have to supplement it I think by what actually happened at the event, what everybody thought.

KT One of the workshops we did was life drawing and the stress of everything seemed to get focused on this when they realised. Then the artist got stuck in, with his professional hat on, .....they argued very powerfully – press – belly dancers. So we were off on all sorts of ...

SB Show and tell.

L Am I right in thinking if this went ahead it would be a one off? It wouldn't be repeat business

KT Oh yes.

MR You mention that it was only women who came but it is interesting then if the women who came then define it as something those bloody men won't do? Too busy doing their macho stuff you know - strutting round the golf course. We're interested in creativity and feelings. And you can imagine that becoming part of a structure of feeling.

KT There were men

MR Yes but you can imagine that the men who came might be those who would rather talk to people than walk around a boring golf course.

KT (explains the proportions)

MR Creating some kind of emotional intensity is part of what you are on about because you do say you don't want to tell everybody about it before you do it (thinking group relations here). Which is about creating and experience.

SB I was wondering if that was a general feature of your work that you go for a flat structure? Or is it geared to this particular ..

KT This was early on.

SB It is a pre conception about how you do the work though because consultancy doesn't have to say 'well never mind your hierarchies' .

KT (explains roots of this from taster sessions and that she knows this would probably not have evolved inside an organisation)

MR The other concept which is interesting about ritual as a generator of emotion is the Victor Turner stuff about linearity, about the way societies create heightened moments of rites of passage and all the rest. In other words that in order for change to take place people have to be shaken out of their every day way of thinking. Inner sanctum , loud music, feelings evoked, Nuremberg rally. I myself think the arts share that kind of notion. Go into a concert hall and everyone gets quiet and the lights go down – that would be part of the – I wouldn't call it ideology but the working assumptions of a group of artists who like to do things which are going to make a difference. We have to create an aura of some kind. Have we reproduced it here? We have to create an aura because mere explanation doesn't enable us to think properly.

I just think that might be part of the core underlying assumptions of work that artists do.

L Presumably those dynamics would be internal to your company in terms of if you combine consultancy with artists, presumably those are in your partnerships and everywhere.

SB I have been thinking about that in terms of these discussions as well because you don't always agree sweetly all the time that this is how it will go. Talking about concerts you know – people have started applauding between movements!

MR Interesting in terms of your company – does a company have the task of maintaining the holy fire inside its own work? They are doing something they consider to be of importance but there is a risk of this being routinised out of existence. So how do they maintain contact with the authenticity of it? I imagine you feeling – doing this work – I spend all my time negotiating for business and writing contracts – I've lost it. A problem for the organisation – has to have something authentic of its own kind in order to have anything to offer but the process of marketing it, selling it and doing it threatens to degrade it or to reduce it.

L Which is why you have to contain the event so carefully because those holding the event need something to happen in order to justify the pain of preparation.

KT Certainly a pull between consultants and artists – Process v performance. It's just as important if they fail to do anything – we can work with that. The artists often find a partnership with the company in terms of performance rather than difficult consultancy. Consultants put into audience position themselves watching the artists and the clients come up with the goods as it were.

L Something about triangles.

KT Yes.

SB We have to stop.

MR The argument about life drawing is interesting because it crystallises your group's commitment to their own thing - the problem of the inside and the outside is focused whether they should take their clothes off.

<b>Panel Reading 8</b>
<b>Client K</b>
<b>June 2008</b>
<b>Reader: Artist AB</b>

**Context of the reading:-** The following data was sent by email to an artist who agreed to look at it and respond by email. Her response, along with the copy of a painting she included is copied below, under 'Reader's Responses'. When I sent her the data it was with the following email. It felt important to include this here along with her email when she returned the document in which her responses to the data were recorded.

KT email to artist AB:-

This is an excerpt from a record of a meeting with a potential client – the pre clinical development team in research and development of a large pharmaceutical company, client company K, or to be more specific the guy, NN, who is in charge of the process improvement experts in the pre clinical development team. And his boss, TT. I've changed the names but otherwise the data is untouched including spelling mistakes typos, the lot. It's pretty stream of consciousness. Quick notes to remind me, and a fellow consultant, of the meeting, to keep it in mind. I was going to choose something neater but I've been brave. What I'm after is a blind reading - what do you make of the data in the context of my research questions. What are your associations?

Respond to it how you like...don't be unnecessarily 'kind' (I trust you won't!)  
Some of the more challenging associations have proved very useful. No expectations about length of reply. Just respond until you're done.

