PROFESSIONALS BECOMING MANAGERS: PERSONAL PREDICAMENTS, VULNERABILITY AND IDENTITY WORK

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Abstract

This thesis explores identity work employed to secure stability and coherence of self-identity. This is achieved through an exploration of professionals becoming managers' experiences of vulnerability, conceived as personal predicaments, as they make a transition into and progress within management.

This thesis takes up the invitation to dialogue with scholars from disparate philosophical orientations and epistemological commitments (Alvesson, Ashcraft and Thomas, 2008a; Smith and Sparkes, 2008) by reviewing critically the shared and contested views on self-identity. A theoretical framework is developed that conceptualises identity work within a fusion of symbolic interactionist positioning theory (Davies and Harré, 1990, 1999; Harré and van Langenhove, 1991, 1999c) and relational social constructionist identity work processes (Beech and McInnes, 2006).

This study's emergent focus on vulnerability, as experienced during role transitions (Hill, 1992, 2003; Watson and Harris, 1999) and ongoing personal predicaments (Schlenker, 1980), builds on the analytical importance of vulnerability (Sims, 2003), insecurity (Collinson, 2003), self-identity and identity work processes. Accounts of vulnerability as professionals make a transition into and progress within management are explored through a two-stage interview process with experienced public sector middle and senior managers from previously under-researched professional backgrounds (Cohen et al, 2002; Casey, 2008). Existing identity-related studies into professionals becoming managers (Hill, 1992, 2003; Ibarra, 1999; Watson and Harris, 1999) considered only the first year of transition into management. This research, therefore, adds to existing literature both through the type of participant and the extended nature of the study.

The framework of self-identity presented is offered as a theoretical and methodological heuristic device. The thesis also offers refined conceptualisations of personal predicaments and of identity work processes, and insights into identity work strategies related to professional becoming managers' experiences of vulnerability.

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In Memoriam

In memory of my parents who were with me when I began my becoming and are with me still

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Author's Declaration

I declare that the work contained in this thesis has not been submitted for any other award and that it is all my own work.

Name:

Signature:

Date:

9 July 2009

Chapter 1 Introduction

1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the research focus and process of this thesis. The chapter begins with an overview of the focus of the study and the key theoretical concepts related to it. The research scope and context are given, including brief details about the research participants. The potential empirical and theoretical contributions of this study are highlighted by drawing upon and differentiating this study from the existing literature on self-identity and identity work processes of professionals becoming managers. The chapter then introduces the research question and related objectives of the study. The chapter then considers why I am exploring this particular area of research and provides fragments from my narrative self-identity. The chapter concludes with an overview of the structure of the thesis.

1.1 The focus of this study

This thesis explores self-identity and identity work processes of professionals becoming managers. In particular, the research focuses on identity work processes which professionals becoming managers employ in attempting to secure stability, constancy and coherence of self-identity in relation to experiences of vulnerability. This thesis argues that experiences of vulnerability, proposed as a type of personal predicament, may trigger active identity work and therefore may provide further insights into identity construction processes. The main theoretical concepts of self-identity, identity work processes, personal predicaments indicating vulnerability and professionals becoming managers will be discussed in order to move to the central argument that theoretical insights into identity work processes may be gained through interpreting professionals becoming managers' personal predicaments relating to experiences of vulnerability.

1.2 Key theoretical concepts underpinning the study

This section considers the concepts of self-identity and identity work processes which are central to this research. It also discusses concepts which are relevant and intersecting but outside the scope of this research.

1.2.1 Self identity

The concepts of self and identity are problematic, being understood and employed in a variety of different ways (Alvesson *et al.*, 2008; Watson, 2008; Smith and Sparkes, 2008) by different scholars. In some cases, the terms self and identity, together with subjectivity, are used interchangeably to convey an individual's sense of "who am I?" (Watson, 2008; Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003) and "what do I stand for?" (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003, p.1164). Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003) make a distinction between self and identity, and use the term self-identity to refer to "some*thing* 'deeper', more personal and 'non-accessible' than identity.... Identity and self fuel each other and indicate different layers of self-understanding (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003, p.1168) (my emphasis). This thesis does not accept the self as 'some*thing* deeper' or 'separate' from identity and therefore rejects Sveningsson and Alvesson's (2003) distinction between self and identity. Like Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003), Harré (1998) makes a separation between the two terms but, in his case, he distinguishes the personal and *private* self, which he conceives as one's singularity as a human being, and one's public and *social* identity based on one's social roles and group memberships (Ashforth and Mael, 1989). This thesis does not accept this separation of the private and public self and, therefore, does not share Harré's (1998) view on the meaning of identity. Watson (2008) argues that a clear analytical distinction needs to be made between what he considers to be internal personal identities and external discursive social identities. To distinguish his notions from social identity theory (Ashforth and Mael, 1989), Watson (2008) uses the hyphenated terms 'self-identity' and 'social-identity'. Like Watson (2008), this study uses the hyphenated term self-identity. However, unlike Watson (2008), it is employed to convey not the separation but the integration of self (personal-identities) and identity (social-identities).

1.2.2 Theoretical perspectives on identity

The preceding discussion on the concepts of self and identity gives an indication of the different theoretical perspectives on identity. Alvesson *et al.* (2008a) have recently extended an invitation to identity scholars to facilitate dialogue across, and to enable identity studies to develop from, disparate orientations and perspectives. This research takes up that invitation and teases out the "productive tensions and alliances" (Alvesson *et al.,* 2008a, p.9) which reside in the existing individual level identity literature from functionalist, interpretivist and critical orientations (Alvesson

et al., 2008a). At this point, however, it is appropriate to summarise the philosophical and theoretical positioning of this study. This thesis shares Watson and Harris' (1999, p.17) "processual, relational, discursive or constructionist style of thinking about human beings and their social worlds". This way of thinking and, related to it, the acknowledgement of the ever-emergent process of becoming (Watson, 1994a; Watson and Harris, 1999; Bryans and Mavin, 2003; Parker, 2004), sees individuals and their self-identities as "ongoing achievements of human interaction" (Watson, 2001, p.223). In addition to conceiving self identity as emergent and a process of perpetual 'becoming', it is also relationally- and socially-constituted (Smith and Sparkes, 2008, Cunliffe, 2008) through language and discourse. This means that individuals derive meaning about the self in relation to others, and construct and reconstruct their self-identities through dialogue and narrative by drawing on discursive resources embedded within their social and cultural context (Watson and Harris, 1999; Kornberger and Brown, 2007). Self-identity, therefore, is shaped by language and discourse with, I believe, the individual being an active agent in using language and discursive resources and practices to constitute the self (Kondo, 1990). Studies working within this broadly interpretivist orientation, including this one, have an interest in "how individuals endeavour to construct a sense of self" (Alvesson *et al.,* 2008a, p.12). Svenningson and Alvesson (2003) suggest that, with some exceptions (such as Watson, 1994a), there are few empirical studies addressing in depth specific individual level processes of identity construction. With its focus at the individual level of identity construction processes, this research therefore has the potential to offer a contribution through extending existing studies.

1.2.3 Identity work

A key theoretical concept within the relational social constructionist approach (Watson and Harris, 1999; Fletcher, 2006; Cunliffe, 2008), taken in this research, is identity work (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002; Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003; Watson, 2006). Theoretically it might be argued that everyone does "work" on (Watson, 2006, p.95) their identities all the time, in keeping *"a particular narrative going"* (Giddens, 1991, p.54, emphasis in original). This leads Alvesson and Willmott (2002, p.626) and Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003, p.1165) to conceive of identity work as a continuous process through which individuals "form, repair, maintain, strengthen or revise" their identities. However, a distinction can be made between active and "comparatively unselfconscious" (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002, p.626) identity work. Some consider that more intensive and more conscious identity work

is triggered by crisis (Beech, 2008; Lutgen-Sandvik, 2008), radical role transitions (Watson and Harris, 1999; Hill, 1992; Ibarra, 1999, 2003) or other forms of specific events, encounters, experiences or surprises (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002).

In all cases, identity work, whether conscious or not, seems to be related to a need to strive for a coherent, distinctive and positively valued self (Alvesson, 2000; Alvesson and Willmott, 2002; Lutgen-Sandvik, 2008, Alvesson *et al.*, 2008a) and to be intensified by a combination of confusion and conflict within the individual and in the social and relational context (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002; Alvesson *et al*, 2008a; Linstead and Thomas, 2002). For Lutgen-Sandvik (2008), a striving for ontological security underpins identity work. However, Knights and Willmott (1999) argue that the pursuit of a unified, coherent and consistent self is illusory. In their view insecurity, as an existential condition, cannot be avoided and attempts to secure a stable identity can actually reinforce insecurities. Watson (2008, p.124) is critical of this tendency to "resist any temptation to see people's selves becoming 're-centred' through their own efforts". Watson's (2008) view implies that individual agency underpins identity work, a position held by Kondo (1990) and Beech (2008). Individuals are agential and act "with intention" (Beech, 2008, p.65). However, Beech (2008) cautions that some identity work attempts and self-identity constructions are agential and deliberate, whereas other may be less effective. This thesis shares this view and recognises that the effectiveness of these processes depends on others and the extent to which the self-identities being 'claimed' within a particular situation are affirmed, rejected or renegotiated by others.

1.2.4 Identity work and vulnerability

The intersection of identity work processes and emotion has been explored in the existing literature (Kondo, 1990; Collinson, 2003; Beech and Johnson, 2005; Kelchtermans, 2005; Lasky, 2005; Beech, 2008; Lutgen-Sandvik, 2008). Kelchtermans (2005) and Lasky (2005) focus particularly on vulnerability and professional identity. Lasky (2005, p.901) conceives of vulnerability as a "multidimensional, multifaceted emotional experience". Writing from a psychosocial perspective and outside the field of organisation and management studies, she considers vulnerability as a "fluid state of being" (Lasky, 2005, p.901). In her view, vulnerability is influenced by an individual's perception of a specific situation and context, and interacts with, amongst other aspects, one's identity (Lasky, 2005). Like Lasky (2005), Kelchtermans (2005) explores teachers' experiences of vulnerability

and professional identity. Kelchtermans (2005) considers that the two concepts are related because experiences of vulnerability call into question one's professional identity and moral integrity. However, Kelchtermans (2005) critiques Lasky's (2005) conceptualisation of vulnerability and, in his view, takes it "beyond the experiential aspect" (Kelchtermans, 2005, p. 997). He conceives vulnerability instead as a "structural condition that constitutes the specific character of the educational relationship and therefore also constitutes the self understanding of teachers" (Kelchtermans, 2005, p.999). Although not specifically focused on vulnerability, Coupland, Brown, Daniels and Humphreys (2008), taking a social constructionist perspective and a critical orientation, adopt a different conceptual understanding of emotion and emotion experience. Drawing on the notion of emotion as a social product and condition of control (Fineman and Sturdy, 1999), Coupland *et al. (2008)* argue that socially-constructed emotions and "articulations of emotionality" (Coupland *et al.*, 2008, p.327) may be drawn upon as discursive and relational resources and strategies of identity work. In observing that identity work is not "emotionally neutral", Beech (2008, p.69) also acknowledges a relationship between emotion and identity. This thesis shares the conceptualisation, by Beech (2008) and Coupland *et al.* (2008), of emotions as social constructions. However, a detailed review of the concept of emotion, of the active management, expression and performance (Coupland *et al.*, 2008) of particular emotions such as vulnerability, and of the interrelationship between emotion, identity and identity work, is outside the scope of this study. This is because the concept of emotion, *per se,* is not the focus of interest in this study. Rather the interest in this research is in experiences of vulnerability as specific relationally and socially-situated contexts, in which the individual may engage in active identity work processes. The "articulations of emotionality" (Coupland *et al.*, 2008, p.327) may indicate, therefore, the significance of the experience as an identity-symbolic event.

1.2.5 Positioning theory and morality

According to Coupland *et al.* (2008, p.330) articulations of particular emotions are "intimately connected" with moral right. Moral right, and the related notion of the "local moral order" (Harré, 1998, p.58), are central to the key theoretical concepts of positioning and positioning theory (Davies and Harré, 1990, 1999; Harré and van Langenhove, 1991, 1999c) which underpin the understandings of identity work developed in this thesis. Every positioning of self or the other also involves expression of the "moral standing" (Harré, 1998, p.58) of the self and the other

within a situationally-specific context. In other words, according to Harré and van Langenhove, positioning theory incorporates also "the study of local moral orders as ever-shifting patterns of mutual and contestable rights and obligations of speaking and acting" (Harré and van Langenhove, 1999a, p.1). Harré (1998, pp.18-19) contends that the local moral order "stands outside" of discourse. He draws on a dualist ontology and epistemology in arguing that "[t]here could be no discourse, no conversation at all, unless there were in place all sorts of practices in which certain reciprocal grantings of rights were immanent" (Harré, 1998, p.19). These ontological and epistemological assumptions are contested by this thesis which maintains that, instead of standing outside of discourse, the local moral order is discursively constructed.

This thesis also accepts that one's narrative self-identity incorporates one's "ethics, values and moral work" (Mischenko, 2005, p.214) and "no managerial act can be morally neutral" (Watson, 2006, p.235). Although this thesis argues that there is a relationship between the local moral order, moral standings and self-identity construction processes, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to review the existing literature on morality (Watson, 2003, Watson, 2006), moral identity and moral agency (Badaracco, 1997; Lovell, 2002; Watson, 2003; Butler, 2005). Instead the thesis acknowledges that there is a "multiplicity of socially constructed moralities" (Watson, 2003, p.173) which individuals draw on as discursive resources in asserting their "moral standings" (Harré, 1998, p.58). It also recognises that the multiplicity of moralities and the way that they may "conflict with each other in a way that is irreconcilable" (Watson, 2003, p.177) might contribute to experiences of vulnerability. However, the focus of this research is not on the concepts of morality and moral identity or on an interpretation of moral dilemmas, such as Watson's (2003) study. Rather, as discussed by Schrauf (2000) and Watson (2003), it focuses on the way that individuals may draw on a discourse of morality, as part of identity work processes, for instance through expressions of moral superiority (Baumeister, Stillwell and Wotman, 1990; Gabriel, 2000; Hotho, 2007) or moral criticism of the other (Harré and van Langenhove, 1991).

1.2.6 Identity and the power effect of discourses

Critical orientation studies engage with identity at a macro level to draw attention to the power effect on self-identity of dominant discourses. With this study's male and female professionals becoming managers working in a public sector context, of

potential relevance to this research are discourses, amongst others, of gender and New Public Management (NPM), with Thomas and Davies (2002, 2005) synthesising the two foci. However, this study is positioned within the interpretivist orientation, engaging with self-identity at a micro level to explore processes of self-identity construction and identity work. Therefore, consideration of how socially constructed categories and concepts, such as gender and NPM or managerialism, are "discursively produced and enacted" (Cunliffe, 2008, p.126), is outside the scope of this research. However, this thesis appreciates that these, and other discourses, may be drawn upon by individuals in the construction of self-identities and, therefore, in identity work processes.

Further dimensions of the scope of the research, particularly its empirical context, are considered in the next section.

1.3 The research scope and context

This thesis appreciates that identity work is ongoing but will focus attention on the "episodic" character (Linstead and Thomas, 2002, p.3) of identity work, and the way that individuals "periodically restructure and reconstruct" (Linstead and Thomas, 2002, p.3) their identities. This thesis will argue that specific episodes trigger active and "more concentrated" identity work (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002, p.626). For professionals becoming managers, the participants in this study, the transition into management is likely to be characterised by identity-symbolic events. This thesis refers to such events as personal predicaments and will argue that they trigger active identity work as individuals attempt to retain coherence in their ongoing narrative of self. When conceived as identity-symbolic events likely to generate "more concentrated" identity work (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002), the accounts of personal predicaments may highlight identity-related tensions and bring into sharper relief the identity work processes individuals employ.

According to McAuley, Duberley and Cohen (2000), limited research has been undertaken to explore how professionals "locate management into their understanding of the world" (McAuley *et al.*, 2000, p.88). As professionals themselves make the transition into management, such location is central to the ways in which they undertake their professional and managerial roles, and construct their self-identities. For the purposes of this study, "moving up" or "moving into" (Watson and Harris, 1999, pp.30-31) management involves making a transition from

individual contributor (Hill, 1992, 2003), within a particular professional field, to manager of others. The managerial role may be specialist, for instance managing other professionals within one's own or related professional fields, or generalist, that is not related to one's professional expertise. This thesis will employ the full phrase 'professional becoming manager' to emphasise that the process of becoming "continues long after" the individual is given a managerial title (Watson and Harris, 1999, p.vii) and, indeed, is continually ongoing (Kondo, 1990; Watson and Harris, 1999).

The professionals becoming managers in this study are all established and experienced managers working in the public sector. Cohen, Finn, Wilkinson and Arnold (2002) state that research into public-sector professionals and, more specifically, into the implications for them of NPM, is mainly health-related or in areas such as social work and education. Although NPM, or managerialism, is outside the scope of this study, this research does provide a distinctive empirical contribution by including participation of professionals beyond health, social work and education. The eight research participants moved into management from diverse professional backgrounds, including youth service work, architecture, library services, dancing, quantity surveying and social housing management as well as social work and teaching. Six of the participants are in middle or senior management positions within a local authority and two are senior managers from the social housing sector. The focus on managers within the public sector, from a range of previously under-researched professional backgrounds, will therefore enable the study to make a distinctive empirical contribution to the literature on professionals becoming managers.

Having indicated this distinctive empirical contribution, the next section explores other potential contributions of this study.

1.4 The potential contributions of this study

Empirical studies into professionals becoming managers, and into self-identity and identity work processes, have been conducted (Hill, 1992; Ibarra, 1999; Watson and Harris, 1999; Bolton, 2000; Hotho, 2007; Casey, 2008). This study complements the private practice professionals making a transition into a managerial role studied by Hill (1992) and Ibarra (1999). It also extends the scope of the public sector professional groups included in Watson and Harris' (1999) study. A common feature

of these three studies is their consideration of only the first year of transition for professionals becoming managers. Although Watson and Harris' (1999) study included two stages of interviews conducted approximately one year apart, it did not undertake further research with those managers as they progressed managerially. The design of this current research enables a contribution to existing studies on identity work processes of professionals becoming managers as they make a transition into management and, particularly importantly, as they progress managerially. The professionals becoming managers in this current study are all established and experienced managers, with some first seeing themselves as, or feeling like, managers some twenty years before my first interview with them. In the first interview, the research participants reflected on their experiences of 'first' becoming manager and of challenges at that time. In keeping with the notion of the "emergent manager" (Watson and Harris, 1999) and of self-identity as a process of perpetual "becoming" (Watson, 1994a; Watson and Harris, 1999; Bryans and Mavin, 2003; Parker, 2004), the participants also gave accounts, in the second interview, of contemporary experiences and challenges of managing. Therefore the longitudinal dimension of the research design and the interpretation of accounts of experiences relating to both initial transition into, and ongoing progression within, management provide the opportunity for a distinctive theoretical contribution relating to ongoing processes of self-identity construction.

The theme of vulnerability, and its focus within this study, emerged from the participants' accounts both of their initial transition into management and their ongoing experiences and challenges. It is generally accepted that role transitions may generate ambiguity and uncertainty (Ibarra, 1999) and stimulate active identity work (Watson and Harris, 1999; Blenkinsopp and Stalker, 2004). However, as individuals progress managerially and work within established managerial roles, they continue to experience insecurity and vulnerability (Linstead and Thomas, 2002; Sims, 2003; Pullen and Rhodes, 2008). This thesis considers vulnerability to be related to insecurity in that, if an individual senses that they are in a vulnerable, weak or exposed position, then this may lead them to sense their self-identity as insecure and unstable. According to Collinson (2003), a greater appreciation of the analytical importance of insecurity can enhance understandings of self-identity and of identity-related survival strategies adopted by individuals within organisations. An analytical focus on insecurity, as well as on the instability, ambiguity and confusion of middle managers' identities are featured in studies of, amongst others, Linstead

and Thomas (2002) and Pullen and Rhodes (2008). In both these studies, "episodic" identity construction processes (Linstead and Thomas, 2002) and attempts to secure stability of self-identity were triggered by organisational restructuring. Whilst sharing a focus on middle and senior managers, this study aims to gain greater insights into the nature of managerial vulnerability, rather than insecurity *per se*, and into identity construction strategies individuals employ in coping with more "localized incidents" (Alvesson *et al.*, 2008a, p.19), related to vulnerability, which may occur outside the context of organizational restructuring. In contrast to, for instance Linstead and Thomas' (2002) study, the organisational context of the participants in this current study is "comparatively stable" (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002), which might imply limited active identity work. Whilst identity work processes, in this study, may be triggered by "specific events, encounters, [or] experiences" (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002), they are associated with the managers' everyday work tasks, and stresses and strains in social relations (Alvesson, 2000). Therefore the juxtaposition of the "specific events" (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002), that is personal predicaments, in a "comparatively stable" (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002) organisational context may provide further insights into "episodic" (Linstead and Thomas, 2002) identity work processes.

Sims explores the concept of the vulnerability of middle managers' identities through interpretation of the vulnerability of their storying, that is "the processes of constructing one's life as a story" (Sims, 2003, p.1196). Sims suggests that the "peculiar loneliness, precariousness and vulnerability" (Sims, 2003, p.1195) that characterise middle managers' lives cannot be understood without the use of narratives and stories. He concludes that "[t]here is no community of storytelling practice in which middle managers can rehearse these stories, or in which they can explore the inconsistencies and conflicts between them" (Sims, 2003, p.1209). This study does not embrace fully Sims' (2003) notion of storying and stories and employs instead Gabriel's (1998, p.102) distinction in "treating stories as distinct types of narrative". However its shared general approach in drawing on narrative analytic methods has the potential to add further insights into the "vulnerability of middle managers as revealed by stories told about them" (Sims, 2003, p.1210). When conceived as identity-symbolic events likely to generate "more concentrated" identity work (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002, p.626), the managers' accounts of personal predicaments relating to vulnerability may highlight identity-related tensions

and bring into sharper relief the identity work processes individuals employ in their attempts to achieve stability, constancy and coherence of self-identity.

1.5 The research aims and objectives

The main aim of this research study is to explore professionals becoming managers' experiences of vulnerability as they make a transition into, and continue to progress within, management. Through an interpretation of the professionals becoming managers' accounts of experiences of vulnerability, which are conceived as identity-symbolic personal predicaments, the study aims to offer theoretical insights into self-identity construction processes, and particularly into the active identity work processes and strategies individuals employ in trying to secure stability, constancy and coherence of self-identity. The research question is:

What relationships are there between professionals becoming managers' personal predicaments, their experiences of vulnerability and their identity work?

The following sub-questions, related to this main question, will be answered through this thesis:

- In what ways do professionals becoming managers experience vulnerability as they make a transition into and progress within management?

- In what ways do personal predicaments, related to experiences of vulnerability, shape an individual's self-identity?

- In what ways do professionals becoming managers' accounts of personal predicaments give insights into identity work processes?

- What identity work strategies are employed by professionals becoming managers in an attempt to retain stability, distinctiveness and coherence of self-identity?

In addressing these research questions, the main objectives of this research study are to:

- locate the study through a synthesis of existing literature from disparate philosophical orientations and theoretical perspectives on self, identity and identity work processes
- explore relationships between vulnerability, self-identity and identity work processes
- provide conceptual understandings of profession, professional and professional becoming manager and review existing studies on identity work processes of professionals becoming managers
- develop appropriate methodology and methods to explore and interpret the experiences and identity work processes of the research participants as they make a transition into and progress within management
- explore professionals becoming managers' personal predicaments related to vulnerability as they make a transition into and progress within management
- provide, through interpretations of professionals becoming managers' accounts of personal predicaments related to vulnerability, theoretical insights into identity work processes, and specifically those aimed at repairing self-identity
- take a consciously reflexive approach throughout the research process
- provide distinctive theoretical, empirical and methodological contributions through the research outcomes

As one objective of this research is to take a consciously reflexive approach throughout the research process, the next section provides an introduction to my interest in the subject of self-identity and considers how my personal experiences may have impacted on the focus of this study and its central argument.

1.6 My position in relation to the subject

My initial interest in the field of identity can be traced back to the early stages of my professional experiences some twenty-five years ago. However, at that time, I would not have used the term 'identity' in trying to make sense of my experiences. In the first year of my employment after graduation, I was sponsored by my employer to do a management development qualification. I was pleased about the opportunity but can distinctly recall conversations with my then manager about why I was doing a management qualification when, as far as I was concerned, I wasn't 'a manager'. I can now appreciate that I was 'managing' as I was coping with my first permanent work role and balancing it with my personal life, and was managing my own work

activities as well as my relationships with my manager, colleagues and clients. In fact, I was also managing one part-time member of staff, but I didn't think that counted as being a 'manager'. It was some ten years later I realised that I was 'managing' at the time. I still tell a variation of this story, particularly when I explore with students their understandings of management and managing, usually when they are starting out on a programme of management education.

I can recall a later incident during my employment in the same organisation which, again at the time, I would not have 'seen' as being 'about my identity', although it was clearly related to making sense of my self. I made a role transition, from an administrative/managerial role, to become a management development consultant towards the end of the 1980s. The role change coincided with the birth of my first son, and I returned to my organisation, into the new role, after a period of maternity leave. I didn't settle easily into the new role and can recall having a conversation with my then, and different, manager about how I was coping. He suggested that I might be suffering from some form of post-natal hormonal imbalance or depression and recommended that I went to see my doctor. As I reflect now on that experience, I can appreciate that, whilst there might have been some embodied aspects to how I was feeling, it was another identity-symbolic event, where I was trying to make sense of 'who I am' and 'who I am becoming'.

One other role transition caused me to engage in active identity work. This time, when I made the move into my current Higher Education Institution where I had studied approximately 15 years previously as an undergraduate, I was aware that I was wrestling with how I 'positioned' myself in relation to others. My job interview was conducted by one of my former lecturers, who was then the Dean, who remembered me as a student. My first office was opposite another lecturer who had taught me. For many months, and possibly years, I struggled to see myself as 'an equal' and discussed this in an MBA assignment I did soon after I joined the organisation.

Some time later I can recall having a casual conversation with an academic colleague and explaining how I did not like to use the title 'lecturer' to describe what I did, preferring to use the term 'trainer'. Even though most of my time was then spent teaching, I would, and still do, explain to my students that I see myself as a facilitator of their learning, and refer to the sessions I facilitate as workshops rather

than lectures or seminars. Going back to the conversation with my academic colleague, who like me had moved into academia from a practitioner background, I remember him saying he considered himself an 'academic' – a label which, for me, implied being 'research active' which I was not at the time. Even though I am now considered by others as 'research active' and would acknowledge that this PhD process is part of my apprenticeship in becoming researcher, I am still not comfortable in 'seeing' my self as 'researcher'. However, through this study and beyond it, I am in the process of becoming researcher. Therefore, in this study, I am both the researcher and 'the researched', as I try to make sense of and reconstruct my self-identity to incorporate this new 'role'. I will include reflections on this process of becoming researcher in the final chapter of this thesis.

I do not want to suggest that I only actively engage in identity work when I change roles, or that it is the job title or 'label' which causes me to reframe my self-identity. However, transitions of different types do seem to feature strongly in my narrative. For instance the transition: from full time education to full time permanent employment; to studying for a qualification in a new area, of management; between my professional work life and my personal home life; from managing self and own activities to managing others; from an administrative/managerial role to one as a management development consultant; to becoming a mother; from a quasi-academic management development centre to an institution of higher education; from a student/lecturer relationship with some of my colleagues to peer; from practitioner as trainer/management consultant to 'academic' as learning/workshop facilitator and active researcher. Also I do tend to 'position' my self and draw on "external discursive 'social-identities'" (Watson, 2008, p.121) in making sense of who I am. It is probably also for this reason that I have been drawn, in this study, towards Harré and van Langenhove's (1999c) positioning theory.

Other academic texts have been important to me in making sense of my own identity work and identity construction processes, and in the design of this research study. At the start of my PhD study, I was influenced by Watson and Harris (1999). I was particularly drawn to the questions for managers raised in their study including the "ways in which moving into managerial work have involved battles about their sense of identity and how they see themselves" and the "discrepancies between the demands of the role of manager, the expectations this places on them and some sense of their 'real' self" (Watson and Harris, 1999, p.53). I now appreciate that I

was drawn to this particular excerpt as it resonated so much with my own experiences of becoming. I was also struck by the idea of "battles" about self. Less consciously, this may have been the trigger for the focus within this study on vulnerability.

I will refer to my positions in relation to the subject of identity and to this study in two main ways in this thesis. Linked with the objective of taking a consciously reflexive approach throughout the research process, I will write intermittently using the first person pronoun. This style is appropriate in particular to show my appreciation that, in designing and implementing this research and in "crafting" this thesis as an "artifact" (Watson, 1994b, p.S77) of the research project, I have made particular ontological, epistemological and methodological decisions. More specifically, in Chapter Four, I will discuss the processes of reflexivity I have used in conducting this study. Finally I will review, in Chapter Eight, the extent to which I have achieved the objective of conscious reflexivity in the research process.

1.7 Structure of the thesis

This **Chapter One** has provided an introduction to the research focus and process. The chapter began with an overview of the focus of the study and the key theoretical concepts related to it. The research scope and context have been given, including brief details about the research participants. The potential empirical and theoretical contributions of this study have been highlighted and the chapter then confirmed the research question and the related objectives of the study. I then illustrated and explained why I am researching this particular subject area. The chapter concluded with this overview of the structure of the thesis.

A comprehensive review of the literature on self, self-identity and identity work processes is given in **Chapter Two**. The work of writers from different philosophical and theoretical perspectives on self-identity is reviewed, in order to offer my own meanings of self-identity and to locate the ontological and theoretical positioning of this study. The theoretical concept of positioning, developed by scholars working within symbolic interactionist social constructionism, will be fused with processes of identity work drawn from relational social constructionism. A conceptualisation of personal predicaments is offered. Finally, and importantly, the chapter confirms how this study, and the theoretical concepts underpinning it of self-identity, identity work and personal predicaments related to vulnerability have the potential to contribute to

existing studies on self-identity construction processes and specifically on remedial identity work processes.

Chapter Three provides details about the context of this research on professionals becoming managers by reviewing the ways in which the concepts of profession and professional have been theorised from different ontological perspectives. It explores the nature of the relationship, as presented in the literature, between profession and management and between professionals and managers. It then considers the typical ways in which professionals make a transition into management. The chapter next reviews general studies which have been undertaken into becoming manager, as well as studies of specific professionals moving into management, in order to highlight the distinctive empirical and theoretical contributions of this study.

Chapter Four confirms the ontological and epistemological positioning of this research. The chapter gives details about the methods used in gathering and interpreting the data, and my reasons for using these methods. The research participants are introduced and the processes of selecting them are explained. The chapter details the methods of interpreting the data and explains how the focus on vulnerability emerged from these. A framework for evaluating the trustworthiness of this research is proposed. This framework highlights the ways in which I have engaged in reflexivity and illustrates this through a discussion of ethical considerations and issues. The chapter concludes by considering the implications of the methodological decisions made in conducting this research.

Chapter Five presents data on and offers interpretations of professionals becoming managers' accounts of make a transition into and progressing within management. The chapter considers when and how the research participants moved into management. It then illustrates, and summarises as a table, personal predicaments relating to vulnerability, from participants' early and current becoming manager experiences. The chapter's key emergent themes are related to existing identity-related studies on professionals becoming managers. The chapter concludes by considering the theoretical and methodological implications for this research of the data presented.

Chapter Six is the first of two which explores identity work processes associated with selective personal predicaments, relating to vulnerability. The selected personal

predicaments are of recently-experienced events and, thus, offer a longitudinal dimension to the self-identity construction and identity work processes of professionals becoming managers as they progress within management. The interpretation of the selected extracts of personal predicaments draws on theoretical concepts on identity work processes reviewed and developed in Chapter Two.

Chapter Seven focuses on self-identity construction processes and specifically identity work processes and strategies employed by the research participants in their accounts of the personal predicaments discussed in Chapter Six. Through synthesising this study's empirical findings with literature on identity work processes, the chapter offer a conceptualisation of identity work processes and illustrations of identity work strategies, aimed at re-securing stability, distinctiveness and coherence of self-identity.

Reflections on this research, its outcomes and processes are offered in **Chapter Eight**. The chapter includes an evaluation of the achievement of the research objectives, and highlights the theoretical, methodological and empirical contributions offered by this research. The methodological limitations of this thesis are discussed through illustrations of self-reflexivity. The chapter includes possibilities for further research and concludes by considering the mutually constitutive relationship between my becoming researcher and this research.

1.8 Summary

This chapter has provided an introduction to the research focus and process. The focus of this research on identity work processes employed in attempting to secure stability, constancy and coherence of self-identity has been highlighted. The main theoretical concepts of self-identity, identity work and personal predicaments relating to vulnerability have been introduced. This introduction has stated the central argument of the thesis, that is that insights into identity work processes may be gained through interpreting professionals becoming managers' accounts of personal predicaments relating to vulnerability. The potential theoretical contributions, and the distinctive empirical context of this study, have been highlighted. The chapter then presented the aim, research questions and related objectives of this research. I explained my interest in identity and my value position on the active and episodic nature of identity work in response to transitions. Shaped by my professional and personal experiences, these interests and positions will have influenced the focus

and process of the research enquiry. The notion of my becoming researcher through this research process was also discussed. The chapter concluded with an overview of the structure of the thesis. The next chapter is the first of two reviewing relevant literature underpinning this study. In order to position this research and distinguish it from other work, the chapter critiques different philosophical orientations and theoretical perspectives on self-identity and identity work processes, and explores relationships betweens these concepts and vulnerability.

Chapter 2 Identity and Identity Work

2 Introduction

The previous chapter provided an introduction to concepts, central to this study, of self, identity and identity work. In this chapter, the work of self-identity scholars from three different philosophical orientations is reviewed critically. The features of identity and identity construction processes within and across these orientations are also explored. In the course of my PhD studies, I have been drawn to, and variously persuaded by, self-identity studies from interpretivist and critical orientations. This framing of the review of the existing literature means that functionalist orientations to self-identity are not considered in detail. After confirming the understandings of self-identity employed in this thesis, the chapter then focuses on the central theoretical concept of identity work and explores its association with vulnerability. A conceptualisation of personal predicaments is offered and their significance as identity-symbolic events is explored. The chapter concludes by considering the implications for this study of the review of existing literature on identity and identity work and confirms the potential theoretical contributions of this research.

This chapter, therefore, addresses the research objectives:

- to locate the study through a synthesis of existing literature from disparate philosophical orientations and theoretical perspectives on self, identity and identity work processes
- to explore relationships between vulnerability, self-identity and identity work processes

2.1 Concepts of self and identity

The concepts of 'self' and 'identity' are problematic, being understood and employed in a variety of ways (Alvesson *et al.*, 2008a; Watson, 2008; Smith and Sparkes, 2008) by different scholars. In lay terms, the 'self' is used to include the thoughts, feelings, values and behaviour of an individual and therefore, according to Schlenker (1980, p.47), becomes synonymous with the term 'person'. Harré (1998) makes a distinction between personhood and identity, and between self and self-concept. Often, in academic texts, the terms 'self' and 'identity', together with 'subjectivity', are used interchangeably to convey an individual's sense of "who am

I?" (Watson, 2008; Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003) and "what do I stand for?" (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003, p.1164). These questions elicit a response in terms of aspects of identity definition, for instance of organisational position (e.g. manager), professional or occupational status (e.g. teacher, social worker) as well as in more informal terms (e.g. 'a people manager') (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002). Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003, p.1190) also propose the notion of "anti-identity" which might be offered in response to the question "Who am I not?".

The following section teases out the philosophical and theoretical reasons behind separation or unification of the terms self and identity and leads to the understandings of the term self-identity applied in this thesis.

2.2 Different philosophical orientations to the concept and study of identity

Philosophical orientations are connected with the epistemological interests of the research and the "ontological commitments" (Chia, 1995, p.579) of the researcher. In organisational studies, the concept of identity, at the level of the individual and the organisation, has been developed in several ways, reflecting different philosophical orientations and theoretical perspectives (Alvesson *et al.*, 2008a; Cerulo, 1997; Smith and Sparkes, 2008). Orientations to identity are discussed by, amongst others, Gioia (1998), Bouchikhi *et al..* (1998) and, more recently, Alvesson *et al.* (2008a) and Smith and Sparkes (2008).

Alvesson *et al.* (2008a, p.8) discuss and encourage dialogue across three orientations – functional, interpretive and critical – to the study of self and identity. They invite identity scholars to make clear how different philosophical and theoretical perspectives related to them feature in existing identity studies and, therefore, to be able to illuminate where "productive tensions and alliances reside" (Alvesson *et al.*, 2008a, p.9). With a specific focus on identity as narratively constructed, Smith and Sparkes (2008) extend a similar invitation. Smith and Sparkes (2008) discuss five processes of self-identity construction – psychosocial, inter-subjective, storied resource, dialogic and performative – and illustrate these with reference to the work of scholars with different epistemological commitments. They give the intention of their discussion as "to provide a framework or typology for viewing variety, similarities and differences" (Smith and Sparkes, 2008) and consider the processes of identity construction, which they refer to as perspectives,

as being arranged along a continuum. However, they do not offer a visual presentation of the framework.

Bouchikhi *et al.* (1998, p.34) discuss three "general" orientations – functionalist, interpretive, and postmodern – to organisational identity. They present the features and implications of these orientations for the study of organisational identity as a "nomological net" (Bouchikhi *et al.*, 1998, p41-43) taking the form of a table.

In this study I have taken up the invitations extended by Alvesson *et al.* (2008a) and by Smith and Sparkes (2008). I have drawn on their discussion, together with that of Bouchikhi *et al.* (1998), to develop a framework of features of, and orientations to, self-identity. My intention in generating this framework is four-fold. First, the framework provides the framing of the review of the existing literature on self and identity and gives an overview of the similarities and differences in the various conceptualisations of self and identity from different philosophical orientations and epistemological commitments. Second, the following discussion of the existing literature will refer to this framework, in order to locate the work of key scholars which has been influential in the philosophical and theoretical positioning of this study. Third, I have used the framework as a heuristic device to develop my own understandings of self and identity and to position this study. Fourth, I propose that this framework offers a potential theoretical contribution, as a heuristic device to other researchers of self-identity, and as a "point of entry into a complex field" (Smith and Sparkes, 2008, p.7).

At this point I will introduce the framework (Figure 2.1) and its dimensions but will reserve discussion of its content until appropriate points in the following review of the existing literature. The dimensions which frame consideration of the different orientations to and features of self-identity are given on the left-hand side of Figure 2.1. These are: philosophical orientations; level of engagement and epistemological interest; epistemological and ontological commitments; processes of self-identity construction; and features of self-identity. Like Alvesson *et al.* (2008a) and Bouchikhi *et al.* (1998), the orientations to self-identity which are considered are limited to three. Following Alvesson *et al.* (2008a) these are labelled as functionalist, interpretivist and critical. Unlike Bouchikhi *et al.* (1998), the framework is not presented as a table as the boundaries across and within the orientations are "blurred and fuzzy" (Smith and Sparkes, 2008, p.7) and are not necessarily mutually

exclusive. Like Smith and Sparkes (2008), therefore, the framework and features relating to self-identity discussed within it are presented as a continuum, indicated by the bi-directional arrow above the three orientations. For instance, the epistemological commitment to relational social constructionism draws on both storied resource and dialogic (Smith and Sparkes, 2008) processes of self-identity construction. On the basis of different epistemological and ontological commitments, I differentiate symbolic interactionist social constructionism from relational social constructionism. As in figure 2.1, for clarity in the discussion of these differing epistemological commitments, I retain the full term symbolic interactionist social constructionism in this chapter.

This review of the existing literature on self-identity begins with an overview of the philosophical orientations to self-identity. It then discusses the features of self-identity, such as self as entity and self as process. As noted above when setting out the intentions in presenting the framework, the work of key scholars which has been influential in the philosophical and theoretical positioning of this study will be located, particularly in relation to their broad philosophical orientation and epistemological and ontological commitments. However, like Smith and Sparkes (2008), I would not want to imply that these are fixed positions for their work or to offend writers by my study-specific and temporary positioning of their work. For instance, I have noted a different emphasis being placed over time in different studies by the same author. As an illustration, I would locate Ibarra's (1999) study, discussed in Chapter Three, as functionalist drawing on social identity theory and her 2004 study as relational social constructionist drawing on storied resource identity construction processes. The positioning of this current research will be made with reference to Figure 2.1 at particular points in this chapter, for instance, when summarising my understandings of self-identity in 2.3.6. However I am aware of how my epistemological and ontological commitments to self-identity have shifted during the course of this PhD study. This is discussed further in Chapter Four on Methodology, when the implications for research design of the differing epistemological and ontological commitments are considered.

Figure 2.1 Features of, and orientations to, self-identity
Developed from Chia (1995)[1], Fletcher (2006)[2], Alvesson *et al.*(2008a)[3], Beech (2008)[4], Cunliffe (2008)[5], Smith and Sparkes (2008)[6] and Watson (2008)[7]

Dimensions						
Philosophical orientations[3]	**Functionalist**		**Interpretivist**			**Critical[3] and Postmodern[1]**
Level of engagement and epistemological interest	Meso level – how organisational effectiveness relates to identity[3]	Micro level – how individuals make sense[5] of self	Micro level – how individuals construct identities, through social interaction[3] and language			Macro level – how individuals respond to the power effect[3] of relations and discourses
Epistemological[6] and ontological commitments[1]	Realist – objective reality and ontology of "being"[1]	Social constructivist - subjective reality[3] and ontology of "being"[1]	Symbolic interactionist social constructionist – subjective *and* intersubjective realities[5] and ontology of "being" *and* "becoming"[1]	Relational social constructionist – intersubjective realities[5] *and* ontology of "becoming"[1]		Poststructuralist – intersubjective[5] and subjectified realities *and* ontology of "becoming"[1]
Processes of self-identity construction	Social psychological[3]	Cognitive and psychosocial[6]	Inter-subjective interdependency[6]	Storied resource[6]	Dialogic and relational[4, 5, 6]	Performative[6]
Features of self-identity	Self as entity and 'being'		Self as entity *and* self as process	Self as process and 'becoming'		Self as process and 'becoming' *or* self as illusion
	Stable, consistent and coherent self		Changing but relatively coherent self	Changing and fragmented self but becoming 're-centred'[7]		Fluid, inconsistent and fractured self
	Singular personal identity and multiple social identities		Singular *or* multiple personal identity and multiple social identities	Multiple and ambiguous selves		Multiple and ambiguous selves
	Cognitive construction of self through language		Agential self, mediated by structure, constructed through language	Agential self crafted through language and discourse		Decentred self regulated by the power effect of discourse
	Primacy to the individual over the social context		Self inseparable from relational and social context	Self embedded in relational and social contexts		Self constituted by relational and social contexts

2.2.1 Functionalist orientations to identity

Functionalist orientations to research assume social phenomena, in this case self and identity, are similar to physical phenomena and approaches to their study draw upon natural science (Gioia, 1998). As noted in Figure 2.1, functionalism is influenced by epistemological commitments to realism (Gioia, 1998) and to an ontology of "being" (Chia, 1995). Functionalist orientations to identity dominate existing studies and are particularly manifest in studies of organisational identity (Alvesson *et al.*, 2008a). Studies within this philosophical orientation tend to engage with self and identity at a meso level and emphasise "how individuals locate themselves as social and organisational beings" (Alvesson *et al.*, 2008a, p.12). Studies are typically interested in how identity and identification are critical variables in achieving managerial outcomes and in improving organisational effectiveness (Alvesson *et al.*, 2008a, p.8).

Theoretical perspectives associated with the functional orientation include social identity theory (Ashforth and Mael, 1989; Haslam, 2004) and social categorisation theory based on the work of the social psychologists Henri Tajfel and John Turner. Social identity theory focuses on the ways individuals identify with groups, through "relatively simple" (Brown, 2001) processes of categorisation of self and others, and the cognitive and affective consequences of that identification (Brown, 1996).

Ibarra's (1999) study, discussed further in Chapter Three, is located within the functionalist orientation. She draws specifically on the work of Ashforth and Mael (1989) in giving her "definition" of identity as "the various meanings attached to a person by self and others (Gecas, 1982)... based on people's social roles and group memberships (social identities) as well as the personal and character traits they display and others attribute to them based on their conduct (personal identities) (Gecas, 1982; Ashforth and Mael, 1989)" (Ibarra, 1999, p.766).

2.2.2 Interpretivist orientations to identity

Interpretivist orientations to research can be traced back to the hermeneutic tradition (Gioia, 1998) and to interests in understandings of human experiences (Alvesson *et al.*, 2008a). Although within the same broad interpretivist orientation, studies which draw upon a relational social constructionist epistemology as distinct from a

symbolic interactionist social constructionist epistemology do not share the same ontological commitments. However, studies from both epistemological commitments tend to engage with self-identity at the micro level and have an interest in how individuals construct through interaction a sense of self (Alvesson *et al.,* 2008a).

Interpretivist studies on self and identity include those taking a symbolic interactionist social constructionist perspective. In contrast to the functionalist orientation, such studies conceive of identity as a "socially and symbolically constructed notion" (Gioia, 1998, p.27), with an individual's sense of self being an accomplishment of interpersonal interactions (Cerulo, 1997). The notion of identity as a narrative and storied resource (Smith and Sparkes, 2008) construction, as conceived by relational social constructionists, shares the symbolic interactionist view that identity is social and relational. Narrative studies are part of the "linguistic turn" (Brown and Coupland, 2005; Currie and Brown, 2003; Smith and Sparks, 2008; Watson, 2006) which considers that identity is discursively constructed.

A key theoretical concept within the interpretivist orientation is "identity work" (Alvesson *et al.*, 2008a) which examines the specific processes and influences on identity construction (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003). This concept and a critical evaluation of the ideas of different writers from within the symbolic interactionist social constructionist (including Schlenker, 1980; Harré and van Langenhove, 1999c; Brown and Jones, 2000) and relational constructionist perspectives (including Beech and McInnes, 2006; Watson, 2008; Beech, 2008) are given in Section 2.4.

2.2.3 Critical orientations to identity

Critical orientations are often influenced by poststructuralism (Alvesson *et al.*, 2008a) and postmodernism (Gioia, 1998). It is beyond the scope of this study to differentiate these perspectives or to explore fully the ontological and epistemological assumptions underpinning poststructuralism and postmodernism. This is not least because postmodernism "challenge[s]... most current ontological, epistemological, and methodological assumptions... including its very own" (Gioia, 1998, p.28). However, according to Chia (1995, p.581), postmodernist thinking privileges an ontology of "becoming". Writers taking a critical orientation to identity may agree with interpretivists that identity is socially constructed (Gioia, 1998). However, critical studies tend to construe identity as a power effect (Alvesson *et al.*,

2008a; Brown, 2001) and as a "complex outcome of processes of subjugation and resistance" (Brown, 2001, p.115). Studies often engage with issues of self-identity at the macro level of broader context relations and discourses and focus on ways in which individuals resist and are liberated from "the various repressive relations that tend to constrain agency" (Alvesson *et al.,* 2008a, p.9).

Key theoretical notions, associated with critical orientations, are "identity control" (Alvesson *et al.*, 2008a) and "identity regulation" (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002). Studies challenge organisational control tactics wielded by organisational elites including managers (Alvesson *et al.*, 2008a) and through managerially-inspired discourses which attempt to regulate employees and their identities. This orientation is affiliated to a more political and emancipatory perspective, exploring and advocating ways in which employees accommodate, reject and resist organisational efforts on identity regulation.

Having introduced the three philosophical orientations and summarised their primary levels of engagement with self-identity as well as their ontological and epistemological assumptions, the next section considers the shared and contested features of self-identity. It also explores processes of self-identity construction associated particularly with the interpretivist orientation.

2.3 Features of self-identity and identity construction processes within and across the three philosophical orientations

This section explores shared and contested features of identity drawing, where appropriate, on each of the three philosophical orientations, namely functionalist, interpretivist and critical. It considers also epistemological commitments, particularly symbolic interactionist social constructionist, relational social constructionist and poststructuralist, relating to self-identity. The features of self-identity explored in this section cover: self-as-entity and self-as-process; stability, consistency and coherence of self; singularity and multiplicity of self; the importance of language and discourse in shaping the self; and self and social context. The first feature relates to self-as-entity and self-as-process.

2.3.1 Self as entity and self as process

Studies, within the functionalist orientation, tend to focus on collective identity and conceive this as a set of shared, 'natural', or 'essential' attributes or characteristics which individual members of a particular collective associate with, internalise and use to construct a sense of self (Cerulo, 1997). The self, then, is often treated as if it were an entity (Harré, 1998), with a set of core characteristics and a fixed and abiding essence (Alvesson *et al.*, 2008a).

Writers from the interpretivist and critical orientations take an anti-essentialist view of the self (Cerulo, 1997). Symbolic interactionists, working within the interpretivist orientation, conceptualise identity as an "interactional accomplishment... continually renegotiated via linguistic exchange and social performance" (Cerulo, 1997, p.387). However, writers within symbolic interactionism may still view identity as a relatively stable entity.

Writers from the relational social constructionist perspective within interpretivism, as well as critical poststructuralists, move concepts of identity away from the 'entitative' self towards a dynamic, relational view (Watson, 2008), and towards identity as "a temporary, context-sensitive and evolving set of constructions" (Alvesson *et al.*, 2008a, p.6). For instance, Linstead and Thomas (2002, p.1), in taking a poststructuralist perspective, give an objective of their study as "mov[ing] beyond the existing studies of managerial identities as changing but relatively stable, towards the recognition of identity construction as... characterized by paradox, fluidity, inconsistency and emergence".

The notion of identity as emergent and the conception that the self is always in the process of "becoming" is central to relational social constructionism and includes the work of Watson (1994a), Watson and Harris (1999), Bryans and Mavin (2003) and Parker (2004). Watson and Harris (1999) entitle their book *The Emergent Manager* to emphasise that, in their view, there is no single, obvious point at which an individual becomes a manager, with the process of managing being a part of life and other, for instance professional, activities before one takes on a title of 'manager'. However, the term emergent and the concept of becoming are also integral to their "processual, relational, discursive or constructionist style of thinking about human beings and their social worlds" (Watson and Harris, 1999, p.17). This style of

thinking rejects the orthodox view of a person as an entity or a relatively fixed being with individual properties. The emphasis moves from 'being' to 'becoming', with people and their understanding of the 'reality' of themselves, others and their worlds being socially constructed through the way they talk with and relate to others.

This perspective on 'becoming' is also emphasised by Parker who explains why he deliberately uses the phrases "becoming manager" and "began becoming", in his autobiographical account, in order to reject any assumption that "the identity of manager is something fixed or final" (Parker, 2004, p.45), or that it has the same meaning for all managers. Kondo (1990) also explains the reasons for choosing *Crafting Selves* as the title of her exploration, within the critical orientation, of power, gender and identity in a Japanese workplace. These reasons include her views that "identity is not a static *object*, but a creative *process*: hence craft*ing* selves is an ongoing – indeed a lifelong – occupation" (Kondo, 1990, p.48) and people are "constantly *becoming,* crafting themselves in particular, located situations for particular ends" (Kondo, 1990, p.257).

2.3.2 Stability, consistency and coherence of self

The extent to which identities are stable, consistent and coherent or changing, fragmented and fractured is also contended in the literature on identity (Alvesson *et al.*, 2008a). Identity is said to be coherent when there is a sense of continuity and recognisability over time and between different situations and experiences (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002).

The psychosocial perspective portrays the individual as a conscious decision maker and agent who, through self-reflection on experiences drawing on interior cognitive structures (Smith and Sparkes, 2008), strives to construct a coherent identity in order to give a degree of "existential continuity and security" (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002, pp.625-6). This psychosocial perspective, which emphasizes the "essential", "real" or "authentic" self (Smith and Sparkes, 2008), regards the individual as being endowed with an identity. I have therefore located this perspective at the boundary of functionalist and interpretivist orientations.

Reflexiveness and self-consciousness are central tenets of Giddens' notion of self-identity as "the self as reflexively understood by the person in terms of his or her biography" (Giddens 1991, p.53). For Giddens, continuity of identity across time and

space is achieved through reflexive interpretation by the individual. However, Collinson (2003), writing from a critical orientation, contends that self-consciousness may serve both as the medium and outcome of insecurities, as we develop anxieties for instance about who we are and what others think of us. Knights and Willmott (1999) go further by arguing that the pursuit of a unified, coherent and consistent self is illusory. In their view insecurity, as an existential condition, cannot be avoided and attempts to secure a stable identity can actually reinforce insecurities. They contest, therefore, Giddens' conception of self-identity as a reflexively organised endeavour in the search for ontological security and argue that attempts to do so are likely to be self-defeating. This view of the futility and contradictory outcomes of attempts to overcome insecurities is developed by Collinson who concludes that individuals may become the "victims of their own identity-seeking preoccupations" (Collinson, 2003, p.533) as they engage in the illusory search for a secure, stable and coherent sense of identity.

Those advocating a critical and poststructuralist perspective, therefore, problematise the concept of the unitary, consistent and coherent self (Knights and Willmott, 1999). Hall, taking a critical orientation, strongly argues for the rejection of the essentialist and stable conception of identity: "The concept of identity... is not an essentialist, but a strategic and positional one... (it) does *not* signal that core of the self, unfolding from the beginning to end through all the vicissitudes of history without change.... identities are never unified and, in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured" (Hall, 2000, p.17). The concept of positional identity also features in Kondo's (1990, p.304) conceptualisation of identities as "nodal points repositioned in different contexts".

Watson (2008, p.124), writing from a relational social constructionist perspective, is critical of the tendency of the poststructuralist approach to "resist any temptation to see people's selves becoming 're-centred' through their own efforts". Social constructionist and relational social constructionist thinking tends to assume that human beings have a need for stability of identity but recognise that this may be enduring only to the extent that the social context affirms the situation-specific identity. Rather identity is in a more or less constant state of flux as individuals negotiate and renegotiate their self identities in relation to, and in response to, others in particular social contexts.

Having considered the stability, consistency and coherence of self, discussion in the next section elaborates on the notion of the singularity and multiplicity of self. This discussion will include consideration of the notion of personal and social identities and self as subject and object.

2.3.3 Singularity and multiplicity of self

Functionalist orientations view the self as an object and further differentiate personal identity from social identity (Alvesson *et al.*, 2008a). Personal identity usually refers to possessing, or believing oneself to have, a unique set of attributes (Harré, 1998). Social identity refers to one's own and others' perception of an individual as a member of a group (Alvesson *et al.*, 2008a). Studies within this orientation often explore how individuals align their personal and social identities, and draw on the concept of identification with social/collective identities based on the individual's personal values and emotional attachments. Writers within the functionalist orientation tend to regard personal identity as singular and unified. However, they also recognise that social identities, often discussed in terms of roles and role descriptions, are multiple and discontinuous.

Social constructionist theorists, including symbolic interactionists and relational social constructionists, view personal and social identities as connected and mutually constituted through discourse and communication (Alvesson *et al.*, 2008a). Harré (1998), taking a discursive psychological/psychosocial perspective, makes a distinction between personhood, which he uses to mean one's singularity as psychological beings, and identity, which he claims, in contemporary writing, is used to mean social identity, that is the individual belonging to a particular class, group or type. Harré (1998) also compares and contrasts the self with the self-concept which he defines as those things we believe or know about ourselves. In this view, the self is "*necessarily* private, the latter [the self-concept], at least in principle, could be, and often is, public" (Harré, 1998, p.53) (my emphasis).

Watson, writing from a relational social constructionist perspective, emphasises the connection between personal identity and social identity and argues that people make connections both "'outwards' to social others as well as 'inwards' towards the self" (Watson, 2008, p.140). Personal and social identities are negotiated through interactions with others and, in forming and reforming personal identity, the

individual draws on discourses available socially and culturally (Alvesson *et al.*, 2008a; Watson and Harris, 1999).

Symbolic interactionist social constructionists agree with relational social constructionists and poststructuralists that personal identities and social identities are attributes of discourse (Harré and van Langenhove, 1999d). However, there are significant ontological differences on the nature of personal identity across these three epistemological commitments. These differences, which also exist within symbolic interactionism, hinge around the self as both subject and object, and the stability and coherence of personal identity. Writers within the symbolic interactionist social constructionist perspective view the self as both subject and object. In other words, they derive "two 'selves' out of one self" (Kondrat, 1999, p.17) by making a theoretical distinction between the 'I' and 'Me'. These two constituents of the self build on the work of William James and his notion of the self-as-knower (the 'I') and the self-as-known (the 'Me') (Schlenker, 1980) and George Herbert Mead's concepts of the 'I', the 'Me' and the 'Generalized Other' in the process of self-formation (Knights and Willmott, 1999; Schlenker, 1980).

In his attempt to provide further theoretical clarity between the 'I' and 'Me', Harré develops the metaphorical linguistic separation of the self into three aspects (Self 1, Self 2 and Self 3) (Harré, 1998). Self 1 is a specific position in time and space, and the expression, through the use of 'I', of a single point of view, which Harré (1998) argues leads to a sense of self as a singularity. Self 2, which Harré regards as the person, represents the totality of personal attributes and displays of "dispositions and powers with the momentary psychological attributes discernible in the flow of private and public action" (Harré, 1998, p.16). Finally, Self 3 is the way we are perceived by others, and the way they ascribe to the individual the "multiple and shifting pattern" of dispositions, skills and abilities. Although Harré refers to attributes and dispositions in his definition of Self 2 and Self 3, he maintains that the self is not an entity: "[r]ather it is a site... from which a person perceives the world and a place from which to act" (Harré, 1998, p.3). Harré (1998) draws a parallel between Mead's use of the 'I' (which relates to Harré's Self1) and the 'Me' (relating to Self 2 and Self 3). Whereas Harré and van Langenhove (1999c, 1999d) view the self, expressed by 'I', as singular, Moghaddam, writing within the same symbolic interactionist social constructionist perspective and accepting the distinction between the 'I' and the 'Me', rejects the notion of the 'I' as "speaking with a singular

voice" (Moghaddam, 1999, p.78) and instead has a multivocal and dialogical conceptualisation of 'I'.

The notion of *The Singular Self* (Harré, 1998), which is viewed as relatively stable and continuous, creates therefore another ambiguity about the concept of self. Because "each human being is the seat of just one person (one selfhood) but of many personas" (Harré and van Langenhove, 1999a, p.6), the way in which the notion of continuous personal identity relates to a multiplicity of discontinuous social identities (Harré and van Langenhove, 1999c, 1999d; Davies and Harré, 1999) seems to present an ontological paradox. Harré and van Langenhove argue that, because "both personal and social identities are attributes of discourse... [and because] there is nothing to which the discourse of selfhood refers except itself" (Harré and van Langenhove, 1999d, p.61), the apparent internal contradiction disappears.

Hermans (2001, p.248) writes from the dialogic self perspective and conceptualises

> the self in terms of a dynamic multiplicity of relatively autonomous *I*-positions... The *I* fluctuates among different and even opposed positions, and has the capacity imaginatively to endow each position with a voice so that dialogical relations between positions can be established... resulting in a complex, narratively structured self

Hermans (2001) contends that a particular feature of the dialogical self is the combination of continuity and discontinuity. Discontinuity comes from the multiplicity of positions that one person can occupy. The many *I*-positions are negotiated spatially and temporally both in internal relations with the self and in internal-external relations with the other. The continuity of the dialogical self is based on the work of William James (cited by Hermans, 2001) who conceived of the self, comprising the *I* and the *Me*, as "'extended' to the environment" (Hermans, 2001, p.244). It is through this extension to the environment and to what is 'mine' (for example, *my* husband, *my* children, *my* friends) that one derives a sense of continuity.

Watson (2008) argues that a clear analytical distinction needs to be made between what he considers to be internal personal identities and external discursive social identities and, to distinguish his notions from social identity theory, he uses the hyphenated terms "self-identity" and "social-identity". For Watson social-identities are "personified elements of discourse" which are "meaningful, accessible, and

appealing or unappealing to the individual... in a way that the abstractions of a 'discourse' [are] not" (Watson, 2008, p.129). According to Watson (2008), social-identities are cultural phenomena, external to selves, and take the form of discursive notions of publicly-available "personas" (Watson, 2008, p.127) or social roles including, for instance, notions of *the manager*. Social-identities are, therefore, "inputs into self-identities (mediated by identity work) rather than elements of self-identities as such" (Watson, 2008, p.131).

Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003) also use the term self-identity but in a different way to Watson (2008). They make a distinction between self and identity, and use the term self-identity to refer to

> some*thing* 'deeper', more personal and 'non-accessible' than identity. For us, identity relates more to the (conscious) struggle to respond to the question 'who am I?' and is of a somewhat more linguistic and social nature.... Identity and self fuel each other and indicate different layers of self-understanding (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003, p.1168) (my emphasis)

By extension of their argument, this implies that they regard the self as 'a somewhat less linguistic and social nature', moving on the continuum presented in Figure 2.1 towards conceptualising self as a psychosocial process.

Relational social constructionists as well as critical poststructuralists view and define self and identity in the plural. Collinson, writing from a critical poststructuralist orientation, supports this view and proposes that we rarely, if ever, experience a singular or unitary sense of self because of the many subjective positions we occupy simultaneously: "While some of these coexisting identities are mutually reinforcing, others may be in tension, mutually contradictory and even incompatible" (Collinson, 2003, p.534). Kondo (1990), taking a critical orientation, shares this view and also stresses that identity-related conflicts, ambiguities and multiplicities are not simply the effect of different positionings in society but are associated also with ambiguities and multiplicities in interpretation *within* the self. Hall similarly claims that identities are "never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions" (Hall, 2000, p.17).

Hall's (2000) consideration of the effect of discourses on identity leads to consideration of the next feature, that of the importance of language and discourse in shaping the self.

2.3.4 The importance of language and discourse in shaping the self

Language and discourse, and the continuous creation and re-creation of selves (Humphreys and Brown, 2002) through discursive practice, are central to relational social constructionism. The view that identities are linguistic acts and accomplishments (Kornberger and Brown, 2007) is shared by Giddens who considers that a person's identity is "the capacity *to keep a particular narrative going*" (Giddens, 1991, p.54, emphasis in original). In making sense of, and in authoring meaningful accounts of, their self-identities (Watson and Harris, 1999; Kornberger and Brown, 2007), an individual draws on discursive resources, including labelling and descriptions (Kornberger and Brown, 2007) and categories and concepts made available in his or her culture (Watson and Harris, 1999).

Poststructuralists also accept the relationship between identity and discourse but emphasise how an individual's notion of "who and what they are is shaped by the discourses which surround them" (Watson, 2008, p.124). In other words, those writing within the critical poststructuralist orientation draw attention to the power of local discursive practices and how language is both a means of authoring self and a medium of social control and power (Brown and Coupland, 2005).

Some poststructuralist studies minimise and even eliminate the individual's agency in using language to constitute the self – "language is not an expression of subjectivity, rather... it is what constitutes subjectivity.... Discourses are not produced or mastered by the individual, they rather... position the person in the world in a particular way prior to the individual having any sense of choice" (Alvesson, 2003, p.23). Hall, taking this critical orientation, shares this extreme view and considers that "identities are points of temporary attachment to the subject positions which discursive practices construct for us" (Hall, 2000, p.19). Working from this premise it follows, therefore, that subjectivity, as an effect of the power and plurality of discourses, is unstable, ambiguous, fluctuating and limited in time and space (Alvesson, 2003).

However relational social constructionist and some poststructuralist approaches recognise that individuals are neither "passive receptacles or carriers of discourses" (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002, p.628) nor "passive entities who are totally determined by external forces" (Collinson, 2003, p.542). Individuals interpret and are

inventive in the way they mobilise and enact discourses (Kondo, 1990; Alvesson and Willmott, 2002). Kondo (1990) particularly stresses this point and explains that one of the reasons for choosing *Crafting Selves* as the title of her book is because crafting implies a concept of agency. Although she believes that individuals do "create, construct, work on and enact their identities" (Kondo, 1990, p.48), she also recognises that social, cultural, historical and political constraints, expressed through discourses, can and do challenge the crafting of selves. The social, cultural and political constraints on self are explored in the next section.

2.3.5 Self and social context

Scholars within the psychosocial perspective acknowledge the role of the larger social context in identity construction, but give primacy to the individual over the social (Smith and Sparkes, 2008). Whilst psychosocial perspectives accept, therefore, that identities have a social element, this is played down with identity being conceived as more situated in the person that the social context.

However, for those committed to social constructionism, including both symbolic interactionism and relational social constructionism, the self is viewed as inseparable from society (Giddens, 1991) and both the individual and social are considered equally important to identity construction (Smith and Sparkes, 2008). Social constructionists view identity as inter-subjectively interdependent (Wetherell and Maybin, 1996; Smith and Sparkes, 2008) and inextricably related to interpersonal interactions and social and cultural context (Kondo, 1990; Stevens and Wetherell, 1996; Kondrat, 1999). Those taking a relational social constructionist perspective (such as Watson, 1994a, 2006; Watson and Harris, 1999; Cunliffe, 2008) view the individual as always in relation to others, whether they are present or not, (Cunliffe, 2008) and immersed within a larger cultural, historical, political and economic context (Kondo, 1990). Somers (1994, p.622, emphasis in original) argues that "*all* identities... must be analysed in the context of relational and cultural matrices because they do not 'exist' outside of those complexes".

Critical and poststructuralist perspectives share the view that individuals are embedded within societal and relational contexts. However, in contrast to relational social constructionists, critical orientations take a more radical view that social relatedness precedes subjectivity (Smith and Sparkes, 2008). From this perspective,

there is no, or a very limited, notion of the self as independent, instead the self is constituted by and within relationship (Smith and Sparkes, 2008).

Having reviewed shared and contested features of self, identity and identity construction processes, the next section confirms the understandings of identity which I employ in this thesis.

