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**THE INFLUENCE OF INFORMAL
COMMUNICATION ON LEARNING IN
A POLITICAL PARTY: AN
INTEGRATED APPROACH
UTILISING INFORMATION
BEHAVIOUR AND
ORGANISATIONAL LEARNING
PERSPECTIVES**

S M Hanlon

PhD

2019

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PERSPECTIVES**

SUSANNAH MICAELA HANLON

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements of the University of
Northumbria at Newcastle for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Research undertaken in the Faculty of Engineering
and Environment

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Abstract

Recently, the political landscape in Europe has been dominated by the growth of populism and the proliferation of smaller political parties, including those of the far right. Pressures are exacerbated by difficulties in discernment of truth amid the prolific dissemination of 'fake news'; alongside exploitation by politicians of technology induced changes in pace and volume of information. At no other time in the history of politics has there been greater need for rapid learning, particularly for established political parties, in order for them to be able to adapt, keep up and remain relevant on today's political stage. This research, utilising interpretivist methodology, aimed to critically explore and analyse informal communication activities within a centre-left political party in a country of the European Union (EU).

The research used a qualitative case study approach to investigate how informal communication influences learning in a political party. An in-depth contextual approach was taken, which involved exploring, through interviews, the perceptions of five participants, identified by using purposive sampling. These were firstly about relevant organisational contexts and secondly, two weeks later, about specific examples of 'informal conversation'; the latter term being the participants' agreed working definition of informal communication. Nine conversation cases emerged from the participants' examples for more focused exploration. The research design was developed through integrating information behaviour and organisational learning perspectives. Template analysis was applied to the findings. Two existing information behaviour models by Wilson (1999) were modified into new models, incorporating elements of organisational theory. The new working model of human information communication in conversation was applied to the findings to enrich and enhance their interpretation, surfacing additional information such as motivation for knowledge sharing as well as for information seeking in conversation. Findings showed boundaries between the formal and informal can be blurred. Many of the revealed aspects of informal communication reflected the nature of the organisation. The participants identified that a key contextual challenge for learning was the party having to rediscover its identity and place, in today's climate, without compromising its integrity. Self-efficacy regarding influence in the party through informal communication was only expressed by very active participants. The likelihood of follow-up activity from informal communication depended on the issues discussed. The research design has potential for expansion to comparative studies as well as application in other types of organisations.

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|------|
| Abstract | i |
| List of Figures | vii |
| List of Tables | vii |
| Dedication..... | viii |
| Acknowledgements..... | ix |
| Declaration | x |
| Abbreviations..... | xi |
| Chapter One: Introduction..... | 1 |
| 1.1 Background..... | 1 |
| 1.2 Research question, aim and objectives | 4 |
| 1.2.1 A note on nomenclature..... | 4 |
| 1.2.2 Summary of the methodology | 5 |
| 1.3 Structure of the thesis | 5 |
| Chapter Two: Literature review | 7 |
| 2.1 Informal communication | 7 |
| 2.1.1 Networks, ties and influence | 10 |
| 2.1.2 Communities of practice..... | 12 |
| 2.2 Knowledge and information | 13 |
| 2.2.1 Information behaviour | 18 |
| 2.2.2 Wilson (1981, 1997, 1999): models, adaptations and comparisons..... | 21 |
| 2.3 Learning | 30 |
| 2.3.1 ‘Organisational learning’ and the ‘learning organisation’ | 32 |
| 2.4 Combining theory areas | 36 |
| 2.4.1 The role of knowledge management in organisational learning..... | 36 |
| 2.4.2 Psychological Perspectives..... | 37 |
| 2.4.3 Informal communication for sharing information and knowledge | 41 |
| 2.4.4 Informal communication as a driver in organisational learning | 45 |
| 2.5 Summary..... | 47 |
| Chapter Three: Methodology | 49 |
| 3.1 Developing research question, aim and objectives | 49 |
| 3.2 Methodology: An interpretivist approach..... | 52 |
| 3.3 Method | 58 |
| 3.3.1 Sampling..... | 61 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| 3.3.2 Ethical issues, scope and limitations | 64 |
| 3.3.3 Establishing trustworthiness..... | 65 |
| 3.4 Data collection..... | 68 |
| 3.4.1 Literature review | 68 |
| 3.4.2 Designing the data collection tools..... | 69 |
| 3.4.3 The pilot study and resulting changes to the data collection tools | 72 |
| 3.4.4 Member validation and reflexivity | 76 |
| 3.5 Analysis..... | 77 |
| 3.6 A tale of two models - part 1: a critique of Wilson’s models | 82 |
| 3.7 Summary..... | 84 |
| Chapter Four: Findings about context | 86 |
| 4.1 Participants’ perceptions of ‘informal conversations’ | 86 |
| 4.2 Staying informed | 89 |
| 4.2.1 Current discussion topics in the party..... | 89 |
| 4.2.2 Keeping oneself up to date | 90 |
| 4.2.3 How one learns best and perceived barriers to learning..... | 92 |
| 4.3 Participant responsibilities, goals and motivation..... | 94 |
| 4.3.1 Current responsibilities and main tasks..... | 94 |
| 4.3.2 Background and motivation for joining the party..... | 95 |
| 4.3.3 Main personal goals and motivation to work for the party..... | 96 |
| 4.4 Participant perceptions on aspects of the [xx] Party organisation | 98 |
| 4.4.1 Perceptions of the main goals of the party | 98 |
| 4.4.2 Attracting and supporting new members into the party..... | 101 |
| 4.4.3 Stories, legends or sayings in the [xx] Party’s narrative | 104 |
| 4.4.4 Leadership style..... | 105 |
| 4.5 Interactions and influence..... | 109 |
| 4.5.1 People with whom topics are informally discussed..... | 109 |
| 4.5.2 Circumstances leading to interactions..... | 112 |
| 4.5.3 Perceptions of who most influences the direction of the party..... | 113 |
| 4.5.4 Perceptions of personal levels of influence within the [xx] Party..... | 116 |
| 4.5.5 Perceptions of most important quality for being influential..... | 118 |
| 4.6 Summary..... | 119 |
| Chapter Five: Case Findings | 121 |
| 5.1 Case One: Book club session..... | 122 |
| 5.1.1 Emerging topics | 123 |
| 5.1.2 Conversation goals | 124 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| 5.1.3 Post conversation follow-up | 125 |
| 5.1.4 Affective factors | 126 |
| 5.1.5 Participant reflexivity | 129 |
| 5.1.6 Boundaries | 130 |
| 5.2 Case Two: A day out with a local area representative | 132 |
| 5.2.1 Emerging topics | 134 |
| 5.2.2 Conversation goals | 135 |
| 5.2.3 Post conversation follow-up | 136 |
| 5.2.4 Affective factors | 137 |
| 5.2.5 Participant reflexivity | 141 |
| 5.2.6 Boundaries | 141 |
| 5.3 Case Three: Online members' social media forum | 143 |
| 5.3.1 Emerging topics | 144 |
| 5.3.2 Conversation goals | 144 |
| 5.3.3 Post conversation follow-up | 145 |
| 5.3.4 Affective factors | 146 |
| 5.3.5 Reflexivity | 148 |
| 5.3.6 Boundaries | 148 |
| 5.4 Case Four: Demonstration to support legislation | 150 |
| 5.4.1 Emerging topics | 150 |
| 5.4.2 Conversation goals | 150 |
| 5.4.3 Post conversation follow-up | 151 |
| 5.4.4 Affective factors | 152 |
| 5.4.5 Reflexivity | 153 |
| 5.5 Case Five: Celebration of amendment | 153 |
| 5.5.1 Emerging topics | 153 |
| 5.5.2 Conversation goals | 154 |
| 5.5.3 Post conversation follow-up | 154 |
| 5.5.4 Affective factors | 154 |
| 5.5.5 Reflexivity | 155 |
| 5.6 Case Six: Series of short informal conversations..... | 155 |
| 5.6.1 Emerging Topics..... | 156 |
| 5.6.2 Conversation goals | 156 |
| 5.6.3 Post-conversation follow-up | 157 |
| 5.6.4 Affective factors | 157 |
| 5.6.5 Reflexivity | 158 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| 5.7 Case Seven: At the annual conference disco | 158 |
| 5.7.1 Emerging topics | 158 |
| 5.7.2 Conversation goals | 158 |
| 5.7.3 Post conversation follow-up | 159 |
| 5.7.4 Affective factors | 159 |
| 5.8 Case Eight: The disillusioned member | 160 |
| 5.8.1 Emerging topics | 160 |
| 5.8.2 Conversation goals | 161 |
| 5.8.3 Post conversation follow-up | 161 |
| 5.8.4 Affective factors | 162 |
| 5.9 Case Nine: A catch-up from home | 163 |
| 5.9.1 Emerging topics | 163 |
| 5.9.2 Conversation goals | 163 |
| 5.9.3 Post conversation follow-up | 163 |
| 5.9.4 Affective factors | 164 |
| 5.10 Findings from shorter examples of informal conversation | 165 |
| 5.11 Summary | 169 |
| Chapter Six: Discussion | 171 |
| 6.1 Informal communication: what, where, when, why and who? | 171 |
| 6.2 A tale of two models - part 2: development of the adapted and the new | 183 |
| 6.2.1 New model of human information behaviour in conversations | 187 |
| 6.3 Informal communication and information behaviour | 191 |
| 6.3.1 Context for conversation action | 191 |
| 6.3.2 Information exchange including information seeking behaviour (ISB) | 194 |
| 6.3.3 Information behaviour outcome and follow-up | 201 |
| 6.4 Learning | 206 |
| 6.4.1 Information communication in single and double loop learning | 209 |
| 6.4.2 Organisational learning | 211 |
| 6.4.3 Being a 'learning organisation' | 220 |
| 6.5 Summary | 223 |
| Chapter Seven: Conclusions | 228 |
| 7.1 Objective one | 229 |
| 7.2 Objective two | 230 |
| 7.2.1 Information behaviour modelling | 231 |
| 7.2.2 Organisational learning concepts and theories | 232 |
| 7.2.3 The 'learning organisation' concept | 233 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| 7.3 Objective three | 233 |
| 7.3.1 Learning at organisational level..... | 234 |
| 7.3.2 Learning at group and individual level | 235 |
| 7.3.3 Influence and learning..... | 236 |
| 7.4 Evaluation of research aim and contribution to knowledge | 237 |
| 7.4.1 Evaluation of research aim..... | 238 |
| 7.4.2 Contribution to knowledge..... | 238 |
| 7.4.3 Potential for further research..... | 240 |
| 7.5 Reflection | 240 |
| Bibliography..... | 242 |
| Appendix A: Information Sheet | 263 |
| Appendix B: Organisation Consent Form | 264 |
| Appendix C: Individual consent form..... | 266 |
| Appendix D: Extracts from first interview transcripts | 268 |
| Appendix E: Extracts from second interview transcripts | 273 |
| Appendix F – Storyboard Images..... | 279 |
| Appendix G: Matching theory to questions for first interview | 282 |
| Appendix H: Matching theory to questions for second interview..... | 290 |
| Appendix I: Pilot first interview guide..... | 297 |
| Appendix J Revised First Interview | 298 |
| Appendix K: Pilot second interview guide | 299 |
| Appendix L: Revised second interview..... | 300 |
| Appendix M: Added Preliminary Discussion..... | 301 |
| Appendix N: Interpretation of case one | 302 |
| Appendix O: Interpretation of case two | 309 |
| Appendix P: Interpretation of case three | 316 |
| Appendix Q: Interpretation of cases four (with prequel) and five | 322 |
| Appendix R: Interpretation of cases six and seven..... | 333 |
| Appendix S: Interpretation of cases eight and nine | 346 |

List of Figures

| | |
|---|-----|
| Figure 1: Interrelationships among areas in the field of user studies | 22 |
| Figure 2: Model of factors influencing needs and information behaviour | 23 |
| Figure 3: From Wilson's general model of information behaviour (Wilson, 1997) | 25 |
| Figure 4: Linking information seeking communication (from Wilson, 1999) | 26 |
| Figure 5: Abstract representation of sense-making methodology's central metaphor .. | 29 |
| Figure 6: Geo-political journey of an information conversation | 131 |
| Figure 7: What is informal communication? | 172 |
| Figure 8: Where does informal communication take place? | 174 |
| Figure 9: Why does informal communication happen? | 176 |
| Figure 10: Who do [xx] Party members engage with in informal communication? | 179 |
| Figure 11: Working nested model of human information behaviour | 184 |
| Figure 12: Working model of human information behaviour in conversation | 188 |

List of Tables

| | |
|--|----|
| Table 1: Initial and revised templates for first interview | 79 |
| Table 2: Initial template for second interview on informal communication | 80 |
| Table 3: Revised template for second interview on informal communication | 81 |

Dedication

In Memory of John and Miriam Dean and Dr Franz Geiselbrechtiger

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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. I also confirm that this work fully acknowledges opinions, ideas and contributions from the work of others.

Any ethical clearance for the research presented in this thesis has been approved. Approval has been sought and granted by the Faculty Ethics Committee on 11th November, 2016.

I declare that the Word Count of this Thesis is 96,012 words

Name: Susannah Hanlon

Signature:

Date: 17th June, 2019

Abbreviations

| | |
|------------|--|
| Area rep | Area representative |
| C1 | Case 1: Book club session |
| C2 | Case 2: A day out with a local area representative |
| C3 | Case 3: Online members' social media forum |
| C4 | Case 4: Demonstration to support legislation |
| C5 | Case 5: Celebration of amendment |
| C6 | Case 6: Series of short informal conversations |
| C7 | Case 7: At the annual party conference disco |
| C8 | Case 8: The disillusioned member |
| C9 | Case 9: A catch-up from home |
| MP | Member of Parliament |
| [xx] Party | The political party (anonymised) that collaborated in the research |
| [xx] Women | Women's section of the [xx] Party |
| [xx] Youth | Youth wing of the [xx] Party |

Chapter One: Introduction

This chapter documents the background and rationale for the development of the thesis research question and the aims and objectives that emerged from this. A brief summary of the methodology is included with a note about nomenclature that will be used throughout the dissertation. This is then followed by a brief explanation about each of the subsequent chapters, thus reflecting the structure of the dissertation.

1.1 Background

The political landscape in Europe, as in the United States, has, in recent years, been dominated by the growth of populist politics and increased support for right wing politics; thus seeing the rise of identity politics, polarisation of political opinion and, in many countries, increasing support for far right political parties. Support for parties that seek to provide left wing responses to equality, climate change, and socio-economic problems, is spread across smaller political parties, while the support base for the centre-left, that characterise the social democracy platform in EU politics, are changing, and in some EU countries, even shrinking (Gallagher et al, 2011; Stoker, 2006; Luther and Müller-Rommel, 2002; Liddle, 2008; Martell, 2003; Keating and McCrone, 2015). Other traditional centrist and centre-right parties have also been experiencing similar losses to the emerging participatory and protest parties, as well as populist parties (Luther and Müller-Rommel, 2002). “There is little denying the sense of vulnerability now being felt by some of the most powerful European parties on both the left and the right” (Gallagher et al, 2011, page 231).

The challenge of increasing complexity and impact of globalisation is further fuelled by the exponential growth of social media and the attendant ‘echo chamber’ phenomenon, where “like-minded participants congregate and avoid exposure to alternative views and information” (Macnamara et al, 2012, p. 626), often leading to misinformation (Quattrociocchi, 2017). This has meant that political parties are under increasing pressure to simplify choices for the electorate and to provide fast, short-term answers. These pressures are further exacerbated as discernment of truth amid the dissemination of ‘fake news’ in an environment of information overload, grows increasingly challenging (Luther and Müller-Rommel, 2002). The world has seen a “radical transformation in the structure of political communication ... due to technology, pace and breadth of impact” (Luther and Müller-Rommel, 2002, p. 8). Luther and Müller-Rommel (2002) noted the concentration of suppliers of channels of

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

communication, in spite of their growing internationalisation. They further identified problems of “atrophying internal resources” and the “reduced role of party press” (p.15). They also note weakening group ties causing a decline in party identification and “increasing electoral volatility” (p. 15). On the status of political parties that sit within the social democracy party family, Keating and McCrone (2015, p. 13) observe that social democracy “has a future but it needs to undertake serious rethinking both about policies and about politics. The current crisis of finance capital provides a historic opportunity to do this”, the finance crisis being rising economic inequality, particularly resulting from recent austerity measures applied in several European countries. With the social democracy platform having once been traditionally the platform of the welfare state and then from the 1990s moving more to a platform of “human capitalism” (Martell, 2013, p. 33), other parties, including populist parties of the right are “embracing the welfare state” (Keating and McCrone, 2015, p.7). Meanwhile protest parties seeking more policies on climate, are adopting other left-wing approaches, which is again squeezing the social democracy parties in the middle. Martell (2013) believes that social democracy needs to rediscover itself, hark back to earlier values and policies and work together with the more left-wing protest parties. Martell (2013) believes the social democracy parties still have a role to play in rebuilding social and economic equality in society, but to achieve this they need to reduce the crisis of austerity by returning to their former policies of stimulus economics. They need a change from their recent culture of over-professionalising their voice (Gallagher et al, 2011), and to re-think work (Martell, 2013), redistributing work to create more opportunity, while also safeguarding working conditions, and work/life balance. Liddle (2008, p. 11) states that “Social democrats will only succeed where they create a credible project for the future”.

It seems that at no other time in the history of social democracy, which began in the late nineteenth century (Gallagher et al, 2011), has there been greater need for rapid learning within those parties, in order to adapt and remain relevant in today’s political landscape. Formal learning and training events are not enough, however, as learning through informal communication, both online and face-to-face, and the networks created through this form of communication, are potentially vital sources of information and knowledge. If struggling parties, such as some of those in the social democracy family, were able to harness learning from this type of communication, they then have the potential to enable a faster comprehension of electoral trends and faster, more relevant response; while demonstrating values which link the past values of the parties with current values in society, without losing credibility.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Reflecting on different types of organisations and workplaces, it is interesting to observe the extent to which employers overlook opportunities to benefit from employee insights. Employees are often equally capable of intelligent horizon scanning and making insightful interpretations of what this could mean for their organisation, as their employers. Employees share their views over coffee, yet potentially creative and incisive insights often fail to travel further than the immediate circle in which the conversation has taken place. How many opportunities for successful outcomes, do organisations miss through missed learning and failure to absorb a more nuanced understanding of a particular situation? If this happens in everyday work situations, then it is just as likely that this would happen in political parties as members exchange views in multiple informal encounters both within the party and outside the party. This led to the question of how does learning and knowledge growth happen, during informal exchanges, and are there any clearly identifiable barriers that prevent learning gained from such exchanges from being effectively diffused throughout the political party. What is the potential for learning from informal communication in influencing a political party's overall process of comprehending its environment and potentially being better placed to respond in a way that feels relevant to voters, without compromising the party's own intrinsic values?

In reflecting on what might be a suitable theoretical perspective from which to develop a research design to facilitate an enquiry into these questions, it emerged that there were, in fact, two bodies of knowledge that could be used here: information behaviour and organisational learning theories, concepts and models. As learning is essentially about growth in knowledge, and informal communication is essentially an exchange between people and involves the seeking and sharing of knowledge and information, the enquiry would definitely benefit from information behaviour perspectives. As the context for learning is organisational, the enquiry would also benefit from organisational learning perspectives. While there is extensive literature on information behaviour and, separately, on organisational learning, there did not appear to be any literature on informal communication that drew from both areas of knowledge. Furthermore, while studies on knowledge transfer through informal conversation and informal learning have been conducted in a number of different organisations, there has been little documented about the role of informal communication among members, supporters and potential supporters of political parties, in influencing the learning of the organisation. This then suggests that not only, is there a knowledge gap, but also that an integrated research approach combining information behaviour with organisational

learning perspectives would be a new direction and offers potential enrichment of the research design and results.

1.2 Research question, aim and objectives

The research question that emerged from these reflections was: to what extent does informal communication influence the learning of a political party? As Luther and Müller-Rommel (2002, p.1) state, continued interest in political parties is because “they are widely regarded as playing a central role in both the theory and the practice of modern liberal democracy”.

The primary research for the investigation centred on a single political party, which fits the EU social democracy profile, and is located in an unnamed EU country, whose membership of the EU was not in question at the time of the research. This is further explained in Chapter Three. The organisation, which participated in the study, requested that its anonymity be protected. The only way this could be done was therefore, to also avoid naming the country. The political party which has assisted in this study will be referred to, henceforth, as the [xx] Party.

The aim of the study was to:

To critically explore and analyse informal communication activities within a political party, utilising information behaviour and organisational learning perspectives, in order to determine the extent of their influence on the organisation’s learning.

The three objectives were to:

1. synthesise a working definition of informal communication;
2. critically investigate information behaviour and organisational learning theories, concepts and models, with a view to underpinning the enquiry; and
3. critically examine learning that takes place during informal communication activities, by applying a combination of information behaviour and organisational learning perspectives.

1.2.1 A note on nomenclature

In the interest of maintaining the anonymity of the [xx] Party, their country’s naming system for their political structures and roles are replaced by the use of generic terms,

after the style of Gallagher et al (2011, p.49) in that “members of parliament have many different titles across Europe ... we use the terms ... ‘member of parliament’, MP and parliamentarian interchangeably”. Some countries in the EU use the bicameral system of parliament with two chambers, while others just use one. The main difference is centred on how legislation is processed and whether an additional layer of inspection is applied. For the purpose of anonymity, it has been decided to avoid alluding to whether the country’s parliament operates with one or two chambers.

1.2.2 Summary of the methodology

The research applies an interpretivist methodology. It is a qualitative exploratory embedded case study of a political party, the [xx] Party, where the units of analysis are nine individual cases of examples of informal communication exchanges, reported by five participants. Purposive snowball sampling was used to identify the participants. The data collection tools were two semi-structured interviews, where the second interview also had characteristics of an episodic interview. The episodic aspects refer to the narratives the participants gave of their informal communication experiences. A pilot of the data collection tools was carried out which resulted in some additional questions being included in the interview guides, and a preliminary section being added to the initial interview. The first interview began by exploring participants’ perceptions of the nature of informal communication, and then proceeded to explore various aspects of personal and organisational factors, which reflect key aspects of organisational learning. After about two weeks, participants were invited to a second interview, in which they reported on their recalled experiences of informal communication exchanges during the intervening period. Template analysis was used to analyse the findings from each interview. The findings were sent to the participants for validity and accuracy checking and to allow for participant reflexivity. Two information behaviour models were modified, incorporating overlapping elements of organisational theory. The application of these models contributed to the final interpretation and discussion of the results.

1.3 Structure of the thesis

Apart from this chapter, the thesis is divided into six further chapters. Chapter two contains a review of the literature on informal communication, information behaviour and organisational learning, as required by the objectives. Literature on the nature of information and knowledge, and on key aspects of learning in general, of relevance to the dissertation, is also reviewed.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Chapter three contains the rationale for the research design, including structure of the literature review; choices of methodology and method; selection of organisation for the study and sample of participants; ethical issues and limitations; data collection tools and pilot study and analysis tools. This chapter also contains a critique of models developed by Wilson, such as the nested model (1999) and the general model of human information behaviour (1997), which later led to the development of two new models (see Section 6.2) for application to the interpretation of the analysis of the findings, and as part of a process of integrating information behaviour theory with organisational learning theory.

Chapters four and five contain the analyses of the findings. Chapter four is about perceptions of informal communication and personal and organisational contexts relating to organisational learning. Chapter five contains the analysis of the findings from the second interview, focussing on the case examples of informal communication, provided by the participants.

Chapter six is the discussion chapter, which is divided into four parts. The first part compares participant perceptions of the nature of informal communication with the findings from the literature review. The second part contains the two new models. The first is an adaptation of Wilson's (1999) nested model and the second is predicated on Wilson's (1997) and taken further to reflect information behaviour in conversion. The third part focuses on the findings relating to the cases of examples of informal conversation, applying the second of the modified models developed in Chapter three. The third part focuses on learning, looking at what the findings revealed about learning and organisational learning, in particular; and it also re-examines the concept of 'learning organisation' in the light of the research conducted up to that point.

Chapter seven is the concluding chapter. The first three sections address each of the three objectives originally stated at the outset of the research. This is followed by an evaluation of the research question and the contribution of the research to knowledge; and potential for further research. The chapter concludes with a short reflection on the research process and experience.

Chapter Two: Literature review

The literature review is divided into four main sections. The first three sections cover informal communication (Section 2.1), knowledge and information, including information behaviour (Section 2.2) and learning (Section 2.3). The fourth section (Section 2.4) brings the three areas of theory together. This is followed by a summary of the chapter in Section 2.5. Section 2.1 contains an exploration of the nature of informal communication and also includes an exploration of theory about networks, ties and the related phenomenon of influence, particularly in the context of informal communication. Section 2.2 explores a range of explanations about the nature of knowledge and information, and related concepts. From there, the focus moves on to information behaviour theory, and finally on to the specific information behaviour models developed by T. D. Wilson in the 1980s and 1990s. Section 2.3 then explores a range of theories and concepts related to learning before moving into the more specific areas of organisational learning, including the concept of the learning organisation. Section 2.4 focuses on where literature on certain theoretical areas can be combined together or where there are overlaps between them. The four sections are then drawn together in Section 2.5, a concluding summary of the chapter.

Running through all sections is the notion of 'sense-making' or 'meaning-making', whether it is addressed explicitly (for example, by referencing the work of Brenda Dervin) or implicitly. Motivation to learn, to improve knowledge at personal, group and organisational levels, to engage in information seeking behaviour, to communicate formally or informally with artefacts or with other people, (online or offline), to formulate goals from individual through to societal levels, to explore, share, and develop personal, organisational, social and cultural values, can all be said to primarily stem from the human need to make sense of the world in which they live.

2.1 Informal communication

Informal communication can be described as “voluntary talk that does not have to be solely work or task focused” or the social glue of the workplace (Fay, 2011, p. 213). It manifests itself in ‘small talks’, private conversations or, indeed, “corridor conversations” (Waring and Bishop, 2010, p.328) and a “web of conversations” (Coiera, 2000, p. 278). Informal communication is the central nervous system of the organisation, while formal communication can be considered as the skeleton (Krackhardt and Hanson, 1993). The network structures for formal and informal

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

communication may be quite different. Informal communication thrives on the formation of meaningful relationships and contributes to the social identity of people within the organisation (Fay, 2011, Meijer, 2008, Yuan et al, 2013). It is “spontaneous” and “volatile” (Farmer, 2008, p. 68).

Informal communication is often unplanned, conversing ‘off the record’ and acting beyond role expectation (Baugut and Reinemann, 2013); it is interstitial or exists between spaces and it is also ambient, i.e. unconscious choices are being made and the communication can be mood driven as much as aiming to tell a story (McNely, 2011). This contrasts with formal communication which is planned in advance, follows certain fixed rules, is official in nature, uses standard language and is sometimes an event that occurs on a regular basis, such as monthly meetings (Baugut and Reinemann, 2013).

Informal communication may also be described as ‘backstage’ discourse or communication in the margins (Waring and Bishop, 2010; Baugut and Reinemann, 2013) and can be vital to an organisation’s effectiveness. Waring and Bishop (2010) found this to be valuable ‘situated learning’, characterised by the oft cited ‘water cooler’ moment. Such backstage discourse is based on “shared understanding and language, trust, occupational membership, as well as situational opportunity and privacy” (Waring and Bishop, 2010, p. 327).

Informal communication can also take the form of artefacts such as scraps of paper, magnetic notepads, whiteboards and post-it notes (Chen et al, 2013). It occurs in physical and in virtual face to face environments as well as through email, additional social media, such as microblogging (McNely, 2011), and mobile phone exchanges (Baugut and Reinemann, 2013). Notes on scraps of paper and post-it notes have been shown to be invaluable in shift changes between nurses when sharing sensitive information about patients (Chen et al, 2013; Waring and Bishop, 2010). However, Skyggebjerg (2012) perceives that intensive e-mail use is causing this type of online communication to become more formalised, and less of a platform for informal communication.

The level and extent to which informal communication occurs is influenced by spatial and temporal settings (Waring and Bishop, 2010). Different times and settings attract different content of informal communication. Content also depends on the degree of privacy, the level of homogeneity or heterogeneity of participants (or homophily as

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

described by Subramanian and Mehta, 2013) and prevalence of 'in' or 'out' groups. Privacy and a sense of psychological safety are important factors for discussion of sensitive or confidential issues (Waring and Bishop, 2010). Where people have shared cognitive-cultural reference points, they often "perceive, give meaning to and act upon the world in similar ways" (Waring and Bishop, 2010, p. 327). This has been found to make it easier to develop safe, trusting relationships (Waring and Bishop, 2010). The seeking of common ground is a key function of informal communication (Fay, 2011; Yuan et al, 2013).

Baugut and Reinemann (2013) in their study of political informal communication cultures write extensively of the backstage nature of informal communication between politicians and journalists. They developed a model showing four dimensions which could influence the likelihood of informal communication taking place, which are shown below. The ones most likely to result in informal communication taking place being shown in bold:

- **Proximity** v Distance
- **Non-publicity** (behind closed doors) v publicity (through indiscretion or arranged leaks)
- **Co-operation** v conflict (co-operation may be on the principle of 'you scratch my back')
- **Seclusiveness** (secluded politics-media milieu) v responsiveness.

Backstage locations include corridors, staff rooms, storage rooms, hallways, cafeterias, break rooms or locker rooms as well as offices and meeting rooms (Waring and Bishop, 2010; Chen et al, 2013; Whittaker et al, 1994; Yuan et al, 2013).

People communicate informally for a various reasons, including personal disclosure, to socialise with each other, to give and receive support, to commiserate or complain, and for business updates and exchanges (Fay, 2011). When a work problem occurs a person is likely to have informal conversations with co-workers or call a friend in another part of the organisation to obtain advice about solving the problem (Johnson et al, 1994).

2.1.1 Networks, ties and influence

“Each individual human being is a complex adaptive system. Bring a group of human beings together in an organisation and the level of complexity increases hugely” (Farmer, 2008, p. 182).

Networks operate in a variety of ways and in organisations, with an organisation being defined as “a complex adaptive social system where people systematically co-operate to achieve a common purpose” (Allee, 2003, p. 14), and networks being defined as “sets of non-linear, non-hierarchical relationships that nest with other networks” (Allee, 2003, p.51). Networks can be social, political, professional, business networks, or networks of enthusiasts (Allee, 2003). Informal communication takes place across networks, which vary in terms of who the network members are, the history and purposes of the network, and how strong the network is. “Informal networks play a critical role in transporting information and facilitating work duties” (Subramanian and Mehta, 2013, p. 247) and they “emerge through voluntary association” (Subramanian and Mehta, 2013, p. 247). They display different patterns of communication and varied motivation among the network members. In informal networks, people do not usually talk in large groups, there is often an absence of clear boundaries or starting point, connections shift and change and “although they have the characteristics of social networks, they are a bit different because the knowledge, gossip, sharing, and stories are all about a particular topic” (Allee, 2003, p. 115).

Reasons for participating in informal networks are similar to reasons given in Fay’s (2011) research, for people engaging in informal communication. Networks are formed through people needing to create affiliations, to foster a greater sense of identity and self-esteem, and to “collect and pass along information” (Allee, 2003, p. 115). Subramanian and Mehta (2013) include psychological functions identified in the earlier work of Baker (1981), which include the need for risk reduction, as a defence mechanism, due to a need to know something and for other reasons such as “greasing the rust wheels and political manoeuvring” (Subramanian and Mehta, 2013, p.248).

Informal communication networks can also be viewed as shadow organisations to the formal organisation, which comprise among its members, key ‘influencers’ who are valuable organisational intangible assets and in particular ‘natural local leaders’, or influencers with extensive personal networks. Increased awareness of who these key influencers are is vital for effective enabling of change (Farmer, 2008). Key influencers,

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

such as knowledge brokers (Swan, 2014), can have a major impact on the pace and direction of organisations. Position in the organisation does not necessarily reveal who the key influencers and knowledge brokers are, though it can be a factor in influencing organisational direction. It is the knowledge skills and personality of the communicator that is more likely to determine the importance of their role as influencer or knowledge broker (Farmer, 2008; Swan, 2014). Communicators can have other spheres of influence, even if they are not key influencers. Some have a particular capacity for influencing immediate local colleagues, while some communicators take either positive or negative stances to proposed changes, which can speed up or slow down change implementation, and 'open minded influencers' can sway the balance of opinion on change (Farmer, 2008).

In documenting Twitter use at conferences, McNely (2011) applied the term 'tummeling' from the Yiddish word 'tumbler' meaning someone who could be regarded as a kind of influencer. McNely (2011, p. 4) describes such a person as "someone who is particularly adept at facilitating conversation and engagement within online communities – someone who often curates ideas and content while connecting previously unaffiliated individuals from overlapping networks" such as through Twitter, the micro-blogging application. A tumbler is essentially a conversational catalyst that might, for example, set the tone of the conversation or bring in someone new. They are essential to the fostering of sustainable organisational ties (McNely, 2011). The sets of ties in networks are essentially connections between people. Not only do ties denote connection, but also variations in strength and durability. Subramanian and Mehta (2013, 247) use the term 'ties' to define its close associate, 'network', describing a network as "sets of ties linking several individuals". Central and basic to theories behind social networks is the concept of tie strength.

Tie strength refers to frequency of contact, emotional closeness, bonding or degree of friendship and reciprocity or extent of bi-directional exchange (Subramanian and Mehta, 2013; Yuan et al, 2003; Shockley-Zalabak, 2012). Subramanian and Mehta (2013, p. 248) describes the movement across the continuum of weak to strong ties as being a function of "the amount of interaction, emotional intensity and reciprocity that takes place between two individuals". People can take on various roles in the linking of networks. They can be the liaison person, where they connect groups with similar or common information but are not members of those groups, or they can act as a bridge through being a member of two or more groups. These roles are 'boundary spanning'

in that the original role of the person in an organisation then links with other parts of the organisation as well as linking to the external environment. (Shockley-Zalabak, 2012). The more interaction, the more emotionally close the two people are, and the more two-way communication exists, the stronger the tie (Subramanian and Mehta, 2013). On the other hand, the less developed the relationships and the more limited they are in terms of “space, place and time” (Shockley-Zalabak, 2012, p. 159), the weaker the tie. With global dispersal of people working together, it can be more difficult to create emotional bonding, making stronger ties more difficult to develop.

Subramanian and Mehta (2013) note that in a study about bankers, ties tended to be stronger with the more experienced, whereas the newer relationships were more prone to disintegrate, with disintegration being the partial or full erosion or discontinuity of an informal network within an organization. Furthermore, Hansen (1999) argues that strong ties promote the transfer of multifaceted knowledge, while weak ties promote the transfer of simple knowledge. There are also other reasons that disintegration could occur, such as staff turnover, insufficient similarity of social strata, level of willingness to share knowledge, organisational change particularly in relation to structures, insufficient opportunities for organisational socialisation, and low levels of group cohesion (Subramanian and Mehta, 2013).

Research also indicates non-native speakers of the working language can experience difficulties creating strong ties with native speakers, unless there is a degree of sensitivity to their difficulties on the part of the native speakers (Yuan et al, 2013). The effort to create ties was found to depend on career preferences. Non-native speakers were more likely to bond with heterogeneous groups if they aspired to remain in their host country and make it their home, whereas those who wanted to return home and continue their careers there would more likely to bond within their own communities (Yuan et al, 2013).

2.1.2 Communities of practice

“Practice communities have stronger ties and more deliberate relationships” (Allee, 2003, p. 115) and are often formed with the specific aim of improving knowledge and skills. “They may share tools, methods, and tips and may even have a systematic way of collecting these. They are likely to have a strong sense of community, particularly where they have been self-selecting, have naturally evolved and are bound together by passion and commitment” (Allee, 2003, p.115). Communities of interest, on the other hand are less deliberate as they tend to be more about sharing interests as opposed to

achieving more specific goals, of projects for example. They are “intelligent ‘synaptic webs’ linking knowledge and ideas from the larger social system with internal expertise” (Allee, 2003, p.115). Communities of practice (COPs) “were the social infrastructure supporting informal learning and communication that generated high-quality performance” (Becker, 2007, p. 45). A community of practice is a group or network of people “who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting with each other on an ongoing basis” (Wenger, McDermott and Snyder, 2002, p. xi). Key elements of a CoP identified by Wenger, McDermott and Snyder (2002) are knowledge domain or what people know; the community itself, i.e. those who are in the CoP engaging in joint activities that build relationships and trust, and practice, or what they do. Allee (2003, p. 25) notes this is where people can share “repertoire and resources embodying accumulated knowledge”. CoP life cycles vary. They are characterised by starting as a loose network which gradually coalesces or comes together, maturing into a more focussed community. It involves stewardship or “cycles of activities to sustain energy, renew interest, educate novices, find a voice and gain influence” (Allee, 2003, p. 128) until the point of achieving some kind of transformation and “letting go, defining a legacy and keeping in touch” (Allee, 2003, p.28), such as through storytelling. Social network analysis methods were used in the British Council to examine its networks and examine how to improve their effectiveness, focusing among other aspects; the development of CoPs, along with personal networks and leadership development (Cheuk, 2007)). In addition to questions about who one sends to and receives information from, was also the question about whom one would have *informal* discussions with about work and emerging ideas. Interestingly, in this research, little difference was found in terms of formal and informal networking patterns (Cheuk, 2007). However, the research did find that one of the actions identified to improve networking was “the nurturing of existing sub-groups and informal groups” and also that regional leaders needed to continue discussing issues informally. It was found that this led to knowledge exchange broadening out from set agendas with a wider range of additional topics being covered “on a more informal basis” (Cheuk, 2007).

2.2 Knowledge and information

Drawing on Ackoff’s (1989) description, among others, Martin Frické (2009) deconstructs the traditional knowledge pyramid, which has seen multiple attempts at drawing discrete distinctions between the terms data, information, knowledge and wisdom. The terms are often used interchangeably, for example, data and information,

as if all information can be reduced to data, but in many cases the data cannot automatically be inferred, due to the intrinsic complexity that can characterise information. For example, why-questions cannot necessarily be automatically traced back to data. “Why-questions typically are going to be answered by a mix of facts and slices from the causal nexus tailored to the context and pragmatics of the question” (Frické, 2009). By the same token information can be wrongly inferred from the data depending on how the data is used in order to arrive at conclusions. Context, as shown by information behaviour studies research (see Section 2.2.1) is all-important to the ‘sense’ of the information. “There are many different senses of ‘information’ in use in information science” (Frické, 2009). Ford (2015, p.11) notes the complexities of definitions of information found, produces a simpler definition, which is that information is defined as “a meaningful pattern of stimuli, which can be converted into knowledge”, which according to Ford (2015) is done via the process of learning. Dervin (2010a) expressed concerns about too simple a definition of information, in which it “was assumed to be a product of innocent observation and analysis. Its innocence was assumed to provide its remarkable value for reality description and reality prediction” (Dervin, 2010a, p. 995), however, through modernity and the proliferation of tools of technology, it became much easier to manipulate information in ways that could effectively corrupt and misrepresent reality, or impose a less than innocent hegemony of power. Dervin (2010a) cites surveillance by governments as such an example. She set out three premises for humbling the notion of innocent information:

“One of these premises is that human beings make and unmake information in times and spaces, in dialogue. The second is that information is made despite and at the same time in human fallibilities. The third is that information can capture at best only a portion of reality for there is inherent discontinuity in reality itself. The combination of these three ideas suggests that all knowledge is inherently fallible and must be humbled to the time and place and procedurings of its origins”. (Dervin, 2010a, p. 995)

Audi (2011) and Frické (2009) are equally mindful of the role of human fallibility in the processes of making and unmaking information, and in what one thinks one knows. Dervin (2010 b) discusses the importance of communication and putting the person at the heart of any information system. Dervin’s (2003, 2005, 2010b) sense making methodology attempts to apply an approach to information that helps to overcome the problems of human fallibility in all the activities relating to information. It recognises the importance of communication and is part of a more dialogic approach to information.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Dervin (2010b) identified six components to be present in order for communication practice to effectively contribute to healthy information systems. These include the head for understanding, the heart to include emotions; hand to make the necessary changes and habit, in practicing the checks needed when dealing with information. The last two components mentioned were hegemony and the importance of remaining aware of how “hidden power discourses impede” (Dervin, 2010b, p. 1000) such information systems; and finally habitus and being aware “of how practices embed power within them” (Dervin, 2010b, p.1000).

Ruben (1992) identified three orders of information, with the third order being the one that most relates to social interaction. Here, Ruben (1992, p. 23) describes information as that which is “socially constructed, negotiated, validated, sanctioned and/or privileged appropriations, representations and artifacts”. Information can also be described as “meanings that are created as people go about their lives and try to make sense of their world” (Case, 2012, p. 51). According to Floridi (2004, p.560) “Information is still an elusive concept”. One view is that information can be seen as “a reduction in the degree of uncertainty or level of surprise given a state of knowledge of the informee (this is technically known as “interested information”)” (Floridi, 2004, p. 561. Floridi (2004) states that most analyses centre on semantic information and he raises a number of issues with this centring on acquisition of meaning, ways of acquiring “truth-values” (Floridi, 2004, p. 564). He ponders whether information can explain truth or meaning. While this is unlikely to be positively so, information can play a role in this. This potentially links quite well with Dervin’s sense-making approach, with some of its inbuilt caveats for dealing with information. Floridi (2004) also considers the relationship between information and knowledge, and which comes first. Information is inevitably absorbed not only to contribute to acquiring new knowledge but existing knowledge also impacts on how information is interpreted, internalised and utilised.

Information and knowledge are often used interchangeably. Sometimes these two concepts can collapse into each other, as in explicit knowledge (Polanyi, 1966; Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995). Frické distinguishes between ‘knowledge that’ and types of ‘know-how’, while Jashapara (2005, p. 136) adds ‘knowing’ to this list. Frické (2009, p. 139) later describes ‘knowledge that’ as “weak knowledge”, equally identifiable as information and therefore knowledge which can be recorded. Regarding the latter case, some aspects of ‘know-how’ might be captured in a way that eventually allows representation as a set of recordable rules, instructions or procedures, i.e. becomes transformed into more explicit knowledge or information. However, much know-how is

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

inexpressible being so intrinsic to the person with the knowledge that it cannot ever be recorded. This tacit knowledge happens so intuitively we cannot explain it (Polanyi, 1966). Other languages sometimes differentiate between different types of knowledge, in a way that English does not. Polanyi (1966) uses the German 'wissen' and 'können', translating the former as 'knowing what' and the latter as 'knowing how', and believes that one cannot be present without the other and that experience, awareness and attention are important in the acquisition of tacit knowledge (Polanyi, 1966). For example, apprehension is triggered by embedded remembered meanings rather than by the specific detail of an event. Synonyms for tacit knowledge include unarticulated, implicit, uncodifiable and difficult to imitate knowledge (Jashapara, 2005). As Polanyi (1966, p. 6) says: "we can know more than we can tell". He talks of the intelligent effort needed on the part of the recipient to pick up on what has also not been said to them.

"Our message had left something behind that we could not tell, and its reception must rely on it that the person addressed will discover that which we have not been able to communicate". (Polanyi, 1966, p.6)

Jashapara (2005) encourages a wider view away from the traditional explicit-tacit continuum of knowledge and looks wider toward postmodernist ideas of the impact of power relations, competing discourses and cultural contexts, as well as phenomenological perspectives of knowledge as a process, which is ongoing and social. Power dynamics impact on access to and dissemination of knowledge in organisational everyday practice (Levina and Orlikowski, 2009). According to Allee (2003, p. 143) "knowledge is a conversation ... not static but continual in motion, emerging in the shared communal learning space that arises between people", between interstices of structures (McNely, 2011). Creativity in knowledge acquisition cannot be known in advance of such conversation (Allee, 2003).

Returning to the notion of recorded data, Frické (2009, p. 139) counsels a pragmatic approach of favouring the recording of "what seem to be concrete facts, i.e. singular and relatively weak statements" as opposed to the far riskier in terms of truthfulness, albeit stronger "universal statements" (Frické, 2009, p.138) or generalised claims. Frické (2009, p. 139) also counsels that "interpreted recordings be true statements", where logical operators indicate the basis of the interpretations; and allow for the possibility of fallibility as well as, paradoxically, increase the likely certainty of that statement, i.e. qualifiers are built into the interpreted recordings. However, he cautions

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

against hedging one's bets to the extent that the interpretations are so vague as to be rendered as of relatively little use.

The characteristic of fallibility is important when considering the concept of wisdom, for which understanding one's own fallibility is key, so "a wise person has to know, fallibly, plenty". "Wide knowledge" is the knowledge that, according to Frické (2009, p. 140), has to be "applicable to tricky problems of an ethical and practical kind, of how to act". As well as having this knowledge, the wise person also needs to act accordingly, which in itself can be challenging as in the oft quoted maxim of teachers, "do as I say, not as I do". Nozick (1989) sees wisdom as diverse. At an individual level, a wise person needs to have knowledge on what are important as life goals, what the unobvious value of things is, and how to achieve goals effectively and recognising dangers. They need to be able avoid or minimise dangers. They need to be able to read people and understand their different approaches, motives and behaviours. They need to be realistic about what can be achieved, what the appropriate limitations are and which are unavoidable. According to Nozick (1989), wisdom is also about being able to accept limitations, to know where to improve and how to have good relationships with others and the society they live in; and they need to be able to take the long term view, have self-knowledge about their nature and motives, and have ways of coping with life's challenges and dilemmas. If this is translated from the individual to the group and subsequently organisational level, an interesting question here is whether or not an organisation can be wise, as a whole entity.

Returning to the notion of fallibility and knowledge, in the early part of his book, Audi (2011) articulates a range of opportunities for fallibility with errors found in the way people perceive with their senses, with the way they remember and with their own beliefs about what they do and don't know. Other factors that play into acquiring knowledge (while still having the possibility to increase error) include introspection where belief comes from looking within, a priori from grasping key concepts often done intuitively, and inductive belief where generalisations are made by learning from perceptions and inducing some conclusions. False inferences can easily be made in all these instances. In conclusion, Audi (2011, p.11) states:

"Positively, we can try to achieve knowledge and justification in relation to subjects that concern us. Negatively, we can refrain from forming beliefs where we think we lack justification, and we can avoid claiming knowledge where we think we can at best hypothesize. If we learn enough about knowledge and

justification conceived philosophically, we can better search for them in matters that concern us and can better avoid the dangerous pitfalls that come from confusing mere impressions with justification or mere opinion with knowledge”.

It is interesting to consider how one decides in informal communication whether someone has actual knowledge or is simply articulating beliefs which seem to lack justification, and how this impacts on the mode of communication as a valid route for organisational learning.

The complex interplay between information and knowledge is reflected in the breadth of literature available in this area and in the various bodies of theory that continue to emerge. The historical roots of knowledge management have, according to Jashapara (2005), come from “an integration of organizational learning, strategy and information systems literature” with no unifying theory, although the ideas of knowledge sharing, social capital and process (especially learning processes) are important to the field and its interdisciplinary nature. An underlying assumption in knowledge management is that “KM practices will deliver competitive advantage for firms in the private sector and improved service quality in the public sector” (Jashapara, 2005, p.139). Information science, per se, lacks a unifying theory but rather consists of a proliferation of a number of, sometimes unrelated, theories about different aspects of information science (Jashapara, 2005). However, in the study of human information behaviour, Wilson’s (1997, 2005 and 2016) general model of information behaviour with its interdisciplinary nature and its capacity for extension (e.g. Hepworth, 2004; Walton and Hepworth, 2011) involved a concerted evaluation of several information behaviour theories (Wilson, 1999).

2.2.1 Information behaviour

As with theories relating to management of knowledge, there has been a proliferation of theories relating to information behaviour as well as numerous summaries encapsulating those which the authors see as the most salient (Case, 2012; Case and Given, 2016; Bates, 2005; Jashapara, 2005; Leckie, Pettigrew and Sylvain, 1996). Wilson’s (1997) general model of information behaviour (see Figure 3 in Section 2.2.2) does much to encapsulate many of the theories, taking an interdisciplinary approach and utilising theories from other areas to bring a more complete approach. Wilson (2005) views his general model as a theoretical framework, which is evolutionary having developed from earlier manifestations from 1981, and likely to develop yet again in the future, as others (for example, Hepworth (2011) and Walton and Hepworth

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

(2004)) utilise and modify it for application to their research. Dervin (2005) offers another approach which is effectively a form of mapping out or modelling of information processes, by applying her sense-making methodology. However, in general, “we conceptualise information behaviour as including how people need, seek, manage, give and use information in different contexts” (Fisher, Erdelez and McKechnie, 2005, p. xix).

Information can be described as the perceived difference in the environment, within you, or “the pattern of reality” (Case and Given, 2016, p.6) or “any difference that makes a difference” (Bateson, 1972, p. 272). However, the idea of perceiving difference, according to Case (2012, p. 71) “rules out the possibility of information existing outside of a knowing mind”. Information can originate from the external environment or from within the person’s psyche, i.e. their own internal world (Case, 2012; Krikelas, 1983; Dervin, 2005). The difference from information acquired in either of these latter ways could conceivably mean that the information is subject to several exposures before the difference occurs. The idea of the ‘difference that makes a difference’ is also reflected in that the process of learning is a process of transformation, however small. Combining this with Ford’s (2015) view of learning being the process of turning information into knowledge, arguably, the consequence of learning is some level of difference has occurred in the learner and subsequently in the learner’s behaviour. Whether consciously or subconsciously, people are often motivated to search for that difference when they realise they do not have enough knowledge to meet a particular goal and seek to reduce this knowledge gap (Dervin, 2005), i.e. to meet an information need (Case and Given, 2016, p.6). The process of meeting one or more goals is likely to induce an information need. A goal can be anything from a task oriented work goal or a specific decision making goal, to simply strengthening an argument in a debate or arriving at a more informed opinion, or to meet an element of curiosity such as in a gossip situation. The difference making a difference could be applied in the sense of completing, changing, clarifying, verifying or enabling a position in a picture of a situation (Todd, 2005).

Situations of uncertainty can create an information need and vice versa, so that information needs, themselves, give rise to further information needs and can lead to a process of continuous iteration (Kuhlthau, 2004 and 2005; Belkin, 2005; Krikelas, 1983). Uncertainty can be associated with anxiety or “disorder in consciousness” (Csikszentmihalyi, 2013, p. 39), as opposed to the more positive feelings of curiosity (Savolainen, 2014) or enjoyment from achieving balance in terms of challenge and skill

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

(Abuhamdeh and Csikszentmihalyi, 2012). Roles and tasks (Leckie, Pettigrew and Sylvain, 1996; Leckie, 2005, Wilson and Walsh, 1996; Wilson, 2005, Walton and Hepworth, 2011) have been found to be key factors in shaping information needs, as well as factors like status in an organisation, years of experience and areas of specialisation (Leckie, 2005).

Case and Given (2016, p.6) differentiate information seeking from information behaviour, with information seeking being a “conscious effort to acquire information”. Information behaviour includes the conscious process of information seeking along with “other unintentional or passive behaviour” such as glimpsing, serendipitously encountering or stumbling upon information (Rioux, 2005; Erdelez, 2005; Williamson, 1998 and 2005; Foster and Ford, 2002). The concept also covers avoidance of information (Case and Given, 2016; Savolainen, 2012 and 2014) among other responses such as secrecy or withholding information or deception, giving misleading information to disguise a sense of lacking (Chatman, 1996). Baker (2005) writes about monitors and blunders in threat-situations, where monitors see information continuously so that they can keep abreast of the situation and know what is happening, often in an effort to reduce stress, while blunders use distracting behaviour to avoid receiving information that they perceive as stressful, when they are already stressed. Information behaviour can be about the level of engagement of the researcher (Baxter and Marcella, 2017), something which can result in being iterative between the levels; for example, being either initially indifferent or initially reactive, or starting by being indifferent and then becoming more reactive; or moving from a haphazard approach to something more focused, proactive and eventually fully engaged information behaviour (Baxter and Marcella, 2017). Alternatively, information behaviour can be about the way emotions can lead to the starting, expanding, limiting or termination of an information seeking process (Savolainen, 2014). In fact, psychological factors play significant roles in the way information behaviour manifests itself (see Section 2.4.2). When considering sources, people often prefer personal or informal sources to more formal sources (Case and Given, 2016; Dervin, 1998 and 2005; Krikelas, 1983; Hepworth, 2004). Information needs arise within given contexts (Dervin, 2005; Wilson and Walsh 1996; Wilson, 2005; Fisher, 2005; Foster, 2005) and it would be rare, if at all, to find any information behaviour research that does not need a degree of understanding of context in order to understand how the studied behaviour may have come about.

Studies, for example, of information behaviour in everyday life, include contexts of work/leisure balance (Savolainen, 1995), slimming blogs (Savolainen, 2011), breast

cancer information needs (Fisher et al, 2002), professional contexts of, for example, engineers, health care professionals and lawyers (Leckie, Pettigrew and Sylvain, 1996), physicists, chemists, research scientists (Ellis, 2005), informal carers (Hepworth, 2004), university students (Walton and Hepworth, 2011), firefighters (Lloyd, 2006), ambulance officers (Lloyd, 2009), microblogging politicians (Baxter, Marcella and O’Shea, 2016), voters during the Scottish referendum on independence (Baxter and Marcella, 2017) or contexts of immigrants’ new ‘information grounds’ (Fisher, Durrance and Hinton, 2004) and refugees’ ‘information landscapes’ (Lloyd et al, 2013 and Lloyd and Wilkinson, 2017). Marcella and Baxter (2005) summarise their research on the lack of correlation between what information providers produce and the information that users actually want, particularly with regard to government information provision. The authors developed an information interchange table clearly demonstrating the frustration of this dichotomy, such as the first example in which the information provider “seeks to create the “well informed” citizen” (Marcella and Baxter, 2005, p. 207), whereas the citizens want something more specific, such as “information of interest, practical use and benefit” (Marcella and Baxter, 2005, p.207).

Whether considering aspects of the knowledge management field, such as harnessing an organisation’s absorptive capital as well as its intellectual and social capital (Jashapara, 2005), or aspects of the information sciences, such as the application of information behaviour theories (Bates, 2005; Case, 2012; Case and Given, 2016; Robson and Robinson, 2013); these two areas are often found in separate faculties in universities. This is, despite the fact the two areas are inextricably connected. Knowledge and information, by their very nature, as a discipline area, essentially function as a meta-discipline, the essential glue that makes all other academic disciplines available for study, hence the joint title for Section 2.2.

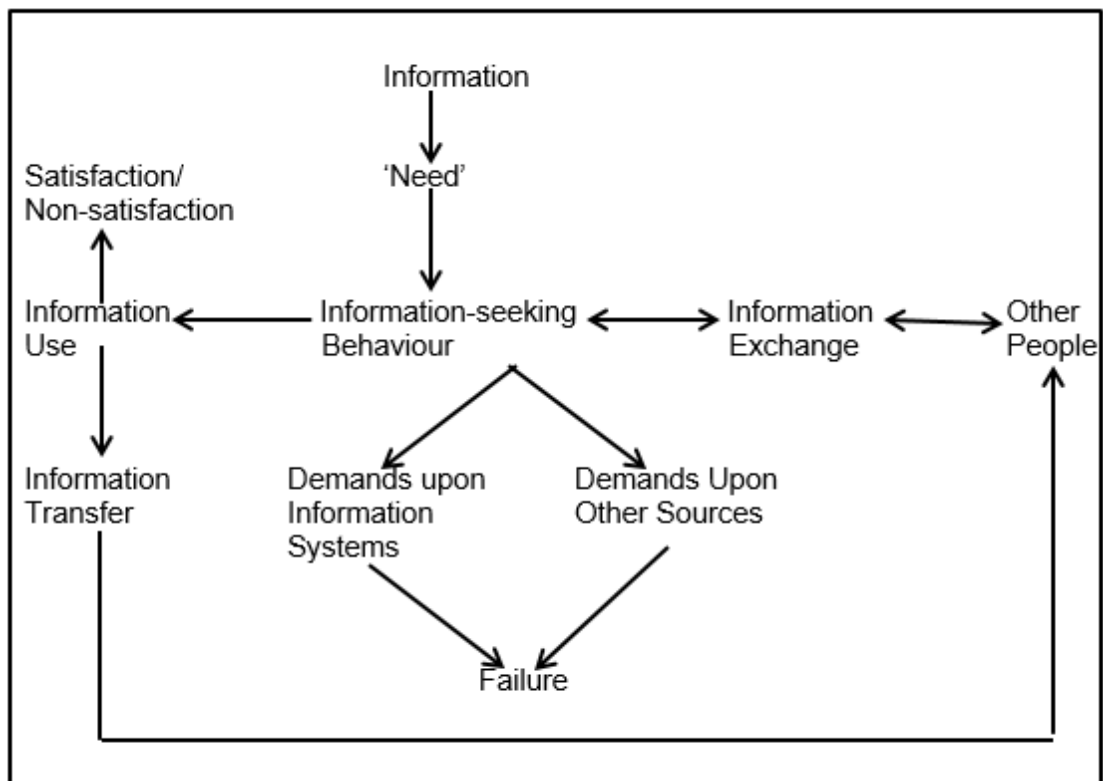
2.2.2 Wilson (1981, 1997, 1999): models, adaptations and comparisons

Wilson (1999, p.249) defines information behaviour as “those activities a person may engage in when identifying his or her own needs for information, searching for such information in any way, and using or transferring that information”. However, Wilson began working towards his general model of information behaviour (Wilson, 1997) much earlier, looking at interrelationships between aspects of information behaviour that could be found in various user studies literature. Wilson created a diagram to map these interrelationships (see Figure 1). As Wilson (1981, p. 4) states: “The user may seek information from other *people*”. This involves an exchange drawing attention to “the element of reciprocity” as a “fundamental aspect of human interaction” (Wilson,

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

1981, p. 4). Wilson (1981) discusses the idea of reciprocity as being sometimes weak, sometimes strong, depending on the hierarchy between the people interacting with each other. So, for example, a subordinate may hold back information from a superior, for fear of revealing “his ignorance” (Wilson, 1981, p. 4), thus being a barrier to the process of information exchange. The diagram recognises that information seeking behaviour can result in failure, whether this occurs through accessing systems or interacting with another person. The use of the information may succeed or fail in satisfying the user’s need. It can also be seen as relevant to someone else and so be transferred to this other person (Wilson, 1981). In information exchange a person may be “looking for facts, advice or opinions” and “orally given advice may be *preferred over* anything in writing” (Wilson, 1981, p. 5). This may meet the user’s information need or be something transferred to meet someone else’s information need. The problem of identifying or defining information need relates to “a failure to identify the context within which information needs investigations are carried out” (Wilson, 1981, p. 5).

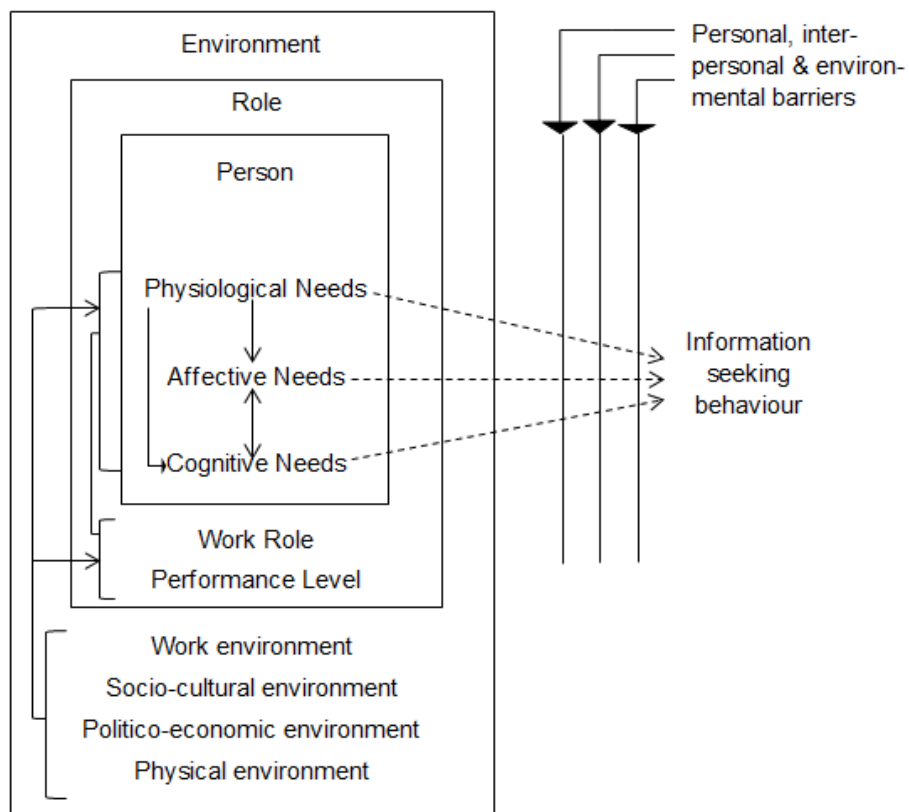
Figure 1: Interrelationships among areas in the field of user studies
From Wilson (1981)



Wilson (1981) suggests the removal of the term ‘information need’ and to refer instead to “information-seeking towards the satisfactions of needs” (Wilson, 1981, p. 8),

drawing from psychology and identifying three types of needs, the physiological, affective and cognitive needs. In other words information needs are secondary to the primary more basic needs. This is encapsulated in the concept of “person in context”, (Wilson, 1997, p. 568), which forms part of Wilson’s (1997) general model of information behaviour. Wilson (1981, p. 9) continues by noting that such primary needs emerge from various roles, which individuals “fill in social life” combined with their “personality structure” and in work life, the “climate of the organisation”. Wilson (1981) identifies four interrelated environments that create contexts in which primary needs arise with the potential to either engage in or create barriers to information seeking behaviour. The environments identified here are the immediate work environment, the socio-cultural environment, politico-economic environment and the physical environment as represented in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Model of factors influencing needs and information behaviour
From Wilson (1981)



In taking a holistic view of the information user, Wilson (1981, p.10) states “the individual would be perceived not merely as driven to seek information for cognitive ends, but as living and working in social settings which create their own motivations to seek information to help satisfy largely affective needs”. Wilson goes on to say that

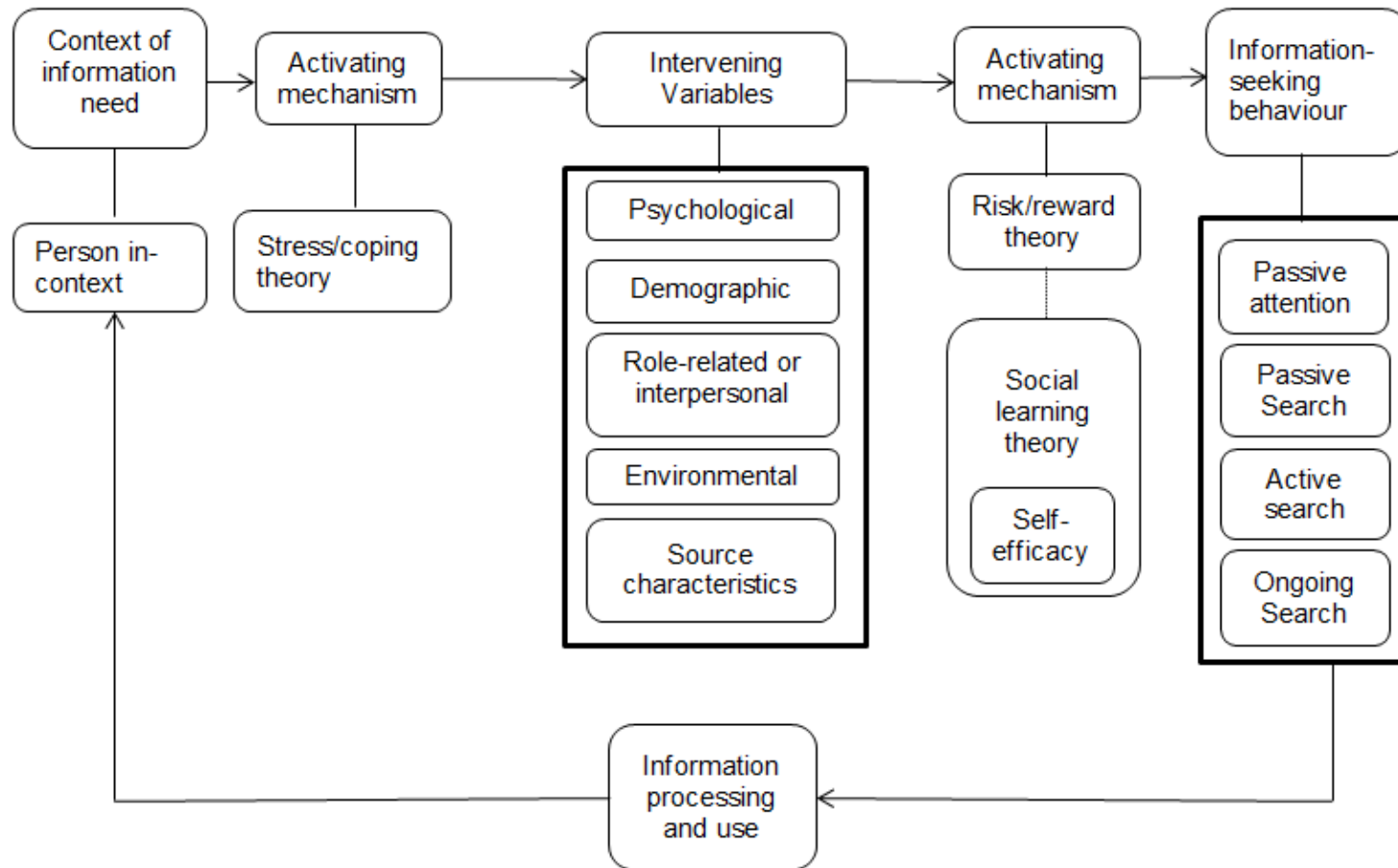
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

research needs a shift from looking at sources and systems “to an exploration of the role of information in the user’s everyday life in his work organisation social setting” (Wilson, 1981, p.10); paying greater attention to “the behavioural and organizational contexts of information-seeking” than before (Wilson, 1981, p. 12); noting that, currently, little attention “has been devoted to the phenomenon of the informal transfer of information between individuals” (Wilson, 1999, p. 251).

Wilson’s (1997) general model of information behaviour, shown in Figure 3, includes a large section on intervening variables, which emerged from Wilson’s 1981 model. While they were identified as potential representation of barriers to information behaviour, they can, at the same time, “serve to suggest that their impact may be supportive of information as well as preventative” (Wilson, 1999, p. 256). Wilson (1997) includes activating mechanisms that can also determine whether or not a user proceeds with information behaviour. For the first of these mechanisms, Wilson (1997) utilises Folkman’s (1984) stress/coping theory and Newcomb’s (1953) perspective of communication being a learned response in the face of strain. For the second activating mechanism, Wilson (1997) utilises the work of marketing theorists, Settle and Alreck (1989) around balancing risk against reward. For the third activating mechanism, Wilson (1997) incorporates social learning theory and the work of Bandura (1977) on self-efficacy, in which one has the confidence that they have the ability to successfully achieve certain desired outcomes. Wilson (1999) also considers Ellis’s (1989) search behaviours of: starting, chaining, browsing, differentiating, monitoring, extracting, verifying and ending. Similarly Wilson (1999) mentions Kuhlthau’s stages of information behaviour, of initiation (characterised by feelings of uncertainty) or recognising the need for information, selection, exploration, formulation, collection and presentation (Kuhlthau, 2004).

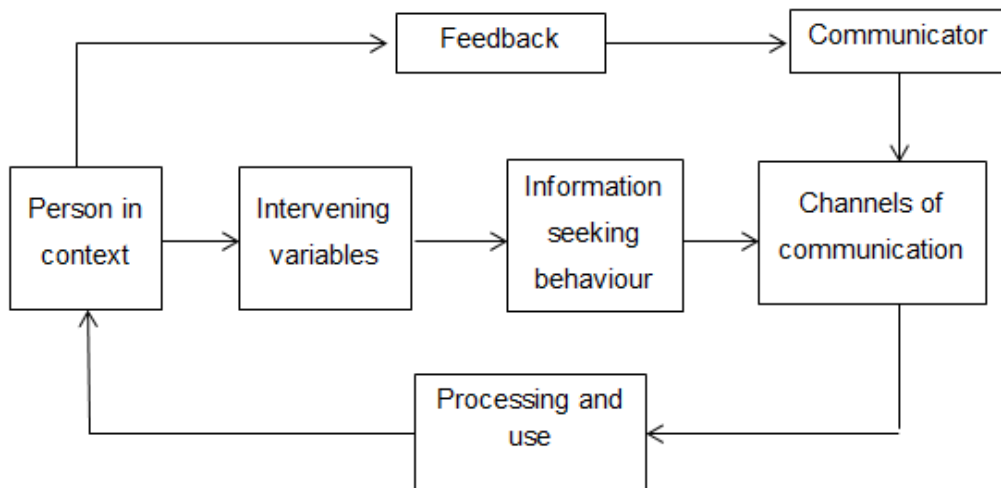
In 1999, Wilson presented a nested model to reflect research in the area of information behaviour and information seeking. Here information behaviour is the overarching circle being “defined as the more general field of investigation” (Wilson, 1999, 263). The sub-set from this is of information-seeking behaviour as people “discover and gain access to information resources” (Wilson, 1999, p.263). Within this, is the smallest subset of information search behaviour, concerned with the interactions of the user and computer based information systems. This does not suggest two way communication that would occur in either face-to-face or computer systems, such as social media and e-mail, as opposed to searching highly organised data sets.

Figure 3: From Wilson's general model of information behaviour (Wilson, 1997)



Wilson (1999, p. 263) suggests extending “the nested model further by showing that information behaviour is a part of human communication behaviour”. Wilson (1999) initially cites Shannon and Weaver’s (1949) model of communication, but quickly moves on to highlight Maletske’s (1963) seminal work on the psychology of mass communication, in particular, focussing on Maletske’s perceptions of the ‘communicator’. This included aspects such as “self-image, personality structure, working team, social environment, organisation,” and the “pressure and constraints caused by the public character of the media content” (Wilson, 1999, p. 264). There does seem to be some overlap here with Wilson’s (1981) concept of ‘person-in-context’, specifically the person’s role, their work context and the social environment of the person concerned. Returning to the idea that information behaviour is a part of human communication behaviour, Wilson (1999) goes on to suggest exploring the behaviours of both the group involved in human communication, and the individual, in terms of information behaviour and its subset of more specific behaviours. Interestingly, Wilson’s (1999) graphic showing adjustment of his general model of information behaviour (Wilson, 1997) for the linking of information seeking and communication does not fully reflect the nested nature as described in the article’s text (see Figure 4).

Figure 4: Linking information seeking communication (from Wilson, 1999)



Wilson (1999, p. 264) states that in this simplification of his earlier model, information sources are renamed as “channels of communication” and that the revised model shows the “communicator as the originator of messages over the channels of communication and shows a feedback loop through which the communicator learns of the recipient’s response to the communication”. It could be argued however, that the

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

communicator is the information source, having certain characteristics, such as those Wilson identifies in Maletzke's 1963 work, and that the channels are the transmission media (Roberts-Bowman, 2016), be it face-to-face, by telephone, or via a computer network system. Furthermore, the information behaviour sits within the whole communication process or event, with multiple exchanges between two or more communicators, which incorporates a continuous process of giving and receiving feedback. The intervening variables of the 'person-in-context' can arguably also be applied to the communicator, as said 'person-in context'. This argument is returned to again in Section 3.6 in the methodology chapter.

Another set of alterations to Wilson's general model of information behaviour (Wilson, 1997) was developed by Hepworth (2004) and further developed in Walton and Hepworth (2011) in their model of information literacy behaviour. Hepworth began developing his extensions to Wilson's model, after conducting interviews with informal carers, in which he was trying to "develop a framework that would help to identify key aspects of the person, his/her social environment, and his/her interaction with sources of information" (Hepworth, 2004, p. 695) which included people as well as artifacts. The model works on the basis of types of data, i.e. sociological, psychological and behavioural, and source data. The sociological section focuses on the 'role-related' variable, identified in Wilson's (1997) intervening variables, and expands this out to norms, roles and tasks. This sociological data is then shown as being interactive with psychological data, which is expanded from Wilson's (1997) variables.

Hepworth (2004) views knowledge, cognitive and affective factors as "states", which are transient variables "associated with a situation and the person's response to that situation rather than a permanent condition or state of mind" (Hepworth, 2004, p. 699). The term, 'knowledge state' refers to the amount of knowledge an individual has. An individual might have little knowledge at the start but gradually, after interacting with a range of sources, the individual's knowledge state changes. Cognitive states "reflect thinking processes associated with situations" (Hepworth, 2004, p. 699). This can be about uncertainty, questions in an information seeker's mind, and development of mental strategies. Affective states are treated as being positive or negative, although they could arguably also occur as a neutral state, with no strong inclination one way or the other. In discussing negative affective states, Hepworth (2004) notes how feeling overwhelmed by information overload, could then act as a barrier to information seeking behaviour. These psychological variables are then shown in Hepworth's (2004) extension of Wilson's (1997) model to lead to behavioural data in relation to information

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

seeking. The model shows three levels of behaviour: existing behaviour, new behaviour and the longer term notion of changed behaviour. This ties in with the idea of information as being the “difference that makes a difference” (Bateson, 1972, p. 272) and the longer term change in behaviour bears some relationship to Argyris and Schön’s (1996) ‘double loop’ learning. However, in the latter case, this usually goes so far as to involve a change of values as well as strategies or misplaced assumptions.

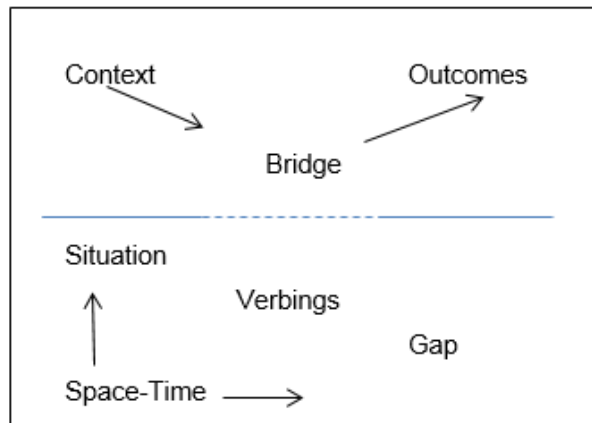
The psychological variables are also shown as being interactive with the source data, which Hepworth (2004) split into two concepts: source character and source behaviour. This could overlap with Wilson’s (1997) variable of source character. However, it is clear that the concepts are more nuanced. In Hepworth’s (2004) work with informal carers, source character is viewed in terms of positive and negative source attributes and how this can reveal the strengths and weaknesses of the sources. The character and behaviour of sources were seen to affect “the individual’s psyche and the fulfilment of tasks” (Hepworth, 2004, p.701). This seems to reflect how sources can impact on an individual’s sense of self-efficacy. In Hepworth’s (2004) research, positive attributes about the information source (face to face, paper based or electronic) were that the source was accessible, knowledgeable (if interacting with a person), showed good listening skills, had a good manner (seems interested), was proactive and responsive. On the other hand, negative attributes were seen to include poor provision of information complexity of information and information overload. Source behaviour is more about responses or outcomes following interaction with a source.

Returning to Wilson’s (1997) model, it is interesting to consider how this might or might not map on to or from Dervin’s (2005) landscape metaphor for her sense-making methodology. The metaphor seems to be looking at two levels: above and below ground. A simplified abstract representation is shown in Figure 5. In Dervin’s metaphor, above ground elements include the all-important context of the process of sense-making and the potential outcomes from the sense-making or bridging activity. Context in Dervin’s (2005) metaphor includes “power structures and dynamics” (Dervin, 2005, p. 28). These can occur at group level, organisational and at societal levels. This takes a different angle but can overlap with Wilson’s (1981) environments of work, socio-cultural and politico-economic environments, though perhaps not so much the physical environment. Dervin (2005) goes on to identify cultures and communities, which would definitely overlap with Wilson’s (1981) socio-cultural environment, and even his physical environment as communities cross physical and electronic spaces. Dervin (2005, p. 28) also refers to “domain knowledge systems” as another aspect of context.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This is less apparent in Wilson's (1981) contextual environments, but it does appear in Wilson's (1997) model, which looks at the variables of both sources and source characteristics and is hinted at in Wilson's (1999) nested model, in which he refers to the specific computer-based information system.

