

SPIRITUALITY AND IDENTITY AT WORK

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To the 16 participants of this research

Abstract: Spirituality and Identity at Work

This thesis investigates the relationship between people's notion of 'spirituality' and their identities in relation to their work. It is mainly concerned with identity processes of people who consider themselves 'spiritual' and shape their working lives to accommodate what they portray as the spiritual aspects of their identities.

Overall, the literature on 'Spirituality at Work' (SaW) is increasing, but as the phenomenon is new and amorphous there are still many gaps that call for empirical research. Moreover, most of the academic literature on SaW is polarised between the affirmative side arguing for introducing 'Spirituality at Work' and the critical side cautioning against the oppressive potential of 'spirituality' adopted as a management initiative. This research, however, places the emphasis on participants' identity processes within contexts of work, providing insights that can suggest implications about identity construction within the more general phenomenon of 'Spirituality at Work'. Based on the analysis of 16 life stories the research examines participants' identity processes in the context of their whole life stories and within the socio-cultural discourses surrounding them.

During the course of this research, it has emerged that participants engage in identity work to incorporate ideas of "unity" into "who they are". In this, they draw on spiritual and other cultural resources to construct aspects of their identities which will enable them to act as 'whole persons' in everyday situations they encounter. The identity processes investigated in this research involve participants' understandings of breaking free from societal impositions and at the same time of being one with everything. Despite these seeming antithetical processes, participants construct ways in which this makes sense for them and find ways to enact it in their everyday lives. Subsequently, participants tend to leave formal work organisations to pursue more 'spiritual' types of work where drawing on spiritual discursive resources, they generate discursive and structural platforms for new ways of organising work.

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1 Introduction

This first Chapter begins with a prologue to the thesis, presenting the background to the topic and explaining the main academic debates. It then introduces the aims and objectives of the research before providing an overview of the whole thesis.

1.1 Prologue

This thesis investigates the relationship between people's notion of 'spirituality' and their identities in relation to their work. It is mainly concerned with identity work processes of people who consider themselves 'spiritual' and shape their working lives to accommodate what they portray as the spiritual aspects of their identities.

My personal interest in the topic stems from my learning of particular spiritual traditions and my personal exploration of the meaning of work in relation to 'spirituality'. Having met other people who considered themselves spiritual and were dissatisfied with their work mainly due to incongruences with their 'spirituality' related ideas, my initial questions dealt with applying spiritual ideas and values at the workplace. However, after having the opportunity to work on two consulting projects of what is called 'values dissemination' which attempted to align corporate with employee values, my interest shifted towards understanding the complex and multiple ways in which people shape their conception of work and enact it in their everyday lives. I now see my personal curiosity as part of the broader increase of the interest in 'spirituality' and subsequently in 'Spirituality at Work'.

The increased dissemination of the notion of 'spirituality' in the world of work, which takes various forms and is usually referred to as the 'Spirituality at Work' phenomenon (SaW), has stimulated the adoption of new practices within the workplace as organisations seek to increase their employees' spiritual awareness (Bell and Taylor 2003). The notion of 'spirituality' as a new form of the search for existential meaning has its origins in the late nineteenth century along with the development of psychology. It became popularised in the 1950's following the rise of humanistic psychology and has been closely associated with work and the economy since the 1980's through the tailoring of spiritual self expression to

business success (Carrette and King 2005). Current increased interest in SaW focuses on workplace ethics, which are related to the 'spiritual side' of people and organisations – this 'spiritual side' being variably and broadly defined by professionals in the field. For example the Findhorn Foundation Consultancy Service, 'seeking to demonstrate the links between the spiritual, social, economic and environmental aspects of life', provides 'spirituality-related' consulting to companies like Pricewaterhouse Coopers and Shell in UK. Moreover, individuals on their own initiative are increasingly becoming involved in similar trainings and practices. 'Spirituality at Work' courses have been attended by executives from companies such as the Bank of England, Mars and British Gas. This has spurred an increasing interest by academics who have started researching the phenomenon.

1.2 The academic debate

A growing number of related books, articles and journals have been published in recent years on the 'Spirituality at Work' phenomenon. Much of this literature is less critical and analytical in the sense that most writings are written 'from the heart' (Mitroff and Denton 1999 p.83), offering broad and vague definitions (Benefiel 2003), but academic analysis based on critical premises is beginning to emerge. The American Academy of Management started a 'Management, 'spirituality' and Religion Interest Group' in 1999 and special issues of other highly reputable social scientific journals have appeared. The present project is a contribution to this developing critical academic engagement with the subject.

The growing academic knowledge on the topic of 'Spirituality at Work' (SaW) is mainly concerned with a debate between the affirmative and the critical literature on the effects of the phenomenon of SaW on society, organisations and people. Although the contributions to the literature are significant from both sides empirical research is minimal. On the one hand, the topic is still new within the academic field but there are also certain inherent hindrances in researching the topic. Firstly, the term 'spirituality' came to acquire a 'broadly inclusive' (Mitroff and Denton 1999), 'amorphous' (Davie et al. 2003) quality which makes it difficult to define or research with conventional research methods. Moreover, the theoretical debate has been extended on the effects of the phenomenon resulting in

leading writers (Carrette and King 2005, Heaton et al 2004, Kelemen and Peltonen 2002) distinguishing between ‘right spirituality’ that addresses the social issues of our times and ‘wrong spirituality’ that fails to acknowledge the interdependence of self and society. However, and especially since the main characteristic of the phenomenon is its ‘amorphous’ quality, people who draw upon ‘spirituality-related’ discourses do not follow specific paths that can be evaluated as either ‘maintaining capitalism’ or as ‘socially transforming’.

This theoretical engagement calls for support from empirical work as the phenomenon is still new and therefore a standard definition does not exist. Therefore it is imperative to understand how people, who consider themselves spiritual, understand and live their ‘spirituality’ in their work and how they construct their identity in relation to this.

The present research contributes to the literature in suggesting an understanding of the process of identity formation and the constructing elements of this process in the cases of people that come across spiritual ideas and set out to shape their working lives to accommodate these ideas. Based on 16 life stories, this research provides ‘generalisable insights’ (Watson 2001 p. xiii) at the ‘level of process and of theory’ (p. xiv) focusing on ‘identity work’ processes and covering wider theoretical propositions (Yin 2003) on identity, work and ‘spirituality’. These insights can suggest implications about identity construction processes within the more general phenomenon of ‘Spirituality at Work’.

This is – to my knowledge - the first qualitative research undertaken in understanding identity at work constructed through the experience of ‘spirituality’. It adds to the understanding of identities at work as well as to the growing literature examining ‘spirituality’. Moreover it is the first time that a research project examines the identity processes of people involved in ‘spirituality’ in the context of their life stories and within the socio-cultural discourses surrounding them. It will thus enhance the understanding of the phenomenon of ‘Spirituality at Work’ which is expected to add to research on the changing boundaries and dimensions of work.

1.3 Aims and objectives of the research

The aim of this research is to explore the processes in which people who consider themselves spiritual construct their identities in relation to work contexts. This aim is divided into the following four objectives:

- to identify the personal and circumstantial factors that inform individuals' interest in 'spirituality'
- to locate participants' understanding of their 'spirituality' in the overall context of their life - past, present and future – and in relation to their work
- to explore the processes in which participants construct their identities in relation to their 'spirituality'
- to locate participants' accounts in broader discursive patterns and processes in contemporary society

These objectives are met through adopting a life story approach which provides a way to engage with the processes by which participants make sense of themselves, their work and their 'spirituality'. To address the first objective, the life story approach enables the generation of accounts in which participants narrate the various 'spirituality' related influences in their lives. Subsequently, the second objective is met in linking the narratives with the context within which they take place as each story unfolds within the structure of time in past, present and future. The third objective is met again through the overall research approach which emphasises the processes of identity construction throughout the participants' life narratives as well as at the time of the interview. Finally the fourth objective is met by analysing and linking participants' lives to broader relevant discourses.

1.4 Overview of the thesis

After this first Chapter (Chapter 1) which provides the background and overview of the thesis, the thesis progresses to locate the topic within the main literature debates (Chapter 2) and proceeds to explain and justify the research approach adopted (Chapter 3). The field research Chapters (Chapters 4-7) follow to pave the way for the overall discussion and conclusion (Chapter 8) that brings the themes and topics of the thesis together and points to possible future research.

Chapter 2, 'Existing Knowledge on Identity and 'Spirituality at Work'' discusses the increased interest in 'Spirituality at Work' as a phenomenon of academic interest. The phenomenon is analysed mainly from two schools of thought: the critical and the affirmative. The critical side cautions against a particular type of 'spirituality' which, conforming to the main capitalistic structures, aims to provide new management initiatives (fads) and remedies for stress. The affirmative side on the other hand views 'spirituality' as a 'new level of consciousness' that will infuse new values in the workplace. Both sides mostly engage with concerns on the outcomes of 'Spirituality at Work' used as a management initiative. The debate revolves around a certain line of arguments which can be analysed to three levels: societal, organizational and individual. Therefore critical scholars argue that on a societal level SaW can represent a revival of that aspect of the Protestant work ethic which produces a notion of 'self' which, in turn, enables exploitative production (Bell and Taylor 2003). On the other hand both critical and affirmative scholars (Aupers and Houtman 2006, Carrette and King 2005, Mitroff and Denton 1999, Woodhead 2001) examine the potential of SaW for social change and Carrette and King (2005) suggest that only engaged types of 'spirituality' can have this capacity. At a second level, critical scholars point to the dangers of using SaW as a management tool that reduces 'spirituality' to the next management fad used for exploitative production. The affirmative side argues that expressing 'spirituality' at the workplace is a need that has to be addressed in organisations (Lips-Wiersma and Mills 2002) and that SaW can be a vehicle for organisational transformation. This argument is also applied to the individual level where the critical side sees the creation of governed selves fit for production and the affirmative argues for the development of 'whole selves'. A large part of the literature on 'servant leadership' seems to promote this 'kind' of personhood.

These debates do not address issues of identity from the perspective of those individuals, who draw on spiritual discourses and therefore there is a need for empirical research to identify the processes through which these individuals take in the various discursive resources available to them and interpret them in the contexts of their everyday lives. In this thesis I look at the ways in which people who consider themselves spiritual draw on 'spirituality-related' discourses and construct their identities in relation to their work.

Chapter 3, 'Researching Spirituality and Identity at Work' provides the adopted research stance and the whole research process to produce the present thesis. Moreover it clarifies that the term 'self' is used here to denote a framework within which 'identity' can be expressed. It also clarifies the use of the terms 'discourse', 'discursive resource' and 'narrative' in this research. As the overall topic is new and 'amorphous', a qualitative inductive approach was chosen so that unknown or hidden facets of identity and of 'spirituality' could emerge. The base for this approach is a view of reality as socially constructed through socialisation and discourse. This provides a processual understanding of 'spirituality' and 'identity' that is used as a platform on which to research relational processes between identity work and constructs of 'spirituality' within work contexts. To facilitate this, a life story approach is employed as the main research strategy as the means to bring out the stories through which participants construct their identities in relation to their views of 'spirituality' and within work contexts.

The chapter also provides an account of the research design and process which at first deals with the respondent selection process and access issues to participants. Then the whole process of the life story interview is detailed, the ways it invited narratives and stories and the ethics stance adopted. Finally the process of analysis of the research is explained.

Having explained the research approach, the sequence of the field research chapters starts with a more general chapter, Chapter 4, that sets the scene in that it addresses participants' views on 'spirituality' and their subsequent accounts of the influences that led them adopt a 'spiritual' way of life. Then, in the following three field research chapters, identity processes are explored in depth through the study of three analytic identity tensions: a) the 'internal' tension between the self as subject and the self as object, b) the 'intermediate' tension between personal and social identity and c) the 'external' tension between the individual and others.

Chapters 4 – 8 present and analyse the empirical findings.

These chapters mainly deal with the processes in which participants handle tensions in their sense of identity, the ways in which these processes are expressed at work and the social responses that these expressions consequently invite.

Chapter 4, 'Becoming 'Spiritual'', begins with participants' views on 'spirituality' and the development of their understanding throughout their lives. These views emphasise subjective experience and participants' interpretations of their experiences reveal their combining of 'essentialistic' with 'fragmented' and 'unitary' conceptions of identity. The participants' upbringing is discussed to identify early influences through socialisation processes and also explores particular sensitivities they mention as important in their life stories. Subsequently, the process of becoming spiritual is analysed and, finally, the chapter presents the participants' accounts on influences on their conception of work and the ways in which this might be related to their 'spirituality'.