KT

AB email to KT

Hello KT

Attached are comments on your data. Not confident that I've brought anything particularly fresh to the reading, but I've enjoyed doing it. re. your suggestion of an 'artistic' response: If I had the time etc., I'd make a life-sized board game - a form of cluedo, with an artist as the corpse, art as a 'blunt instrument', and a defensive shield as another weapon etc., all taking place in different 'rooms' in the form of parts of the body, such as brain, heart, genitals. Could be seen as a very negative 'take' on TT's org., but board games can be exciting, especially when dealing with life and death!

AB

**Data description:** The data is the same data as that presented to the participants at the doctoral conference on March 12<sup>th</sup> 2008, and whose responses are transcribed in panel reading 3. The data is my notes from a meeting with managers TT and NN at client organisation K, a large pharmaceutical company in England. They were written to be shared with Kube consultant A.

### **Data**

#### ***Animal experimentation and life drawing – shame***

*After a long discussion about pcd (pre clinical development) being 'good at paperwork' (there didn't seem to be a lot of paperwork around to me though he kept saying there was) and good at ordering things, and statements like 'we've got as far as we can' we got on to the subject of which art forms and their confession about being the animal experimenters came after a discussion in which TT said 'no' to a nude model in the life drawing (TT thought the americans, who had objected to the fish film on the basis of vegetarianism wouldn't like it) but NN and I encouraged him to keep it as a possibility because of the powerful material which could emerge – possibly about what is difficult to*

*talk about tin organisations (penises in life drawing). I realised that I had been seduced by the friendly, open, psychologically aware, responsive, funny men who were 'so nice' and then, like naughty boys they suddenly said 'fair cop' or 'we'd better level with her' and they told me about the animal experiments which took place there.*

*Process improvement experts prefer to work with the 'doers' directly rather than through their managers. Or the hierarchy.*

*Most of the process improvement people have a scientific qualification (except HR! – they laughed) and will typically have worked their way into their current position from somewhere else in the company.*

*This may be a bit brainstormy from now on.....*

*TT said that, after three years, all the 'easy jobs' were done and that now they had to work cross department.*

*He wanted to push at boundaries and comfort zones*

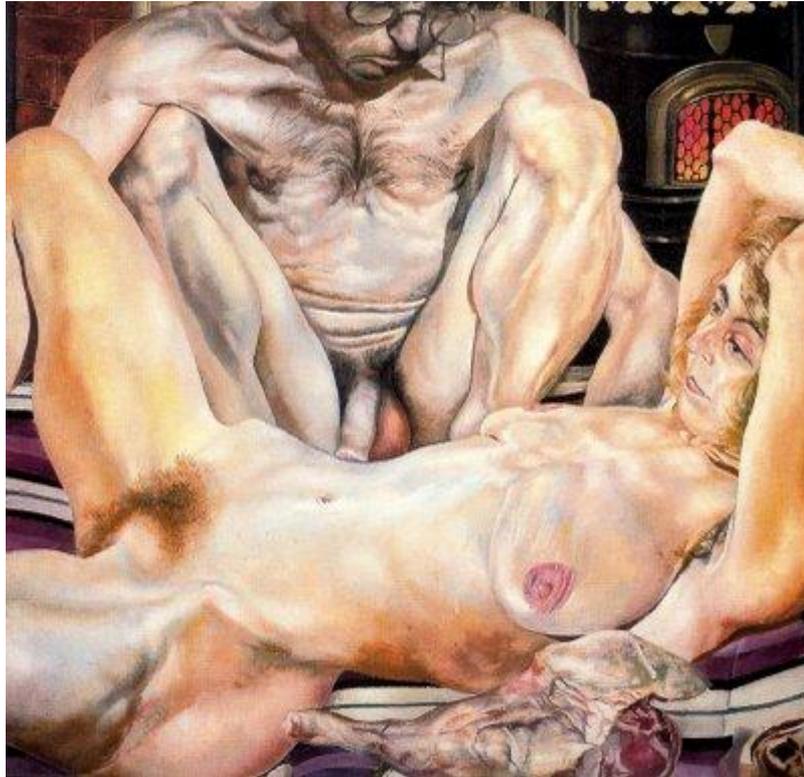
*There is a problem with trust – when they ask for data it is given fearfully as if they thought it would be analysed and their position judged (job lost?)*

*TT is supposed to 'wrap up' the conference but was open to that being 'part of the workshops' – he wants a 'personal commitment' from people to the future even if it is 'private'. At first he said that perhaps they could produce a vision of the future ( a painting) in the sessions but he was open to other possibilities*