Figure 5: Abstract representation of sense-making methodology's central metaphor
Adapted from Dervin (2005)



Moving on from context but remaining above ground, a bridge provides both the route from context to outcome, as well as the clue to what is found below ground, i.e. a gap. Here Dervin's (2005) model allows for further analysis of information behaviour. While Wilson's (1996) psychological intervening factors consider cognitive factors and affective factors, both covered in Dervin's 'bridge', the role of narratives, stories and memories is only considered by Dervin (2005). Yet informal conversations would likely include sharing of stories and memories and contribute to a larger narrative, in some cases. Also Wilson's models (1981, 1997) do not really look in depth at outcomes, in the way that Dervin's model does, in which she considers "helps, hindrances, functions, dysfunctions, consequences, impacts, effects and future horizons" (Dervin, 2005, p. 28).

At the below ground level, various situations are brought to bear, from which recognitions of a gap or gaps, in knowledge, emerge. The situations identified include "histories, experiences, identities", past and present horizons and "barriers and constraints" (Dervin, 2005, p. 28). Wilson's (1981 and 1997) models concern themselves with barriers and constraints on information seeking, and the other aspects of Dervin's (2005) situations could arguably overlap to some extent with Wilson's (1997) idea of 'person in context'. Dervin (2005) shows gaps as revealing themselves through direct questions or expressions of confusion and uncertainty, or states of

stress and anxiety (Dervin, 2005, Kuhlthau, 2004, Wilson, 1997). Through what Dervin calls 'verbings', sense-making and "sense-unmaking" take place (Dervin, 2005, p. 28). It could be fair to say that informal conversation is a classic case of sense-making or "sense unmaking". Here issues, gaps in knowledge, concerns and anxieties, can all be expressed, explored and opportunities revealed for bridging those gaps, and allaying or adding to those concerns and anxieties. The activating mechanisms that Wilson (1997) considers like stress-coping and risk-reward strategies and issues surrounding the feeling of self-efficacy also play their part in determining how individuals go about their information behaviour, sense-making or gap-bridging, be it through informal conversation or other interactions with information or knowledge sources. Wilson does return to his model, most recently in 2016 at the ISIC Information Behaviour Conference in Zadar, with his paper being published later in the year (Wilson, 2016). Essentially he sees the model, which he described as a working model (2005, 2016), as still relevant and holding its own, that researchers can apply and use with their own adaptations of it.

2.3 Learning

The process of learning occurs through a considerable range of actions such as exploring, remembering, questioning, analysing, evaluating, observing, understanding, comprehending, (Bloom, 1956; Adams, 2015), experiencing (both success and failure) (McGill et al, 1992; Dewey, 1916; Al Hawamdeh, 2003), and experimentation (McGill et al, 1992). According to Dewey (1910), inquiry and reflection are the cornerstone activities in the process of learning. Learning is also about seeking out of patterns of logic, while surfacing and challenging assumptions and beliefs (Allee, 2003). All these actions feed into the creation of new knowledge (Adams, 2015). Learning can occur in a planned or unplanned manner. It concerns adapting and changing and can be thought of in two parts, firstly the 'learning product' which is the content of the learning and secondly, the 'learning process' or how one learns (Argyris and Schön, 1996). Learning can come from within organisations or from outside, and is not always automatically for the good. A process of 'unlearning' can also take place where something that has been learned is no longer useful, relevant or no longer works as it did in its original context (Argyris and Schön, 1996).

The experience of learning takes on different levels of depth, permanence and complexity. For example, 'single-loop' learning, as developed by Argyris and Schön (1996), is about performance based detection of error which requires a change of

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

strategy or assumption in the organisation, within a given set of values and norms at both individual and organisational level, that themselves remain unchanged after the error is corrected. Argyris and Schön's (1996) partner concept, 'double loop' learning, concerns the process of making individual and organisational changes in values 'in-use' as well as in the overall organisational strategy and inherent assumptions. Values 'in-use' differ from 'espoused' values in that the latter is about what people claim as their values, while the former is about values as they are acted out in reality (Argyris and Schön, 1996). Deuteron (Argyris and Schön, 1996; Örtenblad, 2004; Bateson, 1972), generative and whole system (Allee, 2003) types of learning go far beyond individual learning. They concern a longer term, systemic approach, which potentially functions, when thinking idealistically, throughout organisations, and indeed society, through many interconnected and complex interactions. Systemic learning involves identifying patterns that connect across systems, recognising the interdependence of systems and complexity of relationship and network dynamics (Allee, 2003 and Senge, 1990).

The capacity for reflection and inquiry into previous contexts of learning are key to learning (Allee, 2003; Elkjaer, 2005; Dewey, 2010). Inquiry is the necessary trigger to learning, though learning cannot take place without the capacity for reflection, learning from past experiences and past consequences of actions. Indeed without reflection "boundaries between what should and must occur and what can never occur" (Katovich, 2010, p. 345), those vital lessons needing to be learned to avoid making the same mistakes, or even as in the most dire contexts, to avoid catastrophe, could be dangerously lost when "moving forward in time" (Katovich, 2010, p. 345). According to Elkjaer (2005), who is much influenced by the work of Dewey, inquiries start with the senses, and bring about new experiences which are not always identified consciously or which are not necessarily at the point where they can be articulated verbally. However, those experiences according to Elkjaer (2005) need to be turned into acknowledged and conscious experiences for learning to take place. Generative learning according to Allee (2003) is intrinsically value-driven, while not forgetting the possibility of value change occurring through 'double-loop' learning (Argyris and Schön, 1996), and strengthens capacity for creativity and renewal. It "seeks what is alive, compelling and energizing [and] ... expresses willingness to see radical possibilities beyond the boundaries of current thinking" (Allee, 2003, p. 141). Learning as a state of paying attention can also be thought of as something that is likely to increase an organization's chances of experiencing good fortune in an increasingly complex environment (Allee, 2003).

Elkjaer (2005) distinguishes between individual and social learning, whereby individual learning is “seen as separating epistemology, to come to know about the world, from ontology, to be and become part of the world”, and whereby mental models of how the world works remain in the minds of the individual. Social learning continuously combines epistemology and ontology, through social action and interaction, the sharing and exploring of mental models, and subsequent challenging of and reflection on individual and organisational assumptions. Individuals are “seen as products of their social and cultural history” (Elkjaer, p. 43), their former experiences and perceptions of power through those experiences. “A social learning theory emphasizes informality, improvisation, collective action, conversation and sense making, and learning is of a distributed and provisional nature” (Elkjaer, 2005, p. 44). In social learning, the process is one of participation and interaction, through different individuals’ experiences and perceptions. Individuals participate in different ways and this affects how learning impacts on the organisations where that learning takes place (Elkjaer, 2005 and Allee, 2003). Social learning relates to practice, becoming a practitioner, therefore it is a process of identity development, negotiation of relationships and socially engaged sense-making. Conflict and power relations inevitably impact on how and what learning occurs (Elkjaer, 2005).

Being able to effectively use the learning that occurs within organisations’ networks could increase the organisation’s ability to adapt in a rapidly changing world. Such learning enhances an organisation’s potential for innovation, improved productivity and performance, increased flexibility and the ability to survive in a rapidly changing world. This could conceivably be reflected within organisations through a systemic learning approach to its activities, such as collaboration and teamwork (Hamel and Prahalad, 1994), and its policies and structures. Such learning involves reflection on past experience, current processes and current practice (Allee, 2003; Al-Hawamdeh, 2003; Bennett and O’Brien, 1994); and has the potential to significantly enhance the transfer and exploitation of knowledge within organisations.

2.3.1 ‘Organisational learning’ and the ‘learning organisation’

“Organisations consist of real people, each with their own experiences, history and hopes for the future...This is the starting point for learning and organizational learning” (Elkjaer, 2005, p. 50). The term ‘learning organisation’ is not interchangeable with that of ‘organisational learning’. The latter refers to processes of learning within organisations, whereas the ‘learning organisation’ concerns learning as it occurs in

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

specific organisations (Dibella and Nevis, 1998) or process in practice (Easterby-Smith and Lyles, 2005). It can sometimes reflect an ideal of how learning could enable an organisation to make the most of the intellectual capital it interacts with. Critics, such as Caldwell (2012a and 2012b), Cavaleri (2005) and Argyris and Schön (1996), see some promoters of the concept as “sometimes messianic and largely uncritical” (Argyris and Schön, 1996, p. xix). ‘The learning organisation’ is seen as “an entity, an ideal type of organization, which has the capacity to learn effectively and hence to prosper” (Easterby-Smith and Lyles, 2005, p. 2). Prospering is not so much about good fortune (neither good luck nor good management) but “good sense (ing)” (Allee, 2003, p. 23) or paying close attention to what is emerging as actions leading to prospering (Allee, 2003). Barriers to effectiveness as a learning organisation include problems such as learning not being seen as a critical success factor; learning models being viewed sceptically or being actively resisted; or lack of reward or recognition for sharing knowledge (Bennett and O’Brien, 1994). Further barriers can emerge through a culture of ‘selfish’ learning focussing only on own individual goals; a loss of expert and experienced staff; lack of effective leadership; or insufficient cross-cultural sensitivity (Bennett and O’Brien, 1994). More has been written about the concept of ‘learning organisations’ in business contexts rather than in public sector environments (Maden, 2011), which suggests that there is scope for more studies on non-commercial organisations, such as hospitals, city councils, political organizations, charities and voluntary organisations. Changes in work patterns and mobility mean people are more often geographically dispersed (Al-Hawamdeh, 2003), which brings its own challenges to enabling the sharing of learning experiences within organisations.

Caldwell (2012a and b) supports Argyris and Schön’s (1996) misgivings about some descriptions of the learning organisation as being too enthusiastic, uncritical, and insufficiently supported by research into learning organisations in practice. He articulates deep concerns particularly about Senge’s (1990 and later work) perception of a learning organisation as a new way of thinking about ‘change agency’ and leadership, as distributed leadership. According to Caldwell (2012a), such a link is unrealistic. Senge neglects issues of practice and power of agency (power to act) or expertise (knowledge as power), and “never really addresses the central issue of the relationship between power and learning, knowledge and expertise, learning and leadership” (Caldwell, 2012a, p. 47). Caldwell (2012a) examines how Senge applies Lewinian principles (Caldwell, 2005) of organisational development: rationality, expertise, autonomy and reflexivity. Firstly, Senge (1990) does not account for the possibility of irrationality; secondly he relies on expertise as the change agent, which

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

ignores the more “processual, non-linear and iterative nature of learning” (Caldwell, 2012a, p. 47); thirdly, the notion of autonomy is presented in Senge (1990) as collectivist with autonomy being primarily invested in change agents, ignoring the possibility of participative inquiry and the notion of individual intentional agency and “voluntarist notions of leadership” (Caldwell, 2012a, p. 48) as well as risking all the dangers of organisational ‘group think’ (Handy, 1993); and lastly the problem with Senge’s handling of reflexivity is that it “reinforces the prevailing role of the change agent who directs the systemic learning and change” (Caldwell, 2012a, p. 42) making the whole process potentially dangerously conformist and authoritarian. Ultimately Senge’s (1990) four dimensions feeding into his fifth systems thinking dimension, which together constitute his vision of a learning organization, are not, according to Caldwell (2012a, p. 50), “moved by rationality, dialogue or reflective participation in reciprocal practices of meaning creation, but rather they are inspired by ideals of commitment, conformity and self-sacrifice found in an overarching moral faith”.

The more ‘processual’ (Caldwell, 2012a) term ‘organisational learning’ is less criticised and used more to describe learning in terms of learning activities or processes at individual, group or organizational level (Dibella and Nevis, 1998), developing social capital and knowledge leadership (Debowski, 2006), or to focus attention on the theoretical study of the learning process of and within organisations (Easterby-Smith and Lyles, 2005), for potential application to any organization. Capacity and opportunity for organisational learning and development is affected by context, cultural climate and practices, vision, goals and values, organisational structures, information flows, work processes, feedback and reward systems, and training and education strategies. These factors and the extent to which they are holistically applied throughout individual, group, organisational, operational, management and executive levels (Debowski, 2006; Maden, 2011; Senge 1990; Argyris and Schön, 1978; Cole and Kelly, 2011; Balogun and Hope Hailey, 2015) significantly affect how well organisations learn. The better they are at learning, the better they are able to quickly identify and remedy errors and to understand where this is more difficult to do. According to Argyris and Schön (1996), literature about organisational learning tends to be more rooted in academic discourse, sceptical of and less prescriptive than learning organisation literature, and takes a more neutral approach in its definitions of learning without linking it directly to positive actions or outcomes.

There is, however, some common ground between the proponents of each of the two concepts, ‘learning organisation’ and ‘organisational learning’. They both note the

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

importance of “recognizing, surfacing, criticizing, and restructuring organizational theories of action” (Argyris and Schön, 1996, p. xix), similar to the idea of mental models used extensively by Senge (1990). Both concepts describe ideas which are similar to the single-loop and double-loop ways of learning, long associated with Argyris and Schön (1978), although these researchers maintain neither groups of proponents consider the study of factors critical to higher level learning relating to differences between ‘espoused theory’ and ‘theory in use’. Another way to link the two concepts is to think of organisational learning more broadly as being about the reflective and theoretical thinking, which allows deeper level exploration of actual practice within structured or unstructured, permanent or less permanent communities of practice, which could include whole organisations or smaller groups within, overlapping or completely outside of the organisational context. This suggests a looser, less prescriptive application of the word ‘organisation’ in either the concept of organisational learning or that of the learning organisation. Furthermore, it begs the question of how can or do organisations learn. It only becomes possible to think about organisations in such an anthropomorphic way when, at organisational level, they are perceived and treated as living organisms.

Living organisms are inevitably interconnected and complex. A living organism existing in an indivisible form might be part of a larger organism or, alternatively, part of a cluster of organisms. To survive, living organisms continuously adapt and change in response to their environment. Debates continue about the extent to which this is learning, with varying interpretations of empirical evidence and beliefs about consciousness and the nature of living organisms. However, in the case of organisations as a collective of humans, changing behaviour at organisational level is, arguably, evidence of learning. Like any other organism, an organisation needs to change and adapt in response to their environment, in order to survive and be sustainable. Learning in clusters and groups within an organisation, might not automatically translate into organisations actually learning, and learning at different levels might not necessarily travel either up or downwards through the organisations. “Diffusion of lessons learned throughout an organisation can be fraught with all sorts of difficulties” (Argyris and Schön, 1996, p. 3) but thinking in this way about organisations allows for looser structures, boundaries and states of permanency. Staying with the notion of organisations as organisms, Allee (2003) builds on the work of Frithof Capra (1997) to identify four criteria for something to qualify as a living system. Firstly, patterns of relationships (equivalent to Capra’s (1996, p. 156) “pattern of organization”) exist among the system’s components; secondly, the system’s physical embodiment as

a structure (Capra (1996, p. 156) also names this as “structure”), has an autopoietic network or organisational intelligence, whereby its being and doing are inseparable; thirdly, the living system continually reproduces itself (equivalent to Capra’s (1996, p. 156) “life process”); and finally, living systems are “dissipative structures” (Allee, 2003, p. 51) open to flow of energy and matter, whereby too much openness leads to disintegration and too little openness leads to rigidity and inflexibility.

2.4 Combining theory areas

This section is about bringing together certain combinations of theoretical areas. The first subsection examines the relationship between knowledge management theory and organisational learning theory. The second section draws together theory about psychological factors, which has been identified in both information behaviour theory and organisational learning theory. The third section examines informal communication as a means for sharing information and knowledge and finally, the fourth section considers informal communication as a driver for organisational learning.

2.4.1 The role of knowledge management in organisational learning

Soo et al (2002) uses a three-way “sources-uses-outcomes” (Soo et al, 2002, p. 132) approach to understanding the process of knowledge creation and innovation. The first part refers to “the sources of information and know-how on which an individual’s knowledge base is built” (Soo et al, 2002, p. 132) arising from a range of network opportunities open to the individual. They argue this can be measured by seeing how much the level of knowledge and information has increased, although tacit knowledge might be so intuitively absorbed, measuring the extent of its increase is well-nigh impossible. Secondly, and an important factor in organisational learning, is the degree of absorptive capacities “for internalizing and integrating the information and know-how” (Soo et al, 2002, p. 133) being extracted from the sources, of the organisation and its individual members. Absorptive capacity refers to the organisational and individual capacity to recognize the value of new external information; and to absorb, assimilate and apply it in new and innovative ways (Cohen and Levinthal, 1990). Organisations rely on prior knowledge and for individuals, “research on memory development suggests that accumulated prior knowledge increases both the ability to put new knowledge into memory, what we would call acquisition of knowledge” (Cohen and Levinthal, 1990, p. 129). The more diverse the knowledge base in an organisation, the greater its absorptive capacity (Jashapara, 2005). Soo et al (2002) seek to measure this by examining the “active information and knowledge sourcing, recording

and sharing, and knowledge accumulation behaviours” (Soo et al, 2002, p. 133) of individuals, such as attending various kinds of training activities, self-learning and keeping up to date with changes in technology; and looking at what policies and procedures the organisation has in place “to encourage and develop individuals’ absorptive capacity” (Soo et al, 2002, p. 133). Thirdly, Soo et al (2002, p. 133) see knowledge as “actionable”, so they are interested in how the sourcing, absorbing and using of information and knowledge affects the quality of the decision-making process. They look for evidence such as whether there is a higher level of comprehensiveness and thoroughness of evaluating options, although this may also be dependent on the rapidity of response required; whether there is an increase in creative, novel, innovative solutions, increased shared commitment and greater emergence of new insights and ideas. They note the importance of context in order to understand the knowledge creation process, and also uncovered a number of knowledge traps while conducting their research. These are addressed in section 2.4.3 on informal communication as a means for sharing information and knowledge.

Knowledge management as a discipline needs to draw its strength from “the ability to adopt an integrated, interdisciplinary and strategic perspective” (Jashapara, 2005, p.140) with organisational learning as the starting point. Failure is seen as an opportunity for learning, “error harvesting” (Jashapara, 2005, p. 140) and exploring; and for developing new capabilities for effective knowledge sharing through both formal and informal processes. Strategic approaches with emphasis shifting from traditional planning to learning are also needed, alongside the development of responsive and supportive technologies. Of equal importance is an understanding of the influence of organisational culture and sub-cultures. Jashapara (2005) identifies certain inquiries that might reveal something about the workings of organisational culture. For example, is there a supported culture of knowledge sharing already in place, how do competitive and cooperative cultures play out, and what is the extent and influence of informal networks, social environments and communities in practice?

2.4.2 Psychological Perspectives

Psychological factors naturally occur as key influencing factors in studies of knowledge, learning and information behaviour, with underpinning theory reflecting the intense multi-disciplinary nature of this area. Not only do psychological perspectives feature prominently in information behaviour literature (see Section 2.2.2), but they are also explored by authors with an organisational learning perspective, such as DeFilippi and Ornstein (2005) and Vince and Gabriel (2011), as well as by authors with an interaction

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

design perspective, such as Preece, Sharp and Rogers (2015). Israilidis et al (2015) identified, from their comprehensive literature review, 84 variables, classified into 11 categories, that affect employees' capacity for effective knowledge sharing, the majority of which relate to psychological perspectives, such as attitudes, beliefs, needs, values, expectations, emotions and motivators. In terms of how a person sees their own capabilities, the concept of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1983; Wilson, 1997; Savolainen, 2012; Robson and Robinson, 2013) is crucial in information behaviour, learning and knowledge sharing. In Savolainen's (2012) study of the role of attribution theory (originally developed by Bernard Weiner in the 1970s), he considers how people perceive causes of past successes or otherwise of information seeking activities (Savolainen, 2012). These can range from impacts attributed to people's own perceived ability, effort, task difficulty and degree of luck, whether factors, either internal or external to the person, are perceived as stable or controllable, or not. Self-efficacy is a key aspect of how someone attributes the cause of past successes and failures (Savolainen, 2012; Wilson, 2005; Robson and Robinson, 2013). The remainder of this section utilises two minor and three main categories of psychological factors that DeFilippi and Ornstein's (2005) use in their exploration. The works of other authors are interwoven into the review.

The two smaller categories include firstly, the biological perspective. This refers to, for example, physical limits to human memory (DeFilippi and Ornstein, 2005; Williamson (1998 and 2005); Williamson and Manaszewicz, 2002); and traits, skills and abilities (Israilidis et al, 2015). Wilson (2005) considers physiological needs in his (1981) model which he absorbs into his (1997) general model; while Nahl's (2007) social-biological information technology model considers 'affective reception and use procedures', 'cognitive reception and use procedures' and 'sensorimotor reception and use procedures' under the heading of biological systems. The second category is that of observable behaviours including behaviourism (DeFilippi and Ornstein, 2005). This covers behaviours relating to authority and power relationships, for example, employees' perceived behavioural control (Israilidis et al, 2015); information seeking behaviour (Hepworth, 2004; Walton and Hepworth, 2011; among others); learning in organisations (Argyris and Schön, 1978 and 1996) and social learning theory (DeFilippi and Ornstein, 2005; Elkjaer, 2005; Brandi and Elkjaer, 2011; Wilson, 1996 and 2005).

The remaining three categories are cognitive factors, affective factors and a category that jointly includes cognitive and affective factors. As an extension of the cognitive perspective (DeFilippi and Ornstein, 2005; Preece, Sharp and Rogers, 2015; Wilson

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

1981, 2005; and others), Hepworth (2004) adds the concepts of 'knowledge state' as well as 'cognitive state'. 'Knowledge state' refers, in simple terms, to the level of knowledge about certain relevant topics a person has, while the latter term, a person's cognitive state, refers to thinking processes and strategies for dealing with uncertainty. Walton and Hepworth (2011) break down cognitive states according to Bloom's (1956) cognitive taxonomy, into comprehension, application, analysis and synthesis, and they add a further dimension, 'meta-cognitive state', which brings in two further terms from Bloom (1956), evaluation and reflection. Cognitive inattention, difficulty in comprehending meaning or falsely combining intuitive or generalised beliefs, can result in key aspects of knowledge being either missed altogether or being misunderstood (Audi, 2011), potentially leading to sharing misinformation. The effectiveness of knowledge sharing in organisations can sometimes be said to be hostage to the level of 'employee ignorance' in an organisation (Israilidis et al, 2015) and the extent to which an organisation's culture and attitude to errors is supportive or punitive.

The affective perspective is well researched (Shipton and DeFilippi, 2011; Vince and Gabriel, 2011; Israilidis et al, 2015; Wilson, 1981 and 2005; Hepworth, 2004; Walton and Hepworth, 2011; Preece, Sharp and Rogers, 2015; Chung et al, 2016 on well-being and organisational behaviour; Williamson, 1998 and 2005; Williamson and Manaszewicz, 2002; Savolainen, 2011, 2012, 2014 and 2015a). Savolainen's studies of emotions of online slimming bloggers (2011) and users of a consumer awareness forum (2015a), utilised the model of interaction process analysis (IPA), developed by Robert F. Bales in 1950, in the analysis of negative and positive emotions in information seeking and sharing behaviour. However, he concludes that possibly other approaches such as conversation analysis "may provide better opportunities to examine the display of emotions as an interactional phenomenon that is intrinsically embedded in the sequential organisation of online discussion" (Savolainen, 2015a, p.1224). Emotion as a factor in organizational learning is increasing its presence in the literature from virtually nothing at the beginning of the millennium to around 60-70 items, about half as much as terms like 'knowledge management' for example (Vince and Gabriel, 2011). Emotions are attracting more attention due to changes relating to wider social and cultural patterns. Perspectives are emerging from biologists, psychologists, neurologists, psychoanalysts, psycho-dynamic scholars who look at the effect of early life experiences and also consider that unconscious factors can be at play regarding emotional responses. Perspectives of social constructionists "focus on subtle ways different national and organizational cultures shape the ways emotions are experienced and expressed" (Vince and Gabriel, 2011, p. 334), and who view emotion as "derivative

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

of social scripts, signs and scenarios” as opposed to the generating of these, which is the psycho-dynamic perspective (Vince and Gabriel, 2011, p. 335).

A combined interplay of cognitive and affective perspectives takes into account considerations such as ideas, cognitions and thoughts; attitudes, beliefs and values; feelings, emotions and intuitions (Dervin, 2005; Israilidis et al, 2015); and memories, stories and narratives (Dervin, 2005). Nahl (2007) considers cognitive and affective reception and use under ‘biological systems’, while Kuhlthau (2004 and 2005) considers cognitive factors (thoughts), affective factors (feelings) together with a third category, affective-cognitive factors (mood), in her six stages of information seeking and use. Both Nahl’s and Kuhlthau’s models show some interesting similarities and differences (Savolainen, 2015b). The cognitive-affective interplay can also be found in Savolainen’s (1995) ELIS (Everyday Life Information Seeking) Model, particularly in his four types of Mastery of Life, in which he examines affective and cognitive values, according to a range of affective categories: optimistic, pessimistic and defensive. According to Vince and Gabriel (2011, p. 334) “emotion and cognition cannot be separated”. Rather than privileging either emotion or cognition over one another, it is important to understand the organizational dynamics and the role that both emotion and cognitive reasoning contributes to that. Vince and Gabriel (2011) view the notion of emotional intelligence with some suspicion, fearful that this may be used in organisations to manage emotional responses and instil compliance in others, which can have the effect of suppressing important opinions that the organisation can usefully learn from. Vince and Gabriel (2011, p. 336) advocate “a more complex and practical understanding to be had from appreciating the interplay between emotion and rationality”. In terms of learning, feelings and emotions are social. They are not detached from the context in which they are expressed and they can be signals to how an organization works or what some of the cultural elements of the organisation are. “Emotions both conscious and unconscious, which are individually felt and collectively produced and performed, are interwoven with politics and power in organizations. Emotion and politics inform and recreate each other within the organization” (Vince and Gabriel, 2011, p. 337).

Emotional politics play a significant role in how or even whether learning and knowledge sharing takes place. It determines who gains, who has their access to knowledge blocked, in whose interest is the knowledge provided, and so forth. Emotional politics makes the difference between ‘learning-in-action’ and ‘learning inaction’. Such tensions can create high levels of anxiety in an organisation. Even

attempts to reduce anxiety can end up increasing it. Too much anxiety, naturally inhibits learning, while too little may reduce motivation for learning. Leadership also has an impact on anxiety. It can cause anxiety and self-doubt, just as much in the leader as in those being lead, and can lead to defensive behaviours, which is counter-productive to learning. In team building, a process strongly affected by emotion and organisational politics, the team builds the individuals including the leaders. Emotions are invariably invoked when criticisms are being made and can be a means to exert a type of power to make the individual lose confidence. But balanced with care in its delivery, criticism can induce more positive emotions and the motivation to respond quickly and comfortably to the criticisms. Ethics of care “allows for mistakes to be recognized and corrected, it supports experimentation and responsible improvisation, and it promotes respect for human infallibility and insecurity” (Vince and Gabriel, 2011, p. 344).

2.4.3 Informal communication for sharing information and knowledge

“Although we continue to describe human communication as the process of constructing shared realities and creating shared meanings we must remember that shared meanings are always incomplete and characterized by ambiguity”.
(Shockley-Zalabak, 2012, p.14)

Dixon (2000) sees links as key to acquiring knowledge including links made internally between information and contexts in which such information could be applied. Dixon (2000) also rates informal networking systems as more effective in improving an organisation’s performance, than technology based systems, storing the explicit knowledge of the organisation. Becker (2007) identifies three types of knowledge, beginning with work-related knowledge, which “often occurs as the result of informal social networks” and is difficult to catalogue as it is primarily “in the heads of people” (Becker, 2007, p. 43). The second type identified by Becker (2007, p. 43) is “person-related information and knowledge”, relates to “behaviours, skills, and attitudes of colleagues and managers that indirectly influence informal learning” (Becker, 2007, p. 43). Becker notes the importance of trust “to enable effective collaboration, along with willingness to give as well as receive information and to give credit appropriately for the information received” (Becker, 2007, p. 43). The third type identified by is the combination of “corporate attitudes, values and behaviour that influence communication and interaction patterns”, which are the “unwritten gatekeepers that shape informal learning” (Becker, 2007, p. 43). Again, less tangible or recordable

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

knowledge depends on people to assist with its interpretation, in order to share effectively (Becker, 2007).

The way people express themselves in human communication depends on their knowledge of the topic in hand, sensitivity to their audience, communication skills and intrinsic values, which directly impacts on the process of knowledge sharing, be it informal or otherwise, as does the context of the communication. The decision on what people are willing to share can very much depend on the way people compare their own knowledge and competence with those they communicate with, considering factors, such as who they think is most likely to have the best information in a given setting. Their perceptions of what is expected of them from the organisational culture and environment also impact on knowledge sharing (Shockley-Zalabak, 2012; Jashapara, 2005). “Context is both culturally and physically influenced, and as with other elements in the communication process, perception of context can differ from one communication participant to another” and the effect of the communication is “not always observable” (Shockley-Zalabak, 2012, pp. 10-14).

Becker (2007) believes that including design factors in the workplace can considerably enhance the opportunities for effective informal communication. Having a variety of settings where work occurs, i.e. eco-diversity, can increase opportunities for informal learning; being able to naturally see and hear what others are doing in the workspace, i.e. spatial transparency, the more a person can see how they can participate in sharing of knowledge and information; not having designated areas to work, akin to desk hopping, is said to foster informal learning although it can cause stress if too many people arrive at the same time; organizing people in smaller areas rather than one large space is more hospitable to informal learning, as well as having a range of neutral zones, such as corridors: “the fewer the spatial status distinctions, the greater the unfettered informal interaction and learning” (Becker, 2007, p. 55).

The concept of ‘ambient awareness’ is relevant in the context of online informal communication and online sharing of knowledge, particularly in organisations where people are spread quite widely in geographic terms or where time restrictions make face-to-face interaction difficult. This concept refers to awareness through continuous contact through social media, of what is happening in other people’s lives (O’Dea, 2019). It can enhance interpersonal relationships and lead to more empathy and trust in the workplace, thus improving collaboration, cooperation and coordination. According to O’Dea (2019) it is “the office chatter which gives people a greater

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

understanding of their organisation's work – as something which oils the wheels of digital workforces". However, electronic communication is not always perceived as effective when trying to develop stronger informal contacts among employees or to strengthen staff commitment and good group decision taking. This is due to the greater reliance on "personal motivation of contacting individuals and the real need to apply technologies" (Raisiene, 2012, p. 233) and the lack of more instinctive links created from frequent face-to-face communication.

In their study of six firms' knowledge management systems, Soo et al (2002) identified a number of pitfalls, some of which were directly associated with the firms' approach to informal communication as a knowledge sharing vehicle. "Firms with more comprehensive and knowledge friendly informal networking systems are better at generating know-how and the innovation and performance outcomes that follow" (Soo et al, 2002, p. 138). However, one of the problems with this is the question of how to make informal structures work. Soo et al (2002, p. 139) identified as one of the key observed pitfalls that "informal networking is an important source of knowledge, but over-reliance on it can be detrimental". While informal communication is vital for harnessing more of the tacit knowledge of an organisation, as this type of knowledge resides primarily in people, there is a risk that this type of communication becomes the de facto source of knowledge for the organization. The concern here is that there is no structure to the networks that are being used this way, so missing parts of such a system might not be identified, or the informal communication risks being primarily a grapevine for rumour and gossip, which, by its very nature, can create barriers to the sharing of important and relevant information, as people may be reluctant to share in such an environment. It is difficult then to know which sources, i.e. people, to approach. The problem of "internal stickiness" (Soo et al, 2002, p. 140; also discussed by Jashapara, 2005. p. 143) was also identified, where information remains within the group of people who understand it, rather than the information being shared more widely.

In addition to negative connotations, such as office gossip, moaning (Gargiulo, 2005), informal communication can encourage covering up of bad practice by maintaining a culture of secrecy and thus, preventing transparency (Waring and Bishop, 2010, Baugut and Reinemann, 2013). Informal communication can also be an opportunity for sharing or, alternatively, for keeping certain people out of the knowledge loop. Waring and Bishop (2010), draws on Erving Goffman's work on human social interaction, published in 1956, in which he identifies different types of secrets with different roles

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

and impacts. These include dark secrets, which remain in the backstage arena; insider secrets, which maintain group cohesion; and strategic secrets. However, in the context of political organisations, where “transparency has become pervasive as a prescription for better governance” (Hood, 2007, p. 191), people are more likely to want to see backstage processes being justified. The role of informal communication in negotiations becomes a balancing act between ensuring transparency while maintaining “efficacy of negotiation” (Baugut and Reinemann, 2013). However, the reality of trying to achieve this balance remains complex.

Teams, where there are members from different language groups to the language of the organisation, may have difficulty engaging in informal communication with the native speakers, unless it is on a one to one basis, where the native speakers have a strong awareness of difficulties experienced by non-native speakers or there is a specific purpose to the exchange. Different ways of interpreting and articulating experience can mean that people might talk past each other. If there are sufficient co-workers in different language groups, they will often have their informal communication together where they can speak their own language without the restrictions of trying to translate (Yuan et al, 2013). A further issue, which can occur where there are differences in language and cultures within an organisation, is that, in terms of culture, not only blame cultures, but also other professional cultures may have attitudes towards management and risk, which might inhibit knowledge sharing. Organisational (such as departments) and occupational (professional groupings) boundaries may inhibit intergroup communication (Waring and Bishop, 2010). Other barriers to effective knowledge sharing often include stress from information overload, difficulties of ascertaining the precise origin of the knowledge and determining the degree of its usefulness in the work situation (Jashapara, 2005; Bawden and Robinson, 2008). Ignorance of individuals in organisations also directly impacts on the effectiveness of knowledge sharing activities (Israilidis et al, 2015).

Informal communication often occurs through serendipity (Fisher, Erdelez and McKechnie, 2005), which is an important positive feature in facilitating knowledge sharing and the chance emergence of a new creative or innovative direction. However, this also needs to be supported by structured time for informal knowledge sharing. Although this may sound contradictory, it need not be, as it may be merely the time and place which is structured and possibly even the identification of a particular issue, whereas the discussion itself takes on more of the characteristics of informal communication. The explicit intention to build in time for people working for an

organisation to learn from each other helps enhance the benefits of informal communication exchanges. Time is very often the limiting factor, but a long term view would see this as something an organisation could try to overcome to ensure those informal exchanges. “This is especially true for service organizations where only a small proportion of their intangible know-how can be codified and the more tacit components will be lost if not shared via regular, structured interpersonal interactions” (Soo et al, 2002). Narratives and story-telling are important vehicles for transferring tacit knowledge; thus facilitating learning and knowledge exchange via social environments, interpersonal relations based on mutual trust to reduce knowledge hoarding, and in particular, via strong informal networks and communities of practice (Jashapara, 2005, p.143).

Informal communication can also enhance the knowledge sharing process due to the fact that it is often a “primary means by which common ground is established” (Fay, 2011, p. 212). Informal approaches recognise social needs as well as the need to support communication within the organisation, while, at the same time, needing to retain a sense of autonomy and integrity (Johnson, Donohue, Atkin and Johnson, 1994). Fay’s (2011) exploration of informal communication among co-workers draws on the work of several researchers in the field in order to determine a number of characteristics of informal communication. Thus Fay (2011) identifies that small talk in informal communication helps to structure the social interaction process; has the potential to reduce uncertainty, and enhance social cohesion; and can confirm underlying values, thus enabling a greater capacity for problem solving. Informal communication can absorb a degree of organisational stress and it can influence beliefs and behaviours, admittedly negatively as well as positively (Fay, 2011; Shockley-Zalabak, 2012). Strong informal communication networks can make up for weaknesses in formal communication and can “improve decision making and encourage innovation” (Fay, 2011, p. 214).

2.4.4 Informal communication as a driver in organisational learning

Learning is a ‘moving target’ and conversations can move in a variety of directions, including making time for reflection and sharing of stories. Informal communication was likely to be “saturated with the stories of the day” (Gargiulo, 2005, p. 31). Stories can be about other people, work issues, past history and future directions, life itself, about oneself or it can be something more visual, whereby a story can be seen or told in a physical layout or the architecture of an organisation (Brown, Denning, Groh and Prusak, 2005). A story usually has a degree of endurance. It has salience, i.e. it

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

remains applicable in ongoing organisational contexts. Stories are told as part of a sense-making process and managing comfort levels within the organisation (Brown, Denning, Groh and Prusak, 2005; Lave and Wenger, 1991; Balogun and Hope Hailey, 2015). However, such stories can be difficult to harness for the longer term as organisational knowledge. People come and go and the reality of the stories can fade over time, either through fading memories or the stories are no longer perceived as relevant.

In Waring and Bishop's (2010) research into backstage communication in the clinical setting, six areas were identified as positive contributions: (i) critical reflection, which is regarded as a key activity in organisational learning; (ii) collective sense-making which this links together with Senge's (1990) team learning element of his organisational learning mode, though this may need a degree of qualifying to avoid group think; it allows the development of shared understanding through collective story lines, narratives and rationalisations of their experiences; and (iii) functional contribution, which enables active problem solving to take place and allows the testing out of ideas, improves decision making and encourages innovation (Fay, 2011); (iv) communication and follow-up, which is essential for the sharing of knowledge to enable transformation in the organisation; (v) supportive and emotional, an essential resource for morale, which allows for the sharing of anxieties and emotional reactions to difficult situations; this also includes commiserating and complaining (Fay, 2011); and (vi) cultural and professional, where norms and values are reinforced and identity maintained. Fay's (2011) research corroborates this and adds that informal communication is a vital buffer against organisational stress and is a strong force for influencing beliefs and behaviours within the organisation.

Backstage informal communication can also act a precursor to formal communication, where risks and significance of issues are collectively agreed. It allows the team to determine when to take something further and when not to. Informal interactions enable people to meet complex goals on personal, individual, group and organisational levels (Fay, 2011). Waring and Bishop (2010) note, in the context of clinicians, how they make sense is a complex process and 'interwoven with professional identity'. Informal networks increase the level of complexity in organizations, as formal processes are sidestepped in order to get the job done. It is important not to confuse complexity with being merely complicated (Farmer, 2008), where the latter can be more easily solved by logical processes and the former involves deeper and less obviously

rational aspects, and its nature can change quickly depending on converging influences and stimuli.

Lave and Wenger (1991) believe learning that occurs through less managed and more situated activities, such as communities or networks of practice, is equally, if not more valuable due to the intrinsic knowledge sharing which occurs through socialisation and participation in ongoing activities. Informal communication is a key part of developing learning organisation values (Filstad and Gottschalk, 2011). It is a valuable sense-making activity as people try to identify and help each other understand uncertainties and ambiguities (Waring and Bishop, 2010; Fay, 2011) in the workplace. It makes up for weaknesses of formal communication (Fay, 2011; Chen et al, 2013), helps structure social interaction, fosters social cohesion (Johnson et al, 1994) and provides an opportunity for establishing common ground (Fay, 2011). “Learning increases the collective intelligence of the whole” and “personal channels of communication” provide some of the greatest potential for learning as they are extensive and dynamic and people are able to “spin out their own interpretations of the same information through their informal interactions with others” (Gargiulo, 2005, p.25). Some researchers have found that people are more willing to trust information exchanged through informal communication and that non-verbal communication is an important aspect of this process (Fay, 2011). Learning cannot occur without communication and “our greatest sources of learning come from conversations. As we strive to understand our job, people are our greatest source of information. The quality of the conversations we have will directly impact on how quickly we get up to speed” (Gargiulo, 2005, p. 55).

2.5 Summary

The literature review began with an examination of literature about characteristics of informal communication, reported in Section 2.1. The findings contributed to several aspects of the research design, from methodology, through to analysis, interpretation and discussion of findings, as informal communication was the key setting for the research. The review then proceeded to examine the nature of information and knowledge as key components of information behaviour and learning, reported in Section 2.2. This contributed mainly to the research design for data collection and analysis of the findings. Information behaviour theory was explored in depth (Section 2.2.1), with particular focus on Wilson’s (1981, 1997 and 1999) models (Section 2.2.2). These models contributed significantly to the research design in that, two of Wilson’s models were modified (see Sections 3.6 and 6.2) and subsequently formed a critical

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

part of the interpretation and discussion of the analysis of the findings (Section 6.3). The literature search continued with an investigation of theory and concepts relating to learning, reported in Section 2.3 with particular focus on organisational learning and the concept of the 'learning organisation' (Section 2.3.1). The findings from the learning and organisational learning part of this investigation were particularly useful for designing the first stage of the data collection with its strong focus on the organisation as a whole. In the second stage of the data collection, the underpinning organisational learning theory was integrated together with information behaviour theory. This direction is already indicated in Section 2.4, in which literature that links various combinations of knowledge from each of the three areas discussed in Sections 2.1 through to 2.3 is further reviewed. This drawing together of academic areas is strongly reflected in the work on the modified versions of Wilson's model (Section 6.2), and appears again throughout the discussion chapter. The methodology chapter includes a further detailed section (Section 3.4.1) on the rationale and approach taken to conducting this literature review, including further detail on how the literature review contributed to the research design overall (Section 3.4.2 and subsequent sections).

Chapter Three: Methodology

This chapter is an explanation and discussion of the research approach taken in attempting to respond to the following research question:

To what extent does informal communication influence the learning of a political party?

The thought process that led to the question and the subsequent aim and objectives is outlined in Section 3.1, necessarily creating a degree of overlap with Chapter One. The context is then set for further explaining the research design process. Section 3.2 examines the rationale for the chosen research methodology (interpretative, qualitative and therefore inductive in nature). This is followed by Section 3.3 on the method (exploratory case study with embedded cases, or units of analysis), sampling process, ethics and limitations of the research; Section 3.4 on the data collection process (literature review, semi-structured interviews, and pilot); Section 3.5 on analysis (template analysis); and Section 3.6, a short critique of two of Wilson's (1997 and 1999) models, which subsequently resulted in the development of two new models at the discussion and interpretation stage of the research. The methodology section concludes with a brief summary in Section 3.7.

3.1 Developing research question, aim and objectives

The research question is set against a rapidly changing global socio-economic and political context (Luther and Müller-Rommel, 2002). As discussed in the introduction (Section 1.1), Europe in the early 21st century has seen growth in socio-economic inequality (Martell, 2003), such as housing crises in various countries in Europe, the demise of certain traditional industries, particularly in manufacturing (Keating and McCrone, 2015), the economic effects of austerity policies (Liddle, 2008; Bremer, 2017), and increasing pressures as refugees look to Europe for safety from conflict in their war-torn nations (DIVPOL, 2014). As right wing leaders are elected, growing populism fuels growing nationalism, while extremist views from various quarters are more openly expressed and acted upon. There is a feeling of increased chagrin and dismay among some of the political parties, who find themselves less able to counter the threats that polarisation brings (Gallagher et al, 2011; Stoker, 2006). This is not necessarily through lack of technology or social media competence. Many political parties of different persuasions have understood the importance of having a sophisticated social media presence, but the quick sound-bite favours populism and its simpler, slogan style message (Stoker, 2006). History has shown that tough socio-

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

economic times can foster polarisation at the expense of support for more moderate or more inclusively inclined political parties, and it tends not to end well. The bigger question asked here is simply, how can political parties learn from past mistakes and avoid making them again when economic challenges such as austerity attack people's aspirations and expectations? While there is, clearly, no simple answer, it did seem that it might be worth exploring some of the academic areas that non-political organisations turn to, when trying to understand how they can ensure their relevance and maintain their survival and sustainability, in an achievable, equitable and ethical way. Relevant fields of research include knowledge and information management, in considering how information seeking and knowledge sharing occur in an organisation; and organisational learning, in considering how learning and diffusion of learning occurs within the organisations. While it is easier to discover how these activities work in formal scenarios, as this is often documented within the organisation, it is most likely to be more difficult to discover the influence of informal communication on learning, knowledge sharing and information seeking on the equitable and ethical sustainability of an organisation.

Such thinking led to considering the possibility of exploring informal communication activities within one of the political parties operating in a European country (see Section 3.3 for further explanation and rationale for choice of party used for this research), which seeks to reverse the trends outlined here, but currently faces considerable challenges to achieving this. It would be anticipated that considering how informal communication contributes to a political party's learning, could provide some vital clues for the organisation as to the degree of importance of this type of communication, and how it can be better and further harnessed for faster and better diffusion of learning. It cannot be claimed that this would improve the political party's chances of changing the current trends, but it could be the case that a better understanding of how informal communication works within the party, could potentially impact on the party's strategies for achieving their aims. There are very clear ethical issues particularly around anonymisation of data and this is discussed in Section 3.3.2.

Information behaviour and organisation learning literature were considered as appropriate areas to investigate as underpinning perspectives. Learning by its very nature must involve behaviour around the handling of information and knowledge. Exploring information behaviour allows for consideration of motivations for information seeking, psychological factors which influence the process, identification of barriers and opportunities for further information seeking, and subsequent actions resulting

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

from discoveries emerging from information behaviour. Organisational learning literature makes a distinction between the terms 'organisational learning' (i.e. the process of learning in organisations, (Argyris and Schön, 1996)) and 'learning organisation', with the latter term being defined by Easterby-Smith and Lyles (2005, p.2) as "an entity, an ideal type of organization, which has the capacity to learn effectively and hence to prosper".

Thus, the aim sought:

to critically explore and analyse informal communication activities within a political party, utilising information behaviour and organisational learning perspectives, in order to determine the extent of their influence on the organisation's learning.

Three objectives were developed for enabling the achievement of the aim. They were:

1. To synthesise a working definition of informal communication
2. To critically investigate information behaviour and organisational learning theories, concepts and models, with a view to underpinning the enquiry
3. To critically examine learning that takes place during informal communication activities, by applying a combination of information behaviour and organisational learning perspectives

The first objective was developed due to the broad nature of the term, as demonstrated in the literature (see Section 2.1), and the possibility that the participants engaged for the primary data collection might have different perceptions of what the term might mean to them. It was important for the treatment of the findings that there was a level of agreement between participants on what was being explored. The second objective identifies the areas of literature to be examined in order to design an academically informed structure for the collection and analysis of the primary data, and therefore to enable the achievement of the third objective. The structure of the literature review and how the literature review informed the data collection tools is explained in more detail in Section 3.4.

To aid the reading of the remainder of the chapter, it is worth providing a brief summary of the steps involved in the primary research. Firstly, the case study organisation was selected. This was a political party in a European country, as indicated earlier (further

detail is provided in Section 3.3). This was followed by identifying a sample of five participants (again, see Section 3.3) and obtaining their consent. They were invited to one of two semi-structured interviews. The aim of the first interview was twofold. Firstly, to establish the participants' perceptions of what informal communication is, and secondly, to obtain contextual information relevant to the organisational learning aspects of the research (see Section 3.4 on data collection and Chapter Four). The participants were then invited to a second semi-structured interview, after a two week interval. This was to explore conversations that the participants had identified during those two weeks, as examples of informal communication. Most of the examples were face-to-face (see Section 3.4 and Chapter Five) and one participant focussed primarily on online informal communication. Nine of the conversations identified by the participants were examined in detail. One of these conversations included details about a prequel conversation that had a significant influence on events leading to the later conversation. Information about the remaining conversations were synthesised and discussed in Section 5.10. The findings were then further interpreted by applying a new model of human information behaviour in conversations (see Sections 3.5.1 and 6.2).

The remainder of this methodology chapter thus focuses on the detail of the rationale for choices of methodology, method, data collection tools and their structure, and methods of analysis.

3.2 Methodology: An interpretivist approach

Trying to gain an insight into organisational learning at individual, group and organisational level (DiBella and Nevis, 1998), is challenging in itself. Indeed this has been a criticism of Senge's (2006) work on the learning organisation, (Caldwell, 2012a and 2012b). A further challenge is to be able to gain enough information about experiences of informal communication that would sufficiently enable one to form a sense of what is happening at these three levels and any subsequent impact or effects of such experiences. One has to make a trade-off between taking a broad brush approach of the whole organisation, as opposed to a more in-depth, more contextual approach. The research question suggests the latter approach as it requires the exploration of what happens within informal communication activities, in order to formulate conclusions about learning within the context of those exchanges. The three-level approach of DiBella and Nevis (1998) can still be applied, but rather than being a whole organisation approach, the exploration is contained within the contexts of

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

particular informal communication activities. The theoretical underpinning of the research design then allows the particularised findings (Stake, 1995) to stand as empirical research that can be further explored and added to in later work by other researchers (see discussion on transferability in Section 3.3.3). With this in mind, the interpretative paradigm of qualitative research was identified as the most suitable for addressing the research question.

In applying some of Bryman's (2016, p. 401) table of "contrasts between quantitative and qualitative research", this research is more about words than numbers, the researcher is close rather than distant, is looking at process rather than something static, is more about rich, deep data than hard, reliable data, uses natural not artificial settings, and, importantly, is about contextual understanding rather than generalisation (Bryman, 2016). Using a qualitative approach allows for the development of methods and tools for obtaining rich data from participants, such as personal and organisational contextual data, together with rich data about participant perceptions of the nature of informal communication and narratives about specific occurrences of informal communication. Rich contextual data assists in developing an understanding of the relationships between the individuals, the groups they interact with, and their organisation. As identified in both organisational learning literature (Section 2.3.1) and information behaviour literature (Section 2.2.1) context is all important in any analysis of behaviour at any of the three levels identified in this section. This then contributes to providing meaning to the findings emerging from examining behaviour in informal communication settings.

Flick (2014, p. 14) appears to confirm the suitability of a more interpretative approach to the research question, when commenting on the work of Beck and Bonss (1989), noting that "scientific findings are not carried over into political and institutional practices as much as expected". The research in this thesis is not about linear attributes, measurements or statistical analysis but rather is focused on the experiential which relies on human perception and understanding (Stake, 2010) in order to gain insight into how organisational learning works, in this case, in a particular political organisation. The research was conducted through the eyes of participants whereby they constructed meaning through their social interactions, set in very specific contexts, identified by the participants themselves. This reflects a research ontology which is relativist (Pickard, 2013, p. 12) as well as being social constructivist in nature (Bryman, 2016 and Flick, 2014). This research assumed "social constructions of reality" (Gorman and Clayton, 2005, p. 4), as each participant brings to the research their own

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

contexts, their own perceptions and their own selection of examples of informal communication activities to explore.

The interpretative approach is again confirmed as being appropriate for addressing the research question, due to the fact that meanings were seen from the different viewpoints of the participants and the research allowed for unexpected developments as experienced by them. The research was experiential in nature as it focuses on participant perceptions and observations. It is also situational, as the participants observed their informal exchanges in specific situations identified by them and it is 'personalistic' as different points of views, values and frames of reference were sought (Stake, 2010).

The research perspective can be described as 'symbolic interactionism' (Flick, 2014, p. 81). Blumer (1969) who first coined this term, states this has three premises:

“The first premise is that human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them. ... The second premise is that the meaning of such things is derived from or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one's fellows. The third premise is that these meanings are handled in, and modified through an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with the things he encounters” (Blumer, 1969, p. 2).

In this research, the participants selected and reacted to the examples of informal communication that they brought forward for exploration, according to their own perceptions. They reacted according to what meanings those interactions had for them, while at the same time, further meanings were derived from and arose out of those interactions, and the participants, in recalling them, further modified those meanings in the process of sharing those experiences with the researcher. The researcher's own interactions with the participant followed a similar process, with the third stage being that the meanings the researcher derived from those interactions were modified through an interpretive process based on selected theoretical concepts.

Flick (2014, p. 90) links the symbolic interaction concept with the idea of “Verstehen in epistemological principle” where research aims to understand a phenomenon, such as informal communication in the case of this study, “from the interior” (Flick, 2014, p. 90). Flick (2014) goes on to apply Schütz's concepts, developed in 1962, of first and second degree constructions. The perceptions of the participants are the first degree

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

constructions, while the application of theory to the interpretation of those perceptions by the researcher, are the second degree constructs (Flick, 2014). Texts as empirical material were constructed by transcribing the recorded interviews with the participants, thus each interview was reconstructed and the reality was the participants' perceptions of reality. The interpretation, as shown in the findings and their analysis and interpretation, was thus the researchers' construct, although the researcher's construct is built upon theoretical principles from three areas, i.e. informal communication, organisational learning and information behaviour. Olesen (2002, online) in a review of Denzin's work on interpretive interactionism, which includes the use of symbolic interactionism, makes an interesting observation, which seems particularly pertinent to research that aims to understand more about organisational learning:

“The dialectic between societal whole and individual situated consciousness includes dynamics of institution building and learning (or actually dialogue)”.

The research also contained elements of ethnography, “the study of social interactions, behaviours, and perceptions that occur within groups, teams, organisations, and communities” (Reeves, p. 337), but this was not through the eyes of the researcher. In fact, social interactions were studied through the eyes of the participants. There are two reasons for this. The first is the practicality of being able to devote the time needed to be in situ while working was impossible for the researcher. Secondly, as the organisation is a political one, there was the potential that some matters under discussion would be of a highly sensitive and confidential nature, and the organisation would not welcome an observer in their midst in spite of assurances of respect of confidentiality. Nonetheless, the aim of the research corresponds with Reeves' (2008, p. 337) aim of ethnography, in that it sought “rich, holistic insights into people's views and actions ... through the collection of detailed observations and interviews”.

The experiential nature of the research, particularly relating to the selection by the participants of examples of informal communication, meant that there was very little predictability in what was discovered. While this does not lend itself to an explanation of cause and effect it does lend itself to achieving the intended outcome of the research which was the gaining of a deeper understanding of what happens in given situations of informal communication. This particularity from rich qualitative data confirms the interpretive nature of the research.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

This epistemological stance (Pickard, 2013, p. 7) is subjectivist due to the fact that “the results of the investigation are a product of interaction between the subject and investigator. What can be known is a result of the interaction” (Lincoln and Guba, cited in Pickard 2013, p.7). The participant responses were subjective according to their worldview. The choice of organisation for the study was subjective being closer to the researcher’s own political persuasions and worldview. This did have the advantage of gaining the trust and agreement of the participants and the selected organisation, but the research could not be said to be independent of the interaction between subject and researcher. A danger in the inevitable subjectivity of the qualitative process in this case is that the investigation might become a mere exchange of shared political opinions. However, the research tools were carefully designed, as shown later in this chapter and informed by the theories and concepts as identified through the literature, keeping the focus on the key aim of the research and the exploration of the research question. Furthermore, as explored later, the ethical issues, particularly around anonymity and confidentiality, meant that data was depersonalised to such an extent that neither the participants nor the organisation itself nor the country it is in, can be easily identified from the reported findings and discussion. The effect of this was that, while the participants’ subjective views were stated, the use of generic terminology (see Section 1.2.1), to protect the anonymity of person, organisation and country, enabled the collection of a body of findings that could be more easily integrated in the future, with results that might later be obtained from further research, which might be expanded to include more participants and more organisations, either in one country, or across a wider geographic spread.

The methodological stance is that of empathetic interaction (Pickard, 2013, p. 12) requiring reflexivity (Bryman, 2016) in understanding the influencing effect of the researcher’s perspective and values, and the impact of the research process itself on the participant. According to Pickard (2013, p. 12) “Interpretivists take the stance that any research activity will leave the subject of that research in an altered state”. She goes on to say:

“Intepretivism can offer understanding of the meanings behind the actions of the individual..... Intepretivism seeks to understand the entire context, at both the macro- and micro- environmental level” (Pickard, 2013, p.13).

With this in mind, the research design investigated context in two different ways. The first was the investigation of the overall or macro-context of the participants’ work within

the organisation under study, while the second was the investigation of the specific or micro-context of exchanges of informal communication that the participants identified and discussed with the researcher after the exchanges had taken place. Thus, the research is particularised rather than generalised (Pickard, 2013). The notion of generalisation in the sense of a sample being representative of a population is “not a goal of qualitative research” (Pickard, 2013, p. 67). Following on from this, it is worth noting what other authors say about the limits of generalisability in qualitative research. Bryman (2016) notes that generalisation, even as evidence of external validity in quantitative research, still needs to be regarded with a degree of caution especially with regard to temporal and spatial limitations. He suggests that “findings to qualitative research are to generalise to theory rather than to populations”, citing Yin’s (2009) work on case study research. Yin (2014) warns specifically against statistical generalisations in case studies, stating that:

“Your case or cases are not “sampling units” and also will be too small in number to serve as an adequately sized sample to represent any larger population.

Rather than thinking about your case as a sample, you should think of it as an opportunity to shed empirical light about some theoretical concepts or principles.” (Yin, 2014, p. 40)

Yin (2014) goes on to discuss a different type of generalisation, namely analytic generalisation, and states within this discussion that:

“The analytic generalization may be based on either (a) corroborating, modifying, rejecting, or otherwise advancing theoretical concepts that you referenced in designing your case study or (b) new concepts that arose upon the completion of your case study.” (Yin, 2014, p. 41)

In fact, as shown in Sections 3.6 and 6.2, this research did result in modifying existing models of information behaviour, resulting in an adaptation of an existing model, and a new model predicated on another existing model.

3.3 Method

As explained in Section 3.2, although this research, on first appearance, seems to be suitable for the qualitative ethnographical approach, that approach could not be adopted for the reasons given, including time limitations and compromising of confidentiality, that often characterise informal conversations (Waring and Bishop, 2010). However, according to Yin (2014) a research question which concerns itself with the 'how' something happens, as the one for this research does as well as seeking to ascertain 'why' it happens, the case study is an appropriate research method. Furthermore, where it does not require rigorous control of events, which in this case would be counterproductive to the enquiry as it was about the naturalistic occurrence of informal communication exchanges; and where the study focuses on contemporary events, again as in this case, Yin considers the case study to be the best approach to use. He provides a two-fold definition of what a case study is. The first is that

“A case study is an empirical enquiry that

- investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the “case”) in depth and with its real-world context, especially when
- the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident” (Yin, 2014, p.16).

In this research, the phenomenon being investigated was that of informal communication and the context was a political one with the organisation, where the informal communication is being studied, being a political party. The context included the external political environment as well as the environment of the organisation itself, and the personal contexts of the people engaged in the informal communication activities. The issue of boundaries between phenomenon and context is important because the contexts invariably impacted on the phenomenon. Yin takes this into consideration in the second part of the definition which is that:

“A case study enquiry

- copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as one result
- relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion, and as another result

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

- benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis” (Yin, 2014, p. 17).

Indeed, several variables of interest were identified; multiple sources of evidence were used; and prior development of theoretical propositions were undertaken to guide data collection and analysis (see Sections 3.4 and 3.5).

Yin (2014) confirms that a case study approach can accommodate a relativist perspective, as the findings are dependent on the participants’ perspectives, thus acknowledging multiple realities. For this research, a single exploratory case study was undertaken of one political party in a European country, with embedded units of analysis, which were the examples of informal communication presented by the participants that were explored in depth. These were the embedded cases, or units of analysis, within the overall case study organisation, i.e. the political party. Further confirming the relativist nature of the study, the contextual findings were drawn from the participants’ perceptions of the case study organisation and their relationship to that organisation, while findings relating to the units of analysis were drawn from the cases of specific examples of informal communication, as experienced, perceived and reported on by the participants over a two week period. Eventually the results of the findings, analysis and interpretation were brought together in order to address the research question of how informal communication influences organisational learning in a political party. While the data collected was relativist in nature, the interviews were guided by key aspects of theory drawn from the three areas of informal communication, organisational learning and information behaviour, as identified in the literature review (Chapter Two). A further point to note is Yin’s (2014) point about blurring context and phenomenon. This is reflected in the fact that some of the data collected for the cases was, in fact, more suitable as contextual data. Of Yin’s (2014) rationales, the most apt is the common case, where

“The objective is to capture the circumstances and conditions of an everyday situation – again because of the lessons it might provide about the social processes related to some theoretical interest” (Yin, 2014, p. 52).

In this case, the everyday situations were the occurrences of informal communication, and the area of theoretical interest is organisational learning and the concept of the ‘learning organisation’. Of Stake’s (1994) types of case study, this study corresponds to an instrumental case study, as the purpose of the study was to investigate a

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

phenomenon, in this case, informal communication, in order to see what this reveals about its role in organisational learning in the political party.

Noting Yin's (2014, p.17) last point in his two-fold definition, in which he states that a case study requires the "prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis", and later advises that researchers need to be aware of the "full range of theories that might be relevant" (Yin, 2014, p.39), as stated earlier, the theoretical area of information behaviour was identified as an important and relevant area, in particular for assisting in the interpretation of the cases, as communication, by its very nature, involves information behaviour (see Section 3.6), thus strengthening the academic basis of the study.

The danger that Yin (2014) identifies in the use of the embedded type of case study, of becoming too focused on the embedded units, is avoided by having two separate data collection periods with separate analyses. The first period of data collection focused on collecting contextual data, and the second focused on the cases of the examples of informal communication (see Section 3.4 for more details on the examples). The findings are initially treated separately (Chapter Four and Five), and then brought together in the discussion chapter (Chapter Six).

As stated earlier, the case study organisation was a political party in a European country. Two decisions were needed here: to decide which country and from that which party to select. The decision was somewhat iterative as various parties and various countries were considered until a rationale presented itself that then enabled the decision to be made. This was that an EU country would be used, and that the party would be a member of the Party of European Socialists (PES), as both the EU and the PES have sufficient members to allow effective anonymity of the selected organisation. In addition, the academic literature about social democracy in Europe in recent times shows sufficient currency (see Section 1.1), suggesting scope for expansion of the research subsequent to the current study. For example, comparative studies can be made across several of the member parties of the PES. Obviously the parties share a particular political direction, but the PES organisation itself is represented in all the European institutions, including the European Parliament and the EU Commission, thus having a significant role to play in the functioning of the EU.

"In the European Parliament, the PES is represented by the Progressive Alliance of the Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament, also

known as the S & D group. It has 191 members and it is the only political group in the European Parliament with representatives from all 28 states” (Party of European Socialists, www.pes.eu, accessed 22nd May, 2019).

Furthermore, regarding membership, the PES states:

“The Party of European Socialists (PES) brings together the Socialist, Social Democratic, Labour and Democratic Parties from all over Europe and Norway. Together with 33 full member parties and 12 associate and 12 observer parties ...”. (Party of European Socialists, www.pes.eu, accessed 22nd May, 2019).

One further decision made about the choice of country was that it would not be one known to be actively seeking to withdraw from the EU during the time, at least, of the data collection period, as this ran the danger of rendering the findings less relevant, in a short space of time. Naturally, with anything organic such as a political party or any political construct, there are always elements of temporality and unpredictability about their fortunes while a study is being undertaken. So, the decision here was more about mitigating the danger rather than guaranteeing its avoidance.

As stated in Section 1.2 on nomenclature, the case study party will be known, from now on, as the [xx] Party and generic terms that denote the different aspects of the parliamentary political system are used throughout the thesis.

3.3.1 Sampling

Pickard (2013, p. 103) states that “case study research always uses purposive sampling to identify information-rich sources within the case”. In this case, a combination of a simple set of a priori criteria sampling and snowball sampling, both purposive, were used to identify the participants. The process of accessing participants was challenging, due to the time commitment needed to participate, and trust required for participants to feel comfortable engaging in this type of research with a stranger. Sharing information about informal communication exchanges of a political nature needed to be handled with care and sensitivity (see ethical issues in Section 3.3.2). Several personal contacts were approached for links to a potential gatekeeper, to enable the recruitment of participants. Eventually, one of these personal contacts enabled access to the gatekeeper, by e-mail introduction, which was important for

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

establishing trust and commitment. A brief meeting took place with the gatekeeper, who then quickly introduced the first participant. The first participant suggested the second, who then suggested two more participants; and another personal contact suggested a fifth participant. A former party leader was approached on the suggestion of the third participant, as a potential sixth participant meaning there were to be six participants in total. However, the last participant had to withdraw due to increased work abroad.

There are various positions taken about sample size in qualitative research. Most argue that smaller samples are better for the rich picture approach characteristic of qualitative research. The precise number for the sample varies between authors and types of research. Bryman (2016) notes from his research into sample size, that in-depth, rich picture research can indeed be conducted on just one or two cases. Guest et al (2012) states that “sampling in qualitative research is generally purposive with small sample sizes and the goal of describing the variability but not its distribution across a general population” (Guest et al, 2012, p. 133). Guest et al (2012) note budgetary or logistical issues can also play a part in limiting the sample size (see Section 3.3.2 on ethics, scope and limitations) to potentially less than the level needed for saturation. According to research by Guest et al (2006) on data saturation and variability, using content coding on 60 interviews, 80% of the content codes were found in the first six interviews and after 12 interviews, the remaining interviews added very few additional content codes. It could be argued that time was therefore lost due to information redundancy (Pickard, 2013). Crouch and McKenzie (2006, p. 484) argue “a positive case for small samples in research where in-depth interviewing is the method of choice and realism the epistemological foundation” and that “the labour-intensive nature of research focused on depth can be evoked to justify a small sample size” (Crouch and McKenzie, 2006, p. 484). Here, in-depth interviewing includes targeting respondents’ perceptions and feelings, which sit within a particular social milieu. This reflects the decision discussed in 3.2, to take a contextual, in-depth approach, where the contexts of the particular informal communication activities identified by participants play a significant role in the interpretation of the findings (see 6.3). Dialogue encourages reflection on the experiences being reported and the researcher is “responsive to cues as they occur in the interview” (Crouch and McKenzie, 2006, p. 487). Furthermore, in their justification for small sample sizes, Crouch and McKenzie (2006, p. 488) observe that most commonly, “in-depth interviews feature in research where respondents’ experience is analysed with the uncovering of its thematic dimensions in view”. This reflects the interview approach as discussed in Section 3.4.2

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

and the template analysis approach as described in Section 3.5. Crouch and McKenzie (2006, p. 488) also note, in their justification, the constructive validity of having the interview data intersecting “with pre-existing theoretical knowledge”. This aspect ties in with the analytic generalisability approach discussed in Section 3.2.

It is thus clear that a small sample size is appropriate to qualitative research and that anything from two to twenty participants can be justified where a rich picture, context-dependent and particularised approach is taken, underpinned by the application of appropriate areas of theory. The particularised approach here refers to the context based examples of informal communication activities rather than a whole organisation broad based approach. And the generalisability follows the analytic generalisability approach of Yin (2014) as discussed earlier in Section 3.2, where the particularised findings are analysed according to and integration of information behaviour and organisational learning theoretical perspectives.

In accordance with the purposive sampling approach, the above-mentioned snowball sampling approach included the application of simple a priori criteria, to reduce bias in the sample (Pickard, 2013). These were that there was a variation in the representation of gender, age and role, to obtain a wider range of perspectives on both the contextual aspects of the case, and on the phenomenon of informal communication being studied in the cases as embedded units of analysis. A further convenience criterion was added, which was that the participants be fluent in English, to avoid the requirement of translation of the audio recordings, due to the time limitation of the research. Profiles of the participants were avoided for anonymisation reasons (see Section 3.3.2), but the ratio within each criterion can be stated. On gender, three women and two men were interviewed. On age, two people in their twenties, two people were in their forties and one person was over sixty. On role, one person was a researcher for a parliamentarian who deals with policy and legislation, one was a full-time employee at the party headquarters, one was chair of a party branch, one a member who works for a voluntary organisation unconnected to the party, and one person was a retired member who had previously held a prominent position in the party, although as a volunteer not a full-time employee. Further participants were not sought due to the time constraints of the research, bearing in the mind the time that was needed to transcribe about 20 hours of interview recordings, while leaving sufficient time to conduct a thorough analysis and interpretation of the findings.

3.3.2 Ethical issues, scope and limitations

Approval for proceeding with the research was obtained from the Northumbria University Research Ethics Committee confirming protocol was followed according to the Northumbria University Ethics Policy. Organisational consent was obtained from the gatekeeper of the selected organisation and individual consent was obtained from the participants, using forms approved by Northumbria University, with accompanying information sheets explaining what the research is about prior to obtaining consent (Appendix A). The terms 'pre-activity interview' and 'post-activity interview' were used to help participants understand the research design, however, for the rest of the thesis, the standard terms of first and second interviews are used. For reasons of protecting anonymity of the organisation (Appendix B) and the participants (Appendix C), only blank sample copies of the consent forms are included in the Appendices. Audio recordings and transcriptions were stored on an encrypted memory stick and then transferred to the University's server. Their handling and storage is subject to the University's retention and disposal policy and will only be held until the final version of the PhD has been submitted.

The transcriptions were mostly verbatim; however, any words or phrases that could potentially identify the country or the party were replaced with alternative generic words or paraphrasing. The nomenclature used throughout the dissertation to describe political roles or parliament buildings, is explained in more detail in the introduction (see Section 1.2). The transcriptions were printed out to facilitate the thematic analysis (see Section 3.5), as the relationships between the data were found to be easier to identify in hard copy than by computer. Only redacted extracts of the analysed transcriptions are included in the appendices (see Appendices D and E), due to the strict requirements for anonymity. The complete set of analysed transcriptions is stored separately and in a locked storage unit. Different coloured fonts were used in the printed transcripts to distinguish between the participants. Although the participants were labelled A to E for the purposes of storing the data, these labels were then dropped to avoid the possibility of creating too detailed a profile of a participant. The requirement to anonymise the country, in order to ensure anonymity of the organisation and the participants, was challenging and it did mean that a small proportion of the data could not be used. There was a fear that this requirement would result in overly bland content, however, this did not transpire to be the case, as many of the issues were common to other EU countries. A further consequence of needing to apply this level of anonymity was that some of the contextual factors, such as information relating to organisational structures, or details relating to specific election performances, had to

be omitted. However, global political trends could be included, and the majority of the organisational characteristics that needed to be explored from an organisational learning perspective, were also included, without compromising the anonymity of country, organisation or participants.

The scope of the research was limited by the amount of research time available, including the time needed to find a gatekeeper and develop a relationship of trust, in order to then attract the interest of willing participants. So, for this reason, one political party was selected for the single exploratory case study, and the units of analysis, or cases, were the detailed informal communications that the participants discussed in the second interview. The time available to participants for each interview and also to maintain their interest during the interview made it important to limit each interview to a maximum of 90 minutes. This was the case both for the contextual interview and for the interviews relating specifically to the cases. Nine cases emerged from the interviews; some were longer than others and, in some cases, a participant would present more than one of these (see Chapter Five). The contextual information collected in the first interview was presented in the form of group findings about their perceptions of what informal communication is, and of various aspects relating to the case study organisation of relevance to its organisational learning processes. Information relating to personal contexts, such as reasons for joining the political party under study, is also presented as group findings, while still highlighting differences and similarities of perception. This more holistic treatment of the case study research was appropriate for documenting such contextual information. It also, again, reduced the possibility of building up too detailed a profile of each of the participants, especially as they were open with their opinions, and it was again important to protect their identity. One further scoping limitation relates to the literature on organisational learning and the concept of the learning organisation. As the literature on these areas is growing continuously in many directions, it was necessary to narrow the focus. This is explained further in the literature review itself (see Section 2.3.1).

Having considered the scope, ethical issues and limitations in the research, it is necessary to also address criteria for judging value in this research.

3.3.3 Establishing trustworthiness

“Understanding the methods of establishing the ‘truth’ of research is essential for researchers and they must understand that it is inappropriate to judge

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

methodologies using criteria that are not only misleading, but fundamentally wrong” (Pickard, 2013, p. 20).

Yin (2014) tends to focus on the four criteria (internal validity, external validity, reliability and objectivity) that are used to judge value in quantitative research, whereas Lincoln and Guba (1985) point to a different set of criteria: “credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability” (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p.300) that are more appropriate for judging the value of qualitative research, while maintaining the four concepts of truth value, applicability, consistency and neutrality. It is the latter set of criteria that are addressed in this section.

The first criterion of evaluation, i.e. the truth value of credibility of the qualitative research, involves three types of triangulation as defined by Denzin (1989). Firstly data triangulation was used. As Flick (2014, p. 183) succinctly states, “Denzin makes a distinction between (1) time, (2) space, and (3) persons; he recommends studying phenomena at different dates and places and from different persons”. In this case, the phenomenon of informal communication was explored through the eyes of five different people (see Section 3.3.1 regarding sample size), selected through purposive sampling, each with different characteristics. With regards to time and space, the informal communication exchanges occurred at different times and in different places, so different aspects of the phenomenon emerged. The second type of triangulation applied was theoretical triangulation, where theory relating to organisational learning, informal communication and information behaviour was explored and drawn upon in order to guide the data collection and analysis process. The third type of triangulation related to the data collection tools. Although the two points at which data collection occurred involved interviews, the first interview was a semi-structured interview whereas the second interview was an episodic interview in that it involved elements of narrative, as participants were asked to narrate their informal communication experiences. Elements of the semi-structured approach were also used to aid the participants in their narration.

Regarding the second criterion of evaluation, i.e. the applicability value of transferability of the findings, Pickard (2013, p.21) states: “in qualitative research the goal is to allow for transferability of the findings rather than wholesale generalisation of those findings”. Transferability is about similarity of the sending context, in this case the political organisation under study with the receiving context, such as another organisation that has enough similar characteristics that could allow for transferability (Pickard, 2013).

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

The organisation in this study identifies closely with similar organisations with the same goals and values in other EU countries, as emerged in the data. Furthermore, the case study organisation periodically collaborates with organisations, which share certain views and values concerning certain specific issues. It can be difficult to judge the level of transferability when the research is only about a single sending context (Stake, 2010). Bryman (2016, p. 384) notes, in his discussion of transferability, that “qualitative findings tend to be orientated to the contextual uniqueness and significance of the aspect of the social world being studied”. The social world here is the context of informal communication within a political party. However, if there is a sufficiently ‘thick description’ (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Stake, 2010; Pickard, 2013; Bryman, 2016) drawn from the data collected in the sending context, as is the case with the two in-depth interviews undertaken for this research, and other organisations with similar characteristics, there is scope for a degree of transferability. A thick description provides others with a platform “for making judgements about the possible transferability of findings to other milieux” (Bryman, 2016, p. 384).

Regarding the third criterion of evaluation, i.e. that of consistency as identified as dependability, there is an auditable trail (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) of audio recordings and full transcriptions kept on the university server and on a secure external drive. A record of email exchanges is also kept there. The transcriptions were also printed out with wide margins, where handwritten notes were made while drawing out the relevant material for the template analysis. These are stored in a secure separate location and in a locked container. It was necessary, as stated in Section 3.3.2, that some aspects of the transcribed content had to be reported in a less specific way than in the verbatim audio recording, to ensure anonymity; and at times, specific nomenclature needed to be used. The findings can therefore be traced back to the transcriptions and audio recordings. Again, as discussed in Section 3.3.2, due to the strict requirements for anonymity, not only of the participants but also the organisation and country of its location, only extracts from the transcripts have been reproduced here (Appendices D and E) in order to demonstrate this part of the auditable trail. Finally, for this criterion of evaluation, the discussion and conclusions can be traced back to both the literature review and the findings.

Regarding the fourth and final criterion of evaluation, i.e. that of neutrality in the confirmability of the research, as discussed in Section 3.2, it is the nature of the research that there is subjectivity as the investigation was conducted through the eyes of each of the five participants. Therefore, the subjectivity of the perceptions is

declared, while the data collection process was informed by theory examined in the literature review. The analysis and interpretation processes were similarly informed so that the research was underpinned by a sufficient level of objectivity and academic rigour.

3.4 Data collection

After discussion of the literature review in Section 3.4.1, the rationale for choice and development of the data collection tools is discussed in Section 3.4.2. This is followed in Section 3.4.3, by an explanation of the pilot study and how this informed the main study. This also explains why the term 'informal conversation' was used in the interviews rather than 'informal communication'. In Section 3.4.4 member validation and reflexivity, of participants and of the researcher, is discussed.

3.4.1 Literature review

A search was conducted of literature on informal communication, information, knowledge and key learning concepts; on information behaviour and organisational learning theory and concepts, as well as a number of articles on related primary research. The search on informal communication was in partial fulfilment of the first objective. The search on information, knowledge and key learning concepts was conducted to demonstrate core academic principles, which underpin the information behaviour and organisational theoretical positions. A number of reports of case studies relating to these areas were also examined. These searches together enabled the fulfilment of the second objective and directly fed into the design of the primary data collection tools. The literature review was then structured according to each of the three theory areas with an additional section where theory areas were combined. Much of this last section was absorbed in the working model on information behaviour in conversations (see Section 3.6.1), which is why the discussion chapter returns to focussing on the three theory areas specified in the objectives.

It was discovered from the literature search that some of the issues identified in the information behaviour literature were similar to those identified in the organisational learning literature. In order to fully appreciate where these overlaps were, a storyboard (see Appendix F) was created with 'post-it' notes of all the salient areas identified from the literature. These were organised according to the body of knowledge they originated from, i.e. information behaviour or organisational learning. The most

significant area of overlap was that of psychological factors as they featured equally strongly in each body of knowledge.