Chapter 5, 'Understanding the Self and Constructing Identity' explains how participants deal with an 'internal' tension between the self as object or as observer and the self as subject or as observed. This tension is expressed as increased reflexivity where the essentialist notions of a core self are combined with notions of fragmented identities as well as conceptions of a unified self. All these theoretically irreconcilable conceptions of self and identity merge in participants' efforts to construct a unified self. In this effort participants make use of the concept of 'presence' as a neutraliser of the 'internal' tension to construct an experience of unity between the self as object and the self as subject. This is then explored within work contexts as participants strive to construct individual and collaborative work frameworks where the 'internal' identity tension is neutralised. This is then located within the wider light of the literature on the relational self.

Chapter 6, 'Careers Choices and Work Orientation' discusses how participants deny authority from social institutions such as 'religion' or 'formal work organisations' and place authority in lived experience and in their own lives. Life and experience become the ultimate authorities and work becomes entangled with life and identity. Here, the individual is positioned in the intersection of societal discourses and 'internal' conflicts where multiple discourses compete within an individual identity and produce interpretations and meanings that cannot always reflect single discursive positions such as 'deference to God' or 'anarchy'. Then the concept of work takes on a meaning of service to provide a justification for

life and participants are shifting their orientations to work and constructing notions of 'a life's work'.

Participants' accounts are examples of the way in which wider cultural meanings of work shape individual stories and enable processes where further individual conceptions of work are produced. In most cases, participants' conceptions of work change towards connecting work with life and identity. Individuals then make choices to pursue a work that fits to their shifting view or vision of it and therefore to create a 'life's work' is considered the product of choice and purpose at the same time. Choosing to follow occupations that involve 'working with people', participants do not only change their lives and careers but encourage people who do not consider themselves spiritual to follow similar paths. Moreover, participants through their life and career choices participate in wider work narratives of protean careers and of downshifting.

Chapter 7, 'Organising Work' explores the tension individuals experience when they encounter situations that they perceive as irrational or conflicting with their individual values. Mostly these experiences are depicted as externally imposed usually from work organisations and peers as participants recount narratives of management initiatives and other types of organisational control that failed to engage their sense of identity. To find a way to fit in the world of work and survive within current capitalist structure doing work that is 'fulfilling', participants experiment with alternative ways of doing business and create new vocabularies and new management perspectives that link business terms with 'spiritual' terms. Here the narratives reflect the intersection of two discourses, one that distinguishes between self and others and one that invents meaningful business-spiritual terms to unify experience. Participants are also creating networks, partnerships and organisations where they can apply and experiment with ideas that support holistic views at work. This is then linked to the literature on 'post bureaucratic' management and the shift to more internal means of organisational control.

Chapter 8, 'Discussion of Research Outcomes: Towards an Understanding of 'spirituality' and Identity at Work' brings the themes and topics of the entire thesis together in a discussion about the main themes that have been raised regarding identity and 'spirituality' at work. It further provides the contribution to

knowledge of this research project and links the research outcomes to the research objectives. Overall, this chapter presents the way that the much debated conceptualisations of 'spirituality' are enacted in individuals' lives, the ways in which participants change their conceptions of 'work' in relation to their 'spirituality' and finally the identity processes within which these conceptions of 'work' and 'spirituality' are assimilated into the participants' sense of self. Finally, the limitations of this research are considered and suggestions for future research are made.

2 Existing Knowledge on Spirituality and Identity at Work

2.1 Introduction

As introduced in the previous chapter, conceptions of ‘spirituality’ and its application to work and business, which have been considered as more ‘secularised’ spheres of life, have been growing. In particular, the increased interest in ‘Spirituality at Work’ focuses on workplace ethics (Ackers and Preston 1997, Konz and Ryan 1999, Giacalone and Jurkiewicz 2003), which are related to the ‘spiritual side’ of people and organisations – this ‘spiritual side’ being variably and broadly defined by professionals in the field. A growing number of related books, articles and journals have been published in recent years on the ‘Spirituality at Work’ phenomenon. Much of this is written ‘from the heart’ (Mitroff and Denton 1999 p.83), offering broad and vague definitions (Benefiel 2003), but academic analysis based on critical premises is beginning to emerge.

The academic literature mostly justifies the indications of the increase in interest on ‘Spirituality at Work’ as evidenced by the number of academic books, articles and especially the devotion of special issues of highly reputable social scientific journals on the topic; the 1999 Academy of Management introduction of the ‘Management, ‘spirituality’ and Religion Interest Group’ and the increasing number of its annual meetings; the increasing number of related conferences as well as the increase in courses on ‘spirituality’ taught in business schools (Boje 1995, Cavanagh 1999, Neal 1997). However, as the phenomenon is still new to the academic field, academics face difficulties to describe and to find alternative ways to research it. The issue lies in that ‘Spirituality at Work’ is a broad theme, it contains seemingly contradicting concepts and ideas, it does not consent on a particular name or definition and it does not have recognisable leaders.

Most literature is prescriptive with the more affirmative side arguing for including ‘Spirituality at Work’ within work organisations and the more critical side warning on manipulating effects of this use. In general however, all writers include in their work both positive and critical elements towards ‘Spirituality at Work’, as the main arguments are still debated and emergent.

The three main trends of divergent concepts analysed in the literature are first: individualism versus communitarianism, second: the resacralisation of work as the ‘new protestant ethic’ versus the ‘rise in consciousness’ and third: the oversimplification of religious traditions versus a disciplined ‘spirituality’. These concepts can be seen to reflect a general main idea/argument diffused at the societal, organisational and individual levels.

The main argument starts at societal level discussing whether ‘spirituality’ is a social apparatus to maintain capitalism and the power of consumer markets or if it is a means of social change. This argument is then filtered to the organisational level as the question of ‘spirituality’ enhancing organisations and providing meaning to work or on the contrary if it is masking manipulative directions for compliance. At an individual level then the literature seems to neglect individuals’ opinions as it is mostly concerned with analysing whether the ideas involved in ‘Spirituality at Work’ are creating a self suited for consumption or a self escaping consumption patterns in capitalist societies.

More specifically, at the societal level of the argument, the literature (Carrette and King 2005, Casey 2000, 2002, 2004, Heaton et al 2004, Kelemen and Peltonen 2002) tends to discriminate between two ‘kinds’ of spirituality; one which provides too much choice and encourages a consumeristic ‘pick and mix’ approach leading to pre-packaged selves while maintaining the status quo and a second one which follows the traditional spiritual paths of discipline and work on the self leading to a greater understanding of the self, others and the world. The latter is thought to have the capacity to promote social change. This argument tends to analyse ‘spirituality’ in terms of political ideologies and therefore fails to look at the link between ‘spiritual’ ideas and their social enactment.

At the organisational level of the argument and from the most affirmative academic work (Fairholm 1996, Lips Wiersma 2001,2002, Milliman et al 2003, Neal 1999), the issue lies in bringing ‘whole selves to work’. The critical side (Bell and Taylor 2003,2004, Carrete and King 2005, Casey 2000, 2002, 2004, Tourish and Pinnington 2002) cautions against ‘spirituality’ used as an indirect means of organisational control that can enable employee exploitation. Neither the affirmative nor the critical sides have looked at how individuals drawing from ‘spirituality’ related discourses (see Chapter 3: 3.1.2) experience contrasting

values with work organisations, involve in identity processes and shape their work orientations.

Finally, at the individual level of the argument, the critical literature remains theoretical and in relation to the other two levels arguing that ‘spirituality’ can become a means of oppression for the individual. On the other hand, a part of the affirmative literature focuses on looking at individuals who ascribe to ‘spiritual’ values as having a need to express their ‘spirituality’ at work (Lips Wiersma and Mills 2002), performing significantly at work (Neck and Milliman 1994) and finding self fulfilment at work (King and Nicol 1999). At this level there are two empirical studies which provide valuable insights on career behaviour. The work of Aupers and Houtman (2006) looking at participants’ career choices through their socialisation to ‘self spirituality’ and the work of Lips-Wiersma (2001, 2002) looking at the influence of ‘spirituality’ on career behaviour through the need to express spiritual life purposes. Both studies add to the understanding of the argument at the individual level and especially on ‘spirituality’ related career changes but they don’t look at processes of career and identity development.

This engagement in theoretical work calls for more support from empirical work as for the moment and while the phenomenon is still new and indefinable, it seems imperative to understand how do people, who consider themselves spiritual, understand and live their ‘spirituality’ in their work and how they construct their identity in relation to this.

The following chapter looks at ‘spirituality’ as a source of meaning and at first provides a general background for the phenomenon of ‘Spirituality at Work’. It then analyses in more detail what the academic literature has to say for ‘Spirituality at Work’ at a societal, organisational and individual level.

2.2 The concept of ‘Spirituality at Work’

This part begins by briefly mentioning the origins of the general phenomenon of ‘spirituality’ then moves on to frame it. Finally, part 2.2 looks at the way individuals draw upon ‘spirituality’ related resources and construct the more specific notion of ‘Spirituality at Work’. The appreciation of the disparate nature of the phenomenon leads to an understanding that different discursive resources (as “tools” that guide interpretations of experience and shape the construction of

preferred conceptions of persons and groups’ Kuhn et al. 2008 p.163, see also Chapter 3: 3.2.2.1) related to ‘spirituality’ can vary in both their conception and expression and suggests that a deeper exploration is needed to understand the meanings attached to certain spiritual ideas by individuals.

2.2.1 A general background of ‘spirituality’ related ideas

Most of the discursive resources (Kuhn et al. 2008, see also Chapter 3: 3.2.2.1) associated with existential meaning have historically been formed in formal religious institutions or secret societies. However, after the middle ages, the movements of the Renaissance and Enlightenment grew to introduce philosophical rationalism and empiricism. Knowledge now was obtained through rational thinking and systematic observation and therefore religious institutions and their doctrines as well as the doctrines passed from generation to generation in secret societies were challenged. At the same time and for people with existential questions, logical reasoning could not provide a meaning to more intangible aspects of human life and existence. With the rising of Romanticism, the emphasis was placed on sensory perception and experience placing the importance on living the moment, being ‘here and now’ or what is now referred to as ‘presence’. Moreover, colonialism enabled an intense blending of cultures and many eastern religious texts were translated in various European languages transferring ideas and provided different sources of meaning.

In the mid twentieth century, the dynamic of distinct social forces such as the rise of capitalism, individualism and intercultural exchange brought about a variety of resources to provide existential meaning as well as the realisation that there is no one institution, culture, religion or system of knowledge to hold the answer to our existence. Among a counter culture at first, a more variable concept of ‘spirituality’ started to emerge that allowed the mixing of particular elements from disparate resources of meaning. Moreover, as these resources are open to interpretation, a greater mix of elements and meanings occurs. In our days, the term ‘spirituality’ came to acquire a ‘broadly inclusive’ (Mitroff and Denton 1999), disassociated from religious institutions, ‘amorphous’ (Davie et al. 2003) quality.

2.2.2 Terms and definitions of ‘spirituality’

Most researchers trying to define or frame ‘spirituality’ recognise that it is very difficult to grasp and pin down the ‘spirit’ part of ‘spirituality’ as it is considered ethereal or ‘other worldly’ and can be so subtle as to be imperceptible. Others assert that the multiplicity of definitions can add to the understanding of such a complex phenomenon (Freshman 1999), whereas most point to the danger of reducing ‘spirituality’ into a quantifiable variable (Lund Dean 2004). However, in order to study ‘spirituality’ and its expressions one needs to frame the subject and enable it to manifest in ‘this world’ and in human life.

The phenomenon of ‘spirituality’ is still academically indefinable and researchers do not only have to look at the continuous renewal of diverse discursive resources (Kuhn et al. 2008, see also Chapter 3: 3.2.2.1) involved in it (including elements from religions, philosophy, science) but also the surfacing of new different ones (i.e. the incorporation of technological advances or systems theory). Some of these resources can be seen as contradictory (for example see Zoe’s disagreement with her instructor’s ‘New Age beliefs’ in Chapter 6: 6.1.1) as they are not yet expressed in a commonly understood language that would explain them in their entirety, together with their links to other spiritual concepts. The language of ‘spirituality’ deals mostly with intangible concepts as ‘inner life’ or ‘transcendence’ which are difficult to understand and people who consider themselves ‘spiritual’ hold different views on the expression of specific concepts which makes the phenomenon even more disparate. Many seeming controversies such as this of individualism versus communitarianism will be addressed in this research through the views of research participants. What makes the phenomenon even more difficult to define is that there are no specific claims of authority within ‘spirituality’ as most of the people who provide teachings in the field do not consider themselves sages but counsellors. Roof (1999) calls them ‘suppliers’ within his conception of the ‘spiritual marketplace’ where the search for the sacred takes on a marketplace logic, but explains that this ‘does not reduce what they do to economics and certainly not to imply that their motivation is mercenary’ (p.109).