2.3.6 Understandings of identity employed in the thesis

I am taking, in this study, an interpretivist orientation and engaging with identity at the micro level in developing theoretical understandings of how individuals construct identities through interaction. Further to consideration of the features of identity which are shared and contested within and across the three philosophical orientations, the following positionings are taken up in this study:

Self-as-entity and self-as-process: the positioning of this particular study is relational social constructionist which conceives of the self as always in the process of "becoming" (Kondo, 1990; Watson, 1994a; Watson and Harris, 1999; Bryans and Mavin, 2003; Parker, 2004). I therefore reject the functional orientation of the self-as-entity and consider that individuals socially construct their identities in a processual, relational and discursive way.

Stability, consistency and coherence of self: I appreciate Linstead and Thomas' (2002, p.1) critical poststructuralist perspective of "identity construction as... characterized by paradox, fluidity, inconsistency and emergence". Therefore, I accept that stability of identity may be enduring only to the extent that the social context affirms the situation-specific identities claimed by the self or appropriated by others. However, I do not agree with views expressed by Knights and Willmott (1999) and Collinson (2003) that attempts to secure stability and coherence of identity are illusory or self-defeating. Individuals need a degree of ontological security and strive to become "re-centred" (Watson, 2008), through identity work processes, including the telling and retelling, in different contexts, of fragments of their ongoing narrative (Giddens, 1991) of self-identity. The individual fragments of narrative may be inconsistent but, taken with others developed over time, are part of identity work processes designed to give greater coherence to one's self-identity.

Singularity and multiplicity of self: My ontological and "epistemological commitments" (Johnson and Duberley, 2000, p.1) lead me to reject the functionalist orientation of self as object. Nor can I accept the theoretical distinctions between the 'I' and 'Me', developed within symbolic interactionist social constructionism by writers such as Harré (1998), Harré and van Langenhove (1999c, 1999d) and Moghaddam (1999). Therefore, I do not share Harré's (1998) view on the meaning of identity nor do I share his dual ontological view based on the separation of psychological/symbolic and physiological aspects of self. I do not accept Sveningsson and Alvesson's (2003, p.1168, my emphasis) distinction between self and identity as I do not conceive the self as "some*thing* deeper, more personal and 'non-accessible' than identity". Although, like Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003), I intend to use the term self-identity, unlike them, my interpretation of the term conveys the integration of self and identity. Instead I view self-identity as the process, and outcome, of identity work. In this sense I use the term in a similar way to Watson (2008), in his distinction between 'self-identities' and 'social-identities'. I, also, share the relational social constructionist and poststructuralist perspectives of self-identity as multiple.

The importance of language and discourse in shaping the self: Language and discourse are central to my conceptualisation of identity. I draw on Gidden's (1991, p.54) notion of identity as "the capacity to keep a narrative going" and consider that it is through language and linguistic acts (Kornberger and Brown, 2007) that individuals develop meanings of, and express, their self-identities. I also consider that, in constructing their self-identities, individuals draw on the local and broader discourses which surround them. However, I do not share the extreme views of some poststructuralist scholars, such as Hall (2000, p.19) that "identities are points of temporary attachment to the subject positions which discursive practices construct for us". Rather, I believe that individuals do exercise agency in constituting their self-identities, although also accept, following Kondo (1990), that social, cultural, historical and political constraints might limit individual agency.

Self and social context: I conceive identity as inter-subjectively interdependent (Wetherell and Maybin, 1996; Smith and Sparkes, 2008) and inextricably related to interpersonal interactions and social and cultural context (Kondo, 1990; Stevens and Wetherell, 1996; Kondrat, 1999). I, therefore, share Cunliffe's (2008, p.129) view that "we are always selves-in-relation-to-others".

To summarise, consistent with the interpretivist orientation, and more specifically the relational constructionist approach discussed in this section, my understandings of identity are that it is multi-faceted with the following features:

- Identity is emergent, that is the self is a process of perpetual 'becoming'

- Identity is unstable and insecure, however an individual's attempts to secure a degree of stability and coherence are not futile

- Identity is multiple, that is an individual can occupy simultaneously many subjective positions with some of these being "mutually reinforcing [and] others being in tension, mutually contradictory and even incompatible" (Collinson, 2003, p.534)

- Identity is shaped by language and discourse, with the individual being an active agent in using language and discursive resources and practices to constitute the self. However, agency may be constrained by social relations, including obligations to others, as well as power effects of local and broader discourses

- Identity is relationally- and socially-constituted, that is individuals derive meaning about the self in relation to others, and by drawing on discursive resources embedded within their social and cultural context

The next section explores the key theoretical concept of identity work, which is often associated with interpretivist orientations to self-identity and is central to this thesis.

2.4 Identity work

Theoretically it might be argued that everyone does "work" on (Watson, 2006, p.95) their identities all the time, in keeping *"a particular narrative going"* (Giddens, 1991, p.54, emphasis in original). This leads Alvesson and Willmott (2002, p.626) and Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003, p.1165) to conceive of identity work as a continuous process through which individuals "form, repair, maintain, strengthen or revise" their identities.

However, a distinction can be made between active and "comparatively unselfconscious" (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002, p.626) identity work. Views on the constancy or flux of active identity work vary from more or less continuous to episodic. For instance, as discussed in section 2.3.2, critical poststructuralists conceive identity as "increasingly fragmented and fractured" (Hall, 2000, p.17). Some writers suggest that such instability of identity induces active identity work as a relatively continuous process (Alvesson, 2000; Alvesson and Willmott, 2002; Musson and Duberley, 2007; Alvesson *et al.*, 2008a). For instance, Alvesson (2000) suggests that people engage routinely in identity work as a means of coping with everyday work tasks, and stresses and strains in social relations. Others consider that more intensive and more conscious identity work is triggered by crisis (Beech, 2008; Lutgen-Sandvik, 2008), radical role transitions (Hill, 1992; Watson and Harris, 1999; Ibarra, 1999, 2003) or other forms of specific events, encounters, experiences or surprises (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002). Yet others suggest that limited active identity work is needed in "comparatively stable or routinized life situations" (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002, p.626).

In all cases, identity work, whether conscious or not, seems to be related to a need to strive for a coherent, distinctive and positively valued self (Alvesson, 2000; Alvesson and Willmott, 2002; Lutgen-Sandvik, 2008, Alvesson *et al.*, 2008a). Identity work also seems to be intensified by a combination of confusion and conflict within the individual and in the relational and social context (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002; Alvesson *et al*, 2008a; Linstead and Thomas, 2002). For Lutgen-Sandvik, a striving for ontological security underpins identity work. With reference to, in her view, the "ongoing modern-postmodern" (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2008, p.114) debate about stable versus fragmented self-identity, she considers that identity work "mediates the poles of modernism and postmodernism by ceaselessly pulling toward the former while grappling with the latter" (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2008, p.114).

Watson (2008, p.127, emphasis in original) contends that Sveningsson and Alvesson's (2003) definition of identity work places too much emphasis on "the ***self*** or 'internal' aspect of identity". He presents an alternative conceptualisation of identity work as projecting "'outwardly' as well as 'inwardly'":

> Identity work involves the mutually constitutive processes whereby people strive to shape a relatively coherent and distinctive notion of personal self-identity and struggle to come to terms with and, within limits, to influence the

> various social-identities which pertain to them in the various milieux in which they live their lives (Watson, 2008, p.129).

The mutually constitutive processes of identity work are shared by Alvesson and Willmott (2002), writing within the critical orientation, who suggest that self-identity is sustained through identity work which is prompted, informed and, to some extent, conditioned by organisational identity regulation practices. In conceiving of identity work as a dialogic process, Beech (2008) agrees with its mutually constitutive nature and also draws attention to how identity work and identity-construction meanings, accomplished through dialogue, are mediated by, and renegotiated with, other(s). Negotiation with others is extended to negotiation with self through Watson's (2008, p.130) notion of "inward/internal self-reflection and outward/external engagement – through talk and action". This also links with Kondo's (1990, p.307) notion of selves as "rhetorical assertions, produced by our linguistic conventions, which we narrate and perform for each other". Both she and Beech (2008) emphasise the performance-based component of identity work. The rhetorical, dialogic, and performance-based components of identity work also connect with the notion of identity work as a narrative (Giddens, 1991).

The inclusion of "to influence various social-identities which pertain to them" within Watson's (2008, p.129) conceptualisation of identity work and Alvesson and Willmott's (2002, p.637) conclusion that individuals can create "space for micro-emancipation and quasi-autonomy" from organisational attempts to regulate and control self identity, emphasise the agential processes of identity work. As noted in 2.3.4 above, agency is explicit in Kondo's (1990) understanding of identity work. She discusses how people constitute their selves through social relations and "obligations to others" (Kondo, 1990, p.22) but may be constrained by the power effects of particular relations and discourses. Beech, conceiving identity work as a dialogic process, also accepts that individuals are agential and act "with intention" (Beech, 2008, p.65). However, he cautions that whilst some self-identity constructions are agential and deliberate, other attempts may be less effective. Similarly, Musson and Duberley (2007, p.147) state that identity work is active but "not limitless", and one is constrained, as well as enabled, by factors including material conditions, cultural traditions and relations of power.

Having reviewed the nature of identity work, the next section reviews identity work processes within the existing literature.

2.4.1 Identity work and positioning

The relationship between relational aspects of identity construction and "obligations to others" (Kondo, 1990, p.22), noted above and which she emphasised through her study, is central to positioning theory (Davies and Harré, 1990, 1999; Harré and van Langenhove, 1991, 1999c).

The concept of positioning is "complex and ephemeral" (Harré, 1998, p.58), involving exploration of the relationship: between the speaker and what is being said; between self as speaker and other(s) as listener(s); and to dominant broader discourses and social practices and their underlying power structures (de Fina, Schiffrin and Bamberg, 2006, p.7). Through analyses of positionings, personal agency in interactions (de Fina *et al.*, 2006) can be explored. Writers (such as Davies and Harré, 1991; Harré and van Langenhove, 1991, 1999a, 1999d; van Langenhove and Harré, 1999) view agency as bi-directional with, on the one hand, socio-cultural forces in the form of dominant discourses positioning speakers and, on the other hand, speakers being agential in positioning themselves in relation to both others and dominant discourses. This bi-directional view of agency in relation to self and other is conceptualised by Harré and van Langenhove (1991, p.440) and van Langenhove and Harré (1999, p.24) through four types of intentional positioning. These are deliberate and forced self-positionings and deliberate and forced other-positionings (Table 2.1):

Table 2.1: Types of intentional positioning

	Agential positioning	Limited or non-agential positioning
Self-positioning	Deliberate self-positioning	Forced self-positioning
Other-positioning	Deliberate positioning of others	Forced positioning of others

Adapted from: van Langenhove and Harré (1999, p.24)

Positioning theory recognises that several types of positioning occur simultaneously within social interactions. Although Harré and van Langenhove (1991) describe these as intentional positioning types, the process of using language to construct

positionings may not necessarily be deliberate or intentional (Potter and Wetherell, 1987). Therefore, the four types, presented in table 2.1 above and discussed below, are offered as an analytical device in order to draw distinctions between the ways in which the positionings occur:

- Deliberate self-positioning is expressed through use of 'I' (Harré and van Langenhove, 1991), and sometimes 'we' when this is used to refer to the first person singular. This positioning may be viewed as a strategic "rhetorical assertion" (Kondo, 1990, p.307) of self-identity

- Forced self-positioning differs only from deliberate self-positioning in that the intentional positioning is initiated not by the self but by the other(s) (Harré and van Langenhove, 1991). Forced self-positioning includes positioning through discursive and social, including institutional, practices

- Deliberate positioning of others by self can be done both in the presence and absence of the other(s) being positioned. When the other is present, deliberate positioning by self makes a positioning of the other which may be taken up or rejected. This type of positioning can involve making a moral criticism, or moral reproach, of the other. (Harré and van Langenhove, 1991)

- Forced positioning by the self of others, like deliberate positioning of others, can occur either in the presence or absence of the person(s) being intentionally positioned. It occurs when the self positions a second person (e.g. the listener) to position a third person (Harré and van Langenhove, 1991). This type of positioning will not be the subject of this study.

Because positioning is mutually-constitutive, positioning of the self also involves explicit or implicit positioning of the other. Identities are socially- and situationally-specific constructions with identity positionings being both conferred, through positioning of self by others, and actively claimed and contested, through positioning of self and others by self. Every positioning of self or the other also involves expression of the "local moral order" and "standing" (Harré, 1998, p.58) of the self and the other within a situationally-specific context. In other words, according to van Langenhove and Harré (1999a), positioning theory incorporates also "the study of local moral orders as ever-shifting patterns of mutual and contestable rights and

obligations of speaking and acting" (Harré and van Langenhove, 1999a, p.1). Harré (1998, pp.18-19) contends that the local moral order "stands outside" of discourse. He draws on a dualist ontology and epistemology in arguing that "[t]here could be no discourse, no conversation at all, unless there were in place all sorts of practices in which certain reciprocal grantings of rights were immanent" (Harré, 1998, p.19). As discussed in Section 2.3, these ontological and epistemological assumptions are contested by this thesis. Therefore, the thesis contends that the local moral order does not stand outside of discourse but is discursively constructed. Adapting Harré's (1998) standpoint, my conceptualisation of the local moral order is as *discursively constructed* orderings of "such moral relations as mutual duty and obligations and by multiple patterns of status relations" (Harre, 1998, p.57) (my emphasis shows the distinction in ontological commitment).

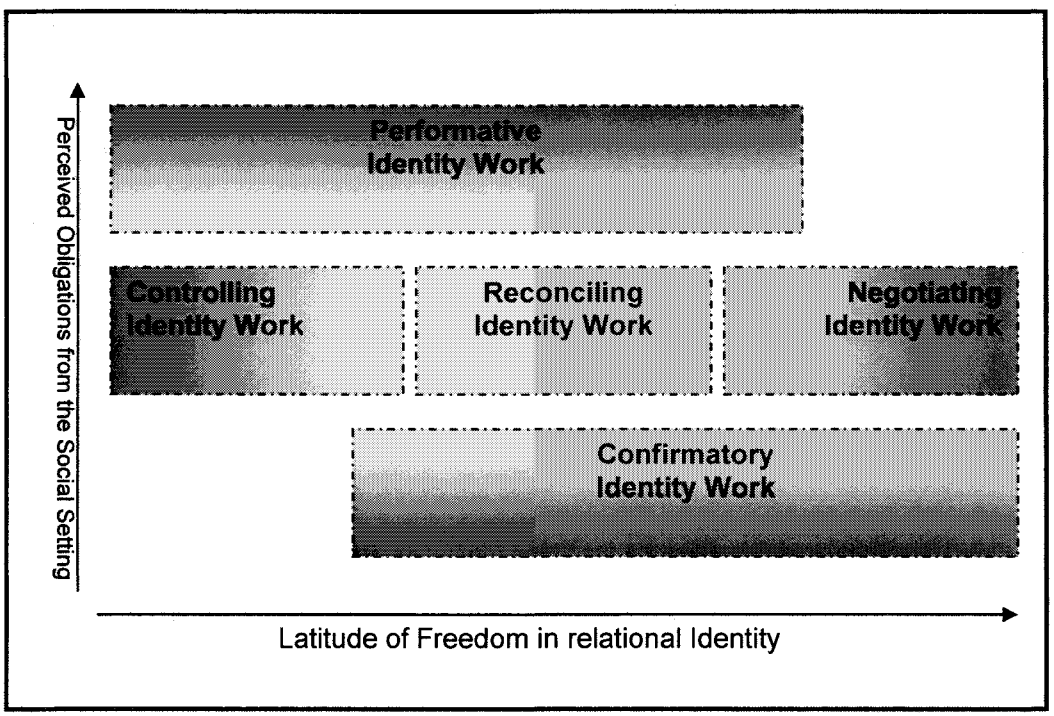
Just as there is a multiplicity of moral duties and obligations in any given social context, there is a "multiplicity of socially constructed moralities" (Watson, 2003, p.173) which individuals draw on as discursive resources in asserting their "moral standings" (Harré, 1998, p.62). The multiplicity of moralities might contribute to the self-identity ambiguity experienced by an individual in a given social context because the perceived rights, duties and obligations may "conflict with each other in a way that is irreconcilable" (Watson, 2003, p.177). This contributes to the "complex and ephemeral" (Harré, 1998, p.58) nature of positioning theory.

To elucidate further the moral order, Harré and van Langenhove (1999b, p.198) make an analytical distinction between duties, obligations and rights. They consider duties as generic and derived from an individual's "powers and capacities". Obligations are entered into, by the self, towards others and include both explicit and implicit undertakings of what the individual might or will do for others. Like duties, Harré and van Langenhove (1999b) regard rights as generic but consider that these are derived from vulnerabilities. As the concept of vulnerability is central to this thesis, I will elaborate on this point with an illustrative example. A manager may challenge the gendered forced self-positioning of 'a woman manager' because it engenders vulnerability towards the Other (ie 'a man manager', in this example). This may trigger the woman to reject the forced self-positioning by other as a 'woman manager' and to renegotiate a more appropriate positioning for her self. She may attempt to achieve this through forced self-positioning and by making "rhetorical assertions" (Kondo, 1990), for instance, of her rights to be viewed as equal to a

'man manager'. For another woman, or for the same woman in a different social-relational context (for instance, when with other female managers) such positioning might be unproblematic. Therefore, the level of positioning (in this example at the level of gender) is appropriate for analytical attention when the individual challenges the positioning at that level.

Beech and McInnes (2006) have produced a developmental conceptual framework which has similarities with positioning theory. Their framework, which they refer to as a model or matrix, explores identity work processes centred on the self, others and the social context. The matrix (see Figure 2.2 below) is framed by two organising questions: the extent to which individuals "believe themselves to have latitude, or freedom of movement, in the relational definition between self and other" (Beech and McInnes, 2006, p.3) and; the extent to which individuals "perceive themselves to be under obligations" (Beech and McInnes, 2006, p.3) imposed by the social context. McInnes (2008) explained that it was intended that the labelling of the relational identity dimension be "latitude of relational identity".

Figure 2.2 Relationships and obligations in identity work



Source: Beech, N & McInnes, P. (2006) 'Relationships and obligations in identity work', 22nd EGOS Colloquium, Bergen, p.11, fig.

Whilst Beech and McInnes (2006) use the term 'position' within their conference paper, they do not refer explicitly to positioning theory (Harré and van Langenhove, 1991, 1999c; Davies and Harré, 1990, 1999). However, there are clear connections between the two theoretical propositions. The bi-directional view of agency and positioning of self in relation to the other within positioning theory (Harré and van Langenhove, 1991, 1999c; Davies and Harré, 1991, 1999) mirrors Beech and McInnes' (2006) dimension of latitude of relational identity. Similarly, the concepts of local moral order and moral standing within positioning theory connect with Beech and McInnes' (2006) notion of perceived obligations from the social setting.

Within their framework Beech and McInnes (2006) develop five different types of identity work (see Fig. 2.2 and outlined below). They emphasise the inter-related nature of the different types of identity work, with individuals moving between them in constructing their self-identity with others in a situationally-specific context.

- Performative: where the individual feels under an obligation to perform a particular identity because of personal, social or institutional pressures to do so. In this case, obligations from the social setting are high. As can be seen from the breadth of the Performative Identity Work type, there is latitude of relational identity definition. However this is weighted towards a "relatively fixed definition of self by the other" (Beech and McInnes, 2006, p.6)

- Controlling: where the individual perceives there to be no or limited latitude to define self-identity, usually because of a mutual degree of obligation impinging on both the self and the other

- Reconciling: where the individual aligns their self-identity construction with the other. This type of identity work is characterised by both a degree of ambiguity relating to the relational identity of self and other as well as discussion about the social setting obligations. In contrast to controlling and negotiating types of identity work, this type of identity work involves a process of reconciling the identity positions of self and other

- Negotiating: where the individual explores and negotiates their self-identity because the relational definition of self and other is not fixed. This type of

identity work might occur in new relational situations where obligations between self and other are being explored

- Confirmatory: where the individual has latitude in defining self and other and low social obligations to perform a particular identity. This type of identity work "allowed both the self and other to maintain their self definition within their shared context" (Beech and McInnes, 2006, p.7) and may involve little active identity work

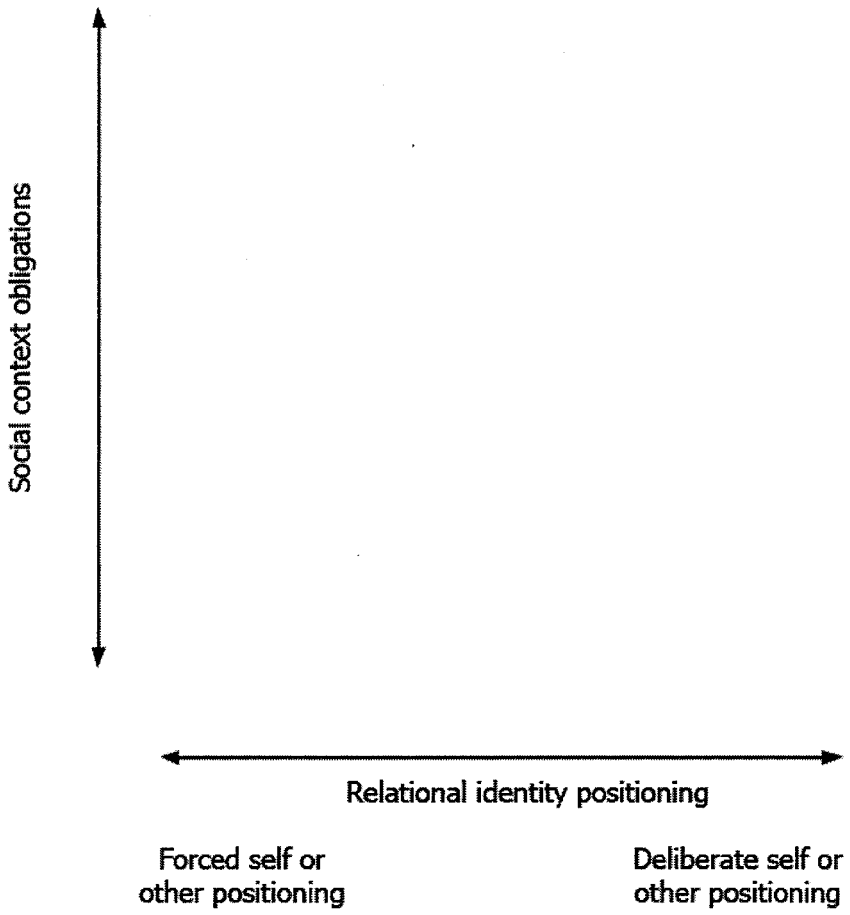
In addition to sharing concepts relating to relational identity positioning and social obligations within the wider social context, there are other similarities between Beech and McInnes' (2006) identity work processes and positioning theory (Harré and van Langenhove, 1991, 1999c; Davies and Harré, 1990, 1999). Both theoretical propositions view positionings and positions as fluid and ephemeral, emerging out of and changing within the discursive relational social context. Positionings may be "disrupted" (Beech and McInnes, 2006, p.12) or challenged by the other, generating negotiation and repositioning of self-identities. The two theoretical propositions also connect with Beech's (2008, p.68) argument that "the meaning of the identity construction is the sum of a set of 'meaning giving tensions' which are the spectra along which people can place themselves, and be placed by others".

As explained in the methodology chapter, and particularly in Section 4.4.4, my 'taking up' of the concept of positioning and positions emerged through this research study's data interpretation processes. Having reviewed the developmental model by Beech and McInnes (2006) in relation to positioning theory (Davies and Harré, 1990, 1999; Harré and van Langenhove, 1991, 1999c), this study has the potential to extend understandings of identity work processes, on the basis that the existing literature is "incomplete, inadequate and incommensurate" (Golden-Biddle and Locke, 2007, p.38). In some respects, the approaches to identity taken by Davies and Harré (1990, 1999), and Harré and van Langenhove (1991, 1999c) seem "incommensurate" (Golden-Biddle and Locke, 2007, p.38) with those of Beech and McInnes (2006). A "productive tension" (Alvesson *et* al, 2008a, p.9) exists in the way in which Harré (1998, pp.18-19) contends that the local moral order "stands outside" of discourse, whereas Beech and McInnes (2006) describe the mutual exploration and discussion about obligations from the social setting. This study shares Beech and McInnes' (2006) view that social obligations are discursively constructed in

given relational and social contexts. Therefore, in contrast to Harré (1998), this current study may bring new insights into identity work processes which presume discursive and dialogical approaches to social obligations.

However, in contrast to Beech and McInnes' (2006) conceptualisation of perceived obligations from the social setting, this thesis incorporates perceived rights and duties (Harré and van Langenhove, 1999b) in interpreting the "local moral order" (Harré and van Langenhove, 1999a, p.1). The refined framework will use the summary labelling of 'social context obligations' for this dimension. A refinement to Beech and McInnes' (2006) latitude of relational identity dimension is also made by the inclusion of deliberate and forced self and other positionings (van Langenhove and Harré, 1999). This dimension is referred to as 'relational identity positioning' in the refined framework (figure 2.3 below).

Figure 2.3 Relational identity positioning and social context obligations in identity work



Finally, the five types of identity work conceptualized by Beech and McInnes (2006) leave two apparent gaps in the framework (see Fig. 2.2). These are in the lower left hand and upper right hand corners. What type of identity work is characterised by low perceived social context obligations, incorporating rights and duties, and limited or no latitude of relational identity positioning? Similarly what type of identity work is characterised by high perceived social context obligations, incorporating rights and duties, and freedom in deliberately positioning self or other? These questions may be able to be answered through this current research, by using the refined conceptual framework to interpret the participants' accounts of personal predicaments. Personal predicaments are considered in the next section.

2.5 Personal predicaments

I accept that identity work is ongoing but have focused attention on the "episodic" character (Linstead and Thomas, 2002, p.3) of identity work, and the way that managers "periodically restructure and reconstruct" (Linstead and Thomas, 2002, p.3) their identities. This thesis asserts that specific episodes, and particularly those which are characterised by some type of personal predicament, trigger active and concentrated identity work. In Linstead and Thomas' (2002) study, the episodic identity construction processes were triggered by organisational restructure. In contrast to their study, the organisational context of the participants in this study is "comparatively stable" (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002), implying limited active identity work. Whilst the personal predicaments in this study are "specific events, encounters, [or] experiences" (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002), they are associated with the managers' everyday work tasks, and stresses and strains in social relations (Alvesson, 2000). Therefore the juxtaposition of the "specific events" (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002), ie personal predicaments, in a "comparatively stable" (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002) organisational context may provide further insights into "episodic" (Linstead and Thomas, 2002) identity work processes. I will develop further this argument in this section by developing my own conceptualisation of personal predicaments. Following that discussion, the existing literature of studies exploring identity work processes related to personal predicaments will be reviewed. The review of personal predicament specific identity work processes will draw on positioning theory employed by scholars with symbolic interactionist social constructionist, relational social constructionist and poststructuralist commitments.

According to The Encarta UK English dictionary [online], a predicament is "a difficult, unpleasant, or embarrassing situation from which there is no clear or easy way out". Schlenker, writing within the symbolic interactionist perspective, discusses personal predicaments in a specific, identity-related manner as:

> situations in which events have undesirable implications for the identity-relevant images actors have claimed or desire to claim in front of real or imagined audiences (Schlenker, 1980, p.125).

Predicaments can range in their severity, from relatively minor events, such as an embarrassing *faux pas*, through others' rejection of a negotiated identity, to more major transgressions of social, moral or legal norms or principles (Schlenker, 1980). This thesis does not consider legal transgressions. For Schlenker (1980), two main factors influence the severity of the predicament. These are the undesirability of the event for self-identity and the actor's perceived responsibility for the event. According to Schlenker (1980, p.131), major events may damage permanently one's identity, a view shared by Lutgen-Sandvik (2008) whose research into intensive remedial identity work in response to workplace bullying is discussed in 2.5.1 below.

Brown and Jones (2000) refer to the work of Schlenker (1980) in their conceptualisation of personal predicaments as situations in which an individual "privately recognizes that they have behaved in a manner discrepant with their beliefs about their self" (Brown and Jones, 2000, p.663). They continue that, in such a situation, the individual's self-esteem is challenged, leading to a state of psychological dissonance. In order to maintain a positive sense of self and to raise their self-esteem, the individual engages in identity work (which they view as sensemaking and impression management tactics) "prompted by the need... to obviate their subjective experience of dissonance" (Brown and Jones, 2000, p.656). This view of personal predicament and of related identity work draws heavily on the psychosocial processes of identity construction which is not shared by this thesis.

Alvesson and Willmott (2002, p.625) also consider that identity is "invariably related to self-esteem" and Watson (1994a) refers to repair identity work being triggered by "felt inadequacies and aspects of self which, it is feared, will not be seen positively by others" (Watson, 1994a, p.78). "Felt inadequacies" and personal predicaments are central to the identity work undertaken by an individual in Watson's (2008) study.

Statements from the individual's written autobiography and other written reflections on his life experiences, interpreted for the study, indicated "the existence in [the case study individual's] mind of a 'personal trouble' – one clearly associated with issues of identity" (Watson, 2008, p.133). The individual, a retired manager, is trying to deal with a "serious worry" (Watson, 2008, p.139). Watson (2008) notes that, through the autobiography and other written reflections, the individual is "doing both inward and outward facing identity work" (Watson, 2008, p.139). I would also suggest that the writing is part of his identity work attempts to "embellish or repair [his] sense of identity as a coherent narrative" (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002, p.627). For me, the publication of the autobiography as a form of outward facing identity work is significant.

The idea that "felt inadequacies" (Watson, 1994a, p.78) may trigger identity work supports Beech's (2008, p.69) observation that identity work is not "emotionally neutral". A detailed review of the concept of emotion, of the active management, expression and performance (Coupland *et al.*, 2008) of particular emotions such as vulnerability, and of the interrelationship between emotion, identity and identity work, is outside the scope of this study. However, this thesis shares Coupland *et al.*'s (2008) conceptualisation that emotions are socially-constructed and that "articulations of emotionality" (Coupland *et al.*, 2008, p.327) may be drawn upon as discursive and relational resources and strategies of identity work. In particular, this thesis argues that the significance of a personal predicament as an identity symbolic event may be indicated by "articulations of emotionality" (Coupland *et al.*, 2008, p.327). This research, therefore, has interest not in articulations of vulnerability, *per se*, but rather in these as signifiers of specific personal predicaments, in which the individual may engage in active identity work processes.

This thesis proposes that personal predicaments, which may include "personal troubles" (Watson, 2008, p.133), are identity-symbolic events triggering active identity work, involving both "inward and outward facing" processes (Watson, 2008, p.139), intended to "embellish or repair one's self-identity as a [more or less] coherent narrative" (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002, p.627). Without both inward-facing and outward-facing elements of identity work (Watson, 2008), the situationally-specific identity work processes and self-identity (re)construction are incomplete. When a predicament is experienced, an individual senses a challenge, rejection or other form of threat, initiated by self and/or other(s), to the self-identity.

The threat might be experienced through thoughts, feelings and expressions of embarrassment, including anxiety, vulnerability, shame, humiliation, guilt, sadness, or disappointment. As a means of coping with the personal predicament, and in a remedial attempt to achieve a degree of stability and coherence of self-identity, the individual engages in active, but not necessarily conscious, identity work.

Having offered a conceptualisation of personal predicaments and explained their significance for active identity work, the next section reviews studies of identity work processes triggered by personal predicaments.

2.5.1 Identity work processes associated with personal predicaments

The following studies are drawn from symbolic interactionist social constructionist, relational social constructionist and poststructuralist perspectives. Discussion of identity work processes includes justifications and excuses, drawing on the work of Schlenker (1980), and other narrative and discursive strategies.

Writing from within the symbolic interactionist tradition, Schlenker (1980) discusses three different types of identity work, which he terms impression management activities, associated with personal predicaments. These are retreat or flight from the event, "apologies" for it, and "accounts" of it (Schlenker, 1980, p.136). Schlenker further differentiates three forms of accounts: defenses/defences of innocence, excuses or justifications (Schlenker, 1980, p.137). Through defences of innocence, the individual tries to deny or minimise personal responsibility for the event, for instance they dissociate themselves from it by claiming that it did not occur or they were not involved in, or responsible for, it. In offering excuses, the individual admits implicitly or explicitly that the event occurred and that they had some part in it. However, they employ excuses, including citing unforeseen consequences or extenuating circumstances, to try to mitigate their responsibility. Like excuses, justifications acknowledge that the event occurred and the individual had some responsibility for it but, unlike excuses, they focus on the undesirable nature of the event. Schlenker (1980) discusses three overlapping ways to justify an event including: "directly minimizing the negativity of the event; comparing the event with similar ones that other people have been responsible for but for which they were not punished; and embedding the incident in the context of higher, more desirable goals that permit or even require the event under the given conditions" (Schlenker, 1980, p.144).

Justifications

Justifying a personal predicament on the grounds of higher, more desirable goals is a strategy employed by Watson's (2003) case study manager in dealing with particular moral dilemmas. Watson (2003) contends that by representing and justifying personal values and moral concerns on "business grounds" and in "business terms" gives scope for managers to make personally important moral inputs into strategic decision-making. Watson's case study manager is very clear that personal moral concerns cannot be brought into managerial work in a straightforward manner, for instance by "doing the right thing for the right reason" (Watson, 2003, p.169). However, this view is contradicted by Badaracco (1997) who proposes that individuals resolve the dilemmas associated with such moments by "following one's heart", validating the moral soundness of the decision through its resonance with one's sense of self. Badaracco (1997, p.6) refers to such conflicts of personal integrity ("who am I", p.13) and moral identity ("what do I stand for?", p.13) as "right-versus-right choices" (p.6) or "defining moments" (p.6). Such decisions and events "reveal, test and shape" (Badaracco, 1997, p.6) an individual's self-identity, are etched in an individual's memory and are often recollected with "an acute sense of vulnerability and uncertainty" (Badaracco, 1997, p.14). Badaracco's (1997) assertion about validating decisions by drawing on a "personal" sense of self is supported by McLaughlin's (2003) study. McLaughin (2003) observed that, in certain circumstances, medical professionals consciously articulate values constructed as personal to help defend and make legitimate their professional activities and decisions. Moral dilemmas may be considered to be one form of personal predicament, and there are clear links between one's moral identity and the duties, rights and obligations to others which are a feature of the identity work framework developed within this thesis. However, the concept of moral agency (Lovell, 2002; Watson, 2003; Butler, 2005) is outside the scope of this thesis.

Excuses

Brown and Jones (1998) analyse the differing narratives of various actors involved with the failure of an information system in a UK hospital. They propose that individuals drew on two types of narratives, of inevitability and of conspiracy. Both types are similar to Schlenker's (1980) notion of excuses, as they are used to absolve the individual of responsibility for the failure. In the first type, the narrative of

inevitability, the failure is presented as unavoidable, but not attributable to any particular individual or group. In the second type, the narrative of conspiracy, the failure is attributed to the intentional actions of others. Not only do the narratives serve to deny personal responsibility for the failure, as "strategic presentations intended to influence others' interpretations" (Brown and Jones, 1998, p.73) they also serve to help to maintain or repair the individuals' self-identities in the face of perceived threat. "For the 'loser', the denial of agency involved in narratives of inevitability and conspiracy may be personally re-assuring" (Brown and Jones, 1998, p.86).

'Losers' are the subject of Schrauf's (2000) study, outside the field of business and management, into the "accounts" (Schlenker, 1980, p.129) and narrative repair identity work done by Spanish directors of carnival groups who have lost symbolically-important and fiercely-competed carnival talent contests. Working within symbolic interactionism, and using positioning theory (van Langenhove and Harré, 1999), Schrauf (2000) proposes that the individual directors have been forcibly positioned as a 'loser' by the contest judges. Through their accounts of the contests, which Schrauf (2000) conceives as autobiographical fragments, the individuals attempt to repair the threat to, as Schrauf sees it, their social identities, by re-positioning themselves and others in ways which free them from blame for the losses. The narrators offer "rhetorical redescriptions" (Schrauf, 2000, p.134) of the contests and reposition themselves as "unrecognized winners" (Schrauf, 2000, p.128) through employing particular "discursive strategies" (Schrauf, 2000, p.133). Schrauf (2008, p.141) concludes that "victims must retain some dignity and agency". However he cautions against positioning oneself as a victim too often because, when this particular discursive strategy is over-employed, it loses its rhetorical and performative force.

Other narrative and discursive strategies

The research participants in Lutgen-Sandvik's (2008) study are victims – of workplace bullying – and she explores the concept of "intensive remedial identity work" (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002, p.626) in the context of employees' responses to such experiences. Drawing on the ideas of Giddens (1991) in defining identity as a reflexively constructed life narrative, Lutgen-Sandvik (2008) contends that workplace bullying triggers "more intensive" (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2008, p.97) or "more

concentrated" (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002, p.626) identity work. The identity work undertaken in response to workplace bully is consciously goal-directed and targeted at specific threats to self-identity (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2008). Remedial identity work focuses on both the trauma and stigmatisation of "spoiled identities" (Goffman, 1963) and includes trying to maintain a degree of narrative coherence, to repair damage to disruption of ontological security, and to repair and restore image as perceived by self and others (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2008).

Collinson (2003), writing from a critical orientation, states that a greater appreciation of the analytical importance of insecurity can enhance understanding of subjectivity and survival strategies adopted by individuals within organisations. Focused on the insecurities of employees particularly within surveillance-based organisations, his study highlighted how individuals employ survival strategies by presenting "conformist", "dramaturgical" and "resistant" selves (Collinson, 2003, p.527). Other studies (including Linstead and Thomas, 2002; Thomas and Linstead, 2002; Sims, 2003; Pullen and Rhodes, 2008) have focused on the insecurities felt by managers, with the work cited giving attention to middle and senior managers. For instance, Linstead and Thomas's (2002) study, taking a critical orientation, examines the destabilising effect of organisational restructuring on the identities of middle managers. Thomas and Linstead (2002) report heightened feelings of identity instability, insecurity, ambiguity and confusion amongst middle managers during such situations. Their study managers, in attempting to "secure legitimacy" (Thomas and Linstead, 2002, p.87) during organisational restructuring and in searching for stability of identity, draw on discourses such as "being an expert", "being different" and "being in the Public Sector".

Thomas and Linstead (2002) observe that, because the meaning of middle management is socially constructed, it is inherently unstable. Sims (2003) develops this point further by arguing that our stories of our selves are, therefore, also vulnerable. He considers that this is particularly the case for middle managers, who have to "put together a convincing story about what they are doing for the benefit of their seniors and also an (often conflicting) story for their juniors" (Sims, 2003, p.1201). In line with Thomas and Linstead's conclusion that middle managers feel that they are "losing the plot" in their organizations (Thomas and Linstead, 2002, pp.87-88), Sims argues that middle managers are in a uniquely vulnerable position because they "have least control of the stories that they tell and the stories that they

live" (Sims, 2003, p.1208). Sims (2003) concludes by suggesting that the "peculiar loneliness, precariousness and vulnerability" (Sims, 2003, p.1195) that characterise middle managers' lives cannot be understood without the use of narratives and stories.

Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003) explore the multiple and sometimes contradictory managerial identities of their case study manager in the context of, and in response to, broader organisational discourses. When attempting to resist organizational discourses and to provide a potential source of stability, Sveningsson and Alvesson argue that their case study manager drew on "a narrative self-identity" (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003, p.1165). Sveningsson and Alvesson conceptualize the narrative self-identity as "one important input in identity work" (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003, p.1165). They interpret the narrative self-identity as a personal and non-managerial/non-work identity, that has "orientations 'outside' the immediate work context" (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003, p.1185), and is "invoked" (p.1188) as a "stabilizer" (p.1184) in certain identity-conflict situations. Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003) conclude that their case study manager's identity work efforts "backfire" as she "unintentionally constructs/reinforces fragmentations through efforts to impose on her work and surroundings a line of action emerging from her self-identity narrative" (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003, p.1187). The expressions "invoke" and "impose" seem to suggest that the narrative self-identity is a form of "greater [cognitive] power" (Encarta UK English dictionary, 2009). Section 2.2.3 above has contested Sveningsson and Alvesson's (2003) separation of self from identity. This thesis accepts that individuals may mobilise their non-work identities (for instance, in my case, social-identities such as mother, daughter, farmer's daughter, yoga practitioner, keen gardener etc) in constructing work identities. As discursive resources for identity work performed through the narrative self-identity, these social-identities are connected to, rather than separate from, self-identities.

2.6 Implications of review for this study

This review of self-identity and of identity work processes has taken up the invitations, extended by Alvesson *et al.* (2008a) and Smith and Sparkes (2008), to engage in dialogue across the three orientations, broadly defined here as functional, interpretivist and critical. As a result of this review I have developed my own understandings of the "productive tensions and alliances" (Alvesson *et al.*, 2008a, p.9) between and across the orientations. Drawing on Chia (1995), Fletcher (2006),

Alvesson *et al.* (2008a), Beech (2008), Cunliffe (2008) Smith and Sparkes (2008) and Watson (2008), a framework of orientations to, and features of, self-identity has been developed. This is presented in Figure 2.1. With reference to that framework, this current study takes an interpretivist orientation to explore, at a micro level, how individuals construct their self-identities through social interaction and language. With its relational social constructionist epistemological commitment, this research draws on storied resource and dialogic processes of self-identity construction. Self-identity is shaped by language and discourse and is relationally- and socially-constituted. Self-identity is conceptualised as multi-faceted and as emergent, unstable, insecure and multiple.

In recognition that the different orientations and perspectives across the continuum, in Figure 2.1, are not necessarily mutually exclusive (Smith and Sparkes, 2008), this study fuses theoretical concepts relating to dialogic identity work processes (Beech and McInnes, 2006) and symbolic interactionist positioning theory (Davies and Harré, 1990, 1999; Harré and van Langenhove, 1991, 1999c). Having reviewed the developmental framework by Beech and McInnes (2006) in relation to positioning theory (Davies and Harré, 1990, 1999; Harré and van Langenhove, 1991, 1999c), this study has the potential to extend understandings of identity work processes. It is proposed that refinements may be made to the dimensions used by Beech and McInnes (2006) in their framework of identity work processes. The dimension relating to latitude of relational identity is reconceptualised as 'relational identity positioning' and incorporates the interpretive distinctions of forced positioning of self or other and deliberate positioning of self or other (van Langenhove and Harré, 1999). A refinement to the 'social context obligations' dimension incorporates "perceived rights and duties" (Harré and van Langenhove, 1999b) relating to the social setting. In contrast to Harré and van Langenhove (1999a, p.1), obligations and "local moral order[s]" are conceived as discursive and dialogic constructions in given relational and social contexts. Finally, it is suggested that Beech and McInnes' (2006) conceptualisation of identity types may be incomplete. For instance, what type of identity work is characterised by low perceived social context obligations and limited or no latitude of relational identity positioning? Similarly what type of identity work is characterised by high perceived social context obligations and freedom in deliberately positioning self or other? These questions will be considered by this current research, by using the refined conceptual framework to interpret the participants' accounts of personal predicaments.

In keeping with the processual and becoming conceptualisation of self-identity, this study appreciates that identity work is processual and ongoing. However, a focus is given to the "episodic" character (Linstead and Thomas, 2002, p.3) of identity work associated with personal predicaments relating to vulnerability. It is presumed that identity work is related to a need and a striving for a coherent, distinctive and positively valued self (Alvesson, 2000; Alvesson and Willmott, 2002; Lutgen-Sandvik, 2008, Alvesson *et al.*, 2008a) and that self-identity may be destabilized by personal predicaments. This study draws on the work of Schlenker (1980), Alvesson and Willmott (2002) and Watson (2008) in associating personal predicaments with identity work processes. Personal predicaments are conceptualized as identity-symbolic events triggering active identity work, involving both "inward and outward facing" processes (Watson, 2008, p.139), intended to "embellish or repair one's self-identity as a [more or less] coherent narrative (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002, p.627).

In contrast to Linstead and Thomas's (2002) study of episodic identity construction processes triggered by organisational restructure, the organizational context of the participants in this study is "comparatively stable" (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002). The personal predicaments in this study are associated with everyday work tasks, and stresses and strains in social relations (Alvesson, 2000). Therefore the juxtaposition of the everyday personal predicaments in this study, in a comparatively stable organisational context may provide further insights into episodic identity work processes. When conceived as identity-symbolic events likely to generate "more concentrated" identity work (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002), the accounts of personal predicaments may highlight identity-related tensions and bring into sharper relief the identity work processes individuals employ. This study will highlight the way individuals offer "rhetorical redescriptions" (Schrauf, 2000, p.134) of the predicaments, and draw on self and other positioning as well as other discursive strategies.

Whilst this thesis accepts that an individual strives, through active though not necessarily conscious identity work, to achieve stability, consistency and coherence of self-identity, such striving is not "outside of" but part of the ongoing and emergent "narrative self-identity" (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003, p.1166). This study, therefore, contests Sveningsson and Alvesson's (2003, p.1188) view that the narrative self-identity "potentially contribut[es] to [identity] fragmentations and conflicts". Rather, it is through the narrative self-identity that an individual tries to

make sense of and reconcile such fragmentations and conflicts. One's narrative self-identity is the identity construction process through which an individual makes sense of and rhetorically asserts (Kondo, 1990) the self. Like one's identity which it conveys, one's narrative self-identity is not singular or coherent but is multiple and inconsistent, with different versions of the narrative being offered for different identity construction intentions, whether conscious or otherwise, in specific relational and social contexts. Therefore, through situationally-specific interactions, and discursive and dialogic processes with others, an individual continuously maintains and (re)-forms self-identity and reconciles inherent tensions and inconsistencies.

Sims (2003) argues that our stories of our selves are vulnerable and this is particularly the case for middle managers. Sims (2003) suggests that the "peculiar loneliness, precariousness and vulnerability" (Sims, 2003, p.1195) that characterise middle managers' lives cannot be understood without the use of narratives and stories. He concludes that "[t]here is no community of storytelling practice in which middle managers can rehearse these stories, or in which they can explore the inconsistencies and conflicts between them" (Sims, 2003, p.1209). This study offers such an opportunity to its middle/senior manager participants and has the potential to add to Sims' insights into the "vulnerability of middle managers as revealed by stories told about them" (Sims, 2003, p.1210) and into the self-identity construction processes related to them.

Although accepting the centrality of language and discourse to the construction of self-identity, this study does not embrace Sims' (2003) notion of storying and stories and employs instead Gabriel's (1998, p.102) distinction in "treating stories as distinct types of narrative". This distinction and its implications for this study's data gathering and interpretation are explored further in the methodology chapter (Chapter 4). Discussion in that chapter will extend the notion that identities are linguistic acts and that individuals draw on discursive practices and resources, including stories, to develop meaning and to construct their self-identities. The methodology chapter will also provide further elaboration on the way in which the concepts of discourse, narrative, story and accounts are employed in this thesis.

2.7 Summary

This review of existing identity literature has drawn together in a coherent manner the different understandings of self, identity and identity work processes. I have

presented the three philosophical orientations of functionalist, interpretivist and critical in the form of a visual framework (Figure 2.1). The framework also provides an overview of the features of self-identity which are shared and contested by scholars within and across the different orientations. These features include: self as entity and self as process; stability, consistency and coherence of self; singularity and multiplicity of self; the importance of language and discourse in shaping the self; and self and social context. Through engaging with the debates across and within the philosophical orientations, the chapter confirmed the positioning of this study within the interpretivist orientation to identity drawing on relational social constructionism. The notion of positioning also underpins key conceptualisations of identity work processes employed by this thesis. This chapter has argued that Beech and McInnes' (2006) developmental framework of identity work processes conceptualisation of identity work may be refined by fusing it with positioning theory (Davies and Harré, 1990, 1999; Harré and van Langenhove, 1991, 1999c). The chapter presented a conceptualisation of personal predicaments as identity-symbolic events (Schlenker, 1980) triggering active identity work, involving both "inward and outward facing" processes (Watson, 2008, p.139), intended to "embellish or repair one's self-identity as a [more or less] coherent narrative (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002, p.627). The chapter concluded by considering the implications of the review for this study. These include the ways in which this study may extend Linstead and Thomas' (2002) work on episodic identity construction processes, and Sims' (2003) exploration of the vulnerability of middle managers. The next chapter sets the context of this study by reviewing concepts of 'profession' and 'professional' and the existing literature on identity construction processes of professionals becoming managers.

Chapter 3 Professionals Becoming Managers

3 Introduction

The previous chapter provided a framework for understanding the concepts of self, identity and identity work processes. This chapter reviews identity work processes which professionals engage in as they cope with changes in their profession and as they move into management. The chapter reviews the ways in which the concepts of 'profession', 'professionals' and 'professionals becoming managers' have been theorised from different philosophical orientations. In that sense, there are connections with the framework of orientations presented in the previous chapter and that framework will be drawn upon in locating key studies cited in this review of the literature on professionals becoming managers. The chapter explores the nature of the relationship between profession and management and between professionals and managers. It then considers the typical ways in which professionals make a transition into management. The chapter next reviews general studies undertaken into becoming manager, as well as studies of specific professionals moving into management. The chapter ends by considering the implications of this review of professionals becoming managers for the design and potential contributions of this current study.

This chapter, thus, provides the context for this current study of public sector professionals becoming managers. The chapter will consider how this current study has the potential to extend other general and professional-specific studies on becoming manager by drawing on the experiences of professionals from under-represented fields within the public sector, and by providing the opportunity for a longitudinal exploration of the process of becoming.

This chapter, therefore, addresses the research objective:

- to provide conceptual understandings of profession, professional and professional becoming manager and review existing studies on identity work processes of professionals becoming managers

3.1 The concepts of profession and professional

There is considerable disagreement, in the literature, about what constitutes a profession and professional (Cheetham and Chivers, 2000) and the terms are contested (Peel, 2005). Watson (2002) goes further to suggest that, as an analytical concept, 'profession' should be replaced by 'occupation'. This is because the notions of 'profession' and 'professional', as used in everyday or 'lay' terms, are "slippery and ambiguous" (Watson, 2002, p.94). I appreciate this argument but will retain use of the terms profession and professional in this thesis. This part of the chapter, therefore, reviews the ways in which the concepts of profession and professional have been conceived traditionally before moving on to more contemporary thinking.

Leicht and Fennell (2001) differentiate three levels of analysis of profession and professional. These are: the micro level, relating to the professional performing professional work and to his or her career progression; the meso level, with a focus on the organisation context and structures in which professional work is undertaken; and the macro level, relating to the profession as a whole and the labour markets, industries or sectors in which it operates. These three levels of analysis relate to the levels of engagement outlined in the framework (figure 2.1) presented in the previous chapter.

Hotho (2007, p.1) suggests that macro level studies, exploring the nature of professions and of relationships between professions, professionals and society, have been widely undertaken. Specific discussion of the profession as a whole, sometimes referred to as the system of professions (Cohen, Finn, Wilkinson and Arnold, 2002), is outside the scope of this study. With its interest in how professionals becoming managers construct their self- and social-identities, including professional and manager, the focus of this study is at the micro level. The professionals becoming managers in this study operate in different organisational, or meso level, settings within the macro context of professions within the public sector.

Having established the level of engagement of this study, this section considers briefly the evolution of ideas about what constitutes profession and professional.

3.1.1 The traits approach to profession and professional

Some writers attempt to define profession, for instance, Cheetham and Chivers (2000) give the following:

> ... an occupation based upon specialised study, training or experience, the purpose of which is to apply skilled service or advice to others, or to provide technical, managerial or administrative services to, or within, organisations in return for a fee or salary. (Cheetham and Chivers, 2000, p.375)

This conception includes the "common characteristics" (Peel, 2005, p.125) of profession developed by studies taking a functionalist orientation. Regarded as the "traits" approach to the professions (Macdonald, 1995, p.2), various writers (including Peel, 2005; Davies 2002a; Davies, 2002b; Bloor and Dawson, 1994) discuss this "classic model of professional identity" (Davies, 2002b, p.31). Although "common characteristics" cannot be agreed upon, discussions of these typically include: having expertise derived from specialized knowledge and skills, developed through extensive training; acting altruistically by using professional expertise for public good; having a one-to-one relationship with the client, diagnosing and addressing their specific needs; providing a service through a relationship of mutual trust between professional and client; being part of a professional association with a process of licensing and regulation of practice; and having a high degree of autonomy in undertaking one's work and in judging, through self and peer review, one's performance (Peel, 2005; Davies 2002a; Davies, 2002b; Bloom and Dawson, 1994).

Some writers from the trait/functionalist orientation, such as Etzioni (1969), make distinctions between 'the only true professions' and 'semi professions' according to the extent to which a particular profession meets these common characteristics. Eraut (1994) challenges the functionalist orientation to professionalism, on grounds including its dominant focus on the élite professions of law and medicine, and on the assumption that professionals are self-employed or in private practice. He argues that more professionals are employed in the public rather than the private sector, where profession and professionalism have different meanings. Hotho (2007, p.2) supports the view of the importance of public sector professionals and states that the public sector is the main employer of the "most influential professions".

According to the classic model, which Davies (2002b) argues draws on a discourse of masculinity, professionals should be accorded respect and given autonomy to apply their knowledge and skills in ways they see fit in relation to each individual client case (Davies, 2002a). Schein and Kommers (1972) suggest that most sociologists agree that the ultimate criterion of professionalisation is the achievement of autonomy. Such an assertion, with its implication of "knowing better what is good for the client than anyone else" (Schein and Kommers, 1972, p.9), is in line with "the power approach" (Macdonald, 1995, p.5) to profession. This notion of professional autonomy, and potential threats to it, is discussed in section 3.2.1 below, when discussing the impact of New Public Management on professions.

According to Dent and Whitehead (2002, p.1), the "old-style" professional no longer exists. Even though it was a dominant discourse during the mid-20th century, alternative and influential thinking, from that period, began to create a shift in understanding and this thinking is considered in the next section.

3.1.2 A shift from what professions *are* to what professions *do*

As part of his review of the existing literature on the professions, Macdonald (1995) discusses how functionalism dominated mid-20th century sociology. However, significant studies, such as Becker's *et al.* (1961) Boys in White and Friedson's (1970) The Profession of Medicine (cited by Macdonald, 1995), provided an alternative, symbolic interactionist, perspective. Such studies are located within the interpretivist orientation and have an interest in how professionals interact with others and how they constitute their social worlds and their careers. Such studies conceived the professional principles of altruism, service and high ethical standards not as abstract standards but as imperfect social constructs.

Studies from an interpretivist symbolic interactionist orientation lead to the conception of professionals as social actors (Macdonald, 1995). Hotho (2007, p.4) sees this as a shift away from trying to establish "what professions *are* towards examining what professions *do"* and as a reconceptualising of profession "from being to becoming". This conceptual shift parallels, therefore, the move away from essentialist and entitative views of the self, towards conceptions of self as process and becoming, as discussed in Chapter Two.

When profession is conceived as social construction, then professionals become social actors who employ 'profession' and 'professional' as resources to further their purposes (Watson, 2002, p.100). In other words, professionals draw on discursive resources to construct and negotiate their own individual and organizational realities (Cohen *et al.,* 2002). When viewed as social constructions, the traits and common characteristics of the functionalist "classic model of professional identity" (Davies, 2002b, p.31) form part of a set of discourses and practices, amongst several other different discourses of professionalism (Watson, 2002, p.100). Professionals draw upon these discourses as means of gaining, legitimising and maintaining autonomy over professional work, and of asserting a relative dominance over other professional groups (Hotho, 2007; McAuley, Duberley and Cohen, 2000). Eraut (1994) treats professionalism as an ideology, in my term a discourse, which embodies "appealing values, in this case of service, trustworthiness, integrity, autonomy and reliable standards" (McIntyne, 1994, in Eraut, 1994, p.viii). As an ideology, it therefore may compete in the construction of self-identity with other ideologies and discourses, such as 'managerialism', as discussed later in the chapter.

In their review on the relationship between professionals and the organisations in which they work, McAuley *et al.* (2000, p.90-91) contradict, through their research, the strong suggestion in the existing literature that professionals present resistance to management as legitimate activity and have little interest themselves in managing. Watson (1994) argues that managers' conception of management is a contributory factor to how they manage. This would suggest that as professionals become managers, their conception of management and managing will be central to the construction of their evolving identities of professional and manager. Therefore, attention is given, in the next section, to professionals' interpretation of management and managing.

3.2 Professionals' interpretation of management and managing

Although disputed by some (including Cohen *et al.*, 2002; McAuley *et al.*, 2000), it is generally suggested in the literature, that professionals are unmanageable, are uninterested in management and managing, and make bad managers. These views stem from conceptualising profession and professionals as different from, and in conflict with, management and managers. Whilst not supporting the proposition,

Cohen *et al.* (2002) outline how the suggestion that there is an "inevitable antagonism between professional interests and ideals, and the demands of the organization" (Cohen *et al.*, 2002, p.4) ultimately creates an "an inherent distance between the roles and activities of professionals and those of managers" (Cohen *et al.*, 2002, p.4).

Davies (2002a, p.32) discusses, but does not support the idea of, how individuals construct their identities by "pairing" with and devaluing the "other". "Establishing an identity in this way sets a boundary, stresses the differences between people rather than their similarities and connections" (Davies, 2002a, p.32) and, in her view, gives little hope that the self and other can relate to each other in a positive way. Negative relations and a discourse of conflict dominate early thinking on the relationship between managers and professionals, and on the management of professionals. A range of positions of conflictual tension can be observed with "pairing" (Davies, 2002a) with or, in my theoretical conception, 'positioning' of managers as a nuisance (Davies, 2002b) or, in more extreme cases, as "primeval slime" (Gleadle and Hope Hailey, 2003, p.6). Raelin (1991), writing within the functionalist orientation, considers that this conflict stems from *The clash of cultures*.

Limited research has been undertaken to explore how professionals "locate management into their understanding of the world" (McAuley *et al.*, 2000, p.88). McAuley *et al.* (2000) explore how professionals create a relationship with management whilst preserving their integrity as professionals. They argue that the scientists in their study, working in two public sector research laboratories, "discover ways of managing that meet both individual and organization contingencies" (McAuley *et al.*, 2000, p.88). Also, contrary to the view that professionals are not amenable to management, they found that the scientists "had a high regard for management as activity as long as it is an invisible activity which is experienced as purposive in relation to the overall accomplishment of the laboratory" (McAuley *et al.*, 2000, p.103).

McAuley *et al.*'s (2000) study confirms the views of some, including Cohen *et al.* (2002), in rejecting the notion of the inherent tension and conflict between manager and professional. In contemporary organisations, within both the private and public sector, the professional has "no escape" from managing (Dent and Whitehead, 2002, p.1), often engaging with aspects of management as part of being a

professional (Watson and Harris, 1999; Cohen *et al.*, 2002). Dent and Whitehead (2002) go further by suggesting that "the manager has become professionalized, the professional has become managerialist" (Dent and Whitehead, 2002, p.6). The discourse of managerialism, and the way in which professionals draw on it in constructing their professional and managerial identities, is discussed in the next section.

3.2.1 Managerialism and professional identities

Managerialism, or New Public Management (NPM), with its related systems of accountability and measures of efficiency, pose threats to professions in the public (and private) sector, to professionals, and to relationships between professionals and management (Cohen *et al.*, 2003; Dent and Whitehead, 2002). For instance, the introduction of competitive market forces, the transfer of management techniques and processes from the private sector, greater financial accountability, and the increase in management power and control undermine notions of professionalism and, in particular, restrict professional autonomy (Hotho, 2007; Cohen *et al.*, 2002; Doolin, 2001; Thomas and Davies, 2002; Butterfield, Edwards and Woodall, 2005).

In addition to the shift from being to becoming, Hotho (2007) sees the discourse of managerialism as part of a shift, in studies of professions, "from becoming to changing" (Hotho, 2007, p.5). These are uncertain times for professionals, with professional work undergoing significant restructuring (Cohen *et al.* 2002), and the emergence of managerialist agendas having far-reaching implications for professionals, their status and self-identity (Thomas and Davies, 2002). Thomas and Davies (2002) argue that public sector restructuring has caused the reconstitution of managerial and professional roles and identities. Not only are professionals increasingly being more actively managed (Cohen *et al.*, 2003; Davies, 2002b) they also find themselves becoming managers themselves (Davies, 2002b; Doolin, 2001) In other words, increasingly the boundaries between the professional and managerial roles are blurred (Davies, 2002b; Doolin, 2001; Butterfield *et al.*, 2005) and, therefore, the classic model's conception of the professional's "unnecessary other" (Davies, 2002b, p.32) – the manager – becomes a necessary and integral part of what it means to be a professional within modern public sector organisations.

The concept of managerialism is outside the scope of this research study. However, when managerialism is seen as a discursive resource used by individuals in

constructing their identity, it is appropriate to note studies which have explored the different ways in which professionals have responded to potential identity tensions. Often working within the critical orientation, these studies focus on how individuals engage with, accommodate, or resist managerialism and attendant managerial initiatives and controls (Hotho, 2007; Doolin, 2001; Henkel, 2002; Thomas and Davies, 2002). Three studies, involving university academics, doctors and police officers and staff, are discussed below.

In the context of NPM in universities in England, Norway and Sweden, Henkel (2002) explores the extent to which academic leadership, at both the institutional and faculty levels, has acquiesced to the prevailing ideology of managerialism. Whilst Henkel (2002) considers that "the language and practices of management have undoubtedly taken a hold in academic institutions" (Henkel, 2002, p.39), this was not to the exclusion of academic identities. Supporting this argument, Henkel (2002) discusses how almost all individuals within her study qualify their managerial identity with reference to their academic identity, for instance by expressing preference for the title of academic leader or academic manager. "The sense that becoming a manager means acquiring not only a new identity but also one that might set apart the individual concerned from colleagues can be an issue" (Henkel, 2002, p.36). The issue, and desire to emphasise their academic identities, was multi-faceted and included; offering continuities in one's self image; establishing and retaining credibility with faculty members; and accepting that, in spite of the tension between the two roles and the possible need to "reconcile managerial values with professional values" (Henkel, 2002, p.39), one is both an academic and a manager.

Doolin (2001) examines the extent to which doctors adapted to the role of clinician manager defined for them by management as part of a strategic and restructuring response to the demands of new public management within a New Zealand hospital. Doolin's (2001) study confirmed, in part, that clinicians have little regard for management, as several of the clinicians minimized its importance. Many saw management as separate from medicine and expressed a desire to remain removed from any involvement in it. Those clinicians who took on the managerial role were often viewed with suspicion by their colleagues. As the clinician manager role was part-time, doctors were able to continue with their clinical practice which was important to them, in a similar way to Henkel's (2002) discussion, for maintaining

credibility with their colleagues and for retaining their identity as medical professionals (Doolin, 2001).

Davies and Thomas (2001) give an account of their two year study into NPM and managers/professionals, their term for public sector managers who have professional backgrounds, from the police, secondary education and the social services in the UK. Focusing on the narratives of the police service participants from the extended study, Thomas and Davies (2002) work within a critical orientation to explore how the middle ranking police and civilian police managers/professionals accommodate, adapt or deny subject positions offered by the discourse of managerialism, as one of a plurality of potentially competing discourses. Thomas and Davies (2002) discuss how subject positions promoting managerial identities created tension and discomfort, and disrupted an individual's sense of self. To re-assert a positive sense of self, participants refuted the managerial subjectivities and actively constructed alternative identities, by drawing on discourses of doing "real police work" and their "proper" job (Thomas and Davies, 2002, p.184) relating to their professional identities.

Having reviewed how professionals "locate" management (McAuley *et al.*, 2000, p.88) and managing within their professional and managerial identities, the next section considers professionals' experiences of becoming managers.

3.3 Professionals becoming managers

In the first part of this section, the ways in which professionals make a transition into management are considered. As any form of transition involves identity work (Blenkinsopp and Stalker, 2004), generic and profession-specific studies, particularly those which explore how professionals make sense of the transition and its impact on their self-identity, are reviewed.

3.3.1 Making a transition into management

Writing within the functionalist orientation, Raelin (1991, p.186) considers that some professionals "simply cannot adjust to a managerial life style" but those who can and do become managers fit into one of four, seemingly exclusive, categories. According to Raelin (1991), most professionals regard management as a natural progression of responsibility and as the ultimate accomplishment of their career. Still with

reference to Raelin's (1991) categories, others see management as either a replacement for an unrewarding professional life or as an alternative to a new job in their profession. The fourth group of professionals move into management when they are concerned that their professional skills are becoming out of date.

Three different, but not mutually exclusive, routes into managerial work emerged from the work of Watson and Harris (1999), writing with a commitment to relational social constructionism. They termed these as: "career managers" who at an early stage in their career set out to become manager; those "moving up" hierarchically within the organisations or professional fields in which they work; and those who were "moving in" to management as a conscious change in career direction (Watson and Harris, 1999, pp.30-34). The most common route into management for the professionals within their study was "moving up", although some other professionals saw themselves as "moving in" to management (Watson and Harris, 1999).

From her study of health professionals who are in, or who have considered taking on, a management role, Boucher (2002) also developed a category which related to the "career managers" (Watson and Harris, 1999, p.30). She termed this individual a "Born Manager" (Boucher, 2002, pp.i-ii), someone who, having shown an interest in management early in their career, actively sought management roles. This was one of six "categories" she developed, with others including: "Ambivalent Managers" who, although currently in management roles, were undecided about whether they would remain managers in the long term; and "Stuck Managers" who did not like being in management roles but felt "stuck" in them (Boucher, 2002, pp.ii-iii). Sims (2008) also identifies with Boucher's notion of the "Stuck Manager". He conceives this as the professional who is forced to become a manager and who would still be a professional if only they could (Sims, 2008). He gives this the story title of "Entrapment" (Sims, 2008, p.993) which, from his autobiographical research into stories he has told about entering management as a public sector professional, he considers is one of five types of story which, in combination, characterise the formation of a managerial identity. The Entrapment story title is different to the four other story titles, of Gaining Experience, Clearing the Stables, Creating Bliss and Life after Death, (Sims, 2008, p.993). This is because it is one that others have sometimes told about him but which he has never personally told and which he does not like, partly because it portrays the manager in the powerless victim role. Sims

(2008) suggests that the Entrapment story is very common among professionals in the public sector.