3.4.2 Designing the data collection tools

Ultimately, interviews were chosen as the key primary data tool, in preference to observation. A key aspect of the research that cannot be gained from observation is how the participant perceives what happens during informal conversations. Participants' explanations of their perceptions of the informal conversations, shared through the interviewing process, allow the inclusion of information about how and what they learn during those conversations. The researcher has an opportunity to find out about the thinking of the participants in response to their reported content of the conversations. It facilitates sharing of some of the internal conversations that participants may have had with themselves while participating externally in their group conversations and indeed when reflecting on those conversations. A second aspect of the research is that it would be incredibly difficult for a researcher to observe informal conversations because the communication can happen very quickly, the communication may be difficult to hear, and the opportunities for such observation are unpredictable due to their episodic nature. These would be considered "issues resistant to observation" (Bryman, 2016, p. 494). Some informal conversations may also be considered too private, personal or confidential for an external researcher to witness. Political parties would be particularly conscious of the danger of leaks from informal conversations, which might be misinterpreted or misused and thus be damaging to the party. These are all important ethical considerations to take into account, especially as the participating organisation did not wish to be identified in the study. Informal conversations are also viewed as something which happens in a safe environment. The presence of a researcher would automatically compromise these as it is potentially intrusive and there is a real danger of "reactive effects" (Bryman, 2016, p. 494) affecting the actual conversations themselves, and thus compromising their integrity.

Interviews are a good way to capture rich data in qualitative data, as it allows for open and exploratory approaches (Oppenheim, 1992). Although questions formed the guiding structure in the interviews, questionnaires were not used either, as this tool does not facilitate prompting to assist the participants in bringing more of their own perspective and narrative to the fore. As stated in Section 3.3, it could be argued that the participants themselves were taking an ethnographic approach in their contribution to the data collection process, as they would be reporting on their own experiences of informal communication in their second interview. So, while the observation for the

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

researcher was not regarded as suitable for the afore-mentioned reasons, participants would, as part of engaging in communication, be making their own observations about the informal conversations, which they later described in the research interviews.

Having participants keep an informal communication diary, as part of their activity in between interviews, was briefly considered. An experiment was conducted in which the researcher attempted to keep such a diary over a period of ten days. Two problems arose. The first was that the process quickly grew tiresome, and the second problem was that confidential information inevitably made its way into the diary. Not wishing to burden the participants with these problems, they were asked instead, in the preliminary discussion of their first interview, how they might capture and recall the conversations that they would report in the second interview. They were all confident that they would be able to recall the conversations and report their experiences. One participant did take notes while the other four relied on memory for those conversations that made a particular impression on them. Again it is important to recognise the relativist nature of this study, as well as the theoretical underpinning of the questions in the interview guides. The latter provided the objective layer upon which the subjective layer of the participants' narratives was superimposed.

Two interview structures were designed. The first interview was essentially a semi-structured interview in which contextual information about the participants themselves and about the organisation was sought, in order to establish a framework for considering the organisational learning aspect of the research question. It also facilitated the understanding of the context in which the subsequent cases would take place, a vital consideration when examining the results from an information behaviour perspective. The second interview, an episodic interview, was semi-structured to include elements of a narrative interview (Flick, 2014), where the participant effectively narrates their stories of their experiences of informal conversation during the two week interval between interviews. It could be argued that these two interviews combined correspond with Yin's (2014) concept of "prolonged case study interviews. These interviews may take place over 2 or more hours, either in a single sitting or over an extended period of time covering multiple sittings" (Yin, 2014, p. 111), which in this case would be two sittings and reflects the in-depth approach to the interviewing process.

The questions which informed the two interview guides emerged from the key areas identified from the literature review, in particular from the informal communication,

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

information behaviour and organisational learning literature, and their overlapping areas. An Excel spreadsheet was created for each interview (see Appendices G and H) in which the emerging questions are listed and four columns are added alongside the questions. The first column identifies influencing theory behind each question. The second column notes the relevance to the research analysis, of each question. The third and fourth columns include keywords and additional comments, respectively. Not all questions have comments attached to them. The comments are sometimes additional reasons for the questions, or anticipated possible directions that the questions might lead to, or issues that might emerge with the types of questions asked. The order of the questions was also taken into account, first easing the participant into the interview, then focussing on the core issues being explored, before reaching the concluding part of the interview. Initially, in the first interview, the first questions focused on the personal contexts of the participants, before moving to the hub of the interview, and then concluding with a question about the most important quality needed to be able to have influence in the organisation. However, as explained in Section 3.4.3, the pilot showed that an additional four preliminary questions in the first interview were required to make the participants' involvement in the research process clearer and thus more helpful, rather than being a general preliminary discussion.

The interval of two weeks was seen to be, and confirmed by participants, long enough to allow sufficient examples of informal conversations to emerge, but short enough that they remain relatively fresh in their memories. The second interview was broken up into three sections again. The first section involved the participants giving a brief summary of the informal conversations they could recall. The next part of the interview then focused on more detailed examples, with prompts from the researcher relating to certain theory aspects to be drawn out of the narratives. The final part of the interview related to participant reflexivity as discussed in Section 3.4.4. Questions were open ended, and in both interviews, where interviewees struggled, prompts were used to assist them in responding; this usually involved rephrasing the question. The researcher remained aware of the need to avoid leading questions, which could be a temptation at the point where additional prompts were needed.

The interviews were effectively social constructions of reality. Such social constructions of reality within a political organisation are set in a wider social context described by Flick (2014, p. 11) as the "pluralization of life worlds" resulting from the "dissolution of "old" social inequalities into the new diversity of milieus, subcultures, lifestyles and ways of living" (p. 12), which have brought about a whole new range of contexts and

perspectives for the social researcher to deal with and which requires “a new sensitivity to the empirical study of issues” (p.12). The participants themselves had different life worlds and the younger participants talked about, for example, changes in the world of work. Within the investigation, participants were asked about current issues that impacted on their work in the case study organisation, partly to understand the context of the examples they gave of informal conversation, and partly to understand the wider contemporary context of that organisation. Flick goes on to say:

“Advocates of postmodernism have argued that the era of big narratives and theories is over: locally, temporally, and situationally limited narratives are now required”. (p. 12)

The explorations of examples of informal conversations, as reported by the participants, correspond directly with the limited narratives described in the above quote. Furthermore, both interviews enabled the participants to apply their own knowledge and practices in their explanations of what happened during the reported informal communication conversations, what led to their occurrence and what happened afterwards, or what the participants believed would happen afterwards. In other words, this is evidence based practice, which can then be analysed and interpreted in response to the original research question (Flick, 2014).

3.4.3 The pilot study and resulting changes to the data collection tools

A personal friend based in the researcher’s home country, who was a member of a small, left-wing party, that was not part of the mainstream tranche of national parties, volunteered to participate in the pilot study. After following appropriate ethical procedures and having an informal preliminary discussion about what was required, the pilot participant commenced the first interview (see Appendix I). There were no problems with the actual questions in the first interview, although an additional query was added into the interview guide for the main study (see Appendix J) on organisational stories, legends and icons. This was because much of the pilot participant’s response involved these aspects and the literature does confirm their significance in understanding organisational learning processes (see Section 2.4.4).

When the pilot participant returned for the second interview (see Appendix K), it quickly became clear that there were some issues with the research design. The participant had not really prepared for the interview and primarily scrolled through a set of mobile phone text messages, which mainly dealt with logistical issues. When asked why they

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

chose these mobile phone exchanges, the participant said it was because they were easier to recall for accuracy. There was a danger, which was in fact realised, that this was not going to reveal anything of any significance about learning in the organisation. However, it is worth noting that the informal communication required for the logistical issues used up a lot of the interviewee's working time. Unfortunately, though, these examples did not have sufficient detail to provide enough data for meaningful analysis and interpretation. The immediacy and exchange elements of the communication were realised to be important aspects in contributing to learning, involving information seeking behaviour and knowledge sharing, and needed to be more clearly explained in the preliminary discussion prior to the main part of the first interview. The challenge, however, was to elicit such examples without leading the participant too much. Another interesting point that emerged from the pilot was that the participant felt that the focus seemed skewed to looking at informal communication they initiated, and that the possibility for being a recipient of informal communication was overlooked. This was not quite the case, but it was clear that this aspect had not been sufficiently emphasised in the interview guide. The final issue was that it proved difficult to extract information about the emotional aspects of the informal exchanges. This was mostly a consequence of the personal approach of the participant, which is to try and move quickly to a calm, 'rational' approach and avoid 'too much' emotional expression. This might also reflect the nature of the party that the participant belonged to and its underpinning philosophy.

One last issue occurred with the second pilot interview. Due to the sparsity of the data, some of the questions were not asked and the pilot questions in Appendix K are the ones that were actually asked. This list was later compared with the original list of questions for the second interview that emerged from the Excel exercise of matching the theory with the questions (Appendix H), and the missing questions were added in to the interview guide for the main study (Appendix L). Some of the questions were rephrased to assist the participants in understanding the nature of the questions. Two additional questions were added at the beginning to allow a freer range of recollection of examples, as it was felt that in the pilot interview, the interview moved too quickly to identify the main case example. Another question was added near the end of interview in which the participants in the main study were asked if they could give any examples of an idea resulting from an informal conversation in the past coming to have a crucial influence on the party. This turned out to be a particularly useful question for the fourth case, as the participant recalled a prequel informal conversation that occurred several years previously which had a direct connection to that case.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

After the issues that occurred with the second pilot interview it was decided that, as well as the additions made to the second interview guide, four new questions needed to be included in the first interview guide, which would constitute a preliminary section (Appendix M) to the main interview. It was decided that rather than imposing an explanation of what the researcher perceived informal communication to be, it would be in keeping with the spirit of the research character, to ask the participants what they perceived this phenomenon to be. It was also thought that if the participants owned the definition and description of the nature of informal communication, they would then find it easier to identify suitable examples for the second interview. Therefore, one question on this and another one on perceived modes of informal communication, were added. A further two questions were added to ensure that participants understood the research process. In this section participants were asked if they could foresee any difficulties in identifying suitable examples of their own experience of informal communication activities, and being able to recall and relay the details of those experiences in a subsequent interview.

The challenge of helping participants determine what was meant by 'examples of informal communication', as required for the research, was not fully resolved until meeting the first participant for the main study. The gatekeeper was late for the appointment to discuss the involvement of the political party in the research, and had asked their researcher, who subsequently was the first participant, to attend the appointment and discuss the research while waiting for the gatekeeper to arrive. The information sheet (Appendix A) was shared and the potential participant asked quite a few further questions about the research. Eventually this began to cover some of the discussion that would have emerged from the first part of the first interview. The steps of the research were explained and the problem of the pilot interview was shared, at which point the potential participant suggested exchanging the term 'informal communication' for 'informal conversation' for the preliminary questions of the first interview. The participant reasoned that it was a less amorphous term and made it much easier for them to begin to imagine the types of examples that could be given in the second interview. This rationale made sense and agreeing to the change had the effect of immediately increasing the level of interest in the research and being involved in it. This revised term did subsequently have the effect of making the preliminary part of the first interview much easier and quicker to conduct; and resulted in more detailed data than in the pilot being brought into the second interview. As documented in the discussion chapter (Section 6.1), the more focused term did not detract from the

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

analysis and comparisons with the literature about the nature of informal communication. The gatekeeper arrived soon after this and was brought up to date with the discussion and gave permission for the research to be carried out, and later signed the organisation consent form. The potential participant then signed the participant consent form and the date and time of the first interview was set.

The locations of the interviews for each participant varied. Two of the participants had their interviews in the parliament buildings. Two had their interviews in an office at one of the local universities, as they both had links with the university, and one of the participants had their interview at their workplace. This reflected the variety of participants as sought in the initial purposive sampling process. All participants consented to have their interviews recorded, and the 10 interviews took about 19 hours in total. The first set of interviews all took between 75 and 90 minutes, while there was greater variation in the length of time for the second set of interviews. However, this did not represent a difference in quality of data, as some of the participants gave concise but, nonetheless, comprehensive data. The longest second interview reflected the context for the informal conversations that were discussed, which was the party annual conference. The latter took place over a whole weekend and gave rise to multiple opportunities for informal conversation.

In concluding this sub-section, it is useful to restate the nine cases that the second interviews yielded. These were:

1. A book-club meeting
2. A day of area rep shadowing by an area co-ordinator
3. An online social media conversation
4. A demonstration and celebration of a successful step in putting forward new legislation on gender equality of opportunity (this includes the prequel conversation mentioned earlier)
5. A celebration of a new amendment relating to collective bargaining access for freelance workers in certain industries
6. A series of medium sized informal conversations at the party's annual conference
7. A conversation that took place at the annual conference disco
8. A conversation with a disillusioned member
9. A conversation with a fellow member based in the participant's home constituency.

The last four cases all took place at the party's annual conference and were reported on by the same participant.

3.4.4 Member validation and reflexivity

The case analyses were sent to the members for validation. Four out of the five participants responded after viewing what was sent. One correction emerged with regards to labelling of a legal issue, in such a way, as not to reveal the country or party's identity. All the participants who responded demonstrated reflexivity in that they were each surprised about certain aspects of their contributions, and recognised that there had since been some changes in opinion. One of the contributors had changed jobs. The latter noted that they sounded 'quite cynical' and was surprised by this but did not dispute the accuracy of reporting. The participant who did not reply did, in fact, go on to stand for election, as had been discussed in one of the cases. They may well be so busy now with constituency work that they did not feel they had time to respond.

Reflexivity is an important aspect of interviewing (Oppenheim, 1992) and, as shown in the analysis template in Table 3 (Section 3.5) and documented in the cases in Chapter Five, the final question in the second interview was whether they found themselves thinking differently during their informal conversations, knowing that they would be doing a second interview about those conversations. All participants reported that at various points they did have the second interview 'at the back of [their] mind'. They also stated that it did not make any difference to the actual conversations. One participant said that they did make occasional notes to ensure they did not forget what they wanted to say in the second interview. Two participants said that the process made them more aware of the boundary issues of determining when conversation is formal and when it is informal and the first participant, in particular, was highly conscious of trying to judge which conversations would work as case material in the second interview. They described the process as 'tricky but interesting'.

A surprising aspect that emerged from the analysis process was that the personalities of the participants reflected not only in their roles, or former roles, but also in the way they presented their perspectives in the interviews and how their contributions could be used in the analysis stages. There was a difference in the amount of data that was usable from each interview. The data for two participants was almost all used as they were concise and succinct in their responses. Although they had the shortest interviews, there was hardly a wasted word. One of these participants is very involved

with legal and policy aspects in the parliament, and conciseness would be a requirement for this type of work. For one respondent there was a degree of repeated information within the interview or information that had already been given in the first interview. This respondent was used to mentoring and training roles, which may reflect repeated explanations provided in the second interview. Two respondents did make a number of asides, however, this was only as short statements, and the majority of their data was used.

Regarding researcher reflexivity, the goals and values of the selected political party are ones that the researcher would be sympathetic to. This did mean that gaining participants' trust was not a difficult task, and the researcher did not experience internal conflicts with the interview reporting. The question has been considered of what the experience of a similar research study would be like for the researcher, had it been conducted on a political party with anathema views and values; and it is acknowledged that this would, indeed, be a challenge, but not necessarily insurmountable, as long as the theoretical underpinnings of the questions remain clearly in focus during the interview. As the political platform of the selected party is clearly stated both in the introduction to the thesis and in the introduction to the methodology section, readers will already be aware of the likely bias of some of the content of the interviews. However, the theoretical origins of the areas of research interest remained firmly in focus throughout the analysis and interpretation of the content. There were moments during the interviews when political events of the country where the researcher is based was mentioned by the participants, but the interviews remained appropriately guided and, in some cases, the observations served as useful comparisons, when they were directly relevant to the case being reported. A reflexive consequence of the research has been a change in the way the researcher evaluates political discussions in their own informal conversations. This is mainly due to the learning gained from the conversations with the participants, which presented a new set of viewpoints and issues, from another country's perspective.

3.5 Analysis

This research applied a template analysis approach as it allows a list of codes, i.e. a template of identified themes, which can begin as a priori, but then is modified and added to, as texts are read and interpreted (King, 2004). Template analysis works well, according to King (2004), when perspectives are being compared in a specific context. Thus, it is an approach that suits research involving multiple perspectives (King, 2004),

as was the case here. In the first interview, different perspectives on the nature of informal communication and various aspects of organisational culture were examined in order to discover insights about organisational learning. In the second interview, which was about the cases discussed earlier, perspectives relating to informal communication, interwoven with perspectives on the underlying information behaviour, also lent themselves to being analysed using the template analysis technique. With this method, salience and frequency might not necessarily correspond (King, 2004). For example, the salient issue of boundaries such as those between formal and informal communication, is not mentioned in all the cases, but it remains an important issue for consideration because the phenomenon of informal communication was the particular area of interest for studying how organisational learning occurs. Template analysis

“Allows the researcher to identify some themes in advance; it is well suited to studies which have particular theoretical or applied concerns that need to be incorporated into the analysis” (King and Horrocks, 2010, p. 168).

This is particularly apt, given the requirement of the objectives to underpin the study by applying pertinent theory and concepts (see objectives in Section 3.1) and given the method applied in generating the questions for the semi-structured interviews (see Appendices G and H).

The first a priori template created for analysing the data from the first interview was built up mainly from the interview schedule, including changes made after the pilot interview. This first set of codes corresponded with the grouping of the questions in the first interview (see first column in Table 1). However, after collating the transcribed data for each question, as described in 3.4, it became apparent that some of the key issues were not highlighted in the first template, and some of the lower-order codes were not under the correct higher-order code. This led to the preparation of a second template, which eventually became the one which approximated mostly closely with the section and sub-section headings applied in Chapter Four (see second column in Table 1). The networks category reappears as a lower-order code in the influence category, as this is an intrinsic aspect of influence. A new higher order category called ‘staying informed’ was created and the relevant lower-order codes were moved from their original categories to this category, which focused on the specific information seeking aspects of the content.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Table 1: Initial and revised templates for first interview

| <i>Initial Template</i> | <i>Revised Template</i> |
|--|--|
| 1. Informal communication i) Modes | 1. Informal communication i) Modes |
| 2. Own Role i) Current roles and responsibilities ii) Main Tasks iii) History of party relationship iv) Personal Goals (Motivations?) v) Keeping up to date | 2. Staying informed i) Current discussion topics ii) Keeping oneself up to date iii) Individual learning |
| 3. About the party i) Party Goals ii) Understanding Party Culture (newcomer perspective) iii) Leadership Style iv) Discussion Topics | 3. Personal i) Responsibilities and tasks ii) Motivation to join the [xx] Party iii) Personal goals in working for the [xx] Party |
| 4. Networks i) Who? ii) What (nature)? iii) How come? | 4. [xx] Party organisation i) Main goals of the party ii) New members iii) Stories and party narrative iv) Leadership Style |
| 5. Degrees of Influence i) Degree of influence of above networks ii) Other groups who influence the party's direction iii) Personal Degrees of Influence iv) Qualities needed for ability to influence | 5. Interactions and influence i) Networks ii) Circumstances leading to interactions iii) Who has most influence iv) Personal sense of influence v) Most important quality for influence |

The handling of the second interview, in which the units of analysis, i.e. the cases, were explored, developed in a curious way, with an unexpected, but quite exciting, result. Once again, an a priori template was created in a similar way by building it up from the interview schedule (see Table 2). This template was considerably more detailed than the one for the first interview. However, this created too many sections for the reporting of the cases.

Table 2: Initial template for second interview on informal communication

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. Short Examples <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Topics b. Places c. Times d. Number of people | |
| <i>Per significant, trackable example:</i> | |
| 2. Context (lead up) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Place b. Time | 3. Goals/Outcomes/Commitment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Conscious b. Emerging c. Desired d. Other goals e. Goals of other participants f. Personal g. Organisational |
| 4. People <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. In lead up b. During c. After d. Representative Groups e. Initiator f. Other participants g. Participant roles h. Number of people | 5. Feeling/Emotion/Mood/Sense of well-being <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Before / During /After b. Atmosphere/Prevailing Mood c. Others' moods /feelings d. Mood impacts e. Reactions/Indicators/Expression of Mood <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. NVC ii. Language iii. Conversation style f. Challenging g. Level of Informality/Level of Emotion Relationship h. Personal handling of emotional reactions |
| 6. Outcome <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Action b. Decision c. More discussion | 7. Follow up/Subsequent Actions/Effects <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Opposing Views b. Echo Chamber Effects |
| 8. Reflection - personal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Benefits b. Lessons learned c. New knowledge d. Contribution to own goals e. Impact | 9. Reflection - organisational <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Benefit to party b. Contribution to party goals c. New insights for the party d. Contribution to knowledge and learning e. Key priority (the activity related to) |

To address the issue of too many sections, a second template was created with a reduced set of codes (see Table 3), where the higher-order category was the case number, and the possible list of lower-order codes was the same for each case, but was in fact reduced in the later cases, as they were less detailed than the first three

cases. A second higher-order category was included here for the analysis of the shorter examples that the participants gave at the start of their interview, before the specific cases were selected. This category was analysed after the individual cases analyses, for the simple reason that in the findings chapter, this allowed the section numbers to match the case numbers. As can be seen, the template in Table 3 is considerably shorter than the template in Table 2, due to the lower-order codes being repeated for each of the nine cases in the study.

Table 3: Revised template for second interview on informal communication

| |
|--|
| <p>1. Case One</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Emerging topics b. Conversation goals c. Post conversation follow-up d. Affective factors e. Participant reflexivity f. Boundaries |
| <p>2. Short Examples</p> |

When the time came to write up the discussion chapter and interpret the findings, particularly the second set of findings, against theoretical underpinnings it became apparent that there was scope for a finer grained interpretation, particularly from the information behaviour theory area. Wilson’s work, in particular his 1997 general model of human information behaviour and his 1999 nested model of information behaviour is critiqued in Section 3.6. Subsequently two new models were developed, as described in Section 6.2. The first model is an adaptation of Wilson’s (1999) nested model, while the second model is a proposed new working model of human information behaviour in conversation, predicated on Wilson’s (1997) general model of information behaviour. A template was developed from the latter new model, and used to gain this more fine grained interpretation of the findings (see Chapter Five) for the nine case studies. This then fed directly into the discussion of the cases in Section 6.3 in the Discussion Chapter.

The next section, therefore, examines Wilson’s work from 1981 through to 2016, and then focuses on the 1999 and 1997 models in particular. The two models that were developed subsequently are then shown and explained in Section 6.2.

3.6 A tale of two models - part 1: a critique of Wilson's models

Initially it was intended that Wilson's (1997) general information behaviour model (see Figure 3 in Section 2.2.2) would be used as part of the information behaviour interpretation of the analysed findings, in particular, for the nine cases. The reasoning for this is quite resonant of the approach that Wilson (1981, 1997, 2005, 2016) himself took in the development of his general model, in that he considered the range of existing information behaviour theories and aimed to reflect their commonalities while at the same time, leaving a flexible enough model for researchers to adapt and add in further concepts if appropriate. Furthermore, the application of information behaviour theory was identified as a possible conceptual bridge between the two theory areas of informal communication and organisational learning. The literature search for this thesis also involved studying a range of information behaviour concepts, theories and models, while seeking common themes. As mentioned by Wilson (1999) and Hepworth (2004), some of the information behaviour theories and models are more suitable for interactions with existing, structured information systems. These were seen as less appropriate for research about human interactions, whether it is face-to-face, spoken or via computer mediated communication (CMC). At first the analysed findings seemed to fit quite well with the different parts of Wilson's (1997) model, also reflecting the design of the interview questions. However, when actually applying the model, a few issues began to emerge.

Much of Wilson's (1997) model focuses predominantly on context initially, as well as on drivers and potential barriers to information seeking behaviours. When the model eventually reaches the point of interaction with an information source, i.e. when actual information seeking begins, the detail in the description of the model (Wilson, 1997, 1999 and 2005) begins to reduce. This has already been identified in the literature by, for example, Niedzwiedzka (2003). Furthermore, while the types of information seeking behaviour included in the model are comprehensive, there is still further scope for integrating ideas of other authors, which could enhance the explanations of information behaviour activity. For example, Todd (2005) developed theory on how information behaviour contributes to changing the information seeker's 'picture' of the particular situation that prompted the information behaviour; Savolainen (2014) undertook in-depth studies about emotional motivations for information seeking choices; and Hepworth (2004), in his work on informal learning amongst carers, considered the evaluation of source character, i.e. the person or artefact that

information is sought from. While the early parts of Wilson's (1997) model definitely contained significant issues to consider in the analysis, the initial attempt at applying Wilson's (1997) model did not seem to capture the dynamic nature of information behaviour in conversations, whether they are formal or informal, online or face-to-face or, indeed, phone conversations. The dynamic of these situations are that there is a continuous movement back and forth between the communicators, which arguably is a continuous and mutual process of both information seeking and information or knowledge sharing.

It is interesting to note some of Wilson's other models and ideas here. For example, in his 1981 model showing interrelationships among areas in the field of user studies, Wilson does identify the phenomenon of "information exchange" and that sources can include other people (see Figure 1 in section 2.2.2), but it is shown as something separate from information seeking behaviour rather than having the information seeking behaviour sitting within the phenomenon of information exchange.

Wilson's (1999) nested model showing information seeking behaviour as a subset of information behaviour, has worked in a modified form. This is because the information exchanges or, in the case of this thesis, the informal conversations are manifestations of information behaviour, which include information seeking as a subset of behaviour in these contexts.

Wilson (1999) presents a further diagram linking information seeking and communication (see Figure 4 in Section 2.2.2). However, as discussed in the literature review (Section 2.2.2), there are difficulties with this model. One particular difficulty with Wilson's (1999) diagram linking information seeking and communication, is that in his explanation, Wilson (1999, p.264) states the diagram "renames information sources 'channels of communication'" with the "communicator as the originator of messages over the channels of communication". This suggests that the message is not perceived as an information source until it is delivered through a channel, or medium of communication. Arguably, however, it is the communicator who is the information source, because they are actively passing on the information they have at their disposal and sharing their knowledge, as well as adding additional non-verbal signifiers of meaning. The channel of communication, invariably characterised by degrees of interference or 'noise' (Roberts-Bowman, 2016), and characteristics of the receiver are naturally contributory factors to what and how a message is actually received. This, in turn, will inevitably affect subsequent communication behaviour and corresponding

information behaviour. The main problem identified with the linking diagram (Wilson, 1999) is that information seeking behaviour still looks, from a visual perspective, to be a separate activity to that of the communication process.

Wilson's models from 1981, 1997 and 1999 all have interesting facets and interrelationships, which can usefully be applied to this research. After the data collection, two new models were developed from this, in which Wilson's ideas were reworked and added to, resulting in the development of two new models. The first is an adaptation of Wilson's (1999) nested model which then links to the development of the second model. The latter is a new model of human information behaviour in conversation, predicated on Wilson's (1997) general model of information behaviour, but bringing in aspects of Wilson's earlier work and like Wilson, integrating the work of other information behaviour theorists. This is explained and discussed in Section 6.2, which is Part 2 of this tale of two models. Section 6.3 then discusses the results which emerged from the application of the second model.

3.7 Summary

There were many decisions to be made in the research design until eventually the final design emerged. The decision to use the interpretative paradigm emerged early in the planning stages, once the research question, aim and objectives were determined. This was followed by the decision to conduct a single embedded exploratory case study of a political party in an EU country that was a member of the PES, and that the country would not be one where continuing membership of the EU was in doubt at the time of the research. The case study context related to aspects of the organisation that could assist with the organisational learning part of the research question. The embedded units of analysis were the cases of informal conversations reported on in the second part of the study, in order to understand the role of informal communication in the organisational learning of the party. A literature review was conducted, covering theories and concepts from relevant academic sources about informal communication, knowledge and information, information behaviour and organisational learning, including the concept of the 'learning organisation'. Interviews and, what were effectively participant ethnographic experiences, were used for the data collection. Two interview guides were developed from questions emerging from an analysis of the theory. These were piloted with a participant who was a member of another political party and based in the researcher's home country. A number of issues emerged from this, which resulted in changes being made to both of the interview guides. Purposive,

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

snowball sampling was used, and five participants were found in the case study organisation, after a personal contact enabled an introduction to a gatekeeper within that organisation. The first set of interviews was about establishing personal and organisational context in the selected party. The second set of interviews primarily centred on the nine cases. Template analysis was used to analyse the data, which involved initial and revised template designs for each set of interview findings. The analysed findings were sent to the participants for member validation and further reactions and evidence of reflexivity. Following the analysis, the interpretation and discussion stage of the research resulted in (a) the adaptation of Wilson's (1999) nested model of information behaviour (see Section 6.2) and (b) the development and application of a new model of human information behaviour in conversation (see Section 6.2.1), predicated on Wilson's (1997) general model of human information behaviour. The development of these models became a core part of the study and resulted in a finely grained set of completed interpretations of the analyses of each of the nine cases (see Appendices N-S). The threads of all the different parts of the research were then drawn together to complete the discussion and conclusion chapters.

Chapter Four: Findings about context

The purpose of the findings in this chapter is twofold. The first reason is to surface participants' perceptions of what 'informal communication' means to them and the second reason to build a picture of the personal and organisational context, in which the research sits. Due to the anonymity requirements of the research, some aspects of context have been deliberately omitted, so as not to reveal the country or the organisation, in which the research took place. The findings are primarily based on the first of two interviews with the participants. Additional data, specifically relevant to the questions asked in the first interview, also emerged in the second interview and is also included in this chapter.

The chapter starts with a discussion (Section 4.1) of the participants' perceptions of what informal communication is and what modes they are most likely to use. This is followed by a section on keeping up to date (Section 4.2), which looks at the main topics the participants talked about, that were current at the time of the interviews. The section then looks at the ways participants keep themselves up to date; as well as how they learn best and perceived barriers to their learning. Section 4.3 focuses on the participants' responsibilities, personal goals and motivations, including what motivated them to join the [xx] Party, and subsequently to work for it. Section 4.4 focuses on participant perceptions of a range of organisational aspects relating to the [xx] Party itself, including organisational goals, organisational culture and leadership style. Section 4.5 begins by looking at who the participants communicate with informally, and then moves on to participant perceptions about influence within the party.

4.1 Participants' perceptions of 'informal conversations'

As discussed in the methodology chapter (Section 3.4.3), a decision was made based on the first interview with the first participant to change the first question from 'what do you think of as informal communication?' to 'what do you think of as informal conversation?' as it was found that this more easily allowed participants to have a more shared understanding of this question. It was perceived as less amorphous a term than 'informal communication'. In exploring perceptions of what informal conversation is, participants discussed characteristics, place and time, purpose and what it is not. They also discussed which modes of communication they used most frequently in informal conversations. The characteristics identified were that informal conversation was spontaneous, chatty, having no goal or no aim, not trying to go anywhere, gossip (this

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS ABOUT CONTEXT

was mentioned by three participants), discussions with friends, 'hanging out', engaging with informal networks and socialising.

The most likely places and time mentioned were: 'somewhere to socialise', at coffee, lunch or after work, at a bar at parliament, in town or abroad where EU meetings have taken place, in an airport departure lounge or on a plane, and on social media. Most of the participants mentioned that this would often be before, after or even during formal meetings, with longer conversations taking place after the meeting when people met up in a bar, for example, to socialise. As one participant said, informal conversation happened 'in the margins of meetings'. One participant mentioned this kind of informal socialising after participating in a demonstration with other party supporters.

The purposes that were mentioned included obtaining people's views and to stimulate thinking on a range of issues. This was mentioned as an unexpected consequence of the initial conversation in question, exchanging pleasantries and personal news. Two participants observed that informal conversation may be leading to a more formal discussion later on, such as to become updated with what is going on, and to make people aware of what they are each working on (for discussion or to co-ordinate campaigns), or to help each other fine tune their debating arguments. One participant felt that informal conversation was an opportunity to 'discuss whatever ... all issues with the party', including direction, policy, 'what we're doing right, what we're doing wrong, what we need to do more on, mistakes we made and members complaining about something or someone'.

What participants said informal conversation was not were meetings, events taking place on a public platform, a formal debate, formally organised meetings with an agreed agenda and official written communication. One participant noted later that 'it may be difficult to distinguish between formal and informal conversations, no matter what mode'. In the subsequent interviews, further characteristics, places and time, purposes and ideas about what informal conversation is not, emerged.

Regarding modes of communication most used for informal conversation, all five participants mentioned face-to-face conversation. Four of them went on to mention social media, including WhatsApp, Facebook including its Messenger function. One of the participants added Twitter to this list. Another participant added the telephone and text messaging and a third participant added the telephone and e-mail. The participant

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS ABOUT CONTEXT

who identified just the one mode (face-to-face conversation) stated that this was essentially the only mode they would use for informal conversation. They felt that, while some online communication can be conversational, 'there is a very different tenor (tone) there because they don't start out as something informal and chatty'. Those participants who mentioned the telephone as a mode for informal conversation did not elaborate further on this mode. The participant who mentioned e-mail stated that 'to me, it isn't actually totally informal, it's easy to use but it's public'. They talked about having learned from a young age 'that you never write anything down that you don't want the world to see'. This suggests that the participant sees that anything written down already compromises the nature of informality, and this is further compromised when this is presented in a public arena.

The social media platforms used were primarily Facebook and WhatsApp. The participant who discussed e-mail (above) also mentioned Facebook and uses it solely to 'lurk' or to add a comment but 'I never post anything myself'. This person is cautious about social media because 'it's very easy to say things on social media that you can't really retrieve'. The other three participants who mentioned social media were very positive and enthusiastic about its use. One of the participants who mentioned Facebook said that there was a private account for members of the particular sector in the party that they work in. It was considered a safe place for people in that sector to share their thoughts and reactions with each other. This person also indicated a sense of a blurring of distinction between formal and informal, saying 'while people would discuss issues and things in that, it would be in a way kind of formal because it's kind of like a continuous meeting'. Another participant participates in two Facebook groups, and described this in some depth in the second interview, saying that they felt that this platform was 'more personalised and people really express themselves'.

In discussing the social media application WhatsApp, one participant saw this as a type of bridge or connector between formal and informal. So it could relate to something more formal later on, or it could start off as formal but then have informal conversation 'nested' in the formal conversation. Another participant mentioned using two WhatsApp accounts; one being for active members and 'just one with friends'. The account for active members included a mix of 'just discussing what's going on', making people aware of areas they are working on and co-ordinating campaigns. In this case, the interviewee simply mentioned WhatsApp as one of the social media applications which was considered as the mode most likely to be used for informal communication. There

was no mention of whether any of the content was perceived as anything other than informal.

The participant who mentioned Twitter said that they mainly used this to 'defend the party'. Another participant also mentioned Twitter, noting that past efforts at using online message boards to stimulate debate had been tried but did not work.

4.2 Staying informed

In this section, topic areas of discussion mentioned by participants are outlined, the way participants keep up to date on these and other topics is explored together with how participants best learn, and what stops them from learning. Self-knowledge of this nature is an important consideration in understanding the learning that takes place in the [xx] Party.

4.2.1 Current discussion topics in the party

Two types of answers emerged here: firstly internal party questions and secondly external issues and events at local, national and international level. Party identity and direction questions came through from all participants with questions such as:

'What are we about still? Where are we going? Where should we be going? What does the party stand for? How do we carve ourselves out in the new political landscape we find ourselves in? What makes us different from other parties? How do we stand out from them? What are our core issues?'

Messaging is a theme that came through in answer to several questions but here it concerned where the party went wrong in its messaging and 'how can we communicate a message to people in a way that makes them more likely to be involved or support us?' Broader questions included where 'social democracy is at', refugee policies and the need for developing more economic policies. The party is engaged in a 'constant process of self-analysis', with [rebuilding] and fighting your way back in'.

In terms of membership, participants also mentioned how to increase member involvement and looking out how to reach out more to 'different sections of society that maybe haven't been spoken to by social democracy' and 'the precariat people who are self-employed'.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS ABOUT CONTEXT

Looking at the external issues, these emerged, as can be seen below, at three different levels. At the international level, issues included social justice issues; dangers of populism and immigration policies – the participant believed the party is about showing ‘we are an immigrant nation and we accept refugees and immigrants’. The impact and uncertainty of BREXIT including the impact on imports and exports was raised as was responding to the message in America of ‘too much identity politics and not enough focus on the working class and the struggling middle classes’.

National level issues were wide ranging covering, for example, hospital waiting lists, the shortage of housing and how it links to work, in that people cannot get on the mortgage ladder because they don’t have permanent work; the future of work - the changing nature of work, the ‘gig’ economy, people not covered by unions, and other work related issues such as getting a fair wage and current transport strikes. Other national issues included a range of women’s rights and righting past wrongs, immigrations and election results. One participant summarised this by asking the question of how we address ‘the reality of this urban, angry population Communities that we’d be considered to have abandoned’.

Finally, local issues included funding for CCTV schemes to reduce break-ins and contribute to crime prevention; train fare classification; flood relief in an area that was experiencing flooding and the dynamic of local campaigns are ‘better because they actually resonate’. One of the participants mentioned that local issues were the easiest for MPs and councillors to have success with compared with national issues where in some areas the local communities may feel quite detached from these. For example, some issues are primarily about issues in the capital city rather than outlying areas and other parts of the country. Furthermore, with regards to handling the national issues, it is more difficult for a party that is not the majority government to influence the resolution of these, although they may have an ameliorating influence. All the participants commented on this particular difficulty and did relate this very much to the issue of messaging and effectively explaining the role of the party in this amelioration process to its members.

4.2.2 Keeping oneself up to date

Online newspapers were mentioned by all participants and three participants cited politics programmes on the radio and television though they did not use the television as often. One did not own a TV and streamed any relevant programmes via the Internet. Two mentioned reading broadsheet newspapers from their own and other

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS ABOUT CONTEXT

countries. Only one participant mentioned the in-house sources of information, and one person mentioned using the telephone. All participants mentioned face-to-face meetings.

All participants used some form of social media, although one participant leaned more towards e-mail alerts and discussion lists and only used social media to 'lurk'. One participant mentioned information overload 'but I have to confess ... it just gets such an overload ... I have done my best to limit times when I will look at my phone ... because it just gets overwhelming'. Three participants mentioned Twitter. Two mentioned Facebook, with one participant being very enthusiastic about this platform, seeing it as a forum for lively debate where people are more outspoken, and 'you can see what people are thinking'. Alerts and discussion lists were mentioned by one participant only.

Views about using Twitter included: 'you can't rely on getting the air time on traditional media ... it's free to be on the social media, so you have to utilise it to its full extent'; one participant found it useful for obtaining information but would be unlikely to post anything there because 'I think it's quite dangerous sometimes ... because it's easier to say something and regret it and you can't take it back'. Facebook was regarded by some as 'more distracting ... less focussed' but useful for 'grasping the mood out there' and 'I would be wary of that' (the Echo Chamber effect); 'just what comes up in a news feed'. WhatsApp groups were mentioned by three participants. One of these talked about a closed WhatsApp group of young activists where the closed nature of the group allowed them to speak more openly and freely on certain issues. One comment on alerts was: 'I look at it more often than I actually read it; they have quite long, earnest articles'.

One participant mentioned weekly updates, updating monitors for 'sitting days' [in parliament] and a service which sends articles on selected topics which the participant had to sign up to. This participant and two others also mentioned the press office for briefings.

One participant spoke in some detail about telephone and face-to-face contact. For example, they said: 'I talk on the phone ... a LOT on the phone, I ring people all the time, I'm checking in, I hear things, I hear news'; 'I go to meetings a lot'; 'I go canvassing with people just to see the temperature, see the reaction, see how they (the other canvassers) get on'. They mentioned meeting friends who would be actively

engaged in politics. Three participants talked about meeting other members at events around the party. The previous participant stated that 'stuff is always being discussed ... Someone is always angry about something'.

One person noted that for issues that have not reached the media 'we ... keep each other informed ... if something's happened during the day' but did not specify how this was done. Another participant described their activities in this section as 'networking'.

Four participants mentioned being wary, or at least having an awareness of the Echo Chamber effect, particularly in terms of social media, and talking with like-minded people like other party members, and that they would actively seek a range of reporting and views of particular issues and events. Other non-political friends or neighbours were also mentioned as potential sources of information that could balance out the Echo Chamber effect.

The importance of the message was again mentioned: 'so if you don't get your message across very clearly and if the words aren't all very clearly can be taken up in the wrong way and taken out of context'.

In summary, there was a variety of preferences of ways of keeping up to date. None of them seemed to be age or gender related, with social media being viewed on a spectrum from suspicion to enthusiasm. Everyone mentioned at least two types of media for staying up to date.

4.2.3 How one learns best and perceived barriers to learning

One participant revealed their preferred way of learning as stated here:

'In a political party you really learn by doing – you know you are out doing it, you're canvassing, you are dropping leaflets then you might have to write a leaflet or you know you might have to write a press statement ... you really learn by doing and I mean you know I never got any training ... [and on canvassing] well, what all parties do is when you go canvassing you'll go with an experienced one and you tag along and then when you feel like you can do it then you just start canvassing on your own in the sense that you actually have to speak yourself but doing ... we do have a lot of training sessions too ... we just had one on Saturday for the new area representatives ... so we do formal training as well'.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS ABOUT CONTEXT

Another participant, again answering an earlier question, said 'I was a dreadful student. I'm not a self-starter. I need to be in a ... with an instructor, you know ... and doing a general degree, [there isn't] a hope of being structured'.

The social media enthusiast mentioned earlier, said that they liked to keep abreast of technological developments, particularly in social media platforms, as much of their reading, which is their preferred way of learning, is online. This person liked the exposure to multiple views and they can judge the trustworthiness of the sources themselves. They did not elaborate on how they judge the sources. They liked the way one can dip in and out of the platforms, viewing the same issues but finding different perspectives according to whatever mood that person is in when reading the material. This same participant also mentioned YouTube and how it suggests follow up videos for further exploration on a topic. They mentioned the importance of keeping an open mind in learning.

Participants identified different ways each of them learns best. These included 'doing'; making notes: 'if I just read I will forget. I take notes, I have to see things written down otherwise I forget'; reading: 'I'm better on text'; and personal contact in an informal group that's 'not too big a group'. On the other hand, several barriers to learning were identified. For example, not being motivated; laziness; lack of persistence; the content is against one's principles or against one's inclinations; not wanting to learn what someone else wants you to learn and finally distractions in the office environment or 'through checking my email'.

One participant noted in their second interview that they 'learn best by reading, and personal contact ... a conversation that's probably not too big a group ... informal maybe ... yes I think so'. And for barriers to learning, the participant said 'laziness, sometimes a lack of persistence ... I'm not so good on spatial'. The participant was mainly positive though about learning, stating that 'I can usually have a go of most [things] ... at the level I would need to know. ... [But] there is an old dog learning new tricks ... well, I'm a bit at that stage in my life'. The participant would be less likely to engage in anything that was 'against my principles or against my inclinations also'.

Further observations were made from the second interview, for example that learning is about 'being open to new ideas. That's the start of it. Not being closed ... I wouldn't be into dismissing anything'. This participant went on to say 'I'd be more into books and

research but there's others ... more interactive things ... and if there were people in groups' the participant did not see themselves as strong on that. They said, even though in their workplace it's 'share and share around ... it's probably not my strongest suit ... I prefer to say I'll take it away and read it and come back'. On the other hand barriers to learning were seen to be 'personality [and] habit'.

4.3 Participant responsibilities, goals and motivation

In this section, a short overview is provided of participant responsibilities and main tasks. This is followed by motivation for joining the [xx] Party and main personal goals and motivation to work for the party.

4.3.1 Current responsibilities and main tasks

For confidentiality and anonymity reasons, care is taken here to avoid discussion about roles in any way that could potentially lead to identification of a particular participant. Nonetheless, the question in the interview was necessary to increase understanding of participant context. Activities involving organising events, meetings, conferences and campaigns were among the responsibilities participants mentioned in their interview. The meetings mentioned included staff meetings at all levels from branch to parliament as well as public meetings. One participant mentioned a public meeting where they invited a former Minister to speak about a party issue. This meeting is mentioned again in one of the second interviews, as part of the context of the informal conversation examples being given. Campaigns included election campaigns for councillors as well as for parliamentary members. They also included raising awareness and support for issues at local, national and parliamentary level. These examples appear to be mainly formal situations but, as mentioned in Section 4.1, opportunities for informal conversations do still arise, no matter how formal the initial setting.

Additional tasks varied in terms of the number of people that the participants tend to interact with, or who are involved with the participants in the achievement of these tasks. For example, drafting press releases proper involves a smaller group of people than debating motions at sector meetings in readiness for the larger party meetings. Tasks involving working with a large number of people (although actual numbers were not specified) included getting people together who are interested in the party (at branch level); promoting the party; ensuring there is good communication between staff and members; canvassing; report writing; inviting speakers to come and talk about

issues from the party (at branch or constituency level, at public meetings or smaller in party gatherings) and debating motions and policies in smaller sectors of the party, from which they could go on to influence the direction of the larger party. Tasks involving contact with people in smaller groups, or those that are more individual in nature included assisting in policy formulation; ensuring members' subscriptions are up to date; drafting press releases and speeches; conducting research on legislative issues and managing the social media and website content. More generalised tasks included assisting in general co-operation within the party and general co-ordination. The variety of level of interaction involved in these tasks means that there are likely to be variations in the number and extent of opportunities for engaging in informal conversation, with each of the tasks mentioned.

One participant described their role as 'informal in a way. It's either something I take on myself or it's an echo of something I used to do ... so in a way I don't really have [a formal role]. The tasks aren't set out. They're not defined ... It's a little bit messy to be honest'. Attendance at meetings in Brussels, for example, would either be through wearing a different hat from being a [xx] Party member, or through volunteering to go as a [xx] Party member, so that there was representation.

4.3.2 Background and motivation for joining the party

In describing their journey towards their eventual decision to join the party, all participants mentioned university studies. Two participants were already thinking about this party during secondary school, and in the first year of university joined the university party branch. One participant joined the party shortly after completing undergraduate studies, having always had leanings towards this particular party. Another participant had already, after graduation, become involved in a number of linked causes and from that decided that joining this political party was a natural next step. A further participant began to look for a political party to join while studying for a postgraduate degree. They were looking for a party that would give the best opportunity to apply the same personal goals that motivated their postgraduate study in the first place.

All participants indicated that their reasons for choosing this party included wanting to be involved and this party was seen as being the most sympathetic to their concerns. These included improving the role of women in society, increasing equality and diversity, having a more international outlook, and supporting trades unions and workers' rights. A range of perceptions that attracted the participants to the party were

also described as the party being a ‘very positive force’ in the country’s politics; trying ‘to bring about change’; ‘trying to get things done and [taking] responsibility for that’; actually ‘willing to be a bit more bold than just the status quo’; being both ‘progressive’ and ‘forward thinking’; having ‘a vision for [their country]’; being a place ‘where I could just be with women who were politically minded and interested in current affairs and changing the society’; being both ‘pragmatic and constructive’– it’s interesting to note that this ‘pragmatic’ aspect was mentioned several times during both sets of interviews, by each of the candidates interviewed, either directly or indirectly, such as when recognising some of the difficulties the party faced in recent elections. A further observation was that the party was ‘where I would align economically, socially... [The] kind of country I would like to build and see in the future and push things in the right direction’. One participant, noting recent election results stated that ‘no party gets it right all the time’. Also in speaking about the party being in government, the participant noted that it is good for the party members to be ‘at the table’ and ‘able to influence policy, towards the social good’.

In summary, the reasons given for joining the [xx] Party centred around seeking involvement, being a modern, progressive party; a party wanting to make significant changes both economically and in the way society is run; a party with a vision but that is also pragmatic, trying to get things done, while working towards the social good; and a party that openly supports the issues of importance to them.

4.3.3 Main personal goals and motivation to work for the party

Four out of the five participants were locally and nationally focused. The personal goals were about personal involvement that would potentially provide opportunities for being able to have an influence on shaping the society of the country. This was expressed as follows: to ‘work towards having a more economically and socially progressive and equal [country name]’; ‘I believe that if you create a good society you will have the people and the infrastructure to actually make a good economy and be wealthy’; just ‘changing the ... society in a way that looks after its citizens better and gives the state a bigger role’; ‘the progressive cause ... pushing the social envelope a bit’; women ‘and women’s role and position and their situation ... are still the things that motivate me’; ‘personal issues would be education’ and some country specific issues relating to education; ‘... constantly pushing for economic justice’ and ‘I have ideas and opinions as well on either tax policy and spending and restructuring health ... and other things as well’.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS ABOUT CONTEXT

In terms of practical aspects of involvement and seeing results, the participants mentioned: being able to see progress from working on campaigns; working on legislation and 'being able to see the impact of that'; 'I'm very much about nuts and bolts ... you don't get to dream so much then ... you just get on with it'; helping to win elections and playing 'some role' and playing to one's strengths such as contributing through one's ability as a good researcher when working on policy development.

One participant spoke about a desire to change what is taught in schools towards 'teaching people how to think, how to problem solve, how to think critically, how to tell fake news from the real news ... and reliably find more correct answers than incorrect ones ... or even on other aspects of just ... for all your social interaction and even maybe with a bit of philosophy and how to be happy... deal with failure'. Another focused on the role of the party at European and international levels. They wanted to 'escape the parochial' and bring perspectives from outside the country back in, to widen the discussion. They also mentioned learning from what people in Europe were doing about environmental issues. For example, sister parties working together at European level with another party (and its sister parties), which also has these issues on their agenda.

Further observations were also made about the process of politics and how this impacts on the degree to which these personal goals can be met, for example

'It's hard in politics to see very far into the future ... it's very hard to make very long term goals because you can't be sure of anything in politics' and

'There are also lots of things that I still think aren't really tackled and you can't even expect that you can even say: Oh this is what I want'.

In talking about trying to make changes with regard to a specific national issue, one of the participants expressed frustration at the slow pace of progress, saying 'it strikes me as somewhat odd because it seems like it's one of those issues where people are in a vast amount of agreement yet nothing's happening right now'. A further comment was made in answer to the subsequent question but relates to this section too, which was that one participant felt there was an element of 'wherever I was, power wasn't'.

In the second interview, one participant felt it was important to also have outside commitments, particularly when there was a sense of the party being at a low ebb;

however, they felt that ‘you shouldn’t divorce ... there is a personal thing in all of this for people’, thus expressing the participant’s ongoing commitment to the [xx] Party, but perhaps expressing it in other areas of life, rather than solely in party life. It was summarised as being ‘maybe not so active within the party itself, [but] still active with the ideals’.

In summary, personal goals were about trying to influence the direction of society for greater social and economic justice, for certain changes in education, for providing better care (such as child care and health care) with more ‘state’ involvement, making progress on the role and position of women in society, and being able to influence legislation, and increasing the party’s international profile. The idealism was also tempered with a sense of realism of the difficulties of being able to make longer term policies, the practicalities in terms of what can be realistically achieved in the time given of an election term, and also a degree of inertia when trying to move on issues of cross party interest, which in theory should be easier to move forward.

4.4 Participant perceptions on aspects of the [xx] Party organisation

This section includes findings about what the research participants perceive as the main goals of the party, how the party attracts and supports new members, stories that reflect the [xx] Party’s cultural narrative and leadership styles within the party.

4.4.1 Perceptions of the main goals of the party

Perceived party goals included: ‘... trying to make the economy work for people and trying to create a just society’; ‘I suppose a central goal is to be able to govern’; upholding the value of ‘equality, solidarity, community ... everything we do is for the community rather than for the individual’; providing ‘good public services’ and supporting ‘bargaining rights and ... issues to do with minorities.

One participant also said ‘I would say, equality where people have a level playing field ... trying to reduce that gap in effort, the difference in effort, as much as possible’. This participant then proceeded to give an example about students, where some have to take on extra jobs to fund their studies while others are more fortunate and do not have to expend their energy on funding their studies this way.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS ABOUT CONTEXT

Another participant spoke about the review that took place at the party annual conference of the party constitution which they identify as ‘the most encouraging thing to emerge from the conference. This participant also mentioned that the approach to the review was less top down than had been experienced in previous years. Participants also spoke of difficulties relating to the practicalities of the parties meeting its goals.

As a minority party in government ‘you’re always going to have to say, well, are you going to make compromises to be in with these people or these people and that’s a difficult one’. This participant went on to say:

‘Politics is all about compromise; trying to get as much of your policies as you can; you can never get hundred percent ... you have to compromise because it’s only healthy; it’s only right, unless you’re in a dictatorship, you shouldn’t get a hundred percent of what you want ... it’s very much well look, here are the issues, obviously we’d all like a utopian society but what can we do? So I think that’s very much a part of how we work, finding, well what can be done? And if something can’t be achieved, sometimes that means ... not doing anything and that can be disappointing and you know without constitutional change there is only so much we can achieve”.

They also mentioned the study of legislation to look for loopholes that allow change to be implemented, as well as the importance of taking a ‘bottom-up approach’ of working with the voters on the ground, to achieve the party goals.

‘So not everything can be changed right now but try to, I suppose through outreach ... so that say if a referendum can be held on an issue, say on equal marriage, by that stage, enough had been done to reach out to people so that there was a groundswell support’.

Another participant said that the party is pushing social democracy and opposing populism even though populism is currently more popular.

The difficulty of communicating the goals of the party was also referred to: ‘we all have our ideas about what the party stands for but ... if you were an outsider looking in you might have incredible difficulty in finding out what we’re for and that’s a difficult thing to communicate’. The participant went on to say ‘people have a sense of what certain parties in [the country of the [xx] Party] stand for to some degree and some people you

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS ABOUT CONTEXT

just can't shake them, because it's either a family thing ... or it's a culture thing ... that's a difficulty for our party but also I'm sure for other parties as well'.

Today's political climate was also seen as problematic as there are 'more parties of the centre ... it's the extremes that are being popularised now more so than they've ever been and the parties more in the middle are finding it difficult to get a voice ... for a more pragmatic approach, it's just not very interesting [to the electorate]'. 'You need a concise way to inspire people because you can't just say things are mostly okay ... that's not really going to get anyone to come out and do doors with you [canvassing]'.

A further comment about communication in this political climate was that, when implementing policies that are difficult, the approach of 'this is good for you, we need to do this, it's for the best' does not and did not work. Whereas a more protesting tone where 'we should have been screaming and saying that we, we can't believe that WE are doing this ... and if WE are doing it, that's how bad it is' might, according to one participant, have been a more effective way of communicating with the electorate. This comment was actually made in response to a later question about organisational narrative.

Additional observations were made in the second interview. One participant remarked:

'Well people come from all backgrounds and what unites us is something. Some people say we're all in the [xx] Party because we want to nationalise everything, no, we're not and I'd say no, we're all in the [xx] Party because we want to have a wealthy society and then we invest back into it, so that we can be wealthy. And then it's no it's not, we want to give decent lives to life's workers, no we're not, we're in it because we want a socially progressive [country], so you could have a million reasons why we do what we do and some them are probably contradicting each other, but it's the same in every party'.

And again, later:

'Everyone's welcome and you know something keeps us together and it's the values and it's instinctively ... we all know what the [xx] Party is about but yes, there are different shades and some people then are just of course, purely ambitious and you know if it doesn't work out they go to a different party'.

One of the participants with a strong interest in environmental issues talked about difficulties of implementing environmental policies where there would be potential job losses. This was perceived as understandable and that an approach of advocating easier adjustment to good environmental practice rather than adopting policies that would cause instant threats to jobs.

In summary, a range of goals relating to equality, solidarity, a workable economy, developing a level playing field reducing the effort gap for people to be able to achieve their goals and play their part more fully in society, supported by having good public services, collective bargaining rights and ensuring the upholding of the rights of minorities. The goal of being in government was seen as being necessary to achieve the other goals. New goals emerged resulting from the annual conference review of the party constitution. The recent approach to reviewing the constitution and the importance of working from the ground up on issues, that may otherwise be difficult to address for constitutional reasons, for example, were also seen as important to the effectiveness of the party in achieving its goals.

4.4.2 Attracting and supporting new members into the party

One participant noted a 'huge' increase of membership in the last year and another noted that the party now has 'a very vibrant youth membership'. This participant qualified this stating that a lot of this comes from college and that 'they don't necessarily stay involved after that'. They went on to note that the kind of working lives of young people is 'different to previous generations, so they mightn't be in conventional work that has union members so reaching out to those people is a challenge'. Social media was identified as being, therefore, all the more important for attracting young people and encouraging those who joined as students, to stay involved.

Noting that union based employment is reduced, another participant said 'work now is changing the kind of jobs people have, so the traditional structures for representing them might not make a lot of sense anymore'. New members have come into the party through party branches at universities and new members' nights. Reasons for joining were varied and included factors such as workplace relevance; particular issues that the party has a history of success with; family background and tradition; a politician, party member or supporter who inspires them; ambitions to run in an election and become a member of parliament; party policies and values. On values, one participant said:

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS ABOUT CONTEXT

‘We don’t have any history of corruption... the electorate don’t mind [corruption] ... whereas we always have to be purer than pure, the others [political parties] can live a little and they don’t mind’.

One participant who is involved in a volunteer youth organisation stated that through the nature of the work, youth advocacy, young people coming through the organisation often enquire about joining a political party. In an attempt to keep work and political affiliation separate, this person attempts to give a non-partisan assessment of political involvement, pointing out that attitudes change over time, but also that it is ‘great for life skills and opportunities’ and recommends not rushing into the decision. So far, the participant noted that the choices were mostly for the [xx] Party and one person chose to become involved with a nationalist party. They said on a number of occasions that the political parties could learn from the voluntary sector including the extent to which new members are made to feel valued, whereby in the voluntary sector, new members are ‘trained and treasured’.

People are also attracted because they ‘see the party as committed to fairness and a more equal society, social issues. Participants commented that trust was broken with the electorate:

‘They look at us and see us and say ‘well you didn’t push for equality, you didn’t do what you were meant to do’ and that they don’t really see that we had no money and that we had to actually save the country economically ... and in the process you had to do these things that you didn’t want to do, that they didn’t accept that’.

A range of activities to attract new members included having meetings for special interest groups; ensuring speakers at public and branch meetings reflect the diversity of population, so that no group feels excluded; and ensuring availability for answering queries and encouraging people to get more involved with their branch. For young people, there is also the Youth Wing, which has events on, using social media to ‘let them know when [are] the social events or maybe some sort of activism or protest that’s going on ... keep them aware of what’s happening’.

One of the participants talked about follow up, stating ‘we have somebody who then makes initial contact with new members’, giving them a call or sending an email,

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS ABOUT CONTEXT

welcoming them and then they are assigned to a branch. The branch secretary and the constituency secretary would be notified and they would make contact, put the member on the mailing list, and invite them to all the meetings. When a new member states that they want to be actively involved, then they would go to the area rep who would take things from there. Another participant also pointed out that some branches are more active than others and these tend to be more in the urban areas and also that there is currently some amalgamation occurring with the branches.

Keeping members also required, according to one participant, the party to identify 'with issues that they care about' and have 'a good social aspect'. For example: 'it has to be something that they enjoy coming to'; 'they like having discussions with people that they like'; 'events that aren't maybe all about policy all the time'; 'Like stuff where people just come out and talk and socialise and have a drink or something' and 'like any sort of club, there has to be a social aspect ... one of the key things'. The feeling of involvement and impact was also seen as important for keeping numbers: 'people feel they're taking part in something that is having a bit of a difference'; 'they feel listened to'; 'they feel involved' and they feel that 'their actions have an impact'. Another participant was concerned about going too far down the road of identity politics as it does not show the 'broader picture'.

One participant said 'we should be relevant' when speaking about difficulties in the current political climate of being seen as such and later on said that 'you have to be for the ordinary people'. Similarly another participant stated 'we still do have causes that really do affect them and are in favour of them' in the context of the changing nature of work especially for young people, and that to make the party appealing the party needs to work on 'helping people to realise what we can actually do for them'.

In the second interview, the participant mentioned about a young woman at their workplace saying she wanted to join the [xx] Party. Because of the role that the participant was in at that time, they did not feel it was appropriate to seize this as a recruitment opportunity, but rather to encourage the woman to continue her quest to find the right party for her and to get involved, by considering different aspects and then 'weigh it up', which she did and eventually joined the party, but via a circuitous route of trying another party first.

4.4.3 Stories, legends or sayings in the [xx] Party's narrative

Interestingly iconic figures were mentioned in an answer to an earlier question about the party goals and the discussion therein of the website. These included two high profile internationally known figures including one person who had a strong impact on the party and the party's founding figure. The latter two figures were also mentioned in relation to slogans relating to 'the cause of [the country]'. Keeping the party connected to its founding history was seen as important by one participant, while stressing the need for the party to have a strong voice and identity in the current political climate. Another iconic figure was a well-known minister who brought in a number of social reforms for women. The party is described by one participant as having the reputation of being the party of equal pay, LGBT issues and young people.

One participant felt that it was difficult to take great moments or great ministers from the past because 'there's a real sense that where we go to – the party's going to look quite different'. This also ties in with an earlier discussion here (see Section 4.4.1) about current difficulties being experienced in communicating the party goals and also communicating the rationale for certain difficult decisions that the party made in the past. Social housing was an aspect of policy mentioned by one participant as being very much part of the party narrative with a proven record of follow through on this when in government.

Another participant mentioned the party experiencing an 'identity crisis'. They felt this meant that former stories and iconic figures may no longer be relevant. Another participant took a more positive view of the situation stating that 'in every crisis there is an opportunity' and saw the process of renewal, reinvention and rebuilding the party identity, as being a positive and progressive move for the party. This same participant cited a favoured slogan 'if you think [xx], vote [xx]'. Other slogans had been suggested but rejected as being too much like 'spin' and with echoes of an earlier observation, this participant stated 'especially now that we can recreate ourselves, we have to be authentic; you know that is THE word, the authentic voice'. This participant also linked this question to the image presented by the current party website. It has undergone a number of changes and the participant noted that in earlier versions, the different sectors of the party were easier to identify. 'I don't know how to find anything ... and it should be inspiring, like we have iconic figures' – the party founder and other key figures were also mentioned in this part of the conversation. When asked about slogans which might indicate new directions in response to more recent electorate protest about government, another participant responded with 'I think people would

love something like that, actually, a really good, you know short message that really ... could explain what we're about in one line that people could rally behind'.

4.4.4 Leadership style

The answers here fell into different aspects which included perceptions of where the core leadership is based, other sources of leadership and influence, and perceptions of qualities that reflect good leadership practice as well as some of the challenges in being able to allocate leadership roles to the best person for those roles.

Core leadership was seen as being three or four people who form the leadership team or core group including the party leader and senior management or the Executive Board and Committees with representatives from different sections of the party, and advisers to the leadership group. One person mentioned instead, the parliamentary leadership party and the MPs ... 'it can be somebody like a councillor or ... it can be somebody who's behind [an MP]'. In discussing MPs, some were seen to be 'really focused on policy and other MPs are more focused on locality'. This core leadership was identified as the people who 'look at the party as a whole ... the whole picture ... general policy ... general messaging ... and feed back to staff'; 'they influence the conversation that we would have at a staff meeting'.

From the second interview, it was further observed that 'parliamentary members have a shared leadership' and 'the (party) leader is just fronting the collective'. Regarding parliamentary leaders, it was stated that 'It is a party of leaders of different issues', where each parliamentary member leads on certain issues 'whether they are spokespeople or whether they're representing certain regions'. In remarking that anyone can have a leadership role in some way in the party, one participant stated that 'the leader doesn't have to do the vision; you know anyone can do the vision; you know you can all lead from where you are'. Passing the leadership baton was also referred to by one participant who resigned from their post because 'I think you should only keep these positions for so long and to let the younger generation through'. Another participant saw the leadership as being highly centralised and partly sees this as a result of the increased pressure of governance and compliance, which has resulted, in their view, in preventing more sharing of the decision taking, and insufficient occurrence of feedback loops between the central leadership and the rest of the members. The participant felt there should be more interaction with people, bringing in a range of people with different areas of knowledge and getting everyone to interact with them and expand their knowledge. This participant again mentioned taking a leaf

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS ABOUT CONTEXT

out of the voluntary sector in terms of the structure, advocating a flatter structure that would promote an 'attitude of being more inquisitive'.

Returning to responses from the first interview, other sources of leadership and influence included 'the members'. They were mentioned by two participants, one of whom also added: 'I'd like to think it is the members who direct, who lead, who take us where we are going ... but then you know you need people to step forward and take positions and to stand in elections'. The Annual Conference was identified as an opportunity for more members to have influence by being able to put forward and debate motions at the conference. It was noted that for the upcoming conference there were fewer motions submitted, but a feeling that this allowed more time to debate those that were submitted, more thoroughly. One participant felt that it was difficult to pinpoint other sources of leadership as 'the party lost a lot of very experienced people ... involved in research and communications for decades ... 'in terms of institutional memories some of that was broken'; however they did note that 'there are a number of people ... who are the ... "go-to" people', although one participant felt there were less of these than in previous years. Another participant identified 'one guy here, he's a parliamentary assistant and I think he's a leader'.

In terms of leader characteristics, one participant noted the relevance of the size of the country in terms of its population, whereby in [country name], any leader is 'mingling among the people' so they will be 'pretty down to earth'. Leadership was seen to be 'about influencing people' and has to give some sort of 'direction' and motivation. 'Healthy critique' was seen as a mark of good leadership, whereby 'if a leader goes to a constituency council, the first thing they get is a grilling and complaints'. 'Overall I think the leaders we have are liked and respected but they aren't adored or worshipped'. Decision making was seen by four out of the five participants as collaborative in approach. One participant particularly mentioned this in the context of what happens at the Annual Conference or what kind of bills 'we should be doing', although another participant felt that there was too much emphasis on passing a high number of motions and not enough time being spent on debating ideas. Aspects that seem to identify a more democratic approach to decision making were that there is 'openness to criticism', 'we all feel quite equal' (although some participants felt there was more progress to be made here), and that there is more 'consensus building; decisions are 'not handed down' (not top down).

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS ABOUT CONTEXT

In the decision making process, one participant mentioned 'they make an effort to value that (people's opinions); value the kind of range of opinions' and another that 'In my experience I have found it fairly democratic'. 'At least if decisions are being made at a higher level, we are being made aware of them, and there is some chance for input' though, this participant also said that there was still room for improvement here in terms of getting people more engaged'. The need to have decisions properly explained was also mentioned.

Party characteristics can be seen as either reflecting the leadership style or influencing the leadership style. Interestingly some observations also indicated a high level of informal communication as being a strong characteristic of the party. For example: 'we're a small party so it's quite informal'; 'it's a party full of thinkers, everyone has an opinion ... we're very critical ... dynamic'; 'we love to discuss ... talking is a big part of the party'; 'people not afraid to bring up something that went wrong during the week' and 'it's not incredibly formal You could converse with anyone you needed to without too much hassle, so it's not a case where you know they're too high up ... anyone is accessible, it is kind of open'.

Opinions were expressed by two participants about how, previously, there had been a more 'top-down' approach, but that this is now changing. Both participants, from quite different age groups, indicated a wish for the current, more consensual approach to be more clearly embedded in the party style. The younger participant noted that 'communication is pretty decent; you can get through to the important, relevant people without too much fuss'.

A new policy unit with people elected to the General Council on it, was seen as a move to increase the sphere of influence to more people in the decision making process. At one point there was a two layer approach to management in an attempt to create a more polished image, which was perceived as reducing the sphere of influence. This approach was described by one participant as 'newspeak'. Both participants who discussed this issue observed that it was very difficult to balance the more polished look, while still coming across as having an authentic voice to represent its supporters. The role of trade unions also came under discussion within this question regarding the back and forth views on how independent the party should be of them. Three of the participants talked about the role of external influences including the effects of EU involvement in times of fiscal difficulties and restrictions on what the party could do in

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS ABOUT CONTEXT

its decision making process, as well as considering the latest election results, and their impact on the leadership approach taken at different points in time.

A criticism of the party mentioned by one participant, which the current leadership is trying to address, was that it was more focused on 'middle class social justice' (social policies and moral policies) rather than on hard economic policies and taking into account people in the lower pay grades and intermittent work contracts.

Further observations were made about leadership in the second interview. One participant talked about 'people who can lead from behind, who are the actual leaders and who have sound judgement'. A person was mentioned 'whose judgement I trust' as opposed to the person 'who parrots what everyone is saying is not a leader'. Although the latter is in a potential position of leadership and the other is not, the participant considered the former person 'somebody I would be influenced by'. Because the person always paid attention to what this trusted person said, they then always 'recognised the words' the latter person said later.

Again, when talking about leadership, the participant observed that 'it needs to be sound leadership and if you lose respect and you are the leader interesting things happen and Then you have people who align with others and start undermining'. They also talked about values such as selfishness, where 'thinking about what's good for me ... is a powerful thing compared to say those who are stewards and who are not selfish' and then asked the question 'how do you know when a good leader becomes a bad leader or the other way around'. The participant talked about agendas and empire building and people getting protective of 'their own little empires'. They later compared politicians to film stars, 'you have to create your own success ... so you need a little bit of 'hey look at me... and if people aren't clapping ... why aren't they clapping?' They went on to mention an article in a national broadsheet paper talking about current voting patterns seeming to be voting against what the perceived elite are saying is not good. They said that the journalist was saying 'no, people are not voting against the elite, they're voting against the fact the elite is not what it used to be. They want an elite but they want it to be a strong elite ... who tells them this is where we're going and this is what we're doing and you are just people but I'm the elite and I know what I'm doing and that's what people actually want. They want the old leaders like they used to be'. A style of leadership, perceived as negative, referred to questionable ways of making voters dependent on their councillors, to increase their chances of being re-

elected. It was an observation of an opposing party with the apparent attitude of 'if you keep people down, they (are) the only ones who can do anything for them'.

In summary, the participants did view the leadership as being more centralised, but having elements of shared decision making within the core leadership group.

Participants' perceptions of the extent to which leadership then drew in its wider membership to foster a wider sphere of influence, were varied, with some giving specific examples where members outside the core leadership group did apply some influence and others saying that there was simply insufficient evidence of leadership consciously fostering debate in order to pull more members into the decision making process. All participants did say that further changes in the leadership style were needed but again there were differing views about the progress already being made in this.

4.5 Interactions and influence

In this section, the people that participants mention they interact with and the circumstances surrounding those interactions are discussed. This is followed by findings on participants' views on influence in the [xx] Party, including their own sense of influence.

4.5.1 People with whom topics are informally discussed

All the participants mentioned friends. These would often overlap into the same people who are either party members or would vote for this political party; in fact, nearly all in the case of one of the participants. In the case where the friends have different political views, two participants saw this as an opportunity to debate issues and explore other perspectives as a learning process – 'we've good debates and it's a useful way to get out of the echo chamber, I suppose'. One participant mentioned that they tend to avoid discussing party politics with friends who are not members. Two participants said that where the friends were not interested, they would not then discuss political issues.

One participant said all members of the family were sympathetic to the party in the case example of informal conversation and so would be active in conversation when reflecting on issues and events being reported in the news. Two participants said they would not be likely to discuss political topics with family members. Another said that one parent would deliberately try and get a response on a particular issue, while the other would have the same political leanings as the participant. One participant talked

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS ABOUT CONTEXT

about the 'family in the party' meaning that the party collective could be regarded as a [xx] Party family. This participant also said that they tended not to discuss these topics with family as 'we assume we all think the same'. Two participants mentioned neighbours. One said they would deliberately try not to talk about politics. The other said 'the people who live near me, they'd all be sort of on the left.

Colleagues and administration included dealing with Head Office; 'my boss'; fellow workers / fellow students and former colleagues, other members and retired members. In one conversation about talking with colleagues, the participant said that due to the nature of their work 'you'd think' everyone would think the same, but 'when you scratch the surface, you'd be surprised'. This person also mentioned advocacy groups related to their work and how some of the topics are discussed there too and often with representatives from a range of parties.

One participant mentioned 'a sub-committee for working on policy now that Article 50 has been triggered' in relation to the BREXIT process, to 'make sure the country is resilient and that it's able to withstand the worst of it'. Another participant had already referred to this in answering the question on current topics. The unsettling nature of this external Article 50 process, with far reaching national implications was also expressed in response to this current question, showing the intense difficulties being experienced in trying to gain sufficient information to ease the uncertainty level that the process has brought about. 'Frightening' and 'turbulent' were terms used to describe this unease and the frustration of not being able to make effective long term plans at this point in time were also expressed in addition to observations made about more immediate practical concerns.

Going for morning coffee with other party members was described as an occasion for discussing what issues each other have had to handle in the week, some reflection on whether more needs to be done on certain issues and sharing opinions on political programmes from the evening before.

Meetings with 'my boss' would be about briefings, looking at what is likely to come up in the coming weeks and what needs to be done in preparation as well as evaluating material collected in response to more immediate events and issues, as well as asking the question 'do we need to be better informed on this issue?'

One of the participants touched again on the blurring of formal and informal communication:

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS ABOUT CONTEXT

‘a lot of the people I know are in the party but a lot of stuff is actually informal – it is our hobby and then for some of us it’s also our job but for some members (not paid) they work nearly as hard as we do, so it’s a job’.

Also mentioned was socialising after ‘branch meetings or constituency meetings ... that’s really good I think for just discussing everything ... and everything else’. The value of retired members was expressed as that they often have

‘some of the most time to put into this stuff actually and they have loads of opinions, they’ve been here a long time, they’ve seen it you know every time, the rise and fall, already so they often have a great vast knowledge as well’.

In looking at the other end of the age spectrum and what might get a young person involved, the following observation was made:

‘Teenagers (are) in a system where they have no power at all; it’s the most volatile time in your life and you’ve given them absolutely no input into their own future, of course you’re going to be angry and you’re going to want to change things, you know and at that age of course, they can be monumentally wrong ... but still feel very passionately’.

This also links in with comments in other questions about rebuilding the youth base of the party.

Two participants mentioned a European umbrella party, this party and its sister parties in other European countries belong to; and all members mentioned sister parties from other countries, in particular those based in the UK. These organisations were seen as useful for networking, looking at how similar issues are being handled in other countries, how the parties across the countries can help or advise each other, and ‘comparing notes’. One participant who frequently attended meetings in Brussels, says they encounter employers, trade unionists, third sector people as well as the party chairman. Interestingly, this person also added that informal conversation tended to take place in groups who spoke the same language as it was easier for this type of communication, echoing the findings of Yuan et al (2013).

A mock parliament is sometimes held in a university where student representatives from all the different parties get together and pick 'about three issues to debate and then whoever's in government sits on that side'. It was described as 'fun' with 'plenty of shouting' and 'it's also a time when we can get passionate and tell exploitative jokes on behalf of the other parties'. It could also be argued that this is a useful way to avoid getting too caught in the echo chamber discussed earlier.

Other groups mentioned were speakers for events, members of activist groups on single social issues, people in protest groups and a university women graduates association. A surprising aspect of this question is that no-one mentioned trade unions, although these are mentioned in answers to other questions.

In the second interview, one of the participants talked about what they would or would not discuss with neighbours:

'My father said a long time ago never talk about politics or religion ... there's always, inevitably unless you're in an echo chamber, there's a good chance that there would be a little bit of disagreement, whereas if you talk about your holidays, or your kids or something like that, there isn't'.

Therefore, participants tended to identify not only whom the topics would be discussed with but also something about what would be discussed in each case and sometimes even why. They mentioned their immediate social circle including friends, family members and neighbours; colleagues including administration; party members, members of sister parties and cross party groups including female members across parties, and members from opposition and other political parties.

4.5.2 Circumstances leading to interactions

Much of this topic had already been covered along the way, so it worked mainly as a catching net for anything that might not have been captured relating to networks of people.

Events at branch and local constituency level were mentioned as opportunities for meeting new members. Weekly and monthly staff meetings for discussing topics mentioned in an earlier question would be ways of meeting other staff. The weekly meetings would be for 'what's happening this week, what's the message of the week, what's out on social media'. The monthly meetings have been occurring in the last six

months, last longer, two hours, and are for discussing issues 'in more depth and give everyone a chance to ... you know at short weekly meetings not everyone gets a chance to come in with their tuppence'. The latter were seen as useful and 'there'd be about 12-15 max at those ... it's enough people to sit around a table' and discuss. Circles of friends sometimes overlapped with groups more related to party work.

The annual conference was mentioned as an opportunity to meet members. This was described by one participant as being 'like a family wedding' where most people actually already know each other. People were selected and contacted when something needs to be done. Being on a committee was another of the circumstances mentioned.