This difficulty to identify cohesiveness is also expressed in any effort to locate ‘spirituality’ within the current culture or predict its future. ‘spirituality’ cannot be

considered as a movement as Sutcliffe (2003) has shown; however, his argument that the instability and lack of organisational coherence of 'spirituality' will have no significant effect is being overridden from the raising cultural significance – consumeristic or not - that the phenomenon has. The basis of Sutcliffe's (2003) argument is twofold, firstly that 'spirituality' 'increasingly displaces 'New Age' and inherits the controlling instincts of dissidence, populism and functionality' and second that the demography of new 'spirituality' is mostly white middle class 'largely made up of professional, managerial, arts and entrepreneurial occupations' (p.223) and that it is mostly represented by women. He goes on to assert that 'the relative social power and status of 'New Age' women remains an unresolved issue' (p.223). Sutcliffe (2003) concludes his book by saying that 'its reflexive biographies, its loose collectivities and its one potentially explosive emblem – 'New Age' – lack a viable level of collective focus and mobilisation effectively to deliver its challenge' (p.225). This conclusion is an assumption mainly derived from personal observations and a review of the relevant literature rather than rigorous research. Despite the many misunderstandings and seemingly contrasting ideas in the literature, the way 'spirituality' is expressed in everyday life seems to follow a distinctive path. Heelas and Woodhead (2005) explain through their research in Kendal that the phenomenon is not that vague and indistinct, as 'such a postmodern condition is scarcely in evidence' (p.32). On the contrary they reveal that the congregational domain and the holistic milieu are two separate distinct worlds and they therefore focus their research on distinguishing 'life-as religion' from 'subjective-life spirituality'.

Terms and definitions given to 'spirituality' range from describing 'other worldly' qualities including the transcendent, God or the mystical to 'down to earth' qualities such as spiritual practices, community service and caring for the environment. The controversial term New Age is widely used as inclusive of the different expressions of 'spirituality' (Bell and Taylor 2003, Casey 2002, 2004, Sutcliffe 2003) but it has also been used to refer to the commodification (Heelas 1996) of 'spirituality' and therefore many people who consider themselves 'spiritual' reject it. Other terms as 'alternative spirituality' (Sutcliffe and Bowman 2000) or 'alternative religion' (Hunt 2003) are very broadly used to include all the

varieties of forms of spiritual expression that are separate from religion but in this way they become vague and ambiguous.

Most definitions tend to set up dividers distinguishing between 'pure' and 'applied spirituality' or 'spiritual development' (Heaton et al 2004) and between religious, secular or mystical 'spirituality' (Gibbons 1999). Similarly, the divide between the substantive and the functional approach to describe religion (Pargament 1997, Bruce 1996, Zinnbauer et al. 1999, Hunt 2003) often used to describe 'spirituality' is not helpful as it separates the existential questioning from its meaning and relevance in human life.

The term that recognises the inseparable 'spirituality' where the spiritual is accessed to explain and transform the 'here and now' is Woodhead and Heelas' 'spiritualities of life' (2000, Heelas and Woodhead 2005). This aspect of 'spirituality' focuses 'on what already lies within the order of things' (Woodhead and Heelas 2000 p.110) where the 'here and now' and the 'other worldly' become one through spirit, wholeness or interconnectedness. This discourse emphasises spiritual experience accepting authenticity of self and at the same time unity and interrelatedness. This research takes on the general framework of the form of religiosity described as 'spiritualities of life' (Woodhead and Heelas 2000, Heelas and Woodhead 2005) but mostly acknowledges participants' views and explanations.

2.2.3 'Spirituality at Work' as a source of meaning

Spirituality as a source of meaning is called upon to respond to abstract questions on the purpose of life or on the nature of human existence as well as to more tangible questions on everyday life concerns. In this sense, it can be considered as a source of meaning similarly with Geertz's (1973) view on culture when he explains: 'Believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning.' (p.5). 'spirituality' then, can be seen as a 'web of significance' created to explain life and can be drawn upon to provide meaning.

Heelas and Woodhead (2005) ascribe the growth of spirituality, or what they call ‘the holistic milieu’, mainly to the ability of ‘spiritualities of life’ to cater for those who value subjective life ‘as a primary force of significance’ (p.82) whereas for Carrette and King (2005) the reason of ‘spirituality’ being so popular despite its amorphous nature is because it has now become the ‘brand label’ (p.32) for the search for meaning.

Berger (1969a, 1969b) has argued that the search for meaning is important to maintain a sense of reality and identity, but this search in relation to ‘spirituality’ involves a further process of trying to interpret reality and of unravelling its meaning by assuming that there is something which lies beneath or beyond it. This whole process of searching for meaning by analysing ‘reality’ is inherent in the ‘SaW’ discourse. Bell and Taylor (2003) see ‘the search for ontological depth’ as a problem and explain ‘Spirituality at Work’ as an ‘answer to a meaning obsessed society that mystifies work in order to demystify it and resolve its meaning’ (p.343).

The quest for meaning of people who draw on ‘Spirituality at Work’ resources involves having to reverse understandings and pass through different stages of initiations in order to grasp and become ‘conscious’ of the seemingly contrasting concepts. This does not mean however that all people who draw from spiritual resources perceive, understand and experience their reality in the same terms. The process of stripping reality off any meaning to replace its meaning again can be illustrated through the philosophy of Zen where the student starts when uninitiated by thinking that ‘the mountains are mountains and the lakes are lakes’, whereas during the studies the student begins to reverse the previous understanding by dismantling ascribed meanings and seeing that ‘the mountains are not mountains and the lakes are not lakes’, until in the end of the studentship the student becomes ‘enlightened’ to realise that ‘the mountains are “actually” mountains and the lakes are “actually” lakes’.

2.2.3.1 Main meanings associated with ‘Spirituality at Work’

A lot of ‘Spirituality at Work’ writing is entangled with antithetical concepts that seem to be brought together within spiritual ideas. As mentioned before one of the main pairs of divergent concepts is individualism versus communitarianism

(Bloch 1998, Heelas and Woodhead 2005) as it seems troubling for analysts to see how the new ‘spirituality’ can be seen to be highly individualistic and at the same time to promote a sense of community and unity with others and the wider world.

Heelas and Woodhead (2005) explain this through the ‘Subjectivization thesis’ which relates to breaking free from social conditions and what is perceived as externally imposed to taking on the freedom to be or become oneself. Subjectivization is differentiated from individualism in that although it emphasises individual experiences as a ‘source of meaning, significance and authority, this need not imply that they will be atomistic, discrete or selfish’ (Heelas and Woodhead 2005 p.11).

A helpful concept related to the Subjectivization thesis is ‘holism’ (Hadot 1995, Heelas and Woodhead 2005) which is inherent in ‘spirituality’ related thinking. Holism is apparent in ‘spirituality’ in two levels, at an individual level as the integration and balancing of body, soul, mind and spirit and at a wider level as the interrelation and interdependence of all beings. Therefore the concept of holism emphasises at the same time the ‘whole person’ with unique experiences and subjectivities and a holistic view of the world where everyone and everything is connected.

To understand holism, a this-worldly orientation and subjectivization, a deeper understanding is needed of how people who consider themselves spiritual locate authority in their lives. Woodhead (2001) uses the notion of ‘deference’ to explain the shift in authority from God to self. She explains that the ‘flight from deference’ varies but that it is more likely to be radical within ‘alternative spirituality’. However, there is no empirical evidence in the literature on what people who draw on ‘spiritual’ beliefs mean by ‘self authority’ and how they distinguish it from the authority of God.

Within ‘Spirituality at Work’, the concepts of holism, this worldly orientation and subjectivization are used as grounds of argument since their understanding can shift perceptions along the continuum of the main argument of whether ‘Spirituality at Work’ re-enchants work or it is used as a manipulative tool.

2.3 The three levels of the argument

This chapter focuses on the more critical texts on ‘Spirituality at Work’ which deal with the main argument at a societal, organizational and individual level and which can be related to the managing of one’s identity in relation to work.

In general the literature mostly views ‘Spirituality at Work’ emerging as a counterpart to the problems of downsizing, job insecurity, work stress, increased work hours. Casey (2002), in a critical analysis of organisations, sees ‘seeking expressions of self identity, of spirituality, emotionality and meaningfulness occurring in organisational workplaces’ as ‘signs of a wider cultural reaction against the totalizing ideology of modern, and post-industrial, productivism.’ (p.173).

Similar to this last view, Bell and Taylor (2003) assert that ‘the workplace ‘spirituality’ discourse shares Weber’s acceptance of the structural conditions of capitalism and seeks to resolve the dilemmas these create for the individual by developing an inner sense of meaning and virtue’(p.344). They further explain ‘spirituality’ as a revival of that aspect of the Protestant work ethic which produces a notion of ‘self’ which, in turn, enables exploitative production (Bell and Taylor 2003).

2.3.1 ‘Spirituality at Work’ at a societal level: maintaining capitalism vs indicating social change

At a societal level the argument revolves around whether ‘spirituality’ is a social apparatus to maintain capitalism and the power of consumer markets or if it is a means of social change.

2.3.1.1 The Spiritual marketplace

Carrette and King (2005) think that the main problem of what they call ‘New Age Capitalism’ is that it provides individualised meanings instead of social change. They therefore link ‘spirituality’ to consumerism and the liberal economy.

Moreover, the search for subjective meanings (see above the Subjectivization thesis Heelas and Woodhead 2005) is placing the emphasis on selecting parts from various kinds of spiritual traditions according to one’s ‘inner voice’. This has been

highly criticised from critical scholars and it is the reason new ‘spirituality’ has been accused of adopting a marketplace logic (Roof 1999) and it is often referred to as ‘pick and mix spirituality’, ‘spirituality a la carte’, ‘spiritual supermarket’ and in general a ‘spirituality’ that complies with capitalistic structures. Heelas and Woodhead (2005) provide evidence of shops selling spiritual artefacts increasing in Kendall. In general, ‘spirituality’ has been seen to combine religion and science and to repackage values to suit industrial and post-industrial society (Sutcliffe and Bowman 2000) and to fit the Western way of living and the principles of the market (Heelas 1996).

Carrette and King (2005) mainly criticise the partial and selective capitalisation from the West of Asian traditions (p.87), where rich and complex traditions are being exploited to be repackaged for a market of seekers. They explain how through this process, ideas can be misinterpreted and mistreated as for example Buddha’s complex view of life as dukkha (suffering) that has been simplified and narrowed to a psychological conception. The exceptional value of Carrette and King’s (2005) book is in that they have studied in depth the traditions of which they speak about whereas this tends not to be the norm within an increasing critical stream that tends to look into ‘Spirituality at Work’ from a perspective that neglects the main ideas surrounding it.

2.3.1.2 Tradition and identity

Several writers on ‘Spirituality at Work’ link the compliance of alternative ‘spirituality’ with capitalistic structures to the secularization thesis (Aupers and Houtman 2006, Bell and Taylor 2003, Casey 2000, Grant et al. 2004). Although ‘secularization’ is highly debated in the field of the sociology of religion, it is not in the scope of this research to examine it. Regardless if there was a secularization (Berger 1969a, Martin 1979, Wilson 1966), a partial secularization (Yamane 1997) or not (Berger 1999, Stark and Finke 2000) in western cultures, an increased rationalization and compartmentalisation of various aspects of life (family, work, religion) that used to be combined, as well as a decline of institutionalised religion in the so called secular societies as the British, can be seen to have directed the search for meaning in multiple other sources than organised religion. A more helpful explanation is that of Hervieu Leger (2000)

who approaches religion ‘as a specific mode of believing’ and asserts that one should study the ‘chain’ which links the individual with the social environment, the community with past present and future and the ‘tradition’ which constitutes the collective memory of this community. Hervieu Leger (2002) explains that in most current western societies there is a demand for meaning and a need to recover the past since memory is not anymore present in every part of life as it used to be in past societies. In certain cases ‘tradition ceases to represent the evidence of a way of life passed down from generation to generation and becomes an object of subjective preference on the part of individuals who choose to relate to it’ (p.171). In this sense they become amnesic societies which call for surrogate memories to appear which limit collective identities and at the same time create a need of continuity. In this sense a heightened interest in identity and life history corresponds with the need for continuity, tradition and subjective meaning.