Having considered how professionals make a transition into management, general studies of becoming a manager, and particularly of experiences during the first year of transition, are reviewed in the next section.

3.3.2 General studies of becoming a manager

Hill (1992, 2003, 2004) focuses on the transition from individual contributor to manager and explores the experiences of nineteen new sales managers during their first year of management. Hill (1992, 2003) explores what new managers found most challenging, how they learn, and what resources they use in their learning and development. Two themes emerged from her study: that becoming a manager entailed "a profound psychological adjustment - a transformation of professional identity"; and that it was primarily a "process of learning from experience" (Hill, 2003, p.121). Whilst Hill considers the transition a process rather than an event, she considers there to be a finite end to the process: "becoming a manager begins when a person is promoted from individual contributor to manager and ends when the individual understands and masters the managerial role as successfully as he or she can" (Hill, 2003, p.338). In a similar way to her conception of the transition as finite, Hill (1992, 2003) also seems to consider identity in a finite and unitary way, and therefore I have located this study within the functionalist orientation. For Hill (1992, 2003), managers in transition are engaged in a transformation and a fundamental change in identity. She states that it is only as managers "unlearn" or "give up" their identity as individual contributors that they can "begin to accept their identity as manager" (Hill, 2003, p.48). She continues that, during the transition, "their identity put them in 'no-man's land'; they were neither producer nor manager" (Hill, 2003, p.66). Hill (2003), therefore, seems to conceive of the process as "swapping one identity for another" (Ibarra, 2003: p xi) – a notion which Ibarra (2003) opposes. However, before considering Ibarra's (2003) study, I will consider her earlier work (Ibarra, 1999).

In line with Hill (1992, 2003, 2004), Ibarra (1999) considers that work role transitions may bring about "fundamental changes in an individual's self-definition" (Ibarra, 1999, p.765). Ibarra's (1999) research participants were junior professionals in two private sector professional service firms - management consultancy and investment

banking - making a transition from technical and managerial roles to senior "boundary-spanning roles managing client relationships" (Ibarra, 1999, p.767). Sharing Hill's (1992) view that individuals making a role transition observe and imitate role models, Ibarra's (1999) main contention is that individuals adapt to new increased responsibility professional roles by "experimenting with provisional selves" (Ibarra, 1999, p.764). Ibarra (1999) proposes that "[t]he resulting identities are provisional, however, in that they have yet to be refined with experience and internalized as enduring aspects of a coherent professional identity" (Ibarra, 1999, p.778).

Ibarra (1999) seems, therefore, to use the concept of provisional to imply both pending confirmation and validation by others, and temporary with a potential assumption of the provisional identities leading to more permanent ones. She refers to debates about the stability and change of self-identities and claims that her concept of an adaptation "repertoire of resources from which [individuals] construct diverse self-presentation strategies" (Ibarra, 1999, p.783) allows for both stability and change in identities. However, at times, she seems to assume that individuals can "fully internalize" and "fully elaborate" (Ibarra, 1999, p.765) their professional identities with these being "more adaptable and mutable" (Ibarra, 1999, p.765) early in one's career. Ibarra's (1999) conceptualization of identity construction, therefore, emphasizes strategies and resources as cognitive or behavioural and does not seem to take into account also discursive strategies. With reference to the framework (Figure 2.1) developed in Chapter Two, Hill's (1999) study is, therefore, located within the functionalist orientation to identity.

It is interesting to note her study of 39 people making radical career transitions into a range of new professional activities (Ibarra, 2003) in which she discusses how "working identity is defined", in part, by "the story that links who we have been and who we will become" (Ibarra, 2003, p.18). She refers to the notion of "trial narratives" (Ibarra, 2003, p.60) and discusses how "to reinvent oneself is to rework one's story, revising it frequently, trying out different versions on others" (Ibarra, 2003, p. 141). Ibarra's (2003) conception of identity seems, therefore, to have shifted towards a "storied resource" perspective (Smith and Sparkes, 2008, p.5), which was discussed in Chapter Two.

Ibarra's (2003) conception of identity as a discursive and relational process is central to Watson and Harris' (1999) view of *The Emergent Manager.* In their study of 40 managers, working in public and private sector settings and employed in a range of managerial roles, Watson and Harris (1999) explore how individuals make sense of the continual process of becoming. The study offers accounts of how these individuals come to terms with, adjust to and cope with the potentially problematic relationship between the self and their managerial role (Watson and Harris, 1999).

Watson and Harris (1999) discuss how the participants selected themselves for the study on the basis that they considered they had made relatively recently a significant move into management. Some of the managers in the study had a professional background and included public sector professionals coming from health, education and welfare, social service and public administration, including housing management. For some of these professionals, "moving in" to management (Watson and Harris, 1999, p.31) meant they were beginning to see themselves primarily as managers, rather than nurses, teachers or social workers. Others, however, were more reluctant to define themselves as managers, with one individual seeing herself "'first and foremost a nurse' but doing a managerial job" (Watson and Harris, 1999, p.133). Others, for whom their professional identity seemed central to their self-identity, worked at retaining their professional self by taking an interest in professional activities and, in some cases, by trying to retain a dual role. For others, the transition did not seem to threaten their professional identity, or create a sense of loss from professional activities, and they welcomed the opportunities which had been generated by the move.

Having reviewed these key general studies on becoming manager, profession-specific studies are reviewed in the next part of the chapter.

3.3.3 Studies of specific professionals becoming managers

The profession-specific studies reviewed in this section involve nurses, doctors, teachers and social housing managers.

Nurses

Reedy and Learmonth (2000) suggest that junior nurses becoming managers see

their clinical and managerial identities as sharply distinguished and, to some extent, conflicting. They also discuss how the nurse managers were "generally uncomfortable about their 'management' roles ... finding the need to 'cling on' to the clinical work" (Reedy and Learmonth, 2000, p.160). In her study of UK NHS nurses experiencing a redefinition of their role to middle-management ward managers, Bolton (2000, p.229) discusses how the nurses expressed "ambivalence towards fully embracing a management identity". The nurses expressed concern that they were not adequately prepared, through training and development, for their new role as managers, and stressed "a need to learn new values and different ways of presenting themselves... (and) to learn new 'ways of being'" (Bolton, 2000, p.231).

Doctors

In her study of the impact on professional and managerial identities of organisation change within the medical profession in the UK health system, Hotho (2007) found that, in some cases, the doctors becoming managers reinforced the dichotomy of management and profession, by reasserting the "superiority" (Hotho, 2007, p.25) of the medical profession. Discursive strategies employed by the doctors in Hotho's (2007) study included: asserting the professional over the managerial self, for instance in the way the doctors "class [themselves] as clinicians first" (p.19); seeing the moral basis of the professional domain as superior to the managerial domain (p.20); drawing upon conventional "ideal type" scripts of professional service (p.22); and demonstrating agency through exercising choice and discretion (p.25).

Teachers

Parker's (2004) autobiographical reflections on becoming a head of a management department within a UK university are interesting in that, as a self-avowed critical orientation scholar, he has often positioned himself as "against management" (Parker, 2004, p.45). One might assume that this might lead him to construct a storyline of the Ambivalent Manager (Boucher, 2002) or of Entrapment (Sims, 2008), but Parker (2004) stresses that management is not "an oppressive thing that has to be escaped or opposed but instead... is a particular way of thinking and acting within organizations" (Parker, 2004, p.55). He concludes that he is "a manager with an alternate 'professional' identity... [and] a somewhat divided series of identifications" (Parker, 2004, p.56). This thesis, however, does not share the view

that the managerial identity alternates with the professional one and cannot be positioned simultaneously.

Social Housing Managers

Casey (2008) claims there is a paucity of research into the micro level processes of identity construction of housing managers. Taking a cross-section of housing managers at all levels of management within social housing, Casey (2008) explores, from a symbolic interactionist perspective, how individuals construct and present their self-identities. Casey (2008) argues that housing management as an occupation lacks a strong collective identity and related professional socialisation. This factor, together with the way social housing management is viewed by some members of the public in a marginalised and negative manner, causes managers to engage actively in identity work to construct and sustain credible occupational identities (Casey, 2008). Casey (2008) discusses how social housing managers give, through their talk, individualised and tailored presentations of their professional and managerial identities. Some housing managers, referred to as "pragmatists" (Casey, 2008, p.766) identify weakly with housing management, while others, referred to as "pro-activists" (Casey, 2008, p.766) have strongly held professional and managerial identities which fit, in some cases, with the individual's social and political values.

This consideration of profession-specific studies concludes the review of existing literature on professions, professionals and professionals becoming managers. The next section, therefore, considers the implications of this review for this current study.

3.4 Implications of review for this study

The focus of this study is at the micro level both in relation to Leicht and Fennel's (2001) levels of analysis of profession and professional and the framework (Figure 2.1) presented in Chapter Two. The professionals becoming managers in this study operate in different organisational, or meso level (Leicht and Fennel, 2001), settings within the macro context of professions within the public sector. This is an appropriate level of engagement, given this study's aim to explore professionals becoming managers' experiences as they make a transition into, and continue to progress within, management. It is also an appropriate level of study because macro

level (Leicht and Fennel, 2001) engagement, exploring the nature of professions and of relationships between professions, professionals and society, has been widely studied (Hotho, 2007).

Consistent with the interpretivist orientation of this current study, this thesis rejects the "classic model of professional identity" (Davies, 2002b, p.31) developed within the functionalist orientation to profession. This is because the traits (Macdonald, 1995, p.2) and "common characteristics" (Peel, 2005, p.125) of the functionalist "classic model of professional identity" (Davies, 2002b, p.31) draw on the notion of profession and professional as "being" (Hotho, 2007). Instead, this thesis conceives these 'traits' as social constructions and discursive resources which professionals becoming managers may draw on in constructing their professional and managerial selves. This conception, related to the shift in thinking "from being to becoming" Hotho (2007, p.4), is consonant with the commitment of this research to relational social constructionism.

Relational social constructionism focuses attention on the way in which individuals discursively give meaning to, and construct, their identities through interactions with others. Identity construction processes may involve "pairing" with and devaluing the "other" (Davies, 2002a, p.32). However, this thesis shares the views of Cohen *et al.* (2002) and McAuley *et al.* (2000) in rejecting the notion of an "inevitable antagonism" (Cohen *et al.*, 2002, p.4) between professional and managerial interests and, by extension, between professional and managerial identities. However, the thesis appreciates that conflicting interests may arise, particularly for professionals becoming managers, generating active identity work. This current study has the potential to address the paucity of research, according to McAuley *et al.* (2000, p.88), into how professionals "locate management into their understanding of the world" and into their self-identity constructions.

Professionals working in the public sector have experienced changes, not least with the introduction of managerialist agendas, which some (including Hotho, 2007; Cohen *et al.*, 2002; Doolin, 2001; Thomas and Davies, 2002) argue have had far-reaching implications for professionals and professionals becoming managers. Although the concept of managerialism is outside the scope of this study, the identity work processes of the participants in this current study will be interpreted in

the light of the discursive strategies discussed by, amongst others, Thomas and Davies (2002), Henkel (2002) and Doolin (2001).

Cohen *et al.* (2002) state that research on new public management and public-sector professionals is mainly health-related or in areas such as social work and education. This view is supported by this current study's review of existing identity studies relating to managerialism and of specific public-sector professionals becoming managers. For instance, specific health-related studies, including doctors and nurses, have been conducted by Reedy and Learmonth (2000), Doolin (2001), Bolton (2000), Boucher (2002), Davies (2002a, 2002b) and Hotho (2007). Education studies, including university academic managers, have been undertaken by Henkel (2002), Thomas and Davies (2002), Parker (2004) and Sims (2008), and social work studies by Thomas and Davies (2002). Thomas and Davies (2002) have moved outside these dominant professional groups to consider also police service professionals, and Casey (2008) addresses what she considers to be a paucity of research into identity-related studies in social housing management. In this current study, public sector professionals becoming managers are drawn from social work, education and social housing management. Importantly, they are also drawn from youth service work, architecture, library services, dancing, and quantity surveying. Therefore, the research context of a range of previously under-researched professional backgrounds makes a distinctive empirical contribution to the literature on professionals becoming managers.

In addition to the profession-specific studies, this current study complements the private practice professionals studied by Hill (1992) and Ibarra (1999). It also extends the scope of the public sector professional groups included in Watson and Harris's (1999). All three general studies (Hill, 1992; Ibarra, 1999; Watson and Harris, 1999) on processes of becoming manager share a common feature in only considering the first year of transition. Hill (1992) seems to consider the transition into management as a finite process, and views identity also in a finite and unitary way. The notion of Ibarra's (1999) "provisional identities" becoming "fully internalized" or "fully elaborated" (Ibarra, 1999, p.765) also implies a finite managerial identity. These two studies are incommensurate with the notion of the emergent manager (Watson and Harris, 1999), which is shared by this study. Although Watson and Harris' (1999) study included two stages of interviews conducted approximately one year apart, it did not undertake further research with

those managers as they progressed managerially. The longitudinal dimension of this current study's research design and its inclusion of established and experienced middle or senior managers enable a distinctive theoretical contribution to existing studies on identity work processes of professionals becoming managers as they make a transition into management and, particularly importantly, as they progress managerially.

3.5 Summary

This chapter has traced the different ways in which the concepts of 'profession', 'professionals' and 'professionals becoming managers' have been theorised. These include a move away from the functionalist conceptualisation of the classic model of professional identity with its traits approach towards interpretivist and critical consideration of professionals as social actors. This was summarised as a reconceptualising of profession and professional from being to becoming. The chapter then reviewed professionals' understanding of management and managing and considered the "inevitable antagonism" (Cohen *et al.*, 2002, p.4) between professional and managerial interests and, by extension, between professional and managerial identities. As illustrations of particular contexts of potential antagonism, studies of professionals and NPM were reviewed. In relation to identity construction processes, this review highlighted the ways in which professionals engage with, accommodate or resist the discourse and practices of managerialism. Having reviewed how professionals "locate" management (McAuley *et al.,* 2000, p.88) and managing within their professional identities, the chapter then considered professionals' experiences of becoming managers. Typical ways in which professionals make a transition into management were discussed. This was followed by a review of general studies of becoming manager as well as studies of profession-specific groups. The chapter concluded by considering the implications of the review for this study. In addition to extending the scope of professional groups beyond health-related, social work and education, this study complements the private practice professionals studied by Hill (1992) and Ibarra (1999). It also extends the scope of the public sector professional groups included in Watson and Harris's (1999) study. The three general studies (Hill, 1992; Ibarra, 1999; and Watson and Harris, 1999) on processes of becoming manager are considered to be incomplete in considering only the first year of transition. Therefore this study, with its established and experienced middle or senior managers, has the potential to further understandings of the identity work processes of professionals becoming

managers as they make a transition into management and, particularly importantly, as they progress managerially. The design of this research study, including the selection of the research participants and other methodological choices and decisions, is considered in the next chapter.

Chapter 4 Methodology

4 Introduction

The previous two chapters have drawn on a range of philosophical orientations to the study of self, identity and identity work processes and to conceptualisations of profession, professionals and professionals becoming managers. This chapter confirms the ontological and theoretical commitments of this research. Discussion in relation to these commitments includes consideration of other approaches which have influenced my understandings of self-identity and of research, and explains the positioning of this research within relational social constructionism. This first section of the chapter also re-presents the aim and related research questions of this study. The chapter then discusses and justifies the methodological choices and the methods of data gathering and interpretation employed in this research. This part of the chapter includes an overview of the research participants and the rationale and approach in their selection. It also gives the timeframe of the methods of data gathering and discusses the emergent processes of interpreting the data and of refining the research questions. Criteria for, and methods of, establishing trustworthiness of this research are followed by discussion of reflexivity including ethical considerations. The chapter concludes by evaluating the limitations of the ontological and epistemological commitments of this research, with this evaluation being discussed further in the concluding chapter of this thesis.

This chapter, therefore, addresses the research objective:

- to develop appropriate methodology and methods to explore and interpret the experiences and identity work processes of the research participants as they make a transition into and progress within management

This chapter is reflexive in style and employs the personal pronoun. This style is appropriate because, in designing and implementing this research and in "crafting" this "artifact" (Watson, 1994b, p.S77), I have made particular ontological, epistemological and methodological decisions. These decisions will influence the data I gather and select, the interpretations of data I 'make' and, therefore, the theoretical contributions I propose. In other words, this thesis is my 'construction'. As Potter and Wetherell (1987, pp.33-34) discuss, the term construction is apposite

because: I have "built [it] out of a variety of pre-existing linguistic resources", for instance ideas about how to undertake research generally and identity-related research specifically; I have "actively select[ed]" which resources to include and which to omit; and I will attempt to justify, through discussion of evaluation criteria, that this construction, and my account of this research process, are "potent [and] consequential". However, as Potter and Wetherell also stress, I would not like to imply that the process of constructing this thesis has always been "deliberate or intentional" or "conscious" (Potter and Wetherell, 1987). Some parts of the process have been deliberate and fruitful, others deliberate and not fruitful, and yet others emergent and very fruitful. In this chapter, I will provide illustrative fragments of this emergent and "messy" (Denzin, 1997, p.246) process.

The chapter begins with a discussion of ontological and epistemological considerations and commitments to research generally and to research on self-identity. It highlights the considerations I made before deciding to position this study within relational social constructionism.

4.1 Ontological and epistemological considerations and commitments

Ontological considerations are connected with the epistemological commitments and interests of the research. As reviewed in Chapter Two, ontological and epistemological perspectives on identity are offered by, amongst others, Gioia (1998), Bouchikhi *et al.* (1998) and, more recently, Alvesson *et al.* (2008a) and Smith and Sparkes (2008). These specific identity-related discussions complement those relating to research generally, including Chia (1995), Crotty (1998), Fletcher (2006) and Cunliffe (2008) which have informed my "ontological commitments, intellectual priorities and theoretical preoccupations" (Chia, 1995, p. 579).

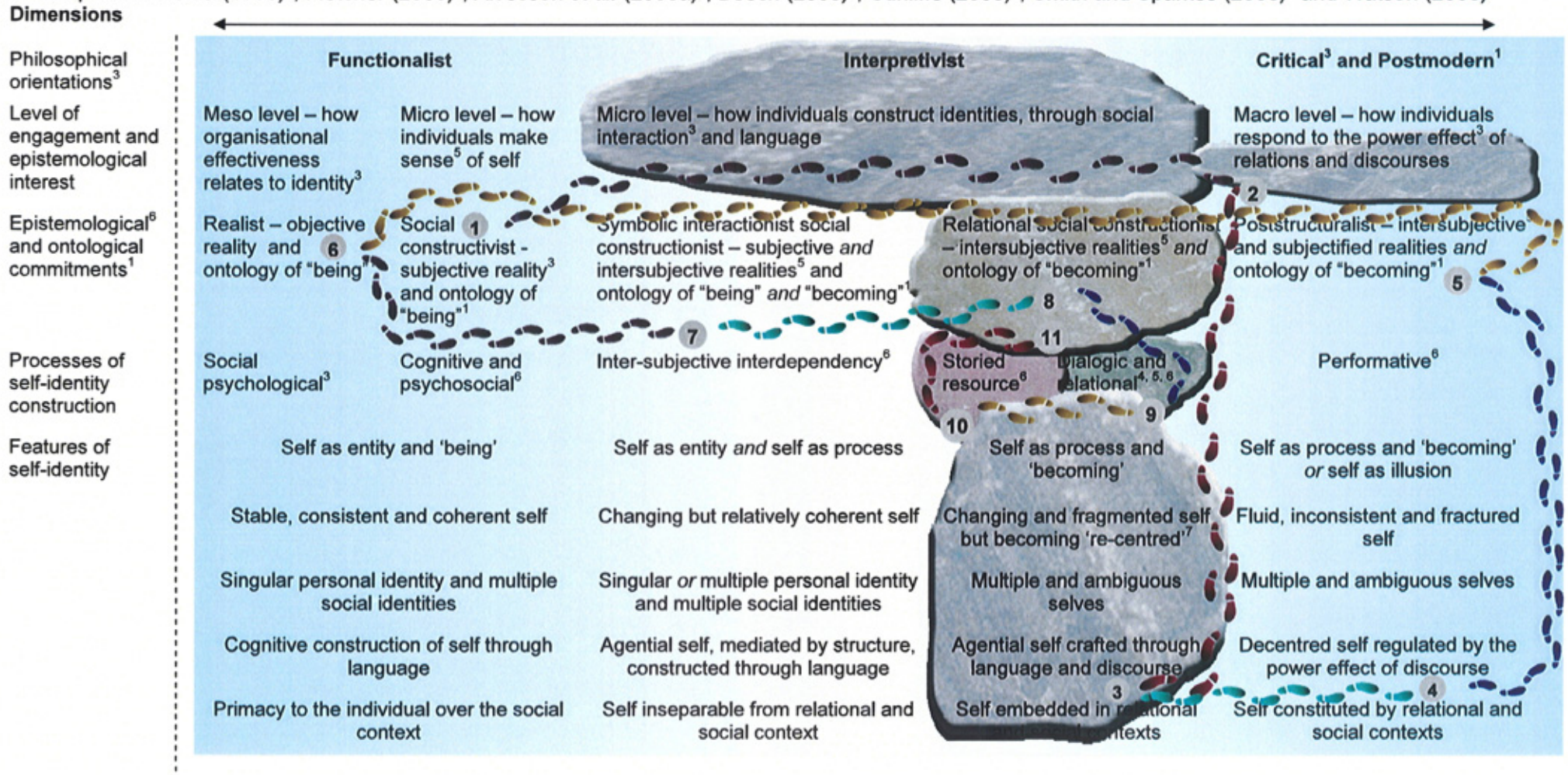
When considering approaches to research, Crotty (1998, p.216) proposes that "[r]ather than selecting established paradigms to follow, we [use] established paradigms to delineate and illustrate our own". Crotty's (1998) use of the word 'delineate' suggests a clearer demarcation between established paradigms than my own understandings of them would suggest. The notion of 'following' a paradigm implies movement and I have experienced this through the shifts in my understandings of different perspectives and the strength with which I have asserted particular ontological and epistemological commitments of this research over the course of the study. My movements between and shifts in ontological and

epistemological orientations are depicted, in Figure 4.1, as footsteps moving from one positioning to another. This section, with reference to Figure 4.1 and to the specific positioning points 1-11, outlines the rationale for incorporating and rejecting aspects of different epistemological commitments, particularly of social constructivism and poststructuralism, into my own research approach. This rationale is set within the context of the main aim of this research study which is to explore professionals becoming managers' experiences of vulnerability as they make a transition into, and continue to progress within, management.

The framing of the research aim in this exploratory manner reflects the social constructionist approach of this study. One of the main tenets of constructionism is that knowledge is "constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world" (Crotty, 1998, p.42). The focus within the research aim on experiences of vulnerability appreciates that identity is socially constructed and temporally- and spatially-specific with "particular actors, in particular places, at particular times, fashion[ing] meaning out of events and phenomena through prolonged, complex, processes of social interaction involving history, language and action" (Schwandt, 1994, p.118). It is through the interpretation of personal predicaments relating to experiences of vulnerability, as identity-symbolic 'events', that I intend to provide "context-related interpretive insights" (Cunliffe, 2008, p.126) into the 'phenomena' of self-identity and identity work processes.

Crotty (1998, p.58, emphasis in original) makes a distinction between *constructivism* with its focus exclusively on "the meaning-making activity of the individual mind" and *constructionism* with its focus on the social dimension of meaning. A social constructivist approach is relevant to the micro-level focus of this research study and, in the early stages of this research project, I stated that I was taking a social constructivist approach (positioning 1 in Figure 4.1). However, I now believe that social constructivism, with its emphasis on individual internal psychological processes of meaning-making, places insufficient attention on relational and discursive elements of social construction processes. One of the reasons for positioning the research as social constructivist was because I was reluctant to embrace the emphasis within social constructionism on "the hold our culture has on us" (Crotty, 1998, p.58) with, I assumed, its attendant interests in issues of power relations and structures (positioning 2 in Figure 4.1). A contributing factor to my resistance was my attendance at the 2003 Critical Management Studies conference

Figure 4.1 Ontological and epistemological considerations and commitments of this research
Developed from Chia (1995)[1], Fletcher (2006)[2], Alvesson *et al.* (2008a)[3], Beech (2008)[4], Cunliffe (2008)[5], Smith and Sparkes (2008)[6] and Watson (2008)[7]



where contributors, to the identity and other tracks, took an explicit critical and emancipatory standpoint. At that time, I did not share the goal of critical orientation, including poststructuralist, scholars in using research, for instance, to explore the power effect of discourses on self-identity or as a platform for political or social activism.

I now consider this rationale to have been naïve as identity is not power-neutral (Kondo, 1990) and the notion of social power dominance (Hermans, 2001) is an intrinsic feature of self-identity construction processes. Critical poststructuralists disclose and challenge power relations and dominance, expressed through discourses, with a view to giving voice to the oppressed. Although it is not an explicit aim of this study to explore how identity is regulated through the power effect of local and more global discursive practices, some of the participants have explicitly stated the effects, in their view, on their self-identity of oppressive power relations. For instance, **Nina** and **Barbara** problematise management and managing from a feminist perspective, and **Norman** gives an account of his relationship with a 'quite powerful' former director. In all of these cases, the participants' experiences are associated with vulnerability. I therefore feel and accept an ethical responsibility to give voice to their experiences of power domination and to consider the impact of this on their self-identity, and particularly the identity work processes in which they engage.

One further reason for the naïvety of the former social constructivist positioning is that I now fully understand and embrace the notion of self-identity as a discursive process, with individuals drawing on discursive resources made available in their culture (Watson and Harris, 1999) (positioning 3 in Figure 4.1). Social constructionism and poststructuralism share the notion that meanings are socially constructed and both approaches focus on language as the means of construction or constitution of social phenomena, including the self. However, as discussed in Chapter Two, I do not accept the extreme critical and poststructuralist perspective that language and discourse constitute subjectivity (Hall, 2000) (positioning 4 in Figure 4.1). Nor do I share the commitment of some poststructuralist scholars that "the meaning of words derives from their relationship to one another and not from any postulated relationship to non-linguistic reality" (Crotty, 1998, p.203) (positioning 5 in Figure 4.1). For me, taken to its extreme, such a commitment implies an "'anything goes'" (Watson, 2000, p.506; Linstead and Thomas, 2002, p.8) relativism

of which, both writers agree, poststructuralism is accused, although "often unjustly", in the view of Linstead and Thomas (2002, p.8) writing from that perspective. Therefore, whilst accepting that social constructionism may be viewed, according to Crotty (1998, p.64), as relativist I do not embrace a "total relativism that treats all narratives as texts of fiction" (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach and Zilber, 1998, p.8).

Crotty's (1998, p.203) suggestion that poststructuralist understandings may be exclusive of "non-linguistic reality" also challenges my belief that reality exists outside the consciousness, language conventions and discursive resources that human beings draw on in their meaning making. Even more strongly than not accepting the extreme subjectivism (Gioia, 1998, p.28) and "radical" relativism (Linstead and Thomas, 2002, p.8) of poststructuralist extremists, I strongly reject the objectivist epistemological view that "things exist as *meaningful* entities independently of consciousness and experience, that they have truth and meaning in them as objects" (Crotty, 1998, p.5, emphasis in original) (positioning 6 in Figure 4.1). A wider review of the literature helped me realise that my struggle in comprehending the ontological and epistemological considerations relating to poststructuralism and social constructionism centred on "mistakenly labelling", according to Watson (2006, p.57), social constructionism as 'subjectivist'. Such a misunderstanding re-creates the separation of the 'subjective' and the 'objective' which Watson (2006) asserts is rejected by social constructionist thinking. However, my reading and interpretation of social constructionist scholars taking a symbolic interactionist approach suggests that this separation is retained by some writers, such as Schlenker (1980) and Harré (1998) (positioning 7 in Figure 4.1).

Rather than dichotomous, dualistic and opposing positions, Cunliffe (2008, p.125) conceives, as a continuum, the dialectical interplay of "interpretive tensions" within social constructionist-based research. According to Cunliffe (2008, p.127), two critical choices, relating to ontological orientations, concern "the notions of subjective or intersubjective realities and... an objectified reality and always emerging in-the-moment realities". The latter notion of emergence, which is central to an "ontology of *becoming*" (Chia, 1995, p.579, emphasis in original), has been an enduring personal "ontological commitment" (Chia, 1995, p.579). Chia elaborates that an ontology of 'becoming' gives "primacy to reality as a processual, heterogeneous and emergent configuration of relations" (Chia, 1995, p.594). Watson and Harris (1999, p.17), whose work was influential to me from an early

stage in this research, adopt an ontology of becoming in their "processual, relational, discursive or constructionist style of thinking about human beings and their social worlds". The first critical choice relating to notions of intersubjective realities (Cunliffe, 2008) helped me move away from the "division between objectivity and subjectivity" (Fletcher, 2006, p.436) towards a "non-dualist epistemology and ontology focusing on relationality" (Fletcher, 2006, p.436) (positioning 8 in Figure 4.1). Mauthner and Doucet (1998) argue that a relational ontology is not contradictory to interpretive or symbolic interactionist informed social constructionism. However, in their view, relational social constructionism emphasises the interrelatedness of notions of interdependence, dependence, and independence, rather than individualism and independence which is given prominence in social constructionist work (Mauthner and Doucet, 1998). Relational social constructionist research, therefore, focuses "on the micro-level – how people within a particular setting creat[e] meanings intersubjectively" and dialogically (Cunliffe, 2008, p.128) (positioning 9 in Figure 4.1). The notion of individuals constructing meanings dialogically (Beech, 2008; Smith and Sparkes, 2008) in interaction with others, is consonant with the understandings of self-identity construction processes developed in this thesis. These understandings include the notion of identity as a narrative and storied resource (Smith and Sparkes, 2008) construction (positioning 10 in Figure 4.1). Confirmation of the relational social constructionist (Cunliffe, 2008) positioning of this research (positioning 11 in Figure 4.1), together with its ontological and epistemological commitments is given in Table 4.1. The table also outlines the "ontological commitments and theoretical preoccupations" (Chia, 1995, p. 579) relating to this positioning, and the "epistemological interests" (Cunliffe, 2008) of this research.

Table 4.1 Ontological and epistemological positionings of this research
Adapted from Cunliffe (2008, p.126)

Nature of social reality – Intersubjective realities and ontology of 'becoming'
Intersubjective realities with people creating meaning and realities with others
Emerging social realities and a focus on processes of meaning-making with no one person in control
Process of socially constructing reality – Relational and dialogical epistemology
Reality construction and sense-making as a relational process with a focus on dialogue and conversation between people
Social realities as relational and experienced in interaction and dialogue between people
Social construction as *both* benign *and* power infused processes
Epistemological interests
Social construction at micro levels between people in everyday conversations
Context-related interpretive insights and meaning created in on-going moments
Research as a reflexive process

The focus of the epistemological interests of this research has developed over the research process. The aim to explore identity construction processes of professionals becoming managers has been consistent throughout this study. However, I have reviewed and refined the aim and its related questions, particularly through the processes of data interpretation. This emergence of the research questions is discussed in Section 4.4.3 below but, for now, here is a reminder of the main and subsidiary research questions.

The research question is:

What relationships are there between professionals becoming managers' personal predicaments, experiences of vulnerability and identity work?

The following sub-questions are related to this main question:

- In what ways do professionals becoming managers experience vulnerability as they make a transition into and progress within management?

- In what ways do personal predicaments, related to experiences of vulnerability, shape an individual's self-identity?

- In what ways do professionals becoming managers' accounts of personal predicaments give insights into identity work processes?

- What identity work strategies are employed by professionals becoming managers in an attempt to retain stability, distinctiveness and coherence of self-identity?

Cunliffe (2008) discusses the implications of working from a relational social constructionist perspective: "If we believe we are constantly creating meaning, sense and selves as we relate with others, then we need to reflexively surface and articulate how we create these meanings, so that we act and interact in more responsive and ethical ways" (Cunliffe, 2008, p.132). The "moral responsibility" (Cunliffe, 2008, p.132) underpinning relational social constructionism also, therefore, associates with, in my view, the socially constructed "local moral orders" (Harré and van Langenhove, 1999a, p.1) which underpin this thesis' central concept of positioning theory (Davies and Harré, 1990, 1999; Harré and van Langenhove, 1991, 1999c). The importance of reflexivity (Cunliffe, 2000) is discussed later in this chapter, in Section 4.5.4.

In conclusion to this section, then, within the interpretivist orientation to research (see Figure 4.1), the term and positioning of this research as relational social constructionist are employed to distinguish it from social constructivist, social constructionist and poststructuralist approaches. Whilst this research approach has elements in common with symbolic interactionist informed social constructionism and poststructuralism, it diverges away from these approaches in important respects relating to its, and my own, "ontological commitments, intellectual priorities and theoretical preoccupations" (Chia, 1995, p.579). Methodological choices and decisions relating to these are considered in the next section.

4.2 Methodological choices and decisions

Based on the main aim of the research, I designed a methodology which gave access to professionals' experiences of becoming managers and to their processes of self-identity construction. Chapter Two argues that language and discourse are central to identity construction. Identities are linguistic acts: individuals draw on discursive practices and resources to develop meaning about and to construct their self-identities. A narrative mode of research is, therefore, needed to convey and interpret meaning about relational processes (Bouwen, 1998). Discourse analysis is the general term for the study of talk and text in social settings (Potter and Wetherell, 1987). Discourse analysts focus on how discourse is "put together" and what is gained by this construction (Potter and Wetherell, 1987, p.160). This approach is particularly suited to this study where I am interested in how individuals "put together" discourse (Potter and Wetherell, 1987, p.160) in making sense of their experiences, in this research of vulnerability. Discourse analysis also explores what function discursive acts serve "in their own right" (Potter and Wetherell, 1987, p.160), for instance in this research in forming and repairing self-identities.

Boje, Oswick and Ford (2004, p.571) discuss the "doing of discourse" and propose interrelated strands of engaging, in their case, with organisations and organising as linguistic/discursive phenomena. Table 4.2 outlines how these strands, or forms, of engagement are applied to this study and its focus on self-identity.

Table 4.2 Language and identity: the doing of discourse in this study
Developed from Boje *et al.* (2004, p.571)

Form of engagement	Overview of strand	Application to this study
foci of engagement	language as a means to an end or language as an end in itself	means to an end – to explore professional becoming managers' experiences of vulnerability and to interpret their processes of self-identity construction and identity work through language

Table 4.2 Language and identity: the doing of discourse in this study (continued)

Form of engagement	Overview of strand	Application to this study
methods of engagement	methodological alternatives include conversation analysis, ethnomethodology, content analysis, deconstruction, narrative analysis, intertextuality, and critical discourse analysis	narrative analysis
levels of engagement	"micro" (e.g. discrete episodes or conversations) through "meso" (e.g. broader patterns and networks of interaction) to "macro" (e.g. grand narratives and metadiscourses with wider social implications)	meso – to explore broad patterns, within and across participants' narrative texts, of managers' experiences of vulnerability micro – to interpret discursive identity work processes
modes of engagement	monological, dialogical, and/or polyphonic perspectives	dialogical

In terms of focus and modes of engagement, as argued in Chapter Two, I conceive of the multivocal and dialogic self (Moghaddam, 1999; Hermans, 2001) and identity and identity work as a dialogical process (Hermans, 2001; Beech, 2008; Cunliffe, 2008; Smith and Sparkes, 2008) with language being used as a "means to an end" (Boje *et al.*, 2004, p.571). I am not treating the participants in this study as "sites" (Boje *et al.*, 2004, p.571) for language analysis, in other words, where language is an end in itself. Instead language is being used to interpret their self-identities and identity work processes. In relation to methods and levels of engagement, I am drawing on narrative analytic methods and applying these, for different purposes, at two levels. In exploring managers' experiences of vulnerability as they make a transition into and progress within management, I engage with a collection of narrative texts within and across the participants' accounts and, therefore, take a meso approach. In offering insights into identity work processes, I engage in a more 'fine grained' or micro-level interpretation of one selected text from each participant's accounts. These methods and levels of engagement are discussed in more detail in the next section.

With reference to methods of engagement, I make a distinction, drawing on the work of Heracleous and Hendry (2000), between interpretive discourse studies, employing narrative analysis methods, and critical discourse studies, employing critical discourse analysis. Heracleous and Hendry (2000, p.1251) propose existing studies – of organisation – take one of three approaches to discourse: "managerialist"; "interpretive"; and "critical". As discussed in Chapter Two, these approaches are not necessarily mutually exclusive but are significantly distinct in their purpose of analysis and in their presumptions about agency, structure and power. For instance, the distinctions between interpretive and critical align with the discussion, in Chapter Two, on the extent to which, within interpretive approaches, human agency is privileged over societal structures of domination, which are a focus within critical approaches (Heracleous and Hendry, 2000). Phillips and Hardy (2002, p.19) make a similar distinction between more critical discourse analysis studies where power dynamics form the focus of the research and those, in their term "constructivist studies", which focus on the processes of social construction of reality. In line with the argument developed in Chapter Two, while being "sensitive to power" (Phillips and Hardy, 2002, p.21), this study draws primarily on the "interpretive" approach (Heracleous and Hendry, 2000) and aims to illustrate and gain deeper understandings of identity work processes and how these are achieved through language and discourse use.

Having established how understandings of discourse-based studies are applied to this study, the next section gives further details about the processes of data gathering.

4.3 Gathering data on participants' experiences

This section gives details about how I selected the research participants and discusses the methods of gathering data on their managerial experiences. It also gives details of the schedule of interviews.

Whilst I might have been able to negotiate access to research participants' "lived experience" (Ellis and Flaherty, 1992; Denzin, 1997) and to study participants' talk and use of language and discourse in their 'natural' work setting, time constraints meant that ethnography (Denzin, 1997; Brewer, 2004) was not a feasible method. Therefore I used "social constructionist interviews" (King, 2004a, p.13) to gather qualitative data from the participants about their managerial experiences. The

participants' accounts of their experiences, including of vulnerability, then provided the means of interpreting their discursive practices and the self-identity function of these.

4.3.1 Selecting the research participants

To move beyond the often-researched areas of health, education and social service (Cohen *et al.*, 2002), I wanted to involved research participants with a range of under-researched professional backgrounds. When I first started the research project, I was aware of the research interest in the then existing literature in new public management in the public sector. At that time, I thought my research might develop in the direction of identity regulation (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002) and the self-identity effects of new public management discourses for professionals becoming managers. I therefore targeted public sector professionals as the participants for this research.

The participant selection and "recruitment" process happened on an "ad-hoc and chance basis" (Rapley, 2004, p.17). Through my work, I had access to potential participants from a range of public sector organisations. However, at the time of developing my research proposal I was, and still am, facilitating management development workshops within one local authority. From the profiles provided to the facilitators, I was aware of the workshop participants' professional backgrounds, where applicable. From my observation of their participation in the workshop and in informal conversations with them, I invited six participants to take part in my research. I selected those who seemed to have a strong self awareness and an ability to reflect on their professional and managerial experiences. I also selected individuals who had given, during the workshop, personal examples of what I considered identity-related issues, for instance feeling professionally compromised in their managerial position. Beyond the six participants who agreed to take part I invited two other participants. One person declined the invitation because of concerns about time and confidentiality. The other person's contract of employment was with the NHS. Not only are professionals within the NHS well represented in identity studies, the application process for ethical clearance was considered too prohibitive and time consuming.

The two other participants who became part of this study worked for two different social housing associations. A colleague recommended one of these participants,

Edward, and he suggested I invite one of his colleagues in another social housing association. Unlike Edward who had a social work professional background, she had a housing management qualification. Although they both worked in the same public service sector, they contributed to my aim in having participants with a diversity of professional backgrounds.

According to Potter and Wetherell (1987, p.161) "the success of a [discursive] study is *not* in the least dependent on sample size". However, Ellis and Bochner (2000, p.756) suggest that five or six research participants are probably sufficient for "intensive interviews". To build trust in the relationship, Ellis and Bochner (2000) recommend interviewing each participant a number of times. As discussed below, because I planned to have two interviews with each participant, I made clear their time commitments to the study, as well as confirming my own commitments particularly in respect of ethical issues. Ethical issues are discussed in Section 4.6.4 below.

All of the research participants are mature with a significant number of years of professional and managerial experience. The eight individuals moved into management from diverse professional backgrounds, including youth work, social work, architecture, library services, dancing, teaching, quantity surveying and housing management. Six of the participants are in middle or senior management positions within a local authority, and two are senior managers from the social housing sector. Four participants progressed managerially within their organisations during the course of the research project. The following offers a 'pen portrait' of the participants:

Nina has 25 years' experience as a 'field worker' within the youth service of the same local authority. She worked as a senior worker for 11 years, before moving up, approximately three years prior to the first interview, to become one of three senior managers within the council's youth service.

Edward has a social work professional background and has worked as a professional in two charitable organisations, a local authority and, at the time of the research project, a social housing organisation. At the time of the first interview he was Director of Care and Support and, by the time of the second

interview, had become Managing Director of one of the association's operating companies, following a merger with another housing association.

After a brief period in private practice following his professional training as an architect, **Norman** has worked for the same public sector organisation for 30 years. By the time of the second interview, Norman had 'gone up a tier' in management to become the manager of a team of professional/technical team leaders. As a middle manager, he has responsibility for managing building projects and liaising between the client, stakeholder groups and technical professionals.

In her first interview **Wendy** describes herself as 'being a chartered surveyor'. However, she had just been promoted to a senior management position meaning that, for the first time in her career, her job title as Contracts and Services Manager does not refer explicitly to her professional background. Wendy practised in the private sector for the first 10 years of her professional career, but for the last seven years has worked for two councils including, at the time of the first interview, three years with her present organisation.

Felicity has an eclectic professional background including as a 'professional dancer earning my money as an artist in my own capacity' and a self-employed public relations consultant. She joined her current public sector organisation in 1996, and is currently a middle manager in Arts and Cultural Development.

Tracy has been in her senior manager position, within a Local Education Authority, for 15 years. After an initial post-qualification teaching position in a secondary school, she developed in a specialist area of education provision and support. The move into her current specialist service area was significant because it involved moving away from direct teaching to the provision of an advisory and support service to the schools within the authority and to other teachers.

Barbara is now Managing Director of a charitable-status housing association, having been its Housing Services Director at the time of the first interview. She has been with her current organisation approximately 10 years, having worked for 11 years for a large national housing organisation. It was when working in

that organisation that she gained her professional housing management qualification.

In his early twenties, after graduating, **John** 'drifted into a career as a books sales representative'. Realising he wanted to do 'something a little bit more meaningful', he gained a qualification as a professional librarian. Following a short period working as a desk researcher for a regional newspaper, he joined the council, 17 years prior to the first interview, as a librarian. John has been in his current middle manager role for five years, managing the council's externally-funded education service provision.

Having given details about the selection of, and briefly introduced, the research participants, the next section provides details about using interviews to gather data.

4.3.2 The research interviews

I gathered data from the research participants in two stages of semi-structured interviews. The first interview, conducted between February and July 2005, was structured into three main parts. These were: the individual's professional background and how they had 'ended up' in their current managerial role; their notions of what 'being' a professional and a manager meant to them; and examples from their professional and managerial experiences illustrating 'challenges' they had faced and explaining how they had dealt with them. Appendix 1 gives the interview 1 "guide" (King, 2004a, p.15). I had adapted some questions, for instance 'what does management and being a manager 'mean' to you', and 'can you identify any personal values or beliefs which you think are relevant to the way you work' from Watson (1994a).

The second interview was held during the period April to June 2006, approximately 12-15 months after the first one. That interview also had three main parts. I asked participants to give accounts of events, broadly related to undertaking their managerial roles, which had happened during the period subsequent to the first interview. In the second part of the interview, I reminded participants of the 'stories' they had told in the first interview, which I had interpreted into broad themes. In the third part, I asked the participants to select, using their own criteria, one of the stories and to elaborate upon it. I also asked them to comment on the significance of the story and their reasons for selecting it.

In both interviews I drew on critical incident technique (CIT) (Chell, 2004). This was particularly in part three of the first interview, when I asked participants to give an example of a 'turning point' or event marking their transition from professional to manager, and in the elaboration of the selected story in the second interview. The way in which critical incident technique "facilitates the investigation of significant occurrences (events, incidents, processes or issues), identified by the respondent, the way they are managed, and the outcome in terms of perceived effects" (Chell, 2004, 48) is appropriate to the study. In particular, the participants' selection and discussion of critical incidents might illustrate the "episodic" (Linstead and Thomas, 2002, p.3) identity construction processes in which I was interested. The critical incidents might also symbolise "epiphanies or existential turning-point moments in their lives" (Denzin, 1997, p.xvii). I also considered that the participants might have "very good recall" (Chell, 2004, p.47) of the incident, because they were selecting and regarding them as critical. In a previous research project I had been trained in behavioural event interviewing, which is derived from CIT (Chell, 2004). However, in this research, I did not use CIT in the same systematic manner, to control the interview and to probe for details of "cognitive, affective and behavioural elements" (Chell, 2004, p.48). Rather I used the questions related to the technique as a checklist to review the detail of the story given by the participant and, for purposes of clarification or further information (Chell, 2004), to ask follow up questions.

Following my oral invitation to the research participants, I contacted them by email to provide further details about my research. In a subsequent email agreeing the interview date, I included the interview guide (Appendix 1) to enable the participant to prepare but stressed that this was not necessary. For the second interview, I followed the same procedure of contacting the participants by email. Again, I provided, in advance of the meeting, an outline of the areas for discussion (Appendix 2).

I piloted the interview process with Edward, who was also a professional/practitioner advisor on my supervision team, and with the first other interview I arranged, which was Nina's. Details of the aspects evaluated through the pilot process are given in Section 4.6 on reflexivity.

Table 4.3 confirms details of the schedule of the interviews with each of the research participants. The first interviews lasted between 40 minutes and one hour and 10 minutes, and the duration of the second interviews ranged from one hour 30 minutes to two hours 35 minutes.

Table 4.3 Profiles of participants and interview schedule

Participant	Professional background	Interview 1	Interview 2
Nina	Youth worker	7 Feb 2005	23 Jun 2006
Edward	Social worker	11 Feb 2005 1 Mar 2005 (for pilot review)	28 Apr 2006
Norman	Architect	25 Feb 2005	24 Apr 2006
Felicity	Professional dancer and dance teacher	7 Mar 2005	9 May 2006
Wendy	Quantity surveyor	15 Mar 2005	8 May 2006
Tracy	Secondary school teacher and education specialist	18 April 2005	19 Jul 2006
Barbara	Housing manager	19 April 2005	16 May 2006
John	Librarian	21 July 2005	18 May 2006

There were practical and ethical considerations in conducting the interviews. Ethical considerations are discussed in Section 4.6.4. With the exception of two of the first stage interviews which were held in my private office, all the interviews were held at the participants' workplace. However, for confidentiality reasons, these did not necessarily take place in the participants' office. Two interviews were conducted in a staff rest area which was not ideal as staff occasionally used the facilities. One interview was interrupted by a fire drill. Tracy was "over-communicative" (King, 2004a, p.19) and tended to be long-winded. She was aware of this tendency and admitted, in the second interview, that 'I can talk for England'. I allowed her digressions but, when I felt that these were departing significantly from the central discussion, I intervened by referring her back to an earlier point.

All the participants participated actively in the interviews. I was aware that the interview was an "interactional event" (Rapley, 2004, p.16) and that the participants' accounts of their experiences were being "mutually and collaboratively produced" (Rapley, 2004, p.16) in the interaction between myself and the participant. Therefore, I considered myself an active participant in the process, guiding the talk, showing interest and encouraging the participant, for instance through "response

tokens" (Rapley, 2004, p.20) which I realised from transcribing the interviews often took the form of 'ummmm'. In the first interview I was more reluctant to be collaborative, for instance through self-disclosing and offering my own experiences (Rapley, 2004, p.26), under the misguided belief that I might "unduly bias" the interview process or "contaminate" the data (Rapley, 2004, p.19). By the second interview, I realised that this was not an issue and the balance of interaction changed, for instance as I offered my interpretations of their stories relating to critical incidents.

Having given details of the method of gathering data, the next section discusses the data interpretation method choices and decisions.

4.4 Data Interpretation

Riessman (1993, p.25) outlines the questions to consider in a narrative analysis process as deciding: how to transform talk into a written text and to identify narrative "segments"; what aspects of the narrative constitute the basis for interpretation; and deciding who determines what the narrative means as well as considering alternative possible readings. Each of these aspects is considered in this section.

4.4.1 Transforming talk into text

All the interviews were digitally recorded. I transcribed the "whole" interview (Potter and Wetherell, 1987, p.165), i.e. including the participant's responses to my questions and interventions. This was because I appreciated my "active and constructive" part in the interview process (Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Rapley, 2004). Also my questions and interventions set "some of the functional context for the answers" (Potter and Wetherell, 1987, p.165) and misinterpretation can occur without them.

I did not produce a "clean" or "sanitized" transcript (Elliot, 2005, p.52) but instead included "repetition, false starts and non-lexical utterances such as 'ummms' and 'errs'" (Elliot, 2005, p.52) as well as indicated pauses and hesitation. The inclusion of such material is important to gain an understanding not only of the content but also the process of the talk in action. However, to ease reading of the extracts within the thesis, I have removed the false starts and non-lexical utterances.

I sent a copy of the transcript to the participant within two weeks of the interview, asking them to make any comment or amendment and confirming authorisation for me to use the data in my research project. They signed an informed consent form during each interview. A couple of the participants commented on their apparent incoherence, as indicated by the verbatim transcripts, and I tried to reassure them that this was a natural characteristic of conversation processes and that my questions and interventions were not always coherent. Apart from these general observations, one participant asked that I further anonymised her professional background and one participant made minor amendments, of a grammatical nature, to the transcript of the first interview.

In addition to working with the data as text I have returned to the recorded interviews, particularly to check for meaning through intonation and emphasis which is lost in transcribed data.

4.4.2 Identifying narrative segments

Whilst the aim of the research has always been related to identity construction processes of professionals becoming managers, I have reviewed and refined the research questions over the course of the study. For instance, at the time of my initial project approval, submitted in February 2004, the research question was expressed as: 'What are the processes of personal identification with professional and managerial roles and how do individuals cope with the multiplicity of identities when making the transition from a professional to a managerial role within an organisation?'. At the mid-stage point, in March 2006, the research question was: 'In what ways do individuals frame and reframe their self identities in the transition from professional to managerial roles?'. The current focus on managers' experiences of vulnerability emerged through an iterative process of data interpretation and literature review. During the course of the first interview, **Wendy**, one of the research participants, observed that:

> I've talked about being vulnerable an awful lot, haven't I, and I don't think I'm particularly vulnerable but ehm you know when you're out of your comfort [zone] that's when you start feeling vulnerable again

In the interpretation of the combined first and second interview data, my attention to experiences of vulnerability was also alerted by the language and rhetorical tropes

(Gabriel, 2000), particularly metaphors, used by some of the participants in their accounting of events. I was drawn to the discursive and highly emotive force of the language which some participants used in making sense of certain situations. For instance **Edward** said: 'I did feel in an incredibly vulnerable position then' and 'it's one of the most embarrassing positions I've ever been placed in'. **Barbara** described 'the most excruciating meeting I've ever been through... I was completely torn between my loyalties to the organisation and my own integrity'. **John** described feeling 'very isolated in having that battle'. I then "trawled through" (Brown and Coupland, 2005, p.1052) the transcripts, identifying and "coding" (Potter and Wetherell, 1987, p.167) other instances which indicated vulnerability. Potter and Wetherell (1987, p.167) state that this process of selecting instances should be as "*inclusive*" (emphasis in original) as possible, including all "borderline cases". I selected the incidents and accounts where the participants gave "articulations of emotionality" (Coupland *et al.*, 2008, p.327) relating to vulnerability. I gave attention to expressions synonymous with vulnerability, such as weakness, difficulty, powerless, exposed, as well as antonymous ones, for instance confrontation, fight, battle, struggle, challenge, power, right.

Potter and Wetherell (1987, p.167) explain that this stage of identifying and coding the data is distinct from the analysis itself, and is intended to "squeeze an unwieldy body of discourse into manageable chunks". I identified between four and 12 incidents of vulnerability accounted by each participant (see Table 4.4). Some of the incidents were discrete, others had multiple parts with the participant revisiting the incident over the course of the interview, and yet others were discussed initially in the first interview and elaborated upon in the second. The overall transcript data of 238, 017 words were reduced to a relevant and more manageable data set of 54,481 words. I saved all the selected data in a separate file and this became the main basis for detailed interpretation, although I returned as appropriate to the original data and the recording.

Table 4.4 Full and selected data details

Participant	Interview 1 data volume	Interview 2 data volume	Number of incidents relating to vulnerability	Vulnerability data volume
Nina	8,073 words	17,321 words	6	5,542 words
Edward	12,802 words	15,863 words	4	5,797 words
Norman	10,714 words	15,654 words	5	4,687 words
Felicity	9,264 words	17,156 words	4	4,612 words
Wendy	11,883 words	19,841 words	12	7,405 words
Tracy	14,253 words	24,898 words	8	7, 941words
Barbara	7,881 words	20,446 words	7	12,420 words
John	10,951 words	21,017 words	8	6,077 words

Having discussed the processes for selecting the data relating to experiences of vulnerability, the next section addresses Riessman's (1993) second question relating to the data analysis process, that is the aspects of the narrative constituting the basis for interpretation.

4.4.3 The bases for interpretation

Before undertaking a detailed interpretation of the narrative "segments" (Riessman, 1993) or "chunks" (Potter and Wetherell, 1987), I had to decide the bases for interpretation, that is the different "features" (Elliott, 2005, p.36) or functions of the narrative data that are of primary importance to the research aim. This research is interested in the participants' experiences of vulnerability and, therefore, I needed to give a focus on the "content" (Elliott, 2005, p.38; Lieblich *et al.*, 1998, p.12) of the narrative. This is the what and how of the experiences of vulnerability and relates to the research questions of

- In what ways do professionals becoming managers experience vulnerability as they make a transition into and progress within management?

- In what ways do personal predicaments, related to experiences of vulnerability, shape an individual's self-identity?

Because of the research aim of exploring the identity construction processes employed by the participants, I also needed to give a focus on the "structure" (Elliott, 2005, p.38) or "form" (Lieblich *et al.*, 1998, p.12) of the narrative. In other words how participants construct their identities by drawing on discursive resources and through use of "linguistic and narrative strategies" (Lieblich *et al.*, 1998, p.6) as this relates to the research questions of

- In what ways do professionals becoming managers' accounts of personal predicaments give insights into identity work processes?

- What identity work strategies are employed by professionals becoming managers in an attempt to retain stability, distinctiveness and coherence of self-identity?

This last research question is related to the "performance" (Elliott, 2005, p.38) of narratives. I was interested in this in a restricted sense of the "interactional" context (Elliott, 2005, p.38) in which the narrative was "produced, recounted, and consumed" (Elliott, 2005, p.38) within the interview, and its performative effect in "repairing" (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002, p.627) self identity. However, the functions of the narrative in relation to the wider social and cultural context (Lieblich *et al.*, 1998) were not a direct focus for the data interpretation. However, I appreciate that the participants' incidents are related to this wider context, not least through the societal and cultural discursive resources that participants draw on in their accounts of the incidents.

Having considered the bases for interpreting the data, namely the content, structure and performance of the narrative, the next section considers Riessman's (1993) final question relating to the narrative analysis process. This relates to deciding who determines what the narrative means as well as considering alternative possible readings and involves, therefore, deciding upon the methods of analysis.

4.4.4 The emergent process of 'reading' the narrative texts

As befits an analytic process for interpreting data on identity construction processes, there is "no *single* narrative method, but rather a multitude of different ways in which researchers can engage with the narrative properties of their data" (Elliott, 2005, p.37). The multitude of different ways did bewilder me and, in trying to understand the different methods and their utility for my intended purposes, I 'piloted' different narrative analysis methods. I now appreciate that this is a natural part of the "many false starts" (Potter and Wetherell, 1987, p.168) and "messy, multi-level, multi-method approach to narrative inquiry" (Denzin, 1997, p.248). I will illustrate the methods I used before a more "systematic patterning emerge[d]" (Potter and Wetherell, 1987, p.168) from the data.

In the period between the first interview and the second one, I interpreted the data thematically by drawing broadly on the techniques of template analysis (King, 2004b). I made single and multiple coding of the then non-segmented narrative text of each participant to identity content themes within and across the data. Using the technique led me to identify broad content themes. These related to: the nature of the transition, challenges to authority; needing to 'have the answers'; making decisions; feeling the weight of managing; compromising professional principles and thinking with a 'corporate management head'; and challenging and a 'force that quells'. I presented this initial analysis as a developmental paper (Corlett, 2005) at the British Academy of Management (BAM) 2005 conference.

In preparation for the second interview, I "segmented" (Riessman, 1993) each participant narrative text into the incidents described by the participants. At this stage I used the term 'stories' to describe this segmentation, although I now use this term with a different meaning, as explained below in this section. For instance, I identified that Nina told me 12 stories in her first interview including: her degree placement in a social services department; leaving university and going on to a job creation programme; her first job which was a 'baptism of fire'; and 'the mobile information play bus' story. I did this form of analysis so that I could remind the participants of the incidents they related in the first interview and invite them to elaborate on one(s) of their choosing as part of the second interview. I describe this process in 4.3.2 above.

As well as these methods which focused on 'content', I was also piloting methods relating to 'structure' and the textual function of the narrative. In the period January to June 2006, the 'content' theme of vulnerability was beginning to emerge from the data. I had selected incidents of what I then referred to as self-identity "defining moments" (Badaracco, 1997, p.6) generating "more concentrated" (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002, p.625) identity work. For instance, drawing on studies by Vaara, Tienari and Säntti (2003) and Koller (2004), I interpreted Edward's use of metaphor and metaphorical expressions in an incident in which he had expressed feeling 'in an incredibly vulnerable position'. I presented this interpretation at the BAM 2006 conference (Corlett, 2006).

However, these methods addressed the separate functions of language and I was looking for a method to integrate the three bases for interpretation, namely content, structure/form and performance. I made a presentation on reflexivity in June 2006 as part of my annual PhD supervision process. A slide relating to data analysis began 'the search for the 'holy grail' and Labels, Labels, Labels'. At this stage, I was still trying to make sense of the distinction between discourse, Discourse, i.e. from a critical orientation, discourse analysis and narrative analysis. I was also piloting Lieblich *et al.*'s (1998, p.13) four modes of reading a narrative which are: holistic-content; categorical-content; holistic-form; and categorical-form. For instance, I produced a holistic-content interpretation of Nina's and John's first interviews, presenting these as work/life stories based on the content of the narrative.

Although I appreciated that I wanted to interpret the three functions of language and discourse, I was 'drawn back' to content-focused analyses. I was struggling to achieve a balance between these and analyses of structure and performative effect. In May 2007, two PhD research colleagues introduced me to Mauthner and Doucet's (1998) voice-centred relational method. This method helped address the issues I had been trying to resolve and fitted with the relational social constructionist epistemological commitment of this research.

During the period May – August 2007, I then selected, from each participant narrative text, one "defining moment" (Badaracco, 1997) incident that indicated vulnerability. The main criterion in selecting the defining moments, which became conceptualised as personal predicaments, was the apparent significance of the incident for the individual. I gauged significance by expressions of vulnerability such

as: 'embarrassed' (Edward); 'exposed' (Edward); 'vulnerable' (Edward, John, Wendy); 'professionally completely discredited' (Edward); 'belittled and... made so foolish' (Edward); 'sick' (Edward, Barbara); 'as if I'd completely abandoned my principles' (Barbara); 'very angry' (Nina); 'sore' (Nina); 'not very sure' (Felicity); 'passionate' (Tracy); 'anxious' (Tracy); 'really chewed up' (Tracy); 'a bit concern[ed]... worried' (Norman). Having selected one incident for each participant, I then interpreted each selected text using Mauthner and Doucet's (1998) voice-centred relational method. The notion of a *relational ontology* is at the heart of the voice-centred relational method (Mauthner and Doucet, 1998, p. 125, emphasis in original) and is therefore fully consistent with the ontological and theoretical commitments of this thesis. The method, which is derived from Brown and Gilligan (1992), translates the relational ontology into a method of data analysis (Mauthner and Doucet, 1998) which involves four readings of each narrative account (Table 4.5).

Table 4.5 The four readings of the voice-centred relational method (Mauthner and Doucet, 1998)
Developed from Mauthner and Doucet (1998, pp.126-132) and Doucet and Mauthner (2008, pp.405-7)

Reading	**Focus and method of reading**
Reading 1 – reading for the plot and for the researcher's responses to the narrative	This reading has two elements. The first element involves reading for the overall plot and story that is being told by the participant. This involves reading for the main events, the protagonists, the subplots, recurrent images, words, metaphors and contradictions in the narrative. The second 'reader-response' element of this reading involves placing self as researcher in the narrative text by acknowledging one's own particular background, history and experiences in relation to the participant and the narrative given.
Reading 2 – reading for the voice of the 'I'	This reading focuses on how the participant experiences, feels and speaks about herself. This involves reading for the participant's use of personal pronouns such as 'I', 'we' or 'you' in talking about herself, and for shifts in use of these which might signal changes in how the participant perceives and experiences herself.
Reading 3 – reading for relationships	This reading gives attention to how the participant speaks about her interpersonal relationships with others and the broader social networks within which she works and lives.
Reading 4 – reading for cultural and political contexts and social structures	This reading involves reading for how participants describe structural and ideological forces and whether these are considered as constraining and/or enabling.

I followed the general principles of the voice-centred relational method (Mauthner and Doucet, 1998; Doucet and Mauthner, 2008). Mauthner and Doucet (1998) consider that the first two readings should always be undertaken, but emphasis on reading 3 or 4 is dependent on the research topic. Because the specific focus of the topic had not emerged at this stage, I conducted each of the four readings on the selected narrative texts relating to vulnerability. In addition to reading for the overall story, in reading 1, I gave attention to the participant's use in the narrative of recurring and contradictory words and of metaphors. Reading 1 has a reflexive element (Mauthner and Doucet, 1998; Doucet and Mauthner, 2008) enabling me, as the researcher, to consider how my "personal, political or theoretical" interests (Mauthner and Doucet, 1998) might influence the data interpretation. Reading for the voice of the 'I', through reading 2, is particularly pertinent to this research as it gives access to the emerging narrated self (Doucet and Mauthner, 2008). The third reading, for relationships and social networks, is consonant with the central tenets of relational social constructionism that individuals are narrated selves-in-relation-to-others (Cunliffe, 2008; Doucet and Mauthner, 2008). The fourth reading focuses on how the participant focuses on power relations and draws on dominant or enabling ideologies. This reading creates the relationship between micro-level individual narratives and macro-level discourses and structures (Doucet and Mauthner, 2008).

A further benefit in using this method was that, together with the other two PhD colleagues using the voice-centred relational method, we formed a "community of practice" (Wenger, 1998). Since May 2007 we have met approximately five times a year. The purpose of the initial meetings was to develop our understandings of the method through our practice and its application to our respective research projects. The community also provided a forum for me to share my readings and interpretations, and to hear their alternative readings, of selected extracts from the data. An illustration of this is provided in the discussion on reflexivity in Section 4.6 below.

Because of its time-consuming nature (Mauthner and Doucet, 1998), I did not follow the four reading method in interpreting the full data set, shown in Table 4.4 above, relating to experiences of vulnerability. Instead, I re-interpreted thematically (King, 2004b) the wider data set, which is presented in Chapter Five, and organised the emergent themes as early and current becoming manager experiences of vulnerability. Chapter Six draws on the detailed application of the four reading

method on the narrower data of one selected personal predicament for each participant.

From the four reading (Mauthner and Doucet, 1998) interpretation of the narrower selection of data, patterns within and across the eight narrative texts began to emerge, for instance, in the way the participants presented self as 'a victim', 'the baddy' and 'bad guy' and concluded their accounts by stating that they 'had no choice'. This last pattern within the narratives led me to give more attention, within reading 4, on the use of moral terms such as 'should', 'ought', 'right', 'wrong', 'good' and 'bad' as indications of the cultural and social norms and values (Mauthner and Doucet, 1998, p.133) perceived in the social context. I returned to the literature and realised that these were narrative sense-making devices relating to "stories" (Gabriel, 2000) and to participants' use of "poetic tropes" Gabriel (2000, p.36-7). I then re-interpreted these parts of the accounts by focusing particularly on attribution: of motive; of causal connections; of unity; of fixed qualities; and of agency (Gabriel, 2000, p.36-37). I also interpreted the "mode of story" (Gabriel, 2000, p.72) including tragic and epic stories.

Gabriel (1998, p.86) expresses concern that the concept of 'stories' is being destroyed by the postmodern treatment of "every text as a story". Whilst he agrees that story-telling and stories are one form of sense-making device, he argues that their power to "generate and sustain meanings" (Gabriel, 1998, p.86) is losing its performative and symbolic effect through, in his view, their improper use as research instruments. Gabriel (1998, p.96) argues that "proper" stories have a beginning and an end, a plot and characters, and are entertaining for audiences and challenging for tellers. He, therefore, distinguishes stories from other types of narratives and narrative meaning-making devices, including descriptions and explanations, opinions and stereotypes, and metaphors (Gabriel, 1998). One of the key distinctions for Gabriel (1998) is the power and effect of stories, with the story-teller using "facts as poetic material, moulding them, twisting them and embellishing them for effect" (Gabriel, 1998, p.102). He concludes that "[o]nly by treating stories as distinct types of narrative... can we study the challenge that they represent for the teller and listener alike, the meanings they carry or fail to carry, the pleasure or pain they afford, and the power they accord or deny" (Gabriel, 1998, p.102).