The Women's Movement in the 1960's and another related organisation were mentioned by one participant as the groups which were the starting point for meeting like-minded people which later grew to include networks linked to the party until such time as the participant became a member. A relatively new cross-party women parliamentarians group was also mentioned by another participant.

4.5.3 Perceptions of who most influences the direction of the party

Organisations, as well as individuals were identified as being influential. Trade unions were mentioned by one participant who at the same time noted they were getting less influential. Organisations such as the Party of European Socialists and the European Union were seen as being influential because 'compared to Britain, for [the country in this study], the European Union has been a great opening up of lots of things both with social policy and the economy'.

Two participants specifically mentioned the party chairman as someone seen as not only influential by virtue of the position held, but also because this person is seen as 'loyal' and 'a conscience figure'. One participant identified three people who they found influential. They are all women. One was the initial contact for the research; one was an MP with a lot of experience of working with EU and one was someone who has quite a different job but was always very helpful with advice. Finally, one participant talked about retired people and their influence saying that some 'just go back to their own career' or some stay on 'in a voluntary capacity ... But I think it's mostly accepted that they still have something to offer'.

In talking about influence within the organisation, one participant stated that

‘influence, it’s an interesting thing in politics because it is so important ... if you have a brain storming meeting or a staff meeting and the same people talk, at some point it becomes noise and you don’t care anymore’.

In talking about qualities that might make a person influential, one participant stated ‘one of my favourite questions was always to ask somebody (like a candidate in an election campaign) if you were looking for sound advice, you know, sound opinion, who would you go to in the party? Just to see who do they rate ... and those are the people I want to know ... But they could be anyone’. Specific qualities were mentioned by the participants in describing the people they perceived to be influential and indeed who influenced them the most. These included the ability to give ‘sound advice’, have ‘sound opinions - not driven by an agenda but based on good judgement’ and ‘having sound judgement’. Participants who used the term ‘sound’ were asked what they meant by this and their responses were that the people they were talking about were ‘wise people for when I need to talk to them and then find I’m wrong’, ‘they actually understand’, are ‘aware of context including echo chambers’ and they are able to keep ‘their own identity and focus on their priorities and plans, and without alienating too many people’, while being very loyal to the party’. It was also considered important to be visible. One participant, in identifying a person of influence, described her as someone who ‘doesn’t stay long but you know she’s there, she’s seen, she talks to people’ and another stated that having a ‘good political nose’ (‘I’m probably not one of them’ the participant said). Another participant mentioned ‘something of the eminence grise’ quality.

Personal qualities identified included being bright, energetic, organised and calm. One of the participants mentioned members who were influential but do not necessarily ‘have official positions that would have the ear of maybe somebody that would have an influence ... they probably do a lot of work either for that person that they influence or in general because you don’t get noticed unless you’re actually putting a bit of work in, so put themselves forward for probably other things’.

In relation to challenges of allocating leadership roles and exercising influence one person mentioned that people rated by other party members might be seen as influential yet there was also a caveat that there was a risk of a ‘halo’ effect simply

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS ABOUT CONTEXT

because the person is always being described as very good. Also 'there might be people in the party who might be in a position of leadership who are not great leaders ... it's not in their personality ... not everyone is made for a leadership role'. Cliques and factions were also mentioned and the need for a 'filter' to be able to identify where personalities, agendas and histories (in the gossiping sense) play into opinions and judgements. The importance of context was stressed in deciding who to listen to. Questions, such as 'who is saying it, what constituency are they, who's the [MP], what's the rivalry, what's the background, why would they say that', affect the extent to which a speaker would be able to influence others. Examples were also given where the best person for the job is not always selected for several of the reasons cited above including the fact that 'you have people's hopes and dreams and all that' or when a person was expecting a position and didn't get it and felt they were 'shafted'. 'There's a lot of human stuff there ... like in a good way'. Another participant felt that people with 'clever tactics' had more chance of being influential than people with ideas.

In the second interview, one of the participants returned to the topic of influence and talked quite animatedly about it. They felt

'that some of the official channels are just a bit broken ... there's still the official coterie and membership and still there's a big disconnect [between members and staff] ... sometimes the reason why people don't engage with the official stuff is they don't feel it's very productive and that's based on experience'.

The participant who made this observation was also not convinced that constituency meetings were a forum for influence, that rather this was a forum for organising the 'nuts and bolts' of the day to day party machinery. Similarly, central council was perceived by this participant as being more about 'accountability and answering' rather than about making 'huge decisions', again that it was about the 'nuts and bolts'. In a discussion about a past politician who was quite influential in their day, this same participant said 'it's often the exception rather than the norm' and posed the question 'is that [politician] able to influence because of being [a politician in their particular parliamentary role] or because of being close to the leadership?' They went on to talk about a current politician, in a similar role, who has currently been very active in pushing the party to the centre of a current key national and somewhat controversial issue. The participant noted that 'twenty years ago when [this politician] was an activist rather than a politician ... they'd have the exact same views but very little influence' and seeing several changes occurring during that time that allowed this person to

become more influential on the issue: 'I think it's change – life has changed, politics has changed, the party has changed'. This participant, however, generally described themselves as 'a bit cynical about structures and all that and the ability to change things.

4.5.4 Perceptions of personal levels of influence within the [xx] Party

Here participants looked at how they put forward their voice, the degree of influence they think they realistically might have, barriers to influence which, apart from lack of time due to other priorities, were mainly seen as being outside the party, and when they could tell that they had been able to have some influence in the party.

Having a voice included being able to add one's thoughts and speaking up in meetings as well as one to one. One participant said that 'If I see certain things are lacking I try to always raise them' (in the context of helping to keep a 'broader picture'), another participant said 'I can if I want', while a further participant said:

'If (I) really feel passionate about something ... I could generally bring (it) to a meeting, put forward a motion or... ring the office (or) ... e-mail or even Facebook'.

Opinions on the degree of influence the participants might have, varied where one person felt that you 'can have as much influence as you like' and where 'you might interview someone who says oh, no-one ever listens, it's not true actually, if you really want to you can have influence'; but there were a number of reasons given as to why this might, nonetheless, not happen. Another participant felt that certain parts of the party structure allow more opportunities for influence, particularly if it was a specific sector of the party, where you would be working with a team of people with shared sector issues. As noted above, tabling motions at party and sector conferences, which is something anyone in the party can do, was seen as a particularly strong opportunity for influencing party direction, as was the opportunity to table a policy. Although as stated below the latter requires time and energy that might not be easily found due to other priorities.

One of the barriers to being able to have an influence on the direction of the party was identified as the difficulties of media decisions on what they see as newsworthy. These were often seen as deeply frustrating when trying to influence the public. This was due, according to one participant, to the complexity of the issue at hand and the difficulty

that presents for providing simple solutions, and also to the degree of interest in or the popularity of the topic in hand:

‘We’re very bad at giving simple solutions because we know that solutions are complex ... because we’d probably think ... ‘you’re giving the wrong impression then’ ... whereas other parties just go ahead’.

This was seen as corrupt but ‘the votes are in publicity – that’s where the votes are ... you know that substance doesn’t get you far’.

The way things are measured was also seen as a barrier to influence. One participant noted the following: ‘do you measure the action or do you measure the outcome?’ In discussing health issues and looking at the number of people on trolleys versus increased survival rates from cancer or extended lives from having a triple by-pass, measuring action was seen as encouraging short-termism, while measuring outcome was seen as more long-term but suffering from the lack of newsworthiness of the positive outcomes. This therefore makes long term influencing more difficult.

The role of the media in terms of air time or print time was another difficulty identified by a different participant: ‘it’s annoying that we don’t get coverage on things that we’d love to get coverage on... But there are a lot of biases on these things and sometimes some people who really shouldn’t be getting loads of amounts of coverage seem to fill up the airwaves ... sometimes a fringe group gets an enormous amount of coverage when it doesn’t represent the views of a lot of people maybe or sometimes we come forward with an issue that’s very sensible we think but just isn’t very sexy and it just doesn’t get the air time and something not really consequential but fun to talk about gets more the coverage as well’.

Participants gave specific examples of how they know when they have had an influence. For example, a new policy on ‘cycling routes ... and recycling ... yeah I still get a kick out of the fact finally recycling is up to scratch’ and [when you] ‘hear people say things that I know I said that, so you know you are having influence ... you start talking and then it spreads ... an idea or a view or an opinion ... so yeah, there’s a lot of influencing probably going on’.

Another participant noted that ‘with a lot of the policy stuff, I felt that doing it through [the sector group] while it could be slow [it] did eventually [happen]’. Interestingly, here

they mentioned an informal encounter with an activist after a European level meeting, which eventually led to that person being invited to speak to the party in the country of this study, about a particular issue that eventually become policy 'and that's one of these informal things and we actually got it through'. The participant who often attends meetings in Brussels mentioned that they speak to advisers to the leadership if they think someone higher up the party needs to be present at one of the Brussels meetings. They also said that they were able to input into EU legislation.

On asking why certain changes have not been made 'they [ministers] are willing to talk to you and explain things'. Here the influence is more about the opportunity for continuing a conversation that potentially keeps an issue alive.

Finally, on the topic of having the advice of an experienced party member taken on board, one participant noted that 'occasionally [a person doing similar work that the interviewee used to do, is named] would ask me about things, not very much though because they do things their own way, the party changes, the society changes, the context in which the group works can change quite a lot'. This was not seen in a negative light but more as a normal evolution: 'you don't want to be hanging around saying "oh well we always did it this way" which is a great temptation'.

4.5.5 Perceptions of most important quality for being influential

All participants discussed the need to be good at communication; two discussed the ability to network effectively, all discussed being able to learn from mistakes and be self-critical, and three of the participants discussed being realistic, in terms of what can be achieved and three participants said simply that hard work is the key quality needed to have influence. One person discussed how long it would take to achieve that influence and mentioned the need for persistence. Another said you need 'to be on the staff' and also said they'd like to see a 'broader voluntary movement' in the party.

Good communication included the ability to communicate externally to the party; avoiding looking as though 'we're just talking to ourselves'; the ability to articulate well with good delivery (and get a reputation for this, so that people will listen to you or follow your lead) and being skilled in diplomacy. The ability to network effectively included knowing people – 'because the structure is not hugely formal, getting to know people is important'; knowing who to go to and not being shy. Willingness to be self-reflective, on the other hand, meant being open to sharing mistakes made and to avoid a blame culture response, learning from mistakes, and being open to new ways of

doing things; having the ability to reflect and be self-critical. Having a realistic attitude meant being constructive and pragmatic and having a sense of reality. Finally, hard work was about ‘putting in the work’ and persistence – ‘we kept on slogging away’. A specific example showing how certain qualities impact on a person’s ability to influence was described in the second interview, in relation to a debate about a motion at the annual conference. Many affective terms were used to describe a particular member who was arguing against a motion at the party’s annual conference, that councillors should have two seats (per constituency) in parliament to increase their voice. The motion failed. The participant said it was primarily because of the person who argued against it, saying

‘Yes, she was fantastic ... she’s just so reasonable ... very convincing ... not preachy at all ... polite ... really good ... one of the best we have ... pragmatic ... but would have strong convictions too’.

Also, in a point about voting on motions, the participant said they would not vote on something where they were not sure of which way to vote. One minister, which the participant likes, though the participant reported that “some people might say he’s a bit out of touch with people, but not necessarily on the doors as he got elected”. Another councillor was described as ‘not really warm on the doors. He’s a bit academic maybe’.

4.6 Summary

After changing terms and using ‘informal conversation’ rather than ‘informal communication’, the interviews proceeded smoothly. A wide variety of perceptions emerged regarding the nature of informal communication. Further observations are noted throughout Chapter Five, which is based on the second set of interviews. This includes the observations made in Section 4.1 that sometimes boundaries between formal and informal were difficult to identify. In Section 4.2 a wide range of topics was identified, and in terms of keeping up to date, all media and social media were mentioned, while awareness of the ‘echo chamber’ effect was also noted. A range of learning styles was mentioned and barriers included a particularly interesting observation that the participant would find it very difficult to learn anything that they perceived to be intrinsically against their principles. In Section 4.3, tasks were varied and involved either working with larger groups or smaller groups of people. The settings for the tasks tended to be formal, but opportunities for informal conversations occurred nonetheless. There were overlapping personal goals for becoming [xx] Party

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS ABOUT CONTEXT

members and eventually working for the party, which mostly focused on being involved with creating a diverse society with equal opportunities and a reduced level of social injustice. This did align with the participants' perceptions (Section 4.4) of [xx] Party's goals, although they did also mention tensions in balancing pragmatic solutions with [xx] Party ideology. Attracting new members to the party was perceived as challenging due to the changing world of work where people might be working freelance between several jobs, having different types of contracts rather than simply having full-time, permanent employment and needing to change jobs more frequently. Participants struggled to find cultural narratives or political icons that would be seen to be relevant in the current voting climate. There was a range of opinions about the level of centralisation of leadership in the party and degree of opportunity for non-role related leadership among members. The findings in Section 4.5 on groups of people that participants tend to have informal conversations with are varied, and further explored throughout Chapter Five. A wide range of characteristics about what qualities people need to have to be influential in the [xx] Party emerged from the interviews, with the top quality being to be good at communication. Integrity and wisdom were also perceived as key characteristics for being heard and respected in the organisation. All the participants had experienced some level of influence although the less involved ones did not experience this now. With regards to learning within the organisation, there are clear indications that learning continually takes place and that there is a healthy culture of debate around issues, assumptions and values. The diffusion of learning is more difficult to ascertain at this point, but this is revisited in the later findings and discussed in Chapter Six, particularly in Section 6.3.

Chapter Five: Case Findings

This chapter explores nine cases of informal conversation examples that participants reported on when they returned for their second interviews. Each case reflects informal conversation in different ways. The list of the cases is provided in the List of Abbreviations, with the studies being labelled from C1 through to C9. Case C1 occurs in a book club. Case C2 centres on a day of canvassing, which is a task that is formally part of an area representative's remit, but on this occasion, the participant who is an area co-ordinator was shadowing the area representative for the day. Case C3 centres on an informal online closed social media members' forum, set up specifically to be a more informal discussion forum. Cases C4 and C5 each begin with a demonstration relating to different pieces of new legislation. In each case, once the news was received that the legislation had gone through successfully, several people repaired to the nearby bar (C4), and the parliament's visitor's bar (C5) to continue their informal conversations. Cases C6 to C9 all took place during the party's annual conference. This event provided considerable case material due to the multiple opportunities for informal conversation. C6 is about several short conversations that were reported as taking place either just before the conference began or in the early stages of the conference. The case is included as the findings here warranted more than the summary in Section 5.10, but on their own, they do not quite fit each being documented as individual cases. C7 was about several conversations that took place during the conference disco organised by the party's youth wing. C8 was a specific case where the participant was engaged in quite a long conversation with someone who indicated a degree of disillusionment and frustration at past directions of the party and C9 was an informal conversation with a member from the participant's home town, where the party has low visibility and where the participant is considering trying for a seat in that area.

Each case is discussed in terms of (1) emerging topics (2) conversation goals (3) post-conversation follow-up (4) affective factors relating to the cases and (5) reflexivity. However, of the four cases (C6-C9) that emerged from the annual conference, the reflexivity section is only included in C6, as the participant reporting on that case also reported on the remaining 3 cases but was only asked once about reflexivity. Cases C1 – C3 also revealed a number of points relating to different types of boundary questions, so an additional section (6) on boundaries was included for those cases only.

All those interviewed continue to be referred to as 'participants' in the cases. For each case, appropriate terminology is used to differentiate between the interviewees and the

people who participated in the case conversation. For example, in the case of the book club, the latter are known as members, i.e. members of the book club (who in this case, also happen to be party members). Quotes from the participants are included in single quotation marks. As documented in Section 3.3.2, pseudonymous identities have not been applied to the participants. Cases C1 – C3, however were each presented by a different participant. Cases C4 and C5 were presented by one participant and cases C6 – C9 were presented by one participant. This chapter concludes with a summary of the total combined range of short examples of informal conversations not included in the selected cases, given by the five participants at the start of each of their interviews.

5.1 Case One: Book club session

The first informal conversation case, known as C1 from now on, was a book club gathering attended by the participant and three other party staff in a room in one of the main parliament buildings. The book under discussion was a Booker prize winner about 'race relations in America', which was serendipitous for the study as 'other books we've read haven't necessary been political in any way'. On this occasion, as will be shown further, the discussion very quickly moved into local and national issues of race relations that the book club group were encountering both through their party work and on more personal levels.

In describing how the book club came about, the participant said:

'We were thinking, look we should do something regular that you know that isn't just work related and an opportunity to come together over lunch once a month so it's a nice event and yeah, people get talking ... in different ways than in a meeting'.

It is worth noting that although this was a planned meeting, the quote demonstrates how the participant differentiates this particular gathering from the ones normally attended by it being 'non-work related' and a situation where people 'talk about issues in a different way', while still on site in the workplace itself.

The member who initiated the book club wanted to 'have a forum' for people to have 'opportunities to get to know each other'. The participant also mentioned when meeting each other 'in passing' or 'in the canteen', that 'often in talking about issues you don't go beyond ...'a lot of calls coming in today' so it's very ... in passing'. The

participant also indicated the value they attached to this by saying 'I'm a committed member (laughs) ... I think it's important to have those kinds of things in work, you know that ... yes, something a bit different'.

The group at this book club gathering consisted of four [xx] Party staff, including the participant. The four members comprised two women and two men. Two members were from the capital city, one was from a smaller town in another part of the country and one was from a different continent. At least one of the party members was a councillor and one was an [xx] Party researcher. It was not stated what roles the other members of the group were engaged in at the time. The participant mentioned that the book club members came from a mix of administrative staff, people who work for politicians and, sometimes, some of the politicians themselves.

5.1.1 Emerging topics

Clearly, as the book chosen for this informal gathering was about race issues in America, concern was going to emerge regarding how this could and does manifest itself in the country in which the [xx] Party is based, as well as the experiences and thoughts the members had about this, both on a personal level and in their work for the [xx] Party. Racism and hate crime were the key topics of discussion in this case.

One of the members spoke both about experiences in their home country and their experience in 'this country'. Two further members mentioned concerns about attitudes they were encountering in their local areas and at constituency meetings. The fourth member mentioned the upsetting nature of the first hand experiences heard at a recent cross party event on hate crime. According to the participant, early on 'somebody mentioned how ... even within the [xx] Party that there would be people coming to [constituency] meetings who are [xx] Party members and would be saying 'oh well we need to look at housing for just our own people' and there are a lot of race issues seeping into [national] politics as well'. In the interview, the participant made a personal observation that 'people tend to tell themselves 'oh well we are not racist' ... you know, innocent'. The participant also talked in the interview about the issue still being 'unspoken' and that as a country they were only beginning to see themselves as a place that others would 'want to come to' from abroad, and what this might mean for the country's future demographics.

A member then expressed concerns about current politics in America. The participant recalled in the interview that this person seemed 'to be saying ... Trump has validated

a lot of the previously existing racism’ and that it ‘set that [progress in the Obama years] back a few steps’. This apparently led to the other members saying ‘well you know we’re not perfect ourselves’, at which point the book club conversation returned to local and national concerns. Another member was concerned about ‘closed mindedness’ in small towns where ‘you would get that insider/outsider [feeling] and ‘the other’ you know’, which was also confirmed by a second member, and afterwards by the participant’s partner.

One member brought in not only their witness of ‘racist slurs being thrown at [public transport] drivers’ but also that concerns were clearly already under discussion at government level by a number of political parties, given that the cross party event mentioned earlier on hate crime had only recently taken place. In addition to the first hand testimonies given at the event, ‘experts’ from another EU country spoke on the need for hate crime legislation. This member voiced their additional concern that ‘at the moment there’s nothing you can do and in terms of recognising it’s not just the slur itself, it’s about how it affects the whole community or the whole grouping’. In the interview, the participant, in recalling the informal conversation, added that they felt a strong concern about ‘ghetto-isation of certain groups of people, because [some] people will use the [housing] crisis to prioritise the old [nationals]’.

5.1.2 Conversation goals

When asked about conscious goals that people had at the start of the book club gathering, the participant, during their interview, responded with ‘I think I would be aware certainly from the people who were present they would be keen to raise those topics [of racism]’. One of the members was observed as ‘looking for and again confirmation that this is not just a once off issue and that it’s ... not just [about one person] seeing it’. On the question of whether additional goals began to emerge from the informal conversation, the participant said that, as the group realised there were common issues and they were concerned, ‘we all felt that this was something worth figuring out in some further way’. The participant said that ‘when we were talking in the conversation it was about what can WE do in the [xx] Party to make sure that we are being more inclusive, so there was a sense of responsibility tied in, in the conversation’. There was a sense that this might not have been so overtly stated, had the participant not been specifically asked about responsibility in the interview. While the conversation did not finish by committing to specific actions, there was a sense that these racism issues were something people needed ‘to get back to’.

5.1.3 Post conversation follow-up

When asked about whether any follow-up had occurred after the book club gathering had taken place, the participant felt it was too early to say, although they did discuss the issues with their partner, who confirmed some of the experiences that the participant had described on returning home that evening. However, the participant hovered between expressing uncertainty about what might happen next as a result of the discussion at the book club gathering, and giving a more definite indication of what they thought was likely to happen. The participant did not want to confirm anything specific for fear, and rightly so, that it might not. However, later in the interview, there were occasional stronger indicators of a probable likelihood of something happening. A number of potential scenarios for follow-up were suggested, such as working on 'the more formal element like hate crime and dealing with racism' and that the 'experiences that people have in their constituencies are quite important in terms of ... we have to start from a basis of being honest'. So, here there is a hint of feeding into a wider discussion about the issues at hand. The participant also indicated that there was the potential for the member working in one of the urban areas to 'perhaps raise it [points made at the book club gathering] at constituency meetings in the future'.

The participant did stress, on a number of occasions, the importance of returning to the topic: 'I think it's something that we'll have to come back to'; 'that's something that we need to tackle so hopefully [uncertain but not totally] I think we will continue with it and be honest about the problem and try to figure out [again uncertainty with regard to not knowing quite what to do] if there's anything, you know, by supporting hate crime legislation, you know, working with the police'. After this last phrase the participant became more confident, saying 'I definitely think it's something that we'll come back to'. When asked about potential opportunities to do this, the participant mentioned staff meetings, including policy related discussions which are held every six weeks where 'I think it's something that could be raised there ... something more general, maybe something more long-term that needs to be discussed'. The participant was more comfortable with the idea of a general discussion rather than something more specific, which seems to reflect the earlier sense of being slightly overwhelmed by the complexity and extensive nature of racism and hate crime issues as more incidents come to light. The participant also mentioned the then upcoming annual party conference. While being unsure of what events would be occurring there, or whether there would be a [xx] Party equality event or a related fringe event, the participant did see that there was a potential for 'looking at those issues of inclusion'.

The topic of follow-up was returned to, with what appears to be a slightly greater level of confidence, in the discussion about benefits and new knowledge gained from having this informal conversation gathering. In talking about ways that what was learned in the conversation could be of benefit to the party as a whole, the participant reiterated the notion of bringing the issue to 'a wider group discussion' and this time added 'specifically around inclusion'. The participant confirms that through 'my own work with [named politician] that we would be quite conscious of questions of inclusion and ... the more examples you hear of, of what's being faced in [various parts of the country including the capital city] you know you can feed that into the policy'.

In talking about the wider [xx] Party context, the participant mentioned that 'there are tensions that need to be resolved, you know if they can be resolved around what policy areas can we prioritise ... what kind of language do we use ... and who is our main audience and those things are still being teased out'. There is an element of challenge here in terms of where, in the overall scheme of things, the issues discussed at the book club gathering can be brought into the bigger political picture, mitigated to some extent by the fact that already there has been an event on hate crime legislation, and also that the participant and the politician mentioned earlier are already conscious of issues around inclusion.

When asked about how the participant benefitted from the informal conversation event and what new knowledge they gained, they said they 'got a lot insight into what other staff are [thinking], not just what they experience and what they see on the ground in terms of the raised issues but also how they are affected by it'. The participant learned that the other people at the conversation were 'annoyed by it [racism] and would like to see a change of behaviour' and went on to say 'I think it certainly gave us all insight into the issue of race and inclusion ... in a way I think that we wouldn't have had necessarily before ... we might have had it individually but not as a group'.

5.1.4 Affective factors

The subject of racism and hate crime are already emotive topics and it came as no surprise that affective factors, such as emotion, mood and atmosphere, often came through in the interview even before the question about these aspects was specifically asked. The interview discourse is further analysed according to the participant's usage of words describing affective factors.

CHAPTER FIVE: CASE FINDINGS

Several positive emotions were expressed in terms of attitude towards the book club gatherings themselves. The participant was 'committed' to attending the book club, and also described the others who attended as 'keen', particularly for this gathering where they were 'keen to raise those topics [of racism]', so there was a high level of motivation here. The gatherings were described as 'good fun', 'easy going', 'open' and that there was a feeling of 'excitement' in anticipation of getting together to discuss the book that had been chosen. The book's story was compared with films and TV shows and here the participant reported that the conversation was 'going off on tangents'. The participant made the positive observation that 'it was good, a good chat'. With regards to discussion of the book's topic overall, the participant talked about it being 'outrageously satirical' and 'grim but so that it's laugh out loud', which has a simultaneous combination of positive and negative aspects, reflecting the approach the book's author took to bringing out the issues of racism in America.

The participant also talked about the 'comfortable environment' of the book club, 'even if it were just having lunch outside' as opposed to being in a staff meeting. In the book club 'there was a sense that we could talk about this ... now everybody had something to share'. This suggests that sensitive issues can sometimes be more easily discussed in an informal, 'safe space' like this, rather than in a more formal, 'urgent' (as said by the participant) forum like a staff meeting.

The participant felt that at the end of the gathering 'there was a sense of maybe having broken the ice on it [issues of racism]'. In terms of personal motivation with regards to the issues raised, the participant reported feeling 'very strongly' that if something like racism is happening and it's something 'we need to tackle', then one needs to 'be honest about the problem' and to try 'to figure it out', what can be done, including 'supporting hate crime legislation'. It was also mentioned that the participant's boss and the participant would be 'very engaged' in working on the 'more formal element like hate crime legislation and dealing with racism [on a national level]'. The member with concerns about urban racism was described as being 'passionate' about the issues.

Elements of reassurance were also brought into the conversation, such as the 'we're not so perfect either' comment mentioned earlier. Also in the case of the urban racism issues, one member, who was a councillor in an urban constituency, also sought reassurance that others felt the same way.

CHAPTER FIVE: CASE FINDINGS

One of the positive emotions expressed apparently by another member at the book club was that of being 'fond of [a particular smaller town]' but this was actually a precursor to negative feelings about attitudes of 'closed-mindedness' in that town, as observed by that member. As one would imagine, negative affective factors were mentioned in various degrees of depth of feeling, particularly when talking about personal experiences as opposed to more general concerns about racism as an important issue and looking at hate crime from a legal perspective. Two of the members, the one who came to the country from abroad and the member who experienced the 'closed-mindedness' of a small town, talked about getting 'that insider/outsider' feeling and sense of 'the other'. This feeling was also mentioned in a later conversation the participant had with their partner after work that day; their partner observing that, even after more than a decade living in 'this country', the feeling does not go away.

Several comments were made about the cross party event on hate crime, attended by the [xx] Party researcher and at least one other member of the book club. The participant was unsure who else from the group attended. The briefing was described as 'affecting', 'quite outraging' and 'you just feel ashamed'. The participant talked about feeling 'shocked but not surprised' and made the distinction of how the group members felt hearing testimonies first hand as opposed to hearing 'anecdotal evidence ... at one remove'. The decision was made to change topics slightly as the participant was showing signs of distress while recalling this aspect of the informal conversation.

'Quite put out', 'still feeling like an outsider', 'added shame', 'feeling affected', 'feeling depressed' were all terms used to describe one of the members talking about their own feelings about what they have experienced in their new country, and also about the racism they see going on in their own country. Another group member had also mentioned witnessing 'racist slurs being thrown at [public transport] drivers'.

'Outraged', 'annoying', 'conflicted' and 'vent' (implying emotional charge) were feelings the participant perceived from one group member who was very much struggling with local attitudes in their constituency, with the experience of constituents coming to the meetings to 'vent' their issues, including their views about people they perceive as being foreigners. There was a sense of disappointment at constituency level, when experiencing this conflict between the book club group's own values and those of some of their constituents. 'Fed up' and 'exhausting' also were words used to describe the

feeling of both the councillor dealing with the racist attitudes among urban constituents and the person who had concerns about 'small town' attitudes.

Other negative affective terms used were: 'it's [racism] bad'; 'It's grim', referring to an Oscar winning film about a young, black, gay person and included experiences of both racism and homophobia; 'enraged' where members were wondering if the others in the group felt the same way; and 'serious'. This last comment came about as an expression of anxiety and concern that if race and hate crime issues are not dealt with now things 'are only going to deteriorate and there's a lot of ghetto-isation happening now'. The notion of something deteriorating reflects negative feelings and the expressed concept of 'ghetto-isation' is also negatively emotive, reflecting fear and underlying concerns here. The participant, when recalling the issues raised about urban racism, talked about the housing 'crisis', a situation usually characterised by fear and anxiety. Here this was linked to anxiety of 'old [nationals]' who want to be prioritised over those they perceive as non-nationals, in this situation. The participant summarised their perception of the feelings of the group by the end of the book club session as that they were 'affected' (this was used in the sense of negatively affected) and 'annoyed'. Looking at the additional words used above, there was also a strong sense of shame, anger, frustration, sadness and disappointment.

Another affective feature that came through in the interview was that of uncertainty. For example the participant, in reporting a sense of not only knowing the issues exist and they're not good, also observed that 'you don't know what to do when there's so much'. This feeling was further underpinned, as discussed in Section 5.1.3.

5.1.5 Participant reflexivity

When the participant was asked if they were thinking about their informal conversations differently because they were going to be doing a second interview for the research, they confirmed that they did 'a bit and I suppose I've been chatting to people thinking well, does this count? Or will this lead somewhere?' The participant seemed to engage in some level of judging what would be worth bringing to the study and what would not as evidenced here:

'Sometimes a chat over coffee is so informal that you know you're just literally talking about the weather ... you know some people might want to switch off entirely and it's their break so I suppose it did make me aware ... I suppose the instances where the semi-formal, you know where it's not chit chat, it is kind of

well we are actually talking with a purpose here ... it's not that ... Nobody's going to take minutes but there is a purpose to it, so yeah and noticing the difference between those different kinds of conversations'.

And when asked to clarify this, the participant went on to say:

'Yes and I suppose that a lot of exchanges you'd have certainly in work apart from the kind of 'meeting' situation doesn't really fit in because often nothing of substance comes out ... Usually the conversation starts with what are you doing this weekend? It doesn't necessarily touch on the kind of wider principles, areas or policy issues ... so it's finding the 'in between' ... it's tricky but interesting'.

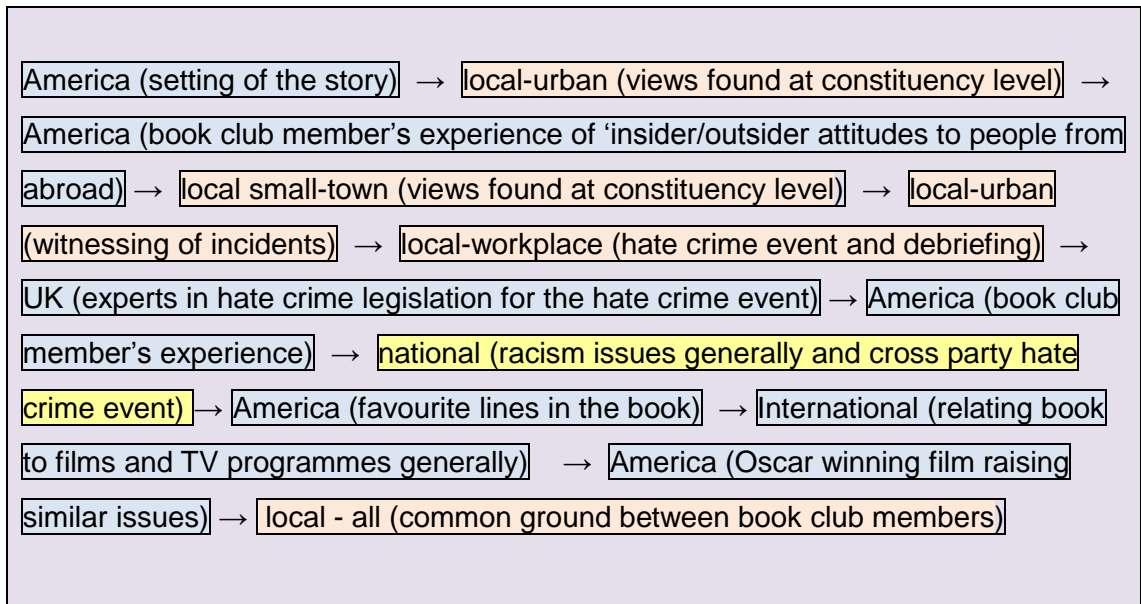
This observation is, in itself, interesting from a boundary perspective, as the participant was trying to work out some sort of boundary that made sense to them of what counted (a) as informal conversation and (b) what would have enough substance to be usable for the interview. There was an interesting hesitancy over whether a conversation that is not minuted, but has a purpose, would count within either of these conditions. And yet in the discussion about the goals of the book club gathering, seen as informal conversation, there was a clear purpose to the book club.

5.1.6 Boundaries

While working through this particular case example of informal conversation, it became apparent that there were a number of different kinds of boundaries, as well as different ways boundaries were perceived, i.e. sometimes as porous or difficult to define, or sometimes where sharing occurred, or where there were challenges to perceived, existing boundaries. This noticeably occurred in terms of geo-political boundaries moving between international, national, local and workplace levels, where the conversation in this case activity continuously moved between these levels. A summary of the geo-political journey of the conversation is shown in Figure 6.

Political party boundaries came into play briefly, in that the hate crime event and debriefing mentioned above was a cross party event initiated by another political party, but anyone could attend. This kind of cross party interaction comes through in other cases discussed later in this chapter. Another boundary is shown as well, which is the boundary between what is considered 'us' and 'other', which is discussed in different ways by everyone at that particular book club gathering.

Figure 6: Geo-political journey of an information conversation



| Legend |
|---------------------|
| International level |
| National level |
| Local level |

Value boundaries were revealed as well. The participant mentioned this initially when talking about general attitudes and denial of the existence of racism in ‘this country’ as well as when talking about the degree of racism ‘especially when they [some of the people making racist comments] are so-called progressives’. The participant went on to observe that ‘you’d be saying why would anyone even join the [xx] Party if that’s their approach to race issues’.

Two of the members experienced conflicts when people in different constituencies (one urban, one small town) seemed to be trying to pressurise the councillors to cross their own value boundaries. The participant recalls one of the participants feeling that ‘this isn’t what I got into politics for ... to be dealing with this ... and especially not into the [xx] Party’; or when talking about small-town ‘closed mindedness’ and the ‘insider/outsider’ attitude ‘even among people who’d be [xx] leaning’.

Blurring of boundaries between work and personal life, particularly in talking about the informal as opposed to the formal was also discussed a number of times. For

example, the book club informal conversation took place at the workplace, but it was considered a situation where ‘well we won’t talk about work’ or ‘isn’t work related’, yet as can be seen throughout this case, the issue of racism was discussed across both work and non-work boundaries, as well as in the context of formal and informal situations. In talking about conversation with family the participant said that ‘at home I talk a lot about my work with my partner’ and ‘I mentioned it [the book club gathering] later to my partner’. The participant added that another family member ‘was asking me about work and how I was seeing it was going’. For the participant, both family members mentioned were described as being either ‘very’ or ‘quite’ interested in politics. Some of the book club members work part-time for the party and have other jobs as well, although nothing was said about whether there was any blurring of boundaries here.

A differentiation between the book club gathering, as opposed to a more formal, definitively work event like a staff meeting, was made in that ‘there’s a forum there [at the book club] to raise these issues’ as opposed to ‘when you do something at a staff meeting or raise an issue [there] ... then it’s urgent and it’s business related’. The issue of differentiating between what counts as formal or informal conversation is visited in Section 5.1.5 when the participant was asked if they were thinking about such judgements and distinctions during various conversations that they engaged in since the first interview had taken place. Here the participant used the word ‘tricky’ to describe going through this thought process.

5.2 Case Two: A day out with a local area representative

This case, known as C2 from now on, is about a day spent with a young [xx] Party local area representative (who is referred to as the ‘rep’), who was going out canvassing. The participant later mentioned that the age profile of local area representatives ranges from early 20s to late 60s. The participant was accompanying the rep in a guidance and support role. Informal conversation occurred throughout the day in a number of different situations. The participant explained that with area representatives ‘there’s a very large and also noticeable local context with each one of them’, such as about ‘the local scene, local politicians ... rumour’ and ‘they’re all looking at a situation that’s different’, whether ‘an area is rural or urban’, or what the dominant party or parties tend to be, or whether it’s an area where ‘nothing ever changes’ or an area that is ‘really volatile’.

CHAPTER FIVE: CASE FINDINGS

In this case, the rep was going to run a public meeting and the participant 'went down there and we did some ground work, I delivered posters for him and leaflets for him, but then we went out canvassing and we went door to door ... I've known him for a few years, this chap'. The participant estimated that they 'did over 250 houses ... or something'. The purpose of the day's activity was 'to introduce' the rep. Later the participant talked about the purpose of canvassing itself. 'You have to canvas so that they know you, and see you and meet you but also so you can hear what are people talking about, and you know what is important to them and if no-one mentions something, is it really an issue or does the media think it's an issue'. So, in addition to introducing the rep, canvassing also allowed both the participant and the rep to get a feel for what people on the ground are actually concerned about. It was interesting to see 'what's not mentioned' as part of 'taking the temperature' like a 'reality check', as to whether the intra-party discussions are about issues that local people relate to or are concerned about.

Later again the participant explained that the canvassing, the media exposure and the upcoming public event are simply part of a longer process of becoming known. 'You need to do maybe ten things ... that person, first you may meet them at the door, then six months later, they get a leaflet from us and then meanwhile also they might see the guy in the newspaper a few then they might meet him somewhere at a local thing, at an event and maybe at that point they might actually start recognising him You nearly have to be on their radar you know x times before they start even recognising you'. There are elements of both formal and informal communication here. Being seen at a local event and having conversations there have that element of the unexpected or the unrehearsed, (associated with the informal), while media exposure is more planned and therefore more formal in nature.

Going back to the specific day in hand, the participant reiterated the purpose of the canvassing exercise: 'we were on a mission and the mission was to knock on doors and to get the posters to his house and he wanted to show me, you know that he had the paper [newspaper article]'. 'On this particular occasion we were promoting the event. Now we were really promoting the guy. The event was just an excuse and we did have conversations about the topic of the event'. But in doing this, the participant went on to say 'we're trying to create persona ... the chap has to be about something and it has to be an authentic persona, he's a young chap ... so it started off as something for young people ... to do with mental health' and, interestingly, the participant then explained that 'we didn't want to say that so we were talking about

supporting young people ... and in the end it was done on exams stress and pressure young people are under’.

The informal conversation mainly occurred between the rep and the participant. Informal conversation also took place when talking to the people being canvassed. Indirectly, other people, such as family of the people that the participant and the rep spoke to, were mentioned as they would be people who would hear about the conversations that the canvassers had with the individuals who responded to the knocking on their doors. It can also be argued that indirectly the media were involved, given that they published an article about the public event coming up that was being organised by the rep, prior to the canvassing exercise. Two members of the rep’s team were also mentioned, although this was more in the context of the public event, and their creativity (with ideas) and support for the rep in getting it organised. They liked to work for this young person because although ‘he mightn’t have great ideas, he will do the work’. A WhatsApp group was also mentioned as being ‘a very supportive group’.

5.2.1 Emerging topics

On the day, the participant and the rep ‘had a coffee’. In the coffee shop the rep indicated two members of a nationalist party, who were talking ‘at the counter’ about a funeral of one of their members. Through observing this conversation, the participant and the rep were able to learn about the perceptions of a competing party. This also led to the participant expressing surprise at a woman being a supporter of that party, as the participant perceived that the nationalist party was not known for actively supporting women’s issues.

The participant explained that they always ask general questions like ‘how’s it going?’, ‘how’s everyone?’ or ‘my favourite phrase: any news?’ So these apparently casual questions are used to find out what is actually happening on the ground with area representatives and what kind of support or guidance might or might not be needed by the representatives in their work. In this case, the rep had news and the coffee shop environment enabled him to provide evidence of this. The participant explained that the rep had said ‘I had a piece in the paper about the public meeting [upcoming]’. The participant went on to say ‘those papers were in the coffee shop so he went and got one and gave me one and I said that’s brilliant’. The rep had responded, saying ‘well actually I have a bigger article in the other paper as well’, so the participant and the rep looked at that. They went on to talk about the local people, the two [nationalist party] people identified earlier, and a current councillor that the rep disliked ‘intensely’.

The participant gave an example of the kinds of conversation that can occur when canvassing and how informal conversation works there. The participant pointed out that the canvassers were uninvited callers, so responses could be 'good, bad or indifferent'. The participant talked about someone (it was not clear if this occurred on the actual day that this case concerns) saying 'look at the state of me; I'm just washing the windows' whereupon, the participant started a conversation about washing windows. The participant said 'you know it sounds really harmless but there's a reason behind it, which is to come across as someone they would consider a normal person, a likeable person, someone like me ... it's only a warm up'. Here the purpose of the informal conversation was to create a sense of the politicians being people that the local people can relate to or recognise something about themselves there.

Returning to the day in hand, the participant, after initiating the conversations with potential voters met on the canvassing trail, always moved on to introduce the rep; explaining that 'he's hosting a meeting and you know it's excellent speakers and if there's anyone in the house ... blah blah blah.... Oh there he is now [the rep], I leave you to it'. The participant then walked away, to allow the rep to get their own 'face-time' with the person with whom the participant first started the conversation.

Another general observation was made by the participant about when they talk to someone who is not on the voting register. Here, the participant explained, one might be tempted to not take the same trouble with that person, as they would with someone who is registered. However 'at the same time, it's a person and if they have a query we take it and also, cynically, I suppose they talk ... they might not have a vote, they might talk to people who do have a vote, they have a family'. The participant went on to cite some research by a former government department on education, which stated that 'about 25% of [people who came to MPs with a query] weren't registered to vote and won't ever give you their vote'.

5.2.2 Conversation goals

The participant explained 'I go canvassing with these people because it's good to know what's the temperature out there, what's the reception, also to see the area representatives canvassing, what's their style, that kind of stuff, like do they know how to canvas?' When asked about having 'conscious goals' at the start of these informal conversations, they explained 'we are driven by wanting to change the society for better' as the motivation behind the whole canvassing activity, which is perceived as

'the business of getting votes ... we're selling ourselves so we can get votes ... you meet someone and you're thinking oh can I get a vote out of that guy'. Later in the interview, the participant reiterated 'at the back of your mind, at the same time, you are always after a vote'.

The participant mentioned an additional goal: 'my goal is also to motivate this guy' and later on 'their [the rep's] success is my goal'. When asked about what the participant thought the rep's goals were, they said 'to be elected on the council and ... some people are just interested in politics'. When asked if there was an intrinsic or idealistic goal as well, the participant responded 'that's the foundation of everything we do ... sometimes we dislike other parties and we dislike them we don't think the things they do promote is the sort of thinking that we have'. They went on to talk about how different people in the party do not necessarily have the same goals. 'I mean some are quite left wing, then we have the trade union thing ... personally I'm not in the movement, and then you have people who are ... some are liberal, but not everyone is liberal. Some are very old fashioned, some are extremely progressive, then some feel sorry for everyone and others are like, sorry, no! I mean not everyone is there to be pitied, so if you're talking to a party member, you have to suss them out as well'.

5.2.3 Post conversation follow-up

Following from the day of canvassing and publicising the public event, the event itself took place. There were a lot of non-party members there which the participant observed was 'always seen as a lot better' because it gets people asking about the organisers, in this case, the [xx] Party. The event 'resonated with parents, teachers and people in general who were interested in the topic'. Another follow-up on the event was that the creative person, mentioned earlier, 'she's bursting with ideas, like after the event [this person] rang me immediately' to say that the event had gone so well. When asked, the participant said that they did not know what proportion of the people at the event came as a result of the canvassing. A lot of the people there said they heard about the event 'in the newspaper'.

The rep also did a follow-up activity after the event and had something placed in the papers about this. The participant also called the rep after the event, to praise him and also to ask what his team had in mind for another event. He said it would be on the gender pay gap. He also said that he had had media coverage again, which, according to the participant, 'will mean ... that it's worth doing'. The WhatsApp group mentioned

earlier also had encouraging posts on it saying 'oh yes that's really good' regarding the event.

With the increasing visibility of the rep's profile, the participant mentioned that 'this other guy rang him, just to say how are you getting on, looking to know ... have you canvassed a lot and how's it going?' This was apparently because 'the other guy wanted to run'.

New knowledge included finding out about the rep's success with the media, and finding that the rep showed himself to be good at canvassing in spite of his personality as perceived by the participant: 'He's actually quite good. He's doing the right technique although the technique probably goes against his personality. He's not a bubbly extrovert at all but he obviously views canvassing as something he must do with a particular style and technique and he's doing it'. Later on, the participant confirmed that they were 'reassured that he [the rep] is really on top of it', his success in 'creating activity which is what we're trying [to do]'. Here the participant observed that 'more activity means more presence for us [the [xx] Party] and if we have presence, we might be a bit more relevant'.

In estimating the mood from the canvassing 'when they met us ... it was positive to indifferent ... no one [complained]' and the participant felt that they were 'updated on local political news and gossip'.

In terms of what people might bring up as topics the participant said 'you just don't know what might come up but there's a context to it, it's not completely random' and gave an example of someone saying 'you see that pillar over there and that gate is nearly collapsing and somebody needs to do something', so here new knowledge is often a very local issue that arises during the canvassing conversation.

5.2.4 Affective factors

Affective factors featured extensively in this interview and were often linked to motivation. Starting first with positive expressions of the affective state; early on it was said to be 'nice' to have someone to talk to where you could 'switch off' from politics. 'That's brilliant' was used in the motivational sense in response to the rep getting a piece in the media. Being liked or 'likeable' was mentioned several times as being part of the goal of the canvassing where the canvasser would 'come across as someone they [the potential voter] would consider a normal person, a likeable person'. Being

CHAPTER FIVE: CASE FINDINGS

'engaged' was discussed in terms of weighing up interest from people met while canvassing. The speakers for the public event were described as 'excellent' and therefore seen as a motivation for people to attend (along with the issues being something that would be immediate and close to a few different groups of people). 'Do your best' was used to describe the preferred attitude if somebody in the electorate asks the party member 'for something'. 'Liberal' and 'progressive' were seen as positive approaches to social issues. Back to support for the rep, members of this person's team were described as 'liking the guy' and 'they believe in him' as motivators for their support and being creative with ideas to be developed with him.

When asked about emotions at the time of the case activity, the affective sense was basically positive. There was an air of 'anticipation', 'a sense of purpose', 'we felt motivated', 'he had some good news' referring to the media coverage, so 'there was already a sense of success ... at that point already we said it's already been worth it'. 'The mood was good' although the participant did mention that 'you are worried and nervous', but that was seen as positive in the sense that 'it makes you try harder'. Praise was also received after the public event, which was perceived as 'successful'. The WhatsApp group was complimentary, saying 'good job' and 'great' 'really good' and 'worth doing', and this was seen by the participant as being encouraging to him 'to do more of the same'. This group was in itself described as being 'interesting', bringing 'a bit of freshness, a bit of naiveté', being 'supportive', having 'a sense of anticipation' and 'optimism'. It was interesting that the participant described all of this as being 'good at the [moment] because it's in the future'. The participant observed the majority of local area representatives as being generally 'optimistic', no matter how the party does in the polls.

Being 'pleased' for the rep that his efforts seem to be paying off was also expressed. His level of initiative was also praised as 'brilliant' and the participant also said 'he earned my respect'. In describing their perception of how the rep was feeling, the participant said 'I think he was pretty pleased because it was already looking good', although 'he was nervous too'. The participant was also of the opinion, that as the canvassing and the public event were 'his thing', the rep would be feeling 'everything tenfold', as opposed to the participant who was 'only dipping in'.

In a more generic observation, the participant talked about someone who accompanied their son out canvassing and introduced this person as 'just starting out', because 'everyone loves a guy who's starting out because it means that he's coming and he's

CHAPTER FIVE: CASE FINDINGS

pure and good'. This was a clear appeal to the emotions of the people who were answering the doors to the canvassers to motivate them to give this new person a chance. In the end, however, the participant felt a 'sense of satisfaction and relief and being well pleased that the guy is getting on well' and that it was not 'a wasted journey' and, as stated in Section 5.2.3, the participant was 'reassured' that the rep was on top of his work.

Affective terms were also used in describing the reception at the houses where the participant and rep were canvassing. On this occasion the responses were either 'good or indifferent' but not 'bad'. These responses were seen as indicators of the standing of the [xx] Party, in this case by comparison to an earlier time where some responses were 'bad'. Also in responding to the people at these houses, by being 'polite' or saying 'that's fine' if people did not want to have a conversation, so as not to provoke discomfort or anger. 'Avoiding disagreement' was used where politics would be avoided as a topic for discussion with neighbours. 'Awkward' and 'not a bubbly extrovert' was used in the context of describing a personality who might potentially struggle with some of the face-to-face communication required in talking to potential voters, although this is later seen as something that was overcome through using skilled techniques. 'Getting a feel' was used in terms of trying to ascertain mood and concerns of people in the area. The President of America was referred to as a common topic of conversation although this was explained as being because he was perceived as so 'outrageously unbelievable'. However, the participant went on to say 'but no-one's going to do anything about [him]. That's just talk'. 'Revolutionary' and 'notorious' were terms used to describe degrees of ideology in different parties.

In terms of negative expressions of the affective state, the following terms or expressions were used: 'volatile' in the context of areas that experience continuous political change; 'being blamed', which described the feeling when voters blame individuals for unpopular measures taken by the party; 'scary' described the thought of women supporting a party known for its socially conservative policies. 'Weird' was used in terms of thinking about conversation that might consist only of formal conversation, in that this was not seen as natural and, in this case, it was in the context of initiating telephone conversations with fellow party members. 'It sounds harmless', 'cynical' and 'cynically' were used when the participant was explaining about wanting the rep to appear 'likeable', as having the ulterior motive of getting people to vote for them or, in the case of unregistered voters, that those people would talk favourably about them with other people they knew. The negative view of 'I'll be damned if I give you anything'

CHAPTER FIVE: CASE FINDINGS

just because the person is unregistered, was seen therefore as being counterproductive. 'Obsessed' and 'driven' were used in terms of motivation and feelings about a 'disliked' competitor. 'We [complain] about other parties quite a lot'. This is a negative motivator but it could also be interpreted as a reinforcement of values. 'Weird' was used again (twice) along with 'wrong' when describing political uses of 'controlling' and 'disempowerment' methods or tactics of creating electorate dependencies on certain councillors as a means of staying in power. The topic of the public event was about examination stress, so already 'stress', 'pressure' and 'fretting' were used to describe the level of anxiety experienced at examination time and, therefore, seen as an important topic for discussion.

In relation to some people canvassing for the first time, the participant did say that some people, particularly if they have never done this, are 'probably intimidated or scared', with the result that they remain inactive until someone pushes them or goes out with them.

Affective responses were given about the issue of parroting either another politician's words or hearsay that become truths, which turn out not to be true, that this becomes 'annoying' or 'it becomes noise and you don't care anymore' or is 'hilarious'. The last comment was in the context of knowing who made the original comment or observation and hearing it being said by another person as if it were their own idea.

On balance in this case, the affective aspects tended to be more positive than negative, and there was a strong sense of motivation and purpose coming through in the informal conversations that the participant had with the rep during their canvassing day, as well as in and around the follow-up public event. The negative comments were more about concerns in politics generally and some areas of anxiety that less experienced area representatives might feel, and of course the anxieties that were actually the topic of the public event. The observation of intrinsic optimism, no matter what opinions might be expressed in the media about the [xx] Party or even how the party is polling, was also interesting. There was a sense that it is not the performance of the party that drives the local area representatives but more the belief that their own intrinsic goals for what they want for their area and country are in line with the goals of the party.

5.2.5 Participant reflexivity

When asked whether they were conscious of thinking about informal conversation differently in advance of the second interview, the participant talked about the difficulty of separating the informal from the formal, stating 'everything's mixed up'. It was difficult to perceive a beginning and an end to the informal component. In talking about the canvassing and promotion of the public event, the participant observed that 'the public event was a formal event and canvassing is formally one of your tasks but what's actually happening in the conversation is much more of a mixed picture'.

5.2.6 Boundaries

As highlighted in section 5.1.6, boundaries between work and non-work life were often difficult to delineate and the participant was no exception. The participant also voiced some uncertainties about where informal conversation stopped being informal and started being formal conversation. The participant seem to equate this to whether the conversation was about work, perceiving that as formal, and non-work, where that was clearly perceived as informal. This dilemma emerged a number of times in the case interview with the participant stating that 'it's not about information or procedures or anything like that, it's pure gossip'. In talking about the public meeting, the participant notes:

'and while that's work related, there is also then a lot of gossip'; 'there's just a lot of gossip that's work related but at the same time spills over ... a lot of informal chats are really still to do with politics'; 'so that's informal but then again you're talking shop really'; 'he's always talking about him. It's not informal, it's to do with the job but again it's that thing of ... what's he up to this time'; 'it's not all just business because that would be weird'; 'it's all chat with a particular purpose'; and when in engaging in conversation about cleaning with a voter who you are canvassing, the conversation is described as 'you just don't know what might come up, but there's a context to it. It's not completely random'.

Later on in the interview the participant goes on to say:

'I think this topic is so difficult to just box in, that it's hard to even think about it because it just spills over, it goes all over the place ... at the end of the day it's the kind of thing that is just everywhere'. When talking about the day out with the rep, the participant went on to say 'that public event was a formal event and

CHAPTER FIVE: CASE FINDINGS

canvassing is formally one of your tasks but what's actually happening in the conversation is much more of a mixed picture ... there is such an overlap'.

In talking about the kind of work the participant does in working for the [xx] Party, the participant says further:

'And it's all informal/formal. Everything's mixed up ... it's such a topic that everyone's talking about it ... it is hard to put that boundary on when I'm doing what ... my phone it could be 24 hours a day in the sense that you know there's always a WhatsApp message'.

Internal and external boundaries with the [xx] Party also demonstrated the fact that the public event that the rep ran was not a party specific event. 'Probably no-one said oh I'm going to a [xx] Party event ... everyone who went to it said ... I'm going off to that thing about helping young people' and the participant reported that there were many 'non-party' members there.

Value boundaries came through as with the last case, where the participant discussed there being different ideas on what the [xx] Party was really meant to be about. The subject of asylum seekers was mentioned as one area where the values vary quite significantly, from the view of 'they're 100% victims' to 'they should all be sent back'. While the participant did not specify whether the comments were made in a formal or informal context, they did say that the environment, e.g. rural or urban, impacts on what people feel they can or cannot say about certain issues. For example, on one of the party's more socially liberal policies, 'we had councillors [from more rural areas] who said I'm not voting for that rubbish'. Another area of value conflict was the area of how much party activists should do for their constituents and where the boundaries are between helping and actively discouraging them from being self-empowered and learning how to do things for themselves. The participant was concerned that 'we're colluding in this [type of] servicing'. The way politics form a person was also mentioned in this context of value boundaries, in that 'you become two-faced and I don't mean it that I am two faced, but you become two faced because you just have to; you have to navigate and manoeuvre and ... no matter who you're talking to [so whether in informal or formal situations], you're always trying to assess where they are coming from'.

Under the heading of value boundaries, the participant also talked about truths and the problem of hearing things [this was meant as hearsay, an informal information context]

'and we start parroting them and they become truths ... just to find out they weren't truths at all'. The frustration of this further lead the participant to comment that 'I've concluded there are no truths ... we're always looking for the magic wand'. The last comment is interesting because it suggests that people believe what they want to believe rather than take the time to consider other possibilities. The participant observed 'a lot of people know things and how they're done and they have these truths but you have to just distil all that and make your own truths'. Value boundaries came through again when talking about training: 'we're training people to do the right thing but there is no right thing because what to me is right, to someone else isn't'. Furthermore, in talking about fake news and 'post truth', the participant felt that people can say anything and it does not have to be true, i.e. 'there's no filter anymore. No one cares ... you can say anything that unless challenged it passes as a truth ... now you can say anything and it's nearly somebody else's job to challenge it'.

5.3 Case Three: Online members' social media forum

This case, known as C3 from now on, is about an informal online closed social media forum set up by members of the [xx] Party, as opposed to an official party forum, on Facebook to 'talk about issues'. The forum members are referred to as such to distinguish them from the book club members in the first case. This forum is described as being 'a lot more policy'. Privacy and the need to be cautious in those online conversations, is also mentioned. 'Though it's technically private, you don't want to start having a go at people or anything ... on Facebook you say what you want but in the [xx] forum [also Facebook based] you have to be careful ... you don't want to necessarily say everything because they might be thinking about their own career or future or getting in a nomination or something like that'. Returning to the nature of the forum, the participant noted 'there's no official kind of recognition of it although I'm sure official people are keeping an on it ... I suspect'. The participant went on later to say that they thought the forum was 'almost archetypally informal because it's just there and people are talking and sharing ideas. There's no real strong structure'. The forum was originally set by a member of the [xx] Party about a single issue but then decided to change the name to [xx] Member Forum, to continue with the online momentum. The initiator invited 10 or 15 people to the forum and it snowballed from then. The participant believed there are at least 300 members in the forum. People in the forum have other links as a result of their work. For example, some of them are in trade unions, or 'NGOs ... local community groups ... there's a teacher [in another EU country]'. When asked if it tended to be the same people talking in the forum, the

participant confirmed this to be the case, saying they are 'middle-ranking activists, some might be local ... [or] someone who's abroad' and that there would 'probably [be] about 8 or 9 people driving the conversation'.

5.3.1 Emerging topics

The first topic mentioned was that 'there was a huge discussion on [a secession issue]'. Various points of view were discussed. One forum member 'was saying no this is ridiculous and we shouldn't be supporting this kind thing' and it was believed that the [xx] Party's sister party in that country 'aren't very keen either', whereas others were pro-secessionist arguing that if it is what people want, it is undemocratic not to allow it. Concerns were raised that 'increasing nationalism might actually destabilise things and ... that sort of thing can actually help fascism rather than reduce it'. One of the issues identified as leading to the movement for secession, was that 'they [the secessionist supporters] don't like paying into the centre'. The participant said that some of the attitudes being expressed in the forum were predictable due to the participant having some knowledge of the people involved in the discussion, and some knowledge of the actual issue in hand. The role of the police was also discussed when protests were growing violent. Again there were views 'for' and 'against' the police stepping in: 'you shouldn't send the police in to beat them up and then it's, well, maybe [they] should'.

There was a discussion about 'the general state of play [in the case country] ... I mean the opinion polls'. There was also a discussion about 'co-operation between' the [xx] Party and two other parties, where there may a sharing of goals in certain areas. This was a reference to a different online forum, which includes non-[xx] Party members, where this is discussed in some depth. Different EU government leaders were also discussed. The participant said that there would be 'a backdrop of the general demise of the [sister parties group at European level]'.

5.3.2 Conversation goals

Conscious goals for having the Members' Forum were seen to be 'to have some influence ... to have a discussion and then maybe have a say collectively ... we'll all have the conversation'. The participant went on to say that, while the initial discussion or conversation happens collectively online, the members would then act, for example, within their own constituency. So 'if there's enough people who all share this [for example, co-operation with other parties] view ... that they'll all come through the ranks

and make that known'. The participant also cautioned against groups being seen as 'a faction or a party within a party', and went on to say that 'not everyone in the forum has to agree ... there is no group position. It's just a discussion. It's just to promote the discussion'. In talking generally about the Forum, the participant expressed the view that 'what brings people together is everyone should have their say and be involved', such as if there is a belief that there is a problem with one of the party rules that 'could bring people together to say change the rules ... so you can unite people around the idea of giving them a say but then what they will say might be diverse and different'. When asked about other goals emerging from the forum conversations, the participant thought that with the primary goal being about exchanging views that this did not really vary in terms of the main goal.

In the interview a personal goal appeared to emerge where the participant explained that due to their knowledge of international issues, they were able to give additional factual background and to add other things to consider in the discussion, taking on a more reflective approach to the issues. The participant would say things such as 'but on the other hand, consider this or it's not that simple ... I'm often trying to bring some parity into it [the conversation]'.

5.3.3 Post conversation follow-up

The participant did not see that any follow-up would occur on the secessionist issue other than considering the effect of the debate as being either that 'it might polarise people' or that it might help people 'clarify ... I think that's where I fit in. I'm more on that side on that issue'. The participant felt that the latter could be a good thing 'just by seeing someone articulate it well'. The follow-up possibility was then that one might say 'I think I'll support more of that or read up on more of that or follow more of that', thus seeking further inquiry. However, later in the interview, the participant suggested that 'we might have a motion about the [xx] Party stance on [the secessionist issue]'. While submission of motions to the annual conference was seen as a potential follow-up destination, the participant expressed a view that the annual conference 'should be much more dynamic', getting young people together and using technologies to get their views and opinions, as opposed to what the participant perceives to be a more 'didactic' approach.

The discussion on the Members' Forum about cooperation between parties on certain like-minded views, was seen as something that had the potential to 'come up at some stage' where 'we could have a motion'; although for the time being, this was seen as

'early days' and a 'slower burn' but that 'it would be very strange to have another conference or two before an election and not have a discussion about whether the party can work together more ... so it's bound to come up'. The participant saw the potential for, when the issue is under discussion in a formal setting, members of the forum, who have been involved with informal online conversations on the topic, to come forward and show their familiarity with the issues. For example, they might say 'oh there's been a big discussion going on online, have you not seen it?' The participant pointed out that if members do not engage with the informal online conversation 'you're going to miss so much' such as finding out whatever the 'general feeling [is] about something'.

When asked about gaining new knowledge, the participant said they found out more about fellow members' positions, about the extent of interest that people are taking in various issues on the forum, and about 'the ability of people to meet across the ... parties'. With the last point, here the participant mentioned that the new knowledge was in finding out that 'grass roots [parties], activists, the [main] parties ... meet together regularly [to] talk about stuff'. When asked about whether the online exchanges benefitted the party as a whole, the participant said 'oh yes, it's definitely benefitted; there's more discussion and interest on issues'. The participant saw this as a potential model to do things in a different way, which could be picked up at more formal levels, so 'if you get the online [discussion] and people are reflecting online and meeting then with more of a point to catch up then in person'. The participant appeared to want to see more intercommunication and flexibility, interweaving the informal online approach with the more formal meetings approach, including using 'open space technology' and electronic devices to capture opinion in meetings 'so you'd have more subtlety ... it gives you a bit more of the complexity and the subtlety of the thing'. The participant talked about using light pads with green and red buttons, for people to use, not only for opinion but also to determine their own knowledge on certain issues and, for example, doing electronic quizzes. The participant also talked about 'gamification' but for 'getting serious outputs', which might lead to, for example, petitions for certain issues.

5.3.4 Affective factors

Starting first with the online discussion on the secession issue, a variety of affective responses emerged. The discussion itself was described as 'good' and that 'it got quite animated ... because I think there are very deep issues', and one person in the discussion was described as being very 'insistent' that secession is a form of nationalism and it is against the [xx] Party values. The participant went on to say 'I think

the majority were pro-[secession] ... there was a lot of interest in it ... because a lot of people had deeply held views, which is why it did go on a lot and got quite animated'. The topic of how the [xx] Party and like-minded parties see nationalism was described as 'always a hugely fraught conversation', where some people have 'no truck with nationalism' while others say 'we can't force people to live together if they don't want to', which is why the discussion 'can get quite emotional'. Other emotions expressed here were fear that 'nationalism might destabilise things' while alternatively, on the side of the secession view, people 'don't like paying into the centre'. The participant identified the topic as being 'literally about identity. That's why it was so hard', which was perceived as being 'a good thing' as it 'wasn't really personality driven, it was people with really strong views about what your political programme is or should be'.

The forum itself was described as being 'good ... it's a good service ... there's a lot of good talk' and the participant stated that they 'like the idea that there's a place for discussing issues'. The main person driving the forum was described as 'interesting' and this person was also 'quite interested in the European stuff'. It was also seen as place where people could exchange a variety of views: 'it's hugely diverse in terms of the views expressed' where some might think 'isn't this rubbish or isn't that great?' or others 'just disagree'. The participant compared affective behaviour in other social media environments: 'I think it's in the anonymous [online platforms] when the emotions go out of the window', as opposed to the Members Online Forum, where 'we all know each other ... it's much more like face-to-face'. The participant mentioned Twitter as being a place which lends itself to more 'partisan' affective responses. Referring back to the secession discussion in the online forum, the participant went on to say: 'we all know each other ... you wouldn't go too far. There'd be a lot of well I'm really shocked you would that's ... well, I can't believe YOU just said that. That's just as hard as you would get. No-one calls each other names or things like that'.

The discussion about co-operation attracted both positive and negative responses: 'these are the ones who want the co-operation' but those who are 'not interested' would not be engaging with that discussion. In terms of trying to push this issue, the participant said that 'a lot of people at this stage don't care about' whether it damages their career chances. Another issue that was briefly referred to related to a tax scandal where the [xx] Party was 'very strongly associated with [the company involved] ... they [the members of the online forum] wouldn't be very comfortable with it'.

On the more negative side, when talking about recent polls, the feelings expressed were that 'most people I think would be fairly pessimistic' and negative about progress;

'pathetic' and 'a general unhappiness about the state of things' were also mentioned. One of the reasons that the participant liked the online forum was because their perception 'that some of the official channels are just a bit broken or dysfunctional'. The participant talked about the [xx] Party live streaming as being 'didactic', whereas the forum was seen as 'far more dynamic' and that the participant wanted to see that dynamism reflected more in other areas of the party. It was clear that the participant had experienced disillusion with the [xx] Party and, further in the interview, talked about still being 'a bit cynical about structures ... and the ability to change things'. But the participant clearly continued to remain committed to the party and to do this, the participant said that they found it important to 'have other outlets for what I'm interested in' otherwise 'if that was all I did ... [I'd] be really discouraged, fatalistic, the whole shooting match because this would be it ... you'd always be disappointed'. The participant described this strategy as 'a personal/psychological thing almost'. On a more positive note, the participant was 'optimistic' about people on the forum drawing other's attention to the fact that they had already had 'big long ideological discussions' online, pointing out that 'you're going to miss so much' in terms of finding out about 'general feeling' on issues.

Regarding positive affective factors, the participant returned to feelings about the Members' Forum itself:

'the very fact that people are having those conversations is somewhat refreshing for me ... the 300 or so people who are interested in talking about issues ... I'd be very happy if there's a couple of hundred people there who are at least tuning in to those debates and discussions – I think that's really good. So in that sense that's a really positive thing'.

5.3.5 Reflexivity

The participant confirmed that, after the first interview, they were more conscious of informal conversation, particularly in the run up to the second interview. 'I was more conscious' with the online forum.

5.3.6 Boundaries

Aligning party values was contentious in the discussion about secession. The online conversation was very much about party values and the degree to which people felt that it would be against [xx] Party values to support any type of nationalism

CHAPTER FIVE: CASE FINDINGS

whatsoever. The issue of the party line on nationalism was described as ‘always a hugely fraught conversation’.

Another boundary issue emerged when the participant talked about ‘party loyalty’ as opposed to ‘ideological loyalty’, differentiating between people who ‘stayed through the difficulties of being in government’ and people who say ‘I’ll work with whoever wants to achieve the same thing as me, I’m not so pushed about the party’. Difficulties in aligning personal ideological goals to the party goals did result in some members leaving the [xx] Party.

In connection with the topic of secession on the Member’s Forum, some posts were actually posted on the members’ own personal social media pages, so there was a blurring in terms of recalling where some of the comments came from – the Members’ Forum or members’ own social media pages.

The boundaries issue arose again when the participant discussed another online forum, which featured discussions on co-operation between parties. The case is interesting from a boundaries perspective in the sense that its interest in co-operation between parties on certain issues implies blurring the boundaries between parties in specific circumstances. The participant indicated similar aligning interests at EU level. But also, access boundaries of the actual forum were discussed as being more porous than the closed [xx] Members’ Forum in the main case discussion, sometimes leading to an occasional journalist scoop, more for the satirical press rather than other media. The participant talked about a phrase relating to these discussions as ‘an open conspiracy’, which was seen as something positive to stimulate discussion more generally, although it was also stated that [xx] Party members had to be careful about the kinds of contributions they made to these discussions, in order that their party loyalty remained clear. Referring to the satirical press, the participant observed that ‘they get about 80% right and about 20% wrong, but that can be the 20% that matters... or else you can tell who’s leaking it and they get it extremely right and it’s almost really clear who gave it to them’.

While boundaries between parties did not emerge to the same extent in the remaining cases, they were occasionally referred to. For example, in Case Five, where a legal victory was being celebrated, this was identified as more of a cross-party event rather than purely a win for the [xx] Party. The people who came to this celebratory event were ‘the people who had been fighting for [the legislation]; some were members of the

[xx] Party, a lot wouldn't be'. In Case Six about the annual conference conversations, one of the discussion points was about what the party approach should be, whether to 'go for day to day issues or social progress [part of [xx] Party values]'. In Case Nine, the issues of deciding when something is informal conversation emerged again: 'I'm trying sometimes in my head to draw a line between gossip and informal conversation'.

5.4 Case Four: Demonstration to support legislation

In this case, known as C4 from now on, a politician was presenting a new piece of gender equality legislation for the second 'stage of passing'. The participant attended a demonstration by [xx] Party members outside the parliament buildings, in support of this legislation. The demonstration was described as being 'quite short' due to the stage that legislation was at. The participant described the people at the demonstration as 'people hanging around with ... banners and stuff, just outside the [parliament] on a nice evening, which was nice to get photo opportunities ... I met some friends from the [a constituency area] branch and so the golden oldies and [one of the former [xx] Party leaders] ... there was quite a lot of milling about'. The participant noted that 'they [people in the parliament at the passing process] came out to tell us what was happening' and later to inform them that it had been accepted by the government. After this, several demonstrators went on to a selection convention in another part of the city, but the participant 'as I said met some of the golden oldies from [a past branch] and we went over to [a well-known hotel bar near the parliament buildings] and had a drink'.

5.4.1 Emerging topics

At the demonstration, the participant discovered, 'I found out stuff that you wouldn't [normally hear about]', that [a national organisation of businesses and employers] 'are definitely gearing up to oppose the implementation ... so that's going to be another battle'. Later at the hotel bar, the participant had a conversation with a fellow demonstrator 'who was a chemist with [a national food and agriculture organisation] about food additives and regulations and things'.

5.4.2 Conversation goals

No specific conversation goals were expressed. However, the participant indicated elements of catching up with the 'golden oldies' as well as finding out new aspects relating to the event, but this seems to be more serendipitous to the conversation rather than something specifically sought by the participant. The participant did share some prior knowledge as described in the section below in support of the discussion

about past behaviours of the employer body, discussed above in emerging topics. The aim was possibly to confirm what the group understood about the attitudes of this organisation, although the participant did not specifically state this. The demonstration was described as ‘much more about party members to come along and do rent a crowd’. This attitude might have made the participant feel that there were no specific goals to the informal conversation, with the main purpose being to turn up in sufficient numbers to indicate a suitable level of support.

5.4.3 Post conversation follow-up

Some interesting ‘prequel’ informal conversations were mentioned in the context of this demonstration and the subsequent gathering in the bar. It was in reference to the resisting organisation mentioned in Section 5.4.1. The participant had had a conversation ‘about ten years ago’ at a meeting in Brussels with a PhD student who was doing research on the gender pay gap. In order to carry out this work, they ‘asked all the employer bodies in the different countries in the EU [for] access to their confidential databases please ... and only two countries would not give access’. One of the organisations was the employer organisation referred to in Section 5.4.1. This conversation had prompted the participant to email the relevant parliamentarian of the time, to alert them of this resistance, already at this early stage.

Later in the interview, the participant described a significant prequel informal conversation which influenced the course of the legislation. Again this occurred some years ago, but was the seed that led to the main event of this case and again it occurred around the time of a committee meeting in Brussels. Here the participant met a co-ordinator and trainer ‘to try and get them [women] involved ... and to get women to feel confident and to go forward for election as mayors’. In a ‘personal conversation ... in fact I’m not sure if it might not have been outside the departures lounge in Brussels Airport actually because some of us had to wait for later planes and have a drink’. The participant discovered that this person ‘happened to have a son who was working over here [the country of the study]’ and ‘so we arranged when she was visiting him, she would come up and meet with some of the committee from [xx] Women and some of the executives, which she did’. The follow-up from this was that ‘through the help of [a [xx] Party politician] and party spokesperson, we actually got a Private Members Bill through to aid the concept’. The participant also mentioned that, at the time, although there was ‘a huge amount of opposition both within the parties and everything else ... a lot of civil society was behind all this’ and the trade union general secretary at the time ‘was really behind it, the gender [equality issue] and so

that helped a lot' in getting support. The participant saw this co-ordinator and trainer as being crucial because 'I mean I used to be we should do that, but how do we do it ... and then you get someone who comes along and makes it seem so much simpler'.

So, rather than creating a follow-up, the case event here, represents the culmination of a seed planted several years ago. However, as indicated in the emerging topics section, there could be difficulties ahead in the actual implementation of the newly passed legislation. A more immediate follow-up from this particular demonstration event was finding out that there was to be another demonstration coming up within the week (see Section 5.5). This was then confirmed by an email alert.

5.4.4 Affective factors

While the conversation about food additives was described as 'nothing earth shattering', the participant was positive about the fact that 'I hadn't really spoken to him before; I mean we both knew who each other was, but we hadn't really spoken so that was quite nice'. The conversation was 'interesting' as it was about 'how I saw it from my end of things and how he ... we weren't in conflict ... it was a bit more about seeing it from his point of view'.

In the discussion about the impact of the visiting co-ordinator and trainer to speak with the [xx] Women Committee, the participant said that 'she really energised people at the time and galvanised us [to get the Private Members Bill through]'. The participant talked about there being 'huge opposition' from within parties, but also that they were 'lucky' to have the trade union general secretary's support. In talking about 'civil society atmosphere in support of it' [the concept of gender quotas], the participant mentioned 'progressive circles with the usual male not subversive'. Following on from this, the participant talked about being 'unduly optimistic and then in some ways unduly harsh about the women who first succeed in any area'. The participant also mentioned a personal 'epiphany' or realisation after having recently talked to 'Trump supporting women'. This was that 'they don't see what the problem is, this is what they live with, this is their everyday life, and they cope with and so they don't see it as being egregious or how shocking this is; either grit your teeth and get on with it or you just don't realise there's anything wrong with it and then all these 'wimps' as they see it objecting to it, and I think there is a huge gap in understanding'.

The reaction to the information the participant relayed about the resistance the PhD student received from the employers' organisation referred to in Section 5.4.1, was that 'they weren't surprised' although they were 'angry about it' nonetheless.

5.4.5 Reflexivity

The participant made notes but 'didn't really do much because largely there wasn't much to [report]'. This was said to be because the event was one where people 'turn up as PR fodder ... they were all having to dash back' to various other commitments, so 'there weren't many people there'.

5.5 Case Five: Celebration of amendment

The event in this case, known as C5 from now on, was initially going to be a demonstration, as stated in 5.4.3 above. The participant described this event as being 'much more interesting [than the gender pay gap event] because it ended up not just being a demonstration'. This was about a legal amendment about certain groups of freelance workers obtaining the right to be able to engage in collective bargaining and 'be represented by a union'. On the day of the demonstration, the participant received a message to say there was not going to be a demonstration, but that the unions involved with developing this legislation were going to have 'a little launch' at the same hotel where the post-demonstration gathering was held (see the introduction to 5.4 above). 'Because I had been involved in trade unions, there were lots of people I knew there'.

The launch started with 'different speeches from the various elements of people involved', i.e. those who would benefit from this amendment. After this, the attendees walked over to the parliament buildings, firstly to the chamber, to hear the Bills being read, and then onwards to the Visitor's Bar. This is where the informal conversations really began, after the initial meeting in the hotel and quiet conversation while in the chamber.