*TT described himself as a typical ISTP very logical person – NN chimed in with another sort of analysis using a colour circle which had put all but one of his team in the very analytical section. They will all be familiar with belbin myers briggs etc etc*

*TT said 'listening is something we are not very good at – maybe you can work on that.' I wondered if he was asking me if I had heard what he had said about animal testing*

## Reader's response



**Stanley Spencer 'The leg of mutton nude' 1937**

### Comments on Kay Trainor's excerpt

First response. I was disappointed. Had expected a richer text that would be easier to understand. Something more inspiring. Parts were difficult to link. Rather detached/abstract – hard to get hold of the significance of what was being discussed – where are the 'feelings'. As a reader, I had to work very hard initially to give meaning to what appeared disjointed, and mean on detail (including 'feeling'). More was being asked of me than I'd bargained for.

On second reading – began to flesh out what was there and was drawn in. Felt like a detective – finding a bloodstained letter by a corpse with desperate notes scribbled in haste ... ! The following are jottings – perhaps echoing the style of your excerpt.

**Issues of mistrust** and **secrecy** figure strongly. TT makes a statement – you doubt its truth or at least you cannot see evidence to back up what he says (You as Doubting Thomas). Seduced (misled?) by the ‘nice’ men who are slow in being open. Are they cagey with wives, children, friends – secrecy important in relation to outside world. ‘Fair cop’ (you as police) – all quite jokey.

Animal experiments associated with ‘covering up’, embarrassment, shame. Interesting that you describe them as ‘naughty boys’ – suggests that they do not feel and/or do not want to be seen as responsible as if they were adults. How, potentially, misunderstood do they feel by ‘outside’ world?

You could also wonder whether TT managed to ‘close down’ a discussion of life drawing by ‘rewarding’ you with this information about animal experiments.

Now that they are working across the department, people fearful about giving data – don’t trust what others will do with it. Can understand why it was important to leave in the typos– ‘cross department’. Fearful, angry, at the thought of what you, Kay, will do with information about them?

TT wants a personal commitment to the future; anticipates that this may be given privately (again, ‘cloak and dagger’). Why not openly expressed?

**A Matter of Life or Death** Vegetarianism (‘picky’ and shame). Americans on moral high ground – vegetarianism – fish film. Makes me think of ‘A Fish called Wanda’. Fish tank broken and fish spilling out – sexual release. Steamroller at end of film – destruction. Veggies out of touch with their aggression – all that is bad is in meat – something outside of them. Were the fish, in the film you’d suggested to them, being killed, eaten – what sort of film would be that offensive? Life drawing – too much like looking at live/dead meat.

Your typo – ‘tin organisation’. The organisation looks solid, but do you sense that it is tinny?

**Adj. 1. tinny** - of or containing tin

**2. tinny** - of very poor quality; flimsy

**3. tinny** - thin and metallic in sound; lacking resonance; "an unpleasant tinny voice"

Tin Drum – Günter Grass. Young boy who, in protest against the horrors of the world, refuses to grow up.

I found myself falling in with an idea that the analytic, logical, nature of the team represented a lack. But a person or organisation can obviously have these qualities but still give space to personal inventiveness and individual sensibility, to imagination, experimentation. They **could** listen to each other (given their skills and apparent open friendliness) but TT sees listening as a problem in the group.

What does art represent for them? I can't get a positive feel for this. Describe themselves as analytic – are they looking for what they feel is lacking, such as intuition, imagination, mess, experimentation, freedom, playfulness, different way of conceptualising. Do they see 'art' and creativity as something outside themselves that someone else will provide – something they will dip into for the odd insight and then return to work as usual.

Does 'art' provide the promise of a safe space, which is less charged than the 'everyday', where the group members will unwrap themselves and show the more private parts of themselves and be heard? Hmm- TT seems pretty anxious about what's on offer so any fantasised 'safe place' would in his mind need to be tightly controlled – he would not suggest 'painting by numbers' but I could see him heading in that direction!

TT suggests you help them work on listening – he is taking initiative – perhaps feels you won't see what they need (or does he need to control?). As you suggest, he may well be wondering if you've heard him. I wonder if he will be able to listen to people in his organisation if they have 'visions of the future' that do not accord with his own, if their visions are, for instance, rather negative – critical of current management/him? Thus, TT listens to you, but rejects ideas –

the film, life-drawing. Tolerance of difference - you give just one example of 'difference' between TT and NN – NN supports your idea of life drawing. Otherwise he laughs when TT laughs and 'chimes in' with confirmatory example of analytical profile of team.