At the same time, I returned to the identity literature searching for 'victim identity' and 'found' that Schrauf (2000) had used positioning theory in his study, outside the field of business and management, into the "accounts" (Schlenker, 1980) and narrative repair identity work done by Spanish directors of carnival groups. This led me to explore positioning theory (Harré and van Langenhove, 1991, 1999; Davies and Harré, 1990, 1999). I recalled the presentation of the Beech and McInnes (2006) developmental framework I had attended at the BAM 2006 conference and I made a connection between it and positioning theory. This then led me to refine the research questions to their present form.

I then decided, like Gabriel (1998), to make a distinction between the participants' accounts and stories. I use the term accounts in three ways in this thesis. The first two ways relate directly to the participants' data, where I use the term in both its general and more restricted technical sense. Generally speaking, the notion of accounts is used to refer to "any passage of talk" (Potter and Wetherell, 1987, p.74) or to "descriptions" (Gabriel, 1998, p.100) of experiences. However, it is also used in a more restricted technical sense as "explanations of a predicament-creating event" (Schlenker, 1980, p.136), with Brown and Jones (2000) and Schrauf (2000) employing it in this way. Through the account, the individual attempts to persuade an audience, including the self, about their own and others' actions relating to the event. I therefore suggest that some participants used "stories" (Gabriel, 1998, 2000) in parts of their accounts, i.e. "descriptions" (Gabriel, 1998) and "explanations" (Schlenker, 1980) of experiences. The "stories" seemed to be used, as "rhetorical assertions" (Kondo, 1990, p.307) or "discursive strategies" (Schrauf, 2000, p.133) for particular performative effect.

As a "patterning" (Potter and Wetherell, 1987, p.168) seemed to be emerging at this stage, I began to develop the central argument of this thesis. Through accounts as "explanations" (Schlenker, 1980), individuals "*repair* some social situation" (Holmes, 2005, emphasis in original). By extension, accounts of experiences of vulnerability, conceived as personal predicaments, may be offered to "repair" (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002, p.626) self-identity in the face of perceived threat. Therefore the research focus emerged of how research participants "giv[e] an account of oneself" (Butler, 2005, p.12) both by "talk[ing] about and account[ing] for" (Allsop and Mulcahy, 1998) their experiences of vulnerability.

There is a third way in which I use the term 'account' in this study. In considering the participants' accounts as "first-order persuasive accounts" (Linstead and Thomas, 2002, p.7) of their experiences of vulnerability, I offer this thesis as a "second-order persuasive account" (Linstead and Thomas, 2002, p.7). In other words, I offer interpretations of the participants' first-order accounts, with the aim of persuading an academic audience of the plausibility of my interpretations and of the argument of the thesis. This thesis is also a "first-order persuasive account" (Linstead and Thomas, 2002) and "explanation" (Schlenker, 1980) of the processes I have followed in conducting the research. The next section considers in further detail the criteria by which the plausibility and persuasiveness of this research and this research account may be evaluated.

4.5 Establishing trustworthiness

This, as with any other research account, is a "rhetorical construction" (Watson and Harris, 1999) and a crafted and shaped piece of writing (Watson and Harris, 1999; Watson, 1994b; Golden-Biddle and Locke, 2007). So how can I persuade the reader that the research is trustworthy and its findings are "worth taking account of" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p.290)?

Because interpretive including narrative studies presume "reality" is a multiple set of mental (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, Brown and Jones, 2000) and social (Kondrat, 1999; Heracleous and Hendry, 2000; Phillips and Hardy, 2002; Watson, 2006; Cunliffe, 2008) constructions, the "truth" of this research account, or of the participants' accounts in the interviews, is not the primary issue (Riessmann, 1993; Watson, 2000). Instead, its "trustworthiness" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Riessman, 1993), a notion which Riessman (1993) claims moves the process of research evaluation into the social world, needs to be considered.

This section takes, as a framework, the criteria proposed for naturalistic inquiry by Lincoln and Guba (1985). Drawing also upon more contemporary ideas of scholars making narrative and other interpretive studies (including Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Riessman, 1993; Ellis and Bochner, 2000; and Watson, 1994b, 2000, 2003), the intention in this section is to persuade the reader of the "credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p.300) of this study.

4.5.1 Credibility of the research process and findings

It is important that narrative research studies are credible and that the reader can have confidence in the research process and findings of a particular inquiry (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). I have tried to establish this confidence through "peer debriefing" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p.301), "member checking" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p.301) and "negative case analysis" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p.301). This section will consider each of these "techniques" and how they have been applied in this study.

I have engaged in peer debriefing in two main ways, as part of the regular supervision process and with research peers. I have had regular meetings with my supervisory team throughout the research process. These meetings have provided a forum in which I can discuss and explore aspects of the study and of the research process. The process of explaining and defending my actions and decisions is useful in making explicit aspects that "might otherwise remain only implicit" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p.308). I have maintained records of these meetings, of the feedback given and the outcomes agreed. Since May 2007 I have also met regularly with two research peers who are using the voice-centred relational method (Mauthner and Doucet, 1998) of narrative analysis, but applying it to different types of studies with different theoretical interests. Whilst neither of my colleagues is undertaking identity-related studies, we have used our meetings to develop our understanding and application of the method and to share interpretations of research data. This last activity is invaluable in appreciating alternative readings and interpretation of the data and I have been able to incorporate their interpretations into my own. Finally, I have made presentations about my research to peers in the research community within and outside my own institution. I have made a number of presentations within my organisation, at the annual postgraduate research conference, and at the annual school research residential. These have been useful in receiving feedback about the process and in presenting preliminary interpretations to "disinterested" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p.308) peers. I have also received feedback, this time from identity scholars, by submitting and presenting papers to the identity track of the BAM annual conference (Corlett, McMillan and Stalker, 2004; Corlett, 2005, 2006, 2007). According to Lieblich *et al.* (1998, p.173) this process of "consensual validation", whereby a researcher shares her views and conclusions with a community of researchers and other interested individuals who

evaluate whether they make sense, is of the highest significance in narrative studies.

"Member checking" involving the research participants, a "crucial technique" for establishing credibility (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p.314), was built into the research design, as part of the second interview. Member checks were beneficial in providing an opportunity for me to summarize my initial data interpretation and for the participant to challenge these (Lincoln and Guba (1985). Describing this process as "correspondence", Riessman (1993, p.66) raises its questionability because participants "may not even agree with our interpretations" (Riessman, 1993, p.67). Indeed it is to be expected and desirable that the participants may not agree. Notwithstanding this, member checking played another part in the design of this research. As discussed in Section 4.3.2 above, in the second interview I "played back" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p.314) a summary of the 'stories' participants had recounted in the first interview. After my "playing back", the participant selected a story and provided additional information (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) relating to the selected incident. This process provided an opportunity for enriched narrative data about the incident.

Negative case analysis involves revising and refining theoretical propositions through insights gained from "negative evidence" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p.323), that is data which do not fit with earlier theoretical propositions. Theoretical propositions and "context-related interpretive insights" (Cunliffe, 2008, p.126) derived from interpretation of data should give "coherence to a body of discourse" (Potter and Wetherell, 1987, p.170). The completeness and trustworthiness of claims may be questioned if there is evidence in the data that do not fit with theoretical propositions offered (Potter and Wetherell, 1987). Potter and Wetherell (1987) suggest that cases that lie outside a proposed theoretical framework are more informative that those that lie within. I have employed negative case analysis and will give instances of, and explanations for, negative evidence in Chapter Seven. The insightfulness of theoretical propositions is linked with the next criterion considered, of transferability of the research findings.

4.5.2 Transferability of the research

Transferability of findings is, "in a strict sense, impossible" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p.316). They continue that the researcher cannot specify the "external validity"

(Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p.316) of an inquiry; she can only enable the reader to take a "common-sense" view (Elliott, 2005, p.26) about whether transferability to their context is possible. The reader determines transferability partly on the basis of whether the research story or account "speaks to" them about, or "resonates" with, their experience (Ellis and Bochner, 2000, p.753). Resonance is greatest when "thick descriptions" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p.316) of participants' experiences are provided and I have, therefore, offered these as well as distinguished between the participants' voices and my own.

The aim of this thesis is not to derive theoretical generalisations about self-identity from the small number of participants in this study (Watson, 2003). Instead, I offer "relatively concrete illustrations of processes" (Watson, 2003, p.174) of identity construction used by the participants, and my "interpretive insights" (Cunliffe, 2008, p.126) into "detailed descriptions and contextualised data" (Elliott, 2005, p.26). In doing so, I trust that the insights derived from my data interpretations may be of "pragmatic use" (Riessman, 1993, p.68) in forming the basis for others' work. In this respect, therefore, the study may be "fruitful" (Potter and Wetherell, 1987, p.171) or "insightful" (Lieblich *et al.*, 1998, p.173) in generating further novel insights into identity work processes. Another dimension of pragmatic use of this research relates to its "utility" (Watson, 1994b, p.S86) and "practical use" (Potter and Wetherell, 1987, p.175) in informing management practices, including those of the research participants. These points relating to others' taking up this study lead into the final criteria of dependability and confirmability of the research process and outcomes (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) which are considered together.

4.5.3 Dependability and confirmability of the research process

Lincoln and Guba (1985) draw on the work of Guba who argues that, because there can be no credibility without dependability, the latter can be demonstrated through the former. Such an argument is similar to other "appeals to plausibility" which are "weak" because of their "frightening circularity" (Watson, 2000, p.506). Acknowledging this weakness, Lincoln and Guba (1985) advise that further weight about the credibility of the study can be given by opening up to examination the *"process"* and the *"product"* of the inquiry (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p.318). They draw on the metaphor of a financial audit and explain that the auditor's examination of the *process* helps to determine the study's dependability, with examination of the product supporting its confirmability. They suggest, therefore, that "a single audit

can be used to determine dependability and confirmability simultaneously" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p.318). This chapter with its detailed account of the research data gathering and interpretation processes, together with the reflexive style of presentation as appropriate throughout the thesis, contributes to the 'audit' of this study. To summarise the main features of the "audit trail" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p.319) presented in this chapter, I have described how I gathered and recorded the data; reduced the data into "chunks" for analysis and interpretation; produced the interpretations; and synthesised emerging themes with existing literature (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Riessman, 1993). Later chapters will show how I have reconstructed the data into themes and how I have synthesised these with the existing literature. The "thick description" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p.316) in the account of the research process and the way that I have made "visible" what I have done (Riessman, 1993, p.68) will help the reader determine whether "the audit trail is complete... comprehensible... and... linked" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p.322).

Interpretive and narrative studies operate as "an open system" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p.329) and criteria of trustworthiness are "open-ended" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p.329). Even though I have followed processes in trying to establish trustworthiness, a study can never be "unassailable" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p.329). The researcher can, therefore, only try to "persuade" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Elliott, 2005) and the reader will apply the criteria of persuasiveness and plausibility (Riessman, 1993, p.65) in judging whether the account offers reasonable and convincing interpretations and "interpretive insights" (Cunliffe, 2008, p.126). Riessman (1993) considers that the persuasive power of an account is increased when alternative interpretations of data are considered and when theoretical claims are supported with data from participants' accounts. I have already discussed ways in which I have made myself open to alternative readings and interpretations of participant accounts through peer review. In the subsequent chapters, Riessman's (1993) recommended practices, of considering alternative interpretations of data and supporting theoretical claims with research data, are followed. However, Riessman (1993, p.66) argues that "persuasiveness ultimately rests on the rhetoric of writing and reader response". The research account's rhetorical "elegance or aesthetic appeal" (Lieblich *et al.*, 1998, p.173) is emphasised by Watson (1994b, p.S86) who suggests that more attention will be paid if a researcher's writing is "aesthetically satisfying".

Lincoln and Guba (1985, p.324) propose that the study's *confirmability* is based on the "extent to which the data and interpretations of the study are grounded in events rather than the inquirer's personal constructions". The researcher's personal constructions are, however, always a part of the research process and this is discussed, in the next section, as part of the process of reflexivity.

4.6 Reflexivity

One of the objectives of this research relates to taking a consciously reflexive approach throughout the research process. Lincoln and Guba (1985) view reflexivity as a technique which underpins the demonstration of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. They propose that the researcher keeps a reflexive journal, recording information about self and method. My reflexive journal, in both its electronic and paper forms, has covered both these aspects. Using the journal for self reflexivity has served as an opportunity for catharsis (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p.327) and for reflecting on how the research connects with my personal interests and processes of becoming. An illustration of each of these aspects is given in the journal entry related to my winning best of track, in the identity special interest group, at the BAM 2004 conference. This was the first time I had presented at an external academic conference and winning best of track was an identity-symbolic event for me. Extracts from my diary are presented and interpreted in the discussion of reflexivity in the final chapter of this thesis. As a "methodological log" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p.327) I have made notes from my review of the existing literature in order to make sense of, and reach decisions about, my ontological and epistemological commitments, and about specific discourse analytical methods.

Rather than viewing reflexivity as a technique (Lincoln and Guba, 1985), I consider it as an essential part of the process of research. The positioning of this research within relational social constructionism, and its commitment to intersubjective and emergent social realities, means that reflexivity is important because "separation of the researcher from the research is impossible" (Taylor, 2001, p.17). Reflexivity involves reflecting upon, understanding and making explicit how the researcher's "personal, political and intellectual biographies" (Mauthner and Doucet, 1998, p.121) influence both interactions with the research participants and the creation, interpretation and theorising of research data. Instead of providing a detailed review of the concept of reflexivity, I consider it more important to provide illustrations of how I have engaged in reflexivity in practice (Potter and Wetherell, 1987) in the

conduct of this research. Sources I have drawn on in considering its importance and practice to research generally include Lincoln and Guba (1985), Watson (1994b), Ellis and Bochner (2000), Alvesson (2003), Mauthner and Doucet (2003), Dowling (2006), Alvesson, Hardy and Harley (2008) and Hibbert, Coupland and MacIntosh (2008). My reflexive practice is also informed by discussion of reflexivity specifically in the context of relational social constructionism (Bouwen, 1998; Cunliffe, 2008) and discourse analytic approaches (Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Mauthner and Doucet, 1998; Taylor, 2001; Phillips and Hardy, 2002; Grant *et al.*, 2004; Elliott, 2005; Rhodes and Brown, 2005; Doucet and Mauthner, 2008) to research.

The outcomes of my reflexive practice and the influences of my self-identity incorporating "personal, political and intellectual biographies" (Mauthner and Doucet, 1998, p.121) on this research are considered in the final chapter. The reflexive processes I have engaged in are guided by my belief, shared by Alvesson *et al.* (2008b), that research processes and knowledge emerging from them should have a productive outcome. A productive outcome may take many forms, including offering theoretical and methodological illustrations and insights. The notion of a "productive difference" (Alvesson *et al.*, 2008b, p.495) is connected to the evaluation criteria of transferability, proposed in Section 4.5.2, of research outcomes which are of practical use (Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Riessman, 1993; Watson, 1995b), fruitful (Potter and Wetherell, 1987) and insightful (Lieblich *et al.*, 1998). Ultimately, it will be others who judge whether these productive outcomes have been achieved. The final chapter will offer reflections on the processes and outcomes of reflexivity, including its theoretical and methodological insights. It will also consider the influences of my self in relation to the research participants, the processes of data gathering and interpretation, and the construction of this thesis. However, self-reflexivity and ethical considerations are considered in the next section.

4.6.1 Self-reflexivity and ethical considerations

Ethical considerations are highlighted when the researcher acknowledges her part in the research process (Taylor, 2001). She also maintains that ethical considerations should be made because of the power relations between researcher and participant. I have consciously used the term 'research participants' to emphasise that I have "no rights over" (Taylor, 2001, p.20) those who have contributed to this research project. However, I appreciate that balance of power between myself and the

research participant is not equal or static, with shifts for instance occurring over the course of an interview.

I have complied fully with the Northumbria University Ethics policy and the Policy for Informed Consent and have been conscious of my ethical obligations in the conduct of this research. These obligations include agreeing the contribution of the research participants on the basis of informed consent and taking steps to protect them from any possible negative outcomes of the research (Taylor, 2001). In addition to completion of an informed consent form, for both interview stages, I returned the interview transcripts to the participants for amendment, deletion and authorisation of data for use in the research. Steps to protect the participants have included giving them a pseudonym and trying to secure anonymity. One participant expressed a concern that she might be identified by her job title and service area and I have changed this potentially identifying personal information. I was able to address this ethical concern but other problems in securing anonymity can arise particularly when a participant is a minority in a particular profession within a specific organisation, as in the case of Wendy in this study. Problems may arise when participants are drawn from the same organisation, as with six of the participants in this study, and may be "readily identifiable to others" (Taylor, 2001, p.21). I was aware of this during data gathering and maintained confidentiality by not giving details about the identity of the other research participants or the content of our discussions.

During the interviews, particularly because of the use of critical incident technique, I was also conscious of the possibility for participant discomfort or pain in retelling and potentially reliving particularly difficult experiences. I discussed my concern about the potentially 'intrusive' nature of the questioning with Edward as part of the interview pilot review. He commented that, whilst the questions were 'fairly deep' and 'it's quite a tiring thing to be interviewed', he felt that I had demonstrated sensitivity, for instance by not 'zooming into areas'. This participant had discussed in his first interview the suicide of a client, an event which I have subsequently identified as a personal predicament. However, vulnerability emerged as a theme through the data interpretation and I did not direct participants to give accounts of such experiences. Nevertheless, I acknowledge that participants did willingly provide data of a personal and potentially sensitive nature, in giving accounts of their own thoughts, feelings and actions as well as those of others involved in the critical

incidents. Finally, it is important to write "from an ethic of care and concern" (Ellis and Bochner, 2000, p.742). One illustration of this concern is that, when giving the participant pseudonyms, I checked that the chosen name did not offend them because one's name is an important aspect of self-identity (Gabriel, 2000).

In spite of my intentions to be self-reflexive, implicit influences relating to my self-identity and "personal, political and theoretical biographies" (Mauthner and Doucet, 1998, p.121) will still play their part in the selection, interpretation and presentation of the data which follows in the subsequent chapters. Before moving to the presentation of data, this chapter concludes by considering the implications of the methodological decisions I have made.

4.7 Implications of methodological decisions for this study

Criticisms and limitations of discursive based research and knowledge emerging from it are often based on the tension between narrative/story and 'reality'/'truth' (Rhodes and Brown, 2005). Although not sharing the criticisms, Ibarra (2003, p.156) discusses how interviews may be considered a "flawed approach" because they create "the cleaned-up identity a person puts on for the outside world. They can never unearth the 'truth' because... people can't resist embellishing their stories... So our stories never reflect objective reality". As discussed in this chapter, the ontological and epistemological commitments of this research reject the notion of objective reality. Instead, it fully embraces an ontology of becoming and the notion of intersubjective realities and emergent meanings. Therefore, this research accepts that the participants' accounts of experiences and their constructions of self-identities are situated and partial (Taylor, 2001; Mauthner and Doucet, 2003).

One of the contributions and values of narrative research is its acceptance of a plurality of different possible stories (Rhodes and Brown, 2005, p.177). An individual may relate the same event in different ways to different audiences (Riessman, 1993), and may vary the retelling to the same individual. Riessman (1993, p.64) goes further to suggest that "[t]elling about complex and troubling events *should* vary because the past is a selective reconstruction." Participants in this research were invited to offer accounts of critical incidents. Because critical incident accounts are always retrospective, they are incomplete and partial. However, for the participants, "partial or not, biased or not, such accounts constitute *their* reality" (Chell, 2004, p.58, emphasis in original). The implications for this research are to

appreciate that the research participants may account for and 'tell' their professional becoming manager experiences in multiple and potentially contradictory ways.

Consonant with the commitment of this research to the notion of emergent meanings, the meanings and significance of the past are not only incomplete but also tentative (Ellis and Bochner, 2000, p.745). Also, because accounts of the past are given in the present, individuals revise them according to the contingencies of their present circumstances (Ellis and Bochner, 2000). This view is supported by Riessman's (1993, p.64) suggestion that individuals exclude experiences that threaten current identities.

Although narratives are central to self-identity construction processes, Elliott (2005) questions whether those told in research interviews are "closely related to those which occur spontaneously in conversation and other aspects of daily life" (Elliott, 2005, p.24). Furthermore, they may be produced specifically for the researcher in the interview (Elliott, 2005, Alvesson, 2003). The implications of this include acknowledgement that research interviews are sites for identity work (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002; Alvesson, 2003), with the interviewer and interviewee taking on shifting positions in explicit and implicit ways (Alvesson, 2003). For instance, in the first interview, through my questions relating to the individual's professional background, in addition to the participant's identity as interviewee, I will be "invoking" (Alvesson, 2003, p.20) the participant's 'professional' identity through my request to provide professional experiences. This positioning as 'professional' may trigger identity work as the individual attempts to recall, for my benefit, incidents which may have occurred many years previously. The need for such identity work may be greater if the individual's 'professional' identity is not central to their current managerial activities. This thesis, therefore, fully acknowledges that relations and power between interviewer-interviewee will influence the partial and biased data generated. It also acknowledges that, in the context of the research interview, multiple processes of identity work are occurring. These include identity work processes occurring through the interaction between the researcher and the participant in the construction of the research data, those relating to the research participants through the partial accounts of specific experiences they give. The implications of the context-specific, situated and partial data generated through the narrative interview method are, therefore, fully appreciated and will be evaluated further in the final chapter of this thesis.

4.8 Summary

This chapter has confirmed the ontological and epistemological commitments of this research to an ontology of becoming which emphasises intersubjective and emergent social realities. The positioning of this research as relational social constructionist distinguishes it from other interpretivist perspectives and highlights the relational and dialogical processes of social construction. The chapter then considered how the centrality of language and discourse to processes of identity construction is maintained through the discourse analysis approach and narrative analysis methods employed by this research. The processes of selecting the research participants and gathering data, through two stages of interviews, were explained. The chapter then gave details about the processes of data interpretation, involving both thematic analysis and the voice-centred relational method (Mauthner and Doucet, 1998). These methods and the research focus on professionals becoming managers' experiences of vulnerability were emergent. The criteria for evaluating the trustworthiness of this research, including the processes for building the reader's confidence in its credibility and transferability, are considered. While the importance of reflexivity is accepted within discourse analytic relational social constructionist research, its practice is particularly pertinent to this study on self-identity. An overview has been given of the principles and practices of reflexivity employed in this research. The chapter concluded with a consideration of the implications of the methodological decisions made and emphasised the context-specific, situated, and partial nature of the data generated as an outcome of the interviewer-interviewee relations and power. The next chapter is the first of two which presents my interpretations of the data of professional becoming managers' experiences of vulnerability. The focus of Chapter Five is on their experiences as they make a transition into and progress within management.

Chapter 5 Professionals Becoming Managers: Making a Transition Into And Progressing Within Management

5 Introduction

The previous chapter, in discussing the methods of gathering data on professionals becoming managers' experiences, introduced the research participants and gave a brief overview of their professional and managerial backgrounds. This chapter provides further details about the participants and, more specifically, about their experiences of making a transition into, and progressing within, management. The chapter begins by summarising the processes of selecting and interpreting the data, relating to experiences of vulnerability, presented in this chapter. The chapter then considers the participants' experiences of making a transition into management. Since those transitions, sometimes occurring more than 15 years ago, the research participants have progressed managerially and are now experienced middle and, in some cases, senior managers. The next part of the chapter provides illustrations of issues and challenges, conceived as personal predicaments, faced by the participants both in their early transition into management and in their current positions. Emergent themes from the data presented are reviewed, at appropriate points, against existing identity-related studies of professionals becoming managers. A summary of personal predicaments relating to vulnerability is then provided as a table. The chapter ends by considering the implications for this study of the illustrative data presented.

This chapter, therefore, addresses the research objective:

- to explore professionals becoming managers' personal predicaments related to vulnerability as they make a transition into and progress within management

5.1 Data selection and interpretation processes

The data selection and interpretation processes have been fully documented in the previous chapter on methodology. This section provides a brief summary of the processes relating to the data presented in this chapter.

The focus on experiences of vulnerability emerged through the iterative and inductive processes of data gathering and interpretation. Feeling vulnerable featured

at different points in **Wendy**'s first interview account. For instance, she said: 'if I knew my stuff I could talk about it and if I didn't I used to feel so vulnerable'; 'I feel as though that might be my next sort of vulnerable side, knowing how to handle that'; 'I just think that the higher up the organisation you go the more vulnerable you are in that role'. Indeed, towards the end of the interview, Wendy reflected on the extent to which she had drawn on a discourse of vulnerability – 'I've talked about being vulnerable an awful lot, haven't I, and I don't think I'm particularly vulnerable but you know when you're out of your comfort that's when you start feeling vulnerable again'. Although I subsequently realised that vulnerability featured in other participants' first interview data, I did not interpret those data between the first and second interviews. Nor, in the second stage interview, did I ask participants to give accounts of specific experiences of vulnerability.

When interpreting the combined first and second interview data, my attention to participants' experiences of vulnerability was also alerted by the rhetorical tropes (Gabriel, 2000), particularly metaphors, used by some participants in their accounting of events. I was also drawn to the discursive and highly emotive force of the language used by some participants in giving accounts of certain incidents. Once I had made the decision to focus on experiences of vulnerability, I selected from the full data set those accounts which included "articulations of emotionality" (Coupland *et al.*, 2008, p.327) indicating vulnerability. For instance, I gave attention to expressions synonymous with vulnerability, such as weakness, difficulty, powerless, exposed, as well as antonymous ones, for instance confrontation, fight, battle, struggle, challenge, power, right. This process of data selection gave between four and 12 accounts of incidents relating to vulnerability for each participant. Full details are provided in Table 4.4 in the methodology chapter. Some selected accounts were discrete, others had multiple parts with the participant revisiting the incident over the course of the interview, and yet others were of incidents discussed initially in the first interview and elaborated upon in the second. In the latter case I have made clear, in the presentation of the data, whether the selected extract is taken from the first or second interview.

The data presented in this chapter have been interpreted thematically (King, 2004b). Within each emergent theme, illustrations of participants' experiences relating to vulnerability at the time of initially making a transition into management are presented together with those relating to experiences in their current middle or

senior management positions. Illustrations of the first type are referred to, in this chapter, as early becoming manager predicaments and those of the second type as current becoming manager predicaments. The chapter draws on the participants' own voices and, therefore, attempts to provide "detailed descriptions and contextualised data" (Elliott, 2005, p.26) of their experiences. Single quotation marks are employed to signify the participants' voices and to differentiate them from my own as well as from references to existing literature. Throughout the chapter the voices of the participants are interweaved with my own interpretation of their accounts, and draw where appropriate on existing identity-related studies of professionals becoming managers.

The focus and purpose in interpreting professionals becoming managers' experiences of vulnerability is not to explore how participants construct the concept of vulnerability. Therefore the concept of emotion, *per se,* is not the focus of interest in this research. Rather its interest is in experiences of vulnerability as specific relationally and socially-situated contexts, in which the individual may engage in active identity work processes. The thesis argues, therefore, that participants' "articulations of emotionality" (Coupland *et al.*, 2008, p.327) may indicate the significance of the experience as a personal predicament, that is an identity-symbolic event. When interpreting and presenting the data in this chapter, I am aware that participants draw on particular discourses in making sense of the personal predicament and, therefore, in constructing their self-identities through these discursive resources. For instance, Nina, Barbara and Wendy draw on a discourse of gender in their accounts of personal predicaments. I accept that this discourse is important in their self-identity constructions and future chapters will highlight how these participants and others draw on specific discourses as discursive resources in making sense of, constructing and repairing their self-identities. However, the social construction of gender and other discourses – such as management, managing, professionalism and emotion – is outside the scope of this thesis. Related to this, the power effect of those discourses on the social construction of self-identities is not the main focus of epistemological interest of this research. Rather, the research interest is in experiences of vulnerability, conceived as personal predicaments, as specific contexts in which the research participant may engage in active identity work processes.

In summary, this chapter provides illustrations of the scope and nature of experiences of vulnerability as professionals becoming managers make a transition into and progress within management. Chapters Six and Seven will then explore in further detail the identity work processes associated with specifically-selected personal predicaments related to vulnerability. When they are first referred to in this chapter, these specifically-selected personal predicaments are indicated.

Having summarised the processes and purposes of data selection, interpretation and presentation for this Chapter, the next section provides illustrations of participants' experiences of making a transition into management.

5.2 First feeling like a manager

This section illustrates when and why the professionals in this study developed understandings of becoming managers. This section gives their responses to my first interview question about when they first thought of themselves as, or felt like, a manager. The nature of the transition from professional to manager and the age at which the participants "began becoming manager" (Parker, 2004, p.45) are discussed. When giving a first extract from each participant's account, this section also provides a reminder of the participant's professional background.

5.2.1 Nature of the transition from professional to manager

Some participants discussed the nature of the transition into management.

After a brief period in private practice following his professional training as an architect, **Norman** has worked for the same public sector organisation for 30 years. As far as he is concerned, management 'just gradually sort of creeps up on you' and it is something that he seems to have been aware of, and practised, from an early stage in his professional career

> it just gradually sort of creeps up on you, this management, because you realise as, from almost three months into your [professional] work, that you cannot actually do it alone and you need to involve other people, other professions, and as soon as you go and involve other professions, you've got to manage them in some way

Like Norman, **Wendy** has a building services professional background, as a quantity surveyor, and she implies that managing a project and others has always been a part of her professional role

> you're leading the team, you know, as a project surveyor, working on a scheme, you're always part of a multi-disciplinary team and there tends to be a hierarchy in that team

Norman and Wendy's similar professional backgrounds may contribute to their shared understandings of management as part of being a professional (Watson and Harris, 1999; Cohen *et al.*, 2002) and there being "no escape" from managing (Dent and Whitehead, 2002, p.1). Their experiences also support Watson's (2001, p.221) view that individuals "do not suddenly 'become' managers".

However, for other participants the transition into management was more distinct. **Barbara** is currently the Managing Director of a social housing association. She recalls first becoming a manager when working for her former employer

> when I first became a manager, many many moons ago, and it was a big transition for me

Nina has 25 years' experience as a 'field worker' within the youth service setting of the same local authority. She worked in a senior worker's role for 11 years, before "moving up" (Watson and Harris, 1999, p.30) to her present role, as one of three senior managers within the council's youth service. Although Nina first felt like a manager when 'getting the senior key worker role' it is the "move up" from this senior role 'in the field' into the civic centre-based senior management role which seems to have been a key transition for her

> it seemed to be such a quantum leap from the field into the civic centre basically, into a structure that you don't really have, have that much, not access to

For **Tracy**, the transition,15 years ago, into her current senior officer advisory role for secondary education was marked, in her case, by the 'phenomenal' nature of the management responsibilities she assumed when "moving up" (Watson and Harris, 1999) within her organisation. In contrast to her former role, where she 'had no budget responsibility... no management responsibility, you were just responsible for yourself', Tracy

> went into a job with phenomenal management responsibilities and... I had no training, no experience, and no background really in it

In their transitions into management, Barbara, Nina and Tracy all "moved up" (Watson and Harris, 1999) in their professional fields and hierarchically within their organisations. For Nina the structural context of the move up 'from the field into the civic centre' seems to have been significant in marking the transition, whereas for Tracy is the 'phenomenal' scope of management responsibilities and lack of experience and training. Responsibility is a discourse which other participants draw on in giving accounts of their experiences of becoming manager, as discussed in the next section.

5.2.2 Being a first time manager at a young age

Some participants comment on the age at which they became managers. **John**, who is currently Lifelong Learning Manager within a local authority, reflects on when he was promoted into his first 'true manager's post' with his current employer

> it was the first time when I had a number of staff to deal with, and I suppose it was externally recognised as a true manager's post, and I was quite young to be in that position... relative across the Council... I mean I've had things like, I was recognised as a supervisor and things but... that's when... I first woke up and thought 'gosh I'm managing here, I *am* a manager' (John's emphasis)

Edward qualified as a social worker during his first employment after graduation, working for a charitable organisation. It was then that he first felt like a manager and, like John, he comments on his age

> I first felt myself to be a manager when I, if we go right back to the beginning in my sort of career, where I actually got promoted quite quickly, I mean I was quite young, but I suppose I had the fortune of being fairly mature, but I was in a situation, when I was 24 where I was responsible for a team of about 20 people

As well as drawing attention to the age at which they "began becoming manager" (Parker, 2004, p.45), John's reflection of 'I had a number of staff to deal with' and Edward's responsibility 'for a team of about 20 people' suggest that their understandings of managing draw, conventionally according to Watson and Harris (1999, p.70), on a discourse of "people management" and of their "people management responsibilities" (Hill, 2003, p.21).

Felicity has an eclectic professional background which includes being a professional dancer and a self-employed public relations consultant. She joined the Arts and Cultural Development Service of a public sector organisation in 1996 and is currently Creativity Development Manager. For Felicity, first feeling like a manager pre-dates any formal management role. Recalling the first time she felt like a manager as when she was a pack leader in the Girl Guides in her early teens, Felicity explains how she

> would have called it being the one in charge... I've always considered myself to be the gobby one, if somebody's asked for an opinion I'll have one... I used to work, be in a youth theatre club, and they wanted parts, I wanted to be the producer or I wanted to be in charge of the sound and the lighting... I wanted to be in charge, I *like* making decisions (Felicity's emphasis)

From the active interest in managing from an early age, Felicity might be considered a "Born Manager" (Boucher, 2002, p.1). She also appreciates that managing happens "in all sorts of contexts" (Watson and Harris, 1999, p.4), including outside of the work context.

Having introduced each of the participants, through illustrations of their experiences of becoming manager, the next section presents participants' accounts of personal predicaments relating to experiences of vulnerability.

5.3 Professionals becoming managers' accounts of personal predicaments relating to vulnerability

The accounts in this section are organised according to broad themes which emerged from interpreting the data. Within each theme, participants' accounts of early becoming manager predicaments are given first and these are followed by experiences of vulnerability in their current positions as middle or senior managers. Due to word limitation, selective extracts most illustrative of the theme are given and the significance of the theme for other participants is indicated.

The themes are feeling responsible, feeling the weight of managing, needing to 'have the answers', challenges to authority, others' perception of the manager, concerns about knowledge and ability, and lack of support. These themes are presented in this sequence beginning, therefore, with 'feeling responsible'.

5.3.1 Feeling responsible

Early becoming manager predicaments

When 'first' becoming manager, a number of the participants refer to feeling responsible, particularly for a team of others, and for making decisions. **Edward** draws the analogy between managing and being a 'parent' in a 'grown up' situation

> I was responsible for a team of about 20 people... so there was a very strong sense of being the manager then, you know, I was responsible for what went on... and people were coming to you, it's a bit like when you leave home and go, 'oh bloody hell the fuse has gone', and... your natural inclination is to turn to your parents and then realise 'oh god, I'm the parent, I'm meant to deal with that' and I suppose it is about the sense of... 'I'm in a grown-up situation here and everyone's looking to me and I'm the person that's going to have to make a decision, one way or the other'

Hill (1992, p.74) suggests that managers begin to, in her view, "move towards" a managerial identity through "making and living with the consequences of decisions". Although not explicitly used, Edward conveys the notion of the discursive device, employed by managers in Watson and Harris' (1999, p.69) study, of "the buck stops here" in expressing "sectional responsibility".

The notion of sectional responsibility is articulated also by **John** when he became manager for the reference library service. John describes this as 'arguably the most staid and old-fashioned bit of the library [which] hadn't really changed in decades' and expresses his feelings of

> sheer frustration and hell at feeling *personally* responsible for a service that, I wouldn't say I was quite ashamed of but I thought 'God, you know, this isn't good enough, it's *not* good enough, we need to change it' (John's emphasis)

He later articulates his feeling that 'if this is my job then every bit of it is a reflection of me'. Part of the frustration that John expresses seems to be related to the speed at which he was able to make the changes. John explains how he thought

> '*Right* I am going to change this, I am going to change that' and immediately coming up against the resistance... absolutely deadly frustrated that I couldn't change this overnight... and the sudden weight of the bureaucracy and the weight of having to turn something round like that in the public service...I think it's the weight of management you know... that was when I

> realised that I'm not going to change the world in a click of the finger, I've got to work on this (John's emphasis)

Barbara also described the change she recognised was needed when she became manager of

> an office that [was] full of old men who hated change, who wouldn't change at all, who continually poorly performed... it was a daunting task but what I actually thought to myself at the time what that office needs is a manager who understands their needs, who understands where they're coming from and who can introduce change in a way that they are able to accept it... it was a manager that was needed and not management [and] that office turned itself around, was one of the best performing offices with the same people [because] they were supported for the first time

Like Watson and Harris (1999, p.14), Barbara differentiates between management and managing. Discussion of the differences, however, is outside the scope of this research. Both John's and Barbara's accounts of early becoming manager predicaments relate to "tak[ing] up the challenge of change" (Watson and Harris, 1999, p.70). Part of the challenge involves creating a context in which others are willing to change (Hill, 2003) so that organisation's performance may be enhanced.

In the accounts of first becoming manager, the participants express a general feeling of being responsible – for a team or for the quality of service provision in their area of "sectional responsibility" (Watson and Harris, 1999, p.69). However, the accounts of current predicaments have a different focus.

Current becoming manager predicaments

Feeling responsible for 'what went on' is a recurrent discourse in **Edward**'s account of a series of events following the suicide of one of his housing association's tenants. The account of this personal predicament, which was initially given in the first interview and elaborated upon in the second, is interpreted further in the next chapter. Edward was 'still fairly recently in post' having joined the organisation 'less than a year' before the client's suicide. As the director for care and support, he represented his organisation at the Coroner's inquest where

> my sense of professionally what was right and wrong was not reflected by the actual practice in the organisation and I did feel in an incredibly vulnerable position then as somebody that was responsible for this... it was

> demonstrably the case there was a complete lack of professionalism, which was all the kind of thing that I'd been brought in to address, but to actually have to go up there and front it up (interviewer: so publicly) so publicly, and having to take it on the chin and thinking you know this wasn't me

Edward's account suggests that, as director, he accepts responsibility for the incident. However, his thoughts that 'this wasn't me' and, therefore he was not wholly responsible, seems to intensify his vulnerability as indicated in the following extract

> I just felt professionally completely discredited, I (slight sigh), terrible, I felt awful... I think probably the most, the worst moment of my professional career... as much as anything because I'd been so belittled and, you know, been made so foolish

Barbara gives an account of a meeting she attended on behalf of her organisation's chief executive. The account of this personal predicament is explored further in the next chapter. Feeling responsible for her organisation, and in particular its future growth objectives, are recurrent discursive devices in her account of the meeting. In particular she draws on these in "accounting for" (Schlenker, 1980) her decision not to support one of the meeting attendees

> I want to support this poor Chief Exec, this lonely Chief Exec who is desperate for an ally but if I do support him it means that I'm immediately putting myself at odds with the other four local authorities who are here who I need to work with... I can't afford to put my own principles on the line because the organisation could struggle

Although she expresses feeling 'completely torn between my loyalties to the organisation and my own integrity', she asserts that

> an important part of the organisation's future is about its growth, if we don't grow we're not going to survive and I feel very passionate about that and I feel very emotionally tied to that, to the organisation in that respect... I couldn't put the future growth objectives of the organisation on the line for the sake of my own principles... I feel very, I felt very responsible for that and so I put that ahead of my own principles

In contrast to the notion of "sectional responsibility" (Watson and Harris, 1999, p.69) which participants draw on in their accounts of early becoming manager predicaments, current predicaments of feeling responsible draw on a discourse of "corporate responsibility" (Watson and Harris, 1999, p.70) in relation to specific

incidents. **Edward**'s expressions of 'thinking you know this wasn't me' and of feeling 'professionally completely discredited' and **Barbara**'s assertion that 'I couldn't put the future growth objectives of the organisation on the line for the sake of my own principles' highlight the tensions between corporate responsibility obligations and discourses of self-identity construction, of professionalism and integrity respectively. These self-identity tensions and conflicts are considered further in the next chapter in its interpretation of these selected personal predicaments.

5.3.2 Feeling the weight of managing

As illustrated in the previous section, when becoming manager for the reference library service, John draws on 'the weight of management' and 'the weight of having to turn something round like that in the public service'. Like John, others go further in expressing the responsibility they feel as a 'weight'.

Early becoming manager predicaments

As the owner/manager of a business at the age of 25, **Felicity** expresses the 'full weight of process' when

> I was sub-contracting other people to come in and deliver [hesitation] and... that's where... other people's earnings were dependent on the work I brought in, and tax returns and the, the full weight of process to stay on one side of the tax man... you're managing their time and why they're not working and there's a calling to account because of the position that you're in

Felicity gives a specific illustration of feeling the 'weight', when dealing with a problem relating to a particular contract

> there was a range of difficulties to deal with there and they were not necessarily nice things to have to do but it was my responsibility to have to do them and I felt the weight, at that point, of being the manager.... In that other people had issues, and that it was their interpretation it was my problem to solve, these people are turning around and saying, 'you're the manager, you sort it', 'right, ok, I'm the manager then, I'll sort it'

As a self-employed professional becoming manager, Felicity's personal predicament does not fit with Hill's (2003, p.77) notion of first time managers feeling "the full weight of being caught in the middle", that is between the demands of senior

management and of one's team. The weight of responsibility felt by Felicity is expressed currently by Barbara.

Current becoming manager predicaments

Barbara articulates how the responsibility of managing 'weighs heavy on her shoulders' because

> the manager's role, for me, is the toughest role that I've ever ever done, without a shadow of a doubt... you can actually almost ruin somebody's life, you know, if you don't manage properly, and that plays heavy on my shoulders, you know, weighs heavy on my shoulders

This section and the previous one have illustrated experiences of vulnerability relating to responsibility generally and, more specifically, its weight. The next section considers how needing to 'have the answers' was a source of vulnerability, particularly in periods of early becoming manager.

5.3.3 Needing to 'have the answers'

The discursive notion of needing to 'have the answers' featured across the participants' accounts. Some participants elaborated upon this theme in their second interview and expressed how this source of vulnerability, felt so keenly in their early becoming manager experiences, was no longer problematic.

Early becoming manager predicaments

When she made the 'quantum leap from the field into the civic centre', **Nina** expresses vividly her vulnerability

> there were several times I used to hide in the desk thinking that I hope nobody, I was always frightened that the director of education would come round and ask me a question that I couldn't answer, you know what I mean? To think that, there seemed to be a pressure on me that I always would feel that somebody very senior would come up and ask me something that I really could not answer

In his autobiographical account of becoming head of department, Parker (2004) describes a similar worry. In his case, he explains how his staff "expected me to be

confident and knowledgeable, and I was just me; still just me, when I needed to become a manager" Parker (2004, p.47).

Barbara contrasts her early becoming manager experiences working for a national housing association with her current organisation. **Barbara** theorises how the culture of an organisation, and the extent of senior management power and control, put pressures on the manager to have 'all the answers'

> at [national housing organisation] it was a different environment... it was power and control and it was management rather than manager-led and *you* had *all* of the answers to all of the questions cos it was your job to and you had to know everything that was going on and that was what I was brought up with and I didn't like it, I hated it, and I kicked against it and when I went to the small office I didn't, I didn't follow it all, I followed my instinct. And when I came here it was completely, it was the reverse actually, it was completely different which suited my style, yea it was much better for me I think

The social and cultural pressures expressed by Barbara as '*you* had *all* of the answers to all of the questions cos it was your job to' are experienced by managers in Watson and Harris' (1999, p.65) study, who were "always expected to know what is what".

In making sense of the 'need to have the answers' in her former organisation, Barbara draws on discourses of 'power and control'. **Norman** also draws on these discourses in his sense-making of being a professional architect. He contrasts his early professional experiences, under the management of the then Director of Architecture, with his move to his current service area within the same council.

> our Director of Architecture was quite powerful, or what he said was what people wanted and therefore the rest of his staff took on this same sort of arrogance, if you like, so that was part of my training under him and, therefore, we had to be strong in that position and we knew what people wanted because we had this vast knowledge, if you like, and it was the opposite of that, as you move through to [current service area], that you realise that sometimes it doesn't matter if you don't quite know what you want, it doesn't lessen you as a professional

Norman's articulations of 'arrogance' and 'this vast knowledge' draw on the "classic model of professional identity" (Davies, 2002b, p.31) with its notions of having expertise derived from specialised knowledge and autonomy to apply that knowledge in ways the professional sees fit (Davies, 2002a). In this case, therefore,

Norman is drawing on a more specific and localised discourse of "the power approach" (Macdonald, 1995, p.5) of profession. Norman explained in his first interview that 'the socialist way of thinking... about what a profession was', gained through him attending a 'heavily socialist college', rejected training that 'perpetuated that elitism, that arrogance, that professionalism'. Like the manager in Watson and Harris' (1999, p.128) study who struggles with "a mis-match between his sense of himself and of his work role", Norman has struggled with his own understandings about professionalism and his director's expectations of him and the 'rest of his staff' in assuming 'this same sort of arrogance'. Norman has been with the council for 30 years and it is only since moving to his current service area that he has been empowered and enabled to 'realise that sometimes it doesn't matter if you don't quite know what you want, it doesn't lessen you as a professional'. Therefore, again like Watson and Harris' (1999, p.128) case study manager, the mis-match has "caused him considerable insecurity and unhappiness... which, it seems, for many years he has had to hide and absorb". This account illustrates the effect of dominant relationships and discourses on professional and self-identity constructions.

Current becoming manager predicaments

For many participants, needing to 'have the answers' is no longer an issue or source of vulnerability. In the second interview, **Nina** elaborated on her first interview account of needing to 'have answers'

> this was making me laugh here about, about moving into the civic centre you know (laughs) thinking I really did used to think that somebody was going to come along and ask me a question (laughs) and the director of education would just, just appear you know and now I'm not, I'm just not, not as rattled at all like that... even if I don't have the answer I feel confident in saying I don't have this information at the minute but I will get it to you yea and whereas before I probably would have been terribly perplexed terribly embarrassed and rooted to the spot

Nina's reflections seem to fit with Ibarra's (1999, p.773) views that an individual's early professional becoming manager identity constructions are based on "discordant perceptions of role requirements and possible selves in the new role". Initial "naïve" constructions develop over time and with experience (Ibarra, 1999, p.773). Nina's second interview account might also be interpreted as an interview-context personal predicament, triggering active identity work. This is indicated by the way Nina laughs, as if embarrassed, at two points in the above account. By saying

'even if I don't have the answer I feel confident in saying...', she is reconciling the inconsistencies in her early and current manager identities. However, she is also repairing any perceived undermining of the current identity she wishes to project (Riessman, 1993) to me as the listener in the interview.

In the second interview, **Wendy** picked up on her first interview account of early becoming manager experiences of feeling 'spooked' about needing to have the answers, and contrasts that and her current feelings of being 'far more comfortable'

> I think probably at first that spooked me and it felt as if I needed to know the answer, you know, and would feel uncomfortable, whereas now I'm quite happy to say 'what do you think, what shall we do?' whereas a few years ago I wouldn't have done that because I would have felt that that would have exposed me

A manager in Hill's (2003, p.62) study learned to "sit back and ask them [the staff] questions and let them find the answers". In that reported case, the manager explains how, in the first months of becoming manager, "I was intent on gaining credibility with the [staff], having them like me, and gaining their trust" (Hill, 2003, p.62).

Barbara still sometimes feels inadequate when managers reporting to her come with complex and 'almost intractable' problems

> and sometimes I feel inadequate because I think they're looking for me, to me for a solution and I haven't got it and I'll say to them 'look I haven't got the answer to this...' and I just sometimes feel as if they think 'well you should have the answer, look what you are getting paid'

She explains how consultants have been working with her organisation and her team on 'sharing and taking corporate responsibility for problems and issues as a group'. Barbara seems to have found reassurance from this

> they were saying it's ok to be like that, whereas before I'd come through [national housing association] who were saying it wasn't ok to be like that, so I was a bit odd, even though the performance was better than anyone else's so there was some proof and evidence that it worked but also I suppose I just question myself, you know, just because it feels instinctively right, is it right?... and all of a sudden this consultant was saying... you can't rely on managers having all of the answers... and that was a bit of a relief, 'oh, thank god, because I haven't got them' [laughter] I've never had them... and

> my managers, yea, I could see them thinking 'oh yea, ok' so I thought phew, got off the hook there (sighs, slight laughter)

Like Nina, Barbara laughs at two points in the above account but, on these occasions, they seem to signify relief. Barbara's account also illustrates dialogic "inward facing" identity work (Watson, 2008, p.139) through her questioning of 'just because... it feels instinctively right, is it right?'. In addition to these internal evaluations (Ibarra, 1999), Barbara makes external self-evaluations of 'performance was better... so there was some proof and evidence'. However, Barbara was not able to resolve the issue until receiving the external validation (Ibarra, 1999) of her approach from the consultant.

As illustrated under early becoming manager predicaments, **Norman** concludes his sense making of needing to 'have the answers' by saying 'not knowing doesn't lessen you as a professional'. Norman elaborates with a recent incident which, in the past, would have been 'a bit of a concern'. This personal predicament is explored further in the next chapter.

> some time ago that [not having a vision of the building] would have been a bit of a concern cos I'd felt I've got to be strong here... I'd been worried that I'd have a room of people who didn't know where they were going and I'm meant to be guiding them... since the last five or six years...I have the confidence that...I don't have to, myself, know where we are going, I know where we are going on some things, but be confident with the people that are around the table, the stakeholders, that they will have a vision, that I don't have to have the vision all the time

This section has illustrated how vulnerability relating to needing to 'have the answers', which is keenly felt on first becoming manager, diminishes for many participants as they progress managerially. **Nina** articulates now feeling 'confident in saying I don't have this information' and **Norman** also draws on confidence as a discursive resource in describing his present circumstances – 'I have the confidence... that I don't have to have the vision all the time'. Hill (2003, p.167) observes how the participants in her study grew in confidence as the first year of transition into management progressed. This thesis does not share, because of its implied essentialist conception of the self, Hill's (2003, p.167) assertion that self-confidence forms "the core of the managerial character". However, developing and projecting self-confidence, as a discursive and performative resource, can counter

self-doubt. Self-doubt in the face of challenges to authority is discussed in the next section.

5.3.4 Challenges to authority

Early becoming manager predicaments

Tracy describes calling a first staff meeting and dealing with 'this woman [who] didn't turn up' as her first touch of management. The staff meeting was symbolic because 'first impressions count' even if 'they might have known me before'. She recalls how

> this woman didn't turn up...and everyone knew, do you know what I mean, she was a very strong personality, very very challenging and I knew people would be sitting around thinking (speaking quietly) 'well X's not here' you know (laughter) so I rang her up

When confronted with the response that 'I've never attended a staff meeting in my life and I'm not going to start now', Tracy explains

> I said 'oh' and I was, I have to say I was really thrown, because you sort of think 'god, what the hell do I do?', you're on the end of a phone, this is the real life, you know... and it's almost like undermining the role, undermining you

Although the situation was resolved with the staff member apologising and attending future meetings, Tracy makes sense of it by saying

> I think there was definitely a view of 'I've worked for an assistant director, do you think I'm going to work [for you]?' and I'd come from them, I had been one of those people so, you know, and I hadn't been one of them for very long, so it was almost like, you know, the new girl

Hill (2003, p.100) discusses the challenges of "managing subordinates", with staff "testing" the limits of a manager's formal authority. Watson and Harris (1999, pp.79-80) also consider the "people challenge" and "the awkward sod problem". Tracy alludes to both the awkwardness of the staff member, as having 'a very strong personality, very very challenging', and the awkwardness of the telephone call – 'I was really thrown'. In stating her expectations that the staff member will attend future meetings, Tracy is constructing a managerial identity in relation to her. In this

she draws on ideas of having now to differentiate and distance her self from her team – 'I'd come from them, I had been one of those people'.

In her current position, the source of challenge to authority for Wendy comes not from a member of her team but from her management peer.

Current becoming manager predicaments

Wendy refers to an incident, involving a management peer, which had taken place 'three or four months' into her then new, and current, role

> [management peer] has got a lot of experience and he's been around a lot longer than I have... and he's certainly been a senior manager a lot longer than I have... there was an incident when we clashed and I had to say to him you know I'm a senior manager in [Department] as well, I am allowed to have an opinion and I will never not express that opinion and I got quite choked saying it

Wendy's articulation of getting 'quite choked' illustrates how personal predicaments are emotional experiences. Emotions are a feature in **Nina**'s account which also involves a management peer. This personal predicament, where a decision affecting service delivery in her area was made without consulting her, is explored in further detail in the next chapter. Nina explains

> there was a meeting where a decision was made about, that should have involved me in a tri-partite discussion and didn't and a decision was made I felt over my head and I'd never questioned that anyone would, would question the equality of you know our roles in terms of being decision makers, I got very, I got very angry about that situation... it would have been easier just to let the situation carry on but I refused to do that, and I did, I did challenge the person

Implicit in both these accounts is the power dynamic, and effect on self-identity, of the gender difference of the female participants and their male management peers. This is not apparent from Nina's account because, to maintain confidentiality about the situation, she referred anonymously to her colleague as 'anyone' and 'the person'. However, as discussed in the further elaboration of this personal predicament in the next chapter, the factors influencing her decision to 'challenge the person' centred not only on upholding 'the equality of... our roles in terms of being decision makers' but also on her belief that 'the gender thing always comes

into it'. Watson and Harris (1999, p.134) discuss how women managers may have to engage in "additional" identity work, "in reconciling being 'a woman' with being 'a manager'". These short extracts suggest that, as women managers progress, they still need to engage in this 'additional' identity work. However, in these cases, the need for additional identity work is not triggered 'internally', from within the individual woman manager, but 'externally' in their relationships with others, namely male colleagues. Although the notion of gendered selves is emergent from the data in this research, it is outside the scope of this thesis.

5.3.5 Others' perceptions of the manager

Early becoming manager predicaments

As part of her account of first feeling like a manager, **Wendy** explains how she became 'very conscious of how other people viewed' her. She particularly became aware of this when she participated in an organisational residential event, at her former council, involving staff from all levels.

> I suppose I'd always known I'd had my *team*, my technical team... but I was slightly more divorced from perhaps the people on site and I became very conscious of how other people viewed me, how high up the ladder other people viewed me... they saw me as a kind of a different breed almost (laughter)... [they] said... things like 'you're not bad for a manager', and you know 'you're not like I'd thought you would be' and the dawning on them was that I was just human... the fact that 'she's alright really' and I thought well I'd thought they'd always thought that I was alright, I hadn't really realised that they thought that I was different (Wendy's emphasis)

Wendy draws on discursive and linguistic resources for performative effect in this account. In differentiating themselves from the 'typical', managers may describe themselves as part of a 'new breed' (Watson and Harris, 1999, pp.120-1). However, usage of the expression, in their case, was of 'younger managers, with new ideas" (Watson and Harris, 1999, p.120). Wendy's linguistic juxtaposition of the notion of her as 'a kind of a different breed almost' and 'the dawning on them was that I was just human' implies that, for 'the people on site', she was not just an 'untypical' manager but somehow also 'inhuman'. It is unclear whether the gender difference is a factor in their perceptions of her.

The metaphor employed by managers in Watson and Harris' (1999, p.161) study was of "'being on a pedestal'". However, Wendy's expression of 'how high up the

ladder other people viewed me' conveys a similar awareness that 'the people on site' viewed her as "being at a distance from [and], also, 'above'" (Watson and Harris, 1999, p.161) them. Both metaphors emphasise the different social positionings between the manager and others and, according to Watson and Harris (1999, p.161) "a risk of toppling off", with the former adding to the manager's sense of isolation and the latter to his or her vulnerability.

Current becoming manager predicaments

Whereas Wendy refers to others' perception of her, generally, as a manager, **John**'s interpretation of others' perceptions of him is in relation to a specific situation he was facing at the time of the second interview. John refers to the situation as a 'big issue, a big big dilemma' facing the Council, resulting from a change in government policy on funding for adult learning. In his account of the situation, which is further explored in the next chapter, John expresses feeling isolated in managing this situation on four occasions. One factor in John's sense of isolation seems to relate to others' perception of him

> I feel in some ways unfairly castigated as the bad guy in this (interviewer: has anybody sort of suggested that's how they see you?) yea, yea, especially some of the community education workers who are actually on the ground, and I am seen as the chap whose service is the one who is imposing all the paperwork, all of the [external funding body's] bureaucracy requirements... so I am seen as that and at times it just seems isolating

The notion of managers feeling isolated is well documented in the existing literature. Writing from a functionalist orientation, Hill (2003, pp.182-3) observes that major challenges relating to isolation, when first making a transition into management, include: coping with loneliness; feeling lost as managers "find themselves without a clear reference group by which to identify appropriate values and norms"; and personal rejection from former peers. Part of John's sense of isolation may be related to his personal rejection by the 'workers who are actually on the ground' because of the imposition of the 'bureaucracy' requirements. There is also a sense of being "in the middle" (Watson and Harris, 1999, p.176) between the external funding body's requirements, over which he has no control, and the community education workers 'on the ground'. Watson and Harris (1999) and Hill (2003) discuss isolation and loneliness experienced by professionals becoming managers in their first year of transition. A "peculiar loneliness, precariousness and

vulnerability" (Sims, 2003, p.1195) is characteristic of middle managers' experiences also, as supported by the short extract from John's account. This extract, and other sense-making and self-identity constructions in relation to this personal predicament, are explored further in the next chapter.

5.3.6 Concerns about knowledge and ability

Personal predicaments involving concerns about current knowledge and ability seem to be more prevalent than knowledge and ability-related predicaments at the time of making a transition into management.

Early becoming manager predicaments

When **Barbara** took her first managerial role, in the former housing association, she remembers 'being really concerned about my own ability', in particular because

> I'm surrounded by older men... I'm a woman, I'm young, how do I demand things of them, because you get to a point where you stop persuading and you start demanding and you have to understand when that transition has to take place

She recalls attending a training day and talking to the consultant who, even though she 'was up there on a pedestal to me, a fantastically-experienced manager', admitted that 'when I was a first-time manager... I was exactly the same as you'. Barbara describes the conversation as a

> bit of a turning point for me because somebody who I had respected was struggling with the same problems and from then on I felt my way through it... and then it became much more natural... and I was just able to manoeuvre, I knew when to persuade, I knew when to negotiate, I knew when to tell

Barbara makes explicit her gender in relation to others – 'I'm surrounded by older men... I'm a woman' – and this seems to have added to her personal predicament. Therefore, it seems significant for her that this consultant, as a manager and a woman, was able to overcome her struggles and problems. Barbara seems to have had a strong identification (Gabriel, 2000) with the consultant, relating to her as a role model (Hill, 1992).

Current becoming manager predicaments

In dealing with a situation of long-term sickness absence of a staff member, **Felicity** is making sure that the process and procedural documentation are in order. This personal predicament is explored in the next chapter. She explains

> I'm not very sure about this sickness dismissal, I need support for that one, and some of that is knowledge based, am I doing it the right way cos there's a by the book... so there's an uncertainty there... the uncomfortable feeling is that I'm not entirely certain about the ground rules, you know, have I got it right? Is this the way *the* Council operates? (Felicity's emphasis)

Watson and Harris' (1999, p.79) study illustrates specific "difficult cases" which form part of the challenge of "'managing people'". The challenge for the manager, in these difficult cases, is focused not on managing a particular individual but on dealing with the specific task (Watson and Harris, 1999). Felicity's expression of 'the uncomfortable feeling' seems, from this short extract, related to the task dimensions. Like the manager dealing with a more general personal predicament centred on vulnerability about limited experiences (Watson and Harris, 1999, p.121), Felicity openly acknowledges her limited knowledge. She is aware of the "frameworks within which disciplinary processes take place" (Watson and Harris, 1999, p.174) within the Council. However, rather than "eas[ing] the discomfort" (Watson and Harris, 1999, p.173) of dealing with the dismissal case, in Felicity's case, her lack of 'certainty' about 'the ground rules' and 'the way *the* Council operates' are adding to her dis-ease.

After **Wendy** became aware of others' perceptions of her as a manager, discussed above in Section 5.3.5, she also became 'aware of how I conducted myself'. Although she has progressed managerially since then, learning how to regulate her responses and behaviour continues to be a personal predicament for Wendy. Over the two interviews, she gives accounts of four incidents which centre on her recognition of the need, but not yet the ability, to modify and regulate her behavioural tendencies. She talks at length about a concern that 'I'm going to be the next on the horizon for bullying' when dealing with poor performers. This personal predicament is explored in the next chapter. One of the challenges in the anticipated future situation hinges on her tendency to 'fly off the handle'

> you have the difficult individuals whose performance is below par time and time again, and it's how to handle that, (hesitation) because I can fly off the handle at people, I can do, I get frustrated if I feel somebody is not pulling their weight and I can be abrupt and I can tell them exactly what I think... I feel as though that might be my next sort of vulnerable side, knowing how to handle that, to perhaps take that step back, think about how I'm going to approach it, because I do fly off the handle at the lads, at the moment, in the QS section but they know me and we get on so well... but there could be other individuals that I react that way to and then suddenly I'm accused of bullying them and I just think I'm going to be the next on the horizon for bullying

As a quantity surveyor, Wendy has worked with and managed predominantly male colleagues – 'the lads'. At a later point in the same interview, Wendy describes how

> I didn't want to be seen as a woman in a man's world, I just wanted to be seen as a surveyor... I haven't minded if somebody's sworn in front of me, you know always sort of wanted to be one of the lads

Wendy's current managerial role means that she is no longer working exclusively with 'the lads... in the QS section'. If she continues to 'fly off the handle' and 'tell them exactly what I think', others may 'react' differently to these 'masculine' qualities of her managerial style. Like the manager in Watson and Harris' (1999, p.144) study who is "conscious of [controlling] his spontaneous reactions" and of having to change "his learned instincts of how a manager should behave" (p.128), Wendy acknowledges that she needs to change the style, which she has learned to fit with her professional, social and cultural environment. Watson and Harris (1999, p.129) found that a recurring discursive theme employed by their study's managers was of "biting your lip", which is articulated by Wendy as 'to perhaps take that step back, think about how I'm going to approach it'. As Watson and Harris (1999, p.129) observe this may seem "an obvious managerial skill to develop" but, as Hill (2003, p.323) also notes, personal skills development involves "making oneself vulnerable." Making the changes, therefore, will involve "emotional management", and "emotion [identity] work" (Watson and Harris, 1999, p.129) and "the possibilities for working through such emotional identity changes in public are potentially fraught with danger" (Beech and Johnson, 2005, p.43).

John identifies what he considers to be a 'life tension not just a work tension' around 'how do you become older and wiser without... you know getting into a nine to five rut?'. He elaborates

> I still want the fire in my belly that I had when I was 25 or 35 at the age of 45, 46 this year... I still want that that fire in the belly but I don't want the sort of... the loose cannon anger that I used to have in my twenties and thirties... the bid that I'm writing on Monday which I don't have to... and I'm conscious that I don't have to cos nobody's bothered but if I didn't, if I didn't then I'm not doing myself a service because then I'm losing the fire... if I didn't do it on Monday I'd feel deeply frustrated (interviewer: mmm) deeply frustrated cos I'd think well... you're turning into a nine to fiver

John reflects that 'I think that's a big issue for me personally' and ends the account by reflecting

> I don't know if it's something you turn into but it's not really what I want to be

Unlike the manager in Watson and Harris' (1999, p.75) study who worries about "getting to middle-age and, like, really sort of cracking under the strain", John's personal predicament is about continuing to put himself under self-imposed strain, to demonstrate to himself that he isn't 'losing the fire' and 'turning into a nine to fiver'.

5.3.7 Lack of support

Some participants discuss the lack of support they felt on 'first' becoming manager. Whereas their need was not expressed in relation to context-specific situations, support in this context is keenly felt by individuals as they progress managerially.

Early becoming manager predicaments

Early becoming manager needs for support take two main forms. These are support from others, particularly from a line manager or other 'higher' member of management, and support in the form of management training.

Nina talks about the 'minimum of support' she received

> So in that role, I didn't get very good induction... basically it was a sink or swim. I mean I remember speaking to my immediate line manager at the time who said "anybody in this role... has to get on and do", you know, and with a minimum of support so... I would say for the few weeks it really was quite nerve wracking

Through the expression 'sink or swim', Nina employs the "swimming" metaphor (Watson and Harris, 1999, p.109) in making sense of these early managerial

experiences. Nina's recall of her line manager's comment that 'anybody in this role... has to get on and do' suggests that she may be employing the metaphor to convey also that it was a "survival-of-the-fittest" (Hill, 2003, p.231) type experience for her.

Edward, Felicity and Wendy also refer to a lack of management training support. **Edward** says

> I was responsible for what went on, without, without really any preparation for that, I had no form of training or anything like that, so a lot of it was about instinctively doing what felt right

Wendy also comments about the lack of management training she received when first becoming manager. At the time of the first interview, she had attended a management development programme

> I've never had any management training at all until I'd done this [management] course... it certainly makes you more aware of how you treat people...I'm still not sure whether you can learn all of these management techniques or whether they're just part of your personality and what you see as commonsense but I think having the training is worthwhile because it helps you understand and make sense of it... the sort of the language that you learn as part of the course helps you explain it

Felicity proposes that the organisation should provide a mentor or critical friend to support early becoming managers

> you don't know what you don't know so you don't know what you need, so what it would have been fab to have had would have been an enforced mentor... a friend, a critical friend, frankly somebody who could just say 'it does look alright from the outside, you know, on the whole, 99 per cent of the time, you're doing alright' and... there was nobody to kind of stroke the ego and pat you on the shoulder now and then, for whom you could afford to be wrong with and have cracks and weaknesses with

For managers in their first year, Hill (2003, p.200) considers a "network of relationships", comprising previous and current line managers and peers, as a critical resource in providing "instrumental and psychosocial support". However, she also observes that "[t]he transition is daunting at best, and most organizations offer little support" (Hill, 2003, p.234).