5.5.1 Emerging topics

The participant found out from other people there about 'how the whole thing started'. The trigger was when a freelance worker who was not in a recruitment agency, would not be guaranteed the same working conditions as those who were in agencies. This was because it was only the agencies who were involved with the trade unions in negotiations for those conditions. The participant gave quite a detailed explanation of

what led to the development of this piece of legislation, as discovered at the gathering in the Visitor's Bar. The participant obtained the information 'in bits and pieces' at the event. The participant also talked about 'talking to this youngish woman', who had been an assistant to one of the young MPs who lost a seat, and talking about the 'shock of the loss of the seat and then the work of the party trying to get match-ready ... and I think it is they're very much fire-fighting'.

5.5.2 Conversation goals

The participant did not feel there were any particular conversational goals, other than to celebrate the success of the amendment. However, it could be said that catching up on information about what was going on in the background and leading up to this success, gave the participant a greater appreciation of the reason why the event was such a joyous occasion. In answering the question about how the participant benefitted from the informal conversation here, the response was 'I don't think I'm as purposive about my activity ... you know I'm at a stage in my life where I support others' activities rather than initiate new ones'.

5.5.3 Post conversation follow-up

One follow-up from the amended legislation, as opposed to the informal conversation above, was that another group of freelance workers working for a US multinational won a case for obtaining negotiating rights. In terms of the people at the event taking follow-up action, the participant said most of them were trade union people and that 'they're quite practical, pragmatic people who would be looking more at how we could use this tool, to see if we can widen it'. Interestingly, the participant went on to say 'I think in some ways they shouldn't talk about it too much because I think it will set up the opposition' while also saying 'that's very much my point of view and I think I would often be considered overly cautious about that kind of thing'. Later the participant talked about the success of the amendment as being 'a platform from which to relaunch ... the closing of a significant chapter in an ongoing struggle and what has been achieved will allow more work to be done ... we provided a platform to issue you know launch further actions'.

5.5.4 Affective factors

One of the positive factors expressed was that a popular politician, now in a very senior role, who was 'one of the first ones working on this' is going to be signing in the new legal amendment. The participant also said 'I thought it was quite nice having the

concept of the cooperation between the unions and the [xx] Party, which has come under strain in recent years'. With regards to the current employment minister who supported the legislation, the participant said that 'given [the minister's] general views, I was a bit staggered ... I was surprised'. A politician who had been very involved with moving this legislation on, was described as having 'worked really, really hard and succeeded ... which was absolutely amazing'. Further senators and MPs were named as being involved and described as: 'all of them were really plus [politicians] ... [and some] had apparently been very supportive in the earlier years'. With regards to the US multinational case mentioned above in section 5.5.3, the participant commented that 'it's amazing how these things don't get into the papers though ... you know because some things that are really quite significant, don't really get in'. When asked why this might be, the participant said 'I think it's the reality of the ownership of the press and to a certain extent laziness'.

People at the event were described as 'happy people ... in a good mood ... it was such a feeling of accomplishment ... it was more just 'wasn't it nice''. The positive mood was further emphasised when the participant said 'it was such a social atmosphere, I don't think they necessarily saw it as learning or a teaching event' when responding to the question about follow-up.

5.5.5 Reflexivity

The participant made notes 'so I wouldn't forget, I actually described for myself what happened particularly with the [amendment case]' as it 'was a communication event'. The participant also noted a comment by one of the people at the parliament Visitor's Bar of 'oh I'm seeing a lot of you now ... it was someone like [the party leader]' and thought that it was possibly that their activity within the party had slightly increased as a result of the research here.

5.6 Case Six: Series of short informal conversations

This case, known as C6 from now on, centres on several short informal conversations from the annual party conference that occurred between the first and second interviews of this research. The conversations were all face-to-face and were with (a) the party chair, (b) a pre-conference conversation between the participant, a friend and a councillor from another constituency (c) a party member from the party head office, and (d) a party member from the Equality section.

5.6.1 Emerging Topics

The informal conversation with the party chair was about tactics for the party and how the party compares with other political parties in the country. The grass roots party was described as being 'good for mass appeal but probably the most socially conservative despite not being the most right wing party'. The conversation related to a motion about which parties the [xx] Party could align with and which the members felt they should not.

In the pre-conference informal conversation between the participant, friend and councillor, the discussion was about a controversial, recently vacated seat in a constituency the participant is active in. The participant had been interested in the seat but 'it seems to be decided that the former candidate is going to take it on'. The councillor was the main contributor to the conversation providing information, opinion and advice to the participant, due to being knowledgeable about the situation and knowing the people involved.

The conversation with the member from head office was very much centred on future plans. The member explored the participants' plans, including ways of implementing them and looking at ideas for the participant to develop their own personal profile in the party. It was the first time the participant had had 'a proper chat with him' although there had already been some e-mail exchanges up to this point.

The informal conversation with the person from the equality section was about an event on whether 'equality must wait'. The participant described how they were saying 'how much social progress [we made] when we were in government' but wondering whether they should 'campaign for more bread and butter issues that appeal to more people, then maybe [once] in government, then implement those social things that we want to do as well'. The participant perceived that, in some of the more rural constituencies, people might be more conservative, and maybe 'finding it difficult to pay for uniforms and books ... childcare' and therefore wondering how being socially progressive 'help me'.

5.6.2 Conversation goals

With regards to the conversation about the controversial seat that had just been vacated, the participant stated that 'I think they were encouraging people to run even if

they didn't think they were going to win first time ... it's a good exercise to do it anyway because you are getting your name out there for example'.

5.6.3 Post-conversation follow-up

In terms of the conversation about strategy, the participant noted that 'our long standing issue is that we lose votes to [the grassroots party]. I think we should be winning those votes'.

5.6.4 Affective factors

Regarding the motion that was passed about those parties the [xx] Party would not go into coalition with some of these opposing parties' economic policies, which were seen by some members as 'total no-go area for them'. The participant also expressed opposition: 'I'm pretty opposed to coalitions with [the nationalist party]' though some were 'more in favour' of that than the former coalition party.

The personality of the councillor advising on the contentious seat in the first of the emerging issues was described as being 'fun to watch'. Other comments were 'I liked him', 'he loves social media, a bit too much', 'he's a bit of a maverick', 'he's one of our battering rams' and 'he would dominate a conversation or be in the thick of it'. People were 'not happy' about the co-option situation and the participant observed that 'it's amazing what can happen within a party, within a constituency council' in the sense of something that is not necessarily in the best interests of the party can happen with respect to filling seats. Furthermore, the seat itself was described as 'contentious' and 'controversial'. As an aside, the participant mentioned being 'delighted that the national radio station gave us two hours on the annual conference' in which one of the councillors going for the vacant seat, was going to be speaking. The participant indicated that 'I would never be afraid to run and lose four times in a row ... personally, I'd happily run six times and lose', also saying 'there are so many people who seem to have such fragile egos that losing once is appalling'.

The participant expressed admiration for the equality team to bring up some of the questions about balancing social progress with meeting the day to day concerns such as having enough money to pay the bills: 'fair play for [xx] equality themselves for actually bringing this to the fore'.

5.6.5 Reflexivity

The participant said that knowing they would be reporting back on the informal conversations in their second interview 'was always in the back of my mind' although more afterwards as a 'reflection on things' though 'it didn't 'hamper' the conversation or 'change what I say'.

5.7 Case Seven: At the annual conference disco

The case, known as C7 from now on, centres on the annual party conference disco. This was organised by the youth wing of the party and a number of informal conversations took place, in between dancing, mostly with two members of the youth wing, but at times other youth members joined the conversation.

5.7.1 Emerging topics

The topics were very much concerned with what is happening in other countries. There were informal conversations about elections in another EU country, UK politicians regarding their stances on BREXIT, as well as a long discussion about the situation in Syria. On the elections in the EU country, 'a lot of people had different opinions on that'. Opinion about one UK politician in particular, was 'split down the middle' although later it was stated 'there are still some supporters ... let's give him a chance', which seems to suggest the split is not so much down the middle. Also discussed was a motion about legalising marijuana which was passed at the conference.

The most talked about topic though was about the conflict in Syria. While the participant would be 'one of the most knowledgeable people' there, there was 'this guy [who] really knows his stuff'.

Another informal conversation took place between the participant and the chair of the youth wing, who congratulated the participant on doing good work in running one of the branches at a time when 'it hasn't been easy'. The chair acknowledged the work the participant put in to the branch and that the participant was effective in keeping 'things going'.

5.7.2 Conversation goals

In terms of the conversation about Syria, the participant was looking at 'what should have been done' in terms of intervention, and 'what to do now'. The participant wanted the country to be involved, 'support moderate seculars ... and give them democratic

support ... but be willing to also stay there'. However, the person the participant was speaking made 'me more aware of ... the difficulties in that because and most of those moderate secular genuinely progressive democrats have either left the country or are dead at this point'. So, the conversation essentially updated the participant's perceptions of events and what the party could or could not do. 'I was failing to realise as much, the emphasis ... was eye opening ... [he was] second guessing how jingoistic I'd have been for going in'. The participant also talked about wanting to learn from making mistakes earlier in Iraq.

5.7.3 Post conversation follow-up

The participant felt that the person they felt had the deepest knowledge about the Syrian conflict did ultimately change their view and understanding of the situation. Later the participant went on to say that 'it's a harder problem [about what to do to help] than I might have thought before that conversation, even though I never thought it was an easy thing'. The conversation had 'made me more cautious'.

5.7.4 Affective factors

Various positive indications were given about the disco itself, that it was 'a great night', 'exceeding expectations' and 'I was even dancing and there were senators dancing'. All the conversations mentioned here induced strong affective responses.

Regarding the conversations about the elections in another EU country, which was won by someone who is 'to the right of us but he's pro-European and he doesn't hate immigrants', the reactions to the candidates varied. Some were 'pragmatic' and supported the result. The participant supported a more left candidate using strong affective indicators: 'I really liked him and I think he's a really principled guy ... he would have been a good candidate ... he was just at the wrong time ... association with [the previous leader] was a big crippling factor ... he was always going to be hampered ... it was extra difficult'. The participant noted the winner of the election was also associated with the previous leader and observed the irony, 'it's funny because he's seen as an outsider'.

On the conversation about the UK politician where there was divided opinion among [xx] Party members, according to the participant, a poll was taken of the most active youth members and the affective response was found to be 'pure support ... is pretty thin now, even if there are some people who feel sympathetic'.

The affective response to the conversation about legalising marijuana was to describe this as 'a blind-sider' that no-one was expecting; 'it was a cheeky one to try' and people were 'really supportive'.

Regarding the conversation about the conflict in Syria, the participant talked about values relating to foreign affairs, describing their own country as 'very passive' and taking 'the safest option' in foreign affairs. The participant expressed concern about this sometimes coming 'at the cost of integrity' and that 'being neutral is nearly a tepid support of something awful'. Later, in the conversation when the participant realised that the situation was trickier than first imagined, they did express being upset by the regime run by the current Syrian leader: 'just ghastly', 'I mean he's just awful'. The participant, while gaining an improved appreciation of the scale of the complexity of Syria and 'it's an even harder problem [than first thought]', did find this new understanding 'depressing'.

Following on from discussing the praise from the chair of the youth wing, the participant talked about frustrations with the youth wing, saying 'it can be a bit naïve' where there are 'lots of well-meaning [contributions] and idealism, but not as pragmatic as it could be'. Sometimes the participant got 'into disagreements' but saw this as a good thing: 'it would make me feel much more positive towards the youth wing'. The participant felt that the people currently in charge of the youth wing are 'more approachable ... and I get on with them' and they were 'supportive' at the conference. This had the effect of 'dampening' the participant's 'frustrations'.

5.8 Case Eight: The disillusioned member

This case, known as C8 from now on, refers to a number of exchanges between the participant and a member attending the conference, who had been unhappy for a while about the direction of the party. The informal conversation began when the participant was outside with two members who were smoking, and they were joined by another 'older guy'.

5.8.1 Emerging topics

The conversation was very much about the member talking about their disillusionment, their pleasant surprise at what he was finding being discussed at the conference, and also about the participant disagreeing with some of the criticisms and explaining how the party had restrained the main coalition partner in some of their more austere

policies. The participant also told the member about the extent of social progress legislation and reversal of cuts to the minimum wage that occurred during and as a result of the influence of the party while it was in coalition. The member was very positive about the conference itself saying that some of the motions indicated the party was 'going back to our roots, focussing on workers' rights and on housing and on proper social policy, you know it was like a return to socialism'. The participant mentioned [to the member] a recent study 'that showed every party and their manifesto and what they implemented ... from 2011' and that it showed the party under study implemented 60% of their manifesto whereas the coalition party only implemented 58% of their manifesto. The participant indicated that 'it should be on the front page cover [of the papers] but that's not what people want to hear'. In telling of this conversation, the participant went on to note that between the two major parties, there is 'so much extra space' and that now there are many more options and there is a much 'more European ... much more diverse parliament' now.

5.8.2 Conversation goals

The participant felt that the member wanted to be heard as being 'representative of a lot of people' who are supportive but 'want to make it known that they weren't always happy' and they do not want to 'just be thrown into a corner'. The participant supported this feeling that in previous years there was a sense that 'communication was a problem between members and leaders'. This included misconceptions about how the Executive Board is put together. The participant's goal in the conversation was to get people who 'might be critical of previous implementations ... to look forward now into what party we're going to be and not be stuck dwelling in the past ... [otherwise] we're not going to progress' and 'to make members feel more pro [[xx] Party]'.

5.8.3 Post conversation follow-up

The participant said the member was 'encouraging and that he was re-invigorated by the attitude of the party at the moment ... so he was probably willing to adapt'. In terms of increased commitment, the participant said that 'I think people who are ideological like that or not ideological but have strong convictions, I think if you can win those people over to believing in the party, they're very strong assets I think to keep; so it's good to convince those people'. They modified this slightly in that 'he wasn't ready to donate his last savings to the party yet' but the participant 'got the feeling that he really had come around from a more negative position'. They felt the member felt able 'to speak up and be listened to'. The participant said, in terms of taking a message back to

head office, there is 'an awareness that more members like that are more easily encouraged now ... than even two months ago ... so they shouldn't be written off'. They anticipated that the initially sceptical member 'would probably get more involved and maybe not be as critical of the party, maybe. More willing to convince others to come on board I think, which is important, which is what you want really'. A general feeling that the participant had at the end of the conversation was that 'people are more willing to be constructive and work together'. In terms of the conversation contributing to the organisation's goals, the participant said 'it was like bringing him back to the fold' and that 'it was a good bit of progress'.

5.8.4 Affective factors

This conversation involved a high level of affective responses from both the participant and the member. A number of affective terms were used to describe the attitude of the member in question: 'he'd be a proud socialist', 'he was critical', 'kind of tired' and 'felt frustrated' about how the party had been when it was in a coalition government, and he felt 'we lost our way', 'felt like giving up on the party' and 'felt that the party betrayed its ... roots ... and didn't live up to [expectations]'. This drew affective responses from the participant, who was 'trying to defend it [the party]' looking at how much of the criticism was 'fair'. The participant said the member was not 'a naysayer, who's never going to be satisfied' but as 'more 'idealistic'. The participant talked about people feeling the party did nothing, just doing what the coalition party wanted, being 'dictated to'. Whereas, people on social welfare and disability benefits 'would have been hammered' [without the party's restraining influence]; 'we fought awfully hard for limiting how aggressive' the coalition party would otherwise be. The participant also described their own motivation to respond as 'a knee-jerk response' and not liking 'people's efforts not being appreciated' and regarding in a 'disparaging' way. The participant did not want the member to 'totally just write it [the [xx] Party] off'. Regarding the conference itself the member was very positive saying it was 'great', 'very interesting' and 'it was great to see some of the motions going through', 'was encouraged', 'it was good to go back to socialism' and he seemed 'tepidly optimistic' and 'open-minded'. The participant also felt that coming to the conference 'shows a certain amount of dedication, even if you are unsure'. They were 'glad' to have had this informal conversation and 'so I walked away from that [with] a positive feeling of ... it would be good to see more of that kind of engagement'. They talked about the importance of members to feel that they are heard: 'if they are totally ignored, it's very disheartening'.

5.9 Case Nine: A catch-up from home

This case, known as C9 from now on, refers to a conversation at the Annual Conference, where the participant was in a conversation with a member friend from their home town who was also part of the conversation referred to in the C8 case. The participant first met the member a few months previously in their home town where they met for lunch and talked about the local area, which had been noted as lacking [xx] Party presence. They had spoken since on social media and then at the conference they had 'a long chat', with the member bringing the participant up to date with what was happening.

5.9.1 Emerging topics

Topics included the issue of trying to raise the profile of the [xx] Party in that area, difficulties of accessing the accounts for the area due to the treasurer no longer being there and difficulties of getting assistance from the head office. The participant explained that this member had a lot of relevant experience and so the participant wanted to encourage the member to become more active at local level.

5.9.2 Conversation goals

The participant was thinking about taking up a local rep position in their home area and so was discussing with the member from the area 'how to build up a support base, getting contact from people from the local area, and thinking of one's own profile ... how she [the member from the area] could probably help me ... what I could do for her [such as helping with the bank account and contact with the head office] ... build up a support team of my own ... she would be willing to canvas for me'. The conversation was also about sharing views on the party making themselves more visible in rural areas.

5.9.3 Post conversation follow-up

The participant said that the conversation 'might influence me saying that to head office ... [to] put a bit of a high priority to these people who feel a bit cast out to sea'. This was in reference to [xx] Party strategy, unlike one of the other parties, to only have candidates in strong urban areas, thus ignoring the rural areas. The participant expressed the values of wanting to have the [xx] Party as being seen as 'a centre left party for everyone not just a social issues party for moderately wealthy people'. The member from the participant's home area was going to 'look into the bank issue and she's going to send in a nomination for myself for area rep and I'll be speaking to [the

local area rep co-ordinator] as we're down for coffee'. The participant said 'if ever I meet the general secretary now, that [the issue of having candidates in low visibility rural areas] might be something I'd like to mention'.

5.9.4 Affective factors

Frustration was expressed at not being able to get a response from the head office, described as being 'very top-down', though the participant felt it was an area the office was 'trying to improve on'. The area that the member is working in was described as having been somewhat 'dead' and was therefore 'glad' to find in the participant, someone 'interested in helping her' and was therefore quite 'enthusiastic, not jumping up and down [but] eager in her own way'. The participant was 'amazed from some of [her] stories ... that she was still hanging in there'. The member in question was retired and many positive affective terms were used to describe the impact of retired members: 'fantastic', 'happy to put in the time', 'dedicated', 'we need them' and 'it's good to have them'. The affective terms were more negative in describing how members in the more rural areas feel about the party. They are 'kind of thrown off while head office focusses on the 'strongest candidates'. The participant said 'it's very disconnected ... it's not nice ... I can understand the lack of support for ... untenable constituencies but that's annoying if you're a member there'. They felt that 'it's silly' not to run candidates in every constituency as otherwise 'you're wasting membership ... you could have lost really passionate members'. The participant felt it was important to support passionate members in the rural areas and 'acknowledge ... not undervalue' their efforts or 'fail to appreciate those rural areas, at least from a strategy point of view'. Again, not supporting these members was perceived as 'not a good message to send to [voters]' and that showing 'ambition to maybe one day be the party of the government' was seen to be a more positive long term strategy. In talking about email communication between members and head office, 'can sometimes come across more aggressive from the members and more snobbish from the head office' and 'it's far better to have it [the conversation] in person' and at the conference 'people find it much easier to find common ground when they're in person than they do over social media or email. So I think in-person forums are far better for getting unity'. The participant felt that from speaking to people at the conference, 'there was more willingness to promote people in areas' where there is not traditionally a lot of support. 'There is a more constructive attitude to, especially new voices, and I think we're happy more to take them on anywhere now'.

5.10 Findings from shorter examples of informal conversation

The shorter examples of informal conversation that were mentioned as occurring between the first and second interview, in addition to the individual cases, were as follows:

- i) Morning coffee, family conversations and talking with friends. This included talking about a family friend, who, one of the participants said is now an area representative and that 'it's a total coincidence that when he became our friend years ago and neither one of us probably was in the party'. With regards to family, the response was varied in terms of whether or not participants discussed their party work with them. One said they did as their family was very interested in politics and had sympathetic views to the [xx] Party, while another said that their husband was not a member of any political party and that it was 'nice to switch off'. Friends were mentioned again 'because everyone is interested in politics so even when I meet friends, we often might talk about current affairs or what's happening What's it like over there, have you any news? ... A lot of our friends would be ... likeminded'. This same participant was concerned about the degree of overspill from work into friendships, including sometimes finding it difficult to know if someone was either fully a friend or simply a fellow party supporter, with whom one might work closely for a while. The participant was concerned about the phenomenon of echo chamber, not only in social media but also in social circles. They gave an anecdote about a child's birthday party where the guests were 'all [xx] Party people' and the participant realised 'some of us don't know any other people ... we've actually stopped knowing other people. And I mean, a child's birthday party, you know, you would think you would invite people who have nothing to do with your work'. Another participant mentioned in-laws 'who are actually party members in [their town], a very small town, they would meet each other a lot more in an informal way. They're more community based ... and the first thing they would be talking about is aw what's happening there with the [[xx] Party leader]'; or 'through work, I might bump into them ... down at the shopping centre or something'.
- ii) Gossip and rumour. While four participants mentioned this aspect, only one participant found it to be a constant issue: 'it seems my life is made of gossip'.

CHAPTER FIVE: CASE FINDINGS

One of the other participants mentioned gossip ahead of the party conference, more specifically gossip about candidates for an election on the executive board: 'how are they all getting on and ... who's going ... and I wonder will this happen or will that happen'. Gossip about a former colleague recently in the news was mentioned: 'it was a negative piece so it created a lot of informal conversation ... you know this article was very large, nearly a page with pictures ... so it provided a lot of material for gossip'.

Rumour was mentioned as being engrained as a mental model until a situation arises where it turns out to be untrue. This occurred in the case of preparing a training session on local media, where the trainer told the participant (it is not clear if this was a formal or an informal setting) that an MP in the trainer's former area said 'to get anything in the papers you have to give them something at five o'clock on a Monday' and the trainer had said this was actually a false mental model. Another example of this was given with regard to mental models around canvassing, where someone, at a training session, had said 'there's nothing worse than canvassing on your own' until the participant said to them 'a lot of people canvas on their own' basically because it is better to go out on your own rather than allow the worst case scenario where 'you never go out'. So the initial attitude to canvassing had been 'floating' in some people's minds until someone else challenged that.

- iii) Life events – e.g. weddings, birthdays, funerals. An example had been given about a funeral of the partner of a [xx] Party member. People at the funeral included 'a huge number of people ... and that's a very traditional ... thing in a way that everyone comes to the funeral and they talk about politics. Well, it's obviously friends and family too, but a huge cohort of people and it's people I knew because I was down at the house, the funeral, the whole thing you know, so it would have had a lot of people, I hadn't seen in a while ... and of course, the entire leadership; the entire current MPs and other people who lost their seats, were all there; colleagues of this person [the deceased] ... the people I was talking to would be more the traditional activist types'. The topics relating to politics tended to be about the 'state of things ... and how things had gone in government and afterwards' from a fairly negative viewpoint, talking about 'frustration', a feeling of 'malaise' and people not having 'such high expectations anymore'. Of course, emotions of sadness were expressed, although the participant also observed how quickly people moved from the sad emotions to

starting a conversation about political issues:

'I think when people meet [such as at a funeral], it [the conversation] seems to be a lot more about nuts and bolts and personalities and the leadership and about what they're doing and do they change and all that kind of thing ... They're thinking more about we're all in this club, we're all in this thing, so you tend to reflect more on the personalities and on the process and staffing and things like that and people's personal experience like 'and oh when I rang, so and so never really did much for me and now they're really important' and you know, gossip in a way, but more personal, more organisational and more focussed on people's own personal experience rather than a big picture of policies'.

So, here the participant identified that the conversations were more personal, in that personalities were discussed and there was more expression of personal experience with those personalities, and looking at organisational process rather than party policies. The participant and other mourners were also talking about how the deceased person had not somehow had the appreciation that was deserved during his lifetime.

- iv) Social media platforms. Facebook, was mentioned in terms of conversations about what was happening in the UK: 'particularly around the UK election, there has been quite a lot of Facebook toing and froing and sometimes with candidates that people would know who are actually running for election' and people who had gone over to help with the campaigns. The social media comments were described as 'not very deep', just 'posting links of say local newspaper articles about what's happening with the different constituencies but ... it just gives you more of a sense of immediacy and interest. This participant also talked about people posting on Facebook 'to stop people doing the tactical voting thing' and people talking about the recently appointed London mayor (favourably). When asked about whether the posts were critical of politicians in the UK, the participant said that in relation to the party that most closely aligns to the [xx] Party, 'it's more supportive, observational, not terribly analytical ... I mean it isn't that there isn't any criticism but it's a lot more muted'. In terms of one of the UK's political leaders, the participant said 'earlier even before the election there was a lot more ding dong about whether you were pro [party leader] or anti [party leader], you know and what people thought about that'.

These examples demonstrate some of the porosity that exists when someone works in politics. There is a sense here that boundaries are so fluid that anyone working for the [xx] Party, for example, had considerable difficulties in finding time to actually switch off from work. 'It is sometimes hard to get away from the work because the work we do is the work people talk about. You read about what we do in the paper ... we're the objects of ... they [complain] about us, so it's a good idea not to talk about politics with every single person that you know'. One of the participants mentioned that they 'definitely have neighbours that I wouldn't want to talk politics with ... [because] it's nearly like I am the [xx] Party but I'm not ... you're blamed for things that you're not responsible for yourself'.

- v) Random phone calls. One example was about making random phone calls to people one is supervising in some capacity: 'I ring them for no reason, I'm checking in, how's things and ... I hear how they're doing and we chat ... so you get to know them and you ... have to'. The participant said that behind the apparent randomness of the call, it is in fact their way 'of creating a working relationship that is not just a hundred percent functional but that it is also about the human aspect ... to motivate ... you have to know what makes them tick ... whether to be gentle ... whether to say just get on with it' and also what tone to take with them, whether they needed to be pushed or looked after. 'You have to get to know them a bit so that you can get the best out of them'. Here it is clear that understanding the affective aspects of the working relationship is key to motivation and that informal conversation is an important way of achieving this.

Receiving random calls was also mentioned. For example, a former member called to talk about how she was doing. As the participant said 'she was articulating something that was important to her at the time. She was just going through a hard time'. Again some phone calls were difficult to classify in terms of formal or informal from the perspective of the recipient, for example, 'people who have a gripe ... they ring a lot ... so you're dealing with a lot of stuff that's ... but they might have something to say that means a lot to them and you have to deal with them ... there's a lot of that'.

Other opportunities for informal conversation occurred when participants joined or met up with party members at demonstrations on a range of issues outside the parliament

building. Such gatherings sometimes resulted in some members gathering together later in a hotel bar across the road or the bar located within the parliament building. Two participants mentioned that in the context of meeting up at EU level, and with the EU group of sister parties, there were opportunities for informal conversation; for example, when travelling to and from EU headquarters to their meetings. Also, as stated in the cases, an annual conference of the [xx] Party, took place between the first interview of some of the participants and their second interview. Informal conversations took place again in the bar in the evening, also at a disco on one of the conference evenings, or outside between or during sessions, when people were having a 'smoke'. There were varied reactions from the participants regarding the annual conference. One was sceptical and attended for part of a day to meet a few friends in the party and show their face. One was enthusiastic about some of the developments and the motions being put forward at the conference, but one participant yielded several different informal conversations that they were involved in at the event. A couple of the short examples of informal conversations at the annual conference included (a) where a former minister had created a humorous situation on the platform at the conference, which the research participant asked about and as a result received the historical background to the incident, which the participant had not known about before; and (b) a conversation with a former party leader, where the participant told him how as a teenager, the participant's parents pointed the then leader out to him. The former leader was 'friendly', 'a very nice man' and was encouraging towards the participant. It is worth noting here that the examples mentioned above also touched on boundary issues, such as those between personal and party values, as well as showing the porosity of the political working environment with other environments that the participants engage in. Again there appeared to be a continuum emerging between what the participants recognised as clearly informal, clearly formal and what kinds of situations they found more difficult to classify, almost as if there is an 'in between' level of formality.

5.11 Summary

In summary, there was no shortage of examples of informal conversation. Some were more detailed than others. All nine cases were quite varied in their range of topics and in the expression of affective factors. Some of the conversations in the cases had longer term goals than others. In some cases the follow-up was relatively immediate, while in others they were highly likely to occur and finally, the follow-up was expressed as a hope or a possibility rather than something more definite. The first three cases

CHAPTER FIVE: CASE FINDINGS

also included observations about issues of boundaries, between formal and informal communication; between events happening at local, national and international levels; and regarding values between members, with some preferring an ideological approach, while others prefer a more pragmatic approach, while not compromising the [xx] Party's core values. A further interpretation of the selected cases has been conducted, applying the working model of information behaviour in conversations, discussed in Section 3.6.1. These interpretations can be found in Appendices N-S, and are further discussed in Section 6.1.

Chapter Six: Discussion

Firstly, it is important to reiterate that the literature review (Chapter Two) was focussed on the wider term of 'informal communication' as used in the title of the thesis; whereas, as stated in the methodology (Chapter Three), the first interview quickly revealed that the term 'informal conversation' made it easier for the participants to visualise the examples they needed to bring forward and report on in the second set of interviews. It is interesting to note that in spite of the change in terminology for the interviews, this did not create any difficulties in later relating the findings to the literature. The term 'informal communication' will be used, however, for most of this chapter; while the term, 'informal conversation' will be used where it better enhances the points being made in relation to discussing the individual cases.

Section 6.1 compares views of the participants (Chapters Four and Five) about what informal communication is (i.e. informal conversation), with the findings from the literature review (Chapter Two, Section 2.1). This section also documents the informal networks identified in the findings from the participants' interviews (Chapters Four and Five). Section 6.2 focuses on information behaviour, in particular, on the development of two new models of information behaviour, while Section 6.3 focuses on the application of the second of these two models. This is the new model on human information behaviour in conversations. Section 6.4 explores how the literature (Chapter Two, Section, 2.3) on learning including organisational learning is reflected in the primary research findings (Chapters Four and Five). This section includes a reflection on the concept of 'learning organisation'. The chapter is then summarised in Section 6.5.

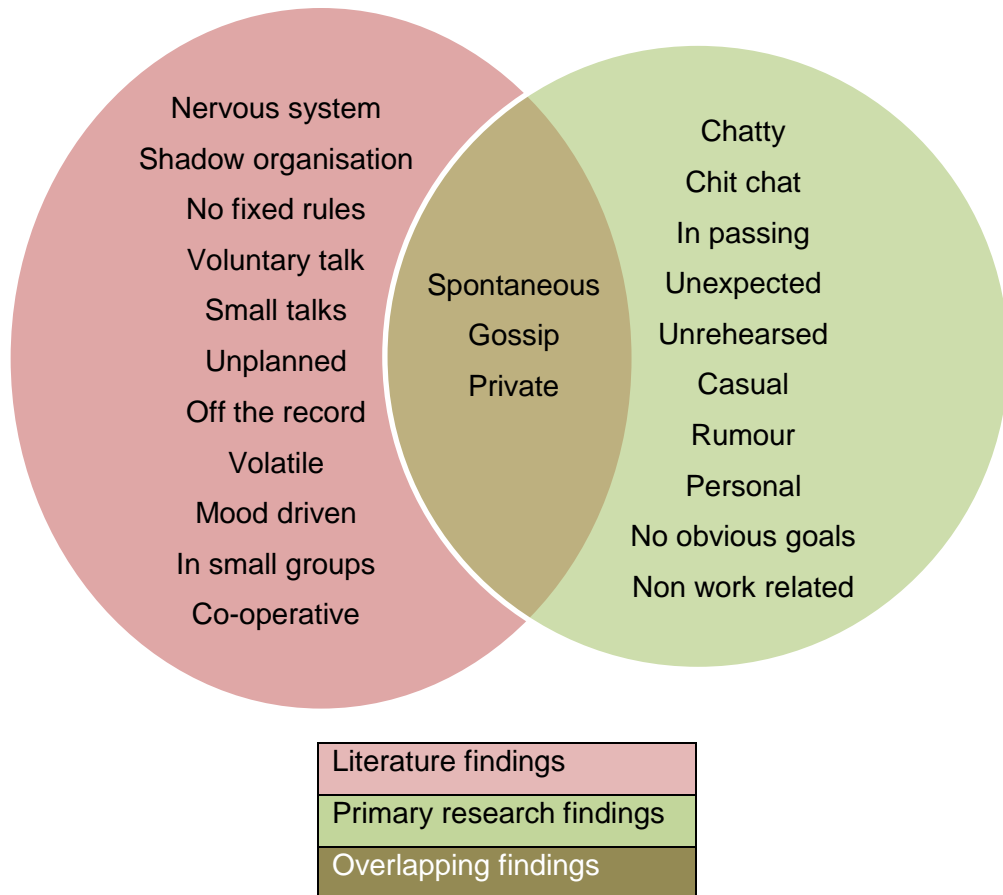
6.1 Informal communication: what, where, when, why and who?

In this section, several Venn diagrams are used to visually represent what was found in the literature search and what was found in the primary research (verbatim from the participants) on informal communication, and where overlaps were found. It is worth noting that some of the terms the participants used were an expansion or more nuanced version of some of the terms used in the literature. The diagrammatic approach is used for the 'what', 'where' and 'why' questions as, in these cases, there was sufficient information to warrant the Venn diagram format. The 'when' question is reviewed together with the 'where' question due to the place of communication being

inextricably linked to the time it took place and the duration of the communication. Figure 10 shows the informal networks that participants mentioned in their two interviews, thus addressing the ‘who’ question.

The first Venn diagram, Figure 7 shows clear overlaps and differences between the literature and the participant perceptions of *what* informal communication is.

Figure 7: *What* is informal communication?



As in the informal communication literature, participants included gossip as an example of informal communication, and their mention of ‘rumour’, ‘chatty’ and ‘chit chat’ also suggests these are types of informal communication. The overlaps between the literature and the participants regarding characteristics of informal communication were that it was private, spontaneous and includes gossip. However, one of the participants said in their first interview that informal communication was primarily ‘non-work related’ although later in the actual case, they quickly found that they were including work related material in their responses. In fact, in all the cases, very little of the communication was ever completely unrelated to work. This may also be a reflection of the nature of the work. As one participant put it ‘everyone is interested in politics’,

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION

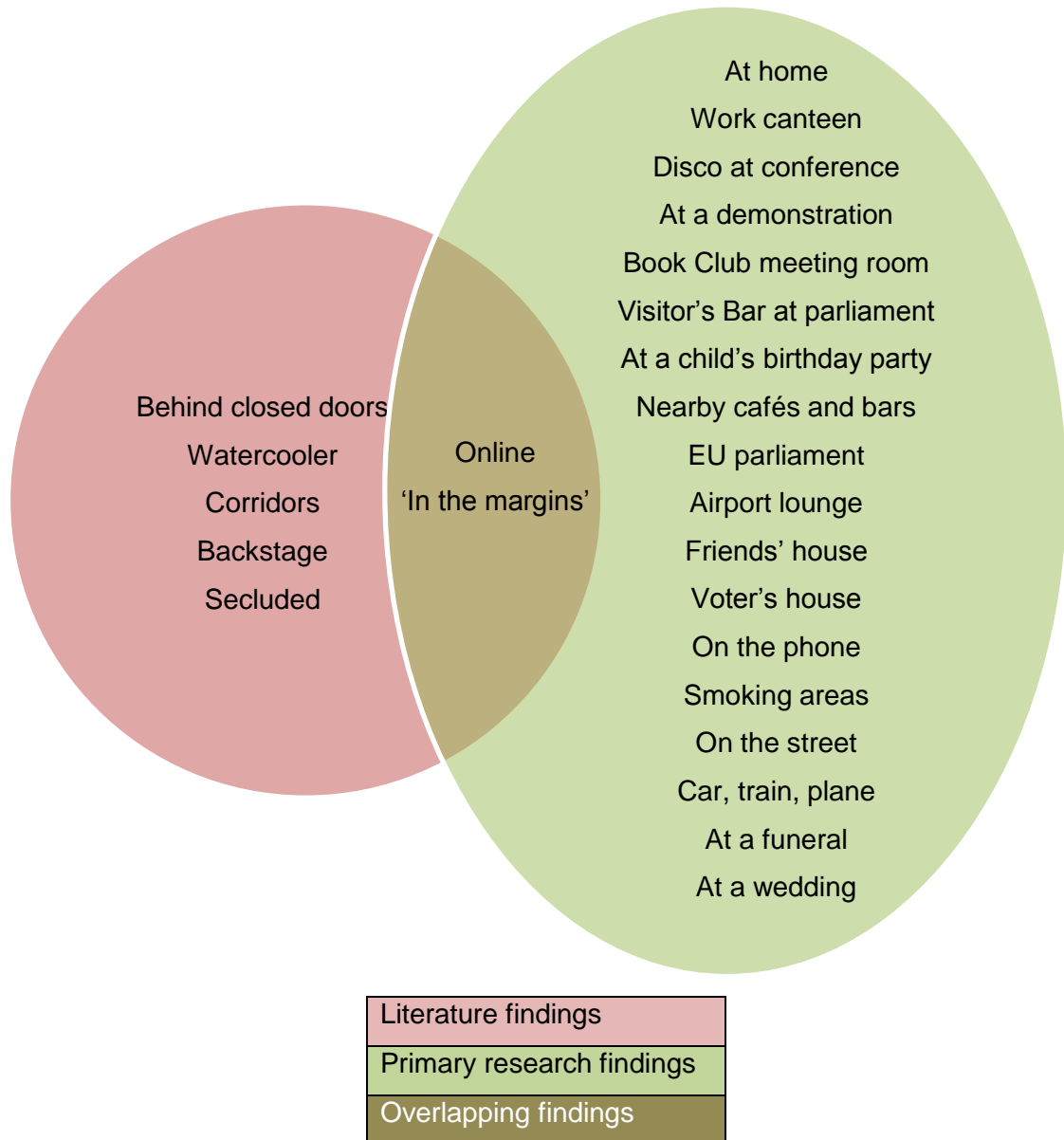
arguably as politics impacts on everyone. This suggests that participants found boundaries between formal and informal quite blurred and not quite as differentiated as the “nervous system” and “skeleton” (Krackhardt and Hanson, 1993, p. 104) or Farmer’s (2008, p. 12) “shadow organisation”. Other differences that arose in what participants originally said about informal communication and what emerged in the cases relates to goals. In their initial interviews some of the participants said that informal communication has ‘no obvious goals’. Waring and Bishop (2010), however, mention that informal interactions can help people to meet complex goals. Furthermore, this is reflected in the analysis of the cases (see Section 6.3), which shows the very strong role that goals play in the informal conversations under study.

Some of the participants’ comments reflect the characteristic of spontaneity: ‘in passing’, ‘unexpected’, ‘unrehearsed’ and ‘casual’. This, along with participants including ‘personal’ as an aspect of informal communication, reflects the “voluntary” (Fay, 2011, p. 213), unplanned with no fixed rules, and “off the record” (Baugut and Reinemann, 2013, p. 25) characteristics identified in the literature. However, several of the cases involved planned situations like the book club, an organised day of shadowing an area rep, attendance at a demonstration and a celebratory event and the annual conference. However, within those planned events, spontaneous informal conversations sprang up and developed during them. Case C2 about the shadowing of the area rep did seem to suggest some planned informal conversation as a way to lead people into revealing issues on the ground for the party to take on board. The volatility aspect (Farmer, 2008) is reflected in some of the discussions that were quite fierce debates, particularly about overseas issues of sovereignty and what members thought of as the role of the party in conflict areas in the Middle East. These debates came from the online forum and at the annual conference respectively. While the participants did not initially identify characteristics corresponding with McNely’s (2011) observation that informal conversations are mood driven, it became clear that mood and emotion played important roles in the cases (see Section 6.3).

Moving on to Figure 8 and the question of *where* the informal conversations took place, the findings revealed a wide range of locations. These included being out of doors (at a demonstration outside parliament buildings, in smoking areas and while walking from house to house when canvassing); as part of a journey (in a car, on a train, on an aeroplane and in airport lounges); in people’s private homes (participants’ own homes, a friend’s house or at voters’ homes); at significant occasions such as a wedding and a

funeral, where guests were milling around and chatting both indoors and outdoors; and public venues such as bars and coffee shops.

Figure 8: Where does informal communication take place?



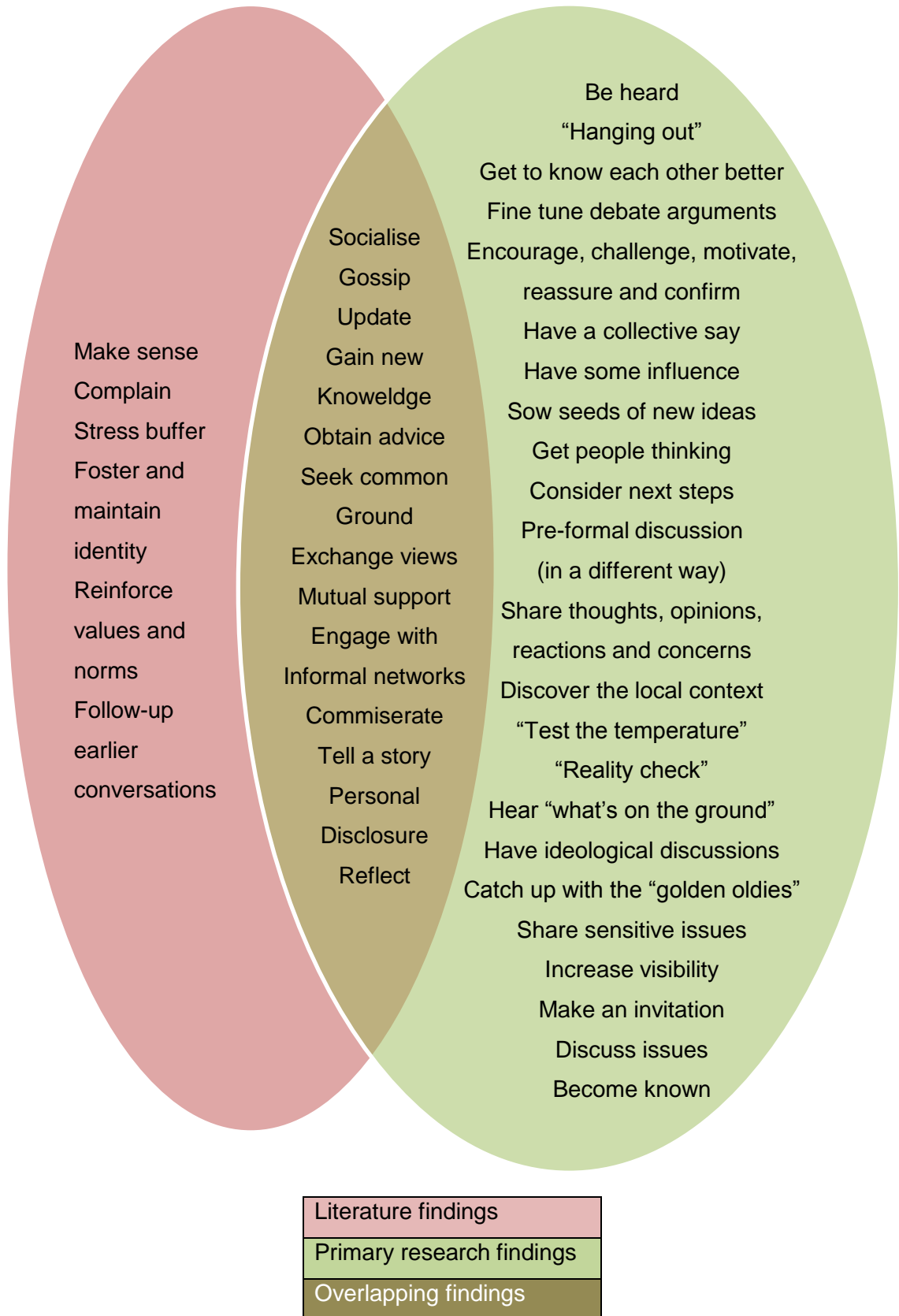
The annual conference had a number of locations for informal conversation including a bar, a disco and smoking areas at the venue. Only three of the locations mentioned were specifically in a workplace. These were in an EU building in Brussels, the room for the book club and the work canteen, the latter being the closest to the water cooler moments described by Waring and Bishop (2010). Participants also mentioned online social media spaces and 'in the margins of meetings'. The participant who mentioned informal conversations in an EU building in Brussels noted that people from the same

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION

country and speaking the same language tended to group together for their informal conversations. This corresponds with Waring and Bishop's (2010) discussion on the importance of common language and cultural reference points, and Yuan et al, (2013) who observed that in informal communication, people tended to stay in their own language groups, in situations of temporary location when they expect to quickly return home. The participant reporting on the book club conversations mentioned that the book club was regarded as 'a safe space', which suggests a correspondence with Baugut and Reinemann's (2013) four dimensions that have the greatest likelihood of generating informal communication: proximity, non-publicity, co-operation and, in particular, seclusiveness. However, with many of these locations being in public areas, such as bars, coffee shops, on the road in canvassing and airport departure lounges, the last dimension might sometimes be lacking. Even at the annual conference, conversations took place in visible areas, such as smoking areas and coffee areas, although the venue itself would be a private booking for the [xx] Party members. This preponderance of public spaces could be argued as reflecting the nature of the organisation being a political party, and the work of the people within it. Nonetheless, the conversations can still be regarded as backstage and having Baugut and Reinemann's (2013) characteristic of non-publicity.

In terms of *when* the informal conversations might take place, the findings reveal that essentially they take place at any time of the day, whether the conversations are face-to-face, on the phone or online. They could be events like birthday parties, demonstrations and celebrations of party achievements, book club meetings, canvassing days or funerals; or they could be all day events such as weddings and the annual conference. In fact the annual conference was described by one participant as being 'like a family wedding'. Other timings included before and after formal meetings, when travelling, and after work when relaxing with family and friends, or quick chats in passing such as when buying a coffee. Waring and Bishop (2010) write that the content of informal communication can vary depending on time and place. In the findings, the deeper, more detailed explorations of issues through informal communication were longer conversations. However, short informal conversations might include quick 'chit chat' but it was also shown to include useful information such as saying when the next demonstration was going to take place (at the end of C4), or giving praise and brief advice in C6, or in quickly pointing out who sympathised with which party in C2. Now, it is time to consider why informal communication occurs.

Figure 9: *Why* does informal communication happen?



CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION

It can be seen in Figure 9, that the reasons *why* informal communication happens, given by the participants, are many and varied. There was quite a degree of overlap with the reasons cited in the literature. Participants mentioned additional reasons for informal communication, such as honing 'debate arguments' and 'pre-formal discussion', thus suggesting informal conversation also provides opportunities for rehearsing arguments prior to more formal situations. Some of the other reasons that participants gave, that did not appear to overlap with the literature, seemed to reflect the nature of their work and some of their organisation's goals. Participants' examples included to 'become known', to 'have a collective say', to 'have some influence' and to 'have ideological discussions'. Other examples included to 'discover the local context', to 'test the temperature' of voter feeling, to have a 'reality check' and 'hear what's on the ground'. These examples reflect tasks that relate to participants' roles, particularly when they are out and active in their constituencies. However, some of the reasons specified in the literature that did not overlap with participant findings are quite broad based and would cover many, if not all, areas found to overlap between the literature and the findings. Waring and Bishop (2010) see informal communication as partly about trying to make sense of something, which is arguably what the participants are describing in their reasons for informal communication. Even with gossip (Gargiulo, 2005 and Allee, 2003) and socialising (Johnson et al, 2005), views are still likely to be exchanged (Fay, 2011) about events or people, as people fit together their stories (Gargiulo, 2005 and Allee, 2003) and experiences relating to these. In more negative conversations such as someone complaining (Gargiulo, 2005 and Fay, 2011), the exchange could result in either confirmation of that person's view through commiseration (Fay, 2011), as occurred in C1 or an argument that might contradict but potentially add new information to make sense of the situation (C8).

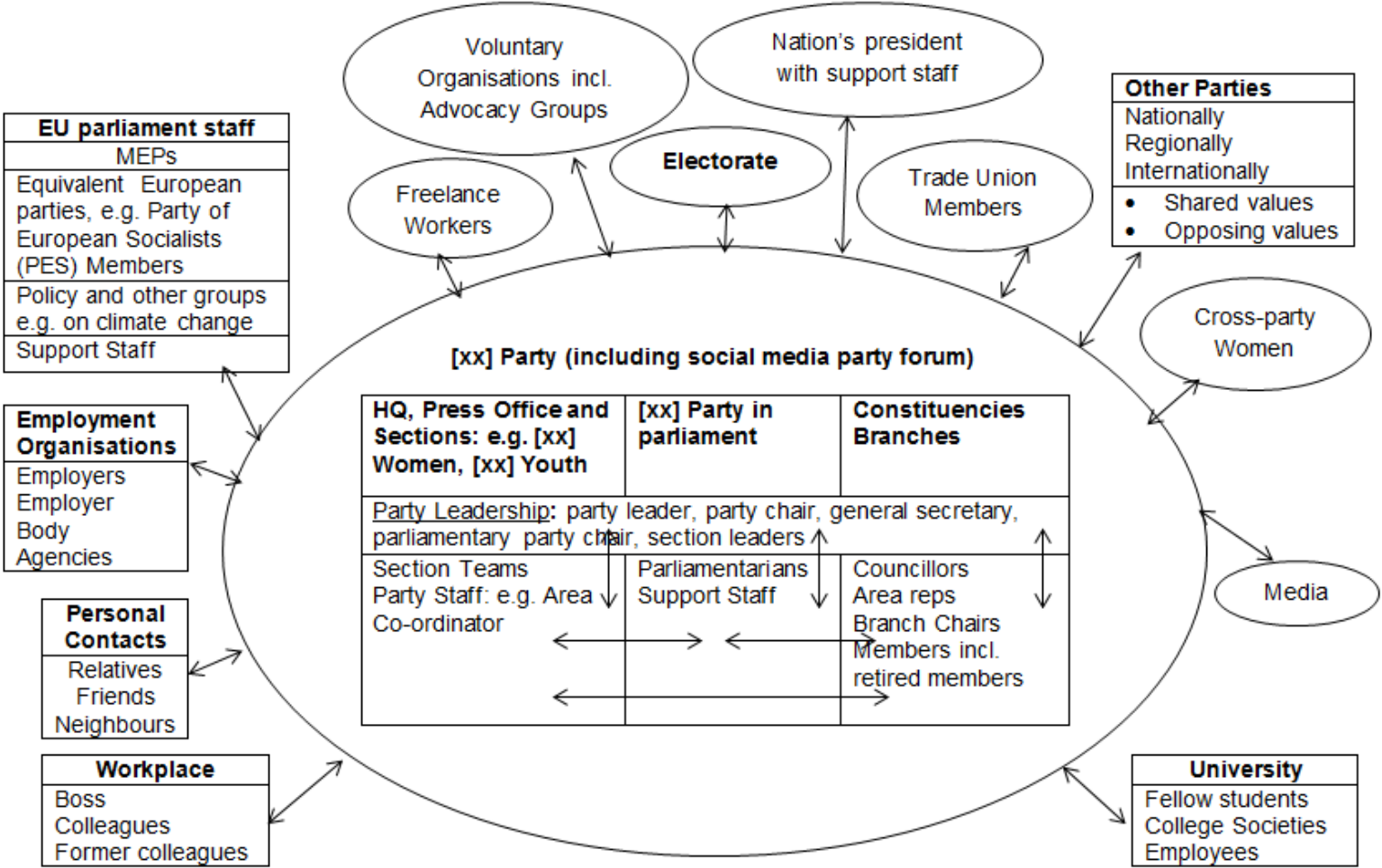
Participants also mentioned informal communication allowed them to 'share sensitive issues', 'be heard' and 'share thoughts and opinions', thus expressing a desire to get another view or opinion on a situation, if not actual advice. Some of the informal conversations at the annual conference did involve seeking advice, both where the participant sought the opinion of the party chairman on their progress and where a member from the participant's home town sought advice on increasing visibility in that area. Johnson et al (1994) mentions obtaining advice as a reason for informal communication to take place, while Wilson (1981) mentions this in the context of information seeking behaviour.

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION

Fay (2011) sees reinforcing values and norms as well as the fostering and maintaining identity as important reasons for people engaging in informal communication, confirming the observations in the primary research findings. Waring and Bishop (2010) and Fay (2011) also mention how informal communication is useful in helping people find common ground, also mentioned in C1. Furthermore, informal conversations brought about for reasons such as gossip, commiseration, looking for common ground, and socialising can all be argued to function as a buffer against organisational stress (Fay, 2011). This is further supported by additional participant comments such as 'hanging out', 'getting to know each other better', and 'catch up with the golden oldies'. However, some of the other reasons given in both the literature and the findings can have the opposite effect and challenge values and norms, even identity, particularly in discussions about the direction of the party (Chapter Four), where participants discussed their party needing to reinvent itself as a response to recent election performance. Challenges can come through new knowledge resulting from exchanging views, telling a story, personal disclosure (Johnson et al, 1994) or reflection. All of these types of informal exchange occurred in the book club discussion (C1). Challenges also came from sharing 'thought, opinions, reactions and concerns' in the ideological discussions in the online informal conversations (C3) and at the annual conference (C6-C9). Informal conversations as a "follow up to an earlier conversation" (Fay, 2011) also proved to be part of a process of getting updates (Fay, 2011) and reflection, at the demonstration relating to the gender pay gap (C4), and the celebration relating to allowing certain free-lance categories of worker access to union support (C5).

The final figure in this section, Figure 10, is a simple network diagram, showing the different groups of people and organisations *who* the participants mentioned, in both Chapters Four and Five, they engaged with in informal communication. Some additional factors to take into account about the diagram are that (a) there is likely to be overlapping membership of the groups and organisations and (b) the groups and organisations are also likely to independently interact with each other informally, as well as with the [xx] Party and its members. Furthermore, some of the participants will have belonged to some of the groups and organisations in the past but are less involved now.

Figure 10: Who do [xx] Party members engage with in informal communication?



CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION

One participant, for example, was a trade union member, a university employee, a member of the Party of European Socialists and an activist with [xx] Women. While now a retired member, the participant still has links with all groups and organisations. The participant also remains a member of the electorate and also engages informally with family, friends and neighbours, some of whom are also [xx] Party members.

There are also obvious overlaps between employment organisations, workplace, voluntary organisations and advocacy groups, trade unions, freelance workers and universities as employers; while the other parties will also have informal contact with the president of the 'home country', the cross-party women group, the EU Party and the electorate. In fact, other political parties may well have a similar profile of networks, although the strength of the ties, apart from the ones already mentioned, might vary depending on the focus and values of the different parties. There may also be other organisations not mentioned here, with which other parties might have contact, such as with groups with more overt 'green' values.

As Allee (2003) states, networks can be social (family, friends, neighbours), political (the networks within the party, other parties, cross-party women, president with support staff, and the EU parliament, and trade unions), professional and business (employer organisations, workplace, freelance workers, universities, voluntary organisations and advocacy groups), or networks of enthusiasts, such as the book club set up for [xx] Party parliamentary staff. As the electorate represents the full voting population, it can be argued that all the other groups and organisations mentioned above are networks consisting of various and overlapping sections of the electorate. There will still be members of the electorate who would not necessarily be in the groups or organisations mentioned here, by the participants.

The more specialised networks of 'communities of practice' tend, according to Allee (2003), to have the aim of improving knowledge and skills, and are self-selecting. Examples of communities of practice could arguably be the cross-party women group (mentioned in Chapter Four), the members' online forum, which forms the basis of C3, and the hate crime policy group in parliament, mentioned in C1. The groups all have specific aims and all involve sharing concerns, passion on certain issues, and a desire to deepen knowledge and expertise. While the book club in C1 is arguably a community of interest rather than of practise, it shares characteristics of communities of practice, in that it is about building relationships and trust, as represented by the participant talking about it being 'a safe space' and a 'place to discuss issues in a

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION

different way'. It is not only a place where stories are read but where stories are told, as people in the book club share their stories with each other.

Returning to Chapter Five and the case analyses in Appendices N-S, the communicators in each case came from some of the groups and organisations featured in Figure 10. The book-club (C1) featured parliamentary staff, including a councillor. Members of the electorate, family, friends and the participant's boss, were also mentioned. In C2 the two main communicators were [xx] Party members, one from Head Office and an area rep, who was constituency based. The electorate, the media, other members from the constituency and members of the online forum were mentioned as well. The conversation in C3 featured the online forum. The participant also mentioned informal conversations that took place with colleagues in the workplace, a voluntary sector organisation; with fellow nationals at an EU policy meeting; and an additional online forum that was open to members of other parties as well as those of the [xx] Party. The participant in the prequel to C4 was a member of one of the European parties, as was the trainer that the informal conversation took place with. The conversations in C4 and C5 were with other party members from different roles and different parts of the party, including former [xx] Party activists, as well as former trade union activists. While they were not specifically mentioned, it was also likely that the freelance workers, who were benefitting from the amendment being celebrated, would have been at the informal gathering. The participant also mentioned the president of the 'home country' but as a signatory rather than in the context of informal communication. At the annual party conference, the communicators in the cases all were (C6 – C9) party members. This included the party chair, certain experienced politicians, members of [xx] Youth, a member of [xx] Women, friends who are [xx] Party members, and a member based in the participant's home constituency.

Subramanian and Mehta (2013) observed that in informal networks people do not usually talk in large groups. This is also borne out by the case examples. Allee (2003) identified reasons for participating in informal networks as including the need to create affiliations and, as mentioned in Figure 9, the need to foster a greater sense of identity. Allee (2003) also sees informal networks as a place where people can mutually build self-esteem. Subramanian and Mehta (2013) add further reasons, which include opportunities for making sense of social reality, reducing risk through co-operation, as well as "greasing the rust" (Subramanian and Mehta, 2013, p. 248) and political manoeuvring. Building self-esteem and reducing risk reappear in Section 6.3 when applying the working model based on Wilson's (1997) general model of information

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION

behaviour. Several authors (Subramanian and Mehta, 2013, Yuan et al, 2003 and Shockley-Zalabak, 2012) identify characteristics of durability of the networks as tie strength, which they see as requiring frequency, emotional closeness, a degree of friendship and level of reciprocity in the networks. In this thesis, this reciprocity could be about exchange of experiences on the ground.

In C1, the book-club is a regular event, though not everyone might attend all meetings; it is likely to continue and it allows for regular reporting from the ground, although the topics are dependent on the choice of book each week. As the book club is partly about people getting to know each other, this suggests that emotional closeness and friendship is still at a developmental stage. In C2 the shadowing is unlikely to be a regular event for the particular area rep, who featured in it; however, regular phone calls allow for further informal communication with the area rep and provide opportunities for reporting back. The main emotional bond here is the success that the area co-ordinator felt about the area rep that she shadowed: 'his success is my success'. It cannot be said that this is a close bond. Rather than friendship, the area rep is more likely to perceive the area co-ordinator as a mentor and guide. There is no reason, however, why this cannot have the effect then of strengthening the tie. In the online forum in C3 there is opportunity for continual informal communication, although member participation might be intermittent rather than regular. The participant articulates respect rather than a close emotional bond or friendship, but he does see some sharing of values in the conversations, which is likely to keep him participating in this informal network. There is capacity for sharing experience from the ground, which may be from recent events or more long term experience. This is also a group that engages informally in philosophical conversations about the direction of the party, which is something that the participant enjoys about the forum. C4 and C5 might not be frequent or continuous, but that is not to say that similar events will not happen in the future, to celebrate [xx] Party achievements. At the two events, the participant renewed past links, thus where there are friendship bonds; and from that was considering support for new and up and coming members by engaging more frequently at branch level, which again is likely to offer further opportunities for informal communication.

The annual conference, on which cases C6 – C9 are based, obviously occurs on an annual basis, and allows multiple opportunities for informal communication, reporting from the ground, and reflections on [xx] Party values. The participant and the constituency member from 'home', in C9, are likely to continue their informal conversations and continue to share experience from the ground, as they look to

increasing [xx] Party visibility in the area. The constituency member was also described as a friend, and both have an emotional bond in their desire to raise the visibility of [xx] Party in that rural constituency.

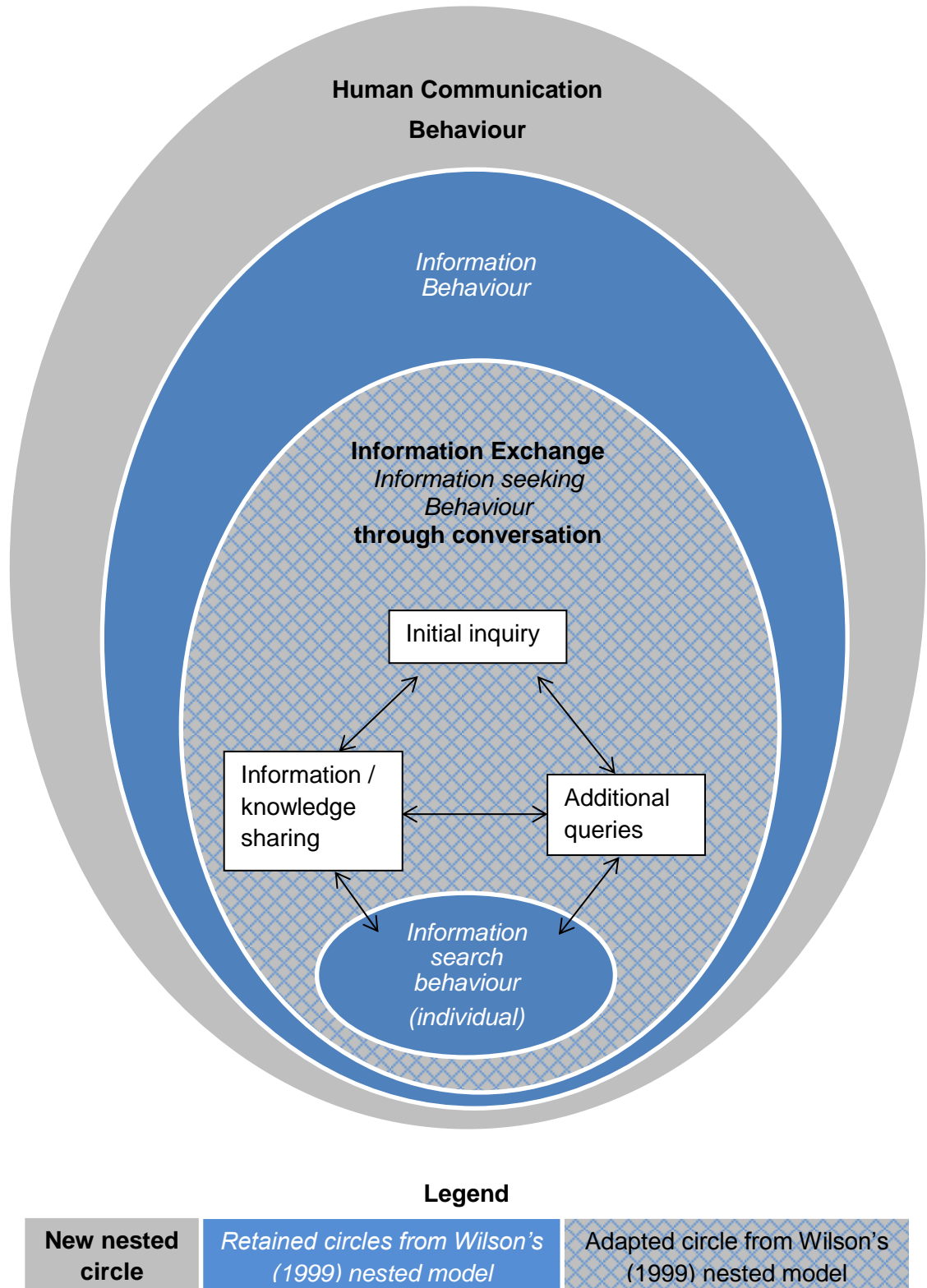
These networks are revisited in Section 6.4.2, where networks and influence are discussed in connection with the process of organisational learning, and how influence could affect the [xx] Party's functioning in the capacity of being a learning organisation.

6.2 A tale of two models - part 2: development of the adapted and the new

This section is about the development of two new models, influenced primarily by Wilson's (1997 and 1999) work (see critique in Section 3.6). The first model to be discussed is the adapted nesting model, shown in Figure 11. This is a reworking of Wilson's (1999) nesting metaphor, in the context of conversations, be they formal or informal. Section 6.2.1 then focuses on a new working model, shown in Figure 12, which arose from the research in this study. It is influenced by aspects of Wilson's (1997) general model of human information behaviour but reworked to reflect information behaviour in the context of conversation. This latter model was then applied to the research findings, for the purpose of interpreting them more fully (see Section 6.3). The purpose of the first model (Figure 11) was to show the overall setting, in which the second model (Figure 12) sits.

Starting with Figure 11, the nesting could be represented by a new outermost circle to include human communication behaviour. This is supported by Wilson's (1999, p.263) observation that "we might also extend the nested model further by showing that information behaviour is a part of human communication behaviour". The second nested circle becomes Wilson's (1999) original information behaviour circle. The third nested circle is an adaptation of Wilson's (1999) information seeking behaviour circle. In Figure 11, this has been adapted to become an information exchange circle, which is subtitled as information seeking behaviour through conversation. As can be seen from the legend, the new nested circle is coloured in grey, and Wilson's untouched nested circles are coloured in blue, while the information exchange circle has a two-tone grey-blue pattern to indicate that the adaptive nature of this circle. The final nested circle follows Wilson's (1999) last nested circle of information search behaviour, which is characterised by an individual search of material such as online computerised journals, databases and website.

Figure 11: Working nested model of human information behaviour
 After Wilson (1999)



CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION

The final and innermost circle is still included because those information sources are, currently, still created by humans, so constitute a form of asynchronous communication behaviour. Returning to the information exchange nested circle, additional features are included to demonstrate the dynamic, iterative nature of information seeking through direct human communication.

The boxes and arrows, linking the text boxes to each other and to the information search nested circle, indicate the relationships between these parts of the information exchange process. They indicate that, for example, one person in a conversation who begins to ask questions of the others could trigger another person to also ask questions too. This could continue backwards and forwards until eventually the queries lead to someone sharing information or knowledge. Alternatively, the original question asked may simply trigger an instant response of sharing information or knowledge. This might lead to additional questions and continuously more knowledge being shared in an iterative process. Arrows are also connected to the final nested model, involving individual information searching. The thinking here, is that a conversation could, for example, come to a close, and one or some of the people who were in the conversation move on to conduct their own individual searches from static sources, though the content is still created by humans. Alternatively, an earlier individual information search may have resulted in someone then asking more questions in the current conversation or alternatively sharing information or knowledge gained from their earlier search. Another possibility is that someone in the conversation may subsequently decide to add their knowledge in a more permanent form, for someone else to access in a search at a later stage, i.e. they contribute, for example, to the creation of part of an online information source. A further aspect of the information exchange dynamic is that new learning from the information exchange may form the content of another action of information or knowledge sharing in a subsequent information exchange. One further possibility is that an earlier information exchange is used to inform the current information exchange. Thus, the connecting arrows indicate a multiple range of possibilities of information seeking behaviour in the iterative processes of human information communication. The naming of the boxes in the information exchange circle, correspond to those used in the equivalent, much larger and more detailed, information exchange textbox in the model described in Section 6.2.1, shown in Figure 12.

One final point to be made in relation to the proposed nesting model is in reference to the text box entitled 'information or knowledge sharing'. This is stated this way to reflect

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION

the fact that, as discussed in Section 2.2, sometimes information and knowledge can collapse into each other and be used interchangeably. For example, explicit knowledge, which is either recorded or recordable, is also thought of as information in some external form, also being more easily accessible. However, some knowledge is internalised into such an intuitive or 'tacit' form (Polanyi, 1966) that it remains implicit, difficult to articulate and practically impossible to imitate (Jashapara, 2005). Both knowledge and information, in whatever way these terms are understood, play critical roles in the social and sense-making context. People can gain a sense of another's intrinsic or tacit knowledge through, for example, hearing about experiences, expressed awareness and noticed attention, which Polanyi (1966) sees as being important to the acquisition of tacit knowledge. Orlikowski (2002, p. 252) notes broader perspectives in the explicit-tacit continuum and refers to knowing as "an ongoing social accomplishment, constituted and reconstituted in everyday practice". Confirming the importance of knowledge in communication, Allee (2003, p. 143) states "knowledge is a conversation ... not static but continual in motion, emerging in the shared communal learning space that arises between people", between interstices of structures (McNely, 2011). Similar observations are made about the importance of information as part of humans' sense-making processes. Ruben (1992, p. 23) observes that information is "socially constructed, negotiated, validated, sanctioned and/or privileged appropriations, representations and artifacts". As Floridi (2004, p.560) says "information is still an elusive concept".

Given the nature of both information and knowledge, and their intrinsically intertwined nature, it seems that to mention one without the other in any discussion about information behaviour, is akin to functioning with a brain, but no heart or vice versa. Not all information is automatically knowledge unless it becomes absorbed in a person's mind to the point of becoming intrinsic and intuitive, and where perhaps the person no longer even remembers from where the information was first found. Furthermore, as implied above, not all knowledge can be articulated as information, although it can be partly spoken of in terms of personal experience and personal awareness and observations. In conversation, both information that might not necessarily become absorbed later as intrinsic knowledge, as well as the sharing of personal experience and observations, can quite often take place in 'information exchanges'. So, while portmanteau terms such as 'information behaviour' relate to information, it becomes important in the explication of 'information exchange' to ensure that both knowledge and information are recognised as playing their intricate part in the encounter; and that information behaviour in its broadest sense necessarily incorporates the phenomenon

of knowledge sharing, as well as information sharing, as responses to information seeking behaviour.

As stated at the start of this section, the second model (Figure 12) that was developed, like the first (Figure 11), was again predicated on Wilson's work, primarily his 1997 general model of human information behaviour. However, the new model was influenced by other information behaviourists as well (see Section 2.2.1 in the literature review) and also incorporated overlapping work by organisational learning theorists (see Section 2.4.2 on psychological perspectives). The new model reflects the new aspects of the adapted nested model, and is applied in Section 6.3 to interpret the findings and analysis relating to the cases of informal conversations in the [xx] Party. Figure 12 proposes a working model of information behaviour in conversations. In terms of the nested model in Figure 11, the proposed working model represents the information behaviour subset of human communication.

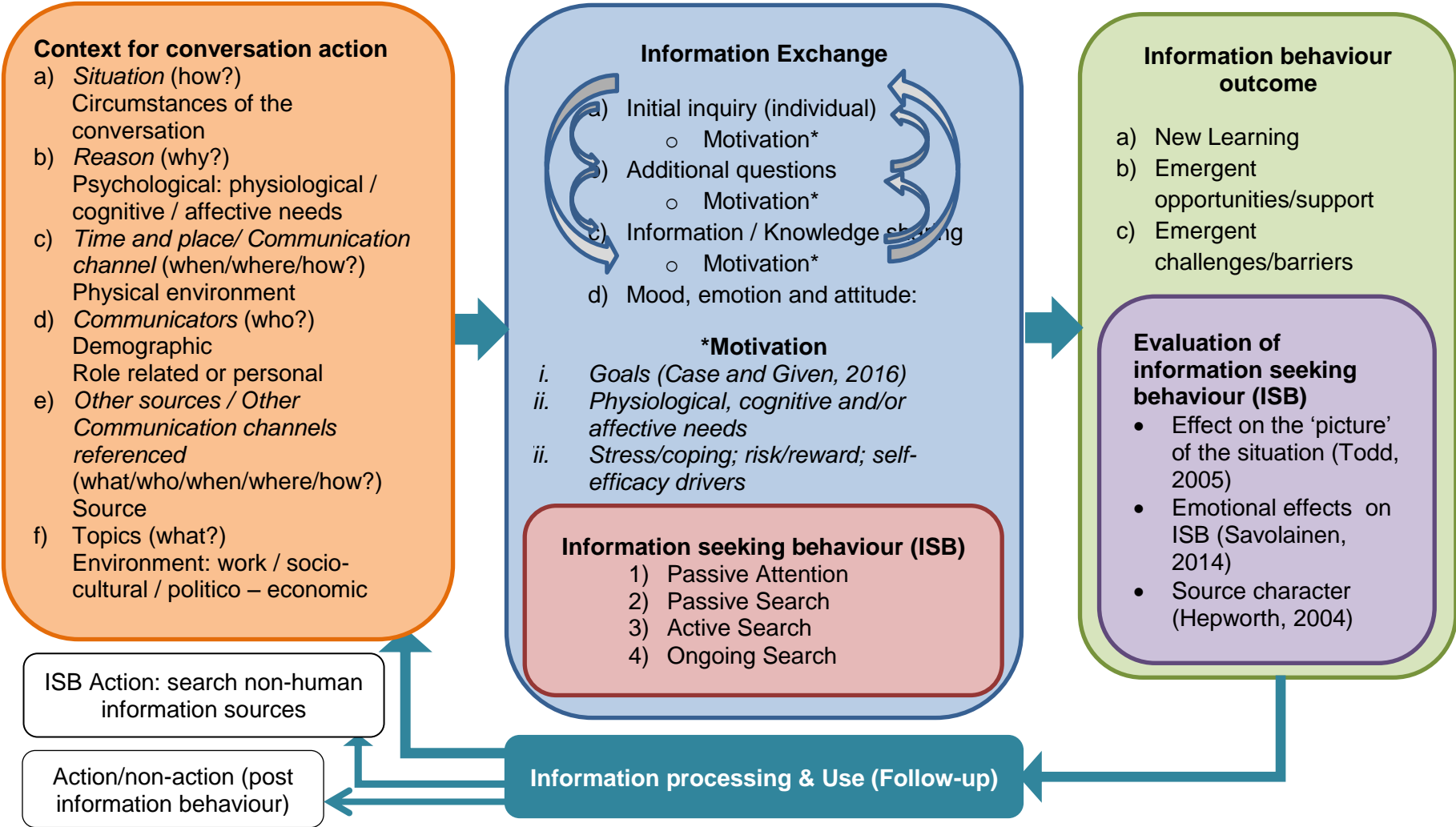
6.2.1 New model of human information behaviour in conversations

The explanation of the new model (Figure 12) is divided into four sections representing each of the main sections of the model. These are: context for conversation action (orange box), information exchange (light blue box) including information seeking behaviour (pink box), information behaviour outcome (green box) including evaluation of information seeking behaviour (purple box), and finally, information processing and use (teal box). Each section is labelled in bold before proceeding with the explanation for ease of navigation between the explanation and the diagram.

Context for conversation action

In creating this working model, Wilson's (1997) separately identified intervening factors, from his general model of information behaviour (Figure 3) have been integrated into a single section on the context for the conversation action. This more closely reflects something of Wilson's (1981) detail on 'person in context' in his model of "Factors influencing needs and information behaviour" (see Figure 2 in section 2.2.2). The intervening variables were part of Wilson's (1997) concerns with factors that could create barriers or indeed be supportive to progressing to information behaviour. Arguably, these issues could still be drawn out of the revised context factors.

Figure 12: Working model of human information behaviour in conversation



The reworked model also allows other opportunities to revisit issues regarding barriers and opportunities in information behaviour. Continuing with the context section, the lower-order headings within the section explicitly show where the 'what?', 'why?', 'where and when?', 'how?' and 'who?' questions about context occur. The context section also includes two further changes aimed to reflect the key human communication issues examined by Wilson (1999). 'Communicators' were identified as part of the 'who' question and 'Communication Channel' was added in with 'Situation' as part of the 'how' question. Staying with the context section, the 'how' question concerns how the conversation came about. Environmental issues, such as the physical or electronic environment of the conversation, are addressed by the where and when questions in the context box. The issue of work / socio-cultural and politico-economic environments (Wilson, 1981) is drawn from the topics covered in the conversation, as part of the process of understanding the context of the conversation. In attempting to have the context be as specific to the conversation as possible, the full complexity, at least of the socio-cultural and politico-economic environments, would not necessarily be revealed here. Context could therefore be regarded as a 'micro-context' where the factors that are immediately relevant to the conversation are identified from the broader environments external to the workplace. A more macro-context that the information behaviour model sits within could serve as an introduction to the application of the model, as applied to different situations.