2.3.1.3 Potential for social change

Both affirmative and critical scholars are pointing to the potential of particular ‘types’ of ‘spirituality’ for social change (Aupers and Houtman 2006, Carrette and King 2005, Lynch 2007, Mitroff and Denton 1999, Woodhead 2001). Carrette and King (2005) assert there is potential for social change only through socially engaged forms of spirituality; Lynch (2007) discusses the engagement of ‘progressive spirituality’ with broader debates about the moral decline of contemporary society whereas Taylor (2005) mentions the disruptive potential of ‘spirituality’ and religion in relation to industrial organization. Mitroff and Denton (1999) find that none of the organizational models they researched are ‘very advanced’ (p.182) or ‘particularly well integrated or developed across all of the four orientations’ (p. 183) of ‘spirituality’ they examine. However they assert that this should not be a block to fostering ‘spirituality’ in the workplace but as a challenge and they therefore propose an integrative model.

Carrette and King (2005) distinguish between individualist/consumerist or corporatist/capitalist forms of ‘spirituality’ which place the individual or corporate wealth above social justice and socially engaged forms of ‘spirituality’ which are ‘grounded in an awareness of our mutual interdependence, the need for social justice and economically sustainable lifestyles (and) may yet prove our best hope

for resisting the capitalist excess of neoliberalism [...]’. In concluding, they assert that ‘Our futures may depend upon it’ (p.182). On the contrary, they assert that private psychologised ‘spirituality’ ‘fails to acknowledge the interdependence of self within community and the ethical necessity of countering the abuses of power within market societies.’ They go on to say that this ‘restricts the individual to a unit of consumption rather than a dynamic of relation and creative expression’ (p.78) as well as ‘breaks the social self and conceals [...] the collective manipulation of isolated individuals in the language of free will and choice (p.80).

However, it seems unattainable to distinguish between people’s ‘spiritualities’ and whether they are consumeristic or not. If there were two different types of people, the ones who are spiritual in capitalist ways and the ones who strive for social justice, then the distinction would be evident, but within an amorphous phenomenon where subjectivity is key it would be harsh stereotyping to start separating ‘the good’ from ‘the bad’. The theorists that distinguish between different kinds of ‘spirituality’ fail to acknowledge that the interrelation between self, organisation and society is ingrained in the spiritual discourse through subjectivities of holistic thinking (Hadot 1995, Heelas and Woodhead 2005), reflexive relationships (Roof 1999) and ideas of active creation of one’s reality. A possible reason why this is not visibly apparent is that within the holistic discourse it is possible to support a view that individuals are part of society and therefore cannot spend their endeavour fighting against it but might influence it by constant focus on the here and now, reflective work on the self, combined reflective work in interrelation with others and active engagement with addressing issues or problems that arise.

However one theorises, analyses and distinguishes forms of spirituality, yet it remains difficult to understand how social change can come about through ‘spirituality’ related disciplines, and it seems unlikely that it is going to be through revolutions and wars. Theorists are talking about ‘raising consciousness’ (Aupers and Houtman 2006, Biberman et al 1999, Dehler and Welsh 1994), which seems to be related to a relational conception of life (Hay 2001). Moreover, Casey (2002) observes that ‘spiritual – seeking’ employees in organisations do not resemble revolutionaries of earlier modern social movements, but that ‘These spiritual seekers speak of ethical practices and new relations between self and

other, of ecological relations between humans and other life forms on the planet we share. Emerging ethical subject-actors resisting the excess of instrumental rationalities, and fundamentalist religious, ethnic and communalist fanaticism, act to bring about a revitalization and recomposition of the world.’ (p. 193)

2.3.2 ‘Spirituality at Work’ at organisational level: enhancing organisational output vs masking manipulative directions for compliance

2.3.2.1 Corporations taking over religious tasks

Organisations are so powerful that critical researchers are pointing to corporatisation of religion or the dangers of the hijacking of religious ideas from corporations (Carrette and King 2005) to provide a worldview. Carrette and King (2005) ascribe the takeover of ‘spirituality’ by capitalism to the takeover of religion by psychology and discuss a wider cultural trend which commodifies experience and ‘opens up the space for the corporate takeover for all human knowledge and life’.

Some theorists are drawing parallels between management initiatives and religious or cult programmes (Ackers and Preston 1997, Tourish and Pinnington 2002). Bell and Taylor (2003) notice that that management has acquired some of the language and characteristics of religion in a secularised version and associate ‘spirituality’ with Weber’s protestant ethic where by being seen as a calling, work was elevated to a means of salvation and striving for a greater good. They view ‘spirituality’ as a revival of the protestant ethic to be based in conscientious consumption and love of the self instead of ‘thrift and guilt’ and they further argue that this is leading to the compliance of workers to support capitalist production.

2.3.2.2 Spirituality in work organisations

Theorists argue that employees are disillusioned with the consequences of rationalised organisations on their lives and are attracted to align personal with organisational goals and missions (Ashmos and Duchon 2000, Cash and Gray 2000, Heelas 1996, Kunda 1992, Neal 1999). This view encourages the injection of ‘spirituality’ in the workplace as a solution within the existing capitalistic, bureaucratic structures. It then creates concerns on turning ‘spirituality’ into a

management model (Bell and Taylor 2001, Carrete and King 2005, Casey 2002, Tourish and Pinnington 2002). Bell and Taylor (2001) consider that the application of ‘spirituality’ in organisations as a model represents ‘the crudest form of commodification of new organizational spirituality’ but assert that this is most likely to happen given the ‘economic and social contexts within which the phenomenon is located’ (p.11).

Affirmative views on ‘Spirituality at Work’

Grant et al. (2004) support that the spirit is already present in an organisation even if only a few employees experience the sacred through their work. This point of view addresses the intangible side of spirituality, but Mitroff and Denton (1999) find that current work organisations seem to be more oppressive than enabling the spiritual. A more pragmatic view of bureaucracies on the one hand and what ‘Spirituality at Work’ is about on the other indicates incongruence between the two constructs. It is not suggested that the spirit should remain in an ‘other-worldly’ realm but as Mitroff and Denton (1999) support, ‘organisations as wholes and not just individuals need to become more spiritual’ because ‘unless organizations become more spiritual, the fragmentation and ambivalence felt by individuals cannot be repaired’ (p.7). Academic theorists, popular writers and practitioners try to propose feasible ways to cultivate ‘spirituality’ at the workplace. A large part of the literature discusses the potential of organisational transformation either through raising consciousness at the individual level by cultivating spiritual values or at the organizational level by designing new organisational models or both (Biberman et al 1999, Cavanagh 1999, Neal 1999). Ashmos and Duchon (2000) look at organisations as communities for spiritual expression, Milliman et al (1999) developed a model to analyse the way spiritual values affect an organisation and applied it in Southwest Airlines, whereas Khan (2003) conducted a three year case study of worker perceptions on two spiritual transference processes introduced in an optical services company.

The majority of the writings on ‘Spirituality at Work’ relate it to the incorporation of values, a sense of community and ethics into work and into the organisational culture (Neck and Milliman 1994, Butts 1999, Konz and Ryan 1999, Milliman et al. 1999, Ashmos and Duchon 2000, Cacioppe 2000, Giacalone and Jurkiewicz 2003, Milliman et al. 2003). These studies concentrate on separate aspects of

'spirituality' expressed as socially oriented values which are positively associated with spirituality, but which can also be seen as secular values reflecting a concern for the betterment of society. Contrary to Pava's (2003) allegation that attempting to tap the supernatural realm is problematic in organisations, it seems that by excluding the transcendent part of spirituality, 'Spirituality at Work' becomes equivalent to any 'values implementation' or 'values alignment' management initiative. Mitroff and Denton (1999) conclude after having evaluated the Values Based Organisation that values and virtues alone are not sufficient to 'produce organizations that can sustain a high sense of ethics (p.161). In a rigorous study where they looked at 5 types of organisations to assess best practice models Mitroff and Denton (1999) explain in their findings that none of the types is developed to be effective in instilling 'Spirituality at Work' but they nevertheless point to the 'path of transformation' (p.183).

In 1999 Milliman et al conducted an empirical study in Southwest Airlines and created a model to evaluate spiritual values' impact on both profitability and employee attitudes. Using their model, they explored the relevant literature to address issues as how this would influence different types of people such as managers, employees and customers. They reveal certain out of the ordinary practices such as the CEO accepting to freeze his pay, employees creating a fund to help co-workers and more importantly the choice to meet customer needs or help fellow employees even if it means breaking company policies. On the other hand they report other practices that could be debatable such as assessing humour in recruiting. Milliman et al's (1999) argument that 'spirituality' is not only in mission statements but it is woven into business strategies and practices could be more thoroughly assessed with research on employee opinions. It seems that although Southwest Airlines is an enjoyable, values based place to work for certain employees, it is not necessarily spiritual. The assertion that the central interrelating aspects of workplace 'spirituality' is when an organization acts as a community and has a cause or important purpose, can also apply to a family business with no spiritual associations.

In certain cases people borrow from spiritual practices to create psychology related mechanisms to cope with stress. Laabs (1995) describes the case of a company that installed a machine called Natural Enhanced Sound Transmission

where people sit in and listen to music, read a book or just take a break. This type of application together with schemes that allow employees to pray at work might be effective and seem to have the potential to nurture the spiritual side of employees but remain organisational schemes and do not demonstrate the transforming potential that ‘Spirituality at Work’ promises.

The solutions proposed for the instigation of spirit in organisations are either top down through leadership or bottom up through the employee base. In both cases the assumption is that changing the individual can change the organisational culture. Heaton et al. (2004) suggest an inside out approach that will develop the individual which ‘becomes an instrument for organisational change’ (p.63). In the first case the intention is to influence organisational culture through leaders (Schein 1992, Neck and Milliman 1994, Harung et al. 1995, Cacioppe 2000, Benefiel 2005). Fairholm (1996) promoted a model to apply spiritual leadership at work based on morality, stewardship and community in order to achieve a culture that would fulfil ‘whole-self needs at work’. Within this framework leaders take on the task to connect spirit with work and the emphasis is given on their values and their ability to facilitate spiritual development become role models (Howard 2002) as well as spiritual counsellors (Konz and Ryan 1999). In opposition, Tourish and Pinnington (2002) argue that current models of transformational leadership might encourage organisational ‘spirituality’ initiatives applied in forms that promote group dynamics often found in cults than in business organisations and suggest more participatory models of leadership.

In the second case, employees are encouraged to bring their ‘whole selves’ at work since it is proposed that when individuals can be ‘whole persons’ at work, they can offer several advantages in the workplace. Researchers expect that ‘whole persons’ care for meaning and personal growth, which are expected to translate to increased motivation, empowerment, enthusiasm, a higher sense of service and organizational commitment (Neck and Milliman 1994, Laabs 1995, Delbecq 1999, Porth et al. 1999, Zinnbauer et al 1999). Moreover, they are seen to develop stronger intuition that is usually associated with enhanced creativity (Biberman and Whitty 1997, Freshman 1999, Neck and Milliman 1994), innovation (Neck and Milliman 1994, Zinnbauer et al 1999), good leadership (Duchon and Plowman 2005) and heightened commitment to organisational goals

(Delbecq 1999). Finally, the link of ‘spirituality’ with values at work is seen to increase ethical behaviour (Laabs 1995), teamwork (Biberman and Whittey 1997, Laabs 1995), caring for others, the community and the environment (Cavanagh 1999) as well as social action (Zinnbauer et al 1999).

Although being critical of the use of ‘spirituality’ as an ideology of domination for corporate purposes, Casey (2002) chooses to see spiritual seeking as a resource for self and social transformation and as ‘efforts to criticise, revitalize and transform.’ (p. 193). Similarly, Boyle and Healy (2003) see it as one of the few ways in which workers can practice resistance in a controlled work environment.

Cautions against introducing ‘Spirituality at Work’ initiatives

Critical theorists who caution against the use of ‘spirituality’ in organizations are mostly concerned that it can be used as a manipulative tool, reduced to a management initiative or extended to a cult like initiative (Bell and Taylor 2003, 2004, Carrete and King 2005, Tourish and Pinnington 2002). They warn that ‘spirituality’ and the search for meaning at work can enable exploitation (Bell and Taylor 2001, Dehler and Welsh 2003), create a flexible and adaptable workforce that will accept a potential downshifting (Casey 2002), or facilitate the acceptance of situations as they are (Wallis 1984) in order to serve specific organizational goals. Casey (2001) asserts that ‘the reappropriation of spiritual interests and impulses toward conventional organizational end and modern productionist rationalities does not generate conditions for reenchantment, dealienation and self creation in the workplace’ (p.214).