Whereas, Felicity's need seems to be more, in Hill's (2003) terms, psychosocial, the need expressed by **John** seems more instrumental. In his case, he wanted backing for the changes he wanted to make in the reference library. He articulates

> feeling absolutely deadly frustrated that I couldn't change this overnight and also feeling that there wasn't necessarily instant support from above, because what I was trying to do was radical

Current becoming manager predicaments

In their current positions, most participants refer to either general or situation-specific lack of support. In some cases this seems to be contributing to the participant's vulnerability. In other cases, seeking the support of others seems to be an important way of coping with the identity-related implications of the personal predicament.

In the period between the first and second interview, **Nina's** service had been restructured creating the formation of a new management team of which she is a member. She reflects on the 'settling-in period' of the management team, and how she and her peers have been 'getting used to each other' and 'getting used to roles'. She expresses 'disappointment', 'sadness' and 'isolation' in relation to this team

> there's been a disappointment from my side... because I thought I was one of a team but... we're very separate in many ways... and that to me that's been a sadness... because I've been used to working in very close teams... I like a team approach to things... I felt at my level a little bit isolated... they seem happy with this; I don't, I don't particularly, I wanted to be part of a team

The notion of a 'team' is important for Nina. However, unlike the relationships between the manager and team discussed as "important" in Watson and Harris' (1999, p.157) study, the relationship which Nina lacks is between herself and her peers. Hill (2003, p.24) reports that few early becoming managers talked about proactively managing relationships with peers. Peer relationships were not the early becoming managers' "highest priority" (Hill, 2003, p.89). However, it is just this type of peer relationship that Nina craves as a middle-senior manager.

John explains how the isolation he feels has been exacerbated because his boss has been away from work, for an extended period, for personal reasons.

> since my boss has gone off that's exaggerated that to the nth degree... if anything it's increased my sense of autonomy but also increased the sense of isolation and that can be a bit scary especially when you know when I'm responsible for effectively millions of pounds of external funding... it feels a bit like walking a tightrope at times without a, without a safety net

In relation to a change in external funding arrangements, he explains

> there's a lot of money resting on it in terms of external funding coming into the Council yet I feel other than talking to colleagues in other local authorities and other than talking to staff who report to me I've largely had to pilot that myself... I should be talking that through to a line manager... so that is an area where mmummm (quizzical sound) I think mmummm (quizzical sound)... I need some support... I feel sort of vulnerable... in that area, that said I go ahead and do it (laughs) you know I will go ahead and do it

Towards the end of the account of this personal predicament, which is explored further in the next chapter, John concludes

> I would like to... feel there was a, a weight of support behind me but there isn't

Tracy's main source of vulnerability at the time of the second interview relates to her not feeling valued by her manager. She sets this into two contexts: first, not feeling valued generally by her manager; and, second, not feeling valued in relation to the then current review of the council's education services provision, including her field of professional expertise. She articulates not feeling valued by her manager as

> it would be nice if [he] just said god that was a really good job or you know I really value you or I really appreciate you... and I have actually said that openly to my line manager, that I do not feel valued, it was interesting that the response was (hesitation) you must know you're valued the schools think... you're great... and I didn't even at that point say it's not the schools that I don't feel valued by

At the time of the second interview, Tracy's field of professional expertise was part of a strategic review of the Council's education services. This personal predicament is explored in the next chapter. Tracy's vulnerability is related, in part, to her line manager's role in the strategic review

> I feel [manager] is powerful and I feel that [manager]... could well be the key person in going for a preferential option here, he'll be writing the paper...because I felt I didn't get a strong message of... the service being valued...I was really chewed up about it and I came the next day and I said to [manager]... if [name of council] sees a future for [field of professional

> expertise] which doesn't have central services as part of that future I don't know if I want to be part of [name of council] anymore... (interviewer: and what did [line manager] say in that meeting?)... nothing that assured me... I suppose I want him to say I know what you're saying I hear what you're saying, I value your services

Tracy explains how discussing the situation with one of her team members was supportive.

> [the team member] listened and [he] under[stood] you know and I felt comfortable that I could share it with him, more so than I probably could have shared it with [husband] because [the team member] was closer to it... I knew he knew where I was coming from, I knew he shared the same perspective as me about the passion for the services but also...I think he had picked up on the ambivalence you know from [line manager] about not necessarily you know seeing the value of what we provided and perhaps splintering it up

Watson and Harris (1999, p.199) observe that "relationships outside work can support the 'emerging manager'". Over the course of both interviews, Tracy explains how she talks to her husband about work situations and concerns. On this occasion, however, she chose to discuss the situation with her colleague, and articulates feeling 'comfortable' in presenting her vulnerable self to him.

The need for support from their line manager, expressed by John and Tracy, is also articulated by **Felicity**. Felicity's need seems to be intensified because the type of support that she is currently missing was provided by her former line manager. Felicity expresses this as a general need

> I miss the 10 minuteses... the 10 minutes of reassurance... to put things back in perspective... I actually feel the need occasionally for reassurance that I'm doing the right job... I miss the informal moment that somebody cares so I don't feel that kind of adrift feeling

The specific situation in which she feels this need most keenly relates to dealing with the long-term sickness absence of a team member. In managing this situation, like John's need for a 'weight of support behind' him, Felicity says

> that's when I'm going to need my 10 minutes down the road with somebody who says 'no you are doing it right and actually I'm right behind you'

A recurring theme within **Barbara's** interview accounts is feeling on her own, which is due to

> being an only woman in a male senior management team in both organisations... having to come to terms with that it's been very very difficult and there are times I've thought 'well what am I doing here? do I really want this anymore?'

She explains that she has 'stuck at it', partly to support other women

> I've stuck at it because I've felt that I had to stick at it but there have been times when it would be very easy to have just walked away [but] I've come through it and I'm fine and I'm well established but it's a battle, it's a battle and I do feel very strongly that, I feel that I owe the female managers in this organisation something, because I've been there and done it and I understand it and I want to try and help and support them through it

The illustrations in this section all articulate, in different ways, the need for "emotional support [in] handling dilemmas" (Hill, 2003, p.214). Early becoming managers' need for emotional support arises primarily from difficulties in managing people (Hill, 2003), that is the manager's own staff. As illustrated by this study, middle-senior managers also articulate a need for emotional support. However, in contrast to Hill's (2003) study, the source of the predicament triggering the need for support is not managing one's own staff but rather managing relationships with one's manager, as in the case of John and Tracy, and with one's peers, as illustrated by Nina and Barbara. Felicity's seemingly 'managing people' challenge is focused primarily on handling the dismissal process and procedures rather than the specific team member. A further observation is that, for the middle-senior managers in this study, a lack of emotional support may even be the source of the personal predicament.

5.3.8 Summary of professionals becoming managers experiences of vulnerability

Professionals becoming managers' early and current personal predicaments relating to experiences of vulnerability, as illustrated by the selected accounts presented in this chapter, are presented in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1 Sources and illustrations of professionals becoming managers' experiences of vulnerability as they make a transition into, and progress within, management

Source of vulnerability	Illustrations as participants make a transition into management	Illustrations as participants progress within management
Feeling responsible	• 'I was responsible for a team of about 20 people… I was responsible for what went on' – **Edward** • 'feeling *personally* responsible for a service' – **John**	• 'I did feel in an incredibly vulnerable position then as somebody that was responsible for this' – **Edward** • 'I felt very responsible for [the future growth objectives of the organisation] and so I put that ahead of my own principles' – **Barbara**
Feeling the weight of managing	• 'the full weight of process… there was a range of difficulties to deal with there and… it was my responsibility to have to do them and I felt the weight, at that point, of being the manager' - **Felicity**	• 'you can actually almost ruin somebody's life… if you don't manage properly, and that plays heavy on my shoulders… weighs heavy on my shoulders' – **Barbara**
Needing to 'have the answers'	• 'there seemed to be a pressure on me that I always would feel that somebody very senior would come up and ask me something that I really could not answer' – **Nina** • *'you* had *all* of the answers to all of the questions cos it was your job to and you had to know everything that was going on and that was what I was brought up with and I didn't like it, I hated it, and I kicked against it' – **Barbara** • 'we had to be strong in that position and we knew what people wanted because we had this vast knowledge' – **Norman**	• 'I really did used to think that somebody was going to come along and ask me a question (laughs)… and now I'm not, I'm just not, not as rattled at all like that' – **Nina** • 'at first that spooked me and it felt as if I needed to know the answer… whereas now I'm quite happy to say 'what do you think, what shall we do?'… a few years ago... I would have felt that that would have exposed me' – **Wendy** • 'sometimes I feel inadequate because I think they're looking for me, to me for a solution and I haven't got it' – **Barbara** • 'since the last five or six years… I have the confidence that… I don't have to have the vision all the time – **Norman**
Challenges to authority	• 'I had a staff meeting… and this woman didn't turn up… she was a very strong personality, very very challenging… I was really thrown, because you sort of think "god, what the hell do I do?"… and it's almost like undermining the role, undermining you' – **Tracy**	• '[management peer] has got a lot of experience and he's been around a lot longer than I have… there was an incident when we clashed and I had to say to him you know I'm a senior manager… as well' – **Wendy** • a decision was made I felt over my head… it would have been easier just to let the situation carry on but I refused to do that, and… I did challenge the person – **Nina**

Table 5.1 Sources and illustrations of professionals becoming managers' experiences of vulnerability as they make a transition into, and progress within, management (continued)

Source of vulnerability	Illustrations as participants make a transition into management	Illustrations as participants progress within management
Others' perception of the manager	• 'I became very conscious of how other people viewed me, how high up the ladder other people viewed me… they saw me as a kind of a different breed almost (laughter)… and the dawning on them was that I was just human' – **Wendy**	• 'I feel in some ways unfairly castigated as the bad guy in this… I am seen as the chap who's Service is the one who is imposing all the paperwork… so I am seen as that and at times it just seems isolating' – **John**
Concerns about knowledge and ability	• 'I'm surrounded by older men… I'm a woman, I'm young, how do I demand things of them, because you get to a point where you stop persuading and you start demanding and you have to understand when that transition has to take place' – **Barbara**	• 'I'm not very sure about this sickness dismissal… and some of that is knowledge based… the uncomfortable feeling is that I'm not entirely certain about the ground rules' – **Felicity** • 'that might be my next sort of vulnerable side, knowing how to handle that, to… think about how I'm going to approach it, because I do fly off the handle' – **Wendy** • 'how do you become older and wiser without… you know getting into a 9 to 5 rut?… I don't know if it's something you turn into but it's not really what I want to be' – **John**
Lack of support	• 'in that role… basically it was a sink or swim… my immediate line manager at the time… said "anybody in this role… has to get on and do", you know, and with a minimum of support so… I would say for the few weeks it really was quite nerve racking – **Nina** • 'I was responsible for what went on, without, without really any preparation for that, I had no form of training or anything like that' – **Edward** • 'there was nobody to kind of stroke the ego and pat you on the shoulder now and then, for whom you could afford to be wrong with and have cracks and weaknesses with' – **Felicity** • 'there wasn't necessarily instant support from above, because what I was trying to do was radical' – **John**	• 'there's been a disappointment from my side… I thought I was one of a team but… we're very separate in many ways… they seem happy with this… I don't particularly, I wanted to be part of a team' – **Nina** • 'it's nice sometimes to have someone take an interest in what you're doing and I don't get a lot of that … I would like to… feel there was a weight of support behind me but there isn't' – **John** • 'it would be nice if [manager] just said god that was a really good job or… I really value you or I really appreciate you… I want him to say I know what you're saying I hear what you're saying, I value your services' – **Tracy** • 'I miss… the 10 minutes of reassurance… to put things back in perspective … I actually feel the need occasionally for reassurance that I'm doing the right job' – **Felicity**

5.4 Implications for this study of the accounts presented in this chapter

This section summarises the main theoretical and methodological insights and implications derived from the accounts presented in this chapter.

All of the professionals becoming managers in this study "moved up" within their professional field and hierarchically within their organisation, confirming that this is a common route into management (Watson and Harris, 1999, pp.30-34). For some participants such as Norman and Wendy with management responsibilities as part of their professional roles, the transition into management was gradual. However, for others, the transition was more momentous, with **Barbara** experiencing 'a big transition' and **Nina** making 'a quantum leap'. These experiences contrast with the view that individuals "do not suddenly 'become' managers" (Watson, 2001, p.221).

In explaining the source of their personal predicaments relating to vulnerability, the participants in this study draw on discourses of feeling responsible, feeling the weight of managing and needing to 'have the answers'. As illustrated by Edward, John and Barbara's experiences, early becoming manager predicaments relating to feeling responsible focus on "sectional responsibilities" (Watson and Harris, 1999, p.69). However, the level of responsibility shifts to "corporate" (Watson and Harris, 1999) in current experiences, as illustrated by Edward and Barbara's accounts. Some participants in this study go further in expressing the responsibility they feel as the 'weight' of management. Whilst appreciating the review of existing identity-related studies has been limited, drawing primarily on Watson and Harris (1999) and Hill (2003), the discursive resource of the 'weight' of managing does not seem to have been employed by the managers in either of those studies.

Barbara and Norman draw on discourses of power and control in making sense of their early becoming manager predicaments of needing to 'have the answers'. These accounts illustrate the power effect on self-identity of relations and discourses. Further illustrations of the relationship between self-identity construction processes and power are provided by Barbara and Nina, who draw on a discourse of gender in their understandings of predicaments relating, respectively, to concerns about knowledge and ability and challenges to authority. It is interesting to note that many of the women in Watson and Harris' (1999, p.134) study reflected on their gender as differentiating them as 'untypical' whereas no men did. In this current

study, the three men do not draw on a discourse of gender, whereas Nina and Barbara explicitly do and it is implicit in Wendy's accounts. However, as previously noted, the social construction of discourses, such as power, control, gender and gendered-management, and their effects on self-identity, are outside the scope of this thesis.

The professionals becoming managers in this study provided illustrations of challenges to authority and of differences between their self-perceptions about selves as manager and those of others. In contrast to Tracy's early becoming manager predicament involving a team member, current predicaments for Wendy and Nina involve challenges to their positions as managers by management peers. In contrast to Hill's (2003, p.89) suggestion that managing relationships with peers was not "highest priority" for early becoming managers, the illustrations from this study suggest that proactively managing relationships with peers is important for individuals as they progress managerially.

Additionally, a lack of support from their management peers is a source of vulnerability in their current positions as middle-senior managers. The illustrations in this study suggest that, as they progress managerially, individuals want "emotional support" (Hill, 2003) from their management peers, or manager, often to help cope with situation-specific dilemmas. This contrasts with the more "instrumental support" (Hill, 2003) taking for instance the form of management development, desired by early professionals becoming managers. The subject of management development is discussed by Watson and Harris (1999) and Hill (2003). However, Wendy's observation that 'I've never had any management training at all until I'd done this [management] course' may have been prompted by my former relationship with her as a workshop facilitator on that management course. This thesis, therefore, fully acknowledges that relations and power between interviewer-interviewer may have biased the data generated.

Needing to 'have the answers', a theme in early becoming manager personal predicaments, is no longer an issue or source of vulnerability for the participants in their current positions. Indeed, Nina and Barbara engage in active identity work, during the interview, by articulating their confidence in dealing now with such situations. These identity work processes seem both to help the participants reconcile the differences between their early and current manager and self-

identities, and to reinforce the current identity they wish to claim (Riessman, 1993) in their interaction with me as the interviewer. It might be argued, therefore, that such active identity work means that interviews must be considered an unsatisfactory method for identity-based studies (Ibarra, 2003). However, this thesis argues that identity work occurs in any social and discursive interaction, including interviews. This thesis extends the argument by proposing that awareness of these in-the-moment identity work processes may give further insights into relationships between personal predicaments, vulnerability and identity work. The implications for this research in acknowledging that interviews are sites for active identity work (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002; Alvesson, 2003) are to appreciate that data arising from context-specific interviews are situated and "biased" (Chell, 2004) by the in-the-moment needs and interests of the interviewee and the interviewer.

Connections between personal predicaments, emotion and identity work are illustrated in the accounts presented in this chapter. For example, Wendy's self-acknowledged need to adjust her instinctive reaction of 'fly[ing] off the handle' will involve emotional management and, therefore, emotion identity work. However, as noted previously, exploration of the intersection of emotion and identity work is outside the scope of this study.

5.5 Chapter summary

This chapter has provided illustrations of experiences relating to vulnerability of professionals becoming managers as they make a transition into and progress within management. The chapter began by confirming how the focus on experiences of vulnerability emerged through the data gathering and interpretation processes. The chapter discussed the nature of the transition into management which was more pronounced for some than for others. The personal predicaments experienced, both as they make a transition into and progress within management, relate to feeling responsible including feeling the weight of managing, needing to 'have the answers', challenges to authority and others' perception of self as manager. The chapter also illustrated concerns about knowledge and ability, and lack of support which were expressed by the participants in this study as themes in both their early and current experiences of becoming. Whilst all the themes discussed are common to both early and current experiences, the chapter discussed key relational and social context differences between them. A summary of the illustrations of experiences of vulnerability discussed in this chapter was presented

as a table. The chapter concluded by considering the theoretical and methodological implications of the data presented and acknowledged, as part of this discussion, that interviews are sites for active identity work. This chapter has provided a foundation for the next one which offers interpretations of identity work processes associated with specifically-selected personal predicaments.

Chapter 6 Personal Predicaments and Identity Work

6 Introduction

The previous chapter provided an illustration of the scope and nature of personal predicaments related to vulnerability of professionals becoming managers as they make a transition into and progress within management. This chapter is the first of two which explores identity work processes associated with selective personal predicaments. The chapter begins by summarising the way the data have been selected and interpreted. The chapter then gives an overview of the selected personal predicaments, one for each participant, and the reasons for its selection. Details of the socio-relational context of the personal predicaments are also provided. The next part of the chapter provides illustrations, from the participants' accounts, of relational identity positioning and social context obligations associated with the personal predicaments. Therefore, the presentation of the data is related to the framework (Figure 2.3) developed, in Chapter Two, following the review of identity work processes, and specifically Beech and McInnes (2006) and positioning theory (Harré and van Langenhove, 1991, 1999c; Davies and Harré, 1990, 1999). The chapter provides a summary table of relational identity and social context obligations, as highlighted in the participants' accounts of personal predicaments. The chapter ends by considering the implications for this research of the data presented.

This chapter, therefore, addresses the research objectives:

- to explore professionals becoming managers' personal predicaments related to vulnerability as they make a transition into and progress within management
- to provide, through interpretations of professionals becoming managers' accounts of personal predicaments related to vulnerability, theoretical insights into identity work processes, and specifically those aimed at repairing self-identity

6.1 Data selection and interpretation processes

The data selection and interpretation processes, as they relate to this chapter, have been fully documented in Chapter Four on methodology. This section provides a summary.

From the data set of experiences relating to vulnerability, I selected one personal predicament for each participant. The selected personal predicament was chosen for a number of reasons. The main criterion was the perceived significance of the personal predicament for the individual. I judged significance in a number of ways. First, I was drawn by the strength of expression of vulnerability, or other similar feeling such as isolation, expressed explicitly by the participant. Second, my attention to selected personal predicaments was alerted by the language and rhetorical tropes (Gabriel, 2000), particularly metaphors, used by some participants in their account of the event. The third reason was because the participant may have chosen, in the second interview, to elaborate on this or a similar event which they discussed initially in the first interview. Finally, the participant may have referred to events with a similar theme in other parts of the interview.

Having selected one incident for each participant, I then interpreted it using Mauthner and Doucet's (1998) voice-centred relational method. I followed the general principles of the method and interpreted the data through each of the four readings. However, I gave particular attention to the second reading, for the voice of the 'I', as this was particularly pertinent to this research on self-identity. As themes – such as 'doing the right thing', 'doing it right' and 'having no choice' – began to emerge from the data interpretation, I began to give more attention, from reading 4, on the use of moral terms such as 'should', 'ought', 'right', 'wrong', 'good' and 'bad' as indications of the cultural and social norms and values (Mauthner and Doucet, 1998, p.133) perceived in the social context.

At this stage in the data interpretation, through revisiting the literature, I extended the data interpretation. This involved focusing attention on the participants' constructions of relational identity, through positioning of self and other(s), and on their constructions of social context obligations, as explored through the rights, duties and obligations expressed by the individual. Therefore, I began to use as an interpretive framework, Beech and McInnes' (2006) identity work processes, combined with the concept of positioning theory (Harré and van Langenhove, 1991, 1999c; Davies and Harré, 1990, 1999). The refined framework, discussed in Chapter Two and presented there in Figure 2.3, has been used in the presentation of the data in this chapter.

There is an overlap between the framework's two dimensions, of relational identity positioning and of social context obligations. As the next chapter explores further, participants draw on both dimensions in their accounts of personal predicaments and in their self-identity constructions. To avoid duplication the account extracts are presented according to their primary focus, of relational identity positioning or social context obligations, and have offered interpretations on both dimensions. To aid interpretation by the reader of the participants' accounts and my interpretations of them, *deliberate positioning of self or other(s)* is indicated in italics, and **forced positioning of self or other(s)** in bold, and social context obligations as underlined. Throughout the chapter the voices of the participants are interwoven with my own interpretations of their accounts, drawing selectively on existing literature. This chapter provides the foundation for the next chapter in which interpretation of the participants' accounts will be extended to theorising on identity work processes, and specifically those aimed at repairing self-identity.

In summary, then, from participants' accounts of selected personal predicaments relating to vulnerability, this chapter provides illustrations of relational identity positionings and perceived social context obligations.

Having discussed the processes for selecting and interpreting the personal predicaments, the next section provides an overview of each one. Details about the socio-relational context of the personal predicaments are also given.

6.2 The selected personal predicaments

Edward gave an account of a situation relating to the events subsequent to the suicide of a client. Part of the event involved Edward, who at the time was Director of Care and Support, making an appearance at the Coroner's Inquest as an organisational representative. Edward referred to this as 'one of the most embarrassing positions I've ever been placed in as a caring professional'. Edward first described the event in the first interview and chose to elaborate on it in the second because

> I had almost kind of forgotten about the thing with the guy that committed suicide (interviewer: mmmm) it's bizarre you know because I mean god at the time that was probably such a hugely painful memory for me, ehm and it's, it's kind of almost reassuring that I've kind of like I've put that behind me and I've moved on...

At the time of the incident, Edward was 'still fairly recently in post' having joined the organisation less than a year prior to the suicide. Edward first heard about the incident through a telephone complaint made by the client's brother and Edward gives his first reaction as a feeling of 'we're incredibly exposed here, this has been mishandled'. He later comments on how 'I did feel in an incredibly vulnerable position then as somebody that was responsible for this'. Following his appearance at the Coroner's Inquest, Edward articulated his feelings

> I was, really shaken up and felt sick and, I just felt professionally completely discredited, I (slight sigh), terrible, I felt awful, one of the, I think probably *the most*, the worst moment of my professional career (Edward's emphasis)

Barbara gave an account of a situation about which she also 'felt sick, felt sick [for] weeks'. In the first interview, Barbara observed 'I do think there are gender issues when you get at the level that I'm at'. At the time of the first interview she was a housing association director and, by the time of the second interview, had been promoted to chief executive of one of the association's operating companies. She continued

> if I'm in a fairly high brow meeting surrounded by men in grey suits and I'm an only woman, I feel fairly inadequate, and it's not that I can't contribute and I know I can contribute as effectively as they can, but there's something about men that makes me feel inadequate

In the second interview she chose to elaborate on two male-dominated events, one a seminar and the other a meeting. I have selected to focus on the second event, where Barbara 'had to stand in for the Chief Exec [of her organisation] at a meeting and umm a highly political meeting'. Barbara explains how she was 'dreading' the meeting for two reasons

> I wanted a bus to come and knock me over so I didn't have to go with all these men, cos they were all men, got there and there were two women amongst 20 men... and they'd stitched up, before the meeting, one of the Chief Execs, they'd stitched up a decision between them all and I knew they had, and I knew it was unfair and I hated what was going to happen which was why I didn't really want to go to the meeting in the first place, cos firstly I didn't [like] the audience and secondly I didn't like to be part of what was going to happen

Barbara concludes by referring to the meeting as

> ... the most excruciating meeting I've ever been through... [it] was just nauseating... it just made me feel as sick as a dog... I felt sick, I felt sick [for] weeks... I didn't like it, I just didn't like it at all... I just hated it, hated it... I don't want to put myself in that position again, if being at the top means that you've got to put up with that then I don't really wanna be there... I've moved on from it now

John describes how generally, in his role as Lifelong Learning Manager within a Local Authority Education Service, 'I'm a little bit marginalised within [my] service'. He gives details about how that situation has 'mixed blessings' because, on the one hand, 'I've got an awful lot of autonomy which I really appreciate' but, on the other hand, 'it occasionally feels isolated'. His sense of occasional isolation has been exaggerated because, at the time of the second interview, his line manager had been absent from work for three months. John describes how the feeling of isolation

> can be a bit scary especially when you know when I'm responsible for effectively millions of pounds of external funding... it feels a bit like walking a tightrope at times without a, without a safety net

He gives an account of 'a big issue a big big dilemma' relating to changes in Government funding for learning and of a Council policy change that 'I've largely had to pilot myself'. For John this is

> an area where I need some support... I feel sort of vulnerable... in that area, that said I go ahead and do it (laughs) you know I will go ahead and do it

In addition to John's expression of needing support in piloting the policy change, I selected this as a personal predicament because he referred in the first interview to 'a huge political issue at the moment because the Government is effectively saying we won't fund learning for its own sake'. The issue and the changes being piloted are at odds with his professional values, discussed in the first interview, that

> people have a pursuit in learning for its own sake... it's a passionate belief in the benefits of learning for individuals and individuals learning for their own motivation... a belief in a learning culture where individual pursuit is respected

A number of **Nina**'s personal predicaments, which give indications of vulnerability, centre on decisions about whether to 'challenge' a particular situation or person. Over the course of both interviews, she gives accounts of four incidents, describing situations both where she has challenged and where she has not. The personal

predicament I have selected is an event, given in the second interview, which occurred during the 'settling-in period' of the new senior management team of the council's youth service, of which she is a part. The event, which had happened between the first and second interviews, related to 'a decision... made I felt over my head' and which, for Nina, questioned 'the equality of our roles in terms of being decision makers'. Nina expresses the anger and soreness she felt about the situation

> I got very, I got very angry about that situation and it took me back to (slight laughter) I think when I first started out in my first professional post feeling that anger disappointment frustration umm like I couldn't find a way out and I was thinking then (very low voice), and I started thinking just a minute (slight laughter) I didn't get to here to feel like this... I've not felt as sore as that for a long time... I haven't felt that for a long time

Felicity's personal predicament relates to the long-term sickness absence of a member of staff within the council's arts and cultural development service. She describes this as 'a personal challenge on my part because I think, I think ultimately I might be facing dismissal'. It is not Felicity herself who is facing dismissal but the member of staff but her expression does seem to give an indication of the personal connection and empathy she feels. Felicity anticipates the probable outcome of the situation

> it's going to be nasty... it's not a very nice position to be in to tell somebody that uhh actually you don't think they're doing the job... it's not going to be nice, it's not going to be easy, and if we are facing dismissal then (sigh) then that won't be nice, I mean it wouldn't be nice if it was any of us in the same position, how can you work in a place where they are trying to get rid of you?

One of the reasons for my selection of this event as a personal predicament is because Felicity returns to it towards the end of the same, second, interview. At that point she says

> I'm not very sure about this sickness dismissal, I need support for that one... there's an uncertainty there... the uncomfortable feeling is that I'm not entirely certain about the ground rules, you know, have I got it right? Is this the way *the* Council operates? (Felicity's emphasis)

The first event **Tracy** discussed in the second interview related to not feeling valued by her manager. She explained how 'I have actually said... openly to my line manager that I do not feel valued'. '[T]he ambivalence from [her line manager] about

not necessarily… seeing the value of what we provided', at the team level of the specialist education service professionals she manages, combined with the low value shown by her manager towards her personally seem to underpin the selected personal predicament, relating to a then current service review. I have selected the service review for two reasons, the first relating to the strength of feeling Tracy expresses about her service area

> I feel so strongly and passionately about what they provide and what they do… they know I would be passionate and that I will not, the service won't go without a massive fight you know from my point of view

The second reason was because, in her account of the event, Tracy refers back to the lack of value from her manager and the anxiety this created for her about the event. Tracy explains

> if I'm honest Sandra my anxiety was, [line manager] was quite powerful in all of this… I feel [line manager] is powerful and I feel that [line manager] could well… be the key person in going for a preferential option here… I felt I didn't get a strong message of… the service being valued

She refers to another source of anxiety which arose during a two day strategic options review event, with her management colleagues. She articulated her feelings when it looked possible that one of the options might be to splinter her service group and provision

> I was becoming anxious that I couldn't really see the service that I had responsibility for anywhere… I was really chewed up about it… I feel so passionate about it and I feel so strongly… I just feel so strongly what will be lost

Over the course of both interviews, **Norman** seems to wrestle with his notions of what it means to be a professional architect. His predicament stems from his early professional experiences, some thirty years ago, of 'training under' and management by a particular director of his professional group. He comments on the style and effect of the director, in his former service area, who was 'quite powerful or what he said was what people wanted therefore the rest of his staff took on this same sort of arrogance'. Over the course of the two interviews he referred to this notion of 'professional arrogance' in four separate events. I have selected one event, from the first interview, of a then recent meeting with stakeholders to discuss

the design of a new building, where Norman felt confident that 'I don't have to have the vision all the time'. Norman comments that

> some time ago that [not having a vision of the building] would have been a bit of a concern cos I'd felt I've got to be strong here... I'd been worried that I'd have a room of people who didn't know where they were going and I'm meant to be guiding them... since the last five or six years... I have the confidence that... I don't have to, myself, know where we are going... it might have concerned me earlier because you felt that you were the professional and you were therefore meant to be in control

This event could, therefore, be regarded as an anti-personal predicament but I have selected it for interpretation because, in his account, Norman refers back to his training under the former director.

The final personal predicament, **Wendy**'s, relates to an event which has not happened but which Wendy seems to think is inevitable. At the time of the first interview, Wendy had been promoted to, but had not yet started, a new higher management role. For the first time in her career, this promotion meant that she would be managing teams comprising other professionals outside her own professional group of quantity surveyors. She talks about

> the thing that's worrying me about my new role, in terms of challenges, is (hesitation) things to do with... bullying and harassment

She expresses a concern that 'I'm going to be the next on the horizon for bullying' when dealing with poor performers. Although the predicament hadn't occurred by the time of the second interview, Wendy seems to believe that the inevitable accusation is linked with her position in the organisation – 'the higher up the organisation you go the more vulnerable you are in that role'. However, for me, the event seems to relate to a theme, discussed in the previous chapter, of the recognised need, but not yet the ability, to modify and regulate her personal preferences and behavioural tendencies. Wendy referred to this need in four other events over the course of both interviews.

Although the selected personal predicaments were introduced in the preceding chapter, this section has provided a summary of them. It has also explained my reasoning for their particular selection and has considered their significance and

context for the participant. The next section provides further details about the socio-relational context of the personal predicaments.

6.2.1 The socio-relational context of the personal predicaments

As **Wendy**'s personal predicament has not occurred, its 'location' is internal to self. 'Internal to self' aspects of identity work feature in all of the accounts of personal predicaments. This inward-facing element (Watson, 2008), which includes sensemaking of the predicament and of the self, is an essential aspect of identity work. In addition to internal to self aspects, **Norman**'s personal predicament incident takes place outside his organisation and involves 'external' others. The personal predicaments of **Edward** and **Barbara** also feature external incidents and, in their case, it is these external to organisation aspects which seem to trigger the active and concentrated identity work. In all other cases, the personal predicaments involve incidents which take place within, and involve others from, their own organisation. **Edward** gave an account of the personal predicament in both the first and the second interview. Internal incidents were emphasised in the first account of the situation and external dimensions were emphasised in the second account.

A range of others are involved with, or mentioned in relation to, the personal predicaments. All participants, except **Felicity** and **Norman**, refer to their line manager. However, other than in having conversations about the incident, the line manager only seems central to **John** and **Tracy**'s personal predicament. Although **Felicity** does not mention directly her current line manager, she does refer to 'somebody who says 'no you are doing it right and actually I'm right behind you''. She explains in other parts of the interviews that this is the type of support or appreciation her former line manager gave her. Therefore in **John**, **Tracy** and **Felicity**'s cases, lack of support from a line manager seems to be a contributory factor in the individual's sense of vulnerability in dealing with the personal predicament. **Norman** does not mention his current line manager but discusses at length his relationship with his former line manager, the Director of Architecture, and, as discussed later, this relationship does seem to be central to his identity work.

In some participants' accounts, others are referred to by name, as in **Barbara**'s and **Tracy**'s cases. **Nina** was concerned about maintaining anonymity and consciously chose not to refer to others by name, and particularly the peer who she considered

had made a decision over her head. However, in some other cases, others are referred to generically and impersonally, for instance **John** refers to 'the Council', 'people in the council hierarchy' and to 'everybody'. In other cases, others are referred to specifically but in terms of their profession. For instance, **Tracy** refers to her immediate and next higher line managers as 'psychologists'. In yet other cases, others are mentioned with specific reference to their perceived attitudes towards the self and others. For example, **Nina** refers to 'colleagues [who] exclude women'. These and other forms of positionings of others and self are explored in the next section.

6.3 Relational identity positioning

This section provides illustrations particularly of the way participants express relational identity and the latitude, or freedom of movement, they perceive in the relational definition of self and other (Beech and McInnes, 2006). There is a relationship between the relational identity and social context obligations dimensions of the identity work framework. Interpretations about social context obligations are offered in this section where they seem to have an effect on relational identity definition. To aid interpretation by the reader, *deliberate positioning of self or other(s)* is indicated in italics, and **forced positioning of self or other(s)** in bold. The <u>social context aspects of rights, duties and obligations</u>, which are highlighted by underlining, are discussed fully, in section 6.4. In offering my interpretation of the accounts, I also draw on other relevant extracts from the narrative texts given by the participants in the course of the two interviews.

Because of the complexity and length of some of the personal predicament accounts, I have had to be necessarily selective in focusing attention on particular extracts. This section illustrates positioning of self: as villain; in relation to powerful others; and by 'taking on' neutral social-identities.

6.3.1 Positioning of self as villain

When discussing the 'bit of a battle' he had with others in the council over the piloting of the new funding policy, **John** observes

> *I felt very isolated in having that battle* because I realised **I was up against people who in the Council hierarchy are higher than me** (slight laugher) you know and **coming across as the bad guy** when actually <u>*all I was doing*</u>

> *was protecting the Council's interests* by making sure there was a sense of probity in using [external funding body] money.

John deliberately positions his self in relation to others – 'people who in the Council hierarchy are higher than me'. The expression 'I realised' suggests that he was conscious, at the time, of his hierarchical position relative to the others, and implies the relatively lower self-positioning is forced by the social and cultural norms that generally operate within a hierarchy. John suggests that it was others who perceived him as 'coming across as the bad guy', giving a forced positioning of self by others. Being perceived as 'the bad guy' seems to generate a sense of injustice which John counters, through a deliberate positioning of self, by stating that he was acting to 'protect the Council's interests', thereby fulfilling his duty to his employer. This extract illustrates the tensions in the latitude of freedom in relational identity definition, through the interplay of deliberate self-positionings and forced positionings by others. It also illustrates the effects of the perceived social context obligations. The obligations, in this case the duty which he feels he is fulfilling in protecting the Council's interests, are discussed in Section 6.4 below.

John picks up again on the injustice of the forced positioning of self by others in his next articulation of being perceived as the 'bad guy'. In this case, the positioning is coming from a different part and level within the organisation

> I feel in some ways **unfairly castigated as the bad guy** in this... (interviewer: yea I mean has anybody sort of suggested that's how they see you?) yea yea yea especially some of the community education workers who are actually on the ground, and **I am seen as the chap whose Service is the one who is imposing all the paperwork**, all of the [funding body's] bureaucracy requirements with regards to quality

John is being positioned as the bad guy, a form of "villain" identity (Gabriel, 2000), from those above and below him in the organisational hierarchy. Irrespective of the level of others positioning him as 'the bad guy', he conveys a sense of being punished severely and unjustly. In his words, he feels 'unfairly castigated' for fulfilling a social context 'duty', of complying with the tightening of the funding arrangements, which includes having to introduce additional 'paperwork'.

In contrast to John's perceived forced positioning of self, **Felicity** concludes her account of the personal predicament of the potential sickness-related dismissal of a team member, by the deliberate self-positioning statement of

> *I don't want to be the baddy* in that one but actually I don't see a way round it

Felicity elaborates on her concerns

> I really don't like seeing people upset, I like there to be peace and harmony and however difficult this situation might be that person is going to end up in tears, distressed, highly distressed and completely let down by this organisation

Her use of a discourse of 'peace and harmony' can be traced back to the way she introduced her self at the beginning of the first interview

> I'm the peacemaker, in any role I tend to be the one that looks for the pros as opposed to the cons, the places where you can move forward from this situation, the things you can salvage, the bits you can build on and how two people who really don't like one another can actually have a professional relationship and get on with each other

Felicity seems to be struggling to accept the inevitability that 'I am facing dismissal', as this will symbolise that the relationship, in this case between 'that person' and 'this organisation', has gone beyond the possibility to 'salvage things'. If or when the dismissal happens, Felicity will have failed and the staff member's feelings of being 'completely let down by this organisation' will also be targeted at her, as the manager. Although Felicity seems to anticipate the inevitable outcome of this personal predicament, 'I am facing dismissal', she does not seem to want to submit her self-identity of 'peacemaker' or of 'salvager'. In considering options for the return to work of the member of staff, she expresses the personal sacrifice she is prepared to make

> she's also coming back into... an office where frankly people have given up patience, so one of the options is should she come back into this office actually she's going to share with me, so she isn't facing the rest of the team, and she'll probably think that's a dire thing to have to do but that's *my martyrdom* at the moment.

Felicity is still willing to explore and put in place options, thereby acting as the 'salvager'. Through her discursive strategy, Felicity recasts the positioning of self as the baddy, the "villain" (Gabriel, 2000), to the deliberate positioning of self as 'martyr', acting in the interests of the superior goal of protecting other(s). According to Gabriel (2000, p.72), martyrdom is 'almost always linked to epic or heroic qualities.' The 'martyr' incorporates the hero-like qualities of the 'salvager' of the

situation, and is the discursive strategy by which Felicity has repaired the 'baddy' self-identity. Related to the discursive strategy of positioning of self as 'villain', Edward and Barbara employ the discursive strategy of positioning self and other as 'victim'. Because the social context obligations of their personal predicaments are relevant to their use of this positioning strategy, it will be considered later, in Section 6.4.3 below.

6.3.2 Positioning of self in relation to powerful others

In describing his appearance before the Judge at the Coroner's Inquest, **Edward** uses a range of metaphors and metaphorical expressions. Interpretations of these were offered in a developmental paper presented at the British Academy of Management conference in 2006 (Corlett 2006). Whilst a full interpretation of the use of metaphors is outside the scope of this study, they do offer insights into the relational identity positioning between Edward and the coroner

> you know what these judge characters are like, *they think they're god* and behave like god, so **I was made to feel** sort of **about an inch high**

The deliberate positioning by Edward of the judge as 'god', with its possible implications of him as having superhuman/supernatural power over Edward's fortunes, indicates the perceived constraints on the latitude of relational identity and the imbalance of power in the relationship. Koller (2004) suggests that metaphors of religious leaders relate to the wider coherent metaphor complex of control. This notion of power and control is supported by Edward's forced self-positioning of being 'made to feel about an inch high', a positioning emphasised in the conclusion to his account of the court appearance

> I just felt professionally completely discredited... as much as anything because **I'd been so belittled**

The forced self-positioning of being 'belittled', as if dwarfed by the power of the Coroner, might stem from Edward's views on the status of his own professional group with that of lawyers, which he discussed in the first interview

> If you go to a party and say... "I'm a doctor" or "I'm a lawyer", then people will go "mmm", you know, "heavyweight" whereas if you go "I'm a social worker" they will go "mm, not a heavy weight"

Edward might be using the word 'heavyweight' to suggest the contribution to society made by lawyers as a professional group, or to highlight the power differential between that group and his own of social workers. One's status in relation to the other is connected with one's rights in a social context and, therefore, again the interplay between relational identity positioning and social context obligations, within the identity work framework, is illustrated.

Norman explains why the stakeholder meeting, at which he had no vision about the purpose or design of the new building, might have concerned him a few years ago

> some time ago that [not having a vision of the building] would have been a bit of a concern cos I'd felt **I've got to be strong here**... it might have concerned me earlier because you felt that you were the professional and **you were** therefore **meant to be in control**... and I think it goes back to probably Architectural Services, and our Director of Architectural Services was quite powerful, or what he said was what people wanted and therefore the rest of his staff took on this same sort of arrogance that 'don't you worry, we know what you want, we know what you want, you don't have to tell us'

Expressions such as 'I've got to be', 'you were meant to be' and 'we had to be' indicate the cultural and power effect of working with and for the Director. The possessive expression 'our Director' might imply the power effect the Director had on Norman and others within the Service. However, by referring to the 'rest of his staff', Norman seems to be excluding himself from 'taking on' 'this same sort of arrogance'. In addition to drawing on the discourse of professional 'arrogance' twice within this extract, Norman uses this as a discursive resource on two other occasions over the course of the two interviews. This suggests that he struggled to accept this characteristic in his Director and others. The positioning, therefore, of 'the rest of his staff' has the effect of disassociating his self from these professional colleagues and of dis-identifying with this professional attribute.

The 'professional arrogance' of 'we know what you want' and the "dominant architect" (Cohen *et al.*, 2005) discourse established an architect-client relationship in which the client was denied an opportunity to be consulted on, or to challenge, the design decisions made by the professional. In the first interview, Norman talked at length about his professional architectural education at a 'very sort of socialist college'. It was there that he developed a fundamental belief in client involvement – 'I've always believed and been in the frontline of tenant involvement... of client involvement'. Whilst the type of professional-client relationship practised by the

Director and others was in line with the "dominant architect" (Cohen *et al.*, 2005) discourse, it destabilised what Norman believed was the "expected order of things" (Allsop and Mulcahy, 1998, p.808) and also seemed to destabilise, therefore, his professional-identity and self-identity.

In developing his understandings, Norman explained, in the first interview, how he struggled with the architect stereotype

> I'm not really quite part of that [stereotype], I mean I have been in a lot of meetings where an architect has been very dogmatic and that they are right and that it has to be done this way but... I've never really been quite, I suppose I've been a bit of a wishy-washy architect anyway that I have been influenced more easily by others

He draws on the discourse of the 'stereotype architect' as someone who is dogmatic, with a strong belief in self and a conviction in their own design ideas which they consider to be 'right'. He contrasts the stereotype with his self as a 'wishy-washy' architect, with attributes of being 'influenced more easily by others'. This discursive device creates distance between his self and his professional group. This self-positioning of self contradicts the 'professional arrogance' which he struggled to accept as part of his training under the Director of Architectural Services. His current service area is more in line with his notions of professionalism and, therefore, with his professional-identity and self-identity constructions

> it was the opposite of that, as you move through to Property Services, that you realise that sometimes it doesn't matter if you don't quite know what you want, it doesn't lessen you as a professional

Norman contrasts the approach and effect of working for this Director with the 'opposite' experiences of working in a different service area where not 'know[ing] doesn't lessen you as a professional'. Norman no longer feels the need to be strong, in the sense of assuming a 'professional arrogance'. It is only now that he is able to practice as an architect in the way he conceives of what it means to be professional.

Barbara's recollection of the meeting at which the Chief Executive had been 'stitched up' was triggered by the attendance of a particular 'strong-minded person', AB. She described two incidents 'around AB that stick in my mind' with the selected personal predicament being one of them. She sets the context of the meeting

> AB always strikes me in this, in this situation even though he was one of many... AB was there, Chief Execs from local authorities were there, top politicians from local authorities were there.

She describes AB as

> *he's a very strong-minded umm person who has very fixed views* and **is actually quite terrifying** to be honest

Barbara deliberately positions AB with certain qualities, such as 'strong-minded' and 'very fixed views'. She implies the effect these have on her self, suggesting that her forced self-positioning in relation to him is to be terrified. Her account culminates in a description of his abusive behaviour towards the 'stitched up' Chief Exec

> AB struck me, was very abusive, unnecessarily abusive, *he used language that was uncalled for* and nobody stopped him, nobody would dare stop him, you know *he was just out of control* I thought, I thought *he was bang out of order*, and I thought the Chief Exec quite rightly said you know umm I've took offence at that and I thought well anybody would take offence at that and AB said I couldn't care less... couldn't care less

Highlighting the shortcomings of others (Allsop and Mulcahy, 1998) can be used as a discursive strategy in the defence of one's own position and therefore might be a tactic that Barbara is using to justify why she did not support the 'lonely Chief Exec' during the meeting. Barbara articulates AB's shortcomings, including that he is 'very strong-minded', with 'very fixed views', 'quite terrifying', 'very abusive, unnecessarily abusive', 'just out of order', 'bang out of order'. In each case Barbara qualifies the description, for instance with the use of the adjective 'very', 'unnecessarily' to give discursive effect to her deliberate positioning of him and the indirect impact of his behaviour on her.

In addition to the way that AB insulted the Chief Exec, at different points in the account, Barbara describes the personal insults she experienced from AB and the other male attendees at the meeting

> they didn't want to know who I was and of course AB was sat next to me, AB who didn't even turn to acknowledge us... not even wanting to know who you were, didn't even know me, didn't even want to know who I was, you know **I was one of two women and that was, that was all they needed to know**

'Us' in the context of the first part of the extract could refer to Barbara and the other woman but might also be a way of deflecting the full force of the insult by not attributing it directly to herself. According to Barbara, as far as the men were concerned, she was 'one of two women'. They had, therefore, forcibly positioned her by her gender. She implies that this positioning didn't even deserve being addressed by her name – 'they didn't want to know who I was'. Therefore, a significant self-identity detail (Gabriel, 2000) had been obliterated. This insult, and injury to her self-identity, seems to have affected her as she contrasts the way the attendees treated her with how they might have behaved towards her male Chief Executive, for whom she was deputising

> I think at least [he] would have been given some eye contact or they would have wanted to know who he was, pphh (blowing out sound) (voice drops) they didn't want to know who I was

Barbara had partly made sense of the meeting incident and her lack of support for the 'lonely Chief Exec' from a gender perspective and had discussed her views on this with her Chief Executive. She admitted, however, that her Chief Executive did not share her view

> my Chief Exec said he didn't think it was a gender issue, he thinks that many men would have felt the same way which is fair enough, he thinks I pin too much on gender which I think I perhaps do

In this series of extracts, Barbara draws on a gender discourse in describing AB's, and others', behaviour and its effect on the latitude of relational identity she perceived in positioning her self in relation to the other male attendees. She expresses how she felt ignored by the male attendees, to the extent of them not wanting to know who she was. Attending this meeting had a powerful emotional effect on Barbara, which she discussed with her mentor. Tracy also recognises the emotional effect of her personal predicament – the service review.

6.3.3 'Taking on' neutral social-identities

Tracy acknowledges her emotional and biased positioning when working, with other senior manager colleagues, on the strategic service review:

> *I find it very hard to disengage myself from the service I manage* and the contribution I think they make to young people and the service they provide

> for this Council in terms of a sort of like cold black and white analysis of well if we got rid of this because *I feel I so strongly and passionately about what they provide and what they do...*

The expression 'disengage' highlights the tension in separating her self from the service in order to conduct the 'cold black and white analysis'. Describing the review also as 'cold', implying unfeeling, contrasts with how 'strongly and passionately' she feels connected to the professional service she manages. In their study of teachers and managers within the same organisation, Coupland *et al.* (2008) found that the managers tended to position themselves as dispassionate, whereas the teachers articulated their emotions. In some situations, the teachers constructed themselves as 'passionate experiencers of emotion' (Coupland *et al.*, 2008, p.342) in order to distinguish their selves from the others, in that case of managers and administrators. In this situation, Tracy is both manager and professional and her struggle to disengage her professional self, a significant element of self-identity, from her managerial self triggers an attempt to repair her self-identity, by deliberately positioning self and others as

> ***we're the outsiders, we're the onlookers***, you know *we're the consultants...* we have to imagine ourselves as consultants who've been asked to come to a neighbouring authority because we have [specialist professional] experience and say what their [specialist service provision] might look like... <u>I appreciate the need to be strategic</u> and to... *stand out of side of something* <u>and reflect on something being fit for purpose</u>, and *to stand out of that emotional connection with people*

The duties of the managerial self, to 'be strategic' and to 'reflect on something being fit for purpose', are in tension with aspects of her relational identity, her 'emotional connection with people', which is an important element of her professional and managerial selves. Drawing on the emotionally-neutral social-identities, of 'the outsiders', 'the onlookers' and 'the consultants', also seems to be an attempt to repair the inconsistencies by separating out her managerial and professional selves.

John expresses feeling 'unfairly castigated as the bad guy' as a result of the introduction of changes to funding for learning. He concludes his account of the personal predicament with one final restatement of the forced-positioning of self by others, 'so I am seen as that', and explains how he would like the situation to be different

> **I feel in some ways unfairly castigated as the bad guy** in this... **I am seen as the chap whose Service is the one who is imposing all the paperwork... so I am seen as that** and at times it just seems isolating you know you just feel in some ways it shouldn't be (John gives his first and second name) that's doing this, it should be the [Service name] in the name of the Council, that's the difference

John's use of the moral expressions 'shouldn't' and 'should', initially to deflect his personal level of duty and obligation, and then to emphasise the collective responsibility of the Council, heightens the injustice of feeling 'unfairly castigated'. Also by referring to self as 'you just feel' John is employing another strategy, of trying to lessen the extent of his personal responsibility and connection with the situation. He seems keen to emphasise that his actions are, and should be seen by others as being, in direct alignment with the interests and the name of the Council. John's sense-making and articulation of this 'difference' seems also to be a means of repairing his self-identity.

This section has considered issues relating to relational identity positioning. However, as illustrated by John and Tracy's personal predicaments, positionings are constructed in relation also to perceived and socially-constructed social context obligations. The next section focuses on issues relating to the latter.

6.4 Social context obligations

The accounts presented in this section illustrate the rights, duties and obligations within the social context, as constructed by the participants. To aid interpretation by the reader, the indexing used in the previous section is retained, that is *deliberate positioning of self or other(s)* in italics, and **forced positioning of self or other(s)** in bold and perceived rights, duties and obligations in the social setting shown as underlined text.

This section includes accounts relating to: doing the 'right thing' and 'doing it right'; sacrificing significant elements of self-identity for the sake of the organisation; positioning of self and others as victim; judging the moral standing of self in relation to others; standing up for one's rights; experiencing self-identity tensions in relation to one's 'natural' style of working; and having no choice.

6.4.1 Doing the 'right thing' and 'doing it right'

Nina explains why she challenged her peer over the decision which she felt had been made 'over her head'

> I did challenge the person... I wanted to make the right decision... we made the right decision, not in terms of both having to win but for that situation... right for the service... I didn't want to make this quick fix decision I wanted a proper discussion about the situation and to look at some options and to... make the right decision... we were actually both right in the end... we both were right which is good, we were both right about different aspects of this situation

Nina repeats the word 'right' both in terms of making the right decision and in being proven to be right. As well as the counter to the 'gender thing', discussed in Section 6.4.5 below, which Nina stated had triggered her challenge, she also challenges because her principles and values about what is 'right for the service' and her right to 'make the right decision' were at stake.

Norman compares and contrasts the approach taken by his former Director in another part of the organisation with the approach taken in his current service area. The contrasting experiences help him to define what achieving 'the right result' and 'in the right way' means to him as a professional

> as you move through to Property Services... you realise that sometimes it doesn't matter if you don't quite know what you want, it doesn't lessen you as a professional because part of that professionalism is accepting that but being able to channel it in the right way so that everybody ends up with the right result

Both Nina and Norman share a concern respectively for the 'right decision' and the 'right result in relation to professional service. As well as concerns about doing the right things, some participants expressed concerns about 'doing it right'. Different perspectives on 'doing it right' – procedurally, professionally and morally – featured in the participants' accounts.

A source of **Felicity's** vulnerability in managing the staff member's long-term sickness and potential dismissal was her uncertainty about whether she was 'doing it right'. She refers to this towards the beginning of the account when discussing the steps she is taking

> on the kind of by the book side then it's been making sure that the review process through HR, through the medical system, that everything's filed in order... there is a file now accruing cos I know that's what we're heading for and just making sure that that's in order and I've had... long conversations with the person in HR so that I know that I'm doing it right

Towards the end of the account she reiterates her concerns about 'doing it right'

> am I doing it the right way cos there's a by the book... have I got it right? Is this the way the Council operates?

A concern for 'doing it right' is apparent in **Edward's** account of the incidents relating to a client's suicide. The suicide happened 'not long after' Edward joined the organisation and he was responsible for making an internal investigation following a complaint made by the client's brother. Edward explains that

> my sense of professionally what was right and wrong was not reflected by the actual practice in the organisation... how the thing first came to my attention was that the brother of the guy rang up to make a complaint, and I immediately thought "fucking hell" you know in truth, we're incredibly exposed here this has been mishandled

As if in stark contrast to the way in which the situation had been mishandled prior to him joining the organisation, Edward conducted a very thorough internal investigation. This might have been an attempt at restoring his professional credibility. He was prepared to do this, even if that meant adding to his feelings of vulnerability through further 'exposing' himself and his organisation. He explains

> I felt that, to a certain sense, we had done things wrong, now I have to say that, by tackling it in the way we did [in the investigation], that it was the best way, because when things like that go wrong what people want you to say "I am sorry, we screwed up, we did this wrong", you know, "we should have done it differently"... I think it's very important to tackle these things as openly as you can, even if it means exposing yourself

Unlike Felicity's concern for procedural rightness, and Edward's concern for what is professionally right, **Barbara** was concerned about the moral rightness of the way in which 'this Chief Exec' was being treated at the meeting

> I really want to support this Chief Exec cos what we're doing is so wrong but I can't do it... he was just desperate for somebody else to help him you know it was just like this "help!" and that's where I felt really bad cos what they were doing was wrong

In this extract Barbara switches from we – 'what we're doing is so wrong' – which assumes some responsibility for the Chief Executive's treatment, to 'they' – 'what they were doing was wrong'. She seems to employ this discursive strategy to create distance between her self and the actions of the others. Barbara repeats the word 'wrong' and also articulates how 'bad' she felt about not supporting the Chief Executive. At a later point in the account, she reflected on how the behaviour of some attendees was not in accordance with the principles by which she conducts herself and her organisation

> The principles around the way I operate are around honesty and transparency and fairness and being straight with people, they mean a lot to me and that's part of the success of the organisation... *and politicians and some of those officers are not straight people*, they're very much out to look after themselves, *they're not entirely honest*... so **I can't always be what I want to be with them...** I wanted to say "stop, this is not right, you can't do this, it's just not fair, it's not the way to run a business" but they couldn't give a toss the politicians

In this extract of the account of the predicament, and probably at the time it was happening, Barbara seems conscious of the discrepancy between her personal and professional principles – 'they mean a lot to me and I think that's part of the success of the organisation' – and her decision not support the Chief Executive. Barbara may be feeling that she acted hypocritically (Brown and Jones, 2000) and, therefore, feels the need to justify her decision and to repair the inconsistency in her self-identity. In reflecting on becoming manager, Parker acknowledges that "hypocrisy, or at least unease, is part of my life now in ways that I find difficult to ignore" (Parker, 2004, p.49). Barbara is uneasy about the way the Chief Executive has been treated and may feel that she has behaved hypocritically in not supporting him. Brown and Jones (2000, p.666) suggest that "hypocrisy always engenders cognitive dissonance because it threatens the unity of the individual's sense of self". This thesis does not support their view about cognitive dissonance or the "unified sense of self" (Brown and Jones, 2000, p.679). However, Barbara does seem to employ a self-identity repair strategy of scapegoating (Brown and Jones, 2000; Beech and Beech, 2003) by deflecting any personal blame towards others. She places the blame on the 'politicians and some of those officers' who are 'not entirely honest' and who are 'not straight people'. As these characteristics are in stark contrast to her own principles and usual behaviours, she 'can't always be what I want to be with them'. In other words, she sees this as a constraint on the expression of her self-identity. The final statement of 'they couldn't give a toss the politicians' suggests the futility of any

attempt she might make to stop the situation. Related to this evaluation of the moral standing of the politicians and some of the officers, she provides further justification for her lack of support which is explored in the next section.

6.4.2 Sacrificing significant elements of self-identity for the sake of the organisation

In giving her account of not supporting the Chief Executive, **Barbara** describes the implications of positioning her self as his 'ally'

> the Chief Exec, the lonely Chief Exec who'd been stitched up was desperately trying to get allies, and... I want to support this poor Chief Exec, this lonely Chief Exec who is desperate for an ally but if I do support him it means that *I'm immediately putting myself at odds with* the other four local authorities who are here who I need to work with... I can't afford to fall out with any of them

She justifies (Schlenker, 1980) that, although she wants to support the Chief Executive, she feels constrained in doing so because to deliberately position her self as an 'ally' would, in Barbara's words, 'put myself at odds with' the others. Barbara seems willing to sacrifice the obligations she feels towards the one Chief Executive for the sake of her relationship with the others – 'I can't afford to fall out with any of them'. She picks up on this positioning of self as 'ally' at a later point in the account, when she makes explicit its implications for her

> I'm sat there thinking if I actually support this one Chief Exec against those four, we can afford to lose work in that one local authority area, we probably won't because the Chief Exec, cos nobody's going to support this Chief Exec so I don't think any of us would have been damaged, but if I supported him those other four would clock it straightaway and **they would immediately assume that I was allied to him** and it could have damaged our growth potential in some of those areas and it's not beyond them to do that

In this extract Barbara seems to contradict herself by saying 'I don't think any of us would have been damaged' by supporting the Chief Executive. Again, the repetition of 'if I support this one Chief Exec' suggests that she is wrestling with "what do I stand for?" (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003, p.1164). However, it is the likelihood of greater damage by the other four authorities to 'our growth potential' that seems to hold her back from positioning her self as 'ally' to the Chief Executive. In conclusion she reflects that

> I felt as if I'd let down this Chief Exec who was crying out for help, I felt as if I'd completely abandoned my principles, I knew why I'd done it and to be honest put in the same position again I would probably do the same again, I'd put the organisation first again

In stating that she had 'let down this Chief Exec', she is conscious that she did not fulfil her perceived obligation towards him. She is also aware that she had 'completely abandoned her principles'. However, despite both these "moral standings" (Harré, 1998 p.62), she would probably 'put the organisation first again'. Barbara has constructed her own understandings of the personal predicament – 'I knew why I'd done it'. It could be that she feels that her duty to the organisation is greater than both her obligation to the Chief Executive and her own moral principles. However, both her principles and her commitment to the organisation are significant elements of her self-identity.

> an important part of the organisation's future is about its growth, if we don't grow we're not going to survive and *I feel very passionate about that* and *I feel very emotionally tied to that*, to the organisation in that respect and I want to make it successful *but I'm reliant on all of these people that were around the table* to enable us to grow because if a local authority doesn't want you to grow in their area you won't grow and that's our heartland and that's where we have the majority of the work

Therefore, she has another reason for 'put[ting] the organisation first'. She is 'very emotionally tied' to the organisation's growth and, therefore, a central part of her self-identity is bound up with its success. In Casey's (2008) study of social housing managers, Barbara might be categorised as a "pro-activist" (Casey, 2008, p.773), a manager who presents her self as forward looking and ambitious and, therefore, relatively powerful within her organisational context. 'Put[ting] the organisation first' may be both a means of asserting an important part of her self-identity, and of reconstructing her managerial positioning as powerful in contrast to the powerlessness she feels in the meeting. The complexity of self-identity tensions for Barbara is very clear from these extracts. Irrespective of her obligations to, and future relationships with, the Chief Exec, and other Chief Execs, she was prepared in that personal predicament, and probably would be in the future, to sacrifice her principles, and hence a significant element of her self-identity, for the sake of the organisation, another significant but conflicting element of her self-identity.

Barbara described the way 'this one Chief Exec' was 'stitched up' before and during the meeting. The notion of a conspiracy features in **Edward**'s account, in the second interview, of his appearance at the Coroner's Inquest

> it became fixed in the mind of the Coroner that that [notice seeking repossession] was... what had caused the guy to go and commit suicide, actually... the notice seeking repossession was kind of incidental actually to the whole process, but it was convenient for everyone, you then had everybody conspiring together to go (slaps table) sound we've found **somebody that we can pin it on**, everybody's happy, the family have got somebody to blame, we can all go home, so that's the way it panned out

Towards the end of the account of his appearance at the Coroner's Inquest, Edward suggests he has made the ultimate public sacrifice

> **I'd been put in a position where I'd been nailed up, I'd been crucified**

Although no actual punishment has been meted out to Edward, he conveys, through his use of evocative language, a strong sense of having been punished, personally and organisationally. Gabriel (2000, p.69) suggests that in tragic stories, punishment may not restore justice but instead might "reinforce injustice by being entirely incommensurate with the magnitude of the offence". Edward had given his view that the repossession notice was 'kind of incidental actually to the whole process', and certainly not worthy of a metaphorical crucifixion.

6.4.3 Positioning of self or other as victim

A theme which runs through Barbara's and Edward's accounts is the positioning of self or other as 'victim'. Although **Barbara** does not position the Chief Executive directly as 'victim', the repetition of 'lonely' and use of the terms 'poor' and 'desperate for an ally' indicates her awareness of the way that the Chief Executive was being duped during the meeting. In **Edward**'s case, he seems to feel that he has been tricked by the other statutory agencies and exploited by the Coroner. The positioning of self as victim might be an "identity performance" (Coupland *et al.*, 2008, p.343), and a discursive strategy designed to emphasise the adverse effect of the incident on the individual's self-identity. Gabriel argues that the casting, within a story, of the villain, victim or hero is determined by the "attribution of blame and credit" (Gabriel, 2000, p.38). This assigning of moral responsibility, and

determination of right and wrong, has been considered above. However, the next section expands on this, particularly in relation to Edward's attribution of blame.

6.4.4 Judging the moral standing of self in relation to others

Edward gives his views, during his account of the personal predicament in the first interview, on the other professions, the nurses and the social workers, who were involved in the client's case

> the nurses and the social workers, who were involved in the guy's case, who also had a case to answer, they were more than happy to pile the shit onto us in terms of 'oh Christ, thank God, somebody else is going to take the rap for this'

His relationships with the other statutory agencies, in this particular case the nurses and social workers, were difficult as they did not take responsibility for their part in the situation. Even though they 'had a case to answer they were more than happy' to let somebody else 'take the wrap' for this situation. Edward seems aggrieved because, by not accepting their part of the responsibility, the outcome at the Coroner's Inquest was that he and his organisation assumed full responsibility.

In the second interview he refers to the 'low profile' which the statutory agencies kept during the Coroner's Inquest, and implies that they also had been complicit in the conspiracy

> it was the statutory agencies that had mishandled it, actually our part had been fairly peripheral... they kept a very low profile and they did adopt the position that statutory agencies usually do which is to say "there's no way we were going to accept any blame for anything, no way, we're not going to hold up our hands for anything" and so I think for them it was "oh brilliant, fantastic, **we've found the fall guy here**"

In this extract, Edward feels as if he has been made a scapegoat for the statutory agencies. Beech and Beech (2003, p.5) draw on the work of Douglas in discussing how victim identities such as fall guys are created through scapegoating. Brown and Jones (2000, p.667) cite the work of Bonazzi in explaining how scapegoats are intentionally positioned by others in order to "hide", "distract", "avoid" and "deny" responsibility. The 'very low profile' and the failure of the statutory agencies to admit any form of liability or obligation when, according to Edward, they 'had a case to answer' may have made the projection of blame, as 'the fall guy', all the more

difficult to take. Edward had used the same metaphorical expression of 'holding one's hands up' to describe how his organisation had 'acknowledged all the things that had gone wrong' in the report of the internal organisational investigation which he had conducted. The symbolism of signifying surrender, justly in the case of the internal investigation, is contrasted with the injustice of the failure to surrender by the statutory agencies.

Although **Tracy** does not blame another professional group, she does allude to the moral responsibility of her own professional group in comparison to an allied profession, psychologists

> if you ask the psychologists' view of something you could wait six months for a psychological assessment because they'll do it when this slot in their diary is available, whereas I'll say to my staff the Authority needs this child to be seen and can you get in next week and <u>they'll do it</u>

In this extract she seems particularly critical of the psychologists' timeliness of response, that is of duty, compared with her own staff's response within a week of a request for a professional assessment. The effect of the account is to imply that the other professional group is not to be trusted, and also to enhance the value and esteem of her staff, and indirectly herself as a member of that professional group.

Although in a later part of the account she does not refer directly to the psychologists, she is still making comparisons between her own professional group, 'the group of people over there', and 'another group of people' who are inferred to be the psychologists. The provision of both groups is potentially under threat as part of a strategic review of service provision. Tracy compares the commitment to duty and service provision and obligation to service users of the staff within the professional group she manages compared with that of the other, 'another group of people'

> we should have mugs tattooed on our heads because <u>we are so committed to the children and we would go above and beyond and in addition and more than</u> and yet you can have another group of people who see themselves as a service to children and it doesn't feel like it, <u>it doesn't feel like the passion is there, it doesn't feel like the care is there</u>

The repetition of the terms used to express the standards of service from her staff, 'so committed', 'go above and beyond and in addition and more than', emphasises

the duty of care Tracy believes they provide. Tracy refers to 'another group of people' as 'seeing themselves as a service to children' which implies that she does not share their professional assessment of themselves. Use of the slang word 'mug' implies that, because her staff are showing such commitment to their service users, they are being a made a fool of in comparison to the other – 'another group of people'. In the strategic review, their current relational status of 'mug', implying somebody regarded as unintelligent or easily deceived, could be extended to an easy target for, or victim of, the changes to service provision and structure.