Art ranges from the **challenging** to **safe**. Seems that you are negotiating the medicine/remedy (the art form) – rather like deciding with your therapist what approach he/she should take?! Are they tempted to choose the least threatening option? I imagine that this discussion is all part of deciding whether or not a company can use in a productive way what you have to offer.

In suggesting a painting of a vision of the future, I feel that TT is (thinks he is) going for a safe option – vague, abstract (he is choosing the most traditional art form). This would seem to contradict his stated desire to push boundaries and comfort zones. Painting from imagination may be seen as less 'competitive' (as well as less sexy etc) than life drawing – in life drawing look at something 'real' (can assess how accurate and skilled people are in portraying the subject). If paint 'vision of the future' from the imagination, one can escape into a **private/personal** world, where such direct comparisons cannot so easily be made.

In practice, as you will well know, any visual image opens up space for fresh, challenging thinking so TT's suggestion could be used to good effect. He is also positive in saying he's open to other possibilities. Your notes leave me with the impression that he likes to call the shots and go for safe options, and may not be as 'open to other possibilities' as he suggests.

The para. that I find hardest to tune into is the second one. I imagine that if you did get this team together with some artists, the artists might be seen positively by this group as 'doers', and you might be lumbered with role of 'management' (i.e. not as well qualified as your workers and haven't 'worked your way' up – you can prescribe medicine but don't know how to make it).

<b>Panel Reading 9</b>
<b>Client Q</b>
<b>June 2008</b>
<b>Reader: Workshop participants at a one day conference.</b>

**Context of the reading:** The following data was presented, along with a copy of my research questions, and a brief explanation of the project, to a workshop at the Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust, as part of a one day conference focused on Practice Near research, funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). I recorded the responses of the workshop but it was too difficult to tell who was speaking when I transcribed the text so I have typed up what I heard with a space when the speaker changed. I have prefixed with KT the dialogue which was my own. I record several questions I asked.

**Data description:** The data excerpt is a record of a three way telephone discussion between me, GG - a project team leader at the head office of Client organisation Q (a major UK bank) - and an internal consultant, LL, to discuss an ABS intervention at an away day they were planning.

### **Data**

*Room takes 100 – we talked about the room first. It divides into quarters or a half and two quarters*

*We discussed sound proofing – the dividers are floor to ceiling and provide some sound proofing but she is going to try and get another room and look if the café door can be closed. Coming back with measurements*

*This is a short term team mixed across organisations – including client organisation Q, a Major consultancy firm, Major UK technology conglomerate - coming together for a short time to do a project. a team was put together but then halted and a new team (doubtless some of the same people) of twenty re constituted in October November – twenty grew to 45 and there are others she wants to invite*

*Need to address this – didn't absolutely say fifty was the cut off point – space will dictate too*

*Lets hope they don't all turn up*

*They did quite a bit of talking between them – about b7s – about two guys who I assume are the bosses further up the chain and how GG would feel intimidated to have them there at the beginning*

*I assume they are not taking part in this*

*They are doing serious stuff in the second half of the day*

*I was quite clear that they wouldn't get to the specifics with fifty people three artists and one facilitator and that the artists would give them an experience of working in an unusual setting in a team – they would discover each other in a new more human way but they wouldn't get to grips with why silo a and silo b don't get on – she doesn't want it named anyway – but she also does not want to miss out on the reflection –this can't just be fun as they have persuaded the client organisation Q to let them do something 'out there for client organisation Q – they need to demonstrate the learning;. This in the context of whether people would like to try two different things – GG doesn't want to miss out on the reflection (LL in the background saying she wants it to be fun)*

*There was a sense of collusion between us like with LP. Part of a women's support group. I joked when she said she would pay whole fee up front and trust me that we would turn up and she said she'd kill me if I didn't*

*Ha ha*

*8.30 coffee – wants us to mingle. 9.15 intro by GG then over to us for the morning. Until lunch – max three hours.*

*She doesn't.*

*The team will work together until November so it really is about quick formation Maybe I should talk to ABS consultant D (who introduced us to the client) about it. Get his steer on it*

*The project is at the creative stage she said when we discussed the other possibility i.e. writing and art. Of writing she said everyone was writing the whole time and of the art she didn't want to make a mess*