Information exchange

The next development in the working model was to create an 'information exchange' box, which allowed for the capture of the different aspects of information behaviour that could occur within a specific conversation, and at group level as well as individual level. It is also designed to reflect the information exchange nested circle in the revised nested model (Figure 11). The 'initial inquiry' (see corresponding textbox in Figure 11) is the inquiry from the perspective of the person reporting the conversation in which they engage in information seeking behaviour. This could trigger either more queries from others in the conversation (see corresponding textbox in Figure 11), or a range of information or knowledge sharing responses (see information / knowledge sharing box in Figure 11). Sometimes it can be difficult to separate out who said what, particularly when a conversation is being reported rather than observed, but the model allows for these responses to be considered at group level. The arrows in the blue 'information exchange' section of the working model (Figure 12) show the continuous and iterative nature of this process of query and response. Also included in this section, is the opportunity to incorporate information about affective aspects occurring within and

during the conversation; in addition to the cognitive behaviours shown in the queries and responses. Observed or reported mood, feelings and attitudes can also suggest some of the tacit knowledge that might be subconsciously shared. Sometimes the information carried by the descriptions of the affective characteristics adds new knowledge or understanding of the issues at hand, in a way that simply cognitive aspects are not able to reveal; for example, the strength of feeling that is expressed regarding a certain issue. This can have a significant effect on subsequent responses and further information seeking behaviour.

Wilson's (1997) work on activating mechanisms is represented within the term 'motivation' where a range of possible activators, as identified by Wilson (1997), are included. Case (2005) and Case and Given (2015) discuss goals as drivers of 'information need', which arguably lead to voiced inquiries and additional questions in the conversation. This is seen to be a key aspect of motivation that also needed to be included in the model. A maroon textbox with Wilson's (1997) information seeking behaviour types is incorporated in the 'information exchange' section. This decision was made to reflect the fact that types of information seeking behaviour being displayed can change across a single conversation.

Information behaviour outcome

After the 'information exchange' section, a new section was introduced, represented by the green textbox, before the information processing and information use stage, called 'information behaviour outcome'. The purpose of this section is to allow space for reflection on how the information exchange unfolded, before proceeding to the next stage. This section of the working model allows the researcher to consider new learning that may have emerged from the conversation, any emergent opportunities, support, challenge and barriers that are revealed through the information exchange process. A subset (see purple textbox in Figure 12) called 'evaluation of information seeking behaviour (ISB)' was then added into the information behaviour outcome textbox. Here concepts are examined that are particularly about stages and features of information seeking and attributes of the information sources, which may have then affected the outcome in terms of what happens next for the individual who engaged in the information exchange. This includes the consideration of the effect of the information behaviour on a person's 'picture' of a situation (Todd, 2005), compared to what it was prior to the information exchange; emotional effects on the process of information seeking (Savolainen, 2014) and the character of the source or sources

used in the information exchange and their effect on subsequent information behaviour (Hepworth, 2004).

Information processing and use (Follow-up)

After conducting the analysis of the information behaviour outcome, one can then look at what happens next in terms of information processing and information use. The decisions of what to do with the processed information are shown as three possibilities: engaging in another conversation, conducting a further search of non-human sources or doing/ not doing an action based on the information found. The cycle could then potentially begin again.

When the working model of information behaviour in conversations was applied to interpret the findings and analysis of the cases, it was possible to gain an integrated and comprehensive picture of the informal conversations studied in the research. This in turn allowed more conclusions to be drawn and links and comparisons to be made with other areas of the research.

6.3 Informal communication and information behaviour

The majority of this section is based on the analysis of the case findings, using the working model for information behaviour in conversations (Figure 12 in Section 6.2.1) adapted from Wilson's models (1981 and 1997). However, Section 6.3.1, on the context of the conversations, is augmented by exploring overlaps with the discussions in Section 6.1 on the nature of informal communication. The broader European, political context within which the cases take place are discussed in the introduction (Chapter One), and are referred to again in Section 6.4.2 on organisational learning and the 'learning organisation'.

6.3.1 Context for conversation action

In this section, the 'what', 'where', 'when', 'why', 'and 'who' questions about the context are explored. In other words, how the case came about and why, where and when they took place, who took part in the conversations, what were the topics and were any other sources referenced during the conversations.

The context for the cases was varied: an organised book club (C1) that was an informal occasion where staff took a break from work and discussed a selected book in a room booked for the session; informal conversations that took place during a working day of

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION

canvassing in various locations (C2) and a series of conversations between party members on a specific online social media forum (C3). There are then two related cases where members were asked to attend a demonstration (C4) and a launch (C5) to support two pieces of legislation respectively being put to the parliament. In each case, the members then moved to a bar for 'catching up'. A prequel case was also included in support of C4 as it was an example of a past informal conversation that influenced the progress of the legislation being supported in C4. The last four cases (C6, C7, C8 and C9) all took place at the annual conference, where in C6, C8 and C9, members took various breaks for informal conversations during the conference and in C7, conversations took place at a disco in the evening, organised by the youth wing. In all cases, the settings were formally linked to the work of the [xx] Party and the face-to-face informal conversations either took place during breaks either in parliament, while working in the community or at specific events such as the annual conference. The online conversations were less time specific due to the asymmetric nature of the communication. The ages and roles were mixed in all the conversations. The participant reporting on C4 and C5 is a retired member and the participant reporting on C3 was very active at one time but the involvement now is more from the side-lines with occasional attendance at EU meetings. Some of the cases referred to other sources such as a book and an earlier training event (C1), newspaper articles, radio programmes and other online conversations (C2). Although the conversations in C3 did not involve other sources, other conversations in this platform do include sharing of online newspaper articles. Previous conversations were referred to in C4 and C5. However no additional sources were mentioned for the informal conversations at the annual party conference.

The topics under discussion were varied with very little overlap between the cases. Global issues were discussed in C1 relating to racism worldwide as well as in the 'home country', in C3 relating to secession in other countries, and in C7, the conversation about Syria. Sometimes the conversation was about individual progress and development within the party. In C2, the area rep was demonstrating their progress to the area co-ordinator, while the conversations in C6 and C9 were about feedback to the participant on how he was doing, advice on developing his profile and a conversation about how the participant and another activist can support each other in developing their profiles and the [xx] Party presence in a particular area. The conversations in C2 and C9 were also about promoting the [xx] Party with a view to gaining votes, while the conversation in C8 was about encouraging a fellow member to feel more positive about the party. Some of the conversations were about meeting

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION

goals on particular issues, so for example, in C1, the conversation included considering what could be done within the [xx] Party about racism in the country. In C4 and C5 the conversations were about supporting [xx] Party actions on national issues of gender pay (C4) and access to collective bargaining for freelance workers (C5).

The reasons for the getting together, face-to-face or online, reflect those identified in Figure 9. Looking at these in terms of psychological needs: physiological, cognitive and affective, as documented by, for example, de Philippi and Ornstein, 2005; Wilson, 2005 and Nahl, 2007), physiological needs only appeared in two cases. Firstly, in C1 where the need to take a break is expressed as well as wanting to discuss issues 'in a safe space'. The latter also including affective factors. Secondly, the prequel to C4 was about passing the time, so as not to notice the tedium of waiting for one's flight. Cognitive needs were about exploring opinions and practicalities of dealing with certain issues (C1, C8 and C9). These needs were also about exchanging views and sharing thoughts on issues and ideas about addressing those issues (C6 and C7). In C1, 'getting to know each other' was another reason for getting together. 'Catching up' was another expression of cognitive need (C4 – C6), though it will include the affective need of belonging to a group and being recognised or feeling part of a group. Providing or seeking support was a common affective need and was expressed in C2, C4 and C5. Another affective need was simply to be able to 'relax' (C7). There were further cognitive needs behind the conversations in C2, the day out canvassing. This was to see how the rep was doing. This is also affective because as the participant said 'his success is my success'. Another reason again in C2 was that of wanting to find out 'what people are thinking on the ground'. These motivations will be revisited in Section 6.3.2, the discussion on the actual information exchange in the case conversations.

Reflecting on Section 4.2.8 (current discussion topics), based on the first set of interviews, there is a degree of overlap between what was said there and what was said in the second set of interviews. The party identity and direction questions raised there were indirectly addressed in the cases that were looking at what the [xx] Party stance on secession issues (C3) and Syria (C7) should be. The identity question was discussed more directly when considering co-operation with like-minded parties (C3) and working towards a motion saying that the [xx] Party would not go into coalition with right wing parties (C6). Direction and 'reaching out to different sections of society' is reflected in C6 with the 'equality must wait' argument and in C9 in looking at increasing [xx] Party visibility in rural areas. Identity also occurs in the social justice arena mentioned in Section 4.2.8, regarding showing 'we are an immigrant nation and we

accept refugees and immigrants'. This is reflected in C1 and the concerns surrounding racism in the 'home country'. Of the national issues identified in Section 4.2.8, the 'gig' economy reappears in C5 with the launch of the availability of collective bargaining to freelance workers, and women's rights reappears in C4 relating to legislation to reduce the gender pay gap. Immigration reappears, although not directly, in C1 in the conversation about racism. The 'equality must wait' approach discussed in C6 reflects, to a degree an earlier view expressed in Section 4.2.8 of 'how do we address the reality of this urban, angry population ... Communities that we'd be considered to have abandoned'. Interestingly the local issues identified in 4.2.8 were not returned to in the subsequent cases. This is understandable as each area may well have different issues that need addressing. Further issues were raised in the cases. The public event discussed in C2 was about exam stress for young people. While it was a local event, it is likely to be a national issue as well. In the conversation about racism in C1, local race issues were identified by an urban councillor and a [xx] Party staff member from a rural area, with racism and 'small-town' thinking from [xx] Party voters. Again possibly reflecting the notion of the 'angry population' and forgotten communities, as well as being challenges to the [xx] Party in maintaining their identity as a party of equality.

6.3.2 Information exchange including information seeking behaviour (ISB)

This section considers the actual information exchange in terms of initial inquiry asked by the case participants, additional queries asked within the group involved in the conversation, and knowledge and information shared in the conversation groups. The motivation for each of these aspects is examined from a range of perspectives, such as goals and cognitive and affective psychological perspectives as well as looking at areas of interest to Wilson (1997), like stress/coping factors, risk/reward aspects and self-efficacy development. Additionally, overall affective factors of mood, emotion and attitude are explored and considered in terms of how these factors can act as drivers for further information seeking and action; and how they enrich the story of people's information behaviour in the cases. Finally, Wilson's (1997) information behaviour types are applied to the cases as they played out in each of the conversations.

The initial inquiries can be divided into two groups, the generic and the specific. Generic questions were queries like 'how's it going?' (C2), 'what are people talking about?' (C3) and 'what is the latest news' (C4). The prequel to C4 was not actually stated but it was clear that a conversation had begun which lead to more specific queries later in the conversation. Some of the queries were still fairly general but were more specific in that the queries functioned as ways of gaining a sense of the overall

picture of the issues in the group. For example, 'what do other book club members think about the book?' (C1), 'so how did the whole thing (the amendment) start?' (C5) and 'what are people's opinions about the election candidates in (another EU country's) election?' (C7) Interestingly the initial queries raised in the conversations at the annual party conference were mostly very specific. They related to career progress (two conversations in C6); and areas of personal concern such as whether there is a place to talk about 'socially progressive' ideas when key concerns are about basic living standards (last conversation in C6), why did 'the older guy' feel disillusioned (C8) and 'what is happening with the party presence' in the participant's home town (C9). A further initial query in C6 was regarding advice on how to vote on a particular motion. The goals motivating the queries were curiosity (C1, prequel to C4 and C9); wanting to arrive at a more informed opinion (C1 and C5); looking for common ground (C1, C3); to gauge 'the temperature' (C2); to see how the party values are being played out (C3); to see how 'I can help' (C3); to put people at ease (C2); to see how something started from the participant's earlier role has moved on successfully (C4 and C5); to obtain guidance and clarification (C6); to compare opinions (C1, C3 and C7) and to better understand another member's point of view (C8). The majority of these goals correspond to those identified in Figure 9 in Section 6.1. The goal of seeing how something started in earlier years has successfully moved on could be argued to be about seeking the consequence of having influence or sowing the seed of an idea, both of which are identified in Figure 9. The goals often relate to a combination of cognitive needs, such as become more informed, better understand and find out what other people think. However, affective issues also play a significant part here as a driver for the goals. Barriers of information overload (Jashapara, 2005; Bawden and Robinson, 2008), attitudes to risk (Waring and Bishop, 2010), or lack of confidence (Vince and Gabriel, 2011), low self-esteem (Subramanian and Mehta, 2013) or a low sense of self-efficacy (Wilson, 1997), either evoke or are affective reactions. Seeking guidance and finding common ground can also be about reassurance, an affective response. Looking at how party values are playing out and trying to understand the members' views can be about having a sense of belonging. Seeing how the seed of an idea has materialised provides a sense of satisfaction. Becoming better informed could be about trying to reduce the stress that might come from experiencing a knowledge gap (Dervin, 2005). Finding out other members' opinions on difficult issues like racism (C1) is also about reassurance in the face of uncertainty about how to deal with such a complex issue.

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION

Subsequent queries generally became more specific, although in the case of C6 there were no subsequent queries as the initial queries all related to very short conversations. Sometimes, the queries opened up to include more topics, but the questions were nonetheless more precise. For example, in (C3), the online conversation, the initial query was to find out what people were talking about. The subsequent queries were then specifically targeted in seeking opinions on specific topics. This was also the case for C7 as the topics moved from the other EU country's election, to gaining opinions about the sister party in the UK and finally to some very probing queries about Syria, especially when the participant realised the depth of knowledge that his co-communicator had on the topic. Interestingly a number of queries were about how the participant can help in terms of sharing their knowledge and experience, as was the case for C2, C3, C4, C8 and C9. The participants reporting on C3 and C4 had been actively involved in the [xx] Party in earlier years and were now less involved, but clearly have a lot of experience to bring to the conversations. The participant reporting on C2 is an activist with considerable experience behind her, and in C9, the reporting participant is now growing in experience. The conversation in the prequel to C4 was also about help. In particular, it was about how the co-communicator could help and influence [xx] Women in feeling more confident to become more politically active.

The first few additional questions raised in C2 were interesting in that they were actually questions that the participant was asking herself. This was while observing the area rep, as he responded to her and showed her evidence of his performance to date, and later in the day as he engaged with householders during canvassing. The later queries in C2 were then about finding out the actual voter views and issues at local level. The queries in C4 and C5 were also about being further updated on current developments on the two legislative developments in the two cases. The second query in C5 was an enquiry about what is going to happen next regarding the collective bargaining legislation, so there is a tracking of events aspect here. The queries in C1 quickly moved from opinions about the novel to very specific queries about what people knew about attitudes and the extent of racism in the [home country], what their personal experiences and witnessing of racism were and what kind of ideas they had about developing a party strategy on dealing with racism. Another aspect of the queries was to find out how other people responded to racism they experienced or witnessed. So, there was commonality in some of the additional queries raised in the cases, and in the cases of C1 and C2, the goals and the cognitive and affective needs were not dissimilar to those for the initial queries, although more fine-tuned and nuanced. Goals

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION

included wanting to be more informed (all cases); wanting to know more about others' opinions (C1, C3, C7 and C8); seeking as well as offering guidance on party stance, approach to specific issues and how to handle certain situations (C1, C2, C3, prequel to C4, C4, C8 and C9); seeking alignment of personal, group and party values (C3, C7 and C8); and seeking reassurance (C1 and C2). The goal of wanting to be updated, particularly in C4 and C5, the legislation cases, was not only about the satisfaction of seeing something one was involved with in past years, come to fruition, but also to gain a sense of completing the picture of progress made from the time the participant became less active. Queries in C2, C8 and C9 were also focused around finding ways to gain more votes, effectively a 'bread and butter' goal of any political party. Curiosity continued to play a role in motivating the questions particularly in C3, C4, C5 and C7, but the questioning, on the whole, tended to be more specific and more focused. The queries resulted in expansive responses on the whole, in terms of knowledge shared. This included further opinions and beliefs on the topic in hand (C3 and C6 – C9); sharing of personal experiences relevant to the queries asked (C1, C4, C6 and C9); personal witness (C1) and personal influence or contribution (C4); evidence of personal success via news media (C2); knowledge about political sympathies and profiles of local people (C2); and updated information, such as reporting about a recent training event (C1), or progress on legislative processes (C4 and C5) or information about non-reported aspects of how the [xx] Party performed in government (C8) or an update on how a particular area is performing (C9). Further information and knowledge shared included more specific information such as constituents' attitudes on racism (C1), voters' issues (C2), background facts on certain issues (C3 and C7), ideas and guidance for self-improvement relating to helping women become more confident to be politically active (prequel to C4) and to developing profile and visibility for up and coming activists (C2 and C6). Other information shared included timings and logistics for scheduling a visit to [xx] Women (prequel to C4). Sharing of information and knowledge was also about exploring, discussion and debating opinions on contentious issues (C3 and C7). The goals for sharing were again varied with some meeting cognitive needs, some meeting affective needs and some meeting both.

Providing updates and additional information on certain processes and on background facts (C2 – C9) can meet cognitive needs and could also be affective if it has an effect on stress levels. The goal here is likely to be about reducing knowledge gaps and increasing self-efficacy. It could also be about reducing stress, however this depends on whether the updates bring good news or not. For example, reporting on the hate crime training (C1), while adding to a picture of a situation, did bring with it a degree of

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION

stress as some of the testimonies were distressing to share. However, empathetic responses and a sense of solidarity can also be about aiming to reduce stress. The goal related to helping each other with ideas, guidance and detailed updating can be about increasing a sense of self-efficacy for both the provider and the receiver. This can then lead to encouraging more confident and informed activism (C2, prequel to C4, C6, C8 and C9), as a related goal. For the person sharing, there is also an affective element of possibly wanting to feel pride in being able to help and having one's ability to help be recognised. Sharing in order to explore, discuss more deeply and debate contentious issues can have the goal of aligning party values or aligning personal values with party values, perhaps seeing if 'espoused values' match 'values in use', based on Argyris and Schön's (1996) concepts of 'espoused theory' and 'theory in use'. The goal of some of the sharing, such as information about one's performance (C2) or sharing similar experiences about racism (C1) can be about reassurance, and the latter can also be about maintaining solidarity as committed [xx] Party members, all affective aspects of the information and knowledge sharing behaviour.

Although each stage of the information exchange, i.e. the initial queries, additional queries and knowledge sharing, includes a section on examining the motivation from stress/coping, risk/reward and self-efficacy aspects, reflecting Wilson's (1997) model, there are overlaps in how these aspects function, so these are treated together. Stress and coping with stress is very much about the affective domain as stress is something that is felt. Risk and reward from making these initial inquiries, relate not only to opportunities for reducing stress, but also in so doing, and furthermore in addressing cognitive needs, the reward can very much be about increasing each other's sense of self-efficacy. For example, putting people at ease makes people feel better able to contribute to the conversation (C2). Sometimes, however, the initial queries and even subsequent queries do not result in reduction of stress. Becoming more informed and increasing self-efficacy might only emerge through the reassurance of shared stress, such as in C1, or the challenge of argumentative debate (C3, C7), or supportive nature of empathy (C1, C8 and C9).

The mood, emotion and attitude aspects of the information are interesting in that they add an extra dimension or layer to the picture being created about the information exchange, and this can provide indicators of areas of support, or potential challenges and barriers. In C1 the mood began in quite a light hearted way, 'it was fun, easy going, and open' but quickly passions are stirred due to the racism subject matter, where people 'felt strongly', were 'passionate', felt 'negative, concerned, distressed, shocked

but not surprised, outraged, annoyed, ashamed, conflicted and angry' as well as a sense of feeling overwhelmed by the issues. It was clear that the conversation was intense. 'Commitment' was expressed in trying to 'tackle' the issues, but this was also seen as challenging. In C2 the affective aspects were low key, by comparison, and mostly positive in that the area rep was 'reassured', the rep was 'seen as likeable' and praised and following on from the public event he organised, he again received praise on how well it went. Voter responses were 'positive to indifferent' and included complaints about other parties, while the public event was about the anxiety of exam stress. The online conversation in C3 was seen as, for example, being 'animated', 'dynamic' and 'refreshing' while still refraining from offensive comments when sharing 'deeply held views about values and secession'. Interestingly the restraint aspect was seen by the participant as something indicating that the online forum in question was 'more like face-to-face' communication. A common thread from the prequel to C4, C4 itself and C5 was an expression of joy. For example, the participant was happy to have found someone to talk to and motivate [xx] Women, happy about meeting the 'golden oldies' in C4. Amazement was expressed in C5 at the amendment success, the hard work that went into and how nonetheless these events 'don't get in the papers. Joy was also expressed in C5 at seeing a 'popular politician' involved in the early stages of development, now getting to sign the amendment. The participant also in C5 expressed a 'feeling of accomplishment'. However, there was 'anger' in C4 that there was still a group opposing legislation relating to narrowing the gender pay gap in C4. Regarding the short conversations in C6, strong emotions were expressed regarding a motion about classifying some parties as 'no-go' for co-operation, but the mood was mostly positive in both C6 and C7 with the participant mainly expressing admiration for the people he had the conversations with and amusement at one person, who he described as 'fun to watch', as well as admiration for an EU election candidate discussed in C7. Also in C7 the disco was 'a great night'.

Some of the conversations during the disco, did draw more sombre responses, such as reduced support for a leader of an EU sister party, depression at the state of Syria, and frustration felt by the participant when he saw the youth wing as 'naïve'. However he felt that the disagreements were 'a good thing'. The affective factors described in C8 captured the initial negativity of the disillusioned party member. He was 'initially critical, tired, frustrated and feeling betrayed' as he regarded himself as 'proud socialist'. So a sense of being let-down in what was seen as a drift in party values was presented here. The stress for the participant trying to respond is captured when he says 'he was trying to defend the party', had a 'kneejerk response' and strongly wanting to explain

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION

that 'we fought awfully hard for limiting how aggressive' the coalition party, that the [xx] Party was in government with, actually wanted to be. The movement towards a more positive attitude by the member is captured when he is described as being 'encouraged both by the conversation and by the motions in place, and he felt the party was 'going back to its roots'. There were mixed feelings in C9 with frustration at the 'sense of disconnect for rural constituencies' while at the same time the participant wanted to see that 'passionate members' are supported and not undervalued. Particular praise was given for retired members as being 'fantastic', 'happy to put in the time', 'dedicated' and 'we need them'. These affective factors proved crucial to providing a deeper appreciation of what has been happening in the communication exchange. Without understanding these, it becomes more difficult to see what the internal drivers are for the members and what motivates them in their work and willingness to learn. Considering affective factors also allows a degree of sensing of the tacit knowledge of the members as they express their emotional responses. Drivers include 'passion', 'belief' in party values and the stands the party takes on issues, being able to experience a 'sense of achievement' as well as approval and feelings of support. Negative affective factors can also act as drivers to act, such as shock and outrage as expressed about the extent of racist attitudes, disagreements of opinions and disillusionment. The disillusioned member acted as a driver for the participant to persuade him there have been more positive developments.

Regarding the type of information behaviour according to Wilson's (1997) categories, C1-C4 involved moving from passive search, effectively browsing the conversation, to more active searching as the conversation picked up pace. In C1 and C4 the information behaviour initially started as passive attention; for example, in C1, the participant was simply going to read a book, which serendipitously ended up being about a significant social issue that political parties need to tackle, racism. In C4, the passive attention involved casual listening at a demonstration which then became a more focussed conversation on the legislation about the gender pay gap. Other cases also began with passive attention but quickly moved to active searching (prequel to C4, C5, C6 and C8), whereas cases C7 and C9 were already focused and therefore the information behaviour was of active searching. The suggestion of ongoing searching after the information exchange occurs in almost all of the cases. In C4 and C5, there was a sense of completeness in the conversation, however the participant indicated that she would be continuing to follow the two pieces of legislation and their future development. The first two questions in C6 were considered as complete in terms of information seeking, whereas the second two conversations there would involve

ongoing searching. In C8, it was thought that the disillusioned member, having been persuaded the [xx] Party was once again aligning more closely to his values, might want to continue with an ongoing search on the progress of the party.

6.3.3 Information behaviour outcome and follow-up

In this section, new learning that emerged from the conversations is identified, along with emergent opportunities or support and challenges or barriers. The information seeking behaviour is then further evaluated against a range of theorists' categories. Not only did this help with gaining further insight into the information behaviour in the exchange, it also served to check the consistency of the analysis when applying Wilson's (1997) information behaviour categories. This was particularly the case when applying Savolainen's (2014) information seeking responses. The information processing and use section following on from the information behaviour outcome is fairly short, due to the fact that the study is not a longitudinal one so it was not possible to observe further detailed, longer term use of information and knowledge garnered during the conversations. However participants were able to comment on more short-term follow-up behaviours, involving actual, probable or possible behaviour.

Reflecting on the new learning resulting from the case conversations, most of this came under one of four areas. First, there was new learning about others' and one's own capabilities and ways of doing things, either in terms of a particular group (C1, C3, prequel to C4 and C9) or in terms of individuals (C2, C6 and C8). In C1, the participant learned that she and other staff could discuss complex and difficult social issues in 'a new way' and that there appeared a commitment to trying to 'figure out' an effective way for the party to deal with those issues of racism and hate crime. The participant in C3 learned about how members processed their arguments on line and what kinds of results were generated. He was also impressed by 'how well they articulated their positions'. In C4, the EU co-ordinator was able to commit to visiting and speaking with [xx] Women, to help them feel more confident about being party activists. In C9 the participant found that he could work together with the member from his home town on trying to raise party visibility in that area. In terms of individual capability, the participant in C2 learning about the extent of the area rep's capability in organising a public event, dealing with the media, talking with the voters and gaining belief in him from others, and praise. In part of the C6 short conversations, the participant obtained tips on improving his own profile, and in C8, the same participant found that he was able to persuade a disillusioned member to think more favourably about the [xx] Party.

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION

The second area of new learning related to discovering new, similar or different opinions and often a new range of arguments on a particular topic. So, in C1 the participant learned that others in her group also felt ‘annoyed’ at the racism issues in their ‘home country’, while the participant in C3 learned about the arguments and strength of feeling on a range of topics. Similar views were expressed by the participant in C6 – C8, particularly in relation to the discussion on Syria (C7).

Third, new learning included becoming better informed and being updated on progress and development around certain issues, which arguably could increase one’s own feeling of capability in terms of having a sense of knowing more about what one is talking about than initially thought. So the participant in C2 became better informed about voter issues in the area rep’s constituency, while the participant in C4 and C5 was able to update herself on developments that led to the current situation regarding legislation on the gender pay gap and collective bargaining for freelance workers. The participant in C6 was able to update himself on the people and background to a contentious seat, and in C7 to learn more about the complexity of developments in Syria at the time. In C8 the participant updated a member on party performance; while, in C9, a fellow member was able to update the participant on what was happening in his home constituency. The last area of new learning was more about practicalities and logistics, such as when the EU co-ordinator in the prequel to C4 would be able to visit and talk with [xx] Women, the date of the next demo (C4) and access to the constituency accounts (C9).

In considering opportunities and support and challenges and barriers, more opportunities and support emerged than barriers, although one or two challenges also emerged. The challenges and barriers were very specific, so in C1, the challenge was the overwhelming complexity of racism and hate crime issues and information overload; in C2 the challenge was perceived as being able to maintain voter trust. Other challenges included seeing how one can use one’s experience in an advisory capacity from an onlooker position (C4), availability of relevant staff when seeking advice (C6), and a particularly interesting challenge was that of developing party stances on certain international issues, when the issues are so complex to grasp (C7). A further challenge was the task of increasing party visibility in rural areas (C9). Potential barriers were mainly that dissatisfaction or disillusion by members in respect of the party direction or evolution of party values in a way that those members are less able to relate to, can result in less participation or even leaving the party (C3 and C8).

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION

For the opportunities and support, there seem to be three main areas that the cases covered. Firstly, regarding support, confirmation and emergence of mutual support came through in C1 in trying to tackle racism and C9 in trying to raise visibility in rural areas; C2, C6 and C8 featured the offering of support to the area rep, to the participant in C7 who wants to eventually stand as an election candidate and to the disillusioned member in C8; in the prequel to C4, the EU co-ordinator was able to offer significant support to [xx] Women. Success was a second factor that marked opportunities, so the success of the EU co-ordinator in motivating [xx] Women led to the development and continued work on the gender pay gap legislation (C4). Both this success and the success of the collective bargaining legislation made the participant want to be more involved again at constituency level, but only in an advisory capacity (C4 and C5). Praise and success with the voters and the media in C2 and praise and encouragement in C6 and the success of being able to persuade the disillusioned member to moderate their view in C8 resulted in an increased sense of self-efficacy, thus acting as motivation for the activists to continue to improve and develop their work. A third positive opportunity identified was the dynamic of debate, exploration of ideas on stances members think the party should take on certain issues and reflection on party values. The ability to articulate well thought out arguments, be open to different perspectives, to disagree, even to do so passionately, are all seen to be of value, particularly by the participants in C3 and C7.

The evaluation of information seeking behaviour as an outcome of the overall information behaviour surrounding the information exchange was interesting in that it served as a check on the analyses up to that point, and ensured that the different parts of the analysis corresponded consistently with this last section. In terms of Todd's (2005) work on how the information exchange contributed to increasing perceptions of the overall picture of the issues being explored in each case, the majority of cases had the effect of clarifying the picture of the situations for the participants. In many cases, verification also took place as people shared their experiences and understandings of the situations under discussion. Furthermore, in C5, the additional information on how the collective bargaining legislation had progressed, completed a picture for the participant, and had the effect of filling in the missing knowledge gaps (Dervin, 2005). The participant in C8 was able to have the effect of changing a member's picture of how the [xx] Party was progressing.

All the cases suggested there would be continued expansion of the information search (Savolainen, 2014) subsequent to the information exchange. This possibly reflects the

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION

positive nature of the opportunities and support identified earlier. Some of the expansion of information seeking is about keeping track of developments, such as in C2 with the progress of the area rep, in C3 with keeping track of the online discussions on the member social media forum, in C4 and C5 with keeping track of the progress of the legislation on gender pay, and the amendment on collective bargaining for freelance workers, in C6 with the 'equality must wait' debate and in C7 on international affairs and [xx] Party positions on them. More focused expansion of information seeking is likely for C1 as members try to look for ways to tackle racism and hate crime, in C2 where the area rep and co-ordinator continue to gauge voter issues on the ground, in C6 as the participant continues to seek advice on building up his profile and in C9 where the same participant will be looking at ways of influencing and improving party visibility in his home town and opportunities for moving forward towards becoming a candidate for council elections in that area.

Using the positive and negative attributes that Hepworth (2004) applied in his work on informal communication among carers; it is interesting to note that no negative attributes were reported in respect of either human sources or any additional sources brought into the conversation. The communicators and additional sources in C1, C2, the prequel to C4, and C4 – C6 were perceived as both accessible and knowledgeable. Sources in C3 and C7 were seen as knowledgeable. The additional sources in C1, the book and the hate crime training event, were seen as relevant. The communicators in C6, C8 and C9 were also described as experienced, and the source in C9 was further described as reliable. So, in total the source attributes were positive and considered mostly accessible and knowledgeable, and in some cases, also reliable, relevant and experienced. All of these being factors that show trust in the sources and confirms the literature that informal communication is often more trusted than formal communication (Case and Given, 2016; Dervin, 1998 and 2005; Krikelas, 1983; Hepworth, 2004).

For the purposes of this research, the information processing and use part of the information behaviour cycle is described as 'follow up'. It can be argued that part of the information exchange already involved a degree of information processing, in order for the dynamic of the conversation to work. However it is also fair to say that further information processing is likely to occur after the conversations, either in terms of reflecting on the information received and new knowledge gained, or in terms of formalising and organising the information received in order to do something with it. In the cases used here, the information was mostly reflected upon and in some cases, used in further conversations or to proceed with making arrangements as in the case of

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION

the prequel to C4. This reflects the fact that the interviews occurred quite quickly after the informal conversations took place. In reviewing the participants' answers to the interview question on follow-up, the responses fell into three main categories: actual follow up (C2, prequel to C4, C4 itself, and C6, probable follow-up (C1, C3 and C9) and possible follow-up (C5, C7 and C8). In C2 the area co-ordinator contacted the area rep after the public event took place and heard that there was very good attendance, good feedback in the press, and that the area rep had received praise from the members' WhatsApp group. Following on from that, the area co-ordinator heard that the rep would be organising another public event, which the area co-ordinator thought was 'going to be on the gender pay gap'.

From the prequel to C4, the visit of the EU co-ordinator was organised and her talk 'galvanised' [xx] Women into action, which culminated in the legislation event in C4. The information given in C4 about the launch of the collective bargaining amendment resulted in the C5 event. Some of the conversations in C6 led to votes in subsequent motions, and the participant deciding not to go for the vacant seat. The participant in C1 did not want to commit to follow-up activity but as her boss was already working on developing a [xx] Party policy, she felt it was very probable that she would be bringing her new knowledge from the book club into discussions with her boss and into the planning of the policy. She did have a further conversation with her partner on the evening that the book club took place, in which she shared what she had learned and her partner confirmed his own experience regarding racism. The participant in C3 said that he was a regular viewer and contributor to the informal social media members' forum and that he often added articles to the platform for discussion. This makes it very likely that he will continue to track the topics discussed in C3 not only from the platform but also via other sources. The participant in C9 said that he would be following up on the issue of access to the constituency bank account in his home town. He is also likely to be keeping up to date with developments in the area, given his interest in running as a candidate there. He expressed the hope that the member in C8 would become more active, but as he could not be sure, this would be more of a possibility than a probability. The participants in C5 and C7 did say that they were interested in tracking the topics that they discussed. This is indeed possible, given their level of interest, but it is also arguable that the possibility of other issues taking priority might reduce the likelihood of tracking the issues. This is unlike the cases with probable follow-up behaviour as the actions are considered highly likely to happen due to either the task oriented nature of the motivation or the regularity of the particular type of communication activity.

Moving into the next part of the discussion, the discussion here in Section 6.3 of the cases feeds into the different aspects of the discussion on learning in Section 6.4. This then demonstrates how taking an information behavioural approach to the research question significantly assists the study and plays an important part in the evaluation of how informal communication influences the [xx] Party in being a 'learning organisation'. It effectively forms a bridge between the analysis of what constitutes informal communication or conversation, and the application of learning and organisational learning theory in the interpretation of the findings in both Chapters Four and Five.

6.4 Learning

The process of learning as shown in the findings from Chapters Four and Five as well as the analysis in Section 6.3 does, in fact, reflect what the literature says about learning. The findings mention a range of learning experiences involving exploring, asking questions, analysing and evaluating the responses, gaining increased understanding and comprehension (Bloom, 1956 and Adams, 2015), experiencing (McGill et al, 1992 and Elkjaer, 2005), challenging assumptions and beliefs (Allee, 2003) in, for example, C3, C7 and C8, and reflecting (Dewey, 1910; Elkjaer, 2005) are all activities that appear in Section 6.3. As Argyris and Schön (1996) says, learning can take place within and outside organisations, can be planned or unplanned and sometimes involves a process of 'unlearning' as in the case of C8, the disillusioned member at the annual party conference. Similarly, informal communication can also take place inside or outside the organisation as shown in Section 6.1. Learning that emerges from informal communication tends to be more unplanned, spontaneous, and sometimes unexpected, thus reflecting the nature of informal communication itself (Figure 9). Even where the situations of some of the informal conversations were planned, the actual content of the conversations was free-flowing and spontaneous, such as in (C1, C4 and C5) and there was no specific agenda. Dewey (1910) identifies both inquiry and reflection as crucial to the learning process and incorporating learning from past experiences and past consequences of actions. Katovich (2010) further observes that without such reflection and the continuous process of learning, significant lessons result in being lost in the passage of time and old catastrophes are then repeated again and again. In the first interviews, participants frequently mentioned wanting to learn from the mistakes of the [xx] Party in the previous government. In some of the cases, such as in C3 and C7, international developments are observed and reflected on, again looking at what the [xx] Party can learn from this, particularly

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION

regarding concerns about the growth of the far right (Gallagher et al, 2011; Stoker, 2006; Luther and Müller-Rommel, 2002; Liddle, 2008; Martell, 2003; Keating and McCrone, 2015).

According to Elkjaer (2005), inquiries start with the senses which are not necessarily at the point of verbal articulation, but do eventually need to be turned into consciously acknowledged experiences in order for learning to take place. It could be argued in C1 in the conversation about racism, feelings and senses experienced by the communicators in other situations, were brought to the surface and verbal acknowledgement of these was triggered as more people began sharing more of their own experiences and witnessing of racism. The participant reporting on this used the expression 'puzzling it out'. Arguably, the process of bringing what one senses to verbal articulation is exactly that. Allee (2003) regards learning as a state of paying attention. This comes through in all the cases, be it about values (C1, C3, C7, and C8); socially challenging behaviour on the ground (C1); voter views (C1, C2 and C6); [xx] Party visibility (C2 and C9) and [xx] Party successes (C2, C4 and C5).

Elkjaer (2005) distinguishes between individual and social learning, whereby individuals maintain certain mental models until they engage and share these with other people. Exploring each other's mental models, challenging them and reflecting on the challenges is seen by Elkjaer (2005) as important to identity development within organisations, as well as to negotiation of relationships and collective sense-making. A caveat here is that people can struggle with surfacing and articulating their mental models, and similarly to the process of articulating information need (Case and Given, 2016), it could take several informal conversations before people are able to recognise the mental models they have been functioning with. Elkjaer (2005) also sees the way individuals participate in learning affects the learning impact on their organisation overall, with conflict and power being contributory factors. It can be argued that these points also relate to the way individuals perceive how influence functions in the organisation (see Section 6.4.2) and impacts on their own sense of self-efficacy in contributing to learning within their organisation. Allee (2003) also emphasises the importance of learning within organisations' networks (see Section 6.1). Elkjaer (2005) further emphasises the importance of "informality, improvisation, collective action, conversation and sense making" (Elkjaer, 2005, p. 44), thus confirming the value of informal communication in learning in organisations.

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION

Some aspects of informal communication might not automatically result in learning. Vince and Gabriel (2011) consider the role of emotional politics and how emotions are interwoven with politics and power in the organisation. These authors believe that emotional politics make the difference between “learning-in-action and learning inaction” (Vince and Gabriel, 2011, p. 339). This view is supported by Fay (2011). Gargiulo (2005), Waring and Bishop (2010) and Baugut and Reinemann (2013) articulate the view that learning inactivity is more likely where more negative factors prevail. This view is further supported by other authors, especially when the informal communication is about gossip or moaning (Gargiulo, 2005); being a grapevine for rumour (Soo et al, 2002); maintaining a culture of secrecy and keeping people out of the information loop (Baugut and Reinemann, 2013); or unintentionally omitting to include people through ‘internal stickiness’, i.e. where information is only shared among those who understand it (Soo et al, 2002). Overreliance on informal communication can result in missing other key information that can only be gleaned from more formal communication (Soo et al, 2002). In the findings from both Chapters Four and Five participants observed gossip where people would talk about other politicians at social events or life events such as a birthday, a wedding or a funeral. Gossip also featured in the café conversation in C2, where the area rep was pointing out which parties the different people there were aligned to. In addition, gossip occurred at various points at the annual party conference. One of the participants described this annual event as being ‘like a family wedding’; in other words, a life event.

However, not all so-called gossip had uniformly negative effects. For example, regarding rumour, some of the informal conversations were about clarification rather than about spreading rumours further. The participant in C6 gained clarification regarding a story about a controversial seat, because he was trying to decide whether to stand for it or not. He also gave clarification himself, to another member, on the current direction of the party in C8, to reduce the negativity of the member who was experiencing disillusionment. Thus conversations in which the communicators portrayed negative emotions did not automatically block further learning, but rather acted as a motivation for people to share information, thus facilitating learning, about positive action already occurring in (C1 and C8). Negative emotions also acted as a motivation to try to tackle the issues which are actually causing the negative feelings, again in C1 regarding racism issues. This also occurred in C4 in the discussion about the employer body that was against the legislation on gender pay equality; and in C9 regarding the issue of [xx] Party visibility in rural areas. It is also interesting to note that in the first interview, one of the participants was very firmly of the opinion that informal

conversation is frequently about gossip. However, in the actual reporting back after the informal conversations took place, the gossip element turned out to be relatively small. The conversations subsequently turned out to be more about values (C1, C3, C7 and C8); sharing sensitive issues (C1); personal progress and goals in the party (C2, C6 and C9); and tracking progress in areas that people had a personal investment in (C4 and C5) and 'testing the temperature' among voters in (C2). Values and goals are examined further in Section 6.4.2, when looking at organisational learning and what it means to be a learning organisation.

6.4.1 Information communication in single and double loop learning

Argyris and Schön's (1996) concept of single-loop learning can be as uncomplicated as identifying a simple error and correcting it or it can be something more complex, such as reviewing a particular strategic approach or set of assumptions. In the cases, there were several examples of changing assumptions when considering the new learning from informal conversations both at individual and at organisational levels. In C1, the assumption that [xx] Party supporters would not have racist views was challenged by a councillor, who reported from his constituency that some of the supporters were making openly racist remarks. As the follow-up was the probable feeding back to the policy unit in parliament, it is likely that organisationally there would be a change in assumptions about the extent to which racism is becoming openly expressed by [xx] Party voters. This effectively confirms the need for the party to address the causes of hate crime in the 'home country'. In C2, the area co-ordinator who worried that the area rep's personality might work against him, found that, to the contrary, he had mastered the required techniques and was successful in gaining respect and support from other [xx] Party supporters in the area. This works at an organisational level as well, as the area coordinator could confirm the success of the area rep at headquarters. In C6 clarifying the situation about the controversial vacant seat, and the conversation in C9 led the participant to change his strategy about which seat he should consider. This reflects a change in direction for the individual, but its impact has the potential to be felt at organisational level, once the participant makes a firm decision about where he is going to stand. In C8, the participant worked to change the assumptions being made by the disillusioned member. The potential expressed by the participant here was that this member would, as a result of changed assumptions, engage more actively with the [xx] Party. While a change in organisational strategy is not obvious here, there is the tenuous possibility that if the member does become more active as a result of this conversation, there may be an organisational benefit from this.

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION

Some of the informal conversations were about trying to gauge voter views and behaviour and how this might affect future election strategies (C2), as well as looking at what can be learned from the election performance of sister parties in the EU that can be taken into account in the 'home country's' own election strategy (C7). Sharing views about the implications that a possible BREXIT might have on the 'home country' was ostensibly about individual opinions in the actual conversation, but at some point, it is highly likely that these discussions are revisited at various levels in the [xx] Party organisation. At the time of the study, it was not possible though to say whether these particular communicators would, from their informal conversations, go on to influence organisational strategy in response to the various effects of the UK's deliberations and eventual decision on the BREXIT question. One very apparent and positive organisational effect of an informal conversation was the prequel to C4. Here the participant learned that the person she was speaking with could and would come to the 'home capital city' and talk to [xx] Women. The long term organisational benefit from this was that the women learned about ways of becoming effective activists, which previously they doubted they were able to do. So their assumption of lack of self-efficacy was then changed to increased self-belief. Eventually and a direct result of this intervention, [xx] Women were able to make a difference to the party strategy and influence party values ('double loop learning' as per Argyris and Schön, (1996)), which thus led to progress in putting through legislation on the gender pay gap, celebrated in C4. It could be argued further that the immediate learning gained from being updated at the demonstration (C4) and the freelance workers' collective bargaining amendment launch (C5) was about gaining confirmation of progress on [xx] Party values represented by those pieces of legislation.

With Argyris and Schön's (1996) double loop learning concept, the learning includes not only a change in strategy or assumption but also a change in organisational values. In the first set of interviews (Chapter Four), several of the participants talked about the [xx] Party needing to re-examine itself in terms of its identity and to re-establish their core values after a poor performance in the prior election. Reviewing the values and party strategies is something that occurs at events like the annual party conference. In C6, one of the short conversations was about determining how to vote on certain upcoming motions, including one about who the party should not go into coalition with, if another election resulted in the need for a coalition. This was, in fact, about realigning party values. Also, in C6, the conversation on 'equality must wait' that was being proposed at the conference, was another example of the organisation re-examining priorities in its values, to reflect the economic situation of the constituencies' poorer

voters. The online conversations in C3 were debates about co-operation with other parties and views about whether or not it would be appropriate for the [xx] Party to support secession activists in, for example, another EU country. Here again, values were being challenged and discussed with potential impact on how the [xx] Party might move forward on certain international issues. This was similar to the discussions in C7. The participant in C3 explained that the online social media platform was something of a testing ground for bouncing off new ideas, although he did note that out of the full membership of the forum, about 300, only about 8 people were really engaged in the discussions. However, the prominent communicators on the online forum are not always the same people and participation depends on the issue under discussion and how passionately the member or members feel about that issue. Allee (2003, p.14) describes double loop learning as seeking “what is alive, compelling and energizing” and an openness to “radical possibilities beyond the boundaries of current thinking”. While it cannot be said that radical possibilities have emerged from this study, it is fair to say that learning has been portrayed by the participants as having the dynamic qualities identified by Allee (2003).

6.4.2 Organisational learning

It is useful to review and summarise some of the key concepts and ideas about what organisational learning is before discussing how these have been applied in this study. Dibella and Nevis (1998) maintain that organisational learning is concerned with learning at three levels: individual, group and organisational; which is the approach that is being applied in this discussion. However, various factors can affect whether or not the learning at each level would successfully transfer between and across those levels. “Diffusion of lessons learned throughout an organisation can be fraught with all sorts of difficulties” (Argyris and Schön, 1996, p.3). One of the factors affecting the capacity for diffusion of knowledge in an organisation is the level of absorptive capacity in the organisation. Absorptive capacity is about how people in the organisation can recognise, absorb, internalise, integrate and assimilate new external information and ‘know-how’ (Soo et al, 2002). While Debowski (2006) sees organisational learning as being about developing social capital and knowledge leadership, both Debowski (2006) and Maden (2011) observe that the extent to which this can be achieved depends on, among other things, context, goals and values, organisational structures and information flows. Caldwell (2012a, p. 47) believes the issue of “the relationship between power and learning, knowledge and expertise, learning and leadership” is central to understanding how effective an organisation can be in its learning and diffusion of knowledge. Power is also closely related to influence, thus it could be

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION

argued that overall learning by an organisation as a whole is dependent on the influence that individuals and groups have at different levels within the organisation as well as from outside the organisation. Influence as a force for organisational learning is explored in Section 6.3.3 when new learning at group level in information conversations is examined for the likelihood of the learning then leading to diffusion in other parts of the organisation, as a follow-up effect of the original informal conversations. The sharing of expertise and motivations for doing so also features in the cases in Section 6.3. Leadership is discussed in Chapter Four, and is seen by Bennett and O'Brien (1994) as being crucial to the extent and level of knowledge sharing and diffusion that occurs within an organisation. Interestingly, the participants have quite different views on how leadership works in the [xx] Party.

To apply these findings from the literature review it is useful to return to Dibella and Nevis's (1998) three levels and Debowski's (2006), Maden's (2011) and Caldwell's (2012a) factors which were identified as affecting the extent to which organisational learning can realistically occur. Firstly, the broader political context is considered and how the participants perceive the [xx] Party's responses to the challenges presented. At organisational level, participants' perceptions of leadership style, and [xx] Party alignment of goals and values are examined. At group level, links are made to the material in Section 6.1 on networks and Section 6.3.3 on outcomes from information exchanges through informal conversations. Links are also made to participants' observations about influence in the [xx] Party as discussed in Chapter Four. At individual level, ways the participants learn and keep themselves up to date, again discussed in Chapter Four, are reviewed. Links are made to Section 6.3.2 on motivations for making inquiries and sharing one's own individual knowledge in informal conversations, as well as considering some of the barriers that can prevent individuals from diffusing their learning at group and organisational levels.

Firstly, the current political context that the [xx] Party finds itself in is one characterised by a rise of populism and identity politics, as discussed by the research participants. These challenges and the challenge of increasing popularity of right wing and nationalist agendas is also well documented, particularly in literature on the problems currently facing social democracy parties in Europe (Gallagher et al, 2011). The environment for the [xx] Party, particularly after a poor performance in a recent election, is not one of complacency. Participants in the first interview (Chapter Four) repeatedly pointed to the need for heightened attention to overt and more nuanced changes occurring across the global and European political stage, in particular in

relation to 'social justice', 'dangers of populism' and its effect on immigration policies, and the impact and uncertainty of BREXIT. Participants wondered 'where social democracy is at'. The participants mention that the [xx] Party needs 'to be relevant' and 'have an authentic voice' and one participant wonders about how they in the [xx] Party can get the messaging right, to the electorate, while not succumbing to populist values. The participants perceived an identity crisis for the party, although one participant saw this as a positive opportunity for renewal and rebuilding of party identity. The matter of [xx] Party identity was also discussed in some depth in the case analyses in Section 6.3.1 when exploring the context of the case conversations. In the question in Chapter Four, from the first interview, about finding stories that have embedded themselves in the [xx] Party narrative, the participants struggled to find answers to this. They said it was because they felt that many of the old stories and icons would not have so much resonance now, with one participant citing the changing patterns of working among the younger generation as a possible cause. This also affects member recruitment. Regarding the national political context, participants noted a wide range of issues arising, such as homelessness and the difficulty of getting onto the mortgage ladder; as well as the changing nature of work including the 'gig' economy, often characterised by zero-hour contracts. Further issues mentioned were improving women's rights and thinking about how to right past wrongs, including, as mentioned earlier, trying to address 'the reality of this urban, angry population'. One of the participants observed that local issues were easiest for MPs and councillors to succeed with, compared with national issues, which might be regarded in some communities as something detached from them. The impression gained from the participants is that the [xx] Party has a tough learning task on its hands as it tries to find its place in the current political environment. In the conversation in C8 the participant there was optimistic about the future and shared this with a more disillusioned party member, explaining some of the changes and new developments that have been occurring.

At organisational level, participants' perceptions of leadership style (Chapter Four), and their discussion about [xx] Party alignment of goals and values (Chapters Four and Five) are examined. Firstly, looking at the question of leadership style, when the question was posed to the research participants, it was explained that this was not a question directly about the party leader, but that rather it was about how the participants sense and experience leadership, recognising that leadership can occur in different ways (Handy, 1993; Cole and Kelly, 2011; Balogun and Hope Hailey, 2015) and is not necessarily dictated by role. Farmer (2008) develops the idea of informal communication being a "shadow organisation" (Farmer, 2008, p. 12), which includes

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION

the emergence of “natural local leaders” (Farmer, 2008, p.13). Views on leadership were varied and at times, contradictory. There is a sense of change in the leadership style in a way that allows for better diffusion of knowledge in the organisation, and that practical steps are being taken to do this. The party leadership itself is described as being shared within the leadership team (see Figure 10). One participant remarked that anyone can have a leadership role and that the leader does not necessarily ‘have to do the vision; you know anyone can do the vision; you can all lead from where you are’. However, another participant, who had become less active in the party but remains a committed member, saw the leadership as being too centralised. The participant felt there was insufficient interaction with people leading to insufficient expansion of knowledge, thus acting as a barrier to organisational learning. Progressive developments in the flatter structured voluntary organisations, which were found to stimulate an ‘attitude of being more inquisitive’, were perceived as something the [xx] Party could learn from. Two other participants expressed the opinion that in previous years, the leadership style was more top-down and was more focused on creating the ‘polished image’ or ‘newspeak’ rather than presenting an ‘authentic voice’, but that now this is perceived as changing and the leadership is becoming more consensual, such as when a member of the leadership team invited the attending party members to develop their own ideas for the party constitution. This apparently had not been done before and most of the ideas were then incorporated into the revision of the constitution. While leadership style drew varied responses, four out of the five participants were of the opinion that decision making was essentially collaborative in approach. There was a sense of ‘openness to criticism’ and an attitude of ‘healthy critique’. Informal communication was identified as a strong characteristic of the culture of the [xx] Party. ‘Everyone has an opinion ... we’re very critical ... we love to discuss ... talking is a big part of the party’. Two participants expressed the view that a member of the party could talk to anyone, ‘it’s not a case of they’re too high up’ and ‘you can get through to important, relevant people without too much fuss’. Good leadership was also seen as people who ‘can lead from behind’ and who have ‘sound judgement’ and leaders who seek to empower their voters rather than simply fixing all their problems at local level.

The current political climate has created a challenge for the [xx] Party members to ensure their values and goals remain relevant and that they are perceived to be authentic about their goals and policies. The participants all perceived the [xx] Party, in some way, to be about equality, solidarity, having a workable economy, having good public services, ensuring collective bargaining rights, playing its part in international

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION

work on climate change, upholding the rights of minorities, as well as trying to level ‘the playing field’ and ‘trying to reduce the gap in effort as much as possible’. This referred to, for example, the situation where some students have to earn at the same time as they undertake third level education, while others do not have to, and so have more opportunity to make the most of their studies, or have less stress in conducting their studies. Research with regard to this specific example may show a slightly different or more nuanced picture, however, the concept of ‘gap of effort’ is valid, indeed. It is also interesting to examine the motivations that the participants gave for joining the [xx] Party. They saw the [xx] Party as being the party most likely to act on improving the role of women, increasing equality and diversity, and supporting trade unions and workers’ rights. As one participant said that where they would align themselves economically, and socially, the [xx] Party was the party that in their mind was most likely to bring about the ‘kind of country I would like to build and see in the future’. All the participants felt it was the party most likely to bring about change, seeing it as being ‘more progressive’ and ‘willing to be more bold’, ‘pragmatic and constructive’. While the latter was something all the participants felt was important they did say that not all party members would agree and that the [xx] Party should not compromise its ideology. The informal conversations discussed in C3, C7 and C8 were examples of how informal communication facilitated the exploration and debate of these different approaches to meeting the party goals, essentially the difference between a utilitarian approach and a more idealistic and absolute approach. It could be argued that such debate ensures a robust dynamism about the party.

Several difficulties were identified in terms of applying [xx] Party values and achieving [xx] Party goals. One participant, reflecting the pragmatic approach to achieving party goals, stated that ‘politics is all about compromise; trying to get as much of your policies through as you can’. Compromise decisions inevitably result in some dissatisfaction in the electorate but the participant considered this as a healthy state of affairs and that a party does not have to have everything its own way when in government. While the extent of compromise requires examination, the absence of it, as the participant explained, could otherwise threaten the whole concept of democracy and risks the possibility that a more authoritarian approach is at work. Another difficulty that was identified was about the communication of [xx] Party goals, including what the party has been trying to do about achieving those goals, and the rationale behind certain [xx] Party decisions in relation to those goals. These problems relate very much to Argyris and Schön’s (1996) concepts of ‘espoused theory’ and ‘theory in use’. Being able to articulate the [xx] Party goals in a way that makes sense to voters and in a way

that can be absorbed and understood quickly was perceived as highly challenging: 'you need a concise way to inspire people because you can't just say things are mostly okay'. It seems that both 'espoused theory' in relation to values and 'theory in use' or what actually happens, have proven difficult to convey. Furthermore, voters may perceive the 'theory in use' or actual actions as a betrayal of what they perceive to be the 'espoused theory' or values of the party, that originally attracted their vote. Furthermore, as one participant said: 'we all have our ideas about what the party stands for but ... if you were an outsider looking in you might have incredible difficulty in finding out what we're for', again suggesting that even the espoused values are difficult to portray, never mind how those values were actually implemented. The same participant also felt that were definitive lessons to be learned with regards to messaging, for example, rather than messages of 'this is good for you', but an approach of 'if we are doing this, that's how bad it is', in this case, in respect of dealing with specific economic problems might have been less unpopular. Some questioning arose from voters about the [xx] Party not sufficiently addressing some of the hard economic problems some of them are facing. This emerged in the challenges faced by the councillor in C1 who was finding some of his constituents more willing to complain about diversity and be openly racist, while in C6, in a more sympathetic approach, a policy of 'Equality must wait' was being presented to the party. The proliferation of parties with a high degree of overlap in their goals was also seen as a challenge with regards to the messaging.

Group behaviour in terms of informal conversations and networks is discussed extensively in Section 6.1. However, with regards to understanding how diffusion of learning might occur in the [xx] Party it is worth examining the findings in Chapter Four on the participants' perceptions relating to influence. When the participants were asked about who has the most influence on the direction of the party (Section 4.5.3), core leadership was mentioned, along with MPs, sometimes councillors and the party chair was favourably referred to as being not only influential by position but also because this person was seen as 'loyal' and a 'conscience figure'. 'I would like to think it is the members who direct, who lead, who take us where we are going' but as the participant who said this later observes, for this to happen, people need to step forward and stand in council elections. The annual conference was seen as an opportunity for members to influence the party direction and having fewer motions allowed more time for debate on those that were submitted. Participants mentioned that there were 'go-to' people, though the number of these had been reduced due to some very experienced leaving resulting in the loss of some of the institutional memory of the [xx] Party; a common

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION

issue for organisations (Bennett and O'Brien, 1994). Members who particularly have the ear of someone who would have influence were also mentioned. These latter two types of people equate to Farmer's (2008) and Swan's (2014) 'knowledge broker' concept. Knowledge brokers have no obvious leadership role, but command considerable influence due to their particular networks and access to knowledge. In addition to the party chair, other specific people were mentioned as influential. This was also connected to respect. As one participant said, where respect is lost then people start to 'align with others and start undermining'. Influential people were also seen as people the participants would go to for 'sound advice', 'not driven by agenda but by good judgement', 'wise people', 'able to keep their own identity', 'visible', has 'a good political nose' and again 'loyal to the party'. This also reflects Nozick's (1989) perceptions about the nature of wisdom (Section 2.2), which includes understanding the important goals in life and being able to tell what is appropriate and when, i.e. having good judgement. Retired members were also seen as influential due to their experience and the fact that they may have more time to provide voluntary support at constituency level.

Negative aspects of influence were also mentioned (Section 4.2.12) including the 'halo' effect due to habitual praise that might not always reflect the reality; people being in positions of leadership who are not suited to the role; people who are good at using clever tactics rather than those who could have been influential with ideas; and cliques and factions which thrive more on gossip.

When specifically asked what the most important quality needed to be influential in the [xx] Party might be, being good at communication unanimously took poll position, while further qualities that were mentioned included the ability to learn from mistakes, be self-critical, work hard, be persistent and be realistic about what can be achieved. The last quality also features in Nozick's (1989) definition of wisdom. The ability to network effectively was seen as also the ability to know who to go to. This kind of knowledge can take time to build and requires a degree of experience, which arguably becomes more intuitive with the passage of time, reflecting a more 'tacit' quality of knowledge. Participants were also asked about their own sense of having influence. All participants felt that at one time or another, they were able to have some influence in the party, but the extent to which this was the case, varied. Also participants felt that certain situations allowed this more than others. One example given here was the situation of working with a specific team with shared values on certain sector issues and arguably an example of an effective community of practice. The annual conference with its

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION

opportunity for any member to put forward motions was seen as another example where more members can have an influence or a voice in the party. The difficulties of media decisions in what they see as newsworthy was identified as a potential curb on enabling members to further influence the direction of the party, as was the way success is measured in the media environment. An example was given of the highlighting of people on trolleys in hospitals, while ignoring the increased survival rates from cancer or extended lives from triple by-pass operations. Long-term influencing was seen as more difficult to achieve. One interesting aspect of this discussion was that one participant said 'wherever power was, I wasn't' yet the person, in the snowball sampling process, who recommended this participant saw the participant as having been very important and influential in the [xx] Party over many years. This might suggest that this experienced participant was not necessarily aware of their own impact and capacity to influence, or they did not link influence with power. Yet influence is arguably about the power to enact change.

The cases analysed in Section 6.3 show that the communicators in each conversation were clearly influencing each other. There was a sense of trust and the fact that fewer barriers than support opportunities were identified, and that no negative views were expressed about the communicators as sources of information and knowledge, gave a sense of openness and clear learning taking place. In terms of follow-up from the conversations, some cases did impact on other levels in the organisation, such as voting on a motion after the conversations in C6. In C1, the participant saw a strong likelihood that what she learned in the conversation there, would feed into policy discussions at a later date with her influential boss. In C2 it was clear that further communication at area rep level with the area co-ordinator at headquarters level would be continuing. Furthermore, it transpired that the area rep was able to gain good media coverage, often difficult to achieve, thus increasing his visibility in a positive way in his constituency. The conversation in the prequel to C4 became very influential in organisational terms, as shown by the growing sense of self-efficacy of [xx] Women and the success with the legislation to reduce the gender pay gap. In C9, the participant indicated having good links with head office and would be able to use these to help the member he was communicating with in solving some of the administrative issues she was encountering. Organisational learning in the sense of members of the leadership and the more experienced members were able to influence and guide some of the less experienced participants in C3 and C6. The debates in C3 and C7 were seen as being of a longer term discussion across different members of the party, and a continual process of reflection on what the underpinning ethos of the party should be.

Moving to the individual level, the cases all reveal individual learning, through the knowledge and information shared (see Section 6.3), including experience from an organisational training day on hate crime (C1). In the initial interviews, when participants were asked how they keep themselves up to date (Section 4.2.9) the full range of media were mentioned, though not all participants used the full range, i.e. radio, television, online and hard copy newspapers, nationally and internationally. Everyone mentioned social media; although some perceived this is a distraction while others felt that it was useful for 'grasping the mood'. Participants also mentioned awareness of the 'echo chamber' effect of potentially only hearing opinions that correspond with theirs rather than fully gauging 'the temperature' on the ground. The closed online members' forum was however seen as a useful platform by the participants who mentioned it. For the area co-ordinator, the telephone was seen as a vital source of remaining informed about what was happening on the ground in the different constituencies. In-house bulletins, articles on selected topics produced on certain 'sitting days' and briefings from the press office were also considered important sources of information. Participants also mentioned that both informal conversations and more formal meetings enabled them to stay informed. When asked about how they learn best (Section 4.2.15), the participants had different ways of learning best. For one, it was learning by doing, although they also have training on some aspects of their work. Another participant mentioned that they need 'to be with an instructor' and also need to make notes so they do not forget key points. One of the participants was very enthusiastic about using online resources, including different social media platforms, and expressed an interest in learning more about technical methods of improving communication, and applying them in the [xx] Party. This participant felt that being open to new ideas was an essential aspect of learning. Interestingly this same participant had experienced a level of disillusionment and had effectively found a new lease of life and a sense of renewed commitment through his engagement with the [xx] Party members' online forum. He was particularly impressed by the quality of debate and argument which occurred in the forum. Another of the attractions that a participant felt such a platform offered was its 'dipping in' and 'dipping out' nature. Interesting observations were made about barriers to individual learning. Lack of motivation or not being in the mood, laziness, lack of persistence, too many online distractions, not wanting to learn something enforced or avoiding content that is 'against one's principles or one's inclinations' were all cited; with the latter being a classic example of the kind of avoidance behaviour in information seeking that Savolainen (2014) researched.

6.4.3 Being a 'learning organisation'

Having discussed organisational learning at all three levels: the organisation, groups and individuals, the question now is what does this say about the [xx] Party being a 'learning organisation'? As discussed in Section 2.3.1, there is some controversy around this latter term with Argyris and Schön (1996) and Caldwell (2012a and 2012b) articulating particular concerns about authors such as Senge (1990) whom they perceive as being too enthusiastically prescriptive in their vision of what a learning organisation is. The critics are concerned about the danger of encouraging conformity, rather than stimulating Allee's (2003, p.14) "radical possibilities" described at the end of Section 6.4.1 and risking inadequate levels of self-reflection and enquiry (Dewey, 1910). Filstad and Gottschalk (2011), on the other hand, take a value-focused and qualified approach in their learning organisation study of two groups of police managers in Norway, by applying Argyris and Schön's (1996) concepts of 'espoused theory' and 'theory in practice'. They perceive that aspiring to being a learning organisation requires continual alertness of the differences between espoused values and practised values. This is seen as only achievable through a culture of continuous questioning of behaviours by members of the organisation, in their case, the police managers, and being willing to challenge the assumptions and values in use, revealed by those behaviours. Furthermore, the willingness to challenge the organisation's espoused values was perceived as equally important. This has been shown to occur in the [xx] Party as all the participants spoke about continuous self-questioning on the identity and relevance of the [xx] Party, in their first interview, particularly in the light of poor election performance. Other participants welcomed opportunities for debate and self-reflection in C3 and C7. The debates were, not only about opinion, but also what perspective people felt the [xx] Party should or would have to the issues discussed there. In both those conversations, sharing of individual knowledge and experience had the effect of challenging assumptions being made, and for the participant in C7, caused a change in his own assumptions and perspective on [xx] Party's stance on Syria.

Similarly, the conversation in C6 with the member who was presenting an argument for 'equality must wait' so that pressing hardship issues can take priority at the current time, challenged the participant to think about his own priorities, which were more about achieving progress in social attitudes. Challenges to values were mentioned in C1 with the councillor struggling with some of the values being reflected by some of his constituents with regards to race issues. The successes in C4 and C5 were the result of earlier and consistent challenges to the status quo, in order to eventually bring about

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION

a change in direction with regards to gender pay and collective bargaining for certain groups of freelance workers, for now.

An interesting manifestation of 'espoused theory' and 'theory in use' occurred in the participants' initial conversations about what they thought 'informal conversation' was, and what they eventually selected as their examples for the second interview. Even during the second interviews, some of the participants seemed to become uncertain about whether or not an aspect they were discussing was in fact informal. For example, one participant said 'oh no, that's work, that's not informal'. This becomes important when arguing for organisational recognition of the importance of informal conversation to organisational learning as a whole. If one set of assumptions is that this is only gossip and non-work related conversation, it becomes harder to convince organisational leaders to incorporate the enabling of informal conversation at strategic level. Whereas the response could arguably be more forthcoming, if the assumptions are that informal conversations allows for crucial 'testing of the waters' for issues (C2) and ideas (C3, prequel to C4, C6 on 'equality must wait', C7 and C9); or the sharing of informative experiences from the ground (C1, C2, C6 and C9), which could provide vital indicators of the [xx] Party's visibility, voter perceptions of performance, and potential changes in the socio-economic environment.

Returning to examining the concept of the 'learning organisation', Senge's (1990) concept of the 'learning organisation' based on systems thinking emerging from working on the four dimensions of personal mastery, team learning, mental models and shared vision, has a number of intrinsic difficulties. Such difficulties relate not only to the dangers identified by Caldwell (2012a and 2012b), but also, again as Caldwell (2012a) observes, to how these dimensions would work in practice. Personal mastery is, at least, dependent on the absorptive capacities of the individuals in the organisation, which are inevitably varied. Team learning, if too structured, runs the risk of being too formulaic, thus lacking the spontaneity that, for example, is offered by informal communication. The idea that team learning can occur if its members "suspend assumptions" (Senge, 1990, p. 10) in order to think together, is also unrealistic, in that people are not automatically aware of their assumptions, and surfacing those is not easily done. Furthermore where assumptions are surfaced, judgements about their appropriateness are not necessarily immediately apparent, nor are they necessarily the same in every situation. This is shown by the participants' valuing experience and wisdom. They see only some of their members as having sound judgement. Just as assumptions can be challenging to surface and evaluate, so

too is the case with understanding and challenging mental models, as mentioned early in respect of Elkjaer's (2005) work on social learning. Again people are not necessarily able to articulate a particular mental model. Even articulating what the [xx] Party stands for, due to the breadth of views and values absorbed and indeed characterised by the [xx] Party, is problematic. The idea of shared vision being driven by a desire to "excel and learn" (Senge, 1990, p. 9) is a worthy goal, but without continual self-reflection, openness to criticism and re-evaluation, the risk of 'group think' (Handy, 1993) and the modern day concept of the 'echo chamber' (Macnamara et al, 2012) can result in errors occurring which are more costly, in this case in terms of votes, than might otherwise have been the case.

The idea of a single shared vision can be difficult to apply in the context of the [xx] Party, due to the fact that, as stated earlier in the discussion on sharing goals and values, the participants articulated a considerable range of goals. One participant talked about the incredible breadth of values being expressed across the party: 'we could have a million reasons why we do what we do and some of them are probably contradicting each other'. Having said that, this same participant saw the key goal as being about gaining votes and getting elected to enable the [xx] Party to influence the direction of the 'home country' and its society. For others the goals were perceived as being more about increasing social progress and improving economic justice. Clearly several interrelated values underpin the [xx] Party's goals, but understanding the difficulties the [xx] Party face in getting their message across, also discussed earlier in this section, could make the presentation of a single vision difficult too. The continually changing external political, economic and social landscape also provides challenges to [xx] Party vision. This is reflected in C6 where the idea of 'equality must wait' is challenging the ideals of members who are seeking to increase social progress in areas such as equality and diversity, when other members see tackling economic hardship and the restoration of economic justice as key priorities and primary goals.

Given the difficulties found with Senge's (1990) 'learning organisation' concept, which also resonate with the difficulties identified by Argyris and Schön (1996) and Caldwell (2012a and 2012b), it appears that Filstad and Gottschalk's (2011) approach applies the 'learning organisation' concept in a more useful, realistic and informative way. Arguably, a prescriptive aspiration fitting a preconceived ideal of what a learning organisation should look like, begs the question of whether such an ideal exists in practice, whether indeed presenting a 'learning organisation' ideal is even desirable, or whether there are, in fact, several ways of being a learning organisation; and whether,

in that case, the same organisation might show different 'learning organisation' behaviour at different points in time? Arguably an organisational culture of continuous reflection, inquiry and self-questioning as advocated by Filstad and Gottschalk (2011), renders the notion of an ideal learning organisation state as being counterproductive, risking organisational complacency, entropy and ultimately undermining the organisation's capacity for sustainability. Factors such as environmental changes, leadership changes with new styles and preferences, changes in communication technology, or a new set of elections could all present quite different challenges, which the organisation could respond to, from a learning point of view, in quite different ways, without it performing any better or worse than it did prior to such changes taking place. It could also be argued that studies centring on the 'learning organisation' concept might be more usefully envisioned as snapshot views of organisational learning over a specified period of time, which focus on the way organisational culture and organisational learning practice reveal themselves during that time. Such focus could be on particular aspects of organisational learning, such as the values approach of Filstad and Gottschalk (2011), or a focus on communities of practice, or an examination of a broader range of practice, for example researching into learning and diffusion of learning at organisational, group and individual levels. Snapshot views can also incorporate multi-disciplinary approaches, such as combining information behaviour approaches with organisational learning practices and theory; this being the approach taken in this thesis.

This discussion chapter is effectively the snapshot view of how informal communication influences organisational learning in the [xx] Party, whereby the findings are evaluated against literature on the nature of informal communication, a working model of information behaviour in informal exchanges, and literature on learning and organisational learning, including Argyris and Schön's (1996) concepts of single and double loop learning, and their 'espoused' and 'in-use' value concepts.

6.5 Summary

Firstly, the nature of informal communication as found in the literature and expressed by the participants in their two interviews was examined. There were overlaps in perceptions of what informal communication is, where and why informal communication occurs. There were also differences in what was found in the literature and participants' perceptions. Sometimes the terms were synonymous but not in every case. The initial participant views of what informal communication might be described were that they

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION

were quite casual, chatty conversations with no obvious goals and one participant even thought that gossip was the main type of informal communication. However, when it came to present examples of informal communication, the content was far more work oriented, or involving serious issues such as beliefs about what the [xx] Party should stand for, both in general and in response to international events, or social issues such as tackling racism, or practical issues relating to achieving visibility in constituencies. Participants remarked on blurring of boundaries between formal and informal, not always knowing when the informal starts and the formal ends and vice versa. Self-reflection on party identity and ethos was a strong feature in the informal communication examples. Participants were more confident about responding to the study when they thought about informal communication as informal conversation, but this did not invalidate the comparisons being made between the literature and the participant responses.

Secondly, two models were developed. The first (Figure 11) was an adaptation of Wilson's (1999) nesting model and the second (Figure 12) was influenced by Wilson's (1997) general model for human information behaviour. This was then developed and expanded to facilitate analysis of information behaviour in conversations.

The new model of human information behaviour in conversation (Figure 12) was then applied to the nine case findings, looking at several aspects of context, all of which were quite varied; along with an examination of the queries posed and knowledge and information exchanged along with cognitive and affective needs expressed here, together with evaluations of motivation behind the questions and the responses. Affective factors of mood were examined next. The outcome of the information exchange were examined by considering the information seeking behaviour types displayed in the information exchanges, new learning, possible opportunities for support alongside barriers and challenges, and evaluations of sources. Finally follow up behaviour was explored in terms of whether this was actual, probable or possible. Much of the motivation for the questions and the sharing of knowledge of information reflected the reasons given in 6.1 for engaging in informal communication generally. Increasing self-efficacy, the seeking of support and advice, debating values, and reducing stress were some of the main reasons behind the questions posed, and wanting to provide reassurance, confirm experiences or be helpful were some of the main reasons for sharing knowledge and information. More opportunities for support were identified with very few barriers or challenges being noted, apart from the challenge of complex issues being difficult to untangle and the challenge of information

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION

overload. The information seeking behaviour mostly began as a passive search and then moved on to more active searches, with many participants indicating that they would continue their information search relating to the content of their informal communication discussions.

New learning sometimes involved making discoveries about one's own or a colleague's abilities. It also involved reviewing information about international events after informal conversations with people the participants felt knew more on the topic. New learning also related to new discoveries about the benefits of the online [xx] Party forum. The attributes of the communicators were mainly seen as positive in which they were perceived as knowledgeable and accessible. This is seen later as a useful route for diffusion of knowledge across groups and between people at different levels in the organisation. The inclusion of information about affective factors occurring during the information exchanges served as providing a significant enrichment of the picture of what transpired during the conversations and what people's feelings were about the different topics mentioned. The role of stress is shown clearly here and the process of sharing stories was one of the ways that stress could be reduced during the exchanges. Overall, however, the participants presented a positive perspective on the informal conversations confirming literature suggesting that the most trusted information is that which comes from informal communication.

In terms of learning, the analysis of informal behaviour proved a useful source for identifying new learning and potential barriers, challenges and opportunities for support. The case analysis provided many examples of both single loop and double loop learning (Argyris and Schön, 1996). Self-questioning of party values was a strong feature of the double loop learning and also reflected Argyris and Schön's (1996) espoused and in-use theories. Changing assumptions about, for example, what should be prioritised in terms of whether it be alleviating economic hardship first, or moving towards a 'more socially progressive' society.

Organisational cultural issues related to leadership were examined. There was a mixed response regarding the degree of consultation and participation being allowed in decision making. It seemed that this is changing and the party is moving to a more collaborative approach with its members. The strong range of goals and values that are spread across the party was also discussed. A wide range of networks were being used by the participants, however in discussing influence in the party, there was a mixed response in participants' perceptions of their own sphere of influence. However,

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION

the informal exchanges, the outcomes, and the actual, probably and possible follow up actions did show a degree of diffusion of learning between levels in the [xx] Party. Robust debating of values and continual reflection on the direction members felt the party should go in, was a definite aspect of the informal discussions, and soul searching on social issues relating to racism and how the party should respond to this and understand some of the causes of this.

A strong example of organisational learning travelling through the levels was the example of an informal conversation with an EU trainer which led to a formal talk with [xx] Women that motivated and empowered the women to drive the gender pay gap legislation. Communication and messaging were seen as difficulties when it came to conveying what the [xx] Party stood for, and how they could be perceived as relevant to the electorate. Participants had clear views about what constituted an influential person. On the positive side, these would be people who were regarded as being of sound judgement and being true to their own ideals as well as showing steady loyalty to the party. While on the negative side, clever tactics were seen as the way some members gained influence, and effectively blocking attention to some of the more creative members of the party. So, learning was occurring between and across different groups and individuals in the organisation, but some participants felt that, in some cases the leadership was too centralised, and although some participants reported an increase in collaboration across the different levels in the party, there was scope for increasing this and thus increasing members sense of self-efficacy in being heard and able to have more influence of the direction of the party. Such an approach would also enhance the level of diffusion of knowledge and learning in the party. What is clear though, is that there is a strong culture of continual self-evaluation in order to identify how the party remain relevant today's electorate particularly in atmosphere of rising right wing influences.

Finally Senge's (1990) concept of the learning organisation is challenged and the criticisms of Argyris and Schön (1996), Caldwell (2012a and 2012b) are absorbed, while the more adaptive version of the concept in the work of Filstad and Gottschalk (2011) is seen as more workable. It is suggested that the 'learning organisation' be considered more as a snapshot approach of organisations' learning states, underpinned by at least organisation theory and practice.