6.4.5 Standing up for one's rights

Nina describes how she challenged the decision 'made over her head' on the basis of her right not to be subjected to the negative emotions generated as a result of her peer's actions

> I got very angry about that situation and **it took me back to** (slight laughter) well I think **when I first started out in my first professional post** feeling that anger disappointment frustration umm like (slight sigh in voice) I couldn't find a way out and I was thinking then (very low voice) I started thinking just a minute (slight laughter) I didn't get to here to feel like this, this is not, and you know it was, it would have been easier just to let the situation carry on but I refused to do that umm and I did, I did challenge the person and I think again I don't think it was, when I questioned the person I do not think it was anything to do with **that person feeling that they were more senior than me** at all

It is not clear from the expression 'to here', which Nina emphasised, whether she is reflecting on her current position in the organisational hierarchy or the stage in her career. However, the incident does seem to have forcibly re-positioned her self back in time to when she 'first started out in [her] first professional post'. The repetition of 'first' emphasises the time and career difference as well as the attendant feelings at the time, which she expresses as 'anger disappointment frustration'. In the first interview she described her first job as a 'baptism of fire', implying a painful experience, and this incident may have triggered feelings associated with that time. Nina states that she did not think that her peer's actions had resulted from his feeling 'more senior' than her. However, her drawing attention to their relative status suggests that she might have perceived her self as forcibly positioned by him as 'inferior', which links back to the way she described the decision as being made 'over her head'.

At the beginning of the account, Nina said

> I'd never questioned that anyone would question the equality of our roles in terms of being decision makers

She then went on to explain that, in her view, 'the gender thing always comes into it' and that this was one of the factors that caused her to react in the way that she did

> and I think probably that's the bit that triggered this whole thing off I felt that if I'd been another, a male colleague... there was no way this person would have gone ahead and made that decision... if I'd have been a male worker, I do not believe that that would have happened in the first place...

Although, as previously discussed, Nina was concerned about making 'the right decision... for the service', she explains that she reacted in the way she did because of her belief that her gender had been a contributory factor in the way the decision had been made.

Nina's view about 'the gender thing' is shared by **Barbara** who talks about "gender issues"

> I do think there are gender issues when you get at the level that I'm at

Through the expression 'I do think', Barbara had rationalised the meeting incident from a gender perspective and drew on a discourse of gender in explaining why she didn't support the Chief Exec

> I really want to support this Chief Exec cos what we're doing is so wrong but I can't do it, *I feel anyway completely out of it because I'm a woman* and because **there is so much power around this table** it's just and I mean **they would just eat me up**, you know I would have a go at it but **they would just gobble me up and spit me out**, I know they would

In this extract, Barbara draws on a fairytale genre of storytelling in constructing the gendered and power-based constraints on her relational identity positioning. She positions her self as 'completely out of it because I'm a woman'. The repeated and generic expression 'they' refers to the men with 'so much power' who, like a monster, 'would just eat me up... gobble me up and spit me out'.

In both Nina's and Barbara's cases, they perceived their relational identity positioning and rights as a 'woman' had been challenged by others. **Wendy** also expresses a right but, in her case, it is for a manager to deal with poor performance issues. However, she seems to be wrestling with the managerial duties, as set out in HR policies, and her own style of dealing with staff

> I have this idea where we raise employees' expectations about things to do with bullying and harassment... we raise everybody's awareness of these issues and I think that's quite right... we raise these issues and it becomes common language... you have all of this HR and they come out with all of these policies on the way you should treat people and all of that sort of thing, but you have the difficult individuals whose performance is below par... it's how to handle that... *I do fly off the handle at the lads*, at the moment, in the QS section but they know me and we get on so well... but there could be other individuals that I react that way to and then suddenly **I'm accused of bullying them**, and I just think the higher up the organisation you go the more vulnerable you are in that role... I'm not going to back off from poor performance... cos I think, as a manager, you're quite entitled to tell somebody that you have an issue with their performance

Wendy has developed a theory, 'I have this idea', about bullying and harassment. Although she states that it's 'quite right' that employees' expectations, and implicitly therefore rights, about these issues have been raised, Wendy seems to imply that these have been raised too far or that staff will take them too far. For instance, the repetition of 'all of this' and 'all of these' seems to suggest Wendy has a pejorative view of HR and of 'these policies on the way you should treat people'. The repeated 'all' also seems to convey the comprehensiveness of the constraints on managers. She seems to repudiate the 'common language' which has come about by raising issues of bullying and harassment, implying that this can be used to attack the vulnerable positions that managers 'higher up in the organisation' find themselves in when they deal with poor performance issues. Although she seems to regard as constraining HR and its policies 'on the way you should treat people and all of that sort of thing', she asserts that she will not 'back off from poor performance'. She reinforces her right, as a manager, by stating 'you're quite entitled to tell somebody that you have an issue with their performance'. In this context, 'quite' seems to add emphasis to the entitlement and, therefore, right. This would seem to be reasonable as managers are accountable for the performance of those they manage, and therefore have a duty to their organisation in this respect. The central self-identity issue then for Wendy seems to focus on how she deals with poor performers and this is explored in the next section.

6.4.6 Experiencing self-identity tensions in relation to one's 'natural' style of working

Wendy elaborates on the challenges she faces in 'how to handle' poor performers

> it's how to handle that, (hesitation) because *I can fly off the handle at people*, I can do, *I get frustrated if I feel somebody is not pulling their weight* and *I can be abrupt and I can tell them exactly what I think*, and... I feel as though that might be my next sort of vulnerable side, knowing how to handle that, to perhaps take that step back, think about how I'm going to approach it, because *I do fly off the handle at the lads*, at the moment, in the QS section but they know me and we get on so well

Wendy feels the need to protect herself in the new social context of raised employee expectations and because 'the higher up the organisation you go the more vulnerable you are in that role'. The policies which set out how 'you should treat people' will stop Wendy from being her self in 'fly[ing] of the handle at people'. 'At the moment', she is not 'vulnerable' because the QS section know her and they accept or tolerate her managerial style. However, if she flies off the handle at others she now manages, they may view her behaviour as bullying. Her managerial style may be such a significant element of her self-identity that she is unwilling, or finds it very difficult, to modify her behaviour. Embellishing the social context, by drawing on how the HR policies are impacting on her managerial rights and duties, might be a discursive strategy for avoiding, or coming to terms with, the significant self-identity work, in adapting her managerial style, that she consciously recognises she needs to do.

Gagnon (2008, p.384) refines Collinson's (2003) notion of conformist selves by identifying, from her empirical research, two types of conforming practice: 'work-on-self' and 'enacting required self'. Gagnon (2008) considers that 'work-on-self' is a profound type of identity work, involving introspection as well as undertaking new practices with the intention of changing one's self in order to comply with a required identity. The other type of identity work, 'enacting required self', is more superficial, and involves displaying conformity through outward expressions and actions without necessarily bringing about more fundamental movement or change to self-identity. On the one hand, by expressing cynicism about the extent to which 'all of this HR' and 'all of these policies' have raised employee expectations about the way that managers should treat people, Wendy seems to be trying to present a resistant self

(Collinson, 2003). However, she also recognises that her personal predicament is 'how to handle that'. 'Flying off the handle' is such a routine way of behaving and a key part of her managerial identity. To comply with the policies and to conform to the required organisational managerial identity of someone who is in control of their emotional out-bursts (Watson and Harris, 1999; Coupland *et al.,* 2008), Wendy will need to engage in profound "work-on-self" (Gagnon, 2008). In her attempts to resist, Wendy presents the counter-discourse of 'as a manager, you're quite entitled to tell somebody that you have an issue with their performance'. In addition to the HR policies constructing "the local moral order" (Harré, 1998, p.58), the social context obligations regarding the appropriateness for managers of "articulations of emotionality" (Coupland *et al.*, 2008, p.327), in the form of 'fly off the handle' emotional outbursts, present a further challenge for Wendy. The need to change her ways of behaving, and hence to do work on her managerial and self-identity, is triggered by her acknowledgement that 'there could be other people I react that [way] to and then suddenly I'm accused of bullying them'.

John is experiencing difficulties in undertaking a forced self-positioning 'role' and managerial duty resulting from the funding policy changes

> it's quite a difficult one, I think because I'm not naturally that kind, *I'm not naturally an auditor accountant type of person*... **it's cast me into that role of being the guardian or the watchdog of the money**... and that's a bit of a difficult role... *what I like to do is to come up with new things* and to delight and excite everybody you know, so it's not natural, **it's not a natural role for me to be in** but there again <u>I think there's no choice, so I've got to do it</u>

John's repetition of 'naturally' and 'natural' indicate the strong inconsistency between the forced positioning relating to the duties of the role, as 'the guardian or the watchdog of the money', and his own self-positioning and narrative self-identity. John draws on discourses of psychology and personality in trying to make sense of the 'type of person' he 'is' and 'isn't'. Rather than 'being' an 'auditor accountant type of person', John likes to 'come up with new things' and in the process to 'delight and excite everybody'. It is this activity which gives him pleasure and, it could be argued, raises his self-esteem. This narrative self-identity is more consistent with the first interview discussion of himself as someone who feels 'more comfortable around entrepreneurs than I do around little p inverted commas professionals' and who has 'this very, you know, entrepreneurial, can-do approach'. John does not want to submit his natural self to the 'role of being the guardian or the watchdog of the

money' but 'there's no choice, so I've got to do it'. This theme of 'having no choice' is discussed in the next section.

6.4.7 Having no choice

A number of the participants seemed to believe that they could not influence the outcome of the personal predicaments and therefore, it seems, did not act, or chose not to act, agentially. In contrast to his normal level of autonomy, 'I've got an awful lot of autonomy because I like to work independently and I like to have that capacity to make decisions and make things happen', **John** explicitly expresses his thoughts that 'there's no choice' in assuming the 'role' in which others have 'cast' him.

> **it's cast me into that role of being the guardian or the watchdog of the money** you know and... that's a bit of a difficult role... **it's not a natural role for me to be in** but there again <u>I think there's no choice</u>, <u>so I've got to do it</u>

John draws on a "narrative of inevitability" (Brown and Jones, 1998) in the way he says 'so I've got to do it'. Through the phrase 'I don't see a way round it', **Felicity** draws similarly on a narrative of inevitability

> no I don't want to be the baddy in that one <u>but actually I don't see a way round it</u>

Wendy seems to perceive as inevitable her being 'next on the horizon for bullying' because of her position

> suddenly **<u>I'm accused of bullying them</u>** and I think I'm going to be the next on the horizon for bullying because... I just think that the higher up the organisation you go the more vulnerable you are in that role

'Suddenly' implies without warning and without the opportunity for Wendy to prepare herself. This is clearly not the case as she is already aware of the possibility of her being accused of bullying. Whilst it would seem that Wendy does have a choice in this situation, she may be questioning whether she believes she can change her behaviour. The challenge for her, for instance in knowing how, and being able, to modify her style and to control her reactions of 'flying off the handle', was discussed above. 'Suddenly' might also explain the unpredictable way that 'others', that is those who do not know Wendy well, react to her behaviour. Some might tolerate such behaviour and others might not, resulting in them making an accusation of

bullying against her. As observed by one of the doctors dealing with complaints made against them, in Allsop and Mulcahy's (1998) study, "they have done the damage as soon as they make the complaint" (Allsop and Mulcahy, 1998, p.810). Similarly Wendy may feel that the damage to her self-identity will be done if and when she receives a complaint against her.

Barbara points to a number of reasons for her inaction in the meeting. One factor relates to her perceived position of powerlessness in relation to the 'so power mad and so power driven' men at the meeting. This positioning seems to have made her resign herself, during the meeting, to the ineffectiveness of any action she might take

> I was completely torn between my loyalties to the organisation and my own integrity and I sat there at that meeting and I thought even if actually I had something to offer this meeting, I don't think any of these men around this table would give me, would give me any time, they just didn't want to, they were just so full of themselves and so power mad and so power driven that... **I would have just been swept alongside** and I thought well what is the point of that meeting?

In the next extract, Barbara expresses again the futility of any action on her part or from 'this little Chief Exec' – 'we wouldn't have stood a chance'. However she introduces another factor, the way in which her action could damage her organisation, in her explanation of the social context constraints on her

> I need to work with all of these local authorities, that's what we do, I can't afford to fall out with any of them, I can't afford to put my own principles on the line because the organisation could struggle, could suffer as a result of it... I really want to support this Chief Exec cos what we're doing is so wrong but I can't do it... If I could have... got rid of the damage it would have done to the organisation and I could have just concentrated on what I thought was right, it would have made no difference whatsoever because it would have been me and this little Chief Exec and **we wouldn't have stood a chance**

Although Barbara says and does nothing in the meeting, she may feel as if she has 'acted' in defence of her organisation by not causing damage to its future growth. **Edward** seems to be conscious of the need to defend his organisation

> I then went up to be interviewed by the Coroner and I'd just decided **there's no point trying to adopt a defensive position** here, so there was one part of me thought that I need to defend the organisation, there's another part of me realised that **if I attempt to do I would be seen as defensive**...

The discursive assertion of 'having no choice', illustrated in this section, is related to self-positionings as 'villain' or 'victim'. Gabriel (2000) suggests that a storyteller may deny agency and thereby recast a possible villain self as victim. This seems to apply to **John** and **Felicity** who considered their self-positioning as 'villain' in the form, respectively, of 'the bad guy' and 'baddy'. John denied agency through the expression 'I think there's no choice, so I've got to do it', and Felicity stated 'but actually I don't see a way round it'. These discursive strategies both have the effect of repairing self-identity and engaging the empathy of the audience, in these cases me in listening to the accounts of the events. For others, the disempowered self-positioning of victim means that the individual's ability to exercise choice is perceived to be limited. The social context of **Edward**'s incident, taking place in a court, is formalised with recognised relational and cultural constraints. As a representative of his organisation, Edward may feel as if he is on trial and, according to van Langenhove and Harré (1999, p.28), "the ultimate defence in a trial is to position oneself as a person who lacks agency". They continue that the self-positioning of lacking agency renders "empty" (van Langenhove and Harré (1999, p.28) any other positionings that would imply responsibility on the part of the individual. This and other discursive identity work strategies are discussed further in the next chapter.

In concluding this section, a summary of relational identity positionings and social context obligations, as illustrated by the participants' accounts of personal predicaments, is given.

6.4.8 Summary of relational identity positionings and social context obligations illustrated in the accounts of personal predicaments

The self-identity tensions highlighted in the accounts of personal predicaments are complex and involve the dynamic interplay of relational identity positionings and social context rights, duties and obligations, as well as other relational and social context influences, such as the power effect of relations and discourses. Drawing on the account extracts presented in this chapter but, this time, presenting them in the sequence in which they appeared in the participants' accounts, Table 6.1 summarises the main self-identity tensions for each participant.

Although the table highlights the multi-faceted nature of self-identity tensions, it does not convey the dynamic nature of the self-identity positionings. The positionings 'taken up' deliberately or forcibly are multiple and dynamic, shifting in response to the latitude of relational identity and social context obligations as perceived and constructed by the individual and others, in-the-moment of the situation and relationship. The multiplicity and dynamic nature of self-identity positionings is explored in the next chapter. Before moving on to the further exploration and theorisation of these accounts of personal predicaments, this chapter ends by considering the implications for this research of the accounts presented.

6.5 Implications of data presented for this study

This section summarises the main theoretical and methodological implications and potential insights derived from the accounts presented in this chapter.

The personal predicaments relating to vulnerability, presented in this chapter, were selected for their perceived significance to the research participant. I judged the significance of the personal predicament in a number of ways, including from the participants' "articulations of emotionality" (Coupland *et al.*, 2008, p.327) relating to vulnerability. These expressions included: 'embarrassed' – Edward; 'exposed' – Edward; 'vulnerable' – Edward, John, Wendy; 'professionally completely discredited' – Edward; 'belittled and... made so foolish' – Edward; 'sick' – Edward, Barbara; 'as if I'd completely abandoned my principles' – Barbara; 'very angry' – Nina; 'sore' – Nina; 'not very sure' – Felicity; 'passionate' – Tracy; 'anxious' – Tracy; 'really chewed up' – Tracy; 'a bit concern[ed]... worried' – Norman. In addition to these articulations of vulnerability, which drew my attention and led me to select the accounts, the participants articulated other emotions in their accounts of the selected personal predicaments. These and the other illustrations of expressions of emotionality, drawn on by the participants in their accounting of and for the personal predicaments, support Lasky's (2005) view of the multifaceted and multidimensional nature of vulnerability. The multidimensional nature is further illustrated by the range of socio-relational contexts in which the selected personal predicaments take place.

Table 6.1 Illustrations of relational identity positionings and social context obligations in accounts of personal predicaments relating to vulnerability

Participant	Relational Identity positionings	Social Context obligations
Barbara	• 'feel[ing] completely out of it because I'm a woman' • 'they would just eat me up… gobble me up and spit me out' • 'I would have just been swept alongside' • being 'one of two women' • 'we wouldn't have stood a chance' • 'feel[ing] very passionate about [the organisation's growth] and… feel[ing] very emotionally tied to that' • 'being reliant on all of these people that were around the table to enable us to grow' • 'I can't always be what I want to be with them' • 'they would immediately assume that I was allied to him' • 'think[ing] I perhaps do… pin too much on gender'	• 'think[ing] there are gender issues when you get at the level that I'm at' • 'want[ing] to support this Chief Exec... but I can't do it' • not being able 'to put my own principles on the line because the organisation could struggle' • being 'completely torn between my loyalties to the organisation and my own integrity' • 'think[ing] [none] of these men around this table would give me… any time' • 'wanting to say "stop, this is not right, you can't do this, it's just not fair"' • 'need[ing] to work with… the other four local authorities' • 'feel[ing] as if I'd let down this Chief Exec' • 'feel[ing] as if I'd completely abandoned my principles' • 'put[ting] the organisation first'
Edward	• being 'made to feel… about an inch high' by the judge • 'decid[ing] there's no point trying to adopt a defensive position' • 'realis[ing] that if I attempt to do I would be seen as defensive' • feeling 'in an incredibly exposed position' • being 'somebody that we can pin it on' • being 'the fall guy' • feel[ing] 'professionally completely discredited… because I'd been so belittled and been made so foolish' • being 'put in a position where I'd been nailed up, I'd been crucified'	• 'the nurses and the social workers… who also had a case to answer [did not] accept any blame for anything' • feeling 'in an incredibly vulnerable position… as somebody that was responsible for this' • feeling that 'we had done things wrong' and 'think[ing] that it's very important to tackle these things as openly as you can' • feeling shocked 'that no effort had been made to contact the family' • thinking 'I need to defend the organisation' • 'ha[ving] to stand there and take it'
Felicity	• 'think[ing] ultimately I might be facing dismissal' • not wanting to 'upset that… feel-good feeling' within her team • not wanting 'to be the baddy'	• 'know[ing] that I'm doing it right' • not 'see[ing] a way round it'

Table 6.1 Illustrations of relational identity positionings and social context obligations in accounts of personal predicaments relating to vulnerability (continued)

Participant	Relational Identity positionings	Social Context obligations
John	• ' lik[ing]… to come up with new things' • being 'up against people who in the Council hierarchy are higher than me' • 'coming across as the bad guy' • 'feel[ing]… unfairly castigated as the bad guy' • being 'seen as the chap whose service is… imposing all the paperwork' • being 'cast… into that role of being the guardian or the watchdog of the money' • 'not [being] naturally an auditor accountant type of person'	• 'protecting the Council's interests' [of financial probity] • 'feel[ing] it shouldn't be (John gives his first and second name) that's doing this, it should be the [Service name] in the name of the Council' • 'think[ing] there's no choice, so I've got to do it'
Nina	• being taken 'back to when I first started out in my first professional post' • 'not think[ing] it was anything to do with that person feeling that they were more senior than me'	• 'thinking just a minute I didn't get to here to feel like this' • 'refus[ing]... to let the situation carry on' • 'want[ing] to make the right decision' • feeling that 'if I'd have been a male worker, I do not believe that that would have happened in the first place'
Norman	previously feeling 'I've got to be strong here' and 'in control'	• 'being able to channel [not quite knowing] in the right way so that everybody ends up with the right result'
Tracy	• 'find[ing] it hard to disengage myself from the service I manage' • 'imagining ourselves as consultants… outsiders… onlookers' • 'stand[ing] out of that emotional connection with people'	• 'appreciat[ing] the need to be strategic and reflect on [the service] being fit for purpose • being 'so committed to the children and… go[ing] above and beyond and in addition and more than'
Wendy	• knowing 'how to handle… the difficult individuals whose performance is below par… because I can fly off the handle at people… I do fly off the handle at the lads' • 'get[ting] frustrated if I feel somebody is not pulling their weight and… be[ing] abrupt and… tell[ing] them exactly what I think' • being 'accused of bullying them'	• thinking 'we raise employees' expectations about things to do with bullying and harassment' • 'hav[ing] all of these policies on the way you should treat people' • 'think[ing] the higher up the organisation you go the more vulnerable you are in that role' • 'not going to back off from poor performance' 'think[ing], as a manager, you're quite entitled to tell somebody that you have an issue with their performance'

The socio-relational context of the personal predicaments range from 'internal to self' and primarily inward-facing for **Wendy**, to those taking place external to their organisation, in the case of **Norman**, **Edward** and **Barbara**, with all others being located within the context of the participant's organisation. Whilst Wendy's personal predicament has been categorised as 'internal-to-self', its articulation in the interview has made it now also externally-facing. A range of others are involved directly, or mentioned by the research participants, in relation to the personal predicaments. The participants' line manager features in all accounts, and is a contributory factor to the personal predicament for some, including **John**, **Tracy**, **Felicity** and **Norman**. Relationships with peers feature as problematic in the accounts of **Barbara** and **Nina**, and from a professional perspective for **Tracy** also. Only **Wendy**'s and **Felicity**'s personal predicaments are centred primarily on relationships with and "managing subordinates" (Hill, 2003). Therefore, the insights from these illustrations support those presented in Chapter Five, that in contrast to the focus on relationships with the team for first becoming managers (Hill, 2003), for individuals as they progress managerially proactively managing relationships with peers assumes "highest priority" (Hill, 2003).

Drawing on the work of Schlenker (1980), Watson (1994, 2008), Alvesson and Willmott (2002) and Lutgen-Sandvik (2008), amongst others, in Chapter Two this thesis argued that, when a personal predicament is experienced, an individual senses a challenge, rejection or other form of threat, initiated by self and/or other(s), to the self-identity. As a means of coping with the personal predicament, and in a remedial attempt to achieve stability and coherence of self-identity, the individual engages in active, but not necessarily conscious, identity work. An individual's articulations of emotionality related to the personal predicament may be indicative of the threat to self-identity and, therefore, of the 'activeness' of identity work to be done. From the participants' expressions of emotionality, the selected personal predicaments, as identity-symbolic events, seem to range in significance from major, for instance in the case of **Edward**, **Barbara** and **John**, to relatively minor, in the case of **Norman**.

The participants may have recalled and accounted for these events because they triggered strong emotions at the time and, for some, during the interview in their telling. The strong emotions associated with the experiences may impact on, consciously or unconsciously, self-identity construction processes. This supports

Beech's (2008, p.68) view that "identity work is not 'emotionally neutral'". For instance, **Nina**'s personal predicament, a decision made over her head, may not have been significant in itself but it seems to have triggered a strong emotional reaction, causing her to recall feelings of anger, disappointment and frustration which she felt at an early stage in her professional career.

Nina's recall of previous events and experiences highlights how identity work involves interplay of the past, the present and the future. Linstead and Thomas support this by arguing that "identities are constructed in terms of the conjunction of reflecting on past and future experiences" (Linstead and Thomas (2002, p.1). The temporal (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2008; Hermans, 2001) and ongoing (Bryans and Mavin, 2003; Parker, 2004; Watson, 2001; Watson and Harris, 1999) processes of self-identity constructions and of identity work processes are also indicated by **Edward** and **Barbara** who both talk about 'moving on' from the event. For instance, **Edward** comments that he 'had almost kind of forgotten' about the incident even though, some 14 months previously, it was 'such a hugely painful memory for me'. The extent to which Edward has 'moved on' may be questionable given his use of hedges (Fairclough, 1992) such as 'kind of' which suggest that he has low affinity with the assertion. Alternatively the hedges might signify that, through the retelling, he is reliving the painful memories of the incident and the threats to his self-identity he experienced at that time. A temporal dimension is also referred to by **Norman**, with his expression 'some time ago that would have been a bit of a concern' suggesting that he is positioning this event in relation to past one(s). He also seems to distance his self from the significance of the event, and any active identity work associated with it, by using the impersonal expressions of '*that* would have been a bit of a concern' and '*it* might have concerned me earlier'. Norman may not now express concern about the personal predicament selected here. However, the relationship with the former Director of his professional group, which was central to the selected personal predicament, seems to have impacted significantly, in the past, on Norman's understandings of being a professional architect and on his professional and self-identity constructions.

The data presented in this chapter, and particularly **Wendy**'s personal predicament, highlight that identity work and the narrative self-identity are prospective and anticipatory in nature. Whilst Wendy's personal predicament is in the present, it relates to a possible future event which has not happened and may not occur. The

anticipated accusation of bullying had not been made by the time of the second interview some 14 months after Wendy recounted the personal predicament. This supports Beech's (2008, p.52) view that, in identity work, "there is the shadow of encounters past and the foreshadow of encounters yet to come". The prospective nature of narrative construction is disputed by Ashforth *et al.* (2008, p.345), writing from a functionalist perspective, who claim that "[c]onstructing a narrative is always retrospective... as individuals draw on remembered experiences". They suggest that "a promising avenue for future research is how... identities are retrospectively and prospectively constructed" (Ashforth *et al.* (2008, p.351). This current research counters Ashforth *et al.*'s (2008) claim that constructing narrative is 'always retrospective' and provides further "relatively concrete illustrations" (Watson, 2003, p.171) of the "retrospective-prospective processes" (Linstead and Thomas, 2002, p.8) of self-identity constructions.

Discussing personal predicaments with others seems to be important in helping to make sense of the event, as well as providing a safe environment in which to be open about one's vulnerability, and to engage in "back-stage identity work" (Beech and Johnson, 2005, p.45 after Goffman, 1961). **Nina** reflects 'when that incident happened I felt a bit isolated because I would have liked to have thought I had a colleague who I could have talked about that to you know at my level'. **Felicity** laments not having the type of support her former line manager provided and comments she would like somebody to reassure her by saying 'no you are doing it right and actually I'm right behind you'. In other cases, the participants discuss positive relationships with others who supported them in meaning- and identity-making. For instance, **Tracy** refers to a member of her team who 'was very supportive to me' and 'I felt comfortable that I could share it with him'. **Barbara** seems to have found it helpful to talk about the meeting situation with 'the other woman', her own Chief Executive and her mentor. Engaging in dialogue with others provides an opportunity for the participant to extend identity work beyond internal inward-facing processes to external outward-facing social processes. The internal and external processes also reinforce the mutually-constitutive nature (Watson, 2008) of identity work. In Chapter Two this thesis argued that without both these processes the (re-) construction of self-identity is incomplete and the participants' expressions of need of support and explicit references to supportive others seems to support this argument.

6.6 Summary

This chapter has provided illustrations of relational identity positionings and social context obligations in accounts of personal predicaments relating to vulnerability. The processes of selecting and interpreting the data presented in this chapter were summarised. The chapter provided an overview of the selected personal predicaments, including their socio-relational context, and the reasons for their selection. These reasons included the strength of participants' articulation of vulnerability, and use of rhetorical tropes and metaphors in their accounts. Illustrations of relational identity positionings centred on discursive strategies of positioning of self as villain and as victim and of 'taking on' neutral social-identities. The chapter also considered positioning of self in relation to powerful others. Illustrations related to social context obligations highlighted concerns with doing the 'right thing' and 'doing it right'. Participants drew on discursive strategies of sacrificing self for the sake of the organisation, and of judging the moral standing of self in relation to others. For some participants, standing up for one's rights, for instance as a woman, was an issue, whilst others experienced self-identity tensions relating to expressing their 'natural' styles of working in the face of social context duties. Having no choice was a frequently employed discursive strategy for making sense of personal predicaments relating to vulnerability. The illustrations presented in this chapter were summarised in the form of a table. The chapter concluded with a consideration of the implications for this research of the data presented. As the selected personal predicaments were of recently-experienced events, they have provided, therefore, further insights into managerial vulnerability, and into self-identity construction processes, of professionals becoming managers *as they progress within management.* The insights also add to understandings of the vulnerability of middle managers as revealed, not as in Sims (2003) by the stories told *about* them, but, in this research, by the stories told *by* them. This chapter has provided a foundation for the next one which offers theoretical insights into identity work processes and strategies, aimed at repairing self-identity.

Chapter 7 Insights into Identity Work Processes

7 Introduction

The previous chapter offered, from participants' accounts of selected personal predicaments relating to vulnerability, illustrations of relational identity positionings and perceived social context obligations. That chapter has provided a foundation for this one, in which theoretical insights are offered into identity work processes and strategies, and specifically those aimed at repairing self-identity. The data interpretation and theorising processes used in this chapter are summarised. The chapter then proposes a conceptual refinement of Beech and McInnes' (2006) identity work framework. The argument for the refinement is developed by applying to the framework selected extracts of personal predicaments relating to vulnerability. The chapter then provides, and discusses with reference to the existing literature, illustrations of identity work strategies. These illustrations are of identity work strategies focused on relational identity positionings and constructions of social context obligations and, therefore, are related to the refined conceptual framework. The chapter also discusses story-based identity work strategies employed by the research participants in their accounts of personal predicaments. Through these illustrations, the chapter proposes these are self-identity repair strategies, aimed at re-securing stability, distinctiveness and coherence of self. The chapter ends by considering the implications, for this study, of the illustrated identity work processes and strategies.

This chapter, therefore, addresses the research objective:

- to provide, through interpretations of professionals becoming managers' accounts of personal predicaments related to vulnerability, theoretical insights into identity work processes, and specifically those aimed at repairing self-identity

7.1 Data interpretation and theorisation processes

The illustrations used in proposing a conceptual refinement of Beech and McInnes' (2006) framework are taken from selected extracts of the accounts from three participants – John, Edward and Barbara. I selected these extracts because they seemed to highlight the complex and dynamic interplay, within identity work

processes, of relational identity positionings and social context obligations. In particular, my attention was drawn to how participants drew on deliberate and forced positionings of self in the processes of making sense of the personal predicament and in constructing their self-identities. I was also struck by the conflicts and contradictions, relating to social context obligations, within these selected extracts.

The illustrations of identity work strategies aimed at repairing self-identity are drawn from the wider data set of personal predicaments related to vulnerability, that is as presented in the previous chapter. As discussed in Chapter Four on methodology, following Gabriel (1998), I make a distinction between accounts of or for personal predicaments and stories which a participant may employ, as a discursive resource, in the account of the personal predicament. Therefore, story-based identity work strategies are presented as a separate form of identity work, and in a separate section in this chapter. The illustrative story-based strategies given are derived from, and limited to, interpretations of participants' use of "poetic tropes" (Gabriel, 2000, p.36-7) and "mode of story" (Gabriel, 2000, p.72), as described in Chapter Four.

Discussion in this chapter excludes other discursive strategies and practices which are also part of identity work processes. By this I am particularly referring to the way in which participants draw on particular generic and local discourses (Beech, 2008). For instance, I am aware that both Nina and Barbara draw on a discourse of gender in their account of their personal predicaments. Whilst the implications of the perceived forced positioning as 'a woman' are discussed, the gendered nature of management, which Nina strongly believes, is not interpreted and theorised. I fully appreciate that these discourses are important to and in their self-identity constructions. However, gender and other discourses, for instance of emotion which could be conceptualised as related to gender, are outside the scope of this study. This is because of the decision not to position this research within the critical orientation to self-identity.

7.2 Refining the identity work framework

The thematic discussion, as presented in Chapter Six and summarised there in Table 6.1, highlighted the interplay of relational identity positionings and social context obligations within identity work. However, that discussion did not convey the dynamic, fluid and mutually-constitutive nature of identity work with its inherent self-identity tensions, contradictions and multiplicities. This can be illustrated more

effectively through positioning theory. The deliberate and forced positionings which are 'taken up', rejected or renegotiated are multiple, dynamic and dialectic. Self-identity positionings shift in response to the emergent and socially constructed relationships and obligations within a given context. To illustrate the multiplicity, dynamic and contradictory nature of self-identities and of identity work, this section maps selected extracts from participants' accounts of personal predicaments, presented in Chapter Six, to the refined identity work framework introduced in Chapter Two.

Because of word constraints, the number of illustrative examples given is limited. Two separate sections of accounts given by John, Edward, and Barbara are presented and interpreted, to illustrate the interplay of relational identity positionings and social context obligations. Discussion of these illustrations highlights also the effect of the self-identity positionings as strategies for repairing a sense of self.

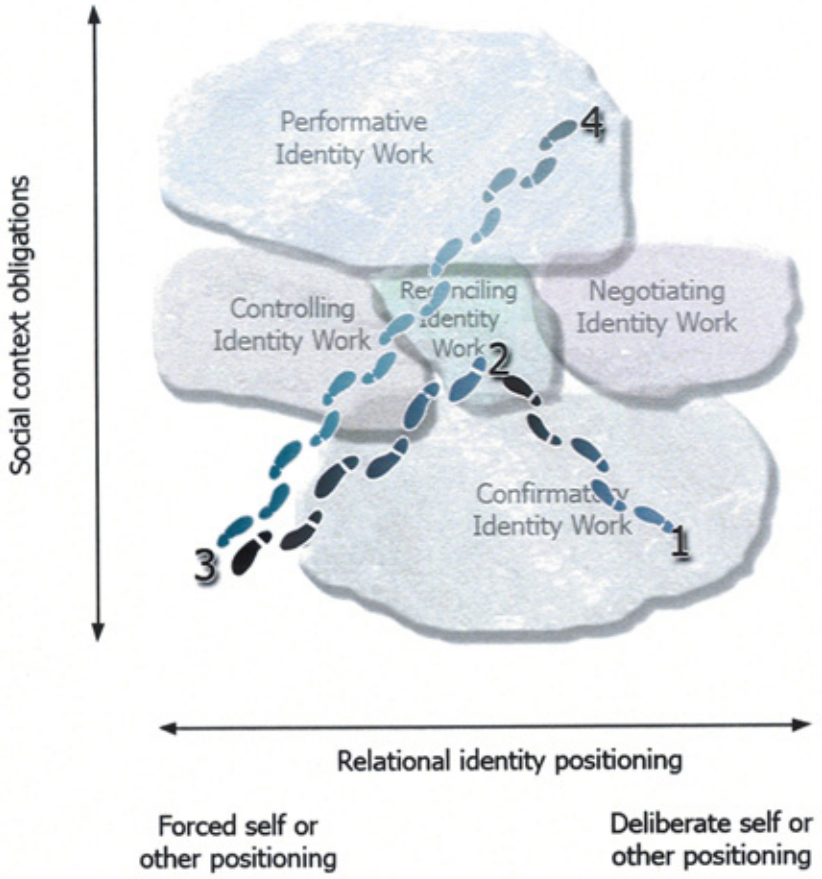
Discussion begins with presentation of the selected extracts as a table, and follows with illustrations of the self-identity positionings presented, in a figure, using the refined identity work framework. The numbers on the figures refer to the positioning index given in the respective table, and movement from one self-identity positioning to another is indicated by footsteps. The notion of shifting self-identities conveyed by footsteps is extended through the presentation, as paving blocks, of the different types of identity work (Beech and McInnes, 2006) associated with the positionings.

To aid interpretation by the reader of the participants' accounts and my interpretations of them, the notation employed in Chapter Six is retained when presenting the account extract, that is *deliberate positioning of self or other(s)* in italics, and **forced positioning of self or other(s)** in bold and <u>social context obligations</u> as underlined.

Table 7.1 Multiplicity and movement of self-identity positionings within identity work – illustration 1: John 1

Positioning index	**Account extract**	**Latitude of relational identity positioning (unlimited/limited/ intermediate)**	**Perceived social context obligations (high/low/intermediate)**
Positioning 1	*I felt very isolated in having that battle*	Deliberate self positioning but 'I felt very isolated' implies limitations on relational identity positioning	Perceived rights in having others to support him 'in having that battle' appear low
Positioning 2	because **I realised I was up against people who in the Council hierarchy are higher than me** you know	Latitude seems further restricted by hierarchical position, giving a shift in relational identity positioning towards forced self positioning	Explicit reference to 'people who in the Council hierarchy are higher than me' implies intermediate perceived social context obligations
Positioning 3	and **coming across as the bad guy**	Forced self positioning as 'coming across' to others as 'the bad guy'	The expression 'bad guy' implies moral criticism by others and, therefore, his perceived rights in positioning self as 'not the bad guy' are lowered
Positioning 4	when actually <u>all I was doing was protecting the Council's interests</u> by making sure there was a sense of probity in using [the external funding body] money	Deliberate self positioning, as the protector of the Council's interests. Latitude of relational identity positioning is not unlimited but influenced by John's interpretation of his managerial duty	The expression 'by making sure there was a sense of probity in using the money' implies high duties and obligations to the Council and the external funding body

Fig 7.1 Multiplicity and movement of self-identity positionings within identity work – illustration 1: John 1



From the mapping of movement of self-identity positionings given in Figure 7.1, the tension is highlighted between the forced positioning by others as 'the bad guy' (positioning 3) and the deliberate self-positioning as someone who is 'protecting the Council's interests' (positioning 4). The ultimate positioning (4) aligns with "performative" identity work (Beech and McInnes, 2006). John may feel under an obligation to perform a particular identity, as the 'protect[or of] the Council's interests', for a number of reasons. These include the institutional pressure of the duties of his managerial role, the moral appropriateness of ensuring 'probity in using [the external funding body] money' and the social pressure to respond to 'people who in the Council hierarchy are higher than me'. Positioning 2 relates to "reconciling" identity work (Beech and McInnes, 2006). There may have been an opportunity to reconcile the identity positions of self and other, for instance by equalising the effects of the perceived hierarchical differences. This might have been possible had John had the support of others and particularly his line manager who, as head of service, would have been the others' peer. However, his line

manager's absence and John's perceived isolation 'in having that battle' (positioning 1) may have served to reinforce the construction of an inferior positioning, taking him to forced self-positioning 3 where he is 'coming across' as the 'bad guy'. Beech and McInnes' (2006) framework does not include a type of identity work for this positioning. There is an element of self-sacrifice in this positioning, in other words, John seems prepared to neglect his own rights, not to be perceived as the 'bad guy', and to yield to the forced positioning of self by others. It might be argued that this is a non-active type of identity work. However, I propose it is a positioning from which active identity is undertaken, for instance John attempts to counter the positioning, and to repair the damage to his self-identity through the forced positioning as the 'bad guy', by deliberating positioning self as the morally blameless 'protector of the Council's interests' (positioning 4).

The next illustration is taken from a later extract in John's account of the same personal predicament.

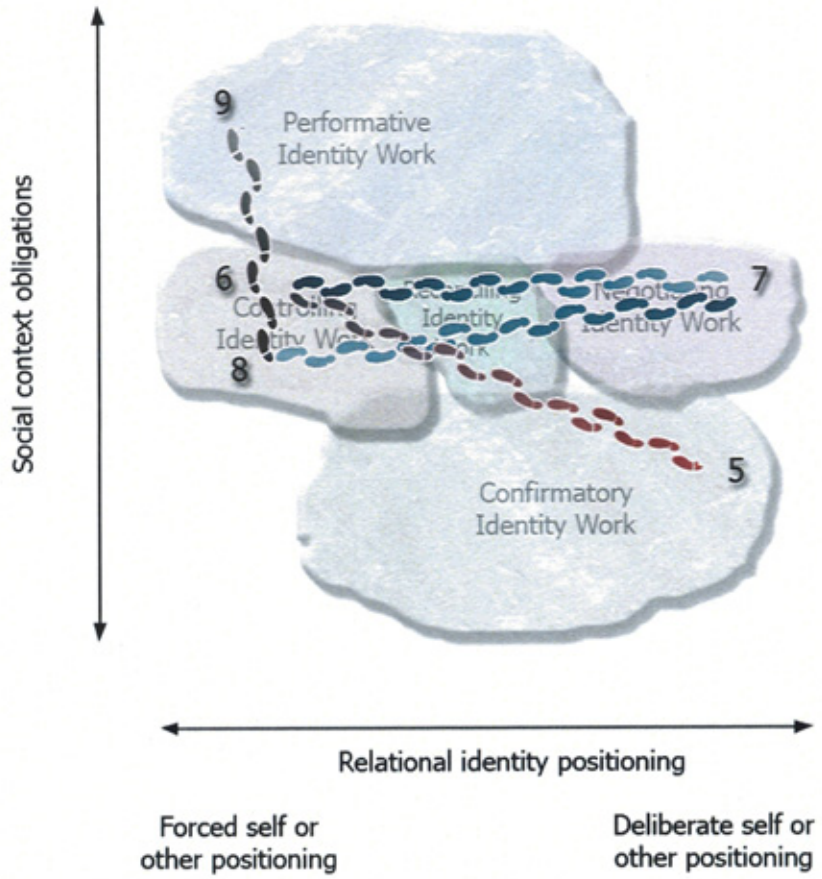
Table 7.2 Multiplicity and movement of self-identity positionings within identity work – illustration 2: John 2

Positioning index	**Account extract**	**Latitude of relational identity positioning (unlimited/limited/ intermediate)**	**Perceived social context obligations (high/low/intermediate)**
Positioning 5	*I'm not naturally an auditor accountant type of person ...*	Deliberate self positioning as 'not naturally an auditor accountant type'	At this point in the account the perceived duties and obligations are not made explicit and are perceived to be low
Positioning 6	**it's cast me into that role of being the guardian or the watchdog of the money** ... and that's a bit of a difficult role ...	Forced positioning of self by 'it' as 'the guardian or the watchdog of the money'	John explicitly refers to the role, implying perceived duties are high. 'Guardian' and 'watchdog' suggest someone who guards against illegal practices and, therefore, implies high moral and legal obligations
Positioning 7	*what I like to do is to come up with new things* and to delight and excite everybody you know	Deliberate self positioning as someone who 'likes to come up with new things'	The expression of 'and to delight and excite everybody' implies that, although John is under no obligation to 'come up with new things', he perceives it to be a socially appropriate activity as it 'delight[s] and excite[s]' others

Table 7.2 Multiplicity and movement of self-identity positionings within identity work – illustration 2: John 2 (continued)

Positioning index	**Account extract**	**Latitude of relational identity positioning (unlimited/limited/ intermediate)**	**Perceived social context obligations (high/low/intermediate)**
Positioning 8	so **it's not natural, it's not a natural role for me to be in**	Forced self positioning because, if given unlimited latitude, he would not 'natural[lly]' assume the 'role'	There are no obligations to others implied by the statement but it does imply a duty to take on the role
Positioning 9	but there again <u>I think there's no choice, so I've got to do it</u>	Forced self positioning. 'I think there's no choice' implies a relatively fixed relational definition	'I've got to do it' conveys perceived social context duty and obligations as high

Fig 7.2 Multiplicity and movement of self-identity positionings within identity work – illustration 2: John 2



The account extract begins with the deliberate self positioning 5 as 'not naturally an auditor accountant type' of person. The tension between this deliberate self positioning and the forced self positioning 6, expressed as 'it's cast me into that role of being the guardian or the watchdog of the money', is shown by the length of movement between the positionings. The roles of 'guardian' and 'watchdog' have implied duties and obligations to others. This forced self-positioning (6) aligns with "controlling" identity work (Beech and McInnes, 2006). However, in contrast to their view that this positioning implies a mutual degree of obligation impinging on both the self and the other (Beech and McInnes, 2006), this illustrative extract suggests that there is no obligation on the other. Instead, the mutually constitutive nature of the obligation constructed by the self towards the other is in response to the other's imposition of a duty, as shown by John's expression 'it's cast me into that role'.

Again there is tension between the forced self-positioning (6) as the 'guardian or the watchdog' and the 'natural' and deliberate positioning of self (7) as someone who 'like[s]... to come up with new things'. The restatement that it is not a natural role for him (positioning 8), and hence is a forced self-positioning because of the perceived duty, again reinforces the 'natural' self-identity contradiction. The final positioning (9) of 'I've got to do it', again forced, emphasises how Johns understands the duties and obligations as high. This positioning (9) with its "relatively fixed definition of self by the other" (Beech and McInnes, 2006, p.6) and the obligation to perform the role fits with "performative" identity work (Beech and McInnes, 2006).

Positioning 7, of liking to come up with new ideas, illustrates "negotiating" identity work (Beech and McInnes, 2006). They suggest that this type of identity work might occur in new relational situations where obligations between self and other are being explored (Beech and McInnes, 2006). This illustration suggests that it is also employed when the individual is trying to resist a forced self positioning, for instance as defined by an institutional duty, and is attempting to negotiate space, for instance within the duty, for important 'natural' elements of self-identity.

Positioning 5, of 'I'm not naturally an auditor accountant type of person', fits with "confirmatory identity work" (Beech and McInnes, 2006). John expresses this as an anti-identity (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003; Carroll and Levy, 2008), in the form of a 'who I am not'. This discursive strategy, discussed further in Section 7.5.3

below, constructs the self through contrast with 'who I am' and is a confirmatory type of identity work.

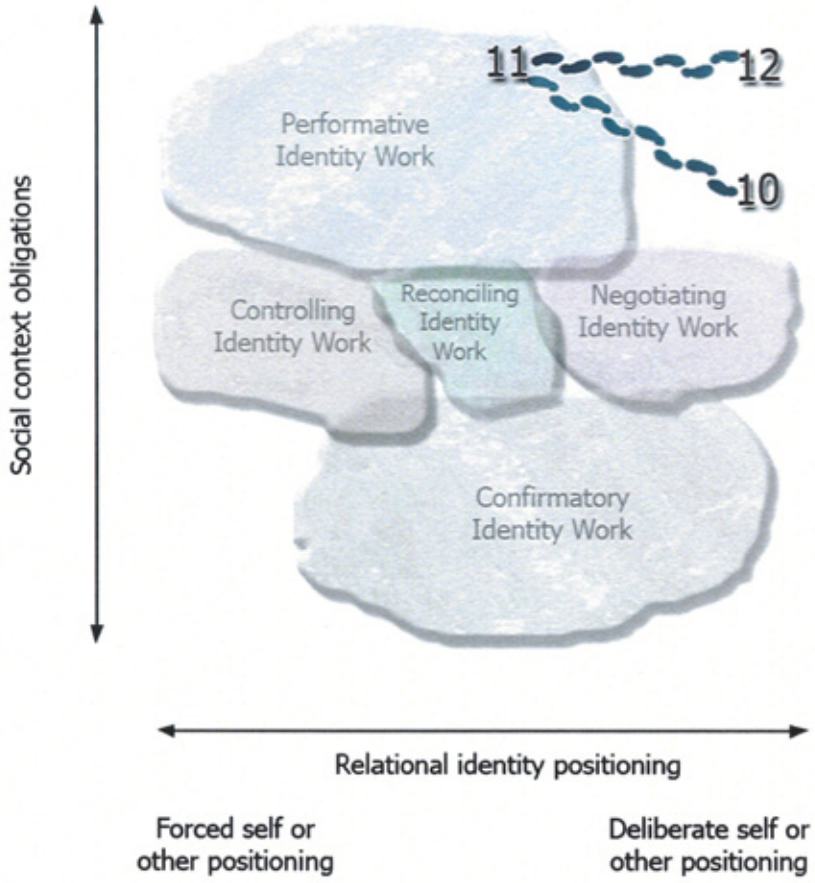
John takes up a number of identity positions in the course of these two short account extracts. As indicated by the footsteps between positionings, the tensions are, in some cases, extreme. This is particularly marked between positionings 3, 'coming across as the bad guy', and 4, 'when actually all I was doing was protecting the Council's interests'. From the selected extracts, the positionings also illustrate attempts to engage in "reconciling identity work" and "confirmatory identity work" (Beech and McInnes, 2006). The illustration highlights the movement between self-positioning "negotiating identity work" (Beech and McInnes, 2006) and forced-positioning "controlling identity work" (Beech and McInnes, 2006). It also shows the forcible taking on of one's perceived duties through "performative identity work" (Beech and McInnes, 2006).

Having given illustrations from John's account, two illustrations are provided from Edward's account of the personal predicament relating to a client's suicide. The first illustration is from his first interview account of the event, and gives Edward's explanation of the way he conducted the internal investigation. The second illustration is taken from his second interview account of his appearance at the coroner's inquest.

Table 7.3 Multiplicity and movement of self-identity positionings within identity work – illustration 3: Edward 1

Positioning index	**Account extract**	**Latitude of relational identity positioning (unlimited/limited/ intermediate)**	**Perceived social context obligations (high/low/ intermediate)**
Positioning 10	I felt that, to a certain sense, we had done things wrong,	Deliberate positioning of self, through 'I felt' and 'we had'	In acknowledging that 'we had done things wrong', Edward shows a high concern for the lack of standards of duty exercised by his organisation. The duty and obligations to others, to right the wrong, are implied to be high
Positioning 11	now I have to say that, by tackling it in the way we did, that it was the best way, because when things like that go wrong what people want you to say 'I am sorry, we screwed up, we did this wrong', you know, 'we should have done it differently' ...	There are some constraints on the latitude of relational identity dependent upon 'what people want you to say'. Although, this leads to a negotiated relational identity positioning, it still retains strong elements of deliberate self positioning.	Edward's expression 'it was the best way' emphasises the high moral appropriateness of the way 'we' conducted the internal investigation. As noted in discussion of relational identity, perceived obligations to others are also high
Positioning 12	I think it's very important to tackle these things as openly as you can, even if it means exposing yourself	Deliberate self positioning, in which Edward asserts his positioning, as someone who 'tackles these things as openly as you can'	'Openly' implies with honesty and therefore conveys Edward's concern for high moral appropriateness. This strong articulation of duty is reinforced by Edward's expression 'even if it means exposing yourself'. This reinforcement raises the perceived duties and obligations.

Fig 7.3 Multiplicity and movement of self-identity positionings within identity work – illustration 3: Edward 1



In this illustration Edward gives the reasons for conducting the internal investigation in the way that he did. Edward begins, through a deliberate positioning of self (positioning 10), by admitting that 'we had done things wrong'. This expression shows Edward's concern for the standards of duty which his organisation has failed to fulfil in the incidents prior and subsequent to the client's suicide. He moves from this self positioning to a negotiated positioning (11) where Edward constructs his relational identity positioning in response to others, that is 'what people want you to say'. The mutual positioning of self in relation to others does not, however, seem to put additional social pressure on Edward to perform a particular identity as he freely states 'I have to say that, by tackling it in the way we did, that it was the best way'. He also seems to have acted agentially 'by tackling it in the way we did'. Edward ends this short account extract with a deliberate self positioning (12), as someone who 'tackles these things as openly as you can'. 'Openly' implies with honesty and, therefore, expresses Edward's concern for high moral standards in fulfilling the duty and obligations to others. However he qualifies the openness by saying 'as openly

as you can' implying that there are pressures, perhaps institutional, on him constraining the extent to which he fulfils the duty of the openly conducted investigation. Edward's strong articulation of duty is reinforced through his expression 'even if it means exposing yourself". 'Exposing' himself would increase his vulnerability but he seems prepared to sacrifice this for the sake of maintaining high moral standards in conducting the investigation. Through this reinforcement he constructs the social context duties and obligations as high.

Positioning 11, where Edward expresses an obligation to others in the way in which the internal investigation outcomes are communicated, aligns with "performative" identity work (Beech and McInnes, 2006). Whilst he has obligations to others, Edward still has some latitude in relational identity positioning. Positionings 10 and 12 fall outside the identity work types identified within Beech and McInnes' (2006) framework. In Edward's case, these positionings are indicative of high latitude of relational identity positioning combined with high social context rights, duties and obligations. In terms of relational identity positioning, this identity work involves a rhetorically assertive self-identity construction. Perceived duties are willingly undertaken. Indeed undertaking these duties may be perceived as enhancing what is morally right. Whilst there may be obligations to others, there is no perceived personal, social or institutional pressure to act in a prescribed manner.

The second extract from Edward's account is now considered. This is taken from his account of his appearance at the Coroner's Inquest.

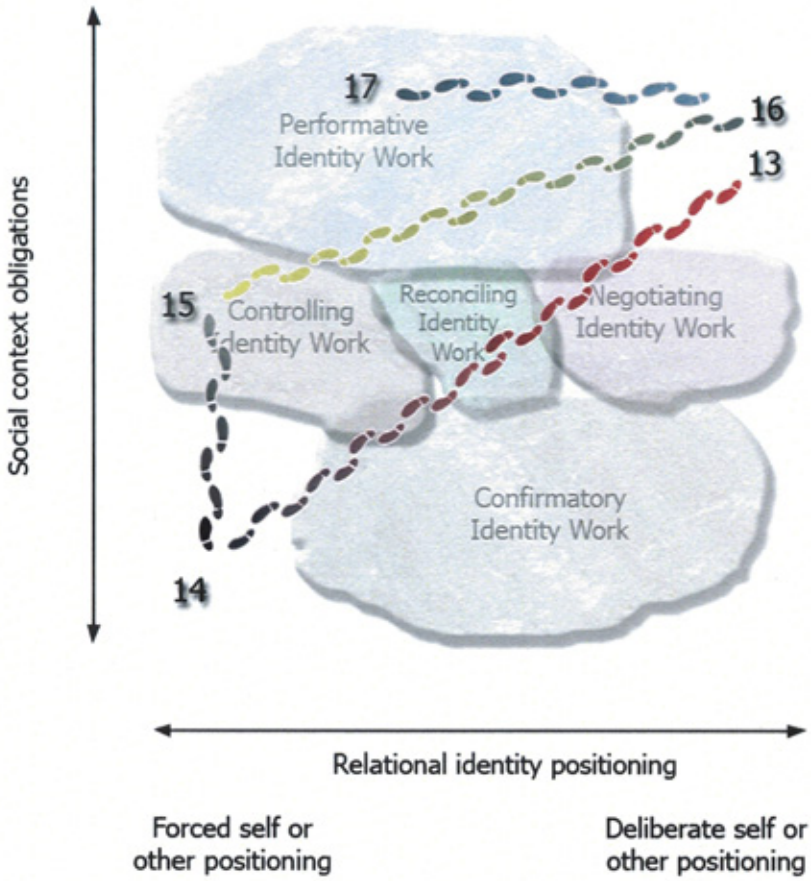
Table 7.4 Multiplicity and movement of self-identity positionings within identity work – illustration 4: Edward 2

Positioning index	**Account extract**	**Latitude of relational identity positioning (unlimited/limited/ intermediate)**	**Perceived social context obligations (high/low/intermediate)**
Positioning 13	you know what these judge characters are like, *they think they're god and behave like god,*	Edward begins by deliberately positioning the judge, 'they think they're god and behave like god'	The formal and legal context setting of the Coroner's Inquest implies duties and obligations are high. The positioning of the other as 'like god' heightens the duty and obligations but also implies a moral criticism of the other

Table 7.4 Multiplicity and movement of self-identity positionings within identity work – illustration 4: Edward 2 (continued)

Positioning index	**Account extract**	**Latitude of relational identity positioning (unlimited/limited/ intermediate)**	**Perceived social context obligations (high/low/intermediate)**
Positioning 14	**so I was made to feel sort of about an inch high...**	Edward describes the effect of the deliberate positioning of the other (13) on the self, in constructing the forced self-positioning of being 'made to feel sort of about an inch high'	Edward's diminutive stature 'about an inch high' in relation to the judge implies that he concedes his rights as low
Positioning 15	and I then went up to be interviewed by the Coroner and I'd just decided **there's no point trying to adopt a defensive position** here, I'm just going to have to, you know, (hesitation) basically say it as it is	Forced self positioning as someone who has decided that the social context makes futile any deliberate self positioning – 'there's no point trying to adopt a defensive position'	Although there is no change, from positioning 14, in social context rights, the expression 'I'm just going to have to... basically say it as it is' implies an obligation, to be honest
Positioning 16	so there was one part of me thought that I need to defend the organisation	This expression suggests the self-identity tensions and contradictions, 'there was one part of me', This part of his thinking, and the deliberate self-positioning expression of 'I need to', imply a unlimited latitude of identity positioning	The expression 'defend the organisation' implies that Edward accepts as high his duty and obligation towards the organisation
Positioning 17	there's another part of me realised that **if I attempt to do I would be seen as defensive...**	This second part of the expression explains the nature of the tensions and contradictions in being forcibly positioned by others 'as defensive'. The freedom of self-definition in the first part of the statement (positioning 15) is now restricted	The expression 'if I attempt to do' implies the same high level of duty and obligation to the organisation but is conditional upon the risk of being forcibly positioned as 'defensive'

Fig 7.4 Multiplicity and movement of self-identity positionings within identity work – illustration 4: Edward 2



The account begins by Edward's deliberate positioning of the judge (13), through the way he draws on stereotypical constructions of judges as 'they think they're god and behave like god'. The effect of this deliberate positioning of the other is to construct a forced self-positioning (14) as someone who is 'about an inch high'. This relates to Gabriel's notion of followers' core fantasies of leaders which include the attribution of "the leader as omnipotent, unafraid, and capable of anything" (Gabriel, 2000, p.211). Positioning the judge (13) with such attributes might imply Edward's relational self-positioning as 'powerless, afraid, and incapable'. This implication seems to be supported by his forced self positioning (14) of 'so I was made to feel sort of about an inch high'. As if submitting to this positioning, Edward justifies his decision, 'I'd just decided', through a forced self-positioning (15) that 'there's no point trying to adopt a defensive position'. He elaborates on his positioning by articulating the obligation of 'hav[ing] to… basically say it as it is'. However, at this stage in the account, there is no suggestion that Edward may be forced to accept full blame for the incident, so this positioning gives an intermediate construction of

his obligations. Edward rationalises his decision not to 'adopt a defensive position' (positioning 15) but his self-identity tensions and contradictions are clear from the next two positionings. Positioning 16, 'so there was one part of me', gives the first indication of a tension and contradiction, with this 'part' of Edward thinking and wanting to deliberately position his self as 'defend[er]' of the organisation. The deliberate self positioning (16) is contradicted by 'another part of me' that considers that such a positioning would be interpreted by others 'as defensive', and therefore leads to Edward's forced self positioning (17). In both positionings (16 and 17), Edward constructs a high duty and obligation 'to defend the organisation'.

The dynamics of the identity positionings in the second illustration centre on the forced positioning by the other. Occasionally these represent neutral and passive self-identity positionings, such as the 'non-defender' (positioning 15) who considers 'there's no point trying to adopt a defensive position'. However, other positionings are negative and passive self-identity positionings, such as the forced self-positioning of being 'made to feel... about an inch high' (positioning 14).

Positioning 15, 'and I'd just decided there's no point trying to adopt a defensive position here' aligns with "controlling" identity work (Beech and McInnes, 2006). Edward perceives no latitude to position his self in relation to the other, and he understands his obligation as 'to... basically say it as it is'. As discussed in positionings 6 and 8 illustrated by John's account (above), Beech and McInnes (2006) suggest that, when engaging in controlling identity work, the individual perceives there to be no latitude to define self identity and usually this is because of a mutual degree of obligation impinging on both the self and the other. In this illustration, Edward's obligations derive from the legal and cultural context of the court, and the socially constructed discourse of duties and obligations in relation to a judge. Although this might be regarded as a form of negotiation of mutual obligations, as Beech and McInnes (2006) suggest, this illustration offers a conceptual refinement that controlling identity work is influenced also by 'internal to self' constructions of the social context obligations and does not necessarily involve dialogue with others. In this case, in engaging in controlling identity work, Edward draws on 'internal to self' discourses of duties and obligations associated with the social, legal and cultural context of the situation. Social context obligations, therefore, may not be made explicit by the other and may be constructed 'internally' by the self in response to the relational, social and cultural context.

Positioning 17 of 'if I attempt to do I would be seen as defensive' illustrates "performative" identity work (Beech and McInnes, 2006). Beech and McInnes (2006) suggest that such a positioning comes from the individual feeling under an obligation to perform a particular identity because of personal, social or institutional pressure to do so. My interpretation of Edward's positioning fits with performative identity work in that he seems to perceive an obligation to, and possible pressure from, his institution to defend the organisation. Simultaneously, as discussed in positioning 15, he is drawing on culturally-determined ways of presenting one's self at court and its associated duties and obligations.

Positionings 14 is excluded from Beech and McInnes' (2006) framework. This positioning is indicative of forced self positioning associated with no latitude of self-identity definition. In Edward's case this positioning is influenced by the power effect on the self of the judge, with associated denying of rights to the self. The individual denies their own rights and, instead, submits to relational, social or institutional pressures to perform a particular forced self-identity positioning. The characteristics of Edward's positionings 14 is similar, therefore, to positioning 3 illustrated in John's account above.

Beech and McInnes (2006) do not define an identity work type for positionings 13 and 16. Positioning 16 in this account shares similar characteristics to positionings 10 and 12, discussed in relation to Edward's first illustrative extract (above). Positioning 16 of 'I need to defend the organisation' involves defining self in a rhetorically assertive manner. In Edward's case there seems to be some institutional pressure on the self to fulfil the obligation in 'defending the organisation' but this does not deny him the right to undertake the duty willingly. In contrast to the three previous illustrations, positionings 10, 12 and 16, which involved deliberate self-positioning, Edward's positioning 13 is a deliberate positioning of the other, 'you know what these judge characters are like, they think they're god and behave like god'. This positioning seems to heighten the duty and obligation towards the other. However, it also implies a moral criticism of the other, 'they think they're god and behave like god'. This positioning also seems to be constructed through an interplay with the forced self-positioning involving low self rights, ie the other positioning excluded from Beech and McInnes' (2006) framework. Both these positionings are

included in the next illustration, from Barbara's account of a meeting she attended on behalf of her organisation's Chief Executive.

Recurring themes in Barbara's account are the tensions and contradictions between her 'want[ing] to support this poor Chief Exec' who has 'been stitched up' and feeling constrained to do so because of duties to her organisation and the perceived power of others at the meeting. This first extract illustrates these self-identity tensions.