However, most writers are positive towards a more appropriate instillation of ‘Spirituality at Work’ that can ‘disrupt the metarationality of capitalist production and economy’ (Casey 2002) and bring about social and organizational change (Carrette and King 2005, Taylor 2005). In this regard, Carrette and King (2005) distinguish between businesses that seek to use ‘ethical’ values in their practice and the marketing of ‘spirituality’ within business as a form of product enhancement (p.127). These differentiations are difficult to make in organizational environments where different views and needs are negotiated; Boje (1999) cautions against ‘spirituality’ being a new fundamentalism and is concerned that ‘one person’s ‘spirituality’ is another’s iron cage.’(p.10). Moreover, the approach

taken to instil ‘spirituality’ in organisations through ‘raising consciousness’ (Aupers and Houtman 2006, Biberman et al 1999, Dehler and Welsh 1994) involves individual practice and personal development. This view is usually misinterpreted in a way that tends to overlook the likelihood that spiritual people might not have common work related traits as well as the possible unintended consequences of incongruent ‘purposes’ or ‘development paths’ among individuals or among the individual and the organisation.

2.3.3 ‘Spirituality at Work’ at individual level: a whole self vs a self suited for consumption

The argument at the individual level lies between the affirmative side arguing that individuals can be healthier, happier, more fulfilled and whole through the introduction of ‘Spirituality at Work’ and the critical side arguing that individuals can be exploited as organisations seek to re-enchant work, commitment and devotion by harnessing the human spirit.

Most critical scholars mention the effects on identity, but mainly provide a theoretical description of their views positing identity construction in the context of organisational or wider societal explanations (Bell and Taylor 2003, 2004, Casey 2002, 2004). The affirmative scholars also explain the importance of ‘spirituality’ for identity development (Ashmos and Duchon 2000, Cacioppe 2000, Fairholm 1996, Lips-Wiersma 2002) and support holistic views of a self striving to fulfil its full potential.

Empirical work is increasing, but remains small-scale and in most cases interpretation concentrates on understanding the general phenomenon’s characteristics which support either side of the main argument, but tends to overlook the meaning of the narrative told in relation to the narrator’s life and the process of narrating. In most cases of relative empirical work, theorists either derive from personal accounts statements that present social, cultural or political views on wider issues or they do explore individual meanings but remain on the surface. An example of the latter is Bloch’s (1998) work on New-Agers and Neo-Pagans with valuable qualitative material where he describes his participants ways of dealing with seemingly antithetical concepts such as shared community and

individual autonomy, but does not explain meaning making and identity processes.

2.3.3.1 The self in ‘spirituality’ writing

Current academic writing on ‘spirituality’ refers to a belief in ‘authentic self’ (Mitroff and Denton 1999, Lips-Wiersma 2002, Bell and Taylor 2004, Heelas and Woodhead 2005, Heelas 2006) entailing both subjective and relational aspects. The relational aspects are both internal and external to the individual, which means that there is relationality among the different aspects of the self (body, soul, mind, spirit) as well as between the individual and the cosmos. The individual then is seen to strive to integrate the different aspects to become ‘whole’ and work to cultivate the self to realise its full potential.

This ‘self’ is expressed in various ways that critical authors explain as essentialist views (Bell and Taylor 2004, Casey 2000, Driver 2005, Heelas 1996) such as a ‘deepest and most sacred self’ (Neal 1997), an ‘inner source of energy’ (Dehler and Welsh 2003), a ‘true self’ or an ‘authentic self’ (Fairholm 2000, King and Nicol 1999, Giacalone and Jurkiewicz 2003). In these views, the self is differentiated from the ego or it is beyond the ego (Korac-Kakabadse et al. 2002) which is seen as conditioned and imposed by societal norms and directions. Aupers and Houtman (2006) use the approach of social construction (Berger and Luckmann 1966) to explain that individuals are socialised into ‘a spiritual discourse about the self’ and are therefore ‘less authentic than they often believe’ (p.210). However, from the perspective of social construction (Berger and Luckmann 1966) we cannot make inferences on how ‘authentic’ individuals are unless we look at their constructs of ‘authenticity’.

At the same time there are accounts of a sense of connection to others, community (Ashmos and Duchon 2000) interconnectedness (Mitroff and Denton 1999) and interpersonal connection (Bloch 1998, Kinjerski and Skrypnek 2004) as a relational view of the self is central in the literature on spirituality. Accounts of the whole self and holism (Asforth and Pratt 2003, Biberman et al. 1999, Dehler and Welsh 2003, Hadot 1995, Heaton et al. 2004, Heelas and Woodhead 2005, Kinjerski and Skrypnek 2004, Milliman et al 2003, Neal 1999) are common since ‘The spiritual dimension is (basically) understood as the dimension at which all

life connects, and where the individual realises her or his true nature in relationship with the “whole” (Heelas and Woodhead 2005 p.99)

Although connectivity and interdependence are commonly used, the whole self is usually not dealt with as the relational self that Shotter (2006) calls ‘living whole’ but rather as a less refined construct of a multilayered self in order to account for emotions, the psyche and the spirit – higher self. Kelemen and Peltonen (2002) adopt a more relational view explaining that in self formation practices, ‘spirituality’ is rooted in the here and now and opening a way to a relationship with the inner side of the individual and with a larger cosmos. Such a relationship can only take place in the present where the individual detaches itself from the future, or the past.

2.3.3.2 Self knowledge and self development

In certain cases, the search for meaning is aligned with self knowledge (Bell and Taylor 2004). Self knowledge in the literature is connected to self development as it is suggested that through self awareness individuals can become actualised and find meaning and purpose in their work and their lives (King and Nicol 1999). The path of self knowledge is seen as the way to become oneself and realize one’s full potential.

Recurring in the literature, academic and not, is that people want to find ‘who they really are’ and ‘their true potential’ which is often contrasted to ‘what their ego suggests they are’. There are many references similar to Maslow’s ideas on self actualisation and realization of inner potential (Ashforth and Pratt 2003, Howard 2002, Tischler 1999) and more specifically attitudes towards work such as ‘to find one’s ultimate purpose in life’ (Howard 2002, Milliman et al 2003, Tischler 1999), to find meaning and significance (Lips-Wiersma 2002, Neal 1997) or to find meaning and purpose at work (Ashmos and Duchon 2000, Fox 1994, Howard 2002, Mitroff and Denton 1999).

Self development is seen as an effort towards finding one’s own unique self and realize one’s full potential. In that, Heelas and Woodhead (2005) argue that the cultivation of unique subjectivities is central to the holistic milieu. They assert that although the holistic milieu is seen to appeal more to people who seek something more meaningful in their lives, these people are not in general dissatisfied with

their lives. The authors draw the conclusion that to enter the milieu 'it takes both humility ("my life is not as good as it could be") and confidence ("I have the potential to be a better person/ I deserve a better life")' (p.106).

The engagement with self search and self development can be seen as a practice through which 'one's sense of oneself grows, as does one's self-esteem and ability to face, deal with, understand and manage one's subjectivities' (Heelas and Woodhead 2005 p.105). In this way work and career then can be seen as a path to self knowledge (Konz and Ryan 1999) and their meaning is not taken for granted (Bell and Taylor 2004). However, Bell and Taylor (2004) in their research on spiritual management development courses view the emphasis on finding inner strength as a way to cope with organizational demands (Bell and Taylor 2004) and warn of the potential of spiritual management development to become repressive in the effort to reconcile the needs of the individual with the needs of the organization.

Engaging with self development has been seen from critical researchers as a technology of the self. Rindfleish (2005) analyses four prominent writers in the field (who might have not have agreed with her categorising them in 'New Age 'spirituality' thinkers') to suggest that their meta-theories deliver a consumer promise for a state of self that is not achievable and therefore the reader as 'consumer' is always in a constant state of 'seeking'. Following Baudrillard's identification of characteristics of the development of new 'social products', she perceives that on the one hand the ideas given are similar so that the 'consumers' feel reassured that they are working on themselves and on the other hand that there are certain inherent contradictions in the methods proposed for self transformation. In that, she equalises the ideas given with consumer products that 'tend to homogenise and differentiate human experience simultaneously' indicating that they are congruent with the post traditional consumer society. What is useful in Rindfleish's (2005) analysis is the view of self transformation or self development practices as 'technologies of the self', however she does not provide a clear explanation of the similarities and contradictions she observes and therefore cannot make a solid case for the application of Baudrillard's characteristics of 'social products' in the spiritual ideas given. Moreover, the ideas presented in the article (Rindfleish 2005) are based on the writer's view of the

four selected texts and fail to produce an in depth understanding of the ideas presented to justify the finding of similarities and/or inconsistencies within them. The writer rightly argues that according to Trungpa (1973) the introduction of Eastern spiritual practices to the Western culture 'exposes the practices to superficial treatment', but she then does not explain what the superficial treatment is and instead criticising those parts in the writings which encourage commitment rather than superficial involvement with spirituality. She on the one hand argues that consumer markets require a constant stimulation and experimental play with the theories instead of a commitment from the individual and on the other hand criticises the continuous work on the self that the writings imply. Focusing on criticising the 'continuous work on the self', Rindfleish (2005) implies that the writings suggest this constant 'reconstruction' in order to appeal to consumers; and with this she contradicts her argument about consumer markets expecting more easy approaches neglecting that all spiritual traditions require a commitment and discipline to sanctify the self.

On the contrary, Kelemen and Peltonen (2002) have used the same concept of 'spirituality' as a technology of the self stressing the importance of seeing it as an art that requires 'regular exercise and constant working on oneself and one's relation to the world' (p.8). According to their view, this exercise can provide a connection between the inner world and the cosmos through the participation in mundane practices but with the individual being 'in the here and now'. In this sense, they assert that discourses of the future can 'act as ideas that help us be more reflexive about the present circumstances that the many different ways our subjectivities are formed' (p.8) and do not encourage the fashioning of the self according to predefined goals as most of the self help literature suggests. Following Hadot's ideas, Kelemen and Peltonen (2002) view spiritual technologies of the self as 'liberation from the individuality and search for self mastery and ethical reflexivity' that enable the individual to become concerned with his or her role in the whole. Hadot (1995) links these ideas to the philosophy of antiquity and concludes: 'it is within ourselves that we can experience the coming-into-being of reality and the presence of being.' (p. 260)

2.3.3.3 Work paths

In congruence with the literature on the self, Ashmos and Dunchon (2000) assert that ‘Spirituality at Work’ is about employees who understand themselves as spiritual beings experiencing a sense of purpose and meaning in their work as well as a sense of connectedness to one another and to their workplace community.

Literature has focused on the need of people to express their ‘spirituality’ or religion in the workplace (Freshman 1999, Mitroff and Denton 1999, Ashmos and Duchon 2000, Cash and Gray 2000, Lips-Wiersma and Mills 2002). Authors begin by arguing that the spiritual side of individuals cannot be neglected in the workplace, especially now that people spend a great amount of their time at work. It is mostly the case that current work organisations do not foster an accommodating environment for spiritual expression and therefore individuals usually restrict their spiritual sides avoiding to express themselves because of intuitive or external and empirical stimuli (Lips-Wiersma and Mills 2000) ranging from the fear of offending others (Mitroff and Denton 1999), being considered unprofessional or becoming alienated from peers to previous bad experiences of having expressed spirituality, company regulations usually regarding appearance or even clear directions from managers that it might impede a promotion (Lips-Wiersma and Mills 2000). This expression avoidance is seen to have restrictive effects on being ‘whole’ that is less alienated from work, self and others and on the negotiation of identity at work (Lips-Wiersma and Mills 2000).

The idea of bringing the whole self to work is very common among writers in the field but it is mostly related to integrating personal values to organisational values (Dehler and Welsh 2003), family responsive workplaces (Glass and Estes 1997) or creating a spirituality-friendly workplace. This encourages the image of the ‘whole person (comprising of mind body and spirit)’, bringing into work different aspects of its human identity in order to ‘function’ effectively within work demands and cope with fast changing circumstances, stress and the need to change careers. Thus theorists are concerned that ‘the new forms of self discipline are mediated through the rhetoric of self actualization, flexibility and hyperadaptability’ (Casey 1995 p.87) and alert to the implications of such discursive resources being used to enable the manipulation of employees (Bell and Taylor 2003, Carrette and King 2005).