In conclusion, informal communication as shown, through the nine cases and findings from the initial interview, has a strong influence on learning within the [xx] Party. There

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION

are strong learning practices but influence was not always seen as fairly distributed or in the hands of the right people. At this point in time it is difficult to fully appreciate the extent to which the conversations in the cases led to more influential decisions being taken by the participants, but a new or longitudinal study could reveal the extent to which those informal conversations were influential, and remains a potential for further research in this field.

Chapter Seven: Conclusions

As documented in Chapter One (Section 1.1) the research question prompting this study was “to what extent does informal communication influence the learning of a political party?” This led to the formulation of the research aim, which is:

To critically explore and analyse informal communication activities within a political party, utilising information behaviour and organisational learning perspectives, in order to determine the extent of their influence on the organisation’s learning.

Three objectives (Sections 7.1, 7.2 and 7.3) informed each stage of the research, culminating in the conclusions provided here. A final evaluation of the research aim and the contribution to knowledge is provided (Section 7.4), which is followed by a short discussion on potential for further research (Section 7.5) and a reflection on the research process (Section 7.6).

As this was a qualitative, inductive, interpretivist study, the findings, interpretations and conclusions are by their nature particularised, although there may be scope for transferability in a similar type of organisation with similar contextual factors. The organisation selected for the study was a political party in an EU country, which affiliates itself to the social democracy platform. For purposes of anonymity, not only were the participants anonymised, but also the party was named as the [xx] Party, and the EU location not named at all.

Trustworthiness was achieved in three ways: (a) by applying three areas of theory: informal communication, information behaviour and organisational learning, in the analysis of the data; (b) by selecting five participants (see Section 3.3.1) with quite different profiles, for the primary research, so that similarities, as well as differences could be identified from their presented perspectives; and (c) by conducting two interviews with each participant, one taking a more general and contextual focus of informal communication and organisational learning, and the second being a more detailed focus on actual informal communication exchanges, yielding nine embedded cases.

For consistency and dependability, the findings, analyses and interpretations are all traceable back to the data from the transcriptions and audio recordings of the interviews (see Appendices I and K for pilot interview guides; Appendices J, L and M for revised interview guides and added preliminary interview guide; and Appendices D

and E for transcription extracts). Template analysis was used to uncover the findings from each set of interviews (see Section 3.5 in the methodology chapter and the findings in Chapters Four and Five) and an adapted model of information behaviour in conversations was used to provide an additional layer for interpreting the analyses (see Section 6.2 and Appendices N-S); all of which was drawn together with findings from the literature review (see Chapter Two) and discussed in Chapter Six.

7.1 Objective one

Objective one was: to synthesise a working definition of informal communication. To achieve this, literature was searched on informal communication (Chapter Two, Section 2.1) and the research participants were asked how they would describe the phenomenon of 'informal conversation', a phrase they found easier to relate to, compared with 'informal communication' (Chapter Four, Section 4.1.1). Comparisons showed some overlap with the literature. Some of the differences were simply different terms being used to describe the same qualities. However, some of the participants' perceptions did not appear in the literature as searched. These differences appeared to reflect the nature of the organisation under study (Chapter Six, Section 6.1). With the organisation being a political party, public visibility is an important aspect of the members' work, so it made sense that several of the locations participants mentioned were in public places, with only a few being either at the parliament buildings or the party's headquarters. With politics being something that affects everyone, and something that many people talk about in their everyday lives whether or not they are involved with a specific political party, it was again no surprise that informal conversations happened at various times of the day and could equally be a short or a longer exchange, depending on the situation. Furthermore, after documenting the groups of people that the participants stated they engaged with in informal communication, it was also clear that their networks covered a broad spectrum of work-related, professional, voluntary, interest-related and personal groups of people, with many overlaps between the groups again facilitating extensive opportunities for informal communication. Informal conversations relating to their involvement and work with the political party occurred just as easily at planned events, both inside and outside the political party, as at unplanned, serendipitous encounters.

The participants gave multiple reasons for engaging in informal conversations. Some overlapped with, or were subsets of, those given in the literature. These included finding common ground, socialising as a buffer against organisational stress, obtaining

updates, seeking advice or to commiserate, share stories and validate each other's experiences. However, many additional reasons were given, again reflecting the nature of the organisation; for example, 'testing the temperature', having ideological discussions, to become known or more visible to the public, to discuss sensitive issues in a 'safe space', to have influence, to 'have a collective say', and to rehearse and debate arguments before engaging in more formal communication. These reasons were further reinforced in the second set of interviews.

Some of the participants initially saw informal conversations as mainly being about gossip or material not related to work, with no specific goals in mind at the encounters. However, the actual examples given in the second interview were work oriented, most had a purpose to them and some of the conversations involved serious issues such as debating and reflecting on underpinning beliefs about party identity, ethos and stances on issues at national and international level. Finally, some of the participants struggled with separating the formal from the informal communication, noting blurred boundaries, most notably when informal conversation was being deliberately used as a tactic when canvassing.

As the objective was based on agreement between the participants and the researcher, in order to create consistency in their understanding of the requirements of the research, informal communication became defined as 'informal conversation'. This was understood by the participants to mean a conversation between at least two people, which could take place at any time, for any duration, at any location, be it inside a specific organisation or outside, online or offline; it could be personal, social or professionally related; it characteristically would not be subject to structured organisational formats other than professional codes of conduct, but rather to the social protocols of the group engaged in the conversation; nor would it necessarily have a pre-defined set of goals for everyone to aim towards; it would allow issues to be explored more freely and in different ways than in more formal, structured settings; and its focus could range from the trivial to deep, philosophical discussions.

7.2 Objective two

Objective two was: to critically investigate information behaviour and organisational learning theories, concepts and models, with a view to underpinning the enquiry. This was met by examining theories, concepts and models (Chapter Two) on organisational learning and information behaviour, and related academic areas. This

led to the identification of the most salient areas to focus on in the primary data collection and analysis stages of the research process, covering information behaviour (Section 7.2.1), organisational learning (Section 7.2.2) and the concept of the 'learning organisation' (Section 7.2.3).

7.2.1 Information behaviour modelling

The decision to include research into information behaviour theories and models as part of the second objective, was predicated on the perspective that learning at whatever level, be it individual, group or organisational, cannot happen without engaging in information behaviour. An adaptation of Wilson's (1999) nested model was also developed, initially to highlight the relationship between information seeking and human communication. This was followed by the development of a working model of information behaviour in conversations, adapted from Wilson's (1997) 'general model of information behaviour' (see Section 6.2 for figures of the two models and explanation of the rationale for each). The adapted information behaviour model not only allowed for the examination of inquiry, as information seeking behaviour, but also facilitated the examination of responding information and knowledge sharing. Cognitive and affective motivations were thus examined, not only for information seeking, but also as motivations for information and knowledge sharing. The working model also made it easier to surface new learning and follow up outcomes from the informal conversation, as well as potential barriers to, and opportunities for, supporting successful information exchange; i.e. factors which influence effectiveness of learning in the [xx] Party.

Affective factors surrounding the information exchange, including mood, emotions and feelings, be they positive, negative or neutral, were identified, firstly by directly asking about this, and secondly by analysing the discourse in the transcripts. A noticeable effect of adding this aspect as a separate and specific part of the information exchange section of the model was that it contributed to a more enriched picture of what was happening in the informal conversations. It helped to better understand the motivations at work from the information exchange perspective. A number of information behaviourist approaches to evaluating the information behaviour outcomes were applied at the evaluation stage of the adapted model. This had the effect of acting as a check that the application of Wilson's (1997) information seeking categories was being applied consistently.

7.2.2 Organisational learning concepts and theories

The body of literature on organisational learning is extensive. A flurry of book and journal publications exploring facets of organisational learning emerged in the late 1990s and in the early 2000s. The area of organisational learning has since been revisited by scholars from an increasingly wide range of disciplines, taking earlier work forward in multiple directions, as well as critiquing the earlier work. The extent of material was initially overwhelming; however, after reviewing the recent literature, the decision was taken to return to the earlier work, particularly from scholars with a knowledge management focus, for deeper exploration, while remaining mindful of observations made in the later critiques (Chapter Two, Section 2.3, and Chapter Six, Section 6.4).

Key elements of organisational learning were then uncovered for application to this research, including DiBella and Nevis's (1998) premise of organisational learning being concerned with learning at individual, group and organisational levels. Context, as in information behaviour theory, is a key part of understanding influences on organisational learning; and it relates to features of organisational culture, organisational structures and the external environment. Elements of organisational culture were found to include goals and values of the organisation and its members, leadership styles and information flows. The way power, influence and expertise function in the diffusion of knowledge, and learning in the organisation as a whole, was also identified as a necessary consideration in undertaking research in organisational learning. For the political party in this study, most of these factors were identified in the first interview with the participants. Care was needed with the reporting organisational structures, so as not to compromise the anonymity required in this research. Some aspects of the influence and expertise elements surfaced in the second interviews as well as in the first interviews.

Argyris and Schön's (1996) concepts of single and double loop learning, and their related value concepts of 'espoused theory' and 'theory in use' concepts also played a key role in the research data analysis (Chapter Six, Sections 6.4.1 and 6.4.2); having been shown through the literature as continuing to be effective underpinning concepts in organisational learning. The 'espoused' and 'in-use' values concepts were also useful in interpreting the information behaviour part of the analysis (Chapter Six, Section 6.3.2).

The review of the impact of psychological factors on learning as well as on information behaviour (Chapter Two, Section 2.2.3) was integrated from organisational learning and information behaviour, respectively.

7.2.3 The ‘learning organisation’ concept

The question of how informal communication influences a political organisation being a ‘learning organisation’ took a different path to that which was originally envisaged. The concept of the ‘learning organisation’ particularly as articulated by Senge (1990) in his development of the five dimensions model, was continuously explored and evaluated. However, as argued in Chapter Six (Section 6.4.3), the conclusion was finally confirmed that this concept can be problematic with some intrinsic contradictions. It was challenging to reconcile such a finite, prescriptive concept as articulated, with the established and well documented requirement for learning to be an ongoing and continuous process of reflection and inquiry. Nor could the concept be easily reconciled with Argyris and Schön’s (1996) reflective ‘double loop’ learning theory. Capacity for and openness to continuous reflection and inquiry, and the continual challenging of an organisation’s assumptions and values, both used and espoused, is argued as being vital to the survival and sustainability of any organisation, be it a political organisation or otherwise. This suggests that the values underpinning what might be construed as an ideal ‘learning organisation’ are necessarily also subject to continuous challenge and change. Some authors applied modified versions of the concept, such as in Filstad and Gottschalk’s (2011) value based study on police managers in Norway (see Sections 2.4.4 and 6.4.3). This suggests that modified versions of the concept could be developed, which recognises some of the issues identified from Senge’s (1990) original work (see 2.3.1 in the literature review).

7.3 Objective three

Objective three was: to critically examine learning that takes place during informal communication activities, by applying a combination of information behaviour and organisational learning perspectives. The conclusions in this section integrate findings from both organisational learning and information behaviour perspectives. Learning is examined at organisational level (Section 7.3.1), group and individual level (Section 7.3.2) and the role of influence on learning is examined (Section 7.3.3).

When considering the conclusions in this section, it is important to remember that the rich data yielded from the qualitative case study method of research, as explained in

Section 3.2, are particularised according to the perceptions and reported experiences of the individual participants. Thus the findings are not meant to be generalised for the whole organisation or political organisations in general. Nonetheless, the varying characteristics of the purposive sample of participants, again explained in Section 3.3.1, allowed for a degree of variation of context and content in the conversations that were presented in the interviews. The template analysis of the detailed data and the interpretation of this, using the new model for human information behaviour in conversation, enabled the following conclusions to be drawn and contributes to the body of empirical research, where other researchers can determine the transferability (see Section 3.3.3) of the findings to other settings of interest to them.

7.3.1 Learning at organisational level

The political environment at the time of the study, as documented in the introduction (Chapter One) and as discovered from participant perceptions, is characterised by the growth of populism in politics, the rise of the far right, the poor electoral performance of the [xx] Party, especially in rural areas, and media unpredictability as to which aspects of party performance they choose to highlight, often ignoring positive achievements of the [xx] Party. National issues of concern identified by the participants included rising incidents of racism and hate crime, changing working practices and the 'gig' economy, 'angry, forgotten communities', and student exam stress. A key learning challenge for the participants was for their political party to rediscover its place in the current political environment.

Regarding the [xx] Party at organisational level, participants perceived the need to learn from past mistakes, to move away from too polished an image, and present an authentic voice. Participants mentioned an 'identity crisis' for the party. They struggled when asked about stories and icons that have become embedded in the political party's narrative, as they feared the old stories no longer had resonance. The participants also mentioned effective messaging in the media. It was challenging to visibly align 'espoused' values with the [xx] party's values 'in use', and to ensure their goals and values remain relevant to the electorate. When asked about leadership, the participants perceived a change in leadership style to being increasingly more collaborative, although there were differences of opinion about the extent to which this was happening. From a learning perspective, the more leadership is about empowering its members, the more open the organisation is to learning as a whole.

There was agreement between the participants on perceived goals of the [xx] Party and these were what attracted them to join the party. Goals identified were to work towards greater equality, solidarity, a workable economy, having good public services, ensuring collective bargaining rights, contributing to international work on climate change, upholding rights of minorities, and trying to 'level the playing field' of opportunities. The challenge the participants identified was one of which areas to prioritise, for example, the 'equality must wait' argument, in particular for socio-economically deprived communities. Other organisational tensions which surfaced in the informal conversations, related to a debate on party orientation, whether it should be on ideology or pragmatism, to party stances on conflict zones around the world, and secession issues in some European countries. From a learning point of view, however, these debates and tensions were seen as a necessary and healthy part of the organisation's dynamic. Continuous inquiry, reflection, and challenging of assumptions and values as discussed here, suggest both 'single and double loop' learning was taking place within the [xx] Party.

7.3.2 Learning at group and individual level

The application of the working model on information behaviour in conversations (see 7.2.2) proved a highly useful vehicle for surfacing learning from the nine case conversation groups. The questions asked and the motivation behind them reflects the findings on reasons for engaging in informal communication. Cognitive goals included wanting to explore opinions, discuss practicalities, seek guidance, exchange views, and get to know each other. Affective goals included a need to belong, feel recognised, provide and seek support and reassurance, to relax, feel pride in each other's achievements and reduce stress. Stress, self-efficacy and risk and reward in relation to information behaviour in conversation were found to be inextricably interlinked. The sharing of stress, might initially seem risky, but the reward for doing so, could, for example, result in increased motivation to tackle difficult issues; and it could improve self-efficacy in seeing what one can achieve through party activism. Motivation for sharing knowledge and information included reducing each other's stress through empathy and sharing; increasing each other's sense of self-efficacy to handle the challenges under discussion, promoting solidarity; encouraging more confident activism and deeper debate of party values; examining each other's experiences of 'espoused' party values not always aligning with 'in use' values; challenging party priorities; and bringing each other up to date. According to one participant, the sense of a 'safe space' encourages this openness, and from that increases learning within the group, which could potentially be brought into other conversations in other areas of the party. It is

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSIONS

worth noting that negative emotions did not have the effect of blocking learning in the cases, but of motivating each other to explore ways to tackle the issues that gave rise to these emotions, for example, the growth of racism and hate crime. In a rare example of gossip in the case conversation, rather than being a negative force, it served a useful purpose in enabling a participant to make the decision not to compete for a vacant councillor seat.

Demonstrating the strength of contribution of informal communication to learning, new learning was found to occur in four areas. Firstly the participants learned about each other's and their own capabilities and ways of doing things; secondly they discovered new, similar or different opinions and new ways of formulating arguments, thus reflecting the rehearsal function of informal communication mentioned in Section 7.1; thirdly, participants were able to become better informed, feel more updated and thus more confident; finally, the last area of learning related to practicalities and logistics of organised events.

From the perspective of individual learning, the participants were all engaged in exploring, asking questions of each other and themselves, analysing and evaluating responses, seeking to gain increased understanding and comprehension of a range of issues, challenging assumptions and beliefs, and reflecting. From an information seeking perspective, most of the informal conversation cases began with either passive attention or passive search, and gradually moved to active searching, as the conversations became more specific. Career related informal conversations immediately commenced with active searching. All the participants mentioned they would engage in ongoing information seeking, either through active searching in further conversations or more passive searching in terms of simply tracking progress on a particular issue. The latter was particularly the case for the less involved members. Personal updating was through all types of media, including social media, while aware of the 'echo chamber' dangers. Participants also accessed in-house resources, such as bulletins, press office publications and articles of relevance specifically selected for staff.

7.3.3 Influence and learning

When asked about their own ability to influence, participants were all able to recall a time they did have influence, but only the more involved participants believed they currently had power to influence across the wider organisation, in spite of, in some cases, having less experience and less expertise than some of the less involved

participants. This was surprising as the perception of the more involved participants was that they valued the experience and expertise of the older members, and their commitment to giving time and support at constituency level. Good communication was considered, by all the participants, to be the most important quality required to be influential. Learning capabilities such as the ability to learn from mistakes, be self-critical, be persistent and work hard, were also included as necessary qualities for being influential, as well as having 'sound' judgement, being able to remain true to themselves, and having an understanding of what people see as 'the important goals in life'. One participant also perceived negative uses of the power to influence, including influence due to the 'halo' effect of habitual praise, and people using clever tactics, such as manipulating cliques and factions, rather than being influential in stimulating creativity and empowerment of the members. Diffusion of knowledge and learning throughout the organisation does require a sense of self-efficacy and belief in one's ability to influence. The time-frame for follow-up activities to occur as a result of the case informal conversations was short. Consequently, only a few examples had occurred, which could demonstrate how the conversations would influence learning at organisational level. One of the best examples, however, is the prequel informal conversation which led to the event being celebrated in the fourth case. The initial informal conversation led to a follow up meeting with women from the party about self-efficacy in activism. Another example is that follow up decisions on voting on motions were made at the annual conference as a result of informal conversations there. In some cases, there was a strong likelihood of a follow-up, such as sharing the concerns raised about racism with the boss of one of the participant's; continuing to contribute to online debates on party values and continuing to work on increasing party visibility in a rural constituency. In some conversations, follow-up was seen as something that might possibly happen but just as easily might not happen, such as a disillusioned member now feeling sufficiently re-invigorated to engage more actively again with the party.

7.4 Evaluation of research aim and contribution to knowledge

For the purposes of this evaluation, the research aim is repeated here:

To critically explore and analyse informal communication activities within a political party, utilising information behaviour and organisational learning perspectives, in order to determine the extent of their influence on the organisation's learning.

7.4.1 Evaluation of research aim

The research aim was achieved in that a range of informal communication activities within a political party were critically explored, analysed and discussed. Both information behaviour and organisational learning perspectives played critical roles in the research design, analysis and interpretation. Through achieving the objectives above, the research has clearly demonstrated that informal communication presents its own unique opportunities for learning within a political party. The strong element of trust was demonstrated by the open nature of the communication, both in terms of inquiry and desire to share information and knowledge. This, combined with the wide set of networks that participants interact informally with, allows for extensive learning within and between groups. While the findings show that this inevitably influences the political party's learning as a whole, they also show differences in a sense of self-efficacy and capacity for achieving such influence. The level of participant involvement in the party, potential for feeling overwhelmed by levels of complexity of the issues faced, and information overload were identified as barriers to organisational learning. There was a difference of opinion about the extent of opportunities for collaborative leadership at different levels in the party. However, this was perceived as an area that is improving.

The development of the new model (Figure 12) of human information behaviour in conversation drew mainly from information behaviour perspectives, but elements of organisational learning were integrated into the model design. In terms of meeting the aim, the application of the model (see Appendices N-S) facilitated a deeper interpretation of the behaviour and factors influencing the learning that took place during the informal conversation cases. From an organisational learning viewpoint, the findings confirm the literature, in that learning by its very nature is a journey of continual inquiry and reflection, learning from past mistakes, and striving for continual improvement and that learning is about 'becoming'. Both the template analysis and the results of applying the new model (Figure 12) showed evidence of opportunities and barriers to learning in the case study political party.

7.4.2 Contribution to knowledge

The research makes a contribution to knowledge in three areas. Firstly, additional characteristics of the phenomenon of informal communication were surfaced in the findings from the primary research, as compared to those identified in the literature. These often reflected the political nature of the organisation. The findings regarding

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSIONS

struggles with separating the formal from the informal in communication and trust being a strong characteristic of informal learning corresponded with reports in the literature. The increased level of trust found in the informal communication examples was further demonstrated by the sources of information, i.e. the communicators, being perceived by the participants only in a positive light.

The second and most significant area of contribution relates to model development. This involved three stages: firstly the adaptation of Wilson's (1999) nested model of information behaviour, secondly the modification of Wilson's (1997) 'general model of information behaviour', to reflect information behaviour in conversation (see Section 7.2.1), and thirdly, the application of the second model in the interpretation of the phenomenon of informal conversation. The latter model functioned as a bridge to enable this interpretation of the phenomenon within the context of attempting to find out how organisation learning occurs in a given setting, in this case, the [xx] Party. Another aspect of this second contribution is that both the adapted nested model and the modified information behaviour model highlight the iterative and dynamic nature of information behaviour in conversations. Furthermore, the modification of Wilson's (1997) model also facilitates a more granular interpretation of information behaviour in the context of conversations, be they formal or informal, due to the additional and detailed components in the revised model.

The third area of contribution relates to the way the two theoretical areas of information behaviour and organisational learning have been integrated in the underpinning of this study. This type of integration has not been done before. Its advantage is that it creates a stronger theoretical underpinning of the research. The combining of the theory areas facilitate the development of a rich picture of what is occurring within conversations, while also increasing understanding of the learning which emerges from those conversations.

The fourth area of contribution, as discussed in Section 7.2.3, is a contribution to the ongoing debate in the literature about the intrinsic value of the concept of the 'learning organisation' and confirming the need for any application of the concept to be balanced by simultaneously ensuring that the values underpinning what might be construed as an ideal 'learning organisation' remain subject to continuous challenge and change

7.4.3 Potential for further research

Three types of research could follow on from this study. Firstly, comparative studies could be undertaken with, for example, other parties in the same country, or similar political parties in other EU countries, or indeed between political organisations in countries based in other continents. This would be about similarities and differences in how informal communication influences learning across those comparative political parties and whether additional factors to those studied here are at play. This would also be useful as there is still relatively sparse literature on organisational learning in political organisations compared with in business and the health sector, where many studies occur. The second type of research could utilise a more longitudinal approach and the application of social network analysis techniques to gain a better sense of diffusion of learning from informal communication over a given period of time. A challenging but interesting option could be to undertake a longitudinal study between two election periods. This would involve several snapshots, of say, two political parties in a particular country, such as in the UK, and examining the findings to see if there were any predictive factors from the learning, that showed in the results of the second election. The third type of research would involve testing the working model of information behaviour in conversations, applying the model in different sectors to see whether there are sector differences in the way the model might work. Alternatively, in a quite different context, to work together with someone who has already used Wilson's (1997) model to analyse usability of mobile phone apps, to investigate the scope for applying the working model for information exchange, looking at, for example, usability in the context of online intelligent agents and chat-bots.

7.5 Reflection

There were two challenges with the primary research, one surprising outcome relating to the theoretical underpinning of the study, and the interactions with the participants yielded two further observations.

The first challenge was that of finding willing participants who would feel confident to respond to the research request. Eventually a personal contact provided an introduction to an enthusiastic gatekeeper, who then initiated a snowball sampling process. The first participant struggled with the term 'informal communication', finding it too amorphous, so the term 'informal conversation' was adopted. The effect of this change was immediate. The participant became confident about their role in the study

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSIONS

and the interview resumed its flow. Furthermore this alteration did not compromise later comparisons with the literature.

The second challenge related to ensuring anonymity. As stated in the introduction to this chapter, there was a triple approach to the anonymisation of the [xx] Party and the party members who were participants in the primary research. After initial fears that this level of anonymisation might result in overly bland content, it transpired that many of the issues could remain included as they were current for several other EU countries; thus allowing the findings to retain their vibrancy.

The surprising development was the major role the adapted working model of information behaviour in conversations played in linking findings about informal communication to conclusions about their impact on the political party's learning. The combined application of the model together with organisational theory allowed the cross-checking of the analysis and conclusions, and strengthened the trustworthiness of the findings.

It was observed that the vividness of the mental memory of each client's voice remained throughout the process, and afterwards when reading the findings and discussion chapters, even when their data had been aggregated. A second observation, documented in Section 3.4.3, was that personality, experience and role of the participants played a stronger role in the amount of data that was ultimately used, than did the length of interview.

At the end of the research, there was a sense of having acquired a completely new way of knowing the [xx] Party; a way that is quite different to the picture previously formed from the media, social media, and academic articles featuring the selected party.

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Appendix A: Information Sheet

For PhD research by Susannah Hanlon, supervisors: Dr Julie McLeod and Dr Tom Prickett, Northumbria University, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 8XE

An investigation into how informal communication influences a political organisation in being a learning organisation.

This study is aimed at trying to understand what role **informal communication** plays in contributing to **knowledge gained** by political parties **which helps learning** both within the party itself and with those the party engages with, as the party works towards meeting its goals and responding to a continuously changing environment. In order to do this, the research is to be conducted through the eyes of a small number of participants who work for one political party, which will be the case study organisation, although the organisation will not be named in the research report. If you are happy to be one of the participants then you would be involved in the following way:

1. **A preliminary discussion** about the nature of informal communication, an explanation of the process, in particular the self-observation, where you may have questions you need to ask before we proceed further. This should only be about 20 minutes, and assuming you are still happy to continue as a participant, would be immediately followed by:
2. **A pre-activity interview** to gather contextual data about a range of aspects including your roles and responsibilities within the party, personal and organisational goals, motivation and experience, current issues of concern, and your communication networks. This will last a minimum of one hour and will be no longer than one and a half hours.
3. **Activity of self-observation of exchanges of informal communication** (according to your perception of what is informal) over a period of a week to 10 days – these can be in any environment, any format, with any number of people, from any of your communication networks (including those not directly involved with your party). The only requirement is that the content needs to be relevant to you in the context of your role and your political activities.
4. **A post-activity interview**, in which you will be asked to recall some of these exchanges of informal communication before focussing on one or two that you identify as being of particular significance or interest, in relation to the aim of the study. We will then explore these selected exchanges in greater depth, track what happens as a result of these exchanges and reflect on the potential influence knowledge gained from these exchanges might have on future actions and discussions within and by the party. It is understood that you will not be disclosing anything that is confidential.
5. The analysis will be expected to take some months, due to the part-time nature of the study, but once findings have been made, **a summary of the findings** will be sent to you and your fellow participants, from which your responses will be sought, for reflection before putting the final PhD report together.

In terms of anonymising the data that you have decided to share, a code will be used in place of actual names, when transcribing the data. Rather than state specific areas of work or constituencies, more generic terms will be used to avoid easy identification of the participant. Disposal of data will be in accordance with Northumbria University ethical policies.

Susannah Hanlon (email: susannah.hanlon@northumbria.ac.uk)
 Department of Computing and Information Science, Faculty of Engineering and Environment,
 Northumbria University, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 8ST

Appendix B: Organisation Consent Form

RESEARCH ORGANISATION INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Faculty of Engineering and Environment, University of Northumbria

Completion of this form is required whenever research is being undertaken by Engineering and Environment staff or students within any organisation. This applies to research that is carried out on the premises, or is about an organisation, or members of that organisation or its customers, as specifically targeted as subjects of research.

The researcher must supply an explanation to inform the organisation of the purpose of the study, who is carrying out the study, and who will eventually have access to the results. In particular issues of anonymity and avenues of dissemination and publications of the findings should be brought to the organisations' attention.

Researcher's Name: _____ Susannah Hanlon _____

Student ID No. (if applicable): _____ c603456 _____

Researcher's Statement:

The research is a qualitative study aimed at investigating the role that informal communication plays in the process of organisational learning. The organisation will be anonymised and data that would conclusively identify the organisation will not be used.

There are five parts to the involvement of participants:

1. A **preliminary discussion** about the research process and the nature of informal communication
2. A **pre-activity interview** to gather contextual data from the participant
3. **Activity of self-observation of exchanges of informal communication** for a period of approximately 10 days, identifying and describing critical incidents of informal communication
4. A **post-activity interview**, in which the interviewee is asked to describe various aspects relating to the critical incidents of informal communication that they identified during the previous 10 days.
5. After the analysis has taken place, a **summary of the findings** from the anonymised data will be shared with the participants and feedback and responses to those findings will be sought.

A code will be used in place of participant names, when transcribing the data. Rather than state specific areas of work or constituencies, more generic terms will be used to avoid easy identification of the participant. The codes allocations will be kept in a separate document and securely stored on the Northumbria University server.

The interview data will be kept secure on password-protected campus networked drives at Northumbria University; consent forms and the personal contact information provided by the participants will also be kept secure and confidential on these servers. Data will be anonymised as described above. Interview data captured on recording devices will be transferred to the secure servers after the interview and then wiped from the recording device. Personal details will be deleted at the end of the study. All other research data will be kept until the end of the study, and will then be disposed of in line with Northumbria University's retention policy.

Participants can withdraw at any time in the process, data will be anonymised as stated above and confidentiality of data will be respected. Here content of data would not be used, but rather characteristics surrounding the informal exchange would be all that would be explored. The preferred handling of confidential material will also be discussed and checked with the participant.

APPENDIX B

Any organisation manager or representative who is empowered to give consent may do so here:

Name: _____

Position/Title: _____

Organisation Name: _____

Location: _____

If the organisation is the Faculty of Business and Law please completed the following:

| | |
|---|--|
| Start/End Date of Research / Consultancy project: | |
| Programme Year Sample to be used: seminar group, entire year etc. | |
| Has Programme Director/Leader, Module Tutor being consulted, informed. | |

Anonymity must be offered to the organisation if it does not wish to be identified in the research report. Confidentiality is more complex and cannot extend to the markers of student work or the reviewers of staff work, but can apply to the published outcomes.

- No confidentiality required
- Masking of organisation name in research report
- No publication of the research results without specific organisational consent
- Other by agreement as specified by addendum

Signature: _____ Date: _____

This form can be signed via email if the accompanying email is attached with the signer's personal email address included. The form cannot be completed by phone, rather should be handled via post.

Appendix C: Individual consent form

Faculty of Engineering and Environment RESEARCH PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

| | |
|---|--|
| Name of participant | |
| Organisation | |
| Researcher's name | Susannah Hanlon |
| Title of research project/dissertation | An investigation into how informal communication influences a political organisation in being a learning organisation. |
| Programme of study <i>[Only if researcher is a student]</i> | PhD |
| Supervisor's name <i>[Only if researcher is a student]</i> | Dr Julie McLeod |

Brief description of nature of research and involvement of participant:

The research is a qualitative study aimed at trying to understand what role **informal communication** plays in contributing to **knowledge gained** by political parties **which helps learning** both within the party itself and with those the party engages with, as the party works towards meeting its goals and responding to a continuously changing environment.

There are five parts to the involvement of participants:

1. A **preliminary discussion** about the research process and the nature of informal communication
2. A **pre-activity interview** to gather contextual data from the participant
3. **Activity of self-observation of exchanges of informal communication** for a period of approximately 10 days, identifying and describing critical incidents of informal communication
4. A **post-activity interview**, in which the interviewee is asked to describe various aspects relating to the critical incidents of informal communication that they identified during the previous 10 days.
5. After the analysis has taken place, a **summary of the findings** from the anonymised data will be shared with the participants and feedback and responses to those findings will be sought.

The interview data will be kept secure on password-protected campus networked drives at Northumbria University; consent forms and the personal contact information provided by the participants will also be kept secure and confidential on these servers. Data will be anonymised. Interview data captured on recording devices will be transferred to the secure servers after the interview and then wiped from the recording device. Personal details will be deleted at the end of the study. All other research data will be kept until the end of the study, and will then be disposed of in line with Northumbria University's retention policy.

Standard statement of participant* consent (please tick as appropriate)

APPENDIX C

I confirm that:
I have been briefed about this research project and its purpose and agree to participate*

I have discussed any requirement for anonymity or confidentiality with the researcher**

I agree to be audio recorded/~~filmed~~/~~photographed~~ ***

* *Participants under the age of 18 normally require parental consent to be involved in research.*
*** *Delete as appropriate*

****Specific requirements for anonymity, confidentiality, data storage, retention and destruction**
A code will be used in place of participant names, when transcribing the data. Rather than state specific areas of work or constituencies, more generic terms will be used to avoid easy identification of the participant.
Data will be stored on an external hard drive and backed up on a secure university server, the U:Drive. The disposal of the data will be in line with the Northumbria University ethics policy.
Participants can withdraw at any time in the process, data will be anonymised as stated above and confidentiality of data will be respected. Here content of data would not be used, but rather characteristics surrounding the informal exchange would be all that would be explored.

Signed **Date**

Standard statement by researcher
I have provided information about the research to the research participant and believe that he/she understands what is involved.
Researcher's signature
Date

Appendix D: Extracts from first interview transcripts

First extract on participant definition of informal communication

1 What do you think of as informal communication?

A: So I would have conversations with colleagues over coffee, and conversations that are spurred on spontaneously, that don't have necessarily any goal to them. Sometimes, someone might say well 'what did you think of the debate last night?' but they're not trying to go anywhere with that; it's just to get people's views, but there's no aim to it and sometimes something political or serious or societal will come out of conversation which was just about 'oh were you watching the news last night?' and then that'll get people thinking about the issues that might have more to do with their work. I mean in terms of setting we'd have over coffee, over lunch, after work, em...

conversations
- at coffee
- spontan
- no goal
get views
get people
thinking

Second extract on participant definition of informal communication

R: That's it. OK. So thank you very much for allowing yourself to be persuaded to help me with this. I'm really grateful. So I'm going to start with the preliminary discussion which is just if you like to kind of get a mutual definition of what we're kind of doing, so the first question is what do you think of as informal conversation?

C: I suppose anything that's not like a meeting or on some sort of public platform or formal debate or anything like that so something like either discussion with friends or like at a bar or something or just hanging out, that kind of conversation which is probably most of your, most of (couldn't hear) communication with people

From email: Conversations outside either formally organised meetings that have an agreed agenda or official written communication; also informal discussions that can arise during more formal meetings.

what it's not
- mtg
- public plat
- formal debate
is disc. with friends, bar, 'hanging out'
also not formally org'd mtgs

following (15)

First extract on modes of communication

conversational tone but I think there is a very different tenor there because they don't start out as something informal and chatty online; you know it's usually somebody commenting on something. Yeah, I would see it as something more as face to face.

online - don't start so formal

R: So that's partly at what modes of communication do you think you are mostly likely to use for informal and you have mentioned over coffee, face, spoken conversation,... Phone?

phone - not so much

A: No, not so much

From email: Face to face, phone, whatsapp, text

f - f
phone
whatsapp
text

Also from email: It may be difficult to distinguish between formal and informal conversations no matter what mode

...and I think you talked about different modes as well, WhatsApp and so on, would really basically be regarded as informal modes of communication as you say but there could be something in there that's going to relate to something formal later on (B: yes, yes) or sometimes you're in a formal situation but some kind of informal thing occurs during (B: yes, right) during that so we realise that it's not kind of 'we're doing informal here - hum!' and into the formal then and nothing informal ever occurs, so we know they can be nested (B: yes, yes) so don't worry about that

} prompted by researcher

R: What modes of communication do you think you're most likely to use for informal communication?

C: Either in person but probably at least half the time or even more of the time, it would be something like Facebook Messenger, or something like that, that's

In person
50%+
then FB
messenger
whats App

Second extract on modes of communication

R: So you use Facebook Messenger and WhatsApp?

C: Yeh, I'm in a WhatsApp group for like activism and stuff for the party (R: oh really) likes to coordinate people like that but that's like a WhatsApp group for some members and then just one on one with friends as well there'd also be the youth branch of the party; the Youth Wing has its own private Facebook group where we post things also discuss in there as well

R: So it's a private actually just you guys or and girls – closed then ...

C: In a way though that's not entirely – it's private from the public but every youth member is there; you wouldn't talk about other people in there; more one on one is really how that takes place so ... while people would discuss issues and things in that it would be in a way kind of formal because it's kind of like a continuous meeting, a bit more so than just ...

R: But would people say you know – gosh did you see THAT?

C: Oh they would yeah and for example, the Youth Wing might ... the parliamentary party might do something that a lot of youth wing is not popular about – they would freely discuss it in there but ... ??? (can't hear) people can't see that I suppose for example so I suppose vice versa or whatever

R: Oh great, okay so it's for that particular group isn't it?

C: Yeh.

WhatsApp
- activism
- friends

younger
Youth Wing
Private FB
group

(FB)
blurring

Extract on leadership qualities

there are certain people that I see as leaders, like there's one guy here, he's a parliamentary assistant and I think he's a leader but he's you know, he's not a leader of the party or anything but I ... so there are certain people that I think ... yeah that I think is a leader but also there might be people in the party who might be in a position of leadership who are not great leaders ... you know there might be chairs of a constituency but they're really rubbish actually and they aren't really leading and that's a shame then really when somebody could do a lot more but just you know, it's not in their personality ... you know not everyone is made for a leadership role, so yeah that's an interesting question, who would, who decides, who directs

R: Coz sometimes you can't see who it is. You might think it's one person but it's actually coming from somewhere else.

B: Yeah, I would like to think and I actually did an internal ... just sort of a couple of pages on this about members, members you know, we have to trust the members, that everyone, (president names) was a member, everyone was a member, that's where they all came from... I'd like to think it is the members who direct, who lead; who take us where we are going ... and I'd like to think that it's the membership but then you know you need people to step forward and take positions you know and to stand in elections

R: And I was interested in when you were talking about people having sound opinions. What do you mean by 'sound opinions'?

B: That they don't parrot what someone else said ... that they actually understand ... that they don't go 'oh no, everyone is saying this' and there's one thing that I

Probably not that many people at the end of the day thought there is this 'echo chamber'. And that is ... I feel it and I know it's there and I am fighting it and bringing it up and I'm saying 'I think we're in an echo chamber, we talk to each other and we should be talking to Joe and Mary' ... so that's how I see it; I see that as well; so one of our big challenges at the minute. Coz we think oh that was a great weekend, loads of good tweets, but yeah (R: Who's looking at the tweets), yeah, like who cares? Like does anyone care and if they don't care then we're talking to ourselves so to me that's one of the big challenges we have

R: Yeah I'm glad that you mentioned echo chambers. I was going to bring it up actually, so it's really good that it came through voluntarily and it's really interesting that when you were saying sound opinion that you were actually thinking about people that you see as knowing their own mind and independently thinking through ... based on their own integrity if you like, how they're ... I don't that they're not moral but they have integrity

B: yeah, they have a good political nose, they know ... I'm probably not one of those people in the sense that I kind of ... I get very excited about things and then

Extract on opportunities for informal communication at meetings in Brussels

E: Yeah and I'm doing so much more in the ... in Brussels, literally, I spend a lot of time there and it's a funny thing as well because they have a whole group there, see it was tri-partite, there was employers, trade unions and I'm third sector, technically all the trade union guys are in social democratic parties, like the British ones would be like the British xx party. Still I don't totally always agree with everything they say and I ... you don't come from a party perspective, clearly, they would know, well most of them would know where I'm coming from, wouldn't hide it, strangely enough I find some ... I find myself a lot drifting away from trade unions. In some ways I really respect them as a great social movement, and then I just find them a bit conservative on some of these newer issues. I find with environment and technology that they're a bit defensive. I find it particularly in that committee, the Economic and Social Committee, they're very defensive, they won't ... I just find that they ... funnily enough I wouldn't be in conflict with them but I find myself in disagreement with them a lot in that space. I see (names general president of the main union, and *Chairman of the xx Party) goes there a lot actually ... he's one of the few people I talk to about it ... oh (names him again) I don't really think that way, I don't really think it's well and we have to what we have to do and we have to defend that and I see it's fine, I just don't see the world that way anymore.

But I spend a lot of time there and if I'm writing like I'm writing reports and stuff, so, and you can be a rapporteur and write a report on issues as well, so I suppose a lot of my focus and energy about policy and ideas and writing and thinking goes in there now, because that's what I always wanted to do at European level, so that's why I'm doing it now, I might as well give it my best shot, I might not get another go at it

R: Would you have like informal conversations with any of these people that you're meeting?

E: Yeah I probably have a lot of informal conversations with the (same nationality) people on it which is not the biggest section, but some with others, but others tend to be more formal, because when you have got to write one of those reports, you have a ... It's like the European parliament and you've a committee and you're there and you have ... the great thing is that when you're first in, you can say what you want, you're not hidebound and is says it in Statute, you're represent ... you're nominated in a certain way but you represent your own ideas and you know whatever you think, but particularly actually, strangely enough with the (own nationality) I was with two farming guys, coz we'd probably disagree but politely and we talk a lot through environmental issues, because they're kind of perception, is that little bit more defensive, but when you get into it you can see some, but they talk a lot, the (own nationality) in the informal way as in you meet them on the plane or on the bus or you're going in and having lunch. So a lot of talking and a lot of talk about the city and about the internal politics of that body itself because people are running for this and running for that so all the gossip and all that kind of thing

But we have a lot of informal chats just ... yeah about everything. Because you're meeting them a lot, you're seeing them a lot. You're all in the same boat. You're all

Brussels
 21/05
 TUS
 3rd sector
 Party
 ch. man

place +
 what it
 is

a lot
 of informal
 (same
 nationality
 contingent)

place
 on the
 plane
 the city
 internal
 politics
 gossip

see them
 a lot,
 h + 19

Appendix E: Extracts from second interview transcripts

Extract from first part of book club case (C1) – first three pages

(A1?)
Surround issues
Q1

New themes: nature > discourse, element of surprise, directions of levels of locations, opportunities, personal values (new?), "noise", boundaries(?) - formal/informal

Second Interview for First Main (A) *trigger topics (eg related events)*

R: So what are some of the examples that come to mind of the informal conversation that you experienced since our last meeting? *more likely to trigger (but in atmosphere/environment) sensitive starting point*

A: We'd have been talking to people, like usually in the morning we'd go for coffee and tea, staff ... usually the different xx staff meet up in the morning, we'll also meet for ... we have a staff book club where we meet once a month, so

R: oh have you had that?

A: Yeah, yeah. Last week, so that was good fun, something, something different ... we kind of ... we kind of say ... well we won't talk about work, we'll talk about other things, so that's something different and

R: Did work filter in?

A: Kind of topics ... ye-s ... so I mean the book was that book 'The Sellout' which was the Booker Prize winner this year, a book about race relations in America ... we did get talking a bit about ... not so much about work but I suppose about race issues in [country] and how ... you know what people encounter in different areas, so ... it was interesting yeah, and

R: So you had your staff book club, anything else?

A: Yeah, I think ... I suppose in terms of work I think that would be kind of the main area; I mean at home I talk a lot about my work with my partner at home; he's very interested in politics as well and so we'd get chatting about ... and kind of linking [nationality] issues internationally as well so there's be a lot of kind of debriefing of the day ... yeah and so they'd be kind of the main areas

R: And this weekend?

A: This weekend, well I was at home visiting my mother for Mother's Day and we were just having a nice chat; I mean she was asking me about work and kind of how I was seeing it was going and so ... and she'd be quite interested in politics and so we were chatting a bit about the last week and events ... London (Westminster Bridge?) ... and [redacted] (who'd died) ... you know so we'll always kind of talk about the latest news and so it's good getting those kind of family perspectives as well, but otherwise I was getting a good break at the weekend.

R: I think you were ready for it. Okay and so was there one particular one that we might explore in a bit more detail of your conversations that I can ask?

A: One main one?

R: It can be a couple, whatever... as they come along ... were there any conversations where you kind of kept thinking about it later on and you brought it

topic - US race (case)
national issues of race
constituencies issues of race
(case) had at going other way nat. to interact.
boundary
** controversial politician*

directions
family views
Q2

3 items

into another conversation and that kind of thing? Or did somebody say something to you that triggered something or did you spark something in someone else? (A is struggling) Or we can go to the book club ... (A: yeah, yeah) I think that might be an easy one because you looked at race relations

A: Yeah, so as with many book clubs you kind of just start with the talking a bit about the book and then we were talking about how it kind of ... yeah, I think somebody mentioned how ... and they're a councillor somewhere in [capital city] and how even on their ... even within the xx party that there would be people coming to meetings who are xx members and would be saying 'oh well we need to look at housing for just our own people' and there are a lot of race issues seeping into [nationality] politics as well and [nationality] people, and that [nationality] people tend to tell themselves oh well 'we are not racist', we're you know innocent and everything, so ... yeah I think it's something that we need ... and especially that you know in the xx party that you'd kind of be saying like why would anyone even join the xx party if that's their kind of approach to race issues ... so, yeah I think it's kind of something that ... it's kind of something that's unspoken in ... to a large extent I think it's something that it's still something that I think we're ... we're only kind of beginning here in [country] to even begin to think about ourselves as having other people who maybe would want to come to [country] and what does that mean for our future demographics and everything, so I think it's something that will need to be kind of ... tease out more and

(case)
councillor
v. quickly moves
to local race
concerns

the surprising
truth

R: That's great ... super data this ... I knew you had nothing to worry about ... so that comment ... that was initiated by a councillor, is that right?

main book
club initiator

Q about
who
+
sequence

A: Oh yes, I mean he's just totally kind of ... it was just the staff together ... we were kind of thinking look we should do something regular that you know that isn't just work related and an opportunity to come together over lunch once a month so it's a nice event and yeah people get talking over in different ways than in a meeting

nature of
discourse in
the book club

boundary

R: So the book club was basically put together as another forum for communication where it would be different

A: Yeah, yeah, I think the main purpose I think was as a reason to come together and to talk about ... you know, a kind of a conversation starter, the book, and the book didn't need ... and I suppose that book fed into ... I mean the other books we've read haven't necessarily been political in any way so they're not necessarily political books. I think the next book we're reading is a James Bond book so ... just to do something totally different so

serendipity

Q about
purpose

R: So the purpose was really about bringing people together?

1 item



A: Yeah, yeah he definitely just wanted to have a forum that was ... especially I suppose like I mentioned the last time in the last year there has been such a restructuring of staff in the party and I think he was conscious and a lot of people were conscious and I suppose how there was a reduced number of people who could get to know each other fairly well if they had opportunities to get to know each other and it's also ... and there were also a lot new people who would have been working here because a lot of people left ... there was a lot of restructuring so ... yeah we've been going probably since the summer now, so ...

type of events (how to describe its nature)

creating the opportunity

R: So it looks like some of the purpose is actually for people to get to know each other? [8:28]

double checking purpose of question

A: You know in work because we're always passing each other on the corridor and you know you might meet each other in the canteen you know quickly you know for a lunch but often in talking about issues you don't go beyond the kind of you know 'a lot of calls coming in today' so it's very kind of 'in passing'

differentiate between "noise" (ref).

R: So the councillor initiated? So who else was at this book club? So in fact like how many people were there?

Back to about who

A: There was only about 5 of us actually ... I mean there's only really 15 staff who work say in house and then Head Office, maybe about 16 but a lot of them don't actually work in [capital city] you know there'd be MPs who'd work you know down in [city in the south west] or [city in the south] so they wouldn't be around as often so the people who'd actually be in [capital city] all the time, it's only probably about 10 actually so it's so yeah it wouldn't be more than 5 or 6 that would come along but if ... so kind of 'I'm a committed member (laughs) ... I think it's important to have those kinds of things in work, you know that ... em yes something a bit different

own value expressed

also personal values

R: And what was the gender balance?

who gender balance

A: It was 50:50 actually yeah. There were actually only 4 of us there last week. I think somebody yeah popped their head in for a minute and they said 'oh I have to go' for another lunch, so it ended up just being 4, so it was 2 men and 2 women

50/50 gender

R: So, how early on did the councillor mention about hearing that 'well shouldn't housing just be for our own'?

about sequence

A: We chatted first about a few different ... we kind of went back and forth because we had a few different ... talking about the book and then about ... one of the participants is originally from the States so we asked him about the issues over in America you know at the moment ... you know and he's very depressed about how things are over there and then I suppose it was from there that we kind of ... and we said 'well you know we're not perfect ourselves' so that's how we got onto it ... (R: so that was when the councillor) yes, so that was an example and there was another example then from [city in the south east] you know just

headline, lead into context
↑ nat.
local-capital
" - small town

(all used)

Extract from emotions on the day out with the area rep (C2)

you know quite a lot of what the target was so at that point already, we said it's already been worth it.

emotion So the mood was good (R: positive) yeah well when are preparing for something, you're nervous as well, you're kind of like 'oh god, will this be a disaster, will this work out' so you are worried and nervous but it makes you try harder to push for it ... *motivation*

R: And were you aware of any changes in how you were feeling?

B: Well you know if you're out like that you get tired so eventually you're like 'ah listen we'll call it a day, yeah' so you know you just ... you kind of ... you just get tired ... yeah no that was the mood, it was kind of forward looking, that was the mood I'd say that day

R: Quite optimistic? (B: yeah, yeah) And when you came to the end of the day you were tired but you still have this

B: Actually then he WhatsApp'd the group with a picture of his poster up and he said 'okay, just putting up posters now' so that was 'oh good job you know' coz I brought the posters down but I wasn't helping him putting them up but then you know he started and then it was oh great, he's doing that now'. *follow-up actual*

But I think also I had a sense ... just whatever the word is ... I was pleased that he had worked so hard and that he had achieved already some of the goals that you have and because I could see that he was putting up posters, you know I was pleased that he was doing that, because a lot of people are like or whether they're lazy or whatever, oh I'll do that tomorrow, whereas he's not so there's a sense of just being pleased.

R: That sounds like it was a good day (B: yeah) and what was coming across to you for him do you think?

B: Same. I think he was pretty pleased that because it was already looking good, you know publicity and ... yeah you know he was pleased and I wasn't really sure whether he'd nearly like go 'oh this is horrible' but no, no ... but he was nervous too. He did say 'oh I wonder will anyone show up' so you are nervous when you're doing something like that

R: Do you think that it's maybe different for him because you're a seasoned campaigner and he's still kind of ...

emotion B: Yeah and it was his thing, so at the end of the day he probably was the one who felt everything tenfold ... and because I have so many of these area reps now, you're at arm's length to a certain extent and although I go out with them like this, you're only dipping in. Then I go home and I leave him with the posters and it's his problem.

R: He has to carry on from you

Extract on emotions in online forum (C3)

other people who lost their seats, were all there; colleagues of this person so there was very much the official leadership who were all in attendance. But certainly the people I was talking to would be more the traditional activist types – only three or four of them now in fairness. They'd be more in the malaise thing. The frustration thing – we're going nowhere, that sort of thing, what's happening and what are we going to do about, and ah sure there's no prize giving to the people involved. So there's more just giving out I suppose to be honest.

And they'd be people who would be a bit more in the traditional structure and who would attend other meetings and formal stuff.

R: The next one is about feelings, moods, sense of wellbeing you had before the exchange, during and after.

E: I like the idea that there's a place for discussing issues. I think it's great. For me because I know a lot about the international stuff so I tend to give factual Guys fair enough, but on the other hand, consider this or it's not that simple or something like that so I'm often trying to bring some parity into it ... I'm not trying to claim I know everything but (R: cautious?). No. Probably helpful maybe.

Sometimes we just disagree and I say no I don't agree about that.

R: Because there is literature about emotion and when you're having a kind of informal communication

E: Yes but people have their names on here. I think it's in the anonymous when the emotions go out the window. It's not just that people are named but we all know each other within the organisation or we would know of each other, even though online as a stranger and your name is there. You might not be as concerned but when your kind of named colleagues who are interacting, it's much more like a face to face I suppose.

R: So when it's you exchanging on this particular forum, you're then more reflective?

E: Yeah I think so. Yeah that's fair. I would say reflective if that's not bigging myself up too much.

R: So you're trying to sort of reason things so in a way it's not an excitable mood, it's more a contemplative

E: Yeah, in that forum with those people. There's other places on line where I'd call to say 'that's a load of rubbish' – on Twitter, but I don't do that as much as I used to be a bit more 'partisaning'

R: And objecting?

E: Yeah

Handwritten notes:
emotion
emotion
who (no. 4)
who
goal
goal
boundaries
goal
emotion
emotion
emotion

Extract about after the conversation with the disillusioned member (C8)

Part 2

R: How do you think that he might have felt after the conversation that you both had? The actual discussion ...?

C: I think positive, I dunno how to be more descriptive ... mostly the 'oh' than the 'oh no', he wasn't really ready to fight me anyway which ... I have experienced far more hostile attitudes at least certainly in the body language or people who aren't kind of aggressive but they're kind of like 'ahh ...' (shoulder shrug indicated) not really on board, you know, which is not what I got from him

R: How did you feel then ... I mean did you feel conscious hearing him having an emotional response, having the conversation and something happening with that emotional response?

C: Well for me it was encouraging to see an old member with more of a traditional mind set in the party, feeling like he's more interested now because I think that would make me feel like well if he's thinking that, that might be good representation of others thinking like that ... like the membership become stronger ... if that's the mood, it's probably a good benchmark for that sort of thing.

R: And was that at the start? Did you have that feeling at the start? Did that grow as the conversation went on?

C: Probably already at the start although maybe slightly after you know when you see the kind of criticisms that are obviously still the same kind of stuff. I would see that, but again he seemed open minded, yeah maybe slightly less for myself in that regard, yeah I always give people the benefit of the doubt, yeah maybe a bit too much but still positive from my point of view

R: So you felt encouraged that someone with his sort of views did want to come to the party and have this conversation? You had maybe a sinking feeling maybe when the criticisms were coming through, yeah same old, same old

C: then the greatest hits

R: And then you seemed to kind of feel like, but then he was listening to you, so then the negativities sorted of faded away again?

C: That would be a good summary, yeah?

R: And did you have afterwards a general feeling about how you felt afterwards about actually having that conversation?

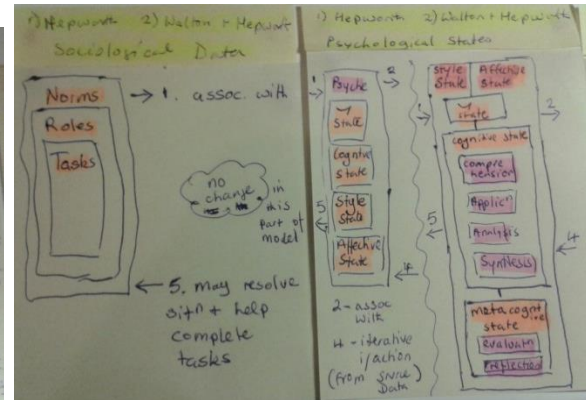
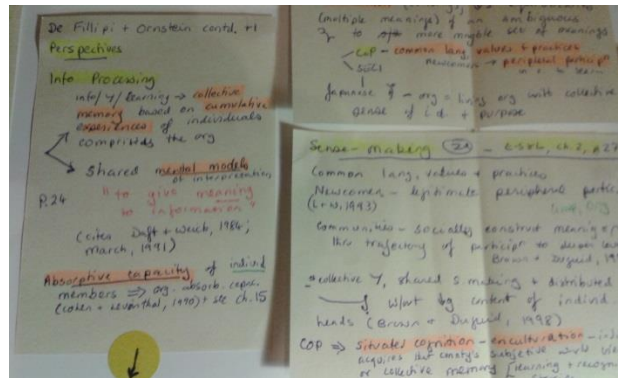
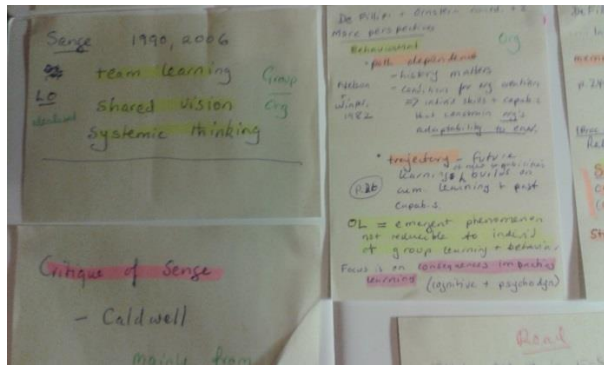
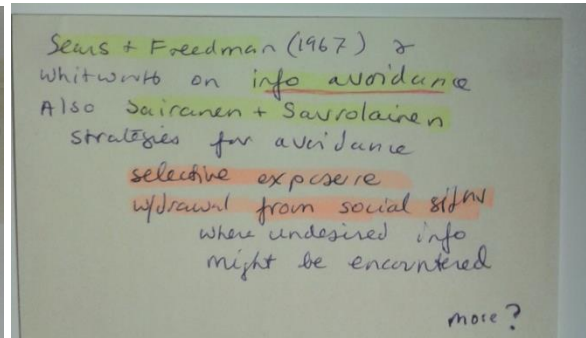
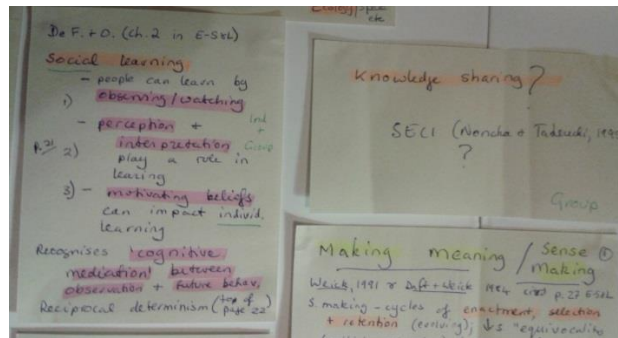
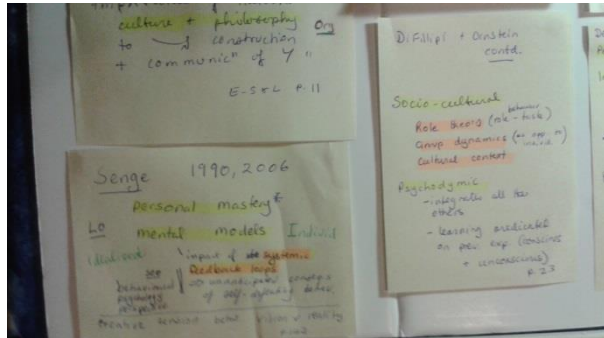
C: I was glad because I was glad to have met someone like him and spoken to him, someone who I've never met before, as you know a very objective sort of measurement so I walked away from that again positive feeling of yeah that's good, it would be good to see more of that kind of engagement ... the fact that members feel more involved and to contribute to what the party's doing I think or speak up and being listened to. That makes a big difference, I think. Coz they

getting a
+ve
result
from
informal
comm.

Appendix F – Storyboard Images



APPENDIX F



APPENDIX F

- Caldwell
mainly from
org viewpoint

Goal
El Jaar (Ch 3 in e-s-v-2)
Social learning theory
learning in participation
in social processes

DeBella (Ch 4 in e-s-v-2)
more focus on sense
Lo

Look for
Kiddman + King 190
7 steps to being able
to use
reflective

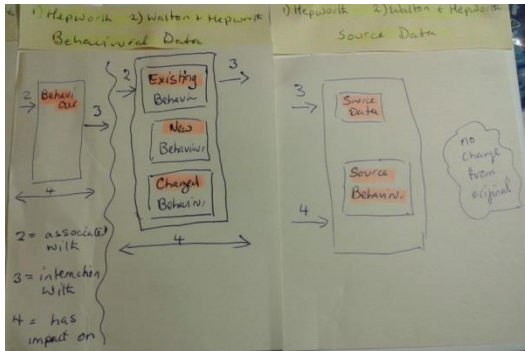
SITUATION:

Cap → **social cognition** - social learning theory
social learning theory
social learning theory

De Filipp + Ocasio cond + 2
life processing perspective
memory stand
index or distributed?
knowing v. forgetting
(org or indi?)
Action on assumption
Sense making is a critical component of cognition (cognitive aspect of psychology)
Shin-Response Behav patterns
in-level (cognitive instead of behavior)
→ higher level development of cognitive-involvement

De Filipp + Ocasio cond + 4
Social construction
- embedded in activities
- includes (or, see, King 1996)
- complements (Proc + Behav)
- socially mediated Cogn
Process of Interpretation
+ Sense-making
(see additional notes)
- formal, intentional process
- emotional vs Cog (intentional)
Applied learning = with
active interaction by trial
learned factors by
"Action Science" - checked
for reliability
assumptions-use +
applied assumption

De Filipp + Ocasio cond 5
Project based / action science theory
Project based / reflective practice
(3 - ways of reading application
in practice)
Cognitive learning perspectives
Action Science - Karl Swain (1986)
examining dual belief beliefs
that "our" theory is wrong
- **Intentional surface assumptions**
- not a way to learn
Kim (1993) - the mental model
in index leads to where most
of an org's T has both
knowledge + mental models
- shared mental models study
→ solve in 1/2 to individual
cabin mental models - address
multiple accumulative learning
multifaceted - at shared cognitive
networks



critical thinking
cited p.22 E-s-v-2

Look For

Special Edition
Organization Science
1991

authors are
neo-rationalist
tradition
max. effic. use of Y
not obstacles in
the way

Brown + Duguid
social process of
OL - pre-eminent
Influ. sev. incl. Lawe +
Wenger, Orr, Nicolini + Mezomo

Interesting section to
read in e-s-v-2 - Part II
Problematising OL + Y

1. (Garrabrant + Swain)
Discourses of KM + LO - their
Production + consumption
2. stickiness - ... meaning +
difficult + KT in orgs
(Savolainen + Cappetta)
3. (John Child + S Rodrigues)
Social I.D + OL
4. (Fineman)
emotionalizing OL
5. Carroll, Rodolph, Ratzliff -
... (2011 + 2012)
6. Delbecq (2011 + 2012)
7. Semantic (Conley + Gioia)
8. OL + KM (Hyles + G-S)

epistemology - bound by
propagation (change)
↓
Inquiry
Reflection
Experience

IN A Political Party
(just post-election)
may be another
one soon

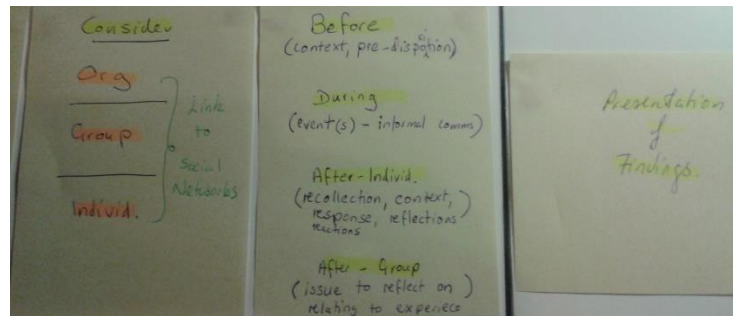
Informal Communication
(see 2. Review to date
for reading on this)

IB - Savolainen

Social constructionism
→ discursive practice
(Tuominen + Sav, 1997), Sw (2007)
Everyday Life Info Seeking
(ELIS) (Sav, 1995)

'Role of emotions in
online info seeking + sharing'
(2015)

↓
psychological oriented
towards life
meanings, material capital,
social capital, cultural
+ cognitive capital, current



Appendix G: Matching theory to questions for first interview

Theory to identify first set of interview questions

Research Objectives

1. To synthesise a working description of informal communication (IC)
2. To critically investigate organisational learning (OL) and information behaviour (IB) theories, concepts and models, with a view to underpinning the enquiry
3. To critically examine learning that takes place during informal communication activities, by applying a combination of information behaviour and organisational learning perspectives

Initial Interview Questions

| <u>Question</u> | <u>Influencing Theory</u> | <u>Relevance to Analysis</u> | <u>Keywords</u> | <u>Comments</u> |
|--|--|---|--------------------------------|--|
| 1. What are your current roles and responsibilities in the party | Roles are identified by several theorists (in OL, CoP and IB literature) as being relevant contextual factors when analysing learning and information sharing behaviours | Do the informal communication (IC) encounters reflect different roles being played out? | <i>Roles, Responsibilities</i> | Different roles might emerge from the encounter that are not mentioned here. |

APPENDIX G

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| <p>2. What are your main tasks, as part of these roles and responsibilities?</p> | <p>As above, tasks are usually included in the same theory discussions about roles and responsibilities</p> | <p>How do the IC encounters relate to the participant's need to fulfil his/her tasks?</p> | <p><i>Tasks</i></p> | <p>Is it the task influencing what happens in the IC or is it the IC influencing what happens with the task (if the participant wasn't initially thinking about the tasks)? Could there be no connection?</p> |
| <p>3. Tell me about how you came to be doing this work.</p> | <p>Life values and motivational influences are again mentioned in both IB and OL/KM literatures. Savolainen writes about both of these. Also level of experience is referred to particularly in OL and CoP literature.</p> | <p>Do the informal communication (IC) encounters reflect the life values and motivational influences of the participant? How does the level of experience manifest itself here?</p> | <p><i>Life values, motivational influences</i></p> | <p>I thought the 'tell me about' would give the participant a bit more scope for providing rich data. It might be useful to interject with questions about key influences that brought this person to this area of work.</p> |
| <p>4. What would you say are your main personal goals which motivate your work here?</p> | <p>Although IB literature addresses these from the viewpoint of motivation, OL literature looks quite a lot, not only at motivation but also at the intersection of personal mental</p> | <p>When analysing the IC encounters, it may be possible to see how these personal goals are reflected.</p> | <p><i>Personal Goals, Motivation</i></p> | |

APPENDIX G

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| | models reflecting their goals and the stated goals of the organisation. | | | |
| 5.What do you perceive as the main goals of the party? | See above | When analysing these perceptions along with the different personal goals, it may be possible to see conflicts or harmonies that could explain barriers to collective learning being able to influence the organisation as a whole. | <i>Political Party Goals; goal matching</i> | |

APPENDIX G

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| <p>6. What words (no more than five words) do you think could best help a newcomer or outsider understand the culture of this political party?</p> | <p>Popova-Novak and Cseh (2015) examines a number of OL paradigms which in effect different OL cultures, while Linnenluecke and Griffiths (2010) take a look at the organisational culture literature using the Competing Values Framework of Organisational Culture to describe different types of organisations.</p> | <p>OL is about linking the different levels of the organisation. This area of theory focuses on the organisational level. Answers to this and other questions may help to identify the political party in the context of the OL culture and organisational culture that most closely resembles this type of organisation. And similarly the type of OL and Organisational Culture may help to develop an understanding of how learning through informal communication occurs in the organisation. This type of question is also a good way to tease out mental models that the data subjects have about their organisation.</p> | <p><i>Organisational learning culture, organisational culture, mental models</i></p> | <p>It will be interesting to see what kinds of mental models emerge from this question. And to see what kind of bearing this has on the understanding of organisational learning in this particular political organisation.</p> |
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APPENDIX G

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| <p>7. How would you describe the leadership style of your organisation?</p> | <p>In the OL literature approaches to leadership are an important factor in how effective organisational learning is, and as above, this refers to the organisational level and how this impacts on OL at individual and group levels.</p> | <p>Perception of leadership styles can also reflect organisational culture and therefore context and motivation in informal communication settings</p> | <p><i>Leadership style</i></p> | |
| <p>8. What would you say are the current discussion topics in your organisation?</p> | <p>Sense-making theory - Maitlis and Christainson from OL literature, and Brenda Dervin from IB literature (in the context of gaps in knowledge)</p> | <p>Theory around sense-making is crucial in both OL and IB literature in respect of people interacting with each other.</p> | <p><i>Current issues, sense-making</i></p> | <p>Just wondering how the sense-making aspect, which is very important is reflected in the objectives as they currently stand.</p> |
| <p>9. How do you keep yourself up to date in order to be able to be effective in your role?</p> | <p>OL literature refers to educational literature on learning strategies, and IB literature also documents a range of information seeking strategies that may be relevant here. In terms of the people that the participant may refer to, this may also reflect participation in CoPs. Social network theory, such as</p> | <p>This is to see some of the participant's learning strategies already articulated and whether they include IC</p> | <p><i>Learning strategies</i></p> | <p>This question links with questions about social networks, and also the role of the media and social media in both keeping up to date and raising awareness of what the political party is doing. How much of this</p> |

APPENDIX G

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| | <p>identifying knowledge brokers</p> | | | <p>updating takes place in an informal context?</p> |
| <p>10. With whom would you discuss those topics mentioned earlier? (may need to prompt that they can be inside or outside the organisation)</p> | <p>Communities of Practice (Lave and Wenger) and social network theory (Granovetter) look at the nature of different types of groups and their characteristics and motivators</p> | <p>The networks people belong to, their place and influence in those networks are important factors in sharing, transferring and transforming knowledge in an organisation. Without the interaction in networks, it would be difficult for new knowledge learned to have an overall effect on the direction of the organisation.</p> | <p><i>Communities of practice, social networks</i></p> | <p>Again - wondering about whether the objectives need to be revisited. Learning at group level Is the glue that knits the individual learning together to build up the overall learning of the organisation as a whole</p> |

APPENDIX G

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| <p>11. Tell me about the nature of these different groups? And how do you come to interact?</p> | <p>As above</p> | <p>As above</p> | <p><i>Nature of the networks</i></p> | <p>Hoping to find out indirectly, who the group members are? How strong are your links to those groups? What are the purposes of those groups? How often do you meet? Where would you meet? Are there clear leaders or do you take turns?</p> |
| <p>12. With these groups and the individuals in them, whom would you perceive as those which most influence the direction of the organisation?</p> | <p>Social networks theory about influencing nodes</p> | <p>Understanding the nature of the networks</p> | <p><i>Influence patterns</i></p> | |
| <p>13. How and in what ways might they do this? Are there other groups (perhaps outside groups) who influence the organisation's direction?</p> | <p>As above</p> | <p>As above</p> | <p><i>Impact of influence</i></p> | <p>Someof this might get answered in 12, but 13 ensures that things are not left out.</p> |

APPENDIX G

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| <p>14. What is your own sense of what you can achieve in the organisation and the degree of influence that you have?</p> | <p>Theory around the concept of 'self efficacy' as well as influencing aspects of social network theory.</p> | <p>This reflects back to aspects of OL (allowing learning to go to different levels) and organisational culture, as well as sense making practice.</p> | <p><i>Level of self efficacy</i></p> | |
| <p>15. What do you think is the most important quality you need to have to be influential in your organisation?</p> | | | <p><i>Perceived best qualities for influence</i></p> | <p>Or do we need to look at broader perceptions of influence - barriers or how can we draw out our colleagues so they have a sense of self-efficacy?</p> |

Appendix H: Matching theory to questions for second interview

Theory to identify second set of interview questions

Research Objectives

1. To synthesise a working description of informal communication (IC)
2. To critically investigate organisational learning (OL) and information behaviour (IB) theories, concepts and models, with a view to underpinning the enquiry
3. To critically examine learning that takes place during informal communication activities, by applying a combination of information behaviour and organisational learning perspectives

| <u>Question</u> | <u>Influencing Theory</u> | <u>Relevance to Analysis</u> | <u>Keywords</u> | <u>Comments</u> |
|--|---|---|-----------------|--|
| 1. Context: what lead to the occurrence(s) that you self-observed? | All the IB theories emphasises the importance of identifying the context of the IS activities | It puts the (qualitative) data into context | <i>Context</i> | Although informal communication is already explored through the literature, data may emerge that enhances what is being sought in objective 1 - developing a working f/work of what constitutes informal communication activities. |

APPENDIX H

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| <p>2. Where and when did the occurrence(s) take place? And how long did the exchange last?</p> | <p>Again this is part of the context and both are well documented as influencing factors in the IB literature</p> | <p>There may be factors about the environment, time of day and length of time of the exchange that may partially explain subsequent data</p> | <p><i>Context</i></p> | <p>There are several possibilities here - the environment could be in an office, off-site but in work time, at home or at a social event. This may also link to how affective factors interplay (later in the interview)</p> |
| <p>3. Looking at how the informal exchange was initiated, were you aware of there being conscious goals or desired outcomes behind the initiation of the exchange? If so, what were they?</p> | <p>This part explores the motivations behind the exchange - motivation is important both in OL and IB literature</p> | <p>One of the aspects of this question is to see how this links to the questions about goals that were asked in the initial interview.</p> | <p><i>Motivation</i></p> | <p>When exploring here, it will be useful to look at how sense-making theory can be utilised here as part of the explanation of what might be happening.</p> |
| <p>4. Did other goals emerge? Perhaps from different participants? Again what did you perceive these goals to be?</p> | <p>This relates not only to motivations but also to cognitive triggers - how did the process make people think about the issues being raised?</p> | <p>The exploration of the potential goals of the informal communication exchange links to what happens next (or what the participant thinks is likely to happen next) as a result of</p> | <p><i>Cognitive triggers</i></p> | <p>It is expected that here links will be found to sense-making theory</p> |

APPENDIX H

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| | | the exchange. | | |
| 5. Who was the initiator of the exchange and who else was present in the exchange? What was their involvement? | This links in with social networks and communities of practice theories | The answers to this question would be also looked at in conjunction with the question in the initial interview about who the participant might discuss current topics with | <i>People, Social Networks</i> | Theory relating to different types of roles that occur in social networks, e.g. knowledge broker role - can usefully be applied here to enhance the understanding of what is going on here. |
| 6. Tell me about your feelings, mood, sense of well-being you had (a) before the exchange (b) during the exchange and (c) after the exchange. Were you aware of how you might be expressing these senses? Were you aware of your feelings and mood | This is picking up on work by Walton and Hepworth, Savolainen and Carol Kuhlthau on the impact of affective factors in information seeking behaviour, and also the work of DeFillipi and Ornstein on psychological perspectives in OL literature | The data here may then be found to have some bearing on what happens next with the content of the exchange; and may reveal some factors that could potentially inhibit or promote organisational learning | <i>Feeling, mood, well-being (self)</i> | Once the participants start to think about these factors it may affect how they might act in the future (another question...??) |

APPENDIX H

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| <p>impacting on the others in the group?</p> | | | | |
| <p>7. Tell me what you picked up about the feelings, mood and sense of well-being of the other participants (a) before if possible, (b) during and (c) afterwards, if possible. How were these expressed (tone, NVC, language, conversational style). How did this impact on you?</p> | <p>As above but this time the participant is observing others as opposed to self-reflecting</p> | <p>As above</p> | <p><i>Feeling, mood, well-being (others)</i></p> | <p>The influence of this on the sense-making process is also something to reflect on when reporting back on this question. Asking for how the participant felt the emotions were expressed also helps to understand how the participant arrived at their conclusions about the other participants' affective state.</p> |

APPENDIX H

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| <p>8. What was the outcome of the exchange? Were any decisions made? Or did it lead to more discussion at a later point? Are there any follow up actions?</p> | <p>This is to some extent the follow through of information seeking behaviour. Savolainen's work on outcomes is useful here. It is also relevant to the process of learning and where the discussion sits in terms of learning theory and organisational learning (does it get moved through the different levels - individual, group and organisational).</p> | <p>The data here would then reveal different possible outcomes (though not a full range due to the low number of participants)</p> | <p><i>Outcome</i></p> | |
| <p>9. What happens next?</p> | <p>As above</p> | <p>This question is posed to try and look a little further into the future after the initial outcomes are established - which may then yield information about the extent of organisational learning that takes place.</p> | <p><i>Future</i></p> | |

APPENDIX H

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| <p>10. What do you think now about the exchange? How did you benefit from it (if you did)? What new knowledge did you gain (if any)? Has this helped you in achieving any or your own goals?</p> | <p>This returns to organisational learning theory - at this point, linking with individual and group learning theory (Argyris and Schon - espoused v enacted values)</p> | <p>This data can also be linked back to initial interview data about personal goals and values</p> | <p><i>Self-reflection</i></p> | |
| <p>11. How do you think the exchange could potentially benefit the party as a whole? To what extent do you think the exchange contributed to the organisation meetings its goals? Have new insights emerged from the exchange?</p> | <p>Linking to OL theory from the overall organisational perspective</p> | <p>This could involve a revisiting of mental models. It might not happen - but there is the potential for seeing whether there is movement in the communication exchange, to creating more of a shared mental model.</p> | <p><i>Learning at organisational level</i></p> | |

APPENDIX H

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| <p>12. Do you have any examples of where an idea that came through an informal conversation came to have a crucial influence on the party and its direction?</p> | <p>This explores the potential for developing mental models that become part of an organisation's knowledge (legend) .</p> | <p>As above</p> | <p><i>Examples</i></p> | |
|--|--|-----------------|------------------------|--|

Appendix I: Pilot first interview guide

1. What are your current roles and responsibilities in the party?
2. What are your main tasks, as part of these roles and responsibilities?
3. Tell me about how you came to be doing this work.
4. What would you say are your main personal goals which motivate your work here?
5. What do you perceive as the main goals of the party?
6. What key words (no more than five words) do you think could best help a newcomer or outsider understand the culture of this political party?
7. How would you describe the leadership style of your party?
8. What would you say are the current discussion topics in your party?
9. How do you keep yourself up to date in order to be able to be effective in your role?
10. With whom would you discuss those topics mentioned earlier? (may need to prompt that they can be inside or outside the organisation)
11. Tell me about the nature of these different groups? And how do you come to interact?
12. With these groups and the individuals in them, whom would you perceive as those which most influence the direction of the party?
13. How and in what ways might they do this? Are there other groups (perhaps outside groups) who influence the party's direction?
14. What is your own sense of what you can achieve in the organisation and the degree of influence that you have?
15. What do you think is the most important quality one needs to have to be influential in your party?