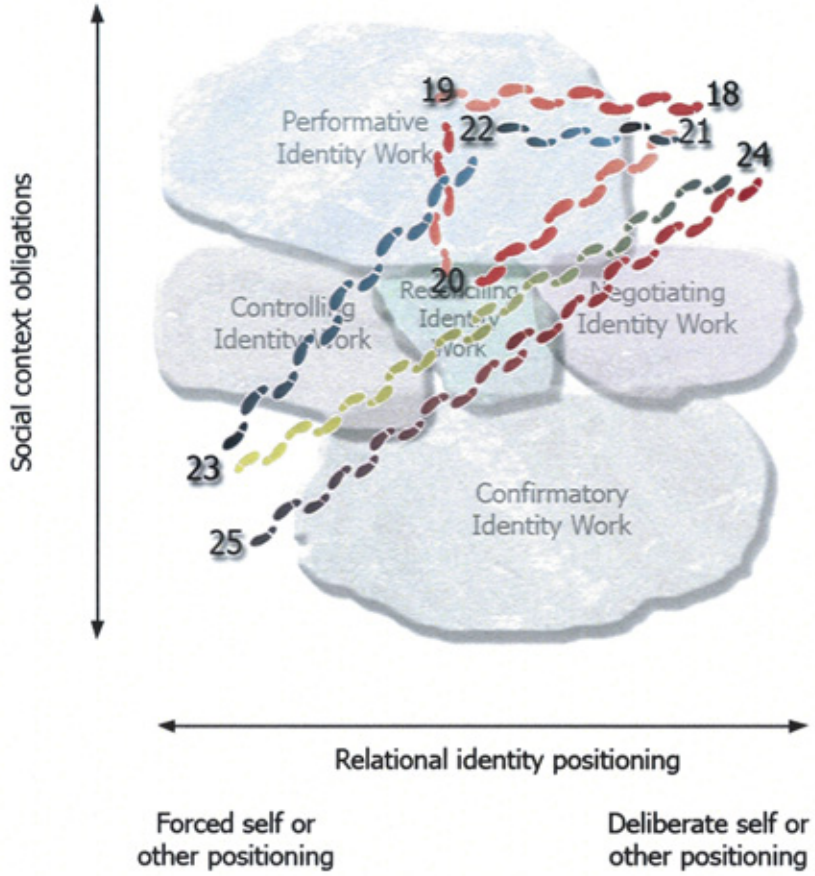
Table 7.5 Multiplicity and movement of self-identity positionings within identity work – illustration 5: Barbara 1

Positioning index	**Account extract**	**Latitude of relational identity positioning (unlimited/limited/ intermediate)**	**Perceived social context obligations (high/low/ intermediate)**
Positioning 18	I want to support this poor Chief Exec, this lonely Chief Exec who is desperate for an ally	Barbara deliberately positions the other, 'this lonely Chief Exec', as someone 'who is desperate for an ally'. If Barbara does support him, she will, therefore, be positioning her self as 'an ally'	The articulation of desire, 'I want', conveys the social context obligations to support the Chief Exec as high
Positioning 19	but if I do support him it means that *I'm immediately putting myself at odds with* the other four local authorities who are here who I need to work with, I can't afford to fall out with any of them	'if I do support him' would construct a deliberate self positioning 'at odds with the other four local authorities'. Her latitude of identity positioning, both in relation to the one Chief and to the four local authorities, is limited as she 'can't afford to fall out with them'. This gives a mutually constitutive relational positioning	In addition to the relational obligation to not 'fall out with any of them', she draws on a discourse of duty as someone who 'need[s] to work with' them. Therefore, the social context duties and obligations are high
Positioning 20	I can't afford to put my own principles on the line because the organisation could struggle, could suffer as a result of it...	There is no direct positioning of self or others in this statement so it is assumed that the mutually-defined positioning (19) still applies here	In this statement there is tension between Barbara's rights to uphold her principles, and her duties and obligations to the organisation. She seems prepared to submit her principles to protect the organisation. The tension leads to the intermediate social context obligations positioning

Table 7.5 Multiplicity and movement of self-identity positionings within identity work – illustration 5: Barbara 1 (continued)

Positioning index	**Account extract**	**Latitude of relational identity positioning (unlimited/limited/ intermediate)**	**Perceived social context obligations (high/low/ intermediate)**
Positioning 21	I really want to support this Chief Exec cos what we're doing is so wrong	This assertive expression is a deliberate positioning of self as a 'support[er]' of 'this Chief Exec'	The first part of this extract, 'I really want', conveys high obligations towards the Chief Exec. To reinforce this, she expresses 'cos what we're doing is so wrong' implying that 'we' have a moral duty to make 'right' the situation
Positioning 22	but I can't do it…	Although a deliberate positioning of self, as someone who 'can't do it', the statement conveys the restrictions on latitude of identity positioning, giving an intermediate positioning	There is nothing in Barbara's expression of 'I can't do it' to diminish the high level of duties and obligations constructed in positioning 21
Positioning 23	**I feel anyway completely out of it because I'm a woman** and **because there is so much power around this table**	The implication in this statement is that Barbara is made to 'feel anyway completely out of it', giving a forced positioning of self by others	Barbara draws on her gender, 'because I'm a woman', in constructing the forced self-positioning. She also implies that the others, the 'men', have 'so much power'. This gives a self positioning in which she has limited or no rights
Positioning 24	I would have a go at it	This conditional deliberate positioning of self…	… implies the high social context obligations she would like to 'have a go at' fulfilling
Positioning 25	but **they would just gobble me up and spit me out**, I know they would	In contrast to the deliberate self-identity positioning 24, Barbara 'know[s]' that 'they', the men, 'would just gobble me up and spit me out'. This discourse constructs a forced positioning of self by others.	Barbara draws on fairy tale storytelling in this extract. The effect is to reduce her power status in relation to the others, with a corresponding reduction in Barbara's rights

Fig 7.5 Multiplicity and movement of self-identity positionings within identity work – Illustration 5: Barbara 1



Barbara's account extract begins with the implicit deliberate positioning of self (positioning 18) as an 'ally' to the Chief Executive. The expression of 'I want' conveys Barbara's high obligations towards supporting the Chief Executive. The next statement provides an insight into her reasoning that if 'I do support him', it would imply her deliberate self positioning (positioning 19) was 'at odds with the other four local authorities'. In the same statement, she elaborates on the constraints on latitude of defining her self in relation to the four local authorities. The high obligations towards them – 'I need to work with' and 'I can't afford to fall out with any of them' – also imply that she would be disadvantaged in her relational identity positioning if she were to fail to meet these social context obligations. This therefore gives a positioning of high social context obligations and intermediate relational identity positioning. There is no direct positioning of self or others in the expression (positioning 20) 'I can't afford to put my own principles on the line because the organisation could struggle, could suffer as a result of it' so the

previous mutually-defined relational identity positioning is assumed to be unchanged. However, the expression reveals the tensions and contradictions between Barbara's rights to uphold her principles, and her duties and obligations to the organisation. She seems prepared to submit her rights to protect the organisation and, therefore, this leads to the intermediate positioning of social context obligations. In the next statement, Barbara deliberately positions self (positioning 21) as a would-be 'support[er]' of 'this Chief Exec'. She elaborates on why she 'really want[s] to support' the Chief Executive, expressing high obligations towards him, by making the moral articulation that 'what we're doing is so wrong'. In this case, Barbara's use of 'we' implies that she is complicit in the wrong-doing, reinforcing the duty to make 'right' the situation. The deliberate positioning of self (22), of 'I can't do it' implies restrictions on relational identity, giving an intermediate positioning. This expression does not diminish the high level of duties and obligations in Barbara's previous positioning 21. Up to this point in the account all positionings have been deliberate self or other positionings. However, the next statement (positioning 23) implies a forced positioning of self by others – 'I feel anyway completely out of it'. She elaborates on the social context factors which have made her feel this way, constructing her forced positioning by others as 'because I'm a woman'. The expression 'there is so much power around this table' implies that she has been overpowered by the others, the 'men', and that her rights, in relation to the others, are diminished. Barbara makes one further conditional assertion and deliberate positioning of self (24), 'I would have a go at it', which re-constructs the high level social context duties and obligations conveyed in positionings 18 and 21. However, she feels constrained from 'hav[ing] a go at it' because 'they', the 'men', 'would just gobble me up and spit me out' (positioning 25). Barbara reinforces this forced positioning of self by others (positioning 25) by saying 'I know they would'. The discursive resources used in this positioning draw on fairy tale stories and are suggestive of the Big Bad Wolf who threatens the Three Little Pigs, the Grandmother in Little Red Riding Hood, or the Giant in Jack and the Beanstalk. All these interpretations imply a reduced power status of self in relation to the others.

At the beginning of this extract there is a spiral movement from the deliberate positioning of self (18) as would-be supporter, to the intermediate positioning of self (19) 'at odds with the others', to a reconciling identity work (Beech and McInnes, 2006) positioning (20) of not being able to 'put my own principles on the line

because the organisation could struggle', returning to the self-positioned and morally assertive would-be supporter of the Chief Executive (positioning 21). The spiral continues to the deliberate but restricted relational identity positioning of 'I can't do it' (positioning 22). However, at this point the spiral is disrupted by the forced positioning of self by others, 'because I'm a woman' (positioning 23). This positioning seems to be the catalyst for more significant movement to the high social obligations, and moral, self-positioning (24) of 'I would have a got at it' but for the consequences of the forced positioning of self by others (positioning 25) in being 'gobbled up'. The self-identity tensions and contradictions and the self-identity shifts between this morally assertive self-positioning (24) and the two forced self-positionings (23 and 25) are indicated by the long track of footsteps.

Positionings 19 and 22 fit with "performative" identity work (Beech and McInnes, 2006). In relation to the social context, both positionings are indicative of high duties and obligations with, in Barbara's case, this involving tensions between her obligations to the one Chief Executive and her relational obligations not to 'fall out with any of' the other local authorities. In both these positionings Barbara implies there are restrictions on the latitude of defining self in relation to the other, the one Chief Executive and/or the other local authorities. Therefore, as Beech and McInnes suggest the positionings are drawn towards a "relatively fixed definition of self by the other" (Beech and McInnes, 2006, p.6).

Positioning 20 aligns with "reconciling" identity work (Beech and McInnes, 2006). This positioning is characterised by a degree of ambiguity, with contradictions in her self-identity positioning arising from the social context obligations to the one Chief Executive being at odds with her relational obligations to the other Chief Executives. There are further tensions and contradictions in the social context obligations. This particular extract illustrates tensions between Barbara's rights to uphold her principles, and her duties and obligations to the organisation. The reconciling nature of this type of identity work, in Barbara's case, does not come from discussion about the perceived obligations, as Beech and McInnes (2006) suggest. Instead, it comes from a process of 'internal' reconciliation by the self of the contradictory social context rights, duties and obligations. In positioning 20, Barbara achieves reconciliation by compromising her principles, and therefore her rights to draw on them, in order to protect her organisation from potential 'suffer[ing]'.

Positionings 18, 21 and 24 fall outside Beech and McInnes' (2006) identity work types. In Barbara's case these are all deliberate self-positionings and, like Edward's deliberate self-positionings 10, 12 and 16, they involve high social context duties and obligations. Barbara's case differs from Edward's in that she constructs her self as not able freely to fulfil her obligations towards the other. However, like Edward, the rhetorical assertions, such as positioning 21 'I really want to support this Chief Exec cos what we're doing is so wrong', express a moral rightness in fulfilling, or wanting to fulfil, the duty and obligation. In Barbara's case her expressed desire to undertake the duties and obligations willingly are restricted by social context obligations and relational identity constraints, as indicated by positionings 19 and 22. The desired non-restricted positionings, 18, 21 and 24, are characterised by high latitude of relational identity positioning. They are also characterised by the freedom to fulfil social context duties and obligations whilst simultaneously being able to uphold one's own and the other's rights. In such a positioning, which is ephemeral, the individual is, therefore, free of self-identity constraints, tensions and contradictions.

Positionings 23 and 25 are also excluded from Beech and McInnes' (2006) types of identity work. As in John's positioning 3 and Edward's positioning 14, in Barbara's case, these are forced self-positionings and are indicative of no latitude of relational identity positioning. Also, similarly to the other two illustrative cases, Barbara denies agency in resisting the power effect of the other – 'I feel anyway completely out of it because I'm a woman' (positioning 23) and 'they would just gobble me up and spit me out, I know they would' (positioning 25). Like John, there is an element of self-sacrifice in these positionings, and particularly in positioning 25, with Barbara implying her rights, as a woman, are denied to her. Rather, she constructs a forced positioning of the self which has to yield, or submit, to the other.

The second illustration from Barbara's account is her justification (Schlenker, 1980) for not supporting the Chief Executive, in which she draws on a discourse of responsibility for her organisation, and in particular its future growth objectives.

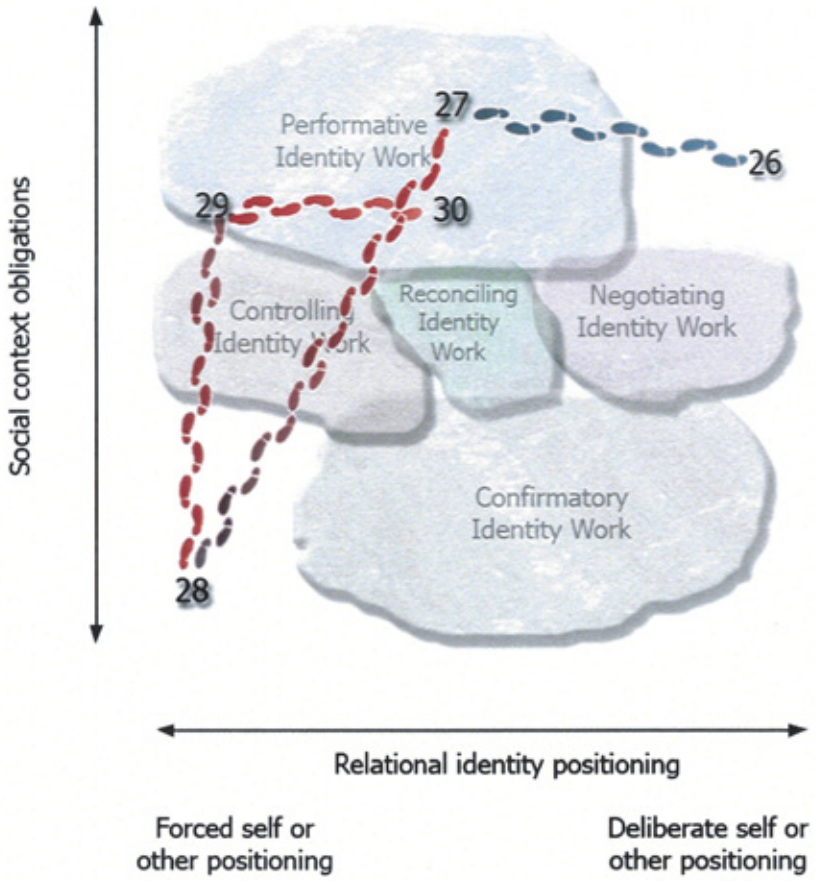
Table 7.6 Multiplicity and movement of self-identity positionings within identity work – illustration 6: Barbara 2

Positioning index	**Account extract**	**Latitude of relational identity positioning (unlimited/limited/ intermediate)**	**Perceived social context obligations (high/low/ intermediate)**
Positioning 26	an important part of the organisation's future is about its growth, if we don't grow we're not going to survive and *I feel very passionate about that and I feel very emotionally tied to that*, to the organisation in that respect and I want to make it successful	Barbara deliberately positions her self through the expression 'I feel very passionate about … and emotionally tied to' her organisation's growth	Barbara's articulation of emotionality, 'very passionate' and 'very emotionally tied', conveys more than an organisational duty. Her articulation 'I want to make it successful', reinforces her 'tie[s]' to the organisation and the extension to her self of 'the organisation's future' and 'its growth'
Positioning 27	*but I'm reliant on all of these people that were around the table* to enable us to grow …	The deliberate positioning of self, 'I'm reliant on all of these people', implies that her latitude of identity positioning is constrained as, without 'all of these people', the organisation will not grow. This gives an intermediate relational positioning.	Barbara's construction of high duty and obligations to her organisation, relating to positioning 26, are reliant on 'all of these people … to enable us to grow'. The fulfilment of her duties to the organisation which are now conditional on her obligations to the others raises her overall social context obligations
Positioning 28	**I can't always be what I want to be with them …**	The statement implies that others do not allow her full latitude of defining her self and, therefore, is a forced positioning of self by 'them'	The statement also implies that Barbara's rights 'to be what I want to be' are taken away from her

Table 7.6 Multiplicity and movement of self-identity positionings within identity work – illustration 6: Barbara 2 (continued)

Positioning index	**Account extract**	**Latitude of relational identity positioning (unlimited/limited/ intermediate)**	**Perceived social context obligations (high/low/ intermediate)**
Positioning 29	if I supported him those other four would clock it straightaway and **they would immediately assume that I was allied to him** and it could have damaged our growth potential in some of those areas	The expression 'they would immediately assume that I was allied to him' constructs a forced positioning of self by others, 'they'	'If I supported him' conveys Barbara's high obligations towards the Chief Executive. However 'support[ing] him' could jeopardise the duties she also perceives in safeguarding her organisation from the 'damage [to] our growth'. The tension between the obligations and duties leads to a compromised positioning.
Positioning 30	I couldn't put the future growth objectives of the organisation on the line for the sake of my own principles … I feel very, I felt very responsible for that and so I put that ahead of my own principles	The three articulations of 'I', 'I couldn't put', 'I felt very responsible' and 'I put that ahead of my own principles', are deliberate self positionings. However 'I couldn't' and 'and so I' convey constraints on her relational identity, in this case between her self and her organisation	'I couldn't' articulates Barbara's obligations to the organisation and its future growth. 'So' implies that she is conscious of the reasons for putting the organisation's growth ahead of her own principles. Again the tension between the obligations to the organisation and her own rights in upholding her principles leads to a compromised positioning

Fig 7.6 Multiplicity and movement of self-identity positionings within identity work – illustration 6: Barbara 2



The account extract begins with Barbara's deliberate positioning of self (26), 'I feel very passionate about… and emotionally tied to… the organisation'. Barbara articulation of emotionality, 'I feel very passionate' and 'I feel very emotionally tied' conveys more than an organisational duty. She reinforces her desire, 'I want to make it successful', which implies that she has the freedom and right to be a part of her organisation's future and its growth. She next moves to a negotiated but still deliberate self-positioning (27) as someone who is 'reliant on all of these people'. This reliance implies that her latitude of relational identity positioning is constrained to a certain extent as, without them, the organisation and, by extension her self, will not grow. This gives an intermediate relational identity positioning. Barbara's articulation of high duty and obligations to her organisation (positioning 26) may be compromised because of her reliance on 'all of these people… to enable us to grow'. This serves to raise her social obligations to 'all of these people' in order to fulfil her duties to her organisation. Her next expression, 'I can't always be what I

want to be with them', implies that others do not allow her full latitude of freedom in defining her self and, therefore, that she is forcibly positioned (positioning 28) by 'them'. The statement also implies that her rights 'to be what I want to be' are taken away from her, giving a low level of perceived rights. In the next statement Barbara returns to her justification for not being able to support the Chief Executive. The clause 'they would immediately assume that I was allied to him' (positioning 29) constructs a forced positioning of self by others, 'they'. The expression 'if I supported him' in this statement conveys Barbara's high obligations towards the Chief Executive. However 'support[ing] him' could jeopardise her duties in safeguarding her organisation from the 'damage [to] our growth'. The tension between the obligations and duties leads to a compromised positioning. Barbara ends the account by justifying (positioning 30) why she put the organisation and its future growth objectives 'ahead of my own principles'. The three expressions of 'I', 'I couldn't put', 'I felt very responsible' and 'I put that ahead of my own principles', are deliberate self positionings. However 'I couldn't put' and 'so I put that ahead of my own principles' imply that there are socially-constructed constraints on her relational identity, in this case between her and her own organisation. 'I couldn't put' also articulates Barbara's obligations to the organisation and its future growth. 'So' implies that she is conscious of the reasons for putting the organisation's growth ahead of her own principles. Again the tension between the obligations to the organisation and her rights in upholding her principles gives the somewhat compromised positioning (30).

In this extract, Barbara's positionings 27, 29 and 30 fit with "performative" identity work (Beech and McInnes, 2006). Barbara expresses an obligation to perform a particular identity in the meeting and in her relations with the other local authorities because of the high duty and obligations towards her organisation. The degree of latitude of relational identity definition varies in the three positionings. In positioning 29 she perceives no latitude in defining self because 'they would immediately assume that I was allied to him' and this would have negative implications for her self in relation to the other local authorities. She has more latitude in positionings 27 and 30 but this is still constrained, in the first case because of her relational reliance on the other local authorities, and in the second case because of her relationship with her organisation. In Barbara's performative identity work, therefore, pressure is social and institutional. Additionally, Barbara puts pressure on her self by compromising her principles for the sake of the organisation (positioning 30).

Positioning 26 is not categorised by Beech and McInnes (2006). This deliberate self-positioning, 'I feel very passionate about that and I feel very emotionally tied to that', shares characteristics with the illustrative examples in John's and Edward's accounts, discussed above, in combining high perceived rights, duties and obligations with a strong rhetorical self-positioning, indicating high latitude in relational identity positioning. There is no pressure or duress in undertaking the duties and obligations to the other, in Barbara's case, to her organisation. A moral imperative (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2008, p.114), in this case of 'want[ing] to make the organisation successful', also seems characteristic of the positioning.

Having considered all the illustrations of this type, which fall outside Beech and McInnes' (2006) framework, this thesis proposes that this is a 'resisting' type of identity work. In all but one of the illustrations, the positionings are deliberate self-positionings implying a highly self-assertive positioning from which attempts by others to define the self are resisted. The social context rights, duties and obligations associated with all the illustrative examples of this type of identity work are high. The positionings are also all characterised by strong moral assertions and, therefore, articulate the individual's moral standings. In the case of the one exception, that is Edward's deliberate positioning of the other, 'you know what these judge characters are like, *they think they're god and behave like god*', one's high moral standing is still expressed, through an implicit or explicit moral criticism of the other. Some positionings, such as positionings 13 and 24, may be active attempts to resist a forced self-positioning by the other and, in this respect, also serve to repair damage or threats to self-identity.

Positioning 28, in Barbara's account, aligns with the other 'gap' in Beech and McInnes' (2006) framework. Like the other examples of this positioning, discussed above, Barbara's expression of 'I can't always be what I want to be with them' (positioning 28) is a forced self-positioning, implying no latitude of freedom in the relational definition of self. As in other examples, that is positionings 14, 16, 23 and 25, the individual denies agency in resisting the power effect of the other. Therefore, this gives an element of self-sacrifice to these positionings and to this type of identity work. The individual constructs their rights as denied to them by the other and the effect of the discursive positioning is to yield, or submit, to the forced positioning of the self by the other. For these reasons, this thesis proposes that this is a 'submitting' type of identity work.

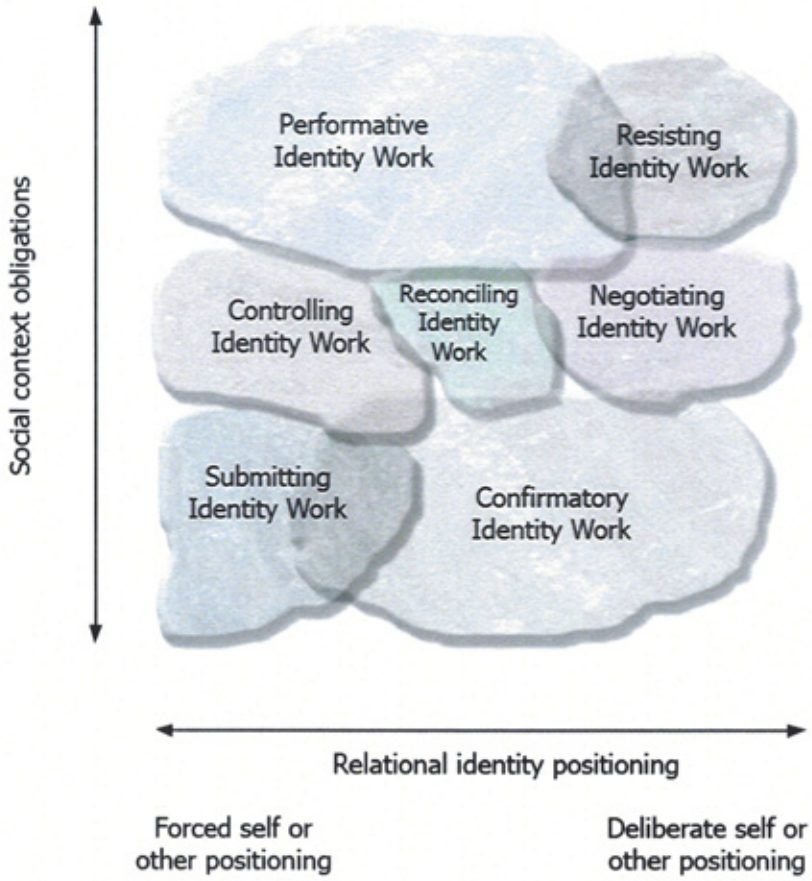
These refinements to the identity work framework (Beech and McInnes, 2006) and those developed in Chapter Two are summarised in the next section.

7.2.1 Refined identity work framework

The preceding section discussed the ways in which the self-identity positionings, derived from the data in this research, fit with Beech and McInnes' (2006) identity work framework. This summary focuses on data which do not fit and offers, therefore, a refined identity work framework.

The mapping of extracts from participant accounts, and the discussion of how the positionings fit and do not fit with Beech and McInnes' (2006) identity work processes, lead to a refined framework, shown in Figure 7.7. Two refinements, to the labelling of the framework dimensions, were discussed in Chapter Two, drawn from positioning theory (Davies and Harré, 1990, 1999; Harré and van Langenhove, 1991, 1999c). The first framework dimension refinement is the addition of the analytical distinction within relational identity positioning of forced positioning of self or other, and deliberate positioning of self or other. The second framework refinement is a change of dimension labelling to social context obligations. This labelling, without reference to 'perceived obligations', emphasises that obligations are socially-constructed. The notion of social context obligations incorporates also rights and duties. Based on the mapping of extracts of data, from this current research, two further refinements to the framework are the inclusion of two additional types of identity work.

Figure 7.7 Relational identity positioning and social context obligations in identity work



The first addition is of 'resisting' type of identity work. When engaging in this type of identity work, the individual deliberately positions the self or other and considers self, therefore, to be unconstrained in the relational definition of self. The social context rights, duties and obligations associated with this type of identity work are high. However, the individual does not experience any personal, social or institutional pressure or duress to perform the self-defined identity. The positionings related to this type of identity work are also associated with strong moral assertions and, therefore, are indicative of the individual's moral standings. In the case of deliberate positionings of the other, one's moral standing is implied through the implicit or explicit moral criticism of the other. In some instances, the positioning may be employed as a discursive strategy to resist forced self positioning attempts by the other. In these instances, the positionings are active discursive strategies which attempt to resist a forced self-positioning by the other and to repair damage or threats to self-identity.

The second addition is of 'submitting' type of identity work. This type of identity work involves the forced positioning of the self by the other. The positioning therefore implies that the individual is denied latitude, or understands there to be no latitude, in the relational construction of self. There is an element of self-sacrifice in this identity work with the individual denying or choosing not to exercise agency, often because of the power effect of the other on the self. The individual constructs a positioning in which they have low or no rights in relation to the other and the effect of this discursive positioning is to yield, or submit, to the forced positioning of the self by the other.

The "rhetorical assertions" (Kondo, 1990, p.307) which the participants in this research make in constructing their selves in relation to others range along a continuum from the more assertive, indicated by deliberate self positioning, through mutually-negotiated, to the less assertive or passive, indicated by forced self positioning. However, as illustrated in the previous section by the mapping of short discursive extracts on the refined identity work framework, these "rhetorical assertions" and positionings of self and other are temporary, ephemeral and often taken up in the process of resisting, negotiating or submitting to other positionings of self and others.

This thesis, therefore, proposes that by using the refined framework as an interpretive device and tracing self-identity positionings, as illustrated in the figures presented in this section, the multiplicity, fluidity and inherent tensions and contradictions in constructing self and in identity work processes are highlighted.

The self-identity positionings related to the refined identity work framework are illustrated further in the following discussion of identity work strategies. The next section provides illustrations of identity work strategies employed, by the research participants in this study, in constructing their selves in relation to others and in constructing the social context rights, duties and obligations.

7.3 Identity work strategies relating to relational identity positioning

This section considers identity work strategies that relate primarily to relational identity. Garcia and Hardy (2007, p.370) discuss self-identity construction processes through "othering", that is discursive devices indicating similarity and/or difference between the self and the other. The other can be an individual or a group.

Therefore, this discussion will be limited to one illustration of positioning which emphasises similarity and one which draws attention to difference.

7.3.1 Positioning self on the basis of similarity to the other

Positioning self by deliberate positioning of, and drawing on similarity to, the other (Garcia and Hardy, 2007) is a means of confirming commonality. This commonality can be reassuring and, hence, help to repair self-identity. Additionally, this commonality can be drawn on as a rhetorical device for positioning, and highlighting the difference from, a third person. **Tracy** employs this strategy when she talks about how a member of her staff 'listened and [he] under(stood) you know and I felt comfortable that I could share it with him... I knew he knew where I was coming from, I knew he shared the same perspective as me about the passion for the services but... I think he had picked up on the ambivalence you know from [line manager] about not necessarily you know seeing the value of what we provided.' The process of talking with another is part of the individual's sense-making of the event and of constructing and repairing self-identity. Tracy achieves the latter by employing rhetorical devices that emphasise the ways in which she and the member of staff are similar and, through the process, emphasise also how the line manager is different. For instance Tracy's rhetorical assertion that her colleague 'shared the same perspective as me about the passion for the service' includes an implicit moral criticism, discussed further in Section 7.6.1 below, that the line manager did not have a similar 'passion'. This positioning strategy is linked with the one illustrated in the next section.

7.3.2 Positioning self on the basis of difference from the other

Drawing on a particular social-identity and selecting specific attributes associated with it is a discursive device for constructing one's own distinctive self-identity. **Norman** employs this device in constructing his understandings of what it means to be a professional architect and, therefore, in constructing his professional self. He selectively draws on the notion of professional arrogance and explains 'our Director of Architectural Services was quite powerful, or what he said was what people wanted and therefore the rest of his staff took on this same sort of arrogance'. The possessive phrase 'our Director' might imply the power effect the Director had on Norman and others within the Service. However, by using the term 'rest of his staff', Norman seems to be excluding himself from 'taking on' 'this same sort of

arrogance'. The 'professional arrogance' of 'we know what you want' and "dominant architect" (Cohen *et al.*, 2005) discourse established an architect-client relationship in which the client was denied an opportunity to be consulted on, or to challenge, the design decisions made by the professional. For Norman, the attribute also seems to have associations with 'being strong' and 'being in control'. This "dominant architect" (Cohen *et al.*, 2005) discourse destabilised what Norman believed was the "expected order of things" (Allsop and Mulcahy, 1998, p.808) and also seemed to destabilise his understandings of what it means to be a professional. The process of differentiating self from other, by drawing selectively on specific attributes associated with the other, simultaneously gives meaning to the self, and helps to give distinctiveness and consistency to self-identity.

Having considered briefly strategies relating to relational identity, identity work strategies relating to social context rights, duties and obligations are considered, more extensively, in the next section. Discussion begins with illustrations of strategies relating to rights.

7.4 Identity work strategies relating to rights

Standing up for one's rights in a given situation is an important identity work strategy. As discussed in Chapter Two, Harré and van Langenhove (1999) associate rights with vulnerabilities. Forced self-positioning by the other may challenge an individual's rights in a general sense or those specific to a given situation. Having to defend one's rights simultaneously generates or is triggered by, consciously or unconsciously, a sense of vulnerability in relation to the other. As I selected the personal predicaments because of the participants' articulations of vulnerability, the participants' accounts all contain, in some ways, identity work strategies relating to one's rights. Identity work strategies in relation to violation of specific context-related rights are discussed in Sections 7.5 and 7.6. This section illustrates identity work strategies to the generic right of one's name.

7.4.1 Defending one's name

One's name is a significant identity detail (Gabriel, 2000, p.224). Defending one's name and its use is a strategy employed to repair damage to this significant element of self-identity. "Obliteration" of significant identity details, for instance getting a name completely wrong, "strikes" at an individual's self-esteem and identity (Gabriel,

2000, p.224). Barbara believed that she was being 'obliterated' from the meeting, and failure by others to use her name was a contributory factor in her understandings of the social context: 'they didn't want to know who I was... not even wanting to know who you were'. The strike to Barbara's self-identity could be considered to be a stronger blow because, rather than just forgetting her name, the other, which she positions generically as 'they' implying the men, completely fails to attempt to acknowledge her by name. Barbara does not defend her name during the meeting but instead, in repairing her sense of self, she draws on gender as a discursive resource in accounting this as an example of the forms of abusive behaviour to which she and others, particularly 'the lonely Chief Exec', were subjected.

Drawing on one's name, to differentiate personal and managerial selves, is an identity work strategy which John employs in his account. John seems to be striving to regain "legitimacy" (McLaughlin, 2003, p.265) for having to pilot, largely by himself because of his line manager's absence, a change in policy affecting Council funding. John attempts to do this by creating a differentiation, 'that's the difference', between his personal self and the managerial duty he has had to assume. He articulates this as 'I feel in some ways unfairly castigated as the bad guy in this... it shouldn't be John X (gives his first and second name) that's doing this, it should be the [Service name] doing it in the name of the Council, that's, that's the difference'. In an attempt to repair the damage of others' positioning of self as the 'bad guy', John draws on his name as a rhetorical assertion both to resist the enforced positioning, as the 'bad guy', and in an attempt to negotiate for an ideal positioning of the pilot being done 'in the name of the Council'. His discursive strategy of de-personalising and making anonymous the one 'that's doing that', and his articulation of the 'difference', are also attempts at repairing his self-identity. Drawing on and acting in defence of one's name, therefore, are identity work strategies aimed at repairing this significant element of self-identity.

In this example, John is drawing on his name and the right to use one's name in an appropriate way as rhetorical devices for coping with the self-identity effects of perceived duties in the social context. The next section considers how individuals draw on position, as a right, in identity work strategies in relation to social context duties.

7.5 Identity work strategies relating to duties

This section gives illustrations of identity work strategies which relate to one's duties. These include: drawing on one's position; taking on 'neutral' social-identities, and contrasting 'who I am' and 'who I am not'.

7.5.1 Drawing on one's position

Drawing on one's position, temporally or spatially, is a discursive identity work strategy related to defending one's rights and to one's duties. Nina employs this strategy, 'I didn't get to here to feel like this', as justification for challenging her colleague about the decision which was made 'over her head'. It is not clear from the expression 'to here' whether Nina is reflecting on her current position in the organisational hierarchy or the point in her career. However, from the fuller extract, given in Section 6.3.5 of Chapter Six, the incident does seem to have forcibly positioned her self back in time to when she 'first started out in her first professional post', with the repetition of 'first' serving to emphasise the time and career difference. In the same extended extract, Nina states that she did not think that her peer's actions had resulted from his feeling 'more senior than me'. However, by drawing attention to status, she might have interpreted her self to be forcibly positioned by him as 'inferior'. One's professional or life narrative positions as well as one's organisational position are, therefore, discursive resources which can be drawn upon to repair one's sense of self.

Drawing on one's position in the organisation's hierarchy is an identity work strategy for defending potential negative consequences related to one's duties. Wendy employs this strategy, in combination with a narrative of inevitability (Brown and Jones, 1998), when she says 'I think I'm going to be the next on the horizon for bullying because... I just think that the higher up the organisation you go the more vulnerable you are in that role'. Wendy expresses the "inevitability" (Brown and Jones, 1998) 'I'm going to be the next on the horizon for bullying' and also makes a causal connection (Gabriel, 2000), implying that the accusation will be due to her position in the hierarchy. Employing this strategy, which is related to victim positioning, discussed in Section 7.7.2 below, has the effect of renouncing one's agency and, therefore, one's personal responsibility.

In addition to drawing on one's position in this way, asserting one's organisational position and its attendant rights provide discursive resources for countering constraints on one's duties. For example, Wendy admits that the way she 'can fly off the handle' might also lead to an accusation of bullying, particularly from those who do not know her. Such behaviour is at variance with the HR policies, a form of discursive resource for forced self-positioning by the institution, which make explicit the obligations of managers to their staff through the moral articulations of 'the way you should treat people'. The forced self-positioning through the HR policies causes Wendy to account for her own behaviour. She does this by drawing on her position as a manager and her rights to 'tell somebody that you have an issue with their performance'. Employing this identity work strategy provides a means of defending her behaviour and of resisting the constraints of the forced self-positioning. The two strategies work in a co-ordinated manner to protect and potentially to repair her self-identity. The first strategy, drawing on one's position in combination with a narrative of inevitability, denies or mitigates personal responsibility through an "excuse" (Schlenker, 1980) related to extenuating circumstances, in this example, that the potential accusation is related to her position in the hierarchy and therefore outside her control. The second strategy, drawing on one's organisational position and its attendant rights, serves as a discursive defence against the potential accusation which might cause harm, for instance through defamation, to her managerial identity.

The next section considers strategies for repairing one's identity when the individual appreciates the need to take on the organisational duty associated with their position.

7.5.2 Taking on 'neutral' social-identities

Taking on 'neutral' social-identities is a discursive strategy which attempts to minimise tensions and contradictions between professional and managerial selves. Tracy draws on the discursive resources of neutral social-identities and deliberately positions self and others involved in the strategic review as 'we're the outsiders, we're the onlookers, you know we're the consultants' in an attempt to bring coherence between her contradictory self-identities. The duties of the managerial self, to 'be strategic' and to 'reflect on something being fit for purpose', are in tension with elements of her relational identity, her 'emotional connection with people', and are in contradiction with her professional identity, 'I find it very hard to disengage

myself from the service I manage'. However, as indicated in her account by her expression 'I was the very one who said I think we have to imagine ourselves as consultants', this deliberate self-positioning coping strategy does not resolve the self-identity tensions. Taking on, as the manager self, the neutral personae or "social-identities" (Watson, 2008) of 'the outsiders', 'the onlookers' and 'the consultants' is a discursive identity work strategy by which she attempts to 'stand out of side of' and, therefore, create detachment from the 'emotional connection' she felt with the people likely to be affected by the decision.

Detachment from an emotional connection is explored in Coupland *et al.*'s (2008) interpretation of participants' accounts of emotional experiences, participants' positioning strategies and associated underpinning "rules regarding appropriate emotional displays" (Coupland *et al.*, 2008, p.327). Whilst it is outside the scope of this study to discuss how participants construct emotional meanings, it is interesting to note that Coupland *et al.*'s (2008) study, like this current research, drew on the work of Harré and his concept of a prevailing "local moral order" (Harré, 1998, p.58). Coupland *et al.* (2008) propose that the managers in their study position themselves as dispassionate, whereas the teachers, working in the same organisational context, tended to acknowledge their emotions. Furthermore, the teachers constructed their selves as "passionate experiencers of emotion" (Coupland *et al.*, 2008, p.342) in order to be differentiated from the other, in their case managers and administrators. This study provides a further illustration of how individuals draw on emotion and, in this case, emotionally-neutral social-identities as discursive resources in constructing self. However, this study extends Coupland *et al.* (2008) by providing insights into the discursive strategies employed where one's managerial and professional identities are in conflict. Tracy is simultaneously manager and professional, in this case specialist teacher advisor, and her struggle to disengage, for the purposes of the review, her professional self, which is also a significant element of self-identity, from her managerial self triggers an attempt to repair her self-identity. Through employing discursive strategies drawing upon explicit emotional language such as 'I feel so passionate about it and I feel so strongly... I just feel so strongly what will be lost', Tracy deliberately positions her professional self as a "passionate experiencer of emotion" (Coupland *et al.*, 2008, p.342). Such a positioning is a significant shift in meaning (Beech, 2008) from the emotionally-neutral managerial social-identities of 'the outsiders... the onlookers... the consultants' she attempts to take on. In this case, the initial attempt to 'take on'

these social-identities seems to exacerbate Tracy's self-identity tensions and contradictions or, as with Sveningsson and Alvesson's (2003, p.1186) case study manager, the identity work "backfires". However, if employed over time, the discursive strategy may serve to "alter the balances of individual tensions" (Beech, 2008).

The way in which Tracy adopts discursive strategies, of 'taking on' the 'outsider' 'onlooker' 'consultant' social-identities, in an attempt to construct a "boundary" between her professional and managerial selves has parallels with McLaughlin (2003). McLaughlin (2003, p.266) refutes the functionalist orientation to identity with an "apparently clear and fixed boundary between the professional and personal self" and the corresponding notion that "to act professionally is to act rationally with no reference to personal feelings or connections". McLaughlin (2003) argues, instead, that categorisations of activities as professional and rational, or personal and emotional or, in Tracy's case, managerial and rational or professional and emotional, are socially constructed and discursively produced. Whilst McLaughlin (2003) appreciates that constructing a boundary between professional and personal may be an important self-identity coping strategy, in her study of antenatal screening professionals, she contends that professionals draw on their 'personal' self, in an integrative way, to make sense of and legitimate their professional role. However, through Tracy's example, this study would suggest that individuals attempt to reconcile self-identity tensions, when dealing with difficult decisions, by drawing on the discursive resource of a boundary between managerial and professional selves.

In the next identity work strategy considered, John is also striving to legitimate an enforced duty and he draws on the discursive assertion of 'who I am' and 'who I am not' in trying to resolve his self-identity tensions and contradictions.

7.5.3 Contrasting 'who I am' and 'who I am not'

Institutionally-defined roles and duties, particularly when these are resisted by the individual, become forced positionings of the self. Resisting enforced duties by explicitly contrasting 'who I am' and 'who I am not' provides a means of re-gaining stability, distinctiveness and coherence to self-identity. Assertions of 'who I am not' construct an 'anti-identity" (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003; Carroll and Levy, 2008) or a 'not-me' identity position (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003, p.1189) which the individual can draw upon to resist, or dis-identify with, the enforced duty.

Defining one's self in opposition to who/what I am *not* is also a means of creating and maintaining a coherent identity narrative (Musson and Duberley, 2007, emphasis in original). John employs this strategy in resisting the enforced 'auditor accountant type of person' positioning. He contrasts this "anti-identity", 'not a natural role for me to be in' by emphasising 'what I like to do is to come up with new things and to delight and excite everybody you know'. John's repetition, given in the full extract in Chapter Six Section 6.4.6, of 'naturally' and 'natural' indicates the self-identity tensions and contradictions between the forced positioning relating to the duties of the role, as the guardian/watchdog of the money, and his narrative self-identity. It is the activity of 'com[ing] up with new things' which gives him and others pleasure and, therefore, forms an important element of his self identity. This narrative self-identity is more consistent with the way he positioned his self, in the first interview, as someone who feels 'more comfortable around entrepreneurs than I do around little p inverted commas professionals' and who has 'this very, you know, entrepreneurial, can-do approach'. The discursive strategy of resisting anti-identity enforced duties, through rhetorical assertions of 'who am I' and links back to one's narrative self-identity, has the effect of rendering non-legitimate the enforced duty and positioning. It also reinforces one's personal distinctiveness and, therefore, contributes to repairing self-identity.

This section has considered identity work strategies related to social context duties. There is a link between these and social context obligations to others, which are considered in the next section.

7.6 Identity work strategies relating to obligations

This section considers two identity work strategies. The first involves criticising the moral standing of others and the second involves justifying precedence given to one obligation over another by drawing on the notion of a superior goal.

7.6.1 Criticising the moral standing of others

Moral criticism of the other (Harré and van Langenhove, 1991), involving evaluation of the moral standing of the other, is a discursive strategy for "embellishing or repairing" (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002, p.627) self-identity. Whilst expression of "moral standing" (Harré, 1998, p.58) is always implicit in positioning, the individual

may employ discursive strategies that have the effect of making "the moral order" (Harré, 1998, p.58) more explicit or "visible" (Coupland *et al.*, 2008, p.337). Tracy uses this strategy when she compares another professional group, psychologists, with her own education specialists: 'if you ask the psychologists' view of something you could wait six months for a psychological assessment because they'll do it when this slot in their diary is available, whereas I'll say to my staff the Authority needs this child to be seen and can you get in next week and they'll do it'. In this extract Tracy is critical of the timeliness of the psychologists' response in their duty and obligation to the client, including the Authority and the child, compared with the response of her own staff. Tracy refers, in a stereotypical way, to psychologists as a collective, 'the psychologists' view' and 'they', making an attribution of unity (Gabriel, 2000). The effect of the account is to imply that the other professional group is not to be trusted in fulfilling its duties and obligations. Tracy's professional group was under threat of possible disintegration as part of the service review. She also believed that her line manager did not value the service provided by her professional group. From this weakened position, Tracy employs the discursive strategy of moral criticism of the professional practice of the psychologists in order to gain temporarily a "higher moral ground" (Coupland *et al.*, 2008, p.340) and "moral superiority" (Baumeister *et al.*, 1990; Gabriel, 2000). The strategy therefore enhances the value, esteem and identity of the professional group and, indirectly, herself as a member of that professional group. The discursive strategy also reconstructs the "local moral order" (Harré, 1998), that is the discursive ordering of her professional group in relation to the other and its associated constructions of obligation, duty and trust. Therefore, moral criticism of the other, in this case on the basis of professional conduct, provides a means of reconstructing and repairing self-identity.

Moral criticism of the other can also involve rhetorical assertion of what is morally right within the given context. The criticism is more generic than in the former example, and involves the individual drawing on a "multiplicity of socially constructed moralities" (Watson, 2003, p.173). Nina uses this strategy when she gives her justification for challenging the colleague who 'made a decision over her head'. She says 'I wanted to make the right decision... not in terms of both having to win but for that situation... right for the service... I wanted a proper discussion about the situation and to look at some options and to... make the right decision... we were actually both right in the end'. She challenges the decision 'made over her head' because both her principles and values about what is 'right for the service' and her

right to 'make the right decision' were at stake. Although she denies that proving her self to be right, 'to win', was part of her consideration, her final statement of 'we were actually both right in the end' reinforces its significance in challenging the situation and as a source of vulnerability to her self-identity. These different aspects of morality served as a "moral imperative" (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2008, p.114) prompting her to act. The discursive strategy served both to repair the injustice of being excluded from the decision 'made over her head' and to re-establish the moral order, 'we were both right'.

7.6.2 Sacrificing self-identity for a superior moral goal

Positioning self as the martyr, for instance by 'put[ting] the organisation first', and justifying actions by drawing on the notion of a superior moral goal, can be used for repairing self-identity. Barbara employs this strategy in her justification for not supporting the Chief Executive at the meeting: 'I felt as if I'd let down this Chief Exec who was crying out for help, I felt as if I'd completely abandoned my principles, I knew why I'd done it and to be honest put in the same position again I would probably do the same again, I'd put the organisation first again'. Her expression that she had 'let down this Chief Exec' indicates her consciousness that she did not fulfil her obligations towards him. She is also aware that she had 'completely abandoned her principles'. However, despite both of these "moral imperatives" (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2008, p.114), she did not act in defence of the Chief Executive. Barbara has developed her own understandings of the personal predicament, 'I knew why I'd done it'. It could be that she feels that her duty to the organisation is greater than both her obligation to the Chief Executive and to her own moral principles. Watson (2006) discusses how a manager's duty is to help sustain the organisation's survival. This is achieved through an "exchange relationship" with "resource dependent constituencies" (Watson, 2006, p.244). As far as Barbara is concerned, she was dependent on 'all of these people around the table' and, therefore, she was "bound to attend to the ethical and cultural expectations" (Watson, 2006, p.244) of these trading parties. The majority of the politicians and Chief Executives would not expect her to support 'this lonely Chief Exec who was desperate for an ally' as they would expect her to ally her self to them. However, "attending to expectations" (Watson, 2006, p.244) may not necessarily have been the reason for her compliance, as she has another reason for 'put[ting] the organisation first'. She is 'very emotionally tied' to the organisation's growth and, therefore, its success is a central element of her self-identity. Barbara might be categorised as a "pro-activist"

social housing manager (Casey, 2008, p.773), a manager who presents her self as forward looking and ambitious and, therefore, relatively powerful within her organisational context. 'Put[ting] the organisation first' is, therefore, both a means of asserting an important part of her self-identity, and of reconstructing her managerial positioning as powerful in contrast to the powerlessness she feels in the meeting. The complexity of the self-identity tensions for Barbara, and the positionings and related discursive strategies she employs, are very clear from these extracts and this discussion. Irrespective of her obligation to the Chief Executive, and her future relationships with the other Chief Executives, she was prepared in that personal predicament, and probably would be in the future, to sacrifice her principles, and hence a significant element of her self-identity, for the sake of the organisation, another significant, but conflicting, element of her self-identity. She justifies, therefore, her decision in not supporting the Chief Executive by drawing on a discourse of "serv[ing] an accepted superior goal" (Gabriel, 2000, p.72) and of "higher, more desired goals" that are required in the given circumstances (Schlenker, 1980, p.144), in this case of safeguarding the organisation's interests. However, in doing so, her discursive strategy also serves to protect her personal interests and self-identity. Therefore, positioning self as the martyr, for instance by 'put[ting] the organisation first', and justifying actions by drawing on the notion of a superior moral goal, are discursive strategies for constructing and repairing self-identity.

Recasting a victim self as martyr, in the service of a superior goal (Gabriel, 2000), employs positioning strategies in combination with story-based approaches to identity work. Although Barbara does not explicitly position her self as victim she draws on a narrative of martyrdom in her construction of the meeting event. Story-based approaches used by the participants are considered in the next section.

7.7 Story-based identity work strategies

Story-based identity work strategies take different forms and serve different purposes. These strategies may not seem directly related to the refined identity work framework developed in this chapter. However, illustrations of story-based strategies are included as these are sometimes explicitly employed in relational identity positioning, for instance positioning of self as martyr, victim and villain. Story-based strategies also link directly with the concept of narrative self-identity, discussed in Chapter Two. There identity is conceived as a storied resource (Smith and Sparkes,

2008) and identity work as a narrative or storied process (Currie and Brown, 2003; Gabriel, 2000; Sims, 2008). Story-based strategies, employing different modes of stories (Gabriel, 2000), are used by the participants in accounting the personal predicaments and, as identity work, in repairing self-identity. Narrative constructions of events are not singular or coherent but multiple and inconsistent, like one's self identity which they convey and construct. Different versions of the narrative may be offered for different identity construction intentions, whether conscious or otherwise, in specific relational and socio-political contexts. Story-based identity work strategies form part of one's narrative self-identity in that they provide a means by which individuals can make connections between events "in ways that ma[k]e them seem coherent, unifying and complete" (Currie and Brown, 2003, p.580). One's narrative self-identity "must continually integrate events which occur in the external world, and sort them in to the ongoing 'story' about the self" Giddens (1991, p.54). Narrative constructions, or storytelling (Gabriel, 2000), of organisational events and incidents are, therefore, part of narrative self-identity construction and identity work processes.

This section discusses story-based identity work strategies including: drawing on a narrative of conspiracy and positioning self as victim; denying agency and repositioning a villain self as victim; and positioning other as villain and denying personal agency.

7.7.1 Drawing on a narrative of conspiracy and positioning self as victim

Drawing on a narrative of conspiracy (Brown and Jones, 1998) and positioning self as victim, serve to exonerate or diminish personal responsibility (Brown and Jones, 1998) and to create a discursive space to criticise the other. Through both these effects self-identity is reconstructed and repaired. Edward draws on a narrative of conspiracy in the account of his appearance at the coroner's inquest. However, it is also a story-based strategy for repairing his professional identity. Edward explains the effect of the court appearance, and the overall event of the client's suicide, on his professional identity as 'one of the most embarrassing positions I've ever been placed in as a caring professional…I just felt professionally completely discredited… I think probably *the most*, the worst moment of my professional career' (Edward's emphasis). Edward's repetition of 'professional' and 'professionally' and the qualifier 'a caring professional' emphasises the effect of the incident on his professional self. He also explains that 'my sense of professionally what was right and wrong was not

reflected by the actual practice in the organisation'. In attempting to repair his professional identity, particularly the challenge to his professional credibility, and to rebuild his self-esteem from 'the worst moment of my professional career', Edward constructs the appearance at the Coroner's Inquest as a conspiracy against him, by the Coroner and the statutory agencies. He articulates this as 'you then had everybody conspiring together to go (slaps table) sound we've found somebody that we can pin it on... for them [the statutory agencies] it was 'oh brilliant, fantastic, we've found the fall guy here'... I'd been put in a position where I'd been nailed up, I'd been crucified'.

To reinforce the narrative of conspiracy Edward draws on a forced positioning of self by others, 'I'd been put in a position', including a corresponding positioning of self as victim, 'the fall guy'. The combined strategies are designed to elicit understanding and empathy from the audience, and to try to secure stability, constancy and coherence of self-identity. Gabriel (2000) draws on the work of Lasch and of Schwartz who argue that "individuals construct their identities... on the basis of the injustices done to them" (Gabriel, 2000, p.72). Gabriel (2000, p.72, emphasis in original) continues that, in their view, victimhood is *the* dominant form of subjectivity in contemporary America. Victimhood is often discussed as subjugation (Garcia and Hardy, 2007), draining agency from the undeserving victim (Gabriel, 2000). In contrast, Garcia and Hardy (2007) argue that victimhood positionings can play a strategic and agential role in identity construction and repair. "Taking on" the victim positioning enables the individual to actively re-construct the event as one in which he or she was '"wronged" by a perpetrator (Garcia and Hardy, 2007, p.381) or "malevolent" other (Brown and Jones, 1998, p.85). This also creates the discursive space to make an attribution of motive (Gabriel, 2000, p.36), for instance that the perpetrator had the deliberate intention of harming or injuring the self. According to Gabriel (2000, p.37), "attribution of motive is one of the most powerful sensemaking devices". The individual can also counter the wrongful and undeserved victimhood positioning by deliberately (re)-positioning the self as someone with "the right to moral indignation" (Garcia and Hardy, 2007, p.381). This right then allows them to "critique the actions of those causing their suffering" (Garcia and Hardy, 2007, p.381). Edward feels that an "injustice" (Gabriel, 2000, p.72) has been done to him, in the way that the statutory agencies positioned him as the 'fall guy', even though they 'had a case to answer'. Edward explains 'it was the statutory agencies that had mishandled it, actually our part had been fairly peripheral... they kept a very low

profile and they did adopt the position that statutory agencies usually do which is to say 'there's no way we were going to accept any blame for anything, no way, we're not going to hold up our hands for anything". Edward's moral criticism of the other, 'they had mishandled it... they did adopt the position that statutory agencies usually do', exonerates or at least diminishes personal responsibility and, thereby, repairs his professional credibility and identity.

Related to this strategy, and having a similar effect in repairing self-identity, is repositioning a villain self as victim through denying agency.

7.7.2 Denying agency and repositioning a villain self as victim

The discursive strategy of "deny[ing] agency, and in so doing cast[ing] a possible villain in the role of victim" (Gabriel, 2000, p.40) repairs self-identity in a similar way to the story-based strategy discussed in 7.7.1 above. In their accounts, John and Felicity positioned their selves as villains. In John's case he constructs the positioning as forced 'I was... coming across as the bad guy... I feel in some ways unfairly castigated as the bad guy... I am seen as the chap whose Service is the one who is imposing all the paperwork'. 'Feeling unfairly castigated' emphasises that John interprets as unfair the attribution of blame (Gabriel, 2000) for 'imposing all the paperwork'. He concludes the account by saying 'there's no choice, so I've got to do it'. This serves to deny agency and, in doing so, to recast the villain self as victim. Felicity does this more succinctly in her expression, 'I don't want to be the baddy in that one but actually I don't see a way round it'. The discursive strategy of denying agency has the same effect, as in John's case, in recasting her villain self as victim.

7.7.3 Positioning other as villain and denying personal agency

Deliberately positioning the other as villain is a story-based identity work strategy which can be used to deny one's agency. The villain may be cast within a narrative of conspiracy or other mode, such as tragedy (Gabriel, 2000). Barbara employs this strategy, drawing on both a narrative of conspiracy and of tragedy, in her account of the meeting at which the Chief Exec was 'stitched up'. At the beginning of the account, she singles out one attendee (AB) and later says 'AB struck me, was very abusive, unnecessarily abusive'. Barbara articulates personal abuse by AB through her expression 'they didn't want to know who I was and of course AB was sat next to me, AB who didn't even turn to acknowledge us'. In this statement, Barbara makes a

simultaneous "attribution of unity" (Gabriel, 2000, p.37) by referring to 'they' and thereby associating the other attendees with AB's attributes. In this way she positions both AB and others as the villain, and her self correspondingly as the victim. She also makes an attribution of causal connections (Gabriel, 2000, p.37) by linking his/their lack of acknowledgement with her being a woman, giving a positioning of her self as a 'victimised woman'. According to Gabriel (2000, p.72), "such [tragedy] stories drain agency from the undeserving victim and place it squarely on the villain". Barbara constructs a lack of agency through saying 'it would have made no difference whatsoever because it would have been me and this little Chief Exec and we wouldn't have stood a chance'. Positioning of the other as villain and, therefore, the self as victim repairs self-identity through denial of personal agency. However, as discussed in Edward's case in 7.7.1 above, Barbara's victimised woman positioning opens the space for her to "critique the actions of those causing [her] suffering" (Garcia and Hardy, 2007, p.381). Barbara does this by saying 'politicians and some of those officers are not straight people, they're very much out to look after themselves, they're not entirely honest... so I can't always be what I want to be with them'. It is, therefore, from the victimhood positioning that she justifies partially why she did not support the Chief Executive. She is thus able to repair the threat to her self-identity, caused by her compromising 'the principles around the way' she operates, through the story-based identity work strategy of positioning self as victim which is achieved through the deliberate positioning of other as villain.

7.8 Implications of illustrated identity work processes and strategies for this study

This chapter has offered a refined identity work framework, developed from Beech and McInnes (2006). Four refinements to their framework have been made. Two refinements relate to the framework's dimensions, and are drawn from positioning theory (Davies and Harré, 1990, 1999; Harré and van Langenhove, 1991, 1999c). The refined framework dimension labels are relational identity positioning and social context obligations. The dimension relating to relational identity positioning includes the interpretive distinctions of forced self or other positioning and deliberate self or other positioning. The refined social context dimension incorporates rights and duties, as well as obligations. In contrast to Harré's (1998) conceptualisation of social setting rights, duties and obligations as structures, standing outside of discourse, the refined conceptualisation of this dimension conceives social context

obligations as socially and discursively constructed in given relational and social contexts, as well as derived from broader societal and cultural discourses. Two further refinements are of two additional types of identity work, developed from the empirical illustrations from this current research. Based on the tracing of self-identity positionings from extracts of participant accounts within the refined identity work framework, this thesis proposes the addition of 'submitting' and 'resisting' identity work types.

The identity work strategies, presented in this section, are not offered as comprehensive in dealing with all, or generalisable to other, personal predicaments and contexts. Instead they are offered as "relatively concrete illustrations" (Watson, 2003, p.171) of the processes of identity work in dealing with situationally- and relationally-specific personal predicaments. The illustrations of identity work strategies highlight the complex and multi-dimensional nature of identity work processes. The participants in this study employ and combine identity work strategies as discursive devices to make sense of the personal predicament and to "form, repair, maintain, strengthen or revise" (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002; Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003) their self-identities. Sometimes the strategies seem to restore a degree of stability, distinctiveness and coherence to self-identity, for instance in the way in which Norman draws on the notion of 'professional arrogance' in forming his understandings of what it means to be an architect, and in constructing his professional identity. However, in other situations, the strategies seem to contribute further to self-identity tensions and contradictions. Such a case is illustrated by Tracy's attempt to 'take-on' emotionally-neutral social-identities in an attempt to resolve the duties of the managerial self which were in tension with elements of her relational identity and also in contradiction with her professional identity. This and other illustrations also highlight the multi-dimensional nature of identity work. In attempting to resolve inherent tensions and contradictions between social context rights, duties and obligations, individuals simultaneously employ discursive identity work strategies which give attention to, and differentiate between, these dimensions of the social context.

In terms of relational identity positioning, individuals may differ in their capacity (Harré and van Langenhove, 1991) to deliberately position self and other. For instance, individuals differ in their ability to make persuasive and effective rhetorical assertions and positionings of self and others. Some may submit to a forced self-

positioning by the other whilst others, in the same situation, might resist 'taking on' such a positioning. The power of others and the effect on relational identity positioning may cause some to submit to an enforced self-positioning. However a forced, and apparently disempowering, self-positioning, such as victim positioning, might be taken up because it provides a discursive resource for alternative self-identity repair strategies, such as criticising the moral standing of others and correspondingly assuming a "higher moral ground" positioning (Coupland *et al.*, 2008, p.340). This thesis acknowledges that such discursive strategies may not be employed as the predicament is happening but can be employed 'post hoc' as justifications in accounting for the event and as identity work strategies, employed in the context of a research interview, for repairing self-identity.

Whilst all identity work strategies are narrative, some involve more explicit use of story modes (Gabriel, 2000), and may involve drawing on narratives of conspiracy with malevolent perpetrators and of tragedy with undeserving victims. Story-based identity work strategies form part of one's narrative self-identity by helping individuals make connections between events "in ways that ma[k]e them seem coherent, unifying and complete" (Currie and Brown, 2003, p.580). Narrative constructions, or storytelling (Gabriel, 2000), of organisational events and incidents are, therefore, part of narrative self-identity and identity work processes.

As discussed in Chapter Two, the extent to which one's narrative self-identity can become "coherent, unifying and complete" is contentious and debated (Knights and Willmott, 1999; Collinson, 2003). However, the identity work strategies illustrated in this chapter have different effects in forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening or revising self-identities. The different strategies may cohere at times to give a sense of uniting different and contradictory elements of self-identity. However, at other times, and for the same individual, they may serve to heighten contradictions and associated vulnerabilities. Knights and Willmott (1999) and Collinson (2003) argue that the search for a secure, stable and coherent sense of identity is illusory. This thesis does not suggest that the processes illustrated in this chapter are used deliberately or intentionally, or that in retelling their personal predicaments the participants would employ the same discursive strategies. However, there is a performative function to language and discourse and therefore to self-identity constructions and identity work processes. The participants in this study actively, though not necessarily consciously, employ particular discursive strategies in their

accounts of the personal predicaments. The identity work strategies illustrated in this chapter involve self and other positionings and draw on socially-constructed moralities in relation to social context rights, duties and obligations. These constructions, or accounts of and for, the events help the individual make sense of the predicament and simultaneously construct their self-identities. Because the selected predicaments focus on experiences of vulnerability indicated by participants' articulation of emotionality, it can also be argued that these constructions of the events, and the identity work strategies within them, serve to repair their threatened, vulnerable or damaged self-identities.

7.9 Summary

This chapter has offered theoretical insights into identity work processes and strategies, and specifically those aimed at repairing self-identity.
The processes of interpreting the data and developing theoretical insights from these were summarised. Through illustrations of mapping selected extracts from accounts of personal predicaments within Beech and McInnes' (2006) identity work framework, this chapter has developed refinements to that framework. The refinements are the addition of 'resisting' and 'submitting' identity work types, and these refinements build on the refinements to the framework dimensions, presented in Chapter Two. By tracing self-identity positionings, as indicated within the selected personal predicament extracts, the chapter has proposed that using the refined framework as an interpretive device highlights the multiplicity, fluidity and inherent tensions and contradictions in constructing self and in identity work processes. In relation to the refined identity work framework, the chapter then provided illustrations of identity work strategies relating to relational identity positioning and to social context obligations. Strategies relating to the former included positioning self on the basis of similarity to, and difference from, the other. Strategies relating to social context rights included defending one's name, those relating to duties included drawing on one's position and taking on 'neutral' social identities and strategies relating to obligations illustrated criticising the moral standing of others and drawing on the notion of a superior moral goal. The chapter also included illustrations of story-based identity work strategies, involving positioning of self as victim and villain, and drawing on a narrative of conspiracy or tragedy. The chapter concluded by considering the implications for this study of the illustrations given. These included the assertion that, by employing the illustrated discursive strategies the participants in this research were attempting, with variable effectiveness, to restore stability,

distinctiveness and coherence of self-identity. The next and final chapter includes an evaluation of the theoretical insights provided in this and other chapters through its reflections on this research and the research process undertaken.

Chapter 8 Reflections

8 Introduction

The purpose of this final chapter is to reflect on this research and the research process undertaken. As well as retrospective, the reflections are prospective in looking to the future and considering areas for possible further research. In reviewing the research aims, this chapter draws together the threads of the central argument presented throughout this thesis, that is that insights into identity work processes may be gained from interpreting professionals becoming managers' personal predicaments relating to experiences of vulnerability. This is achieved by evaluating how and whether the research objectives have been achieved and by highlighting the contributions to knowledge made by this study. One objective of this study relates to taking a consciously reflexive approach throughout the research process and this chapter, therefore, considers the methodological strengths and limitations of this thesis. As part of methodological reflexivity, this chapter considers how my self-identity has influenced the shape and direction of this research. The chapter then considers possibilities for further research. This chapter concludes with a self-reflexive account on my becoming researcher by reflecting on an early becoming research personal predicament and evaluating this from my current positioning.

This chapter, therefore, addresses the research objectives:

- to take a consciously reflexive approach throughout the research process
- to provide distinctive theoretical, empirical and methodological contributions through the research outcomes

8.1 A review of the central argument, objectives and contributions of this thesis

The thesis has argued that experiences of vulnerability, conceived as a type of personal predicament, trigger active identity work. It has further argued that insights into identity work processes, and specifically into attempts to secure stability, constancy and coherence of self-identity, may be gained through interpreting professionals becoming managers' experiences of vulnerability, as they make a transition into and progress within management.

This section draws together the central argument of the thesis, by reviewing and evaluating achievement of each of the research objectives. It also highlights how achievement of the research objectives has generated theoretical, methodological and empirical contributions. It may seem premature to suggest, in this section, that contributions have been made before they are fully evaluated. Therefore, the aim of this section is to highlight the contributions, and subsequent sections of this chapter will extend their evaluation, for instance through discussion of the outcomes of self-reflexivity.

Chapter Four proposed a framework for establishing trustworthiness of this research and for evaluating its outcomes. The criteria of transferability of research outcomes and of the importance of reflexivity are summarised here. The aim of this research has not been to develop theoretical generalisations about identity work processes from the interpretation of accounts of vulnerability of the eight professionals becoming managers in this study. Rather, the thesis has aimed to offer relatively concrete illustrations of processes (Watson, 2003) of identity work employed by the research participants, and interpretive insights (Cunliffe, 2008) from the detailed descriptions and contextualised data (Elliott, 2005) presented.

This thesis fully acknowledges that the illustrations presented in this thesis, and therefore the interpretive insights derived from them, are partial, biased, influenced by my self-identity and situated. They are partial and biased for a number of reasons. They are taken from partial and biased accounts of the research participants' experiences of becoming manager. From these partial and biased accounts of their experiences, I selected data relating only to experiences of vulnerability. In addition to their partiality, they are biased by my explicitly-stated and implicitly-influencing theoretical interests and personal biography. Their partiality is increased further by the selective presentation of extracts from this refined data set and biased by my authorial strategy and interests in using them to illustrate the broad emergent themes. In respect of the context-specific and situated nature of the illustrations, they are taken from data which were gathered in the context of a research interview, and relate to accounts of personal predicaments which took place in specific temporal and relational contexts. Influences relating to the context of the interview, and its effect on the partial, biased and situated nature of the data, and therefore of the illustrations, are discussed further in Section 8.2 on self-reflexivity.

Chapter Four argued that appropriate criteria for evaluating this research and its outcomes include the resonance (Ellis and Bochner, 2000) of the participants' accounts with the readers' experiences, the persuasiveness and plausibility (Riessman, 1993) of this thesis as a research account, and the practical use (Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Riessman, 1993; Watson, 1995b) and fruitfulness (Potter and Wetherell, 1987) of the interpretive insights offered. I have used these criteria in my evaluations of the research in this chapter. However, ultimately, the reader will determine the trustworthiness of this research, the transferability of its interpretive insights and whether its productive outcomes make a productive difference (Alvesson *et al.*, 2008b). The productive outcomes from this research take different forms and these are summarised in the following sections.

8.1.1 Perspectives on self, identity and identity work processes

The first research objective centred on locating this study through a synthesis of the existing literature from disparate philosophical orientations and theoretical perspectives on self, identity and identity work processes. This objective evolved from an appreciation, gained from the literature, of the complexity of the subject area and, more specifically, from the invitation extended to identity scholars by Alvesson *et al.* (2008a). This objective has been addressed, in Chapter Two, through an exploration of the debates about the features of self-identity within and across the philosophical orientations of functionalist, interpretivist, and critical and postmodernist. From this review, the understandings of self-identity used in this study have been confirmed. In contrast to the notion of the stable, consistent and entitative self, held by scholars within the functionalist orientation, this thesis has conceived the self as becoming, changing and inconsistent. The idea of singular personal identity and multiple social identities, assumed by functionalists and some interpretivist writers from the symbolic interactionist social constructionist perspective, is rejected by this thesis in favour of multiple and contradictory self-identities.