Empirical studies provide more useful insights on the matter. In certain cases where 'Spirituality at Work' initiatives were introduced in the workplace (Aupers and Houtman 2006, Khan 2003) individuals who consider themselves spiritual were seen to be more positively predisposed in contrast to individuals who did not consider themselves spiritual and therefore felt constrained. In other empirical work on 'spirituality' and work, it seems that there is an emerging trend towards individuals leaving formal work organisations to involve in 'spirituality' related work (Taylor 2005, Heelas and Woodhead 2005, Lips-Wiersma 2002). Through a qualitative 'psycho biographical' study Lips-Wiersma (2001, 2002) provides empirical evidence that link 'spirituality' to work behaviour and career choices. She explains orientations towards 'developing and becoming self', 'unity with others', 'expressing self' and 'serving others' as spiritual life purposes which individuals need to express in the workplace and which therefore guide career decisions. This research focuses on the influence of 'spirituality' on career behaviour, looking at the purposes behind participants' career choices. It therefore does not examine processes of career moves towards 'spirituality' related work neither does it look at identity processes at work.

It is not an unusual trend for people to leave their occupations for more flexible 'spirituality' related forms of work. Heelas and Woodhead (2005) mention the paradox that in our culture we experience a fundamental clash of values on the one hand, the cultivation of unique subjectivities and on the other with 'the iron cage of having to live the targeted life.' They assert that 'given the prevalence of the clash, and given the preference on the part of increasing numbers of people for finding the freedom, the opportunity to be and become themselves, it is likely that many will use their 'free' time to seek liberation from their standard /ized, in effect regimented, work lives.' (p.128). However a tendency to integrate work and life might work towards the integration of this tendency where individuals will want to follow a spiritual life not only in their free time and therefore try to abandon their formally ordered work lives.

Also Hellas et al. (2005) noticed that people who enter the holistic milieu come usually from the caring professions but also from other professions as well as from a domestic route. Usually the reasons for leaving are related to increased rationality in the workplace (Ackers and Preston 1997, Casey 2000, 2004, Heelas

and Woodhead 2005) and the disillusionment with various professional realities such as those encountered in caring professions where most studies report that people in the caring professions face existential issues and due to bureaucratisation, they are not able to help as much as they would want the people they care for (Aupers and Houtman 2006, Boyle and Healy 2003, Heelas and Woodhead 2005) or to nurture their own spiritual side (Lips Wiersma 2002). Therefore ‘Those who enter the subjective wellbeing culture and the holistic milieu will be seeking not only to continue or deepen a responsibility of care for others, but also to devote more attention to their own wellbeing.’ (Heelas and Woodhead 2005 p.103).

Summary

Overall, the literature on ‘Spirituality at Work’ is increasing but as the phenomenon is new and amorphous there are still many gaps that call for empirical research. The main debate in the literature can be put as whether ‘Spirituality at Work’ can be used as a means of emancipation or as a means of oppression. This argument between the critical and affirmative scholars is here analysed in three levels: a) the societal level where ‘Spirituality at Work’ is seen to maintain capitalism or indicate social change, b) the organisational level where ‘Spirituality at Work’ is seen to mask manipulative directions for compliance or enhance organisational output and c) the individual level whether it is argued whether ‘Spirituality at Work’ creates selves suited for consumption or whole selves. As this research looks at individual processes of identity in relation to ‘spirituality’ and their enactment at work contexts, it sets out to fill a gap in empirical research on identity construction processes within work contexts of individuals who consider themselves ‘spiritual’. To address this gap, the empirical part of the thesis is organised according to three main identity tensions that correspond to the three levels of the argument in the literature. In this, Chapter 5, ‘Understanding the Self and Constructing Identity’ looks at the internal identity tension that is linked to the individual level of the argument. Chapter 6, ‘Careers Choices and Work Orientation’ addresses the identity tension between private constructions of identity and available societal discourses and relates to the societal level of the argument and Chapter 7, ‘Organising Work’ addresses the

tension between self and other that can be linked to the organisational level of the argument.

3 Researching Spirituality and Identity at Work

3.1 Researching

This research approaches ‘spirituality’ as a construct which presents the qualities of what Heelas and Woodhead (2005) call ‘spiritualities of life’, emphasising ‘subjective life as a source of significance’(p.82). ‘spirituality’ then is not seen as a human trait that organisations have to accommodate but as a construct produced in interrelation. Therefore the effort is not to understand ‘spirituality’ as such but to look at how the process of constructing ‘spirituality’ interrelates with identity processes and wider societal processes.

The aim of this research is to explore the processes in which identities are constructed in relation to constructs of ‘spirituality’ and within work contexts. This aim is divided in the following four objectives:

- to identify the personal and circumstantial factors that inform individuals’ interest in ‘spirituality’
- to locate participants’ understanding of their ‘spirituality’ in the overall context of their life - past, present and future – and in relation to their work
- to explore the processes in which participants construct their identities in relation to their ‘spirituality’
- to locate participants’ accounts in broader discursive patterns and processes in contemporary society

To research these aims a qualitative inductive stance has been selected based on the ideas of ‘the social construction of reality’ as developed by Berger and Luckmann (1966) and including the idea of a ‘relationally responsive kind of understanding’ (Shotter 2005b p. 116) that Shotter (2005a, 2005b) calls ‘expressive-responsive understanding’ (2005a, 2005b) (see 3.2.2). Finally, a life story approach has been chosen for the research process in order to elicit the stories in which participants construct their identities in relation to their views of ‘spirituality’ and within work contexts.

Social construction offers a platform on which to research relational processes between identity work and constructs of ‘spirituality’ within work contexts.

Through the concept of 'expressive responsive understanding' processes of relating are seen as responsive rather than strategic or arbitrary. And the life story approach generates the stories through which people make sense of their experiences, construct their identities and maintain coherence in their life as a whole.

This chapter explains the framework of researching, the research strategy and the research methods adopted. Part 3.1 looks at the research particularities of 'spirituality' as a subject and provides a conceptual framework for the research. Part 3.2 looks at the research strategy and the ethical considerations of the research. In particular it demonstrates the appropriateness of the social construction of reality and of the life story approach for this particular research. The research strategy was designed to provide a unifying approach to exploring the interrelation of the individual and the societal level as well as the interaction of past, present and future. Part 3.3 looks at the research methods adopted throughout the different stages of the research and the internal consistency maintained throughout the whole thesis.

3.1.1 Researching 'spirituality'

The construct of 'spirituality' acquires a 'broadly inclusive' (Mitroff and Denton 1999), 'amorphous' (Davie et al. 2003) quality and is therefore difficult to 'define' and evaluate (Giacalone and Jurkiewicz 2003). Therefore, 'the domain needs more inductive research to simply understand and develop the basic themes and research agendas' (Lund Dean et al. 2003).

Most writers in the field (Benefiel 2003, Lund Dean et al 2003, Lips Wiersma 2004) argue against the use of positivist methods and point to the danger of reducing 'spirituality' into a quantifiable variable. On the other hand, there is a concern in the literature (Giacalone and Jurkiewicz 2003) that there are inadequate measurement tools and express a need for more rigorous qualitative research. Krahnke, Giacalone and Jurkiewicz (2003) present in detail the arguments between the need to measure 'spirituality' following positivistic methods and the need to embrace interpretive 'other ways of knowing'. Krahnke, adopting the interpretive stance asserts that by speaking the language of empiricism, we perpetuate the view of 'spirituality' as a means to an end. This view can be seen in

several papers on 'Spirituality at Work' (Ashmos and Duchon 2000, Collins and Porras 1994, Delbecq 1999, Konz and Ryan 1999, Milliman et al 1999, Neck and Milliman 1994, Tischler et al. 2002) that approach 'spirituality' as an organisational initiative and link variables related to 'spirituality' to various measures of organisational performance.

Moreover, there is a prevalent tendency in the literature (Ashmos and Duchon 2000, Gibbons 1999, Heaton et al 2004, Kinjerski and Skrypnek 2004) to locate the spiritual experience within the individual and in particular within the person's 'inner life'. A large part of this literature then focuses on accessing this 'inner life' and extracting accounts of spiritual experiences from 'self contained individuals' (Gergen 1999) in order to define their spirituality.

Similarly, in the fields of psychology, social work and nursing, qualitative research on 'spirituality' is increasing and various qualitative approaches have been developed. These approaches are mostly constructivist (Zinnbauer and Pargament 2000) in that they locate 'spirituality' 'in' the person, they research it through finding ways to identify it and encompass intervention practices to help the person create 'new positive constructs'. For example, the assessment method proposed by Hodge (2001) as an interpretive anthropological framework approaches 'spirituality' as 'a personal subjective reality' (Hodge 2001 p.208) which the researcher has to identify and emphasise it as a strength to the client in order to foster a 'therapeutically beneficial construction of reality' (Hodge 2001 pp.209-210).

The above approaches look at 'spirituality' as something fixed, contained within the individual or the organisation and therefore fail to look at the interrelationship between the processes of making meaning of 'spirituality' and constructing identity within work contexts.

On the other hand, writers in the field (Lund Dean et al. 2003, Lips Wiersma 2004) are steering towards new and alternative research methods that can encompass the richness of the subject. Mitroff explains to Lund Dean that 'the language we currently use to specify research questions, create instruments to investigate those questions, and discuss findings does not match the phenomena

we study’ (Lund Dean 2004 p. 12) and points to ‘trans-disciplinary studies that lie beyond the current disciplines’ (p.21).

Introducing a more relational approach, Krahnke (Krahnke, Giacalone and Jurkiewicz 2003) uses Buber’s (1996) example of the “I-It” relationship and the “I-Thou” relationship in contemplating a tree: ‘You can observe different aspects of a tree, assign it to a species, dissolve it to a number, and eternalize it. The tree remains an object in this encounter. It is an I-It relationship. But you can also contemplate a tree and feel exclusive and drawn into a relation. All of the tree in its entirety is fused, and you feel the reciprocal interaction with the tree.’ (Krahnke 2003 p.400)

The present research adopts the relational perspective of the social construction of reality (Berger and Luckmann 1966) which investigates identity construction in relation to constructs of ‘spirituality’ in interrelation rather than locating ‘spirituality’ exclusively inside the person itself.

3.1.2 Conceptualising research outcomes

This research uses Watson’s (2003) definition of discourse as ‘a set of concepts, statements, terms and expressions which constitute a way of talking or writing about a particular aspect of life, thus framing the way people understand and act with respect to that area of existence’ (p.48). As ‘living’ concepts, discourses are being shaped and acquire meaning in interrelation during what Katz and Shotter (1996, 1997) call ‘poetic moments’ where new meanings arise, elements of discourses are negotiated and the context of the social process can be grasped. Neither the discourses nor the meanings created are objective formations that exist autonomously, as they are experienced, understood and confronted in different ways. That is because they cannot be ascribed to particular individuals but to the ‘dialogical space’ (Shotter 2006) which is not a separate reality from the individuals involved but transpires in an interactive way generating reactions. The dialogical space then acquires an ‘agentic’ power (Shotter 2006) through its capacity and potential to produce/bring about reactions. This section provides a general overview of the main discourses related to this research, the concept of discourse is further analysed in section 3.2.2

3.1.2.1 The concept of the 'relational self'

It is often argued that modernity created fragmented selves (Holstein and Gubrium 2000); for Mead (1934) for example there are as many selves as social roles and the appearance of the self occurs in the social process. Since in current society social interactions have become variable and incalculable, the subjectivities available are growing and an increased number of roles is required to cope with the diverse demands of modern life. Gergen (1991) refers to this state of identity confusion as 'the saturated self'. He further supports a 'relational view of self-conception, one that views self-conception not as an individual's personal and private cognitive structure but as discourse about the self' (Gergen, 1994 p.185). This discourse takes place between people; the self in this view is a 'relational self' (Gergen, 1991) which occurs in the 'space between' and not within the individual. Moreover, writers associate the increased interest in life story as a means to provide unity and coherence to identity with a passing from modernity to 'a transformed modernity' (Gullestad 1996) or postmodernity (McAdams 1990, Goodley et al. 2004). It is further argued that in western societies, the upsurge of individualisation is linked to an overall societal preoccupation with reflexive practices (Giddens 1991). Plummer (2001) traces individualisation and the rise of autobiography back to the medieval and later the Renaissance periods but explains that it is after industrialisation that, (see also Taylor 1989) people started thinking as individuals and became more engaged with their own identities.

This represents what Josselson (1993) explains as 'the movement into a relativistic rather than a dualistic universe, a universe of human beings always in process, existing on multiple planes of present experience, poised in complex relation to the past and to the future' (p.37) or what Gergen (1999) calls that 'we in the Western culture may be on the verge of a major transformation in our way of conceptualizing ourselves' (p. 138). This research represents this shift towards the relational as participants engage in identity work to incorporate ideas of "unity" into "who they are". In this, they draw on spiritual and other cultural resources to construct aspects of their identities which will enable them to act as interconnected wholes in everyday situations they encounter.