Appendix J Revised First Interview

1. What are your current roles and responsibilities in the party?
2. What are your main tasks, as part of these roles and responsibilities?
3. Tell me about how you came to be doing this work.
4. What would you say are your main personal goals which motivate your work here?
5. What do you perceive as the main goals of the party?
6. What key words (no more than five words) do you think could best help a newcomer or outsider understand the culture of this political party?
7. Organisations quite often have stories, legends or sayings, which help to explain the visions and aspirations of the organisation, and become embedded in its cultural narrative. Are you able to give any examples of such a story? (New question added after pilot)
8. How would you describe the leadership style of your party?
9. What would you say are the current discussion topics in your party?
10. How do you keep yourself up to date in order to be able to be effective in your role?
11. With whom would you discuss those topics mentioned earlier? (may need to prompt that they can be inside or outside the organisation)
12. Tell me about the nature of these different groups? And how do you come to interact?
13. With these groups and the individuals in them, whom would you perceive as those which most influence the direction of the party?
14. How and in what ways might they do this? Are there other groups (perhaps outside groups) who influence the party's direction?
15. What is your own sense of what you can achieve in the organisation and the degree of influence that you have?
16. What do you think is the most important quality one needs to have to be influential in your party?

Appendix K: Pilot second interview guide

1. What are the examples that come to mind of informal communication that you experienced since our last meeting? (Topic, where, when, how many people?)
2. Is there one (maybe two) that particularly stands out – in terms of significance and being able to track what happened since, that we can look at in more detail?
3. What led to this occurrence?
4. Did you have any conscious goals when you engaged with this informal communication?
5. Did any goals emerge, for you or for your organisation while engaged in this instance of informal communication? What were they?
6. How many people were involved in the initial communication? (Possibly look at how many people were communicated with, since, following on from this and as a direct consequence of this).
7. What groups were they connected with?
8. Can you recall how you were feeling or your mood prior to this informal communication exchange? If so, please describe this.
9. And during the exchange? Your own feelings/mood?
10. And the prevailing mood – how were the others reacting, how were you picking up on emotional responses?
11. How did you feel after the exchange?
12. What was the outcome of the exchange? Action? Decision? Change? More Discussion? Follow-up?
13. So tell me all about the things that happened subsequently that are directly related to this informal exchange (I'm assuming you brought it to a meeting and various things happened there; and then you may have made some decisions since then, and did some things after that meeting).
14. So thinking about the detailed example and the other examples you gave me, were you conscious of thinking about these differently because you knew that we were going to have this interview? Tell me more.

Appendix L: Revised second interview

1. What are the examples that come to mind of informal conversation that you experienced since our last meeting? (Topic, where, when, how many people, how long the exchanges lasted?)
2. Is there one (maybe two) that particularly stands out – in terms of significance and being able to track what happened since, that we can look at in more detail?
3. What led to this occurrence?
4. Who initiated the exchange? Who else was there? How did they contribute to the exchange?
5. What groups are the participants connected with (that might be interested in or affected by the content of the informal conversation).
6. Were you aware of conscious goals that motivated the initiation of this informal conversation (perhaps from different participants)? If so, what did you perceive these to be?
7. Did any other goals emerge perhaps as the informal conversation progressed? What did you perceive them to be?
8. Tell me about your feelings, mood, sense of well-being you had (a) before the exchange (b) during the exchange and (c) after the exchange. Were you aware of how you might be expressing these senses? Were you aware of your feelings and mood impacting on the others in the group?
9. Tell me what you picked up about the feelings, mood and sense of well-being of the other participants (a) before if possible, (b) during and (c) afterwards, if possible. How were these expressed (tone, NVC, language, conversational style). How did this impact on you?
10. What was the outcome from or follow up to the conversation?
11. Did anything else happen subsequently that could be directly attributed to this informal conversation?
12. Is there likely to be any further action or follow up in the future? What would this be?
13. So how did you benefit from the informal conversation (if you did)? What new knowledge did you gain (if any)? Has this helped you in achieving any or your own goals?
14. How do you think the exchange could potentially benefit the party as a whole? To what extent do you think the exchange contributed to the organisation meetings its goals? Have new insights emerged from the exchange?
15. Do you have any examples of where an idea that came through an informal conversation came to have a crucial influence on the party and its direction?
16. So thinking about the detailed example and the other examples you gave me, were you conscious of thinking about these differently because you knew that we were going to have this interview?

Appendix M: Added Preliminary Discussion

As you know, this study is aimed at trying to understand what role **informal conversation** plays in contributing to **knowledge gained** by political parties **which helps learning** both within the party itself and with those the party engages with.

To do this, I am seeking your help to identify, over the next few days, some examples of informal conversation within the context of your political party and then look at things like (a) what lead to the exchange – it might not be you who initiated the exchange (b) the exchange itself (c) what happened or will happen next and (d) whether there is something that can be usefully learned from the informal conversation.

Before this, I need to have an initial interview (i.e. this interview) to ask questions that will help me set the context for the analysis of the main part of the research, which we cover with the second interview. However, I have a couple of preliminary questions first, which hopefully you will also find helpful in clarifying the direction of the research.

1. What do you think of as informal conversation?
2. What modes of informal conversation do you think you are most likely to be used for informal communication?
3. For the research you will be asked to describe some of the informal conversations you have had within a given period. This is not only going to be about content, but also about people and about the atmosphere and mood surrounding the communication exchange. Some of the modes you describe above will lend themselves to easy recall when we meet again. Which ones do you think will be more difficult?
4. They are, nonetheless, also potential sources of interest for exploration for this research. Knowing what works best for you, how do you think you might be able to enhance your recall of these more difficult modes of communication?

Appendix N: Interpretation of case one

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| <i>Situation (How?)</i> Circumstances of the conversation | The [xx] Party members working at 'parliament' decided to form a book club for its members. In this case, the book club was reviewing a book which was about racism in America. |
| <i>Reason (Why?)</i> Psychological: physiological / cognitive / affective needs | The underlying reasons for the book club being set up were: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To get to know each other more (cognitive and affective needs) • To take a break (physiological needs) • Explore the issues of the day (in this case, racism and hate crime) 'in a different way' (cognitive and affective needs) |
| <i>Time and Place/ Communication Channel (When/Where/How?)</i> Physical environment | Lunchtime (about one hour) in a room in one of the parliament buildings. The participant also talked about being able to discuss the issues 'in a safe space'. Face to Face Communication. |
| <i>Communicators (Who?)</i> Demographic Role related or personal | Four staff from the [xx] Party. There were two men and two women; two people from the capital city, one person from a smaller town and one person from abroad. One person was in their 20's but no further information was given regarding age. Two roles were identified. One was a councillor and one was a researcher in parliament. The roles were significant to the discussion. |
| <i>Other Sources/Other Communication Channels Referenced (What/Who/When/ Where/How?)</i> Source Features | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The novel itself / read alone in own time / anywhere – probably at home / written communication ○ A cross-party information event on hate crime attended by one of the book club members / a day prior to the book club meeting / at work / face to face communication |
| <i>Topics (What)</i> were the issues | Racism and hate crime, both at home and abroad, and how the [xx] Party can address these. These |

APPENDIX N: C1

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| <p>being discussed?) Environment: work / socio-cultural / politico – economic</p> | <p>globally present issues sit within both socio-cultural and politico-economic environments. The work environment influenced the conversation in terms of wanting to ‘tackle’ the issues as a party.</p> |
| <p>Initial inquiry (Individual)</p> | <p>What do the other book club members think about the book?</p> |
| <p>Motivation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. <i>Goals (Case and Given, 2016)</i> ii. <i>Physiological, cognitive and/or affective needs</i> iii. <i>Stress/coping; risk/reward; self-efficacy drivers</i> | <p>The information needs here emerge from the combined goals of curiosity and wanting to arrive at a more informed opinion (Case and Given, 2016). The participant wanted to compare their own interpretations (cognitive) and reactions (affective) with those of the other readers in the book club. It was also about wanting to ‘find common ground’ with the other readers. Finding ‘common ground’ can be regarded as a coping mechanism with the stress brought on by the issues encountered in the novel and similar issues resonating from real-life in ‘this country’.</p> |
| <p>Additional questions (Group)</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How do race issues manifest itself in ‘this country’? 2. What are the experiences that members have on the issues both personally and from a work perspective? 3. Is anyone else experiencing concerning attitudes in their local areas and at constituency meetings? |
| <p>Motivation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. <i>Goals (Case and Given, 2016)</i> ii. <i>Physiological, cognitive and/or affective needs</i> iii. <i>Stress/coping; risk/reward;</i> | <p>The information needs were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) To expand understanding (cognitive) about current attitudes (affective) to race and hate crime issues. (b) To find out the extent (cognitive) of racism and hate crime in ‘this country’. (c) To find out what to do oneself when facing such issues in personal situations and as party members. <p>This question covers cognitive (knowing a course of action), affective (dealing with feelings that such situations can cause) and physiological (where there might be physical threat) needs.</p> |

APPENDIX N: C1

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| <p><i>self-efficacy drivers</i></p> | <p>(d) To open a dialogue about strategy and policy in tackling the issues raised (cognitive).</p> <p>These information needs of the group emerged from a combination of wanting to arrive at a more informed opinion (a) and (b) and personal (c) and (d) work task oriented goals (Case and Given, 2016). Avoiding information in these cases carry clear risks both personally and at party level. Information discovered in (a) and (b) contributes to meeting information needs in both (c) and (d). Information discovered in (c) and (d) can help to create a greater feeling of self-efficacy, reducing uncertainty and increasing confidence in one's ability to cope with difficult situations relating to race and hate crime.</p> |
| <p>Knowledge shared (Group)</p> | <p>i) Experience as a foreigner in 'this country'</p> <p>ii) Personal witness of racism on public transport and 'small-town' attitudes</p> <p>iii) Experience at constituency meetings of members wanting the party to take actions in conflict with party values</p> <p>iv) Experience and information from attending a cross party event on hate crime. The person sharing here acted partly as an information intermediary but also shared personal reactions to some of the testimonies given at this event.</p> |
| <p>Motivation</p> <p><i>i. Goals (Case and Given, 2016)</i></p> <p><i>ii. Physiological, cognitive and/or affective needs</i></p> <p><i>iii. Stress/coping; risk/reward; self-efficacy drivers</i></p> | <p>Motivation to share information or knowledge was: To raise awareness (cognitive) and reflect (cognitive and affective) on the extent of racism and hate crime in 'this country'</p> <p>(b) To gain support (affective) for racism concerns at constituency level and continued commitment (affective) to tackling those concerns</p> <p>(c) To let people know (cognitive) that some of the racism and hate crime issues have been raised at government level</p> <p>(d) To confirm (cognitive) that there is still much to be done at party and government levels</p> |

APPENDIX N: C1

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| | <p>(e) To help each other recognise the complexity of the issues (cognitive and affective)</p> <p>In terms of goals, (e) and (i) are likely to be both personal goals to share and help and then along with (f) – (h) are also task oriented goals. The reward from sharing information and knowledge here, such as personal experience, or reporting on a training event, was the feeling of support. This also helped with coping with the stress from the personal experiences of racism and witnessing racism including in the course of doing one’s constituency work. Also knowing that others found the issues complex contributed the feeling of mutual support. Furthermore, sharing what is already happening at organisational level increased people’s sense of efficacy because they were likely to have further opportunities to feed into organisational activities, particularly in the case of the researcher.</p> |
| <p>Mood, emotion and attitude (Affective)</p> | <p>A. The view about the book club was one of commitment, that it was fun, easy going, open, and there was a mood of anticipation of excitement and that “it was a comfortable environment”.</p> <p>B. People felt “strongly” that racism is something “we need to tackle and ... one needs to be honest about the problem”. One member was “passionate”. The researcher’s boss was described as being “very engaged” regarding dealing with racism and hate crime issues.</p> <p>C. Participants felt negative, concerned, distressed, shocked but not surprised, outraged, annoyed, ashamed, conflicted and angry about the shared experiences. The person from abroad ‘still felt like an outsider’, felt depressed and “put out”.</p> <p>D. Another feeling was one of uncertainty because “you don’t know what to do when there’s so much”, so a sense of feeling overwhelmed by the issues.</p> |
| <p>ISB type</p> | <p>The information seeking behaviour started with passive attention with the reading of the novel prior to the</p> |

APPENDIX N: C1

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| <p>Passive attention; passive search; active search; ongoing search.</p> | <p>informal conversation. These moved to passive search as people began to share their responses and eventually to active search with specific and focused questions like ‘is anyone else experiencing this in their constituency’. The participant continued with the enquiry on arrival at home, suggesting the search was now ongoing information resulting from information needs expressed in motivation (b) above. The participant was also considering how to feed into conversations relating to developing legislation and policy on hate crime, suggesting ongoing information search in response to information need expressed in motivation (d) above.</p> |
| <p>New learning</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “We all felt that this was something worth figuring out in some further way” and “this was something people needed to get back to”. • “There was a sense of maybe having broken the ice on it [issues of racism]”. • The participant learned that other people were annoyed by the issues and “would like to see a change of behaviour” and • The conversation “gave us all an insight into the issue of race and inclusion in a way I think that we wouldn’t have had necessarily before ... we might have had it individually but not as a group”. |
| <p>Emergent opportunities/support</p> | <p>In point B (mood, emotion and attitude) there were two factors here. Firstly the supportive factor in which people felt “strongly” that racism is something “we need to tackle” providing motivation to continue to explore ways of doing this. Secondly the fact that someone, a senator, has already been identified as “very engaged” regarding dealing with racism and hate crime issues provides potential opportunity for further action including further conversations for mutual information seeking and knowledge sharing.</p> |
| <p>Emergent challenges/barriers</p> | <p>As expressed in point D (mood, emotion and attitude), the participant felt overwhelmed by the complexity of the situation, which induced feelings of uncertainty about how to proceed. In view of the supporting</p> |

APPENDIX N: C1

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| | factors above, these feelings are more likely to function as a challenge rather than a barrier. |
| <p>Evaluation of ISB</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effect on the ‘picture’ of the situation (Todd, 2005) • Emotional effects on ISB (Savolainen, 2014) • Level of progress in ISB process (Kuhlthau, 1991) • Source character (Hepworth, 2004) | <p>The conversation had the effect of clarifying and verifying the picture of the racism situation in the country (Todd, 2005) and creating a desire to expand their information search, in trying to find a way to move forward on tackling racism (Savolainen, 2014). In the ‘new learning’ section above it is clear that there is a sense of still not having enough information, therefore there still being uncertainty, about how to tackle the issues. This is indicated by phrases like being ‘worth figuring out’, something ‘to come back to’ and ‘breaking the ice’. Applying Kuhlthau (1991), the fact there are issues is recognised (initiation stage). The issues are identified (selection stage) and the conversation opened up into further exploration (exploration stage) with the knowledge of the need to continue this before being able to have increased confidence (self-efficacy) to then be able to progress the goal of tackling racism and hate crime. With the complexity of the issues as identified earlier, there is likely to be a continuous iteration (Kuhlthau, 2004, 2005) between the stages, as each inquiry leads to a new set of information needs.</p> <p>In terms of the positive and negative attributes of the sources (primarily the communicators) as per Hepworth’s (2004) model, the main finding was of predominantly positive attributes in that the communicators were accessible and knowledgeable, and there appeared to be good listening occurring in the exchange. The only negative attribute was more about information relating to issues of racism showing that the issues are complex and there is a potential problem of information overload. Recent personal experience, so first-hand experience, also gave a positive edge to the source attributes. The book itself as a source was seen as both explanatory of issues in America but also showed how relevant they remained in ‘in this country’ today. So it produced some negative affective responses but it was also</p> |

APPENDIX N: C1

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| | <p>considered very relevant to the racism issues of today. The training event was seen as coming from very knowledgeable sources, both from the factual viewpoint as well as from the personal experience point of view.</p> |
| <p>Information processing & Information Use (Follow-up)</p> | <p>Later that day, the participant discussed the issues with partner who confirmed experiences as a foreigner. Potential follow up actions were identified as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To work on “the more formal element of hate-crime and dealing with racism” • To feed into wider discussions, specifically about inclusion, like staff meetings, policy related discussions, looking at more long-term approaches • To support hate crime legislation and feeding into policy <p>Note the participant also indicated that it was too early to be more specific.</p> |

Appendix O: Interpretation of case two

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| <i>Situation (How?)</i> Circumstances of the conversation | An area co-ordinator was shadowing an area representative for the day as he was introducing himself to the electorate and publicising an upcoming public event. |
| Reason (Why?) Psychological: physiological / cognitive / affective needs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide guidance (cognitive) and support (affective) • See how the area rep is doing (cognitive) • Find out what people are thinking on the ground (cognitive) <p>The ultimate joint goal of the area co-ordinator and the area rep is to get the rep elected</p> |
| <i>Time and Place/ Communication Channel (When/Where/How?)</i> Physical environment | The informal conversations were intermittent all day, starting in a café, going the rep's house to collect publicity material and then knocking on doors. Everything was face to face, either in one place, driving or walking. |
| <i>Communicators (Who?)</i> Demographic Role related or personal | The area co-ordinator, the area rep, and householders when it came to do the door to door knocks. Although the conversations were informal and appeared casual, they were role related, either in terms of the co-ordinator in a guidance role and for introducing the area rep, and the rep in bringing the area co-ordinator up to date. Additionally, both the co-ordinator and the rep were communicating to promote the event but also to find out what the concerns of the local electorate were. The area co-ordinator was older and an experienced campaigner. The area rep was quite young and at the early stage of his career. The householders were of varying ages. |
| <i>Other Sources/Other Communication Channels Referenced (What/Who/When/Where/How?)</i> Source Features | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Newspaper articles – so written media sources by journalists ○ Radio programmes – so broadcast media by radio journalists <p>Both were written and broadcast in the days prior to the area co-ordinator's shadowing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ After the public event took place, further communication took place among other party members, on |

APPENDIX O: C2

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| | the party's WhatsApp social media group, so this is an electronic channel of communication. |
| <i>Topics (What were the issues being discussed?) Environment: work / socio-cultural / politico – economic</i> | Local issues, the topic for the public event which was on exam stress among young people, newspaper articles and radio reports about the forthcoming public event, indirectly promoting the area rep, which parties the other customers and staff in the coffee shop supported. So all the areas: work, socio-cultural and politico-economic environments are touched on here, primarily at local level. |
| Initial inquiry (Individual) | Any news? How's it going? |
| Motivation <i>iv. Goals (Case and Given, 2016)</i> <i>v. Physiological, cognitive and/or affective needs</i> <i>vi. Stress/coping; risk/reward; self-efficacy drivers</i> | This was described as the area co-ordinator's usual opening query, whether by phone, or face to face with area reps and/or members of the electorate. The goal is to gauge 'the temperature' and try to find out what the emergent issues are. This is mainly about meeting cognitive needs. The stress/coping aspect is more about putting the people being spoken with, at ease so that they would be more likely to be forthcoming. The risk/reward for the area co-ordinator is always ultimately about 'getting a vote'. In the context of the shadowing day the inquiry and subsequent queries about checking the area rep's own sense of self-efficacy and evidence of its application. |
| Additional questions (Individual) | These questions were more about what was in the area co-ordinator's mind throughout the day while the area rep was being observed: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. How well does the area rep canvass? What is his style? Can he do it?2. How is the area rep regarded? Is he liked? Is he seen as likeable?3. Does the area rep need more support or can he manage on his own?4. What are the issues on the ground? (This is also about what might come from the conversations with householders) |

APPENDIX O: C2

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| <p>Motivation</p> <p>iv. <i>Goals (Case and Given, 2016)</i></p> <p>v. <i>Physiological, cognitive and/or affective needs</i></p> <p>vi. <i>Stress/coping; risk/reward; self-efficacy drivers</i></p> | <p>The information needs were:</p> <p>(a) To find out how well the area rep is doing to see if extra support is needed</p> <p>(b) To find out what kind of visibility the rep has among the potential voters to make sure this is good visibility for the [xx] Party</p> <p>(c) To find out how potential voters respond to the rep, to ensure the rep has the personality the public can respond to</p> <p>(d) To find out what local concerns are, to find out if they are issues the area rep and/or area co-ordinator can address or include in future planning</p> <p>The goals are therefore three-fold and all are task oriented. The first goal is to find out if the area rep needs more support or training, (a), and that his style and approach, (b) and (c), can enable the second longer term goal of gaining votes and getting the area rep elected. A more mid-range goal is to be able to address some of the concerns of the local community, (d). Each of the needs has both cognitive (information) and affective. The latter is about mood in the exchanges with voters, attitudes to the area rep and reassurance for the area co-ordinator. Reassurance reduces stress for the area co-ordinator. The area co-ordinator is assured of the sense of self-efficacy that the area rep shows. The risk of not engaging with the area rep and seeing what is happening in the exchange with the voters is that important opportunities are lost for dealing with some of the voter issues. Furthermore, if the area rep did need more support, the area co-ordinator would not be able to establish this as easily through simply a telephone call, for example.</p> |
| <p>Knowledge shared (Group)</p> | <p>i) Evidence of media publicity via newspapers as well as the information that there was also radio publicity on this.</p> |

APPENDIX O: C2

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ii) Information from the local area rep about the political colours of the other people in the coffee shop iii) Opinions from the local area rep about other councillors iv) Information about the publicity event from local area rep to householders v) Information about local issues |
| <p>Motivation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> iv. <i>Goals (Case and Given, 2016)</i> v. <i>Physiological, cognitive and/or affective needs</i> vi. <i>Stress/coping; risk/reward; self-efficacy drivers</i> | <p>Motivation to share information or knowledge was:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) To show the area co-ordinator the publicity the area rep was successful in obtaining to promote the upcoming public event and in so doing, raise his own profile (b) To demonstrate to and reassure the area co-ordinator of the area rep's capabilities (c) To let the co-ordinator know about how other parties are working in the area (d) Both the area rep and the people met while door-knocking were able to raise the area co-ordinator's awareness of the local issues <p>So, the goals are again task oriented but there is also an element of the personal here, in being able to demonstrate personal development and achievement. The goals for the people sharing information during the canvassing were their personal issues and needs, which they wanted the canvassers to be able to meet in some way. All the motivations above have affective elements: pride (e), reassurance (f), surprise at some of the information in (g), and a range of feelings and attitudes in (h). The motivation expressed in (e), (g) and (h) involves sharing of information (e.g. newspaper coverage of the event) and knowledge (e.g. the party affiliations of the other people in the coffee shop) and so meet cognitive needs as well. The reassurance and praise elicited from the area-co-ordinator acts as a stress reducer and it demonstrates the area rep's self-efficacy in his role. The risk of not sharing information and knowledge with the area co-ordinator is that they might not realise how well the area rep is doing. The risk of not sharing local issues,</p> |

APPENDIX O: C2

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| | <p>is the missed opportunity of benefitting from the area co-ordinator’s experience and additional insight into what the [xx] Party might or might not be able to do in response. This kind of discussion can serve to increase the sense of self-efficacy for both the area co-ordinator and the area rep.</p> |
| <p>Mood, emotion and attitude (Affective)</p> | <p>A. The participant was reassured and expressed joy at the media exposure; the area rep was seen as likeable (two of his team had earlier told the participant of their high opinion of him). The rep was also praised for his high level of initiative.</p> <p>B. The response from the householders was described as positive to indifferent</p> <p>C. The more negative comments were about anxiety for young people and stress in exams</p> <p>D. There was a lot of complaint about the other parties in the area.</p> <p>E. After the public event took place, the area rep had told the area co-ordinator (by telephone) that the speaker was excellent</p> <p>F. The local area rep also received praise from a WhatsApp social media group in the party and optimism was expressed for the future.</p> |
| <p>ISB type Passive attention; passive search; active search; ongoing search.</p> | <p>The information seeking behaviour was a mixture of search types. There was a passive search in some of the generic questions and in the general chit chat that sometimes occurred during the door-knocking exercise. Interspersed in these conversations were more specific questions about what was happening or what issues were coming through, which was a more active search. Information behaviour continued after the day with ongoing active searching in terms of finding out how the public event went and how the area rep was perceived as a result of that event.</p> |
| <p>New learning</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The area co-ordinator found out there were several successful instances of coverage of the public event, including interviews with the area rep, both before and after the event. |

APPENDIX O: C2

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The area co-ordinator saw that 'in spite of his personality' was good at canvassing and 'doing the right technique. • The area co-ordinator also learned through other party members in the constituency that they 'believe in' the rep and are enthusiastic about giving him whatever support he needs on the ground. • The area co-ordinator and area rep learned about some of the local voters' concerns. |
| Emergent opportunities/support | <p>The area rep proved capabilities in dealing with the media and motivating fellow party members in the area to help and support him in his work there. The success of the event encouraged the area rep to work towards running another public event on a different topic. His work was also attracting support and confirmation from the [xx] Party members WhatsApp social media forum.</p> |
| Emergent challenges/barriers | <p>The area rep was described as 'awkward' and the area co-ordinator was concerned that this might prove a barrier to the rep's ability to interact with the constituency, but this was shown not to be the case at all. Not all issues raised by people in the door knocking exercise are necessarily ones that the [xx] Party can solve in the short term, and in some cases in the longer term too. This creates challenges with maintaining trust with the voters, which could also result in more negative spreading of opinion about the party, or not engaging with the party in any kind of information sharing conversation.</p> |
| <p>Evaluation of ISB</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effect on the 'picture' of the situation (Todd, 2005) • Emotional effects on ISB (Savolainen, 2014) • Level of progress in ISB | <p>The informal conversations of the day had the effect of changing the area co-ordinator's view of the area rep's capabilities. This view was further verified (Todd, 2005) after witnessing the area rep's engagement with the constituents in the door knocking exercise. Confirmation continued after the public event as well, after the area co-ordinator heard news of the success of the public event. As part of the area co-ordinator's role, the information seeking behaviour will continue to expand (Savolainen, 2014) regarding the area rep's progress and in order to ensure the rep has the right support. There were aspects of</p> |

APPENDIX O: C2

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| <p>process (Kuhlthau, 1991)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Source character (Hepworth, 2004) | <p>search closure (Kuhlthau, 2004) in the relief felt at the area rep's success. However, this is not the full story as the area co-ordinator continues with directed information collection (Kuhlthau, 2004) as to the area rep's progress over time, and to support the process of winning votes. The area rep as an information source was found to be more accessible and knowledgeable (Hepworth, 2004) than originally expected. The area rep demonstrated other positive attributes like having a good manner, good listening skills and being responsive. Although the area rep was seen as 'awkward', a potentially negative attribute, he was found to be using 'the correct technique' to overcome this aspect of his personality.</p> |
| <p>Information processing & Information Use (Follow-up)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The public event was well attended and was a success, which was publicised again in the newspapers. ○ The area co-ordinator telephoned the area rep after the media exposure to congratulate him and ○ Asked what he would do next, to which he responded by mentioning an upcoming event on the gender pay gap. With the growing information about the area rep's profile and organising activities, he was again contacted by the media. ○ The area co-ordinator observed that locals regard the values of the area rep, as they perceive them, as more important than party performance – 'the guy's success is my success'. This was seen as part of a longer process of becoming known as an authentic persona – 'more activity means more presence'. |

Appendix P: Interpretation of case three

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| <i>Situation (How?)</i> Circumstances of the conversation | The conversations referred to here are a series of informal discussions held on an informal social media forum |
| <i>Reason (Why?)</i> Psychological: physiological / cognitive / affective needs | <p>The forum was set up so that members could:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • talk about, react and respond to issues as they arise (cognitive and affective needs) • share thoughts and reactions on policy (cognitive and affective needs) |
| <i>Time and Place/ Communication Channel (When/Where/How?)</i> Physical environment | Varied times in the day as the participant dipped in and out of the informal closed social media forum, while doing other tasks as well. The communication channel was therefore electronic asynchronous communication, as responses were not always immediate. |
| <i>Communicators (Who?)</i> Demographic Role related or personal | <p>The communicators were the case participant and other [xx] Party members contributing to the forum. The demographics did involve different age ranges and both male and female members but specific numbers were not provided, apart from the fact that the forum has about 300 members. There were about 8-9 middle-ranking activists, one of whom was abroad, who were participating in the conversations discussed here. The discussions were sometimes personal views and reactions on topics that the [xx] Party concerns itself with and sometimes were more focussed on issues that would affect the members' approach to policy development and thus be more roles related. No specific roles were revealed though for this series of conversations.</p> |
| <i>Other Sources/Other Communication Channels Referenced (What/Who/When/Where/How?)</i> Source Features | Although no other sources were mentioned in connection with the conversations referred to here, the participant did say that in other conversations, he might share online articles that were relevant to the discussions in hand. So these would still involve electronic channels of communication for sharing news media. |

APPENDIX P: C3

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| <p>Topics (What were the issues being discussed?) Environment: work / socio-cultural / politico – economic</p> | <p>State of play in politics nationally; secession issues that have arisen in another EU country; and opinions about co-operation with parties that have similar goals</p> |
| <p>Initial inquiry (Individual)</p> | <p>What are people talking about today?</p> |
| <p>Motivation <i>vii. Goals (Case and Given, 2016)</i> <i>viii. Physiological, cognitive and/or affective needs</i> <i>ix. Stress/coping; risk/reward; self-efficacy drivers</i></p> | <p>The goal for this question is both personal and task oriented. The personal goal is to see how the party values are being played out and how they might or might not correspond to the participant’s values; and thus is this still the party the participant can feel they can align with? The task oriented goal is to see if there is anything in the discussion that the participant, with their experience and knowledge over the years about party activities and views, could contribute to. There is a cognitive need to find out what people are talking about and an affective need to maintain a connection to the party, especially as this participant is now less active in the party. There can be stress if a member finds that their values no longer seem to align with party values. In this case, the participant was finding that some of the discussion was showing that this was not the case, so that area of stress is reduced. This also worked as a reward for checking in on the online discussion forum. Seeing opportunities for making a contribution also gave the participant a sense of self-efficacy as a party member influencing ideas in the discussion.</p> |
| <p>Additional questions (Individual)</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What do people think about the three topics above? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. State of play in politics nationally; b. Secession issues that have arisen in another EU country; and c. Opinions about co-operation with parties that have similar goals 2. How can “I bring some parity” into the conversation about the secession issue? |

APPENDIX P: C3

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| <p>Motivation</p> <p>vii. <i>Goals (Case and Given, 2016)</i></p> <p>viii. <i>Physiological, cognitive and/or affective needs</i></p> <p>ix. <i>Stress/coping; risk/reward; self-efficacy drivers</i></p> | <p>The information needs were:</p> <p>(a) To find out what the general feeling is about the “current state of play” and to see if this reflected any of the participant’s own feelings about this</p> <p>(b) To get a sense of how party members saw the secession issues in respect of party values</p> <p>(c) To find out if there was anything the participant could contribute to the debates</p> <p>(d) To get a sense of level of enthusiasm for the co-operation ideas and find out if more has happened on this</p> <p>The goal in (a) and (b) are personal again in checking how the party values align with the participant’s own values. The positive reaction of the participant to the online discussion suggests that the stress possibly felt earlier, was reduced by seeing the way the arguments were being debated online. This also served as a reward for the information behaviour itself. Meanwhile the goal in (c) and (d) are more task oriented in determining what contribution the participant can make to the discussions, as well as ensuring he is up to date on the co-operation idea, particularly for when he may be working on an issue alongside members of parties with similar values. So the reward here is the increased sense of self-efficacy felt by the participant as a contributing party member. The information needs in (a) are mainly affective, while in (b) and (d) they are both cognitive and affective needs and (c) is mainly about cognitive needs.</p> |
| <p>Knowledge shared (Group)</p> | <p>i) Opinions, beliefs and values on the secession issue</p> <p>ii) Reflective thoughts on the current state of play</p> <p>iii) Progress and opinions with regards to co-operation with other parties with similar goals</p> <p>iv) Background factual information from the participant’s own knowledge and experience particularly of international issues</p> |

APPENDIX P: C3

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| <p>Motivation</p> <p><i>vii. Goals (Case and Given, 2016)</i></p> <p><i>viii. Physiological, cognitive and/or affective needs</i></p> <p><i>ix. Stress/coping; risk/reward; self-efficacy drivers</i></p> | <p>Motivation for sharing the information and knowledge above was:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) To explore ideas and find out what others think of these (b) Have a thorough discussion / debate (c) Through sharing, opinions are elicited from each other’s responses and reactions (d) To bring each other up to date (e) To provide alternative perspectives <p>The goals for sharing here are likely to be simultaneously personal and task oriented. Personal, in the sense of the continual checking of alignment of personal with party values, particularly in (e)-(g) and (i). Task oriented, in that the more thorough the exploration and debate of the ideas and opinion, the more able members will be to talk about the issues in more formal discussions, and better justify proposals made in other arenas, such as proposing a related motion at the annual conference. So this cognitive increase in knowledge and understanding has the effect of increasing the sense of self-efficacy among members, which in turn reduces stress (meeting affective needs) that might occur prior to more formal meetings. Also helping people in their information seeking has the reward of increasing one’s own sense of self-efficacy and connectedness to the party, again meeting affective needs.</p> |
| <p>Mood, emotion and attitude (Affective)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. The mood was animated due to the “deeply held views about values and secession”, fears about nationalism and its more right wing nature, yet being sympathetic to people not wanting to “pay to the centre” B. The participant found the forum dynamic and refreshing and also noted that C. There was a degree of restraint, as everyone knew each other on the forum. The participant said that |

APPENDIX P: C3

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| | for this reason “it’s more like face to face” communication. |
| <p>ISB type</p> <p>Passive attention; passive search; active search; ongoing search.</p> | <p>The search was a combination of passive search and more focussed and specific active searching particularly for people’s understanding of the issues and any developments on the issues under discussion. So the search became more active once the areas for discussion became more defined. This stimulated ongoing information search to keep abreast of developments in the three areas discussed on the forum.</p> |
| New learning | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The process and result of people clarifying their own positions on the topics in hand • Arguments and strength of feeling put forward on the three main issues in the discussion • The participant was impressed by how well the various positions were articulated in the forum. |
| Emergent opportunities/support | <p>The participant is enthusiastic about the online forum, as expressed in B (mood, emotion and attitude), seeing it as a dynamic platform. This was seen as an opportunity for the participant to continue thinking about finding more ways to engage members through the use of technology.</p> |
| Emergent challenges/barriers | <p>Prior to the online discussion, the participant indicated having experienced a degree of disaffection, which could potentially act as a barrier to engage more in party activities. However, the dynamic nature of the online forum, has encouraged the participant to remain connected and continue to engage in information behaviour particularly via the online forum.</p> |
| <p>Evaluation of ISB</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effect on the ‘picture’ of the situation (Todd, 2005) • Emotional effects on ISB (Savolainen, 2014) | <p>The participant found that the online conversation enabled him to take a position on the issues under discussion, and also clarified and verified the picture (Todd, 2004) of members’ values and positions on the same issues. The positive experience the participant had with the online conversation has meant that he will continue to expand (Savolainen, 2014) his information seeking on the topics in hand. In terms of Kuhlthau’s (2004) model, the participant continues to be at the focus formulation stage for some aspects</p> |

APPENDIX P: C3

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of progress in ISB process (Kuhlthau, 1991) • Source character (Hepworth, 2004) | <p>of the conversation, such as considering opinions on the current state of play. But on specific issues like the secession issue and the co-operation with parties with similar goals issue, the participant expresses a sense of direction and likelihood of continuing to collect information (Kuhlthau, 2004). The source character of the communicators in the online exchange were seen as having positive attributes, like being knowledgeable, skilled (in presenting arguments), with a good manner (Hepworth, 2004). The latter is confirmed in C in the mood, emotion and attitude section above. No negative attributes were identified.</p> |
| <p>Information processing & Information Use (Follow-up)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The participant stated that discussions that happen collectively online are likely to inform members in their actions in their constituencies, or come forward later in formal settings. • The participant thought it likely that there would be a motion at the party conference on the party stance on secession and similarly on co-operation with parties with similar goals. |

Appendix Q: Interpretation of cases four (with prequel) and five

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| <p><i>Situation (How?)</i> Circumstances of the conversation</p> | <p>Brussels airport lounge after a committee meeting of similar parties in the EU (Prequel to Demo)</p> | <p>A supportive demo supporting second stage proposal for new legislation (gender equality) – followed by a drink at a nearby bar.</p> | <p>Post-launch of an amendment for the right of some groups of freelance workers ‘to be able to engage in collective bargaining and be represented by a union’.</p> |
| <p><i>Reason (Why?)</i> Psychological: physiological / cognitive / affective needs</p> | <p>To pass the time while awaiting flights (physiological needs of comfort; cognitive and affective needs in terms of having an interesting informative conversation, making the time pass more quickly)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To support second stage proposal for legislation (affective) • To support lead parliamentarian on the legislation (affective) • Catching up with other members (cognitive and affective) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To celebrate all the work done prior to and leading to the passing of the amendment • To catch up with other members |
| <p><i>Time and Place/ Communication Channel (When/Where/How?)</i> Physical environment</p> | <p>Airport departure lounge, evening time and face to face communication.</p> | <p>An evening outside the parliament buildings followed by drinks in a nearby bar, so face to face communication.</p> | <p>Chambers (to hear the Bills being read) then to the Visitor’s Bar in the Parliament Buildings, in the evening. Again face to face communication.</p> |
| <p><i>Communicators (Who?)</i> Demographic Role related or personal</p> | <p>Participant (now a retired member, but at the time was an activist in [xx] Women) and a woman who was a</p> | <p>Members and friends from the participant’s branch, ‘the golden oldies’ (the only demographic</p> | <p>Trade unions and [xx] Party members including participant and an assistant to a young MP. The</p> |

APPENDIX Q: C4; prequel to C4; C5

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| | <p>co-ordinator and trainer, and who, on a personal level, also happened to have family living in ‘this country’.</p> | <p>indicator) and a former party leader. The gathering included people with experience and knowledge relating to the lead up to the second stage proposal. Specific roles were not identified other than that the communicators were members of the party. The case participant is a retired member but had been an activist in prior years and was familiar with the history of the development of this gender equality legislation, and at one point was involved in this.</p> | <p>gathering included people with knowledge of the progress of the amendment and people involved with the development of the amendment.</p> |
| <p><i>Other Sources/Other Communication Channels Referenced (What/Who/When/Where/How?) Source Features</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ None | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The conversation that took place in the ‘prequel’ to this case ○ A conversation that took place ten years ago in relation to an employer body that wanted to oppose the legislation. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ None |

APPENDIX Q: C4; prequel to C4; C5

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| <p><i>Topics (What were the issues being discussed?)</i> Environment: work / socio-cultural / politico – economic</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Family in ‘this country’ ○ Women and confidence ○ Visiting speaker possibility | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ An organisation that wants to oppose the proposal ○ The ‘airport prequel’ conversation ○ New aspects relating to the event | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How the amendment started ○ The role of the European Court of Justice |
| <p>Initial inquiry (Individual)</p> | <p>While not stated, it is likely that the initial inquiry was about ‘how come you are taking the same flight?’</p> | <p>What is the latest news on this legislation?</p> | <p>So how did the whole thing (the amendment) start?</p> |
| <p>Motivation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> x. <i>Goals (Case and Given, 2016)</i> xi. <i>Physiological, cognitive and/or affective needs</i> xii. <i>Stress/coping; risk/reward; self-efficacy drivers</i> | <p>The motivation initially would be curiosity (cognitive) and a personal goal of wanting to engage in conversation (affective). This could be said to reduce the stress of waiting around. The reward in this case, also turns out to be quite significant as seen later in the conversation. At this point, self-efficacy was not likely to be an issue.</p> | <p>There were affective personal goals here in the satisfaction of seeing something started from the participant’s past role (and the prequel airport conversation) now making such successful progress. The cognitive need for information about the latest progress also met this goal. It confirmed a sense of self-efficacy, and the reward from asking the question was the satisfaction of seeing the progress</p> | <p>Again there was a personal goal here which also related to past roles, as the participant had formerly been a trade union activist. So the interest in seeing legislation to improve freelance workers’ rights confirmed alignment of values and provided satisfaction (affective needs). The cognitive need to get the backstory helped the participant get a more complete picture of the development of the amendment,</p> |

APPENDIX Q: C4; prequel to C4; C5

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| | | and the reduction of stress once the news was received that the second stage had passed. | reducing the stress of not fully knowing, thus also acting as a reward for the information seeking. Here, self-efficacy was not part of the motivation. |
| Additional questions (Group) | 1. Can you help [xx] Women to be more confident and help them to be more politically active? | 1. What has been happening? 2. Tell me about the group opposing the proposal? 3. Are there any past experiences I can share with you? | 1. Could you tell me how the amendment got started? 2. What happens next? |
| Motivation x. <i>Goals (Case and Given, 2016)</i> xi. <i>Physiological, cognitive and/or affective needs</i> xii. <i>Stress/coping; risk/reward; self-efficacy drivers</i> | The information needs were: (a) The participant was aware that in [xx] Women, they knew they should be more active but didn't know how to do this. (b) Wondering if the co-ordinator would be willing to speak with [xx] Women when next visiting her son in the [home country] (c) The desire to find a way to energise [xx] Women to be more politically active and go for | The information needs were: (a) Wanting to know how things have been developing and changing in the party (b) Wanting to know more about the group opposing the proposal (c) Trying to see if there were opportunities for the participant to share relevant knowledge from their own experiences. The goals in all cases were | The information needs were: (a) To get fuller picture of how the amendment came about (filling in the knowledge gaps) (b) To increase appreciation of the history of the work that went into the making of the amendment and its subsequent success. The information needs were both cognitive (a) and affective (b) and the goals were personal goals but |

APPENDIX Q: C4; prequel to C4; C5

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| | <p>political positions.</p> <p>Motivation in (a) and (b) are from cognitive needs of 'know how' and also of the co-ordinator's availability and motivation in (c) is affective relating to depth of commitment to help [xx] Women be more effective. The goals here are all task oriented, aimed at reducing the stress of not knowing how to be more active, while wanting to be so. All three areas of motivation are connected with building up self-efficacy of [xx] Women. The risk of not engaging in information behaviour here, would have been the loss of a valuable opportunity in having the co-ordinator come and talk to [xx] Women.</p> | <p>personal but based on a former role. The information needs were mainly cognitive although in (b) there were affective elements due to the dislike of the group and what it was trying to do. The information needs were also connected with self-efficacy in having experience from being previously involved and wanting to share from that experience. The risk/reward aspect is that these questions also help the participant to stay connected to the party. The information need in (b) was also about reassurance (affective) that the opposing group cannot derail the progression of the legislation. This would also be way of reducing the stress of worrying about this.</p> | <p>related to a past more activist role as a trade unionist. While there was no indication of stress but the risk of not meeting this need could be an underlying sense of incompleteness that could cause stress. The self-efficacy is increased from the point of view of having a better understanding of the situation and perhaps to better talk about it in later conversations.</p> |
| <p>Knowledge shared (Group)</p> | <p>i) Information about family ii) Ideas about increasing political</p> | <p>i) Information about the opposing group</p> | <p>i) Information about how the amendment was conceived and</p> |

APPENDIX Q: C4; prequel to C4; C5

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| | <p>activity of [xx] Women</p> <p>iii) Information about when it might be possible for the co-ordinator to come to the [home country] to speak with [xx] Women.</p> | <p>ii) Knowledge from past experience of the behaviour of the opposing group</p> <p>iii) Knowledge about what has been happening in the [xx] Party since the participant was last involved with any action.</p> | <p>developed</p> |
| <p>Motivation</p> <p>x. <i>Goals (Case and Given, 2016)</i></p> <p>xi. <i>Physiological, cognitive and/or affective needs</i></p> <p>xii. <i>Stress/coping; risk/reward; self-efficacy drivers</i></p> | <p>Motivation to share information and knowledge was:</p> <p>(a) get to know each other a bit more</p> <p>(b) show that organising a meeting would not be a problem</p> <p>(c) And to show how the co-ordinator could help with increasing participation and empowerment of women in politics</p> <p>The motivation in (c) is a personal and affective goal. It also makes it easier to lead on to the discussion</p> | <p>Motivation to share information and knowledge was:</p> <p>(d) To help each other understand the opposing group's behaviour</p> <p>(e) To keep each other enthusiastic and supportive</p> <p>The goals for sharing were both personal and for the members still active, also task oriented. The motivation expressed in (d) is more cognitive while that expressed in (e) is more affective. Both motivation reasons are about reducing stress and maintaining a sense of self-</p> | <p>Motivation to share information and knowledge was:</p> <p>(b) Cause for celebration</p> <p>(c) Helping the participant understand the full picture and the hard work that went into the success of the amendment.</p> <p>So the desire to share was both affective (a) and cognitive (b). The goals were probably personal but also task oriented by spreading the news of the effectiveness of the [xx] Party members to get this amendment through. Thus also</p> |

APPENDIX Q: C4; prequel to C4; C5

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| | <p>about giving a talk to [xx] Women, so it has the effect of reducing stress. The motivation in (d) and (e) address more cognitive and task oriented goals. The risk of not sharing would be significant as it would risk a lost opportunity for building up self-efficacy both for the participant and for [xx] Women.</p> | <p>efficacy and achievement. This also serves as a reward for sharing the information and knowledge.</p> | <p>confirming self-efficacy of the members involved. The reward is that by sharing the information others can celebrate more fully through having increased understanding.</p> |
| <p>Mood, emotion and attitude (Affective)</p> | <p>A. The participant was happy about finding someone to come and speak with [xx] Women about issues such as gender equality.</p> | <p>A. Enjoyed meeting the 'golden oldies' B. Not surprised at what the opposing group were trying to do but angry nonetheless</p> | <p>A. Amazement at the amendment finally getting through B. Joy at the 'popular politician' who signed in the amendment and had been involved in the early stages of development C. The parliamentarian behind the drafting of the legislation talked about 'having worked really, really hard and succeeded ... which was absolutely amazing'. D. 'Feeling of accomplishment'</p> |

APPENDIX Q: C4; prequel to C4; C5

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| | | | <p>E. The participant talked about being amazed that related significant events ‘don’t get in the papers’.</p> |
| <p>ISB type Passive attention; passive search; active search; ongoing search.</p> | <p>Started as passive attention which quickly changed to active search, once the participant found that the co-ordinator travelled regularly to ‘this country’. There would be ongoing information searching in order to make the event happen.</p> | <p>Started as passive attention, moving to both a passive search approach in catching up with the ‘Golden Oldies’ and active search in wanting to find out if the employer body still objected to the legislation. There would be ongoing information searching in order to keep abreast of further developments.</p> | <p>There were elements of passive attention such as in the chambers and in general listening, but when the opportunity arose to ask specific questions this changed to active search to reduce the gaps in the participant’s knowledge about how the amendment came about. There would be ongoing information searching in order to see what further amendments develop from this, as only certain groups of freelance workers are covered in this amendment.</p> |
| <p>New learning</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That the co-ordinator had family in ‘this country’ and so travelled over regularly | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The demonstrators learned that the second stage of the proposal passed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The participant felt more informed |

APPENDIX Q: C4; prequel to C4; C5

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The co-ordinator was in a position to and willing to come and speak with [xx] Women | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The participant also learned more about who objected to the legislation and who supported it. The participant also found out about the demo the following week on casual employees being able to access union support. | |
| Emergent opportunities/support | This conversation offered very significant support to 'get the women to feel confident'. This was seen as crucial because it used to be 'we should do this, we should do that, but how do we do it ... and then you get someone who comes along and makes it seem so much simpler'. | This conversation did result in the participant being informed of another up and coming demonstration. The reconnecting with other members and former colleagues could also act as encouragement to attend the next event. | The success of this event and the previous one made the participant feel motivated to get more involved again as a party member. |
| Emergent challenges/barriers | Rather than creating challenges and barriers, this conversation acted to reduce barriers and better enable the challenges to be | The participant being retired had been taking on more the role of onlooker and potentially informal advisor rather than a more involved | None were identified here. |

APPENDIX Q: C4; prequel to C4; C5

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| | overcome. The end result was an increase in self-efficacy. | activist. However, this was not seen as a challenge or barrier. | |
| <p>Evaluation of ISB</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effect on the 'picture' of the situation (Todd, 2005) • Emotional effects on ISB (Savolainen, 2014) • Level of progress in ISB process (Kuhlthau, 1991) • Source character (Hepworth, 2004) | <p>The information behaviour resulted in a much clearer picture (Todd, 2005) of how [xx] Women could proceed. The joy of the opportunity that presented itself encouraged expansion of information seeking, through the subsequent talk from the co-ordinator. This also gave a sense of direction and confidence that would come with further information collection at the planned talk (Kuhlthau, 2004). The co-ordinator was seen as having positive attributes of being accessible and knowledgeable (Hepworth, 2004) with no negative attributes being identified.</p> | <p>The conversations resulted in a verification of the picture of how the legislation was doing (Todd, 2005). The success and relief of the outcome may mean a continued passive search just to follow the progress, so still expanding on the information behaviour (Savolainen, 2014) and the information collection stage in Kuhlthau's (2004) model. The sources were all regarded as having the positive attributes of being accessible and knowledgeable (Hepworth, 2004). No negative attributes were identified.</p> | <p>The information behaviour resulted in a completed picture (Todd, 2005) of the situation. Similar to the previous event, the participant will probably follow the progress of the amendment, so still expanding on the information search (Savolainen, 2014) and information collection (Kuhlthau, 2004). The sources were again regarded only as having positive attributes, which were that they were accessible and knowledgeable.</p> |
| <p>Information processing & Information Use</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The coordinator/trainer came to speak with [xx] Women and 'she | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The participant went to the next demo (Case No. 5) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The participant talked about the success of the amendment |

APPENDIX Q: C4; prequel to C4; C5

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| (Follow-up) | really energised people and galvanised us' <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A Private Members Bill (relating to the law being celebrated in the next event) was submitted and passed in [parliament]. | | being a 'platform to relaunch ... launch further actions'. |
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Appendix R: Interpretation of cases six and seven

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| <i>Situation (How?)</i> Circumstances of the conversation | This case is a series of short informal conversations that took place during short breaks at the Annual Party Conference (APC) | This case is about informal conversations at a disco organised by the youth wing at the Annual Party Conference (APC) |
| <i>Reason (Why?)</i> Psychological: physiological / cognitive / affective needs | Catching up and exchanging views | To relax and exchange views |
| <i>Time and Place/ Communication Channel (When/Where/How?)</i> Physical environment | Smoking area and other informal spaces (not stated) throughout the two days of the conference. These were all face to face communication channels. | Disco bar on the Saturday night of the conference, at the end of the main day of the conference. Again these were face to face communication channels. |
| <i>Communicators (Who?)</i> Demographic Role related or personal | There were four conversations, involving: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Participant and party chair 2. Participant, friend and a councillor 3. Participant and party member from head office 4. Participant and party member from the Equality section Each conversation was around one topic and attracted one main question, so the numbering of these aspects corresponds to the way the communicators are listed above. The participant is | Although the findings in Chapter Five mention three conversations, two were very short, i.e. one was a quick discussion about passing motion relating to legalising marijuana for medical purposes and the other was with the party chair who gave praise to the participant for his work to date. However, for the purpose of this analysis, it is the main conversation about international politics that would most benefit from further breakdown using this analysis framework. |

APPENDIX R: C6; C7

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| | <p>young and a branch chair of a student based constituency. The more experienced members that he was talking to are all older although specific ages were not mentioned. The roles of the communicators are included in the list above.</p> | <p>The main conversation was between the participant and two people from the youth wing. So they were younger members of the party. The participant is chair of a branch with predominantly young members. The roles of the other members were not specified other than they work in the youth wing of the party.</p> |
| <p><i>Other Sources/Other Communication Channels Referenced (What/Who/When/Where/How?) Source Features</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ None | <p>News reports – the specific sources were not mentioned nor when or where they were consulted, but they would have been recent reports given the current nature of the discussions at the time of the annual conference.</p> |
| <p><i>Topics (What were the issues being discussed?) Environment: work / socio-cultural / politico – economic</i></p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Party tactics and comparison with other parties, and views on motion to ‘not go with right wing parties’ 2. Controversial vacated seat 3. Future plans and how to develop a personal profile 4. Should equality wait and campaigns be more focused on ‘bread and butter issues that appeal to more people’ | <p>Mainly concerns were about what is happening in other countries including an election in another EU country, the UK and ‘Brexit’, views on the leader of the sister party in the UK and a long discussion about Syria.</p> |

APPENDIX R: C6; C7

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| <p>Initial inquiry (Individual)</p> | <p>Each of the queries below corresponds with the list of communicator combinations, and respective topics shown above.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What was the party chair's view of how the party is doing and how to vote on the motion about not going into coalition with right wing parties? 2. Should I consider going for the recently vacated seat? 3. What advice can you give me about my future and how to develop and strengthen my personal profile? 4. Some constituencies are more concerned with paying for uniforms and books, is there a place at this point to talk about 'socially progressive' ideas when the key concerns are about basic living standards? | <p>What are people's opinions about the election candidates in another EU country's recent election?</p> |
| <p>Motivation</p> <p><i>xiii. Goals (Case and Given, 2016)</i></p> <p><i>xiv. Physiological, cognitive</i></p> | <p>The information needs were:</p> <p>(a) To obtain guidance and further information (1. – 3.) so that the participant had a better idea about how to vote on the motion expressed in</p> | <p>The information need was about finding out if people thought the same as what the participant thought or whether they disagreed about the candidates in another EU country's election.</p> |

APPENDIX R: C6; C7

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| <p><i>and/or affective needs</i></p> <p>xv. <i>Stress/coping; risk/reward; self-efficacy drivers</i></p> | <p>(1.), whether to go for the recently vacated seat (2.), and advice on how to build a personal profile (3.).</p> <p>(b) To have a clearer idea about tackling constituencies where the key issues are about struggling with basic needs rather than equality issues (4.)</p> <p>The goals here were task oriented and primarily meeting cognitive ‘how to’ needs. The needs are very much connected with increasing self-efficacy as a branch chair and activist, thus the implicit reward of the information behaviour. The motive for the information need expressed in (b) above would have an affective element with there being a potential conflict of goals, thus also causing stress. Obtaining more information about the thinking from an equality activist has the potential reward of reducing this stress.</p> | <p>The goal with this kind of question is likely to be partly personal in terms of the parties and candidates the participant would support. The task oriented aspect of the goal is potentially about looking at alignment of values, i.e. so the participant’s own political values, perception of party values and how this is reflected in the group’s response, thus reflecting their values. The cognitive aspect is about learning what other members’ opinions are. The affective aspect could potentially be about reassurance through the different views and feelings expressed by the fellow members in the conversation. While there was some difference of opinion, the values expressed remained left-leaning. There was some debate but it was not stress inducing and the reward of the conversation was that hearing other people’s arguments, helped the participant to clarify his own views and maintained his sense of self-efficacy.</p> |
| <p>Additional questions (Group)</p> | <p>As these were short conversations, the initial questions were answered without leading to new</p> | <p>1. What are people’s opinions of the leader of a like-minded party in the UK?</p> |

APPENDIX R: C6; C7

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| | <p>questions.</p> | <p>2. What kind of stance should the party take on the situation in Syria? 3. Is there more I need to understand about the situation there in Syria?</p> |
| <p>Motivation</p> <p><i>xiii. Goals (Case and Given, 2016)</i></p> <p><i>xiv. Physiological, cognitive and/or affective needs</i></p> <p><i>xv. Stress/coping; risk/reward; self-efficacy drivers</i></p> | <p>See above</p> | <p>The information needs were:</p> <p>(a) Wanting to find out if people thought the same as what the participant thought or whether they disagreed in their opinions about the leader of the likeminded party in the UK.</p> <p>(b) Wanting to find out what other people thought about whether the party or the country should have a stance or some kind of action in respect of the situation in Syria</p> <p>(c) Realising that there was someone in the group who knew more than the participant did, the participant wanted to find out more from that particular communicator so that he could improve his understanding of the situation in Syria.</p> <p>The motivation for (a) would be very similar to those behind the information need expressed in the</p> |

APPENDIX R: C6; C7

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| | | <p>first query. The motivation for (b) relates to party stance – this is then a task oriented goal with a cognitive need, but potentially underpinned by affective needs due to the dire situation in Syria, particularly at the time of the discussion. The affective response here would undoubtedly be a feeling of stress and trying to determine a party stance could be regarded as an attempt to reduce that stress. It would possibly also enable a sense of self-efficacy in the face of a situation where one can feel helpless to respond or even know how to respond. The reward of having the conversation is potentially being able to deepen understanding of the situation. The second question. In the case of (c) further discussion showed the participant the complexity of the situation and the difficulty of the party being able to have a stance, especially with events changing on the ground in Syria all the time. The goal of wanting to know more was, in some ways personal and showed both cognitive (wanting to know more) and affective needs. The affective aspect relates to pride where the participant was</p> |
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APPENDIX R: C6; C7

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| | | <p>originally confident that they were quite expert on the situation in Syria and could speak with authority. But after listening to the other member, realised this wasn't the case, so there was a reduction of self-efficacy and a mild sense of stress. There was also admiration for the communicator's depth of knowledge and understanding. The reward of pressing further for information was the improved understanding which potentially could restore the participant's sense of self-efficacy. It is harder to say whether stress was reduced as the discussion indicated that there was little the party could do at this stage.</p> |
| <p>Knowledge shared (Group)</p> | <p>The knowledge shared included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Opinions about the motion on not going with right wing parties (1.) and on the situation and people involved with the recently vacated seat (2.) ii) Long-term party experience relating to the wisdom of whether or not to go for the vacated seat (2.) and guidance on building a personal profile (3.) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Opinions about the elections in the other EU country, and about the leader of the like-minded party in the UK ii) Deeper knowledge about Syria: "this guy ... really knows his stuff" and arguments for why at this point in time, the [xx] Party could not take an official stance on the situation in Syria. |

APPENDIX R: C6; C7

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| | <p>iii) An explanation of the ‘equality must wait’ argument in response to question (4.).</p> | |
| <p>Motivation</p> <p><i>xiii. Goals (Case and Given, 2016)</i></p> <p><i>xiv. Physiological, cognitive and/or affective needs</i></p> <p><i>xv. Stress/coping; risk/reward; self-efficacy drivers</i></p> | <p>The motivation for sharing was:</p> <p>(a) To tease out views and thinking in advance of formal motions (helping to clarify in own minds) in relation to question (1.).</p> <p>(b) To help each other with clarification of focus and strategy in relation to questions (2.) and (3.).</p> <p>(c) To help each other understand the context of situations such as the controversial seat (3.), and the constituencies that might respond more to party policies on ‘bread and butter issues’ as opposed to policies on ‘socially progressive issues’; in relation to question (4.).</p> <p>Again the goals were all task oriented and aimed at helping the participant reduce stress, by increasing his understanding (meeting cognitive needs), and increasing his sense of self-efficacy. The reward for experienced members is affective in the sense of being glad to have their experience recognised and</p> | <p>The motivation for sharing was:</p> <p>(a) To hear each other’s reactions to their views or opinions on the candidates in the EU election and the leader of the sister party in the UK</p> <p>(b) To bring each other up to date with their understanding of what has been happening in Syria and share new perspectives</p> <p>The goals for sharing match those for asking the questions. This includes the personal goal of wanting to share each other’s’ opinions and responses; and the task oriented goal of coming to a party stance, if possible. And where this is not possible, to help each other understand why this is not possible, so hopefully reducing stress and enabling each other to maintain a sense of self-efficacy. The risk of not sharing is that false assumptions might be put forward and potentially suggested as a party line, whereas these conversations are more likely to prevent this.</p> |

APPENDIX R: C6; C7

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| | <p>seen as useful and the positivity that comes from the solidarity brought about by such conversations. The reward for (e), especially relating to question (4.) is potentially the reassurance that the increased information has increased the participant's understanding and so better able to implement the 'equality must wait' policy, i.e. increase the member's self-efficacy in this area.</p> | |
| <p>Mood, emotion and attitude (Affective)</p> | <p>A. There were affective responses to the motion such as regarding some parties as 'no go' areas for coalition</p> <p>B. There was amusement and admiration for the councillor bringing the informal group up to date on the contentious seat: "he's fun to watch", "he's one of our battering rams".</p> <p>C. Admiration was expressed for equality team for raising the issue of balancing social progress with meeting the data to day concerns such as having enough money to pay the bills: "fair play for [xx] Equality themselves for actually bringing</p> | <p>A. The affective factors were very positive about the disco event itself: 'a great night'.</p> <p>B. The participant was very positive about one of the candidates in the election in another EU country that "I really like him" but was then also disappointed that this person didn't win: "he was just at the wrong time".</p> <p>C. On the conversation about the leader of the sister party in the UK the view was found that by the time of the conference, the youth wing "support was pretty thin now".</p> <p>D. Regarding Syria, the participant found the new</p> |

APPENDIX R: C6; C7

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| | <p>this to the fore”.</p> | <p>information ‘depressing’. E. The participant talked about the youth wing “could be a bit naïve”, and not pragmatic enough. The participant sometimes got into disagreements but saw this as a “good thing”.</p> |
| <p>ISB type Passive attention; passive search; active search; ongoing search.</p> | <p>The initial way that the groups of communicators met would have been serendipitous but very quickly the participant engaged in active searches with specific and targeted queries. The information search would be ongoing particularly in following the development of the ‘equality can wait’ debate.</p> | <p>The information seeking involved quite active searches as the questions were around very specific opinions and views of specific current events. It is likely that the participant will continue with ongoing information searching, particularly on those issues that are still current.</p> |
| <p>New learning</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New range of arguments about not going with right wing parties (in the event of a coalition needing to be formed) • New information about the background and people involved with recently vacated seat • More tips on how to improve one’s own profile • Reasons for the ‘equality must wait’ suggested policy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The participant learned that there were different opinions to his about the candidates for the election in another EU country but more similar opinions about the leader of a like-minded party in the UK. • The conversation that most impacted on the participant was the one on Syria. Here the participant found that their idea of how the party should respond was misinformed. The situation was far more complex than the participant first |

APPENDIX R: C6; C7

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| | | realised and the participant's original view about what the party should do about it, needed to be revised. |
| Emergent opportunities/support | The main opportunities were that the participant was encouraged to continue developing his profile. | The opportunities that occurred were the opportunities to debate opinions and views on current international issues, that gave a sense of support in terms of the [xx] Party still being the party whose values most aligned with those of the participant. |
| Emergent challenges/barriers | Some of the communicators are not always available to provide guidance, so this might be a challenge while the participant is still gaining experience and improving his profile. | Potential barriers or challenges are that it might not necessarily be possible for the [xx] Party to come up with a party stance; and that the international situations become too complex to allow this. However, understanding that there is increased complexity could be a challenge rather than a barrier as the participant continues to try to follow the events and the various views surrounding those events. |
| Evaluation of ISB • Effect on the 'picture' of the | The information seeking behaviour had the effect of clarifying (Todd, 2005) the arguments relating to a | The conversation had the effect of clarifying the picture (Todd, 2005) on the different issues |

APPENDIX R: C6; C7

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| <p>situation (Todd, 2005)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional effects on ISB (Savolainen, 2014) • Level of progress in ISB process (Kuhlthau, 1991) • Source character (Hepworth, 2004) | <p>forthcoming motion (1.); verifying the situation with the recently vacated seat (2.) and changing the participant's view of whether or not to go for this seat; clarifying what the participant needed to do with regards to his profile (3.) and the position regarding the 'equality must wait' argument (4.). Once the motion took place the search would terminate as it would in the case of deciding not to go for the vacated seat. The information behaviour would continue however, while improving one's profile and following the 'equality must wait' policy. So here the information seeking would continue to expand (Savolainen, 2014). In terms of Kuhlthau's model, the participant reached 'search closure', although he would continue with 'information collection' on the latter two questions. The source character in each case was seen as having the positive attributes of being experienced, therefore knowledgeable, and accessible. No negative attributes were identified.</p> | <p>discussed. There was a sense that there would be continued information collection (Kuhlthau, 2004) and expanding of the information search (Savolainen) so as to remain informed and less stressed by the uncertainty of not having enough information. Although with such ever-changing situations it can be difficult (see challenges) to feel that one does have enough information. The attributes, in particular relating to the person who knew a lot about Syria, were very positive, especially regarding the level of knowledge that the communicator had. No negative attributes were discussed.</p> |
| <p>Information processing &</p> | <p>1. After voting, the motion on 'not going with right</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thinking longer term, the participant said "The |

APPENDIX R: C6; C7

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| <p>Information Use (Follow-up)</p> | <p>wing parties' was passed</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">Participant decided not to go for the vacated seatFurther conversations were held about future plansParticipant attended the formal session on 'equality must wait'. <p>In addition to the outcome above the participant stated "our long standing issues that we lose votes to [the grassroots party]. I think we should be winning those votes'. This suggests is looking at the longer view in terms of how they can contribute to a strategy for winning those votes.</p> | <p>conversation [about Syria] made me more cautious".</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">The participant would also be continuing to keep up with news reports on the election in the other EU country, at least until the elections are completed, and would continue to follow the like-minded party in the UK and the situation in Syria. |
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Appendix S: Interpretation of cases eight and nine

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| <i>Situation (How?)</i> Circumstances of the conversation | This conversation took place during one of the breaks at the annual party conference and it was primarily about one member's disillusionment with the [xx] Party. | This conversation also took place during one of the breaks at the annual party conference and was about aspects of visibility for the [xx] Party in a rural area. |
| <i>Reason (Why?)</i> Psychological: physiological / cognitive / affective needs | Exploring opinions about the party | To explore building a support base in the participant's home town |
| <i>Time and Place/ Communication Channel (When/Where/How?)</i> Physical environment | Smoking areas | In one of the informal areas (not specified) |
| <i>Communicators (Who?)</i> Demographic Role related or personal | Participant, another two members, also young and an 'older guy'. The participant has a role as a chair of a young branch, but the roles of the other members were not specified. The 'older guy', while being a member of the party, had been active in his younger years, but not so much now. | The participant and a member who is trying to raise the visibility of the [xx] Party in the participant's home town. Both are young and are very task oriented in this conversation, even though the participant is not currently in a role in the area under discussion. The other member is working in a voluntary capacity to try and raise party visibility. |
| <i>Other Sources/Other Communication Channels Referenced (What/Who/When/</i> | ○ None | ○ None |

APPENDIX S: C8; C9

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| Where/How?) Source Features | | |
| <i>Topics (What were the issues being discussed?) Environment: work / socio-cultural / politico – economic</i> | Disillusionment with the party Positive responses to the annual party conference discussions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building a support base • Raising visibility in rural areas • Raising a team for the participant (who at some point in the future, wants to run as a candidate in the home town) • Issues with accessing the accounts for the area |
| Initial inquiry (Individual) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Why did the ‘older guy’ feel disillusioned? | What is happening with the party presence in ‘my’ (the participant’s) home town? |
| <p>Motivation</p> <p><i>xvi. Goals (Case and Given, 2016)</i></p> <p><i>xvii. Physiological, cognitive and/or affective needs</i></p> <p><i>xviii. Stress/coping; risk/reward; self-efficacy drivers</i></p> | <p>The information need was primarily to try and understand the ‘older guy’s’ point of view.</p> <p>Here was likely to be a personal goal of curiosity and a task oriented goal of wanting to find out the kinds of things that turn people off the [xx] Party so that the participant can work on rectifying this in his role. The information needs are cognitive in terms of learning the reasons and affective in the desire to reduce this sense of disillusionment. The participant will have felt pressure, therefore stressed, to try to reduce this sense of</p> | <p>The information need would be a combination of curiosity about what is currently happening in the participant’s home town, along with wanting to identify a role for himself there in the future.</p> <p>Here there would be a personal goal of simply wondering what is happening in the participant’s home town, combined with a task oriented goal in terms of thinking of future possibilities for the participant to get more involved there. The needs are primarily cognitive. It could be argued that obtaining information would help reduce the stress</p> |

APPENDIX S: C8; C9

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| | <p>disillusionment. The reward from asking the question is that understanding the reasons for the disillusionment could potentially increase the participant's sense of self-efficacy if he is able to reduce this member's negative feelings about the party.</p> | <p>of worrying about the future, if the reward for asking the question is that the participant identifies more focused and clearer opportunities for himself. This would also have the effect of increasing his sense of self-efficacy.</p> |
| Additional questions (Group) | <p>Is there something I can do to reduce the disillusion?</p> | <p>How can we help each other?</p> |
| <p>Motivation</p> <p><i>xvi. Goals (Case and Given, 2016)</i></p> <p><i>xvii. Physiological, cognitive and/or affective needs</i></p> <p><i>xviii. Stress/coping; risk/reward; self-efficacy drivers</i></p> | <p>The information need with this question was to see if there were areas that the participant could bring the older member up to date on some of the positive actions of the party.</p> <p>This is clearly a task oriented goal with the cognitive need for information and the affective need to reduce the member's level of disillusion. The reward from this enquiry is significant if the participant is then able to respond in a way that reduces the member's disillusionment. This increases the sense of self-efficacy and reduces the stress of absorbing the negative feelings of the member.</p> | <p>The information needs here were:</p> <p>(a) To establish what would be effective strategies to adopt to raise the party profile;</p> <p>(b) To find out if the member would support the participant as a candidate in the future and</p> <p>(c) To find out how the participant and the member can help each other from their current roles and locations.</p> <p>These information needs are very much task oriented. The first need (a) is a cognitive need while (b) is about meeting an affective need. The last need (c) likely involves both information (cognitive) about how to help each other and the affective need of gaining an increased sense of support and</p> |

APPENDIX S: C8; C9

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| | | <p>self-efficacy in being able to raise the [xx] Party profile. Furthermore the query allows the participant to see how he could build the opportunity to stand in the area, as a candidate. The reward from making the enquiry also lies in finding that one can plan for the future and that there is solidarity between the participant and the member.</p> |
| <p>Knowledge shared (Group)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) The member's reasons for disillusionment ii) Opinions about the conference iii) Information about how the [xx] Party restrained the main party when they were in coalition | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Opinions ii) Experience iii) Information about how the area has been performing to date |
| <p>Motivation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>xvi. Goals (Case and Given, 2016)</i> <i>xvii. Physiological, cognitive and/or affective needs</i> <i>xviii. Stress/coping; risk/reward; self-efficacy drivers</i> | <p>The motivation to share was:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) To have one's criticisms heard and responded to (as being representative of many people's views) (b) To exchange reactions about the conference (c) To respond to the criticisms with new information about lesser known actions while the {xx} party was in government (d) To update with information about current developments in the party | <p>The motivation to share was:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (d) To help each other increase their understanding of the issues involved in increasing visibility and personal profile (e) To see how they can help each other on practical issues (like access to the accounts) in more immediate ways. <p>The goals here are definitely task oriented, albeit in the longer-term. Understanding the issues reflected the meeting of cognitive needs while the</p> |

APPENDIX S: C8; C9

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| | <p>The goals of (a) and (b) were about personal feelings (affective) on track record (cognitive) and of the more positive developments being witnessed at the annual conference (cognitive and affective). The goals in (c) and (d) were task oriented as the participant found it incumbent on him in his role, to persuade the member that the situation was more positive than the member initially believed. In (c) and (d) the motivation was also about self-efficacy in role and enabling increased self-efficacy for the member to feel more positive and report back to others who held similar opinions to his. The whole exchange gradually reduced the stress from the negativity of the disillusionment. Had the participant not probed and explored the members' attitudes, there was a risk not only of the attitude remaining but also that it would be spread or confirmed with other party members.</p> | <p>clarification of mutual support reflected the wish to meet affective needs. The understanding and the support both work to reduce the stress and risk of feeling on one's own, as well as increasing the sense of self-efficacy for both parties in the conversation.</p> |
| <p>Mood, emotion and attitude (Affective)</p> | <p>A. The attitude of the 'older guy' was described as initially critical, tired, frustrated and feeling betrayed</p> | <p>A. Frustration was expressed about communication difficulties with head office, and a feeling that head office focuses on the</p> |

APPENDIX S: C8; C9

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| | <p>B. The values of this person was described as being 'a proud socialist'</p> <p>C. The reactions of the participant were 'trying to defend the party', had 'kneejerk response' to the criticism as 'we fought awfully hard for limiting how aggressive [the coalition party was]'. D. Eventually the 'older guy' was encouraged both by the conversation and by the motions in place, and he felt the party was 'going back to its roots'</p> | <p>stronger areas and candidates; something which created a sense of disconnect for rural constituencies</p> <p>B. The participant felt it was important to support passionate members and not undervalue their efforts</p> <p>C. Praise was given for retired members who are 'fantastic', 'happy to put in the time', 'dedicated', 'we need them'</p> |
| <p>ISB type Passive attention; passive search; active search; ongoing search.</p> | <p>The conversation started off as relatively passive attention until the disillusion became more apparent which then made the participant engage in more active information searching, with a view to persuading the member to feel less disillusioned and want to re-engage with the party activities. The participant is hopefully that the member will engage in ongoing information searching on the party activities, and from that to possibly become more active again.</p> | <p>As the participant was thinking ahead about possibly running as a candidate in the area, the information searching was far more active and focused. There will be ongoing information searching here, specifically to follow up on the constituency bank account and also on how to increase the visibility of the [xx] Party in his home town as well how to increase his own profile there.</p> |

APPENDIX S: C8; C9

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| <p>New learning</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The participant learned of the reasons for the member's disillusionment • The participant felt then, that the member (the 'older guy'), in response, was re-invigorated and that the conversation was 'a good bit of progress'. The participant discovered that he could persuade the member to moderate his views. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The participant was brought up to date with what has been happening on the ground in his home constituency ○ The participant also found out that there was an issue with access to accounts, which he wanted to follow up on and find out how to resolve the issue. ○ Both the participant and the other member gave confirmation of support, mutually |
| <p>Emergent opportunities/support</p> | <p>The participant felt that there was a relenting and an opening of the mind to a more positive view of party progress, which could result in more active support (see follow up below)</p> | <p>The confirmation of mutual support, and the support of other members (see section on mood, emotion and attitude) is seen as an opportunity for developing and improving the [xx] Party visibility in the future.</p> |
| <p>Emergent challenges/barriers</p> | <p>Disillusionment can act as a barrier both in information seeking and in increasing one's level of engagement with the party. However, it appears that the persuasive efforts of the participant have, to some extent, mitigated this.</p> | <p>The rural areas are traditionally not as abundant in [xx] Party seats, so this could be a challenge for the participant and the member from his home town, in increasing party visibility.</p> |
| <p>Evaluation of ISB</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effect on the 'picture' of the | <p>In this conversation the participant clarified the picture (Todd, 2005) of where the party is currently</p> | <p>In this conversation, the picture of what was happening at home was clarified and verified</p> |

APPENDIX S: C8; C9

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| <p>situation (Todd, 2005)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional effects on ISB (Savolainen, 2014) • Level of progress in ISB process (Kuhlthau, 1991) • Source character (Hepworth, 2004) | <p>at. The participant is probably not going to proceed with further information seeking here so the active search is closed (Kuhlthau, 2004) or terminated (Savolainen, 2014). However the information behaviour of the member may be ongoing, still at the focus stage (Kuhlthau, 2004) and the positive feedback could result in expanding the information search (Savolainen, 2014). The member as a source discussing his feelings would be regarded as reliable with talking about his own personal experience and the participant seems to have been regarded by the member as accessible and knowledgeable (Hepworth, 2004). No negative attributes were identified.</p> | <p>(Todd, 2005), as was the commitment to mutual support. The encouragement that the participant and member gave each other is more likely to lead to expansion of the information search (Savolainen, 2014) and continued, quite focused information collection (Kuhlthau, 2004). The source character of the member was that being on the ground in the home constituency, the source would therefore be a reliable source by providing information and knowledge from personal experience (Hepworth, 2004).</p> |
| <p>Information processing & Information Use (Follow-up)</p> | <p>The participant anticipates increased involvement by the member and “maybe not be as critical of the party”.</p> | <p>Although nothing was specified, the conversation is likely to influence what the participant does next in terms of their own plans to be a constituency candidate.</p> |