The importance of language and discourse in shaping the self is also contested by writers from different orientations. Social constructivists view language as the means of cognitive sense-making about the self. In contrast, the social, relational and dialogical importance of language has been emphasised by this thesis which, in taking a relational social constructionist perspective, has conceived the self as crafted through and by discourse. Whilst this thesis has acknowledged the power

effect of discourse in regulating self-identity, it has not shared the view of poststructuralist writers, working within the critical orientation, of the self as dominated and constituted by relations and discourses. Finally, the self in relation to others and the social context is viewed differently from different orientations. Primacy is accorded to the individual over the social context by social constructivists with the contrasting view being held by poststructuralists who conceive the self as constituted by relational and social contexts. Taking a middle ground between these two positionings, this thesis has regarded the self as inseparable from and embedded in relational and social contexts. The features of self-identity highlighted in this thesis are intended to be "illustrative rather exhaustive" (Alvesson *et al.*, 2008b, p.482), particularly as it is questionable whether the latter can be achieved, and are shaped by the epistemological interests of this research. However, the discussion in Chapter Two has emphasised the complexity and the contested nature of self-identity.

From the broad and critical review of existing literature on self-identity:

This research has offered a framework of features of, and philosophical orientations to, self-identity (Figure 8.1).

This framework has added to the work, focused on the concept of organisational identity, of Bouchikhi *et al.* (1998) and Gioia (1998). Specifically in relation to self-identity, it has extended and provided a visual representation of discussion by Alvesson *et al.* (2008a) and Smith and Sparkes (2008). More generally, in relation to orientations to research, it has built on Chia (1995), Fletcher (2006) and Cunliffe (2008). The contribution of the framework in relation to research is discussed later in Section 8.1.5. The boundaries between the philosophical orientations, particularly those sharing underpinning ontological and epistemological commitments may be "blurred and fuzzy" (Smith and Sparkes, 2008, p.7) and not necessarily mutually exclusive. The difficulties in conveying, through the framework, "the full range of relevant influences" on self-identity, as conceived from functionalist, interpretivist and critical orientations, may make the framework prone to the "risk of reductionism" (Alvesson *et al.* 2008a, p.11) and to accusations of misrepresentation. The value of

Figure 8.1 Features of, and orientations to, self-identity

Developed from Chia (1995)[1], Fletcher (2006)[2], Alvesson *et al.* (2008a)[3], Beech (2008)[4], Cunliffe (2008)[5], Smith and Sparkes (2008)[6] and Watson (2008)[7]

Dimensions					
Philosophical orientations[3]	**Functionalist**		**Interpretivist**		**Critical[3] and Postmodern[1]**
Level of engagement and epistemological interest	Meso level – how organisational effectiveness relates to identity[3]	Micro level – how individuals make sense[5] of self	Micro level – how individuals construct identities, through social interaction[3] and language		Macro level – how individuals respond to the power effect[3] of relations and discourses
Epistemological[6] and ontological commitments[1]	Realist – objective reality and ontology of "being"[1]	Social constructivist – subjective reality[3] and ontology of "being"[1]	Symbolic interactionist social constructionist – subjective *and* intersubjective realities[5] and ontology of "being" *and* "becoming"[1]	Relational social constructionist – intersubjective realities[5] *and* ontology of "becoming"[1]	Poststructuralist – intersubjective[5] and subjectified realities *and* ontology of "becoming"[1]
Processes of self-identity construction	Social psychological[3]	Cognitive and psychosocial[6]	Inter-subjective interdependency[6]	Storied resource[6] / Dialogic and relational[4, 5, 6]	Performative[6]
Features of self-identity	Self as entity and 'being'		Self as entity *and* self as process	Self as process and 'becoming'	Self as process and 'becoming' *or* self as illusion
	Stable, consistent and coherent self		Changing but relatively coherent self	Changing and fragmented self but becoming 're-centred'[7]	Fluid, inconsistent and fractured self
	Singular personal identity and multiple social identities		Singular *or* multiple personal identity and multiple social identities	Multiple and ambiguous selves	Multiple and ambiguous selves
	Cognitive construction of self through language		Agential self, mediated by structure, constructed through language	Agential self crafted through language and discourse	Decentred self regulated by the power effect of discourse
	Primacy to the individual over the social context		Self inseparable from relational and social context	Self embedded in relational and social contexts	Self constituted by relational and social contexts

the framework depends on the philosophical orientation of the reader (Alvesson *et al.*, 2008b). Applying the illustrations given by Alvesson *et al.*, (2008b, p.496) to this research, functionalist readers may regard the framework as a more or less accurate representation of the field of self-identity. Critical and postmodern readers may resist the production of the framework altogether, arguing that the researcher has exercised authorial privilege and objectified the phenomenon (Alvesson *et al.*, 2008b). Interpretivist readers may not share the functionalist concern about the accuracy of the framework and, rather, be interested in whether and how it is used (Alvesson *et al.*, 2008b).

Whilst accepting that ontological and epistemological differences may be incommensurate, such as at the extreme positionings on the continuum of functionalist and critical and postmodern orientations, the framework illustrates how theories and concepts can be transferred across and within orientations. The framework may, therefore, be of practical use as a heuristic device, particularly in providing "a point of entry into a complex field" (Smith and Sparkes, 2008, p.7) and in enabling self-identity scholars to position their own and others' particular temporally- and historically-situated studies. For myself, creating and using it as a novice researcher working with the interpretivist orientation, the framework has enabled me to develop my conceptualisation of self-identity and to locate this particular study within the field. It has also helped me to make clear how, although positioning this research as relational social constructionist within interpretivism, I have drawn on the work of others with different ontological and epistemological commitments in my understandings on self-identity and identity work processes. For instance I have drawn on critical orientations in acknowledging the influence of power of relations and discourses on the construction of self-identity. However, I have not embraced the more extreme implications of power in conceiving, for instance, that the self is constituted by discourse.

8.1.2 Relationships between vulnerability, self-identity and identity work processes

The second objective of the research was to explore relationships between vulnerability, self-identity and identity work processes. Whilst accepting that individuals 'work' on their self-identities all the time, this thesis has focused attention on episodic identity work processes. Episodes triggering active, though not necessarily conscious, identity work include radical role transitions or other forms of

specific events and incidents. Such transitions and incidents, conceived in this thesis as personal predicaments, can threaten self-identity and generate a need to strive for a coherent, distinctive and positively valued self. In contrast to Knights and Willmott's (1999) view that the pursuit of a unified, coherent and consistent self is illusory, this study has argued that human individuals have a need to re-stabilise their selves. In summary, this thesis has argued that, when a personal predicament is experienced, an individual senses a challenge, rejection or other form of threat to self-identity. As a means of coping with the personal predicament, and in a remedial attempt to achieve a degree of stability and coherence of self-identity, the individual engages in active identity work.

Through its extended argument that personal predicaments related to experiences of vulnerability can enhance understandings of identity work processes and self-identity 'survival' strategies employed by individuals, this thesis has provided further illustrations of the analytical importance of insecurity (Collinson, 2003). The relationship between vulnerability and insecurity developed in this thesis is that when in a vulnerable, weak or exposed position, the individual may sense their self-identity as insecure and unstable. Following the emergence of articulations of vulnerability as a theme from data interpretation, this research has explored experiences of vulnerability as specific personal predicaments in which the individual engages in active identity work processes. The epistemological interest of this thesis has been, therefore, in identity work processes illustrated by experiences of vulnerability, rather than in the concept of vulnerability *per se.*

This thesis has offered a conceptualisation of personal predicaments which is consonant with relational social constructionism and dialogical and relational identity work processes.

This conceptualisation is differentiated from Schlenker's (1980) symbolic interactionist conceptualisation of personal predicaments, and Brown and Jones' (2000) application of that conceptualisation from a psychosocial perspective on identity. This research has proposed that personal predicaments are identity-symbolic events triggering active identity work, involving both inward and outward facing processes (Watson, 2008), intended to embellish or repair self-identity as a more or less coherent narrative (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002). Whilst this conceptualisation offers a different way of knowing the phenomenon of personal

predicaments, the multiple perspectives (Alvesson *et al.*, 2008b) drawn upon in its construction are limited to symbolic interactionist social constructionist and relational social constructionist epistemological and ontological orientations. Whilst acknowledging this limitation, this conceptualisation of personal predicaments has potential practical use for scholars working from a relational social constructionist perspective, including Beech (2008) and Watson (2008), and writers from more psychosocial orientations, including Brown and Jones (2000) and Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003). The conceptualisation may stimulate further debate, within the existing literature, about the interrelatedness of inward-psychological (Brown and Jones, 2000; Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003) and outward-social processes (Beech, 2008; Watson, 2008) of identity work.

In its conceptualisation of identity work processes, this thesis has fused theoretical concepts drawn from symbolic interactionist positioning theory with the framework of identity work types developed by Beech and McInnes (2006), taking a dialogic and relational perspective on self-identity construction processes. Therefore:

This research has provided an illustration of how "alliances reside" (Alvesson et al., 2008a) and can be built upon between studies drawn from different ontological and theoretical orientations.

The intention in bringing together these different orientations to identity work processes was not to suggest that one is better than the other, but to explore how the juxtaposition of differing perspectives might provide new insights (Alvesson *et al.*, 2008b) and complement existing research which is 'incomplete' (Golden-Biddle and Locke, 2007; Alvesson *et al.*, 2008b). The implication of this argument of completeness is not to claim that the insights gained from this fusing of perspectives are complete. They remain partial and situated but have built upon and added to the existing literature through a refined conceptualisation of identity work processes, the addition of identity work types to Beech and McInnes' (2006) framework, and interpretive insights into identity work strategies. These are discussed and evaluated in Section 8.1.7.

8.1.3 Understandings of profession, professional, and professional becoming manager

The third research objective was in two parts. The first, to provide conceptual understandings of profession, professional, and professional becoming manager, is reviewed in this section as part of the central argument of this thesis. The second part, relating to reviewing existing studies on identity work processes of professionals becoming managers, is considered in the next section in its reflections on the empirical contributions of this current research.

Chapter Three reviewed, from different ontological and epistemological perspectives, the concepts of profession and professional. Consistent with its interpretivist and relational social constructionist orientations, this thesis has conceived the classic model of professional identity (Davies, 2002b), developed by functionalists, as a social construction. The ontological shift "from being to becoming" (Hotho, 2007, p.4), in the existing literature on profession and professional, is consonant with the different orientations of functionalist and interpretivist writers on self-identity. This thesis has noted that a further shift in the literature on professionals, "from becoming to changing" (Hotho, 2007, p.4), has been influenced by, amongst other factors, managerialism particularly within the public sector. However, this thesis has shared the views of McAuley *et al.* (2000) and Cohen *et al.* (2002) in rejecting the notion of an inevitable antagonism (Cohen *et al.,* 2002) between professional and managerial interests and, by extension, between professional and managerial identities. This thesis has acknowledged, however, that conflicting interests may arise, particularly for professionals becoming managers.

This thesis has used the expression 'professional becoming manager' to emphasise that the process of becoming is continually ongoing. However, as illustrated by **Felicity**'s experiences of becoming, this thesis has also confirmed that, for the individual, the processes of becoming manager may begin before any formal organisational recognition (Watson, 2001) in a 'managerial role'.

8.1.4 Existing studies on identity work processes of professionals becoming managers

The review of existing identity-related studies, given in Chapter Three, on specific public-sector professionals becoming managers and on professionals and managerialism, has confirmed Cohen *et al.'s* (2002) claim that research is mainly health-related or in areas such as social work and education. Outside these dominant groups are studies of police service professionals (Thomas and Davies, 2002) and of social housing managers (Casey, 2008).

This study has provided a distinctive empirical contribution by including participation of professionals beyond health, social work and education and by reducing the paucity of research into social housing managers (Casey, 2008).

The public sector professionals becoming managers in this study have been drawn from youth service work, architecture, library services, dancing, quantity surveying and social housing management as well as social work and teaching. Therefore:

The research context of a range of previously under-researched professional backgrounds has made a distinctive empirical contribution to the identity-related literature on professionals becoming managers.

As discussed in Chapter Three, identity-related studies into professionals becoming managers, outside or not exclusive to the public sector, have been conducted by Hill (1992, 2003), Ibarra (1999) and Watson and Harris (1999). A common feature of those studies is their consideration of only the first year of transition for professionals becoming managers. The professionals becoming managers in this study are all established and experienced middle or senior managers.

The two-stage interview design of this study, and the participation of experienced middle and senior managers, have enabled a distinctive contribution to existing studies on identity work processes of professionals becoming managers as they make a transition into management and, more insightfully, *as they progress managerially.*

The theoretical insights into identity work processes of professionals becoming managers are discussed in Section 8.1.6 below.

8.1.5 Appropriate methodology and methods

The fourth objective of the research was to develop appropriate methodology and methods to explore and interpret the experiences and identity work processes of the research participants. The design of this research has been appropriate to its aim of exploring professionals becoming managers' experiences of vulnerability as they make a transition into, and continue to progress within, management. Positioning this research as relational social constructionism, with its commitments to the notion of intersubjective and emergent social realities created with others through relationships and dialogue, is consistent with a key theoretical concept of this thesis of self as becoming. Consonant with the arguments made in this thesis that language and discourse are central to identity construction, it was appropriate to adopt a discourse analysis approach. With its focus on language as a means to an end, this research has employed narrative analysis to interpret broad themes, and specific discursive processes used by the participants, in their accounts of experiences relating to vulnerability. The specific epistemological interest in relationships between professionals becoming managers' personal predicaments, experiences of vulnerability and identity work emerged particularly through data interpretation. Further evaluations of the outcomes of reflexivity in adopting this methodology are given below in Section 8.2 on self-reflexivity.

This thesis has made clear the decisions I have taken relating to ontological and epistemological commitments and indicated the positioning of this research, with reference to the conceptual framework of features of, and orientations to, self-identity (Figure 8.1 above). As a heuristic device, the framework and the illustration of its application to this research, given in Chapter Four, may be of practical use to other researchers in helping them consider and make methodological choices. Therefore:

This thesis, through its presentation and illustration of a methodological heuristic framework applied to this research, has made a distinctive methodological contribution.

As discussed previously when evaluating the use of the framework as a point of entry into the complex field of self-identity, the value of the framework for

methodological purposes will depend on the philosophical orientation of the reader (Alvesson *et al.*, 2008b). The ontological and epistemological considerations and choices I made relating to social constructivism, social constructionism and relational social construction have been detailed in Chapter Four. Therefore:

This thesis has extended discussion on different social constructionist approaches to research. Through its detailed and transparent account of a relational social constructionist approach to research on self-identity, it has extended the illustrations, in the existing literature, beyond entrepreneurial opportunity formation (Fletcher, 2006) and knowledge and learning (Cunliffe, 2008).

Other researchers may find useful, in informing their own research approach, the illustrative account of the ontological, epistemological and methodological choices and decisions made in the design, implementation and evaluation of this research. The account is not offered as a process or procedural manual for others to follow in the conduct of their research. It is important to re-state, as others have done (Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Elliott, 2005), that there is not, nor can be, a single method of discourse analysis. Researchers would need to exercise judgement in determining whether the methodological approach adopted in this research might be transferable to their epistemological interests and research contexts. From my experience of using the voice-centred relational method (Mauthner and Doucet, 1998) and discussing its application with research colleagues employing it for their own research projects, one researcher's interpretation and application of a particular method may be very different to another's. The implications for this research of different interpretations of method and data are discussed further in Section 8.2 on self-reflexivity. However, the methodological approach adopted by this research has been fruitful (Potter and Wetherell, 1987) and, therefore, it may be of practical use in informing the research design of others.

This thesis has employed a unique combination of methods of gathering and interpreting data on identity construction processes. Its use of a two-stage interview process gave a longitudinal dimension to the study design. The second interview, held approximately 12-15 months after the first one, served multiple purposes. One purpose focused on the research aim of exploring professionals becoming managers' experiences as they both make a transition into, and progress within, management. As noted above, this research design feature has provided a distinctive contribution relating to the ongoing processes of self-identity construction

of professionals becoming managers. This distinctive theoretical contribution is reviewed and evaluated below in Section 8.1.6. A second purpose has enabled a methodological extension to the approach taken by Hill (1992, 2003) and Watson and Harris (1999). Whilst those studies involved multiple research interviews and interventions with the participants, these researchers did not ask the participants to re-reflect on their experiences, through revisiting and re-providing accounts of incidents given in a previous research interview. In other words, the second interview in this current research provided an opportunity for the research participant to engage in reflexivity about the significance of a particular incident and their reasons for initially choosing its telling, and subsequent retelling. Therefore:

Through its research design of a two-staged interview process involving the participants' retelling of, or elaboration on, an incident of personal significance, this thesis has offered a distinctive methodological contribution on ways of encouraging research participant reflexivity.

Although all participants offered a retelling, or an elaboration through a further example, of at least one incident, only the data from Edward's first and second telling of the event, relating to the suicide of a client, was selected, interpreted and presented in this thesis. Barbara's account of a personal predicament, selected for interpretation and inclusion in this thesis, was an elaboration in the form of a further illustration of a personal challenge which she had discussed in the first interview. As I had made the decision to explore, in this research, relationships between personal predicaments, vulnerability and identity work processes, the main criterion for selecting the personal predicaments was participants' expressions of vulnerability in their accounts of incidents. Therefore, Edward's and Barbara's accounts were selected because they indicated vulnerability and not because they offered the opportunity to interpret the different stories and different identities constructed through the initial telling and subsequent retelling of an incident. The opportunity to explore the data in this way is discussed below, in Section 8.3, when considering possibilities for further research.

8.1.6 Professionals becoming managers' personal predicaments related to vulnerability

The fifth research objective was to explore professionals becoming managers' personal predicaments related to vulnerability as they make a transition into and

progress within management. This thesis has confirmed that, as they make a transition into and progress within management, professionals becoming managers experience identity-symbolic personal predicaments.

This study has confirmed that moving up within their professional field and hierarchically within their organisation is a common route into management for professionals (Watson and Harris, 1999). However, contrasting the view that individuals do not suddenly 'become' managers (Watson, 2001), **Barbara**'s experience of 'a big transition' and **Nina**'s 'quantum leap' from professional to manager have suggested that the transition for them was distinct.

In the accounts of personal predicaments relating to vulnerability presented in Chapter Five, professionals becoming managers drew on discourses of feeling responsible, feeling the weight of managing and needing to 'have the answers'. The illustrative accounts have suggested that the level of sectional responsibility felt in early becoming manager predicaments shifts to corporate responsibility for participants in their current middle and senior positions.

Through the active identity work engaged in by **Nina** and **Barbara**, in the interviews, and their articulations of confidence in dealing now with personal predicaments relating to needing to 'have the answers':

This thesis has proposed that the significance of needing to 'have the answers' as a source of vulnerability diminishes as individuals progress managerially.

Challenges to authority and others' perception of them as manager were sources of vulnerability for some participants in this study. Whilst **Tracy**'s early becoming manager predicament involved a team member, current predicaments for **Wendy** and **Nina** involved challenges to their positions as managers by management peers. Whilst not high priority (Hill, 2003) for early becoming managers, through the accounts presented in Chapter Five:

This thesis has shown that proactively managing and influencing relationships with, and perceptions of, peers assumes high priority for individuals as they progress managerially.

The participants in this study expressed concerns about knowledge and ability, and lack of support, relating to both early and current experiences of becoming. In contrast to instrumental support (Hill, 2003), in the form of management development and manager backing, desired by early professionals becoming managers:

This thesis has demonstrated that, as they progress managerially, professionals becoming managers crave emotional support from their manager or management peers, often to cope with situation-specific personal predicaments.

Although not a criterion in their selection, the personal predicaments presented in Chapter Six were all of recently-experienced incidents. Their selection and presentation, therefore, provided an opportunity to explore experiences of vulnerability, and related self-identity work processes of professionals becoming managers, as they *progress within* management. In contrast to Badaracco's (1997, p.15) view that self-identity defining moments occur "in sharpest relief" as part of early managerial experiences:

The illustrations provided in this research suggest that professionals becoming managers continue to experience sharp relief identity-symbolic personal predicaments as they progress managerially.

For all participants, except Wendy and Felicity, the relational dimensions of the current personal predicaments centred on relationships with professional or managerial peers. These problematic relationships influenced self-identity work processes, and particularly relational identity positioning. Therefore, the selected personal predicaments have further highlighted the interpretive insights from Chapter Five that, in contrast to first becoming managers' focus on relationships with the team (Hill, 2003), for individuals as they progress managerially proactively managing relationships with peers assumes "highest priority" (Hill, 2003).

The illustrations of middle and senior managers' personal predicaments relating to vulnerability have supported the view that insights into the "peculiar loneliness, precariousness and vulnerability" (Sims, 2003, p.1195) characterising middle manager's lives can be gained through interpretation of their narratives and stories.

Complementing the focus on the "vulnerability of middle managers as revealed by stories told *about* them" (Sims, 2003, p.1210, my emphasis):

This thesis has provided further insights into the vulnerability of middle managers as revealed by stories told ***by*** *them.*

Therefore, in summary:

Through its illustrations of professionals becoming managers' personal predicaments relating to vulnerability as they made a transition into and progressed within management, this thesis has provided a distinctive theoretical contribution.

The longitudinal dimension of the study design, and the participation of experienced middle and senior managers, have enabled a distinctive contribution to existing studies on identity work processes of professionals becoming managers as they make a transition into management and, more insightfully, *as they progress managerially.*

As discussed previously, in Section 8.1 above, this thesis fully acknowledges that the illustrations of personal predicaments relating to vulnerability of professionals becoming managers, presented in Chapters Five and Six and reviewed above, are partial, biased and situated. In spite of these limitations, the broad themes identified from the personal predicaments, and the illustrations of discursive resources and strategies employed by participants in their accounts of them, may be of practical use in forming the basis for others' research. Furthermore, for practitioners, it may be reassuring to appreciate that others experience vulnerability. Accounts of experiences of vulnerability may not normally be disclosed because of their potentially sensitive nature. The participants' accounts, and my interpretations, of personal predicaments relating to vulnerability may resonate with the reader's own experiences (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Ellis and Bochner, 2000; Musson, 2004). The detailed descriptions and contextualised data (Elliott, 2005, p.26) may, therefore, also have practical use in helping other professionals becoming managers, and managers more generally, make sense of and cope with similar predicaments.

This research might have interpreted further and theorised the broad themes and discursive resources discussed in Chapter Five, to reduce the paucity of existing

literature on professionals' understandings of management and managing (McAuley *et al.*, 2000). This was an anticipated direction for the research at the beginning of this research project. However, theorising of the emergent and tentative themes in relation to the literature on management and managing has not been undertaken. This was because, during the processes of data interpretation as described in Chapter Four, the focus of attention on the data shifted to the notion of vulnerability and its implications for identity work processes. Whilst acknowledging the partial synthesis with the existing literature, the discursive resource of the 'weight' of managing, employed by this study's participants in describing both early and current personal predicaments, does not seem to have been used by managers in Watson and Harris' (1999) and Hill's (2003) studies. This and other data might provide further insights into professionals' understandings of management and managing, as they make a transition into and progress within management, which may be addressed fully in future research.

In their sense-making and identity work processes in response to personal predicaments relating to vulnerability, **Barbara** and **Nina** drew on a discourse of gender, and **Barbara** and **Norman** drew on discourses of power and control. Norman's account might even be regarded as an anti-personal predicament and this is supported by the way he seemed to distance his self from the significance of the event by expressing 'some time ago that would have been a bit of a concern'. The account of the personal predicament, however, was insightful, for instance in illustrating Norman's understandings of profession and professional and the impact on his professional and self-identities constructions of conflicting discourses from his professional education and from his training and management by a 'quite powerful' director. Therefore, these accounts have confirmed that identity work is not power-neutral (Kondo, 1990) and have provided further illustrations of the power effect of relations and discourses on self-identity. However, the social construction of discourses, such as power, control, gender and gendered-management, and their effects on self-identity have been outside the scope of this research. The data gathered for this research, however, may provide opportunities for further research.

8.1.7 Insights into identity work processes

The sixth research objective centred on providing, through interpretations of professionals becoming managers' accounts of personal predicaments related to

vulnerability, theoretical insights into identity work processes, and specifically those aimed at repairing self-identity.

The illustrations provided in Chapters Six and Seven have supported the central argument of this thesis that personal predicaments are identity-symbolic events triggering active identity work. Articulations of emotionality in relation to the personal predicament may be indicative of the threat to self-identity, and therefore, to the active engagement in identity work aimed at repairing stability and coherence of self. For instance, in an attempt to repair his self-identity evaluation of feeling 'professionally completely discredited', **Edward** offered a plausible account of why he'd 'been so belittled' through his deliberate positioning of 'judge characters' who 'think they're god and behave like god'. The event threatened his self-esteem and his self-identity, causing him to engage in active identity work, probably at the time of the incident and, in the course of the research interview, through his accounting of and for (Allsop and Mulcahy, 1998) the personal predicament.

The personal predicaments triggered strong emotions for the participants at the time they occurred, and for some in their telling during the interviews. Through expressions such as 'embarrassed', 'exposed', 'very angry', 'sore', 'anxious', 'really chewed up', in relation to the selected personal predicaments presented in Chapter Six, the participants' articulations of vulnerability together with the detailed descriptions about their context (Elliott, 2005) also have confirmed the multifaceted and multidimensional nature of vulnerability (Lasky, 2005).

Although exploration of the intersection of emotion and identity work has been outside the scope of this thesis, the illustrations presented in this research have confirmed that identity work is not "emotionally neutral" (Beech, 2008). For instance, in her attempts to deal with tensions and contradictions between her professional and managerial selves, Tracy employed the discursive strategy of taking on 'neutral' social-identities of 'the outsiders' and 'the onlookers' when undertaking the strategic review of professional service provision. In contrast to Coupland *et al.*'s (2008, p.342) study which suggested that managers position themselves as dispassionate and teachers construct their selves as "passionate experiencers of emotion", in this personal predicament, Tracy is simultaneously manager and professional. Therefore:

This research has extended Coupland et al. (2008) by providing insights into discursive strategies drawing on emotion employed where one's managerial and professional identities are in conflict in a given situation.

This research has confirmed and provided further illustrations that self-identity and identity work processes are temporal and ongoing. For instance, both **Edward** and **Barbara** talked about 'moving on' from the selected personal predicament, and this is implicit in **Norman**'s expression that '*it* might have concerned me earlier'. **Wendy**'s personal predicament highlighted that identity work and the narrative self-identity are prospective and anticipatory in nature. This selected personal predicament, and the illustrations of identity-work processes related to it, has enabled this thesis to reject Ashforth *et al.*'s (2008, p.345) functionalist view that "[c]onstructing a narrative is always retrospective... as individuals draw on remembered experiences". Therefore, this research has provided further illustrations of the tensions which exist across different philosophical orientations in conceptualising self-identity and identity work processes. Instead, with its focus on a possible future event, Wendy's personal predicament has confirmed the 'retrospective-prospective processes' (Linstead and Thomas, 2002; Beech, 2008) of self-identity and identity work processes, as conceived by interpretivist and, in Linstead and Thomas' (2002) case, by critical self-identity scholars. Furthermore:

This research has extended research on self-identity by illustrating the retrospective-prospective identity work processes of middle managers in relatively stable organisational contexts in contrast to "turbulent and ambiguous times" (Linstead and Thomas, 2002, p.8)

Discussing personal predicaments with others seemed to be important in helping to make sense of the event, as well as providing a safe environment in which to be open about one's vulnerability, and to engage in "back-stage identity work" (Beech and Johnson, 2005, p.45 after Goffman, 1961). Engaging in dialogue with others provides an opportunity for the participant to extend identity work beyond internal inward-facing processes to external outward-facing social processes. Some participants, including **Tracy** and **Barbara** seemed proactively to seek the support of others in making sense of the personal predicament, whereas others, such as **Felicity**, **John** and **Nina**, lamented that such opportunities were not available to them. Therefore, the trust between the research participants and myself built up

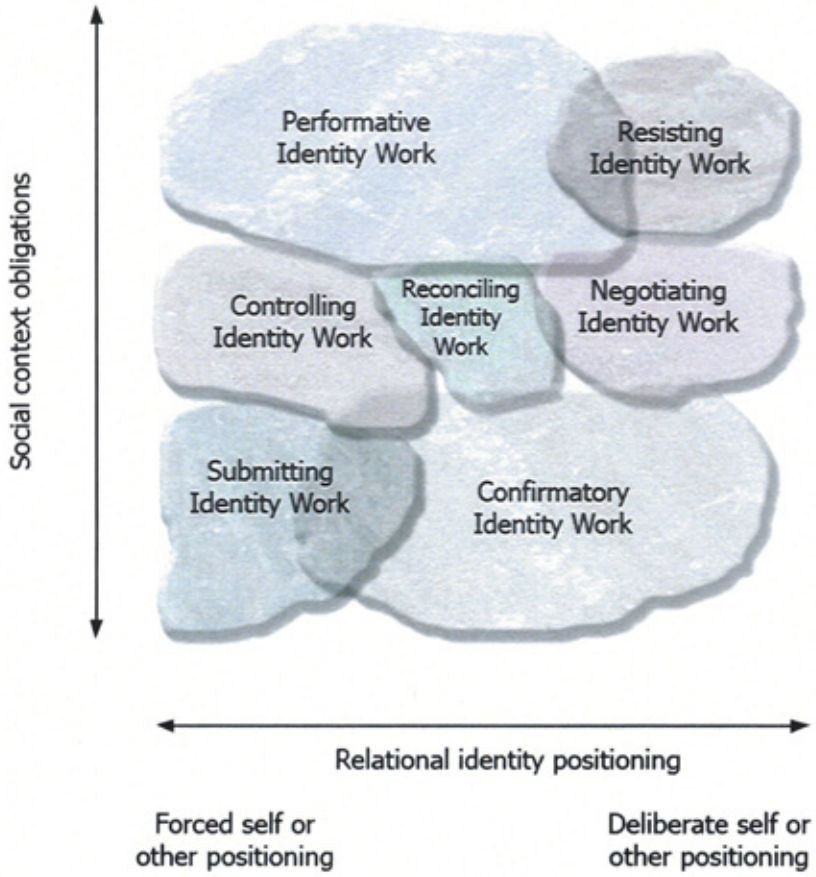
over the two stage interview process and through previous relationships with some through a management development programme, has provided an opportunity to its middle and senior manager participants to "rehearse... and explore the inconsistencies and conflicts" between their stories (Sims, 2003, p.1209).

8.1.8 A refined identity work framework

Drawing on positioning theory (Davies and Harré, 1990, 1999; Harré and van Langenhove, 1991, 1999c) and Beech and McInnes (2006):

This thesis has offered a refined identity work framework (Figure 8.2).

Figure 8.2 Relational identity positioning and social context obligations in identity work



The labelling of the framework dimensions draw on positioning theory, in making an analytical distinction within relational identity construction between deliberate and

forced positionings of self or other. Whilst retaining implicitly the notion of rights, duties and obligations in the labelling of the social context obligations dimension, this thesis has deviated away from Harré's (1998) conceptualisation of these as standing outside of discourse. In contrast, the refined conceptualisation of this dimension conceives social context obligations as socially and discursively constructed in given relational and social contexts, as well as derived from broader societal and cultural discourses.

Derived from this study's empirical illustrations:

This research has extended Beech and McInnes' (2006) framework by the inclusion of 'submitting' and 'resisting' types of identity work.

Resisting identity work is characterised by deliberate self or other positioning and, therefore, by unconstrained relational identity construction. The social context obligations associated with this type of identity work are fulfilled without personal, social or institutional pressure or duress, and are also associated with strong moral assertions. The illustrative examples, given in Chapter Seven, have demonstrated that resisting type of identity work may be employed as a discursive strategy in resisting a forced self-positioning by the other and to repair damage or threats to self-identity. Submitting identity work involves a forced self or other positioning. When the self is forcibly positioned by the other, as in the illustrations in Chapter Seven, the submitting type of identity work is characterised by no or limited latitude of freedom in relational identity positioning. This type of identity work is also associated with denial of one's rights and of personal agency in resisting the power effect of the other or the social context duties and obligations.

Beech and McInnes (2006) developed their framework based on interpretations of "naturally occurring" (Taylor, 2001, p.27) conversations and interactions between their research participants. This might explain the dialogic emphasis given in their explanation of different identity work types, for instance in the way they refer to discussions, say, about obligations impinging on both the self and the other (Beech and McInnes, 2006). The refined identity work framework and additional types are not derived from data occurring in 'naturally occurring conversations' but instead are derived from interpretations of participants' accounts of events, given in an interview context. The data gathering method in this research has the disadvantage of not

capturing "outward-facing identity work" (Watson, 2008, p.139) involved in the predicament as it is happening, although such outward-facing processes occurred during the interview itself. However, through the participants' reflections on the events, the interview method employed in this research has given insights into "inward-facing" (Watson, 2008, p.139) processes and the participants' "inner voices" (Hermans, 2001, p.252). Gaps in Beech and McInnes' (2006) framework may have become more evident because of these inward-facing processes associated with this current research method.

This thesis acknowledges that the additional identity work processes of resisting and submitting types have been developed from a small number of illustrative examples, using specific criteria. The criteria related to participants' articulations of contradictory deliberate and forced self positionings, and of conflicts relating to social context rights, duties and obligations. However, the credibility of the conceptual framework has been enhanced by the use of negative case analysis (Potter and Wetherell, 1987). For instance, as discussed in Chapter Seven, Edward's deliberate positioning of the judge did not seem to fit with the conceptualisation of the resisting type of identity work developed from the interpretation of other account extracts. Rather than deliberate positioning of the other, other examples of positionings in relation to the resisting type of identity work were associated with deliberate self-positioning. Further interpretation of Edward's negative case confirmed his deliberate positioning of the judge, with its implied moral criticism of the other, shared the strong assertion of the moral standing of the self, in this case in relation to the other, illustrated by the other selected account extracts. Therefore, Edward's apparent negative case illustration became a confirmatory example of resisting type identity work. Whether the additional types of identity work processes are insightful in offering explanations for identity work processes undertaken by individuals in different relational and social obligation contexts will be confirmed, or otherwise, by further research. For instance, such research might explore whether dialectical tensions between resisting and submitting identity work processes are associated with deliberate and forced positionings of the other and with relative unity between differing social context rights, duties and obligations.

Through the visual development of the metaphor of positioning, this research has emphasised the multiplicity, and the temporary and shifting nature of self-identity

constructions. By tracing footsteps between identity positionings within the framework, as shown in Chapter Seven, this research has offered a novel of way of highlighting the dynamic, dialectic and contradictory nature of identity work.

Even within the very short account extracts, presented in Chapter Seven, tracing identity positionings within the framework has highlighted the multiplicity of self-identities. This thesis has challenged also Sveningsson and Alvesson's (2003) view that movement of identities might be assumed but not necessarily taken for granted. Movement of identities, as indicated by the footsteps from one positioning to another, has highlighted the self-identity tensions expressed by the individual. This is most marked in the movement between deliberate self positionings and forced positionings of self, and illustrated through the dynamic and dialectic interplay between resisting and submitting identity work processes. Therefore it is proposed that this framework, and its use for interpreting and tracing identity positionings, may have practical use, particularly for those interested in researching identity drawing on positioning theory, which includes the work of Schrauf (2000) and Coupland *et al.* (2008).

8.1.9 Insights into identity work strategies aimed at repairing self-identity

Chapter Seven provided illustrations of identity work strategies, related to relational identity positioning, aimed at repairing self-identity. These included positioning self on the basis of similarity to and difference from the other. The chapter also provided illustrations of identity repair strategies relating to social context rights, duties and obligations, including defending one's name, drawing on one's position and criticising the moral standing of others. Through the illustrations provided in Chapter Seven:

This research has presented a set of identity work strategies, aimed at repairing self-identity, which cohere with and exemplify the refined identity work framework.

In offering the strategies as interpretive insights (Cunliffe, 2008) this thesis acknowledges that many have been discussed by other identity scholars. However, this is the first time that a set of identity work strategies has been presented to cohere with the refined identity work framework and to illustrate relational identity positionings and constructions of social context obligations, associated with experiences of vulnerability. Therefore, the identity work strategies offered by this

thesis have been included as part of the refinement of the identity work framework, and to show the nuances (Garcia and Hardy, 2007) of the processes and outcomes of identity work. Also, there is no suggestion that the identity work strategies presented are comprehensive or generalisable to other personal predicaments and contexts. Instead, the strategies discussed in Chapter Seven might be evaluated as "effective guides to actions" (Watson, 2000, p.506) in doing identity work. In this respect, the personal predicaments and descriptions of strategies employed by the participants in this study may resonate with the reader's experiences and inform his/her strategies in coping with similar self-identity threatening predicaments.

Chapter Seven also included illustrations of story-based identity work strategies, involving positioning of self as victim and villain, and drawing on narratives of conspiracy or tragedy. Through these illustrations this research has contributed to a research agenda, identified by Garcia and Hardy (2007), in exploring how victimhood positioning provides a resource for identity work.

In summary:

Exploration of personal predicaments associated with experiences of vulnerability, as in this research, has provided further insights into self-identity and identity work processes.

The preceding discussion has reviewed and evaluated the central argument of this thesis, achievement of its objectives and of the research outcomes in the form of distinctive theoretical, methodological and empirical contributions to the existing literature. In summary, these are:

- *a conceptual framework of features of, and orientations to, self-identity*
- *a conceptualisation of personal predicaments and insights into personal predicaments, vulnerability and identity work*
- *a methodological approach drawing on relational social constructionist methods of discourse analysis transferable to other research*
- *insights into vulnerability as experienced by professionals becoming managers as they make a transition into and progress within management*

- *a refined identity work framework drawing on positioning theory (Davies and Harré, 1990, 1999; Harré and van Langenhove, 1991, 1999c; Beech and McInnes, 2006)*
- *insights into identity work strategies relating to relational identity positioning and social obligations and into story-based strategies*

Through achievement of the research objectives and the generation of the research outcomes, the research question and sub-questions are considered to have been addressed. However evaluation of the research objective relating to taking a consciously reflexive approach throughout the research process has not yet been made. Achievement of this objective is considered in the next section.

8.2 Outcomes from the reflexive approach

Acknowledging and utilising my presence in, and actions influencing, the research (Taylor, 2001) has required me to be aware of my identity within the research process (Mauthner and Doucet, 1998; Taylor, 2001; Elliott, 2005). Although Taylor (2001) considers this to be important for discourse analytic research involving interviews, it is particularly pertinent given the focus of this thesis on the subject of identity, and its appreciation of the self as reflexively constructed (Giddens, 1991). In the context of research methodology, the identity of the researcher becomes relevant: in selecting the research topic; in gathering data through interviews; in interpreting the data; and in writing up the research (Taylor, 2001). In acknowledging that my identity has influenced the theoretical and methodological outcomes of this research, according to Mauthner and Doucet (1998), the best researchers can do is trace and document their research processes. I have discussed these processes, and the influence of my personal and theoretical interests, at particular points in the thesis. For instance I have discussed my position in relation to the research topic in the Introduction and I have explained, in that chapter and Chapter Four on methodology, my use of the personal pronoun in writing up the research to highlight that this thesis is my construction. This section will be limited, therefore, to providing further illustrations of the reflexive processes in which I have engaged, notably in relation to the processes and outcomes of data gathering and interpretation.

8.2.1 Self-reflexivity and data collection

A relational approach to research requires the researcher to be aware of relational processes (Bouwen, 1998), for instance, during the research interviews. This thesis has emphasised that relational social constructionism is intersubjective and dialogical. The interview, therefore, is a "dialogical act... [and] the mere acts of being together in a room, stating the purpose of the encounter, asking questions, relating to the responses, and participating in the creation of an atmosphere" (Lieblich et al. 1998, p.166) are explicitly and implicitly being socially constructed. Therefore, I needed to be "aware in the moment" (Dowling, 2006, p.8) about what was influencing my questioning and responses. For instance, I was conscious of not being overly intrusive in my questioning, and I discussed this further as an ethical consideration in Section 4.6.1 in Chapter Four on methodology. However, my questioning and probing may have been perceived as a kind of interrogation creating the perceived forced positioning of the participant by me as the "interrogated" and potentially causing them to defend their actions (Edley, 2001, p.222). Similarly, a comment by a research participant may have caused me to respond, and position my self, in a particular way. For example, in the course of responding to my final question, in the first interview, asking him whether he'd like to say anything else, **Norman** discussed his lack of formal management training. Prior to the interview, Norman had participated in a management development workshop which I had facilitated and his comment about 'that management course is a bit of a worry though' prompted a defensive response from me. My initial question of 'why' was in anticipation of a possible criticism about the management development programme. Actually Norman's 'bit of a worry' was related to the time he had been able to make in reflecting on the programme content. However, the initial unexpected response from Norman had 'disrupted' my understanding of the mutual researcher-research participant relationship. Although not conceiving it as such at the time, I would now interpret my response as my perceived forced self-positioning by Norman as 'management development workshop facilitator'. Indeed a number of the six participants, who had participated in the management development programme, referred to it in discussing management training which they might not have done without my previous relationship with them.

From their experience as women researchers, Thomas and Linstead (2002, p.90) reflect on how gender may affect both the tone and content of the interview. They

observed also that the managers in their study "frequently expressed gratitude for having the opportunity to reflect on their situations" (Thomas and Linstead, 2002, p.90). Consequently, interviews may have a "strong counselling feel... with the interviewer being recast as a counsellor" (Thomas and Linstead, 2002, p.90). My experience as a coach, which I differentiate from counselling, and my style and manner (Taylor, 2001), may have led to **John**'s response to my final comment, in the second interview, of thanking him for his time:

> well thank you once again Sandra, I enjoy it, you know (Sandra: well good) cos as I say it's not typical... I don't do this very often, I don't do it at all to be honest so it's nice to be able to sort of like get things off my chest and talk about that

As noted by John, the research participant may not have considered or discussed previously the type of experiences elicited in the research interview (Taylor, 2001; Elliott, 2005). Elliott (2005) continues that, because experiences are not necessarily pre-formed as narrative, "the task of making sense of experiences will be an intrinsic part" (Elliott, 2005, p.24) of the interview. By extension, then, this sense-making and narrative construction of experiences will also be part of the individual's self-identity construction processes. The notion of interviews as identity work has already been discussed in Chapter Four in Section 4.7.

In relation to my gender and the content of the interview (Thomas and Linstead, 2002), instead of acting as a "constraint on certain topics or areas of talk" (Taylor. 2001, p.17), the woman-woman relationship in some of the interviews may have facilitated discussion. For instance, **Nina** and **Barbara** may have felt empowered to discuss the gendered nature of management with me, as a woman researcher who may be empathetic with their views. Indeed, Barbara observed, in relation to large meetings rather than one-to-one interviews, that 'if I'm with men I'm not very familiar with I'm less comfortable... whereas with women I'll just say anything cos I know it'll be fine, dead comfortable'. The gender of the interviewer, therefore, may be related to the power relations in interviews (Elliott, 2005). Power in relation to theoretical interests is also a feature of the research interview, with the researcher and the research participant drawing on their own implicit and explicit theories (Musson, 2004). For instance, extending further Barbara's and Nina's example, I did not offer my views on gender and management, nor position myself "as an insider who shares their situation or interests" (Taylor, 2001, p.17). However, I was aware,

during the interviews and subsequent data interpretation, that their self-avowed activism in gender politics is stronger than my own. Therefore, the "personal, political and theoretical biographies" (Mauthner and Doucet, 1998, p.121) of both the researcher and the research participant will have consciously and unconsciously shaped the course of the interview. I was also aware that I was exercising power, as the researcher, in deciding which issues to probe, minimise or ignore (Mauthner and Doucet, 1998), both in the data gathering and interpretation.

Therefore, I do not claim to have 'captured' (Mauthner and Doucet, 1998) professionals becoming managers' experiences of making a transition into and progressing within management. The way the research participants told and accounted for their experiences is just one of a plurality (Rhodes and Brown, 2005, p.177) of different possible accounts they may have given to others or to me at a different time and place.

8.2.2 Self-reflexivity and data interpretation

As discussed in Chapter Four on methodology, reflexivity is built into Mauthner and Doucet's (1998) voice-centred relational method through the second 'reader-response' element of the first reading. In this element, the researcher "reads the narrative on her own terms – how she is responding emotionally and intellectually to this person" (Mauthner and Doucet, 1998, p.126). Elliott (2005, p.158) observes that it is noteworthy that this explicitly reflexive element is part of the first reading so that the researcher begins by acknowledging her relation to the narrative text, and through it, to the research participant. Making notes on my thoughts and feelings in relation to the text and the participant made me more aware of how and where my personal or theoretical views might influence my understandings and interpretations of the data (Mauthner and Doucet, 1998).

A benefit in forming the CoP with research colleagues also using the voice-centred relational method, discussed in Chapter Four on methodology, was in sharing my interpretations of selected data. My colleagues responded emotionally and intellectually (Mauthner and Doucet, 1998) in different ways to the same narrative text and it was interesting to reflect on why I might have "missed or glossed over what they regarded as key aspects" (Mauthner and Doucet, 1998, p.133). For instance, I discussed my interpretation of **Wendy**'s personal predicament at one CoP meeting. The extract below is from my 'reader-response' reading notes and

includes the annotations I made to incorporate their shared and different reader-responses. In addition to the comments made by KK, it is interesting to note that JW thought that this participant, referred to by me at the time as participant E, was a man.

> In moving up to a more senior management role, I can't imagine that my primary concern and main source of vulnerability would be threat of being accused of bullying (KK note: me neither!). Perhaps this is because I do not fly off the handle and would not have the same concerns about how my emotional reaction might be interpreted. (KK note: is the issue the justice of managing poor performance or how it is done? Eg tone of voice, location, choice of words etc.) Wendy, however, seems much more prepared than I am to deal with issues of under-performance. I have very limited/no experience of dealing with this and would be concerned about how to handle it. Have I, therefore, selected this because of my own potential vulnerability in such a situation and in the knowledge/anticipation that it might be a (near?) future situation for me? (KK note: interesting thought) (JW read this narrative as a man, male behaviour pattern/expectations)

For me, this extracts highlights that, whilst I am reflexive about my social and theoretical positioning, I tend not to acknowledge my emotional responses to research participants (Mauthner and Doucet, 2003) or the research process. That is not to deny that I have and express emotions but it is an influence I need to 'work on' further.

Through this section I have illustrated how I have engaged in self-reflexivity and acknowledged influences on the research outcomes. I cannot know everything that influences my research and knowledge construction processes and some influences are easier to acknowledge and articulate than others (Doucet and Mauthner, 2008). I also fully acknowledge that I have made decisions about the selection, interpretation and presentation of the participants' accounts which will have influenced the outcomes of this research. Therefore this single authored account of the research process is one of many "different and potentially competing stories" (Rhodes and Brown, 2005, p.178) which could have been told. The next section considers this further by considering other possible research accounts that may have been given based on different research decisions and directions.

8.3 Reflexivity and limitations of the thesis

In the words of Bruner, through this research I have expressed

> a willingness to construe knowledge and values from multiple perspectives without loss of commitment to one's own values... It demands that we be conscious of how we come to our knowledge and as conscious as we can be about the values that lead us to our perspectives. It asks that we be accountable for how and what we know. But it does not insist that there is only one way of constructing meaning, or one right way (Bruner, 1990, p.30)

In taking a multiple perspectives approach (Bruner, 1990; Alvesson *et al.*, 2008b) to this research, I have acknowledged the productive tensions and alliances (Alvesson *et al.*, 2008a) which exist within and across the different theoretical orientations to self-identity. From the beginning of this thesis, and throughout, I have expressed my own interests, values and position in relation to self-identity. I have chosen, more or less consciously, to locate this research within a particular epistemological and ontological approach, of relational social constructionism. This will have influenced the aspects I have given attention and those I have ignored. This section considers the potentially different directions I may have taken in the research process, without compromising my ontological and epistemological commitments. These different directions are discussed with reference to the conceptual framework of features of, and orientations to, self-identity (Figure 8.1) and to the questions on the future of identity scholarship posed by Alvesson *et al.* (2008a, pp.17-21).

8.3.1 Philosophical orientation, level of engagement and epistemological interest

This research has taken an interpretivist orientation and explored, at the micro level, how individuals construct their identities and engage in identity work through social interaction and language. Data emerging from this study have suggested the "'darker' aspects of contemporary organizational life" (Alvesson *et al*, 2008a, p.17), for instance as indicated by **Nina**'s theorising that 'the gender thing always comes into it' and **Barbara**'s view that 'I do think there are gender issues when you get at the level that I'm at'. This research might, therefore, have taken a critical orientation in exploring, at the macro level, how individuals respond to the power effect of dominant relations and discourses. Although this thesis has acknowledged that identity work is not power-neutral, taking a more explicit critical orientation would have focused on problematising the "battleground of hegemonic interests" (Crotty, 1998, p.63) which is of epistemological interest to critical theorists and suggested by Barbara's rationale for 'sticking at it' as a woman manager in male dominated environments

> it would be very easy to have just walked away, you know, when decisions are made in corridors, the men only really take notice of the men despite the fact that you've made the suggestion two weeks' ago, you know, but they disregarded it and dismissed it, you know when they make fun of what you say, I mean I've had all of that, I've been there and I've done it and I've come through it and I'm fine and I'm well established but it's a battle, it's a battle

Therefore, as Crotty (1998, p.63) observes research basing itself "on the one and the other of these two envisaged ['peacable' or 'battleground'] worlds" will draw on different philosophical orientations and have different epistemological interests addressing very different purposes.

8.3.2 The self as agent in identity construction

This research has positioned the individual as "a central player" (Alvesson *et al.*, 2008a, p.18) and an active agent in constructing the self and in engaging in identity work. However, **Norman**'s identity struggles in relation to his 'quite powerful' director and the discourse of 'professional arrogance' have indicated that "'extra-individual' forces" (Alvesson *et al.*, 2008a, p.18) are also agents in identity construction. Therefore, as illustrated by Norman's case, this research could have taken the direction of exploring how self-identity is regulated by "organizational agents" (Alvesson *et al.*, 2008a p.18), such as the 'quite powerful' director, and by organisational and professional body discourses, including 'professionalism' and 'professional arrogance', constructed and used as normalising mechanisms by his organisation and professional body.

8.3.3 Language and discourse as identity construction resources

This thesis has argued that identity construction and work processes are dialogical and relational. It has, therefore, given prominence to the ways in which individuals, in their relationships with others including the self, draw on language, discourses and narratives, that is story-telling, in constructing who I am and who I am not. This thesis acknowledges that identities are crafted also from other resources and materials including embodied practices, material and institutional arrangements, and work groups and social relations (Alvesson *et al.*, 2008a, p.19). Discursive resources, therefore, are important but only part of identity construction. This research could have given greater attention, for instance, to the socio-relational and performative dimensions of self-identity construction through interpretations of how professionals becoming managers construct their identities through doing their work

and through their interactions with individuals and groups in the workplace. In this case, the research question might have considered the relationships between naturally occurring workplace practices, interpersonal interactions and identity work. Pursuing this research direction and epistemological interest would have methodological and resource implications. An ethnographic approach involving researcher participation in organisational activities was considered inappropriate to this current research because of time and resource implications. However, research interviews might have been complemented by observations of participants' talk and actions in the workplace. Such an approach would have provided an opportunity to explore more fully the relationships between storied resource, dialogical and relational, and performative (Smith and Sparkes, 2008) processes of self-identity construction (Figure 8.1).

8.3.4 Episodic identity work

This thesis has acknowledged that identity work is ongoing but has focused attention on episodic identity work, associated with role transitions and critical incidents, conceptualised in this thesis as personal predicaments. Taking the research approach, discussed in 8.3.3 above, of observations of research participants' in their natural work setting and relational contexts might have given an opportunity to explore the ongoing processes of identity work. Such a focus on the "situated practice" (Alvesson *et al.*, 2008a, p.20) of identity and identity work processes might have involved, as indicated above, participant observation of "organizational talk-in-motion" (Alvesson *et al.*, 2008a, p.20) such as meetings and less formal conversations, and observations of routine, everyday behaviour and actions.

This section has engaged in reflexivity by considering the limitations of this research because of the chosen philosophical orientations, epistemological interests and processes of identity construction. The alternative directions discussed, which would have yielded different knowledge about identity work processes, do not compromise my epistemological and ontological commitments but place a different emphasis on some interests, such as the power effect of discourse and the ongoing processes of identity work, than have been given in this current research. Alternative directions, in this case of possibilities for further research arising from the data already generated by this current research, are considered in the next section.

8.4 Possibilities for further research

The review of achievement of research objectives has identified the following possibilities for further research.

Participant reflexivity is particularly appropriate to studies exploring identity work processes and the retelling or elaboration of a story previously given may give insights into the plurality of different possible stories (Rhodes and Brown, 2005) and selective constructions (Riessman, 1993) of the self. A two-staged interview process, as adopted in this research, involving the retelling of a previous event, particularly when that event is complex and troubling (Riessman, 1993), may provide further insights into the partial, selective and present-oriented reconstruction (Riessman, 1993) of stories and, by extension, of self-identities. The potential insights into identity construction processes that may be gained from the distinctive method design of this thesis, and from the data it has gathered but not yet interpreted on first and second accounts of the same incident, may be evaluated through further research.

This thesis has addressed partially the paucity of research, claimed by McAuley *et al.*, (2000) on professionals' understanding of management and managing. The implications of the emergent themes tentatively presented in this research, and interpretation of the data set beyond the professionals becoming managers' experiences of vulnerability, may yield fruitful and insightful outcomes.

In their sense-making and identity work processes, participants drew on organisational, societal and cultural discourses, such as gender, power and control, and professionalism. The social construction of these and other discourses, highlighted within the data, and their effects on self-identity may provide opportunities for further research.

Discussing personal predicaments with others seems to have been important to the research participants in helping make sense of events, and in providing a safe environment in which to be open about one's vulnerability. Dialogue with others provides opportunities for dialogic and relational identity work incorporating both inward-facing internal self-reflection and outward-facing external engagement (Watson, 2008). Future research might explore the interplay of inward and outward

identity work processes in non-research specific contexts, such as coaching and counselling conversations.

Using the refined conceptual framework of identity work processes to interpret identity positionings and moral standings might be fruitful in giving insights into the relational and social obligations and other factors influencing moral agency. "Ethically assertive" and "ethically reactive" (Watson, 2003, p.167) orientations may be related to the resisting and submitting types of identity work identified in the refined framework. Watson (2003) recognises that his case study senior manager is not a 'typical' manager because of her self-avowedly ethically-sensitive stance. Future research in this area, therefore, might include managers at different levels in the organisation, those with and without professional backgrounds, and with different orientations to the centrality of a discourse of ethics and moralities to their managerial practice.

Storytelling strategies feature in identity work processes. When giving accounts of their personal predicaments, the research participants drew on storytelling devices, such as positioning self as the victim or the villain. In some cases, the participants employed emotionally evocative linguistic and rhetorical devices. Interpretation of rhetorical tropes, such as metaphor and irony (Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Gabriel, 2000, Grant *et al.*, 2004), might give further insights into self-identity tensions and conflicts and identity work processes.

Finally, the participants may have recalled and accounted for the specific events, selected as personal predicaments in this research, because they triggered strong emotions at the time. Personal predicaments are emotional experiences and related identity work is not emotion-neutral (Beech, 2008). Future research might explore the intersection of emotion, vulnerability and identity work.

The intersection of emotion and identity work, but not of vulnerability, is considered in the final section of this thesis, which gives my reflections on my becoming researcher.

8.5 Reflections on my becoming researcher

The crafting of this thesis as the outcome of the research processes in which I have engaged is a constitutive part of the crafting and re-crafting of my identity as

researcher. This thesis is one of the many stories I have told and will continue to tell about my becoming researcher. As I am soon, hopefully, to make a transition into different and ongoing processes of becoming researcher, it is appropriate to conclude this thesis with an account of a highly significant and emotional identity-symbolic event which occurred towards the beginning of this research process. The account is part of a fuller entry I made in my reflexive diary and relates to winning the best of Identity track for a co-authored paper (Corlett *et al.*, 2004). This was the first time I had presented at an external academic conference and I delivered the paper on behalf of my colleagues who did not attend. Winning the best of track came as a complete surprise to me, and I used the diary initially to record my reflections and then, as the night progressed, for catharsis (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) and for making sense of "who am I" becoming. The following extracts are from the diary record made on that day and night:

> (1 Sept 2004: 2.15 pm) Well, what a day?!... I felt on top of the world – in fact drawing on 'researcher' imagery I had already reached the top of the first peak in the range of my PhD.... BB said that he hoped that I would attend CMS and that I was a valuable member of the community, to which I replied that I felt less on the periphery now... I still can't believe they think I am that good – [co-author] contributed a great deal conceptually to the paper and analytically – I have just been clever 'in carrying it off'. On a positive though, if being a researcher is to write and talk about something you think is interesting, I need to take away from this conference that others think I have the ability to communicate something of interest.
>
> (2 Sept: 5.05 am) it's no good, thoughts won't stop – this must be Desire [reference to another track paper] and maybe that's the key. Identity 'project work' is significant to the individual when the 'event' generates within the individual strong emotion...
>
> (2 Sept: 5.45 am) (might as well abandon sleep!) relational element of identity work... so for 'conscious' identity work you need to be able to read the context, situation, dynamics within it – and modify behaviour accordingly – to impress, to express, starting to sound formulaic – like a recipe book. Perhaps, though, without it identity work – agency in particular – becomes accidental – ie it works out well for the individual 'by chance' or identity work is done to the individual because they allow themselves to be manipulated/shaped by dominant others... [I] have allowed others to shape [my] identity – they have moulded me... interspersed with 'significant' life events, where the individual's repertoire builds to a 'coherent' performance in a given setting, but coherence is dislodged when next (evenement?) [reference to another track paper] push and need for over 'impressing' happens

> (2 Sept: 6.15 am)... This must be what 'they' mean by sense-making; first conscious use of notion but of course I have used reflection-on-action diaries before and have related theory to make sense but am I beginning to extend theory here, or just regurgitating/rehashing (don't like the words because they're too hard on me and what I'm doing) the ideas of others? – But is that what the 'game' is about? An 'event' when things are never the same again [reference to another track paper], where the individual (sees the world in a different way) can never see the world in the 'same' way again. Oh my god, can I cope with life after this – and future sleepless nights.
>
> (2 Sept: 6.30 am) thought about meeting up with AA to discuss diary – still feel I need to show content to confirm their (AA, BB, others') opinion that I have a contribution to make... or is it rather to establish 'me' as an equal (which conceptually I am not now, but AA did say in 3-4 yrs time I could be).

I had not revisited this hand-written diary extract until writing it up at the final stages of this research process. Taylor observes that "[t]he researcher's special interests and, possibly, personal links to the topic are... a probable starting point for the project" (Taylor, 2001, p.17). In re-reading this extract, I am struck by how these diary extracts are not only an important story in the construction of my professional identity as a researcher but also how the genesis of the theoretical concepts of this thesis were 'conceived' on that day/night in September 2004.

Conceptually, this extract illustrates relationships between concepts – of 'identity work', 'event', 'relational element of identity work', effect of 'dominant others' in denying individual agency, and identity 'coherence' – which are central to this thesis. In terms of the ontological and epistemological commitments of this research, this diary extract is dialogical with questions and statements to my self, for instance 'This must be what 'they' mean by sense-making'. The diary extract and this thesis complement each other in providing 'concrete' illustrations of my becoming researcher. If the 2004 conference represented the 'first peak in the range of my PhD', I am now approaching the final climb, in the form of this thesis submission and examination. Conceptually my ideas have developed and I trust that 'I have a contribution to make' through this thesis.

Hibbert *et al.* (2008, p.7) discuss four dimensions of reflexivity and the researcher: repetition; extension; disruption and participation. Conceptualising these dimensions as a sequential process, Hibbert *et al.* (2008) suggest that the transition from extension to disruption is connected to emotional experiences. As an emotional experience, this account does not convey the strength of feelings – for instance of

pride, confusion, embarrassment, confidence, doubt – I experienced at the time, shortly after it, and even now as I recall the event. The reflexive process I engaged in as a result of that experience was, and according to Hibbert *et al.* (2008, p.8) should be, unsettling, messy and contradictory, although ultimately in my case positive and affirmative.

According to Hibbert *et al.* (2008, p.10) the "temporal dimension of the researcher's practice is rarely discussed in accounts of the research process". This has been an explicit dimension of this research process and of this research account. To express my current ephemeral temporal dimension, I now feel ready and able to engage fully in the last of Hibbert *et al.*'s (2008) modes of reflexivity of participation, through my research, with the research community. As a result of this research process and writing up this thesis, I no longer feel on the 'periphery' and look forward to making further contributions to the research community. Initially, these contributions will come through my membership of the steering group for the Identity Special Interest Group of the BAM 2009 Conference and, in the future, to publishing opportunities and success. Engaging proactively and reflexively with those communities will contribute to my ongoing becoming researcher.

8.6 Summary

This chapter has concluded this account of the research and research process. Reflexive in style, this chapter has evaluated achievement of the research aims and objectives. The chapter has drawn together the threads of the central argument of this thesis, that insights into identity work processes may be gained from interpreting professionals becoming managers' experiences of vulnerability. It has highlighted the theoretical and methodological contributions of this thesis in offering "context-related interpretive insights" (Cunliffe, 2008) into: features of, and orientations, to self-identity; personal predicaments and relationships between personal predicaments, vulnerability and identity work; a methodological approach drawing on relational social constructionist methods of discourse analysis transferable to other research; vulnerability as experienced by professionals becoming managers as they make a transition into and progress within management; a refined conceptualisation of identity work processes drawing on positioning theory (Davies and Harré, 1990, 1999; Harré and van Langenhove, 1991, 1999c) and Beech and McInnes (2006); and identity work strategies relating to relational identity positioning and social obligations as well as story-based strategies. This chapter has asserted that these

insights offer a distinctive contribution to the literature both on professionals becoming managers and on self-identity and identity work processes. However, this chapter has acknowledged that these insights are situated and partial and have been influenced by my self-identity as researcher with my personal, political and theoretical interests. Illustrations are given of the reflexive practice in which I have engaged throughout the processes of data gathering, interpretation and theorising. This thesis is both my personal construction and a means of constructing my self as researcher. These mutually-constitutive processes of self-identity construction are and will continue to be emergent and may include pursuing the possibilities for further research highlighted.

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Appendix 1 Interview One Guide

Introduction

Introduce myself and give an outline of the research

Thank you for agreeing to take part in my research and for giving up time for the interview today. As you know, the research is part of my PhD, and I am particularly interested in the experiences of professionals as they move into and undertake managerial roles.

The interview is in three main parts. In the first part, I would like to find out a little bit about yourself – your professional background, how you ended up in the role you currently do etc

In the second part, I would like to explore what being a professional and being a manager means to you.

In the third and final part, I would like to ask you to reflect on your own experiences of 'moving into' management, any 'challenges' you faced and how you dealt with them.

Participant introduction and Outline of professional and managerial experience

By way of introduction, can you tell me about yourself eg

What is your current role?

How long have you been in this role?

How did you end up in this role? (briefly outline your professional and managerial career to date)

Exploring the nature of the professional and manager identities

What does being a professional 'mean' to you?

What has shaped the meaning you give to being a professional?

What does management and being a manager 'mean' to you? (taken from Watson, 1994a)

What has influenced your notions of what it means to be a manager and of how you behave as a manager?

How is being a manager different/similar to being a professional?

Can you identify any personal values or beliefs which you think are relevant to the way you work? (From Watson, 1994a)

Exploring the identity construction/transition process

When did you first think of yourself as a manager?

Can you give me an example of a turning point, an event perhaps, marking your transition from a professional to a manager?

How did this event contribute to your understanding of yourself as a professional and/or manager?

The literature suggests that when making the transition to a managerial role, individuals can face challenges to their professional identity. What, if any, challenges or individual 'dilemmas' did you face?

Can you tell me about a specific incident/experience involving such an individual 'dilemma'/challenge?

What did you do to resolve the dilemma/challenge?

Interview Close

Thank you for your time. I will tape up the notes from our interview and will be able to send you a copy, if you are interested, so that you can amend/add to them. Would you be willing for me to contact you at a later date, to arrange a further interview?

Appendix 2 Interview Two Guide

Allow 2 hours

Purpose of this stage

- To re-engage participant with research project
- To identify and discuss new incidents/stories since 1st interview
- To discuss and co-analyse critical events/stories/examples from 1st interview, through further probing, participant reflection, and discussion of participant's and researcher's perception/interpretation of selected stories
- To encourage the participants to be reflective and reflexive about the influence of their stories on their personal, professional and managerial identities

Introduction

Thanks for a great interview last time we met – you told me x (eg 9) good stories.

As you know, the research is part of my PhD, and I am particularly interested in the experiences of professionals as they move into and undertake managerial roles and your understanding of yourself, as an individual, a professional and a manager.

Related to those broad themes, has anything been happening since we last met? Do you have any new stories to tell me?

New Critical Incidents/Stories

Taking each story in turn:

Let participant tell the story, in overview/detail. Then

Clarify the context and detail of the event, as appropriate eg

> When and where it happened, who was involved? (context: personal and organisational)
> What actually happened (who said or did what)?

What you were thinking and feeling before, at the time and just after the incident?
What were the significant factors?

Review of Critical Incidents/Stories from 1st Interview

SC to provide overview of Narrative Analysis/Critical Incident Technique /Analysis, and to give overview of stories from the participant's 1st interview transcript (eg 9 stories, about a, b, c, d, etc)

SC to provide overview of the key themes identified from these (and other participants') stories. Do these resonate for you?

Participant asked to choose 1 story (which in his/her opinion has impacted on their 'sense of self', their understanding of themselves as a manager) to discuss further.

Analyse/Reflect on the story

Before incident: what was the context? (yours, organisation's)

During incident: What were you thinking and feeling before and during the incident? What do you think shaped your thoughts, feelings, behaviours at the time of that event?

After incident: Why does this story stand out for you? Why did you choose this event (now, and at the time of the first interview)? How do you feel about it now, when you look back on it?

Use selected questions, where relevant, from following framework:

Has anything similar to this happened before? What was it? How is it similar/different?

Interview Close

Thanks for your time. I will type up the notes from our interview and will send you a copy, so that you can amend/add to them. Would you be willing for me to contact you at a later date, to take part in one final stage of data gathering, ie a focus group (in Dec 2006). Give overview of purpose, ie thank participants for involvement in the research project, to provide overview of themes which have emerged, and to check resonance and congruence.