*She finished back on the rooms – said they were beautiful high rooms well kitted out.*

*Six or eight people know each other of old the rest mixed and lots of strangers to each other – so organisational boundaries and professional boundaries*

*And a false start last year*

*Everybody knows what they are doing but doesn't know enough about everyone else or how they work how it all fits together*

*GG and LL are to pre assign the groups*

*And come back to me about numbers*

*I quoted 500 extra if we needed another facilitator – rooms will be the thing  
(Data ends)*

### **Readers' responses**

The first association I had was around the soundproofing in the room and I was left with hmm a sort of ..into an imaginative space thinking about what might need to be contained. And whether there wasn't some sort of stop start mechanism around the.... where the doors were. Just the measurements of it and something around that and then later on at the end when the artist said she didn't want to make a mess I was wondering about the possibility of the anxieties about what might spill out.

And I was thinking about the notion of a sort of quick formation and the paradox about creativity and a period of gestation needed for something creative to happen. And the sort of sense of urgency for things to come together, given the false start or the true start that had already happened. The collusion – I wondered about the sort of rapidity ...of urgency around paying the whole fee

and this declaration of trust and whether there wasn't some kind of hostility or intimidation tucked away behind that.

That's interesting because I also had this feeling of something kind of stumbling - not really knowing what we are doing here - kind of developing very tentatively, and the rules being kind of not stated. In some way. But sort of gradually being made clear because they kind of emerge in terms of all the things you just said about ..wanting to have something but not have a mess - it's like as if a chance meeting or a chance conversation between three people, but actually it's not so much of a chance. There are rules behind it but god knows what they are. Feel quite pessimistic about that (?)

It feels a little bit like a hit and run kind of thing doesn't it, feels very kind of as if something is supposed to be created just to ...something that is kind of disembodied or something and half formulated and can't be too messy. There is something uncontained isn't there about ...I think there's dynamics between the teams or something that the woman wants her ...you know there's some underlying reason for doing this - the dynamics between teams but she doesn't want it to get too out of control. But it's kind of how would you do that? It does feel like a little bit kind of hit and run - what are they expecting you to do? With all of that and you know and it's kind of sticky really isn't it? It kind of reminds me - this is free associating - whatever - it just reminds me of a play room and throwing paint at the walls - bit manic.

As if something magic is being created. It appears something magic could happen if you did that and of course you don't know exactly who is saying what which would be helpful but I thought that you know kay is holding quite a lot back if she is trying to explain what they are doing. They would discover each other in a new more human way? I don't know what that means. I wonder if they know what that means. Is there some sort of task, thinking you understand what it means but you don't.

That issue of being overwhelmed. Let's hope they don't all turn up – because can they all be contained in the space if there is five hundred as opposed to one hundred.

You just kind of think about – I mean dance is a bit sexual isn't it. Going right out on a limb – is there something ejaculatory about it? (laughter) That's me getting kind of too kind of tavisstock – a bit Freudian about it. But it is as if there is this whole phew kind of thing – an explosion and then.

Zen everything can function.

An evacuatory thing isn't it?

Like a crisis or something.

Well that is a good point because there is no seduction is there – there is all this talk of the fear of getting to know each other - thinking we know each other – this is just associating to it but how is this in between place created between two people? It has to happen in relationships. Though I think the point about premature ejaculation or creating something without the relationship foundations being in place for the seduction to take part and all of that ....

I actually wondered whether you wouldn't be interested in what's the cultural background of the guys who are going to take part ? What are their various genders? What are you going to be faced with? There's a sort of assumption that everyone knows what you are talking about but I don't think. I can't imagine that you really do.

It's this emphasis on 'major' too – it's quite grand – I would imagine it is quite masculine kind of environment though these are women. It's money it's bank it's finance. It's trying to marry something very kind of masculine with something which is quite feminine which is artistic and kind of what is going to kind of come out.

A sense that the client wanted to by-pass something shameful or difficult by bringing in the artists and/or the female consultants – as if it was cleansing somehow. Sort of anti corporate.

I kind of got the feeling that somebody was feeling quite ambivalent towards the activity. Itself. Like – oh we will do this in the morning then we will do the serious stuff in the afternoon.

We don't really want to make a mess with this art stuff. You know – we're just doing this because the bank wants us to do something out there. And it kind of – we have to do something kind of odd and off the walls so that they know we are taking this seriously but really it is not – we need to get to the serious discussion later on. And that is what is important. It kind of had that feeling for me – let's just do this and somebody somewhere – these two men that we don't really want there will be happy that we have actually done something.