3.1.2.2 Self and Identity

Seeing the self as relational, this research uses the term ‘self’ as the framework within which ‘identities’ as aspects of the self are expressed. Within the approach of the social construction of reality (Berger and Luckmann 1966) the self cannot be considered separately from society. Therefore there can be as many aspects of self –identities - as positions (James 1890) or roles (Mead 1934) in the society. That is the self can take on variable identities in relation to societal influences.

This self then is realised through everyday experience and formed in reflection upon itself. The process of reflection is of prominent importance as it allows the engagement with the self as an object (Mead 1936, Blumer 1966, Stets and Burke 2003). This process of reflection is analytically distinguished for the purpose of this research to occur on three levels. The level of subjectivity-objectivity interchange, the level of private-social identity interchange and the level of interchange between self and other.

At the first level, James (1890), makes a distinction between the self as knower or ‘I’ and the self as known or ‘Me’ but he considers these two ‘discriminating aspects’ of the self ‘ineradicable’. The ‘I’, or ‘pure ego,’ is the self experienced as a subject and the Me is the self experienced as an object. It is the ‘I’ as knower (James 1890) or as observer (Mead 1934, 1936) which at any given moment is conscious, whereas the ‘Me’ as known (James 1890) or as observed (Mead 1934, 1936) is one of the aspects of the self which the ‘I’ is conscious of. The distinction between self as subject and self as object enables the researcher to look at an individual observing itself and reflecting upon its actions.

The interchange between private and social identity can be experienced to be occurring in the intersection of ‘inner worlds’ and societal discourses. This interrelation lies for Jenkins (1996) where private identity emphasises difference and social identity emphasises similarity. He explains his model of internal-external dialectic of identification as the process whereby individual (private) and collective (social) identity is constructed and clarifies that this distinction is made only for analytical purposes. Similarly to Jenkins’ (1966) view this research does not separate private identity from societal influence and therefore suggests that the private and social identity of an individual can be perceived as distinctive through

the construction of a ‘personal discourse’ which is modelled in ‘public discourse’ (Harré 1983). In this way a relational self within a work context is not seen to endure or enforce power but rather becomes part of an interrelation of intermingled expectations, intentions, orientations and responses. This analytical stance locates the evaluation and review of work values and work orientations in the negotiation between private constructions of identity and available societal discourses.

Finally, the level of interchange between self and other is closely associated with the meanings constructed within ‘the relational conditions of society as a whole’ (Gergen 2003 p.152). As meaning is constructed in relation to others, Gergen (2003) points to the problematic of the belief in private meanings since people would not be able to communicate if meanings were an individual matter. He makes a ‘relational case’ where meaning is not created first in the individual’s mind but it is constructed in interchange since we are always in relational context. To distinguish analytically between self and other enables the study of how individual identity is constructed in interrelation with the organising of work while at the same time individual conceptions of work inform the way individuals come together to form networks partnerships and organisations.

3.1.2.3 The ‘spirituality’ discourse

The academic literature mostly justifies the indications of the importance of ‘Spirituality at Work’ as a phenomenon from the number of highly reputable academic books, articles and especially the devotion of special issues of social scientific journals on the topic.

Terms and definitions given to ‘spirituality’ range from describing ‘other worldly’ qualities including the transcendent, God or the mystical to ‘down to earth’ qualities such as spiritual practices, community service and caring for the environment. The term that recognises the inseparable ‘spirituality’ where the spiritual is accessed to explain and transform the ‘here and now’ is Woodhead and Heelas’ ‘spiritualities of life’ (2000, Heelas and Woodhead 2005). This aspect of ‘spirituality’ focuses ‘on what already lies within the order of things’ (Woodhead and Heelas 2000 p.110) where the ‘here and now’ and the ‘other worldly’ become one through spirit, wholeness or interconnectedness. This thinking emphasises

spiritual experience accepting authenticity of self and at the same time unity and interrelatedness.

Current ‘spirituality’ is associated with ‘the search for meaning’, ‘holism’ and ‘this worldly orientation’. Holism appears in two levels, at an individual level as the integration and balancing of body, soul, mind and spirit and at a wider level as the interrelation and interdependence of all beings. Therefore the concept of holism emphasises at the same time the ‘whole person’ with unique experiences and subjectivities and a holistic view of the world where everyone and everything is connected. Moreover, the ‘Spirituality at Work’ construct is entangled with antithetical concepts that seem to be brought together within spiritual ideas. Perhaps the most frequently used antithesis within the ‘spirituality’ discourse is individualism versus communitarianism (Bloch 1998, Heelas and Woodhead 2005).

3.1.2.4 The discourse of ‘work’

An important discourse which sets the main context of this research is the discourse of work which is not objectively defined but rather it emerged (Freysenet 1999) through cultural and historical dynamics. However, the emergence of the concept at some point in history does not determine its objectivity or stability but rather endorses its dynamism. In this sense, the meaning and importance of work not only differ across time or across economic, social and cultural circumstances (Casey 1995, DuGay 1996, Freysenet 1999, Hakim 1996) but are constantly sourced in everyday life, interrelating with other aspects of it. If then the meaning of work is created in interrelation, in the space between, it is being constantly (within the dynamic of the interrelation) reassumed while at the same time it provides and reshapes the discursive resources (Kuhn et al. 2008, see also Chapter 3: 3.2.2.1) which surround it and on which individuals draw upon to make sense of work. A view on the meaning of work then would be influenced from the way we are studying it, the discourses surrounding it and the discrete meanings emerging in particular interrelations. Within the academic (Ashmos and Duchon 2000, Cavanagh 1999, Giacalone and Jurkiewicz 2003, Korac-Kakabadse et al. 2002, Milliman et al 1999, Mitroff and Denton 1999) and popular (Benefiel 2005, Fox 1995, Howard and Welbourn 2004, Pauchant 2002,

Pruzan and Pruzan-Mikkelsen 2007, Senge et al. 2005) literature on 'Spirituality at Work' the discourse of 'work' is linked to the discourse of 'business', the discourse of 'creativity' and the discourse of 'service'.

To conceptualise the research outcomes the research framework is based on the concepts of the 'relational self' and also draws on the concepts of 'spiritualities of life', 'holism' and 'Spirituality at Work' from the discourse of 'spirituality' as well as on the concepts of 'business', 'creativity' and 'service' from the discourse of 'work'. This vocabulary is used to facilitate the framing of the much debated terms of 'identity', 'spirituality' and 'work' and to therefore address the research objectives according to the research stance taken.

3.2 Research strategy

3.2.1 Theoretical stance, epistemological considerations and ontological considerations

Following the influences explained above, a qualitative inductive approach was chosen. This approach enables the surfacing of ideas and meanings which are intrinsic in the life stories as told by participants. However, recognising that 'deductive and inductive strategies are possibly better thought as tendencies rather than as hard - and - fast distinction' (Bryman and Bell 2003) a theoretical background drawing on the wider areas of 'identity construction', 'meaning of work', 'sociology of religion' and 'Spirituality at Work' (SaW) informed the key concepts of the research.

Interpretivism, as argued in 3.1.1 is most suitable as an epistemological position to explore the subjective meaning of a 'spiritual' world view. By placing the emphasis on the interviewees' interpretations, this approach enables an understanding of the meanings they assign to SaW and of the way they position 'spirituality' and work within their lives. In this way, interviewees' lives are not seen as truthful reflections of an external reality but as processes of their becoming within interrelations. At the same time, interpretivism acknowledges the researcher's own influence on the interpretation of the processes through which individuals create and make sense of the social world (Bryman and Bell 2003, Goodley et al. 2004).

Through this interaction, social reality is seen from a social constructionist ontological perspective, recognising the interplay of social factors in the construction of identity (Gergen 1991) and considering ‘spirituality’ as a social construct. As in David Hope’s life story, Moore (Goodley et al. 2004) depicts David’s identity as the social construction of his experiences of exclusion rather than the spinal cord injury; or in his own words ‘it wasn’t breaking my neck that made me break down’. Through social constructionism social reality is created through social interaction and is therefore constantly transforming (Berger and Luckman 1966, Gergen 1991). Thus, the implications for this research are that since identity is seen as a construct, it is constantly emerging (Watson 2001).

3.2.2 The social construction of reality

‘The social construction of reality is the process in societal and historical contexts whereby people give meaning to the world through cultural interaction. This ‘world’ is one that may well exist beyond language and processes of interpretation. But it is something which can only be known and related to by people through language-based processes of historical knowledge-creation, cultural interpretation and sense-making.’ (Watson 2008)

Researching ‘spirituality’ within a social construction framework means that:

‘Reality’ is socially constructed: The approach of the social construction of reality does not define what is and what is not ‘real’; it rather explains the ways in which we construct our realities through socialisation and discourse. From a realist perspective, ‘the real’ is considered ‘objective’ and ‘true’ whereas in social construction what can be considered as real is constantly under challenge. In social construction reality is not located in the mind of the individual, neither objectively somewhere outside the individual. Instead, reality is created in interrelation so that the moment one tries to make sense of reality one is constructing it. In this, research outcomes can never represent ‘the real’ as by stating something as ‘real’ we exclude possibilities of different views to come forward but in order to explore ‘reality’ one has to look at the processes in which this reality is constructed. Therefore in this research, understandings of ‘spirituality’ or ‘identity’ cannot be fixed in that it does not question whether each of them is ‘real’, neither does it look for objective demonstrations of the spirit or

particular attributes of a fixed identity. What this research looks at in relation to ‘spirituality’ and identity is the processes by which they are being constructed. Specifically this research looks at participants narrations of their reality, at their explanations of experiences with the social world and at the language they are using to frame or re-frame it (see Chapter 7: 7.2 and particularly 7.2.1.2. and 7.2.1.3.). In most cases the construction of reality is visible where a participant’s spiritual understanding meets the way she/he acts.

Meaning is constructed in interrelation and in discourse: Berger and Luckmann (1966) write that ‘to be in society is to participate in its dialectic’ (p. 149). In the social construction of reality what is important is what happens in interrelation, in the space between. That is this research does not set out to research the inner thoughts, feelings etc of individuals but looks at the relationships and processes of relating. This research uses life stories to explore the ways in which participants recount their life narratives in order to make sense of their experiences and create coherence in their lives and identities within the social structures they act. The way participants talk about their lives can reflect the expressions of wider societal discourses. The interest here is to look at how participants explain their bringing together of different discourses. For example the statement ‘I am a spiritual being having a human experience’ (Michael) reflects the dichotomisation of the world in spiritual and human (see Chapter 4: 4.1.), whereas the statement ‘budgeting is energy work because money is energy’ (Sheila) brings together the spiritual discourse with the business discourse (see Chapter 7: 7.2.1.2.)

Berger (1969a) asserts that the ‘dichotomisation of reality into sacred and profane spheres’ (p.27) is very important for the analysis of any religious phenomenon. Especially in this research, this dichotomisation requires particular attention as it is conceived in relation to the ‘spiritualities of life’ (Heelas and Woodhead 2005) where the two spheres become one. Since it has been mainly through the dichotomization of the sacred and the profane that until recently religion or the spiritual was apprehended in Western societies, the shift towards an all (sacred and profane) encompassing worldview requires particular effort and new ‘ordering gestures’ as ‘signals of transcendence’ or ‘phenomena that are to be found within the domain of our “natural” reality but that appear to point beyond that reality’ (Berger 1969b p.70). Paying attention to these ‘ordering gestures’

may well provide a view on how the shift is being constructed. Mainly the ordering gestures are researched where participants’ ‘spiritual’ meanings link to their actions or where they fail to link and cause incongruences and tensions (see Paul’s narrative in Chapter 5:5.2.1. quote 5.11 or Zoë’s narrative in Chapter 7:7.1.2.). For this reason in many parts of the research consecutive narratives of a particular individual are followed to present the congruence or incongruence of meanings and actions. Berger (1969b) goes on to assert that ‘A rediscovery of the supernatural will be, above all, a regaining of openness in our perception of reality. [...] Perhaps it will be an overcoming of triviality. In openness to the signals of transcendence the true proportions of our experience are rediscovered. [...] this in no way implies a remoteness from the moral challenges of the moment, but rather the most careful attention to each human gesture that we encounter or that we may be called upon to perform in the everyday dramas of human life’. (pp. 119-120)

‘Man produces reality and thereby produces himself.’ (Berger and Luckmann 1966 p.204): Gergen (1994) supports a ‘relational view of self-conception, one that views self-conception not as an individual’s personal and private cognitive structure but as discourse about the self’ (p. 185). This discourse takes place between people; the self in this view is a ‘relational self’ (Gergen, 1991) which occurs in the ‘space between’ and not within the individual. Language and discourse are inherent in this relational self construction and are not simply seen as mediums of communication but as inextricable parts in the making of social reality and identity. The self is always ‘in the process of becoming’ it is always ‘emergent’ (Watson and Harris 1999) in interrelation to the available discursive resources (Kuhn et al. 2008).