Similar sort of thing. Difference of opinion about what art can achieve. Some suggestion that creativity can be reparative - obviously something going wrong in the team . Why silo a and silo b and they don't get on and this can somehow be repaired through an act of creativity but that is not a consensus. There is a lot of ambivalence about that and yeah there is this stuff about doing serious stuff kind of denigrates the creative stuff really.

Some sort of forcefulness about it – it is quite sort of stuffed down your throat. You have got to do this and then something will happen but we don't know what it is. The task really is. And there is no reference – maybe it is just an email in many emails but there is no reference to what is it that they want to achieve.

Being forced down your throat reminds me of a discussion I was in yesterday about a workshop done with a group of young people called messing with my head. And the messing with my head was around them not having a voice or feeling they were participating in some major decisions to do with how they were living and I was sort of thinking about this in relation to silo a and silo b – you know, who is going to get the upper hand and who is hierarchically better

placed to actually manipulate themselves into a position of power whereby someone is going to be ousted? and I keep going back to this and it's an associative and I don't know where it is coming from but silo – silo – I am coming with this image and it is an image of a sort of pit where you put either you know it's for horse manure to ...sort of become more mature or..

Grains they are grains

So something like that there is something in terms of an imagery around the silos

Missiles(Laughter )

It's technology it's money if you look behind it. What are you in relation to the major consultancy firm? You are the little arty consultancy firm. Do you know what I mean? What does that mean? I mean where do you – it's these major major kind of ideas, kind of fundamental – what makes the world go round ? it is capitalism isn't it really and technology and you've got this little – you are going to do your art but it can't be art and it can't be writing. It has to be something that we tell you what it is going to be . What it brings up is Saatchi and that money owns art now. That kind of idea.

So that's a double sort of binding isn't it because art you know – do it – can you force art can you force creativity in that way?

And also about the major UK bank - another sort of associative thought with a professor of economics. He said you have to sort of understand that economic development has no moral base, so something around morality and ethics and deeper places that people might have to go.

And the struggle of talking about relationships without mentioning that. Something behind that I think that is right. I felt that.

A long way from the consultancy that the previous workshop that I was in was DL – not that I am criticising this consultancy but it is kind of a bit of a contrast. He was explaining his research into consultancy here at the Tavistock . It's not

a criticism but they were commissioned by X and they put in consultants over ten teams and he did feel there was a lot of meaning in that. And you know I think it did improve some working practices, anxieties and fears at ground level. And you kind of wonder what is the meaning here? You do! What is the meaning – I suppose that is the question isn't it? you know is there meaning to it? You have to wonder – is it a little bit meaningless? Can you create meaning? It's like putting on a play. All that bit before is quite difficult then it all comes together and it kind of feels you wonder how it will come together kind of in this instance.

I felt that I felt why the hell don't they just put on a play?

I thought the world is a stage we must all play our part. Sort of suitish and pin stripish and I don't know.

But they are probably allowed to take their ties off on this day and roll up their sleeves.

Take their jackets off.

But I think your point about the criticism is – is under the surface. What does an organisational consultancy mean – do they have to really meet? Is the organisational consultant going to be observing and being critical – is that kind of part of why people are hanging back? And don't want to enter into something there might be fear around? Is that why this was a false start last year last year? I am curious about that.

Organisational boundaries.

I suppose I was kind of thinking about dance is embodiment isn't it? About being embodied and so I suppose there is a sort of assumption – I won't say it is sort of cross cultural but there is an assumption that it might be able to connect in different ways from words. Because I was thinking that you know someone else said there is no space to develop – it doesn't seem as if there is

a space to develop relationships so is there another vehicle about the embodiment that can cut corners about that – I don't know.

KT What do you think happened next?

In the conversation ?

KT No in the work – did we do the work? What would you predict?

I would say no.

KT We didn't do the work?

I don't want to say anything because I am an ethnographer and I don't have enough.

Well I do a lot of stuff with the bnim and we are always having to.. hypotheses.

And hmm you have swayed me a bit there – because I thought if there is a false start last year why not another one?

Ambivalence. You could imagine it could just fizzle out – feels very kind of brief contact but not kind of really formulated – bit of a hit and run.

Everyone is influencing each other.

I wondered if there was a false start and such a good turn out.

Was that not a positive hopeful gesture?

Kay – we did do the work ...they paid when they wanted to..

The girls at the disco getting ready and terrifying the few sad men prepared to play.

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