While new theories of the self depart from the ‘internal’ to stress the ‘relational’, the ‘structure – agency’ debate is expressed in the exploration of the reflexive capacity of the self and human reflexivity is seen as emergent in social interaction.

Social constructionist and postmodern views of the culturally or discursively formed subject have been misread to allow for ideas of total self transformation to come forward. Although in some sense it is possible to change oneself, even if we are created in self construction, in self deception, or comprised of multiple fragmented selves, it is not possible to turnaround our identity. An action like this

would require an extraordinary degree of self knowledge, which is problematic in a relational self. Even in situations of 'life transformations' individuals might review parts of their value systems but can never create instantly a 'transformed' identity. Therefore the construction of the self is not a simple action but rather represents an ongoing complex process of interrelations.

These interrelations are not seen as arbitrary in this research but as expressive-responsive (Shotter 2005a, 2005b). This idea comes from 'a relationally responsive kind of understanding, to contrast it with the referential-representational kind of understanding we are more used to in our professional lives' (Shotter 2005b p.116). Then the central focus of our inquiries will become the spontaneously expressed, living, responsive, relational activities occurring out in the world between us for all to see' (Shotter 2005b p.114).

'Expressive - responsive understanding' (Shotter 2005a, 2005b). If everything is in interaction then there is not a division between an individual agent acting from a core self and a pre-existing structure imposing imperatives but there is interrelation and meanings arise from the intertwined entanglement of the various elements of what has dualistically been divided into agency (or rational thinking) and structure (societal norms, etc) in a particular situation.

In this view of the social construction of reality language is prominent as to 'think and to speak [...] is part of the process whereby we negotiate reality with others through the cultural medium of discourse and through which we justify and make sense, to ourselves and others, of what we do' (Watson 2001 p.25). Language represents the way people see, interpret and ascribe meaning to life and it is through language that questions about ourselves and our lives are asked or dealt with. That is because 'to use language is to engage in a social process of constructing particular realities' (Tietze et al 2003 p.11). The word, to say something, implies a world of expression which precedes it, sustains it, and allows it to give body to what it means' (Foucault and Binswanger 1993).

But language is not seen as an established means available to the individual for communication or representation of a particular 'reality' but rather as an active force that shapes and at the same time is being shaped in interaction. It is differentiated from other forms of communication or signification because the

‘language signs take on their value from their relations to each other [...] and the diversity of human languages (langues) takes on its full value from this enlightening discovery’ (Lacan 1966 p.92). Tietze et al (2003) refer to examples from studies reflecting the role of language to shape one’s world where the existence of particular words that represent social reality allows a person from one culture to ‘grasp nuances that remain literally and metaphorically unperceivable and ungraspable to someone from outside this culture’ (Tietze et al 2003 p.95).

3.2.2.1 The concepts of ‘discourse’, ‘discursive resource’ and narrative

The concept of discourse links the language used with the act of using language to make meaning. As explained in part 3.1.2 this research draws on Watson’s (2003 p.48) definition of discourse as ‘a set of concepts, statements, terms and expressions which constitute a way of talking or writing about a particular aspect of life, thus framing the way people understand and act with respect to that area of existence’. Studying discourses is to look at the same time at the socio-cultural formations of discourses and how they are interpreted in participants’ accounts of their experiences, ideas and stances. In a relational approach to identity construction, discourse is constitutive and expressive of the relational self construction and it is not simply seen as a medium of communication but as an inextricable part in the making of social reality and identity.

According to Wetherell et al. (2001) the concepts of ‘discourse’ and ‘interpretative repertoires’ are closely connected but are used variably to imply different conceptual and methodological positions. Discourse is seen as used more from Foucauldian perspectives to construct institutions whereas ‘interpretative repertoires are seen as smaller and more fragmented than discourses and therefore more flexible to emphasise human agency. However, this view seems to separate the macro and micro levels of discourse whereas Tietze and Musson (2005) link in D/discourse, as a mutually implicated relationship’ (p.1333), the relationship between macro (institutional) Discourses and micro (local) discourses. In this relational spirit, this research understands the interconnection of Discourses and discourses and uses the term ‘institutional discourse’ for the first and ‘discourse’ for the latter.

Furthermore, in adopting a relational perspective that does not locate meaning networks in human agency or in societal structures but in their interrelation, this research makes use of the concept of discursive resource to look at how different ‘spirituality’ related concepts inform participants’ identity processes. Borrowing from Fairclough (1992) Kuhn and Nelson (2002) and Watson (2001) Kuhn et al (2008) consider the discursive resource as ‘a concept, phrase, expression, trope, or other linguistic device that (a) is drawn from practices or texts, (b) is designed to affect other practices and texts, (c) explains past or present action, and (d) provides a horizon for future practice’ (p.163). From this perspective, ‘Spirituality at Work’ as a discursive resource is drawn upon from participants in order to interpret their experiences, construct meanings about work and guide their actions.

Narratives are elements of discourse and as explained in 3.2.3 it is through narration that coherence in life is maintained. According to Brunner (1990 p.81) the ‘narrative structure is even inherent in the praxis of social interaction before it achieves linguistic expression’. In this way narrative patterns identified in participants’ accounts represent their meaning construction processes and consequently their reactions and ways of acting. ‘Logos and praxis are culturally inseparable.’ (Brunner 1990 p.81). Identity is seen to be constructed in narrative and the participants’ identity constructing narratives represent and at the same time shape the construction of wider discourses.

3.2.3 The life story approach

Following an interpretive stance from the viewpoint of social construction of reality, the life story approach has been considered most appropriate to study the ways in which respondents engage in identity processes in relation to their work and their spirituality. From this relational view point, a life story does not simply represent a static case study of an individual person’s history but mostly the location of a unique person within interrelations. These interrelations are social processes of relating among people, the environment and cultural resources. The Life story approach has not been followed here as a method but rather as a perspective which considers that a) individuals make sense of and construct themselves through narrating their lives, b) this process occurs in interrelation with social circumstances and c) it is a dynamic process which brings together

past present and future. In this, this approach addresses main concerns of sociology such as the construction of identity within social contexts, the significance of the processes of interrelation between the individual and the social level as well as the creation of coherent selves through the synthesis of discursive and experiential fragments.

As part of interpretive social research, the life story approach has been linked to various orientations, mainly symbolic interactionism, phenomenology and structuralism. In this research the approach draws on ideas from the social construction of reality (Berger and Luckmann 1966) and witness thinking (Shotter 2005a) as explained above in 4.1.

The life story approach is increasingly used in the social sciences where authors suggest one should give voice to everyday people in order to get glimpses of social and collective processes (Gullestad 1996, Bertaux 1981). The people selected to participate in this research are seen here as ordinary people in that their engagement with spirituality, although life shaping, is expressed through 'legitimate' ways in societal terms. These are people who consider themselves spiritual and engage in their respective understandings of 'spirituality' without living on the margins of social acceptance or legitimacy. They are concerned with functioning in this world and are therefore not presenting themselves as 'different' in that one cannot spot them in the street and identify them as 'spiritual people'. As it comes up in the interviews, they perceive their 'difference' in the ways they think about the world and in their actions to change it at an abstract 'energetic' level. Although they incorporate 'spiritual' subjectivities to their sense of self and this is reflected in their lives, they strive to achieve a balance between the worldly and the 'other worldly' and therefore do not perceive themselves as marginal. Assuming this position, to view the group of participants as a legitimate societal group in functioning interrelation with the wider society is consistent with the ontological position of seeing individuals as interrelated wholes and with the epistemological stance where the 'consciousness of the self becomes more of a collective exploration than just a private one.[...] these stories can transcend the traditional isolated individual of classic autobiography – the St Augustine or Rousseau – to create a more collective awareness of others'(Plummer 2001 p.90).

At the same time, the life story approach 'recognises that lives are not hermetically compartmentalized into, for example, the person we are at work (the professional self) and who we are at home (parent/child/partner selves), and that, consequently, anything which happens to us in one area of our lives potentially impacts upon and has implications for other areas too' (Goodson and Sikes 2001). 'spirituality' then is not seen as a solely private or 'inner' matter but rather one which permeates all life aspects. The reason it is not evident in apparent 'different' expressions as explained in the above paragraph, lies in the integrating abilities of 'spiritualities of life' where the worldly and the 'other worldly merge towards a 'subjective - life spirituality' (Heelas and Woodhead 2005).

3.2.3.1 Life story as narrative

Atkinson (1998) asserts that 'whatever form it takes, a life story always brings order and meaning to the life being told' (p.8). This research accepts that in an effort to make sense of their lives, create stability and a sense of direction, individuals assemble subjectivities as influences, actions or discourses in a narrative structured as a coherent life story. In this way they create meaning in the interrelationship of these internalised subjectivities by formulating connections between events or people in a web of synchronicity and causal relationships.

This is Ricoeur's (1988) 'narrative identity' where an individual creates a narrative to maintain and interpret itself as a coherent entity. To maintain and enhance a solid self as a shield to protect it from the unpredictable and mysterious aspects of life but also to communicate with other individuals as well as the symbolic world the individual creates a life story that 'makes sense'. For McAdams the narrative identity can still involve many aspects of selves, which can be congruent or opposite to each other as the individual constantly reaffirms or revises its identity narrative (McAdams 1990). Although the life story represents an effort to create a unified self, it also portrays 'the splits of [the narrators'] selves and the oscillations between different self images. (Gullestad 1996 p.300).

The narrative identity is continuously revised in the light of every new event or subjectivity faced but still informs the story of a coherent linear life course. The concept of a life plan according to Berger in the *Homeless Mind* (1973) 'becomes

a primary source of identity' because 'the life plan is the basic context in which knowledge of society is organised in the consciousness of the individual' (Berger et al. 1973 p.70). Life planning then becomes central 'in the meaning the individual attributes to his own biography' (Berger 1973 p.72). Holstein and Gubrium (2000) argue that narratives of the self are not stable within oneself, neither do they simply become adrift in surrounding institutional discourses, but they engage in a complex process of self construction.

3.2.3.2 The interrelation of the individual and the social levels

Musson (2004) suggests that ontologically, the 'life story' approach is based on the belief that individuals construct their identities and make sense of themselves and of their environment, but they do this within the constraints and opportunities of the societal structures within which the individual exists. In this, life stories can provide access to the relations between what can be seen as the individual and the social. The construction of identity through the construction of a life story responds to a social need to ascribe meaning to, understand and communicate with the world. Identity then according to symbolic interactionism is a 'social object' which takes form based on a perspective of a past, present and future. Mead's concept of a 'social object' (Joas 1997, Searle 1995) explains the ways in which meanings and identities are not constructed within self contained individuals but in interrelation.

For Gullestad (1996) at the same time as (people's) life stories are socially produced, they are also socially productive. With such a definition of the field, life stories are not merely translations of lives into texts but also integral parts of life itself (p.8). In this way, life stories provide the means to access the way in which socio-cultural resources are drawn upon to construct life experiences and at the same time they participate in the construction of these experiences and their positioning in a meaningful narrative. Berger (1969a) explains this interrelation where individuals construct themselves and the social world as: 'This world encompasses the biography of the individual, which unfolds as a series of events within that world. Indeed, the individual's own biography is objectively real only insofar as it may be comprehended within the significant structures of the social world. To be sure, the individual may have any number of highly subjective self

interpretations, which will strike others as bizarre or as downright incomprehensible. Whatever these self interpretations may be, there will remain the objective interpretation of the individual's biography that locates the latter in a collectively recognized frame of reference. [...] In other words, the individual's own life appears as objectively real, to himself as well as to others, only as it is located within a social world that itself has the character of objective reality.' (p.13)

In this research the interrelation of the individual and the social level is of prominent importance as the 'spirituality' discourse (see 3.1) includes ideas of holism where the individual and the world become one. Moreover, participants tend to incorporate ideas of unity into "who they are". In this, they draw on spiritual and other cultural resources to construct aspects of their identities which will enable them to act as interconnected wholes in everyday situations they encounter.

3.2.3.3 Past, present and future

Josselson (1993) explains that one of the problems that contemporary psychology debates is 'the movement into a relativistic rather than a dualistic universe, a universe of human beings always in process, existing on multiple planes of present experience, poised in complex relation to the past and to the future' (p.37). Like all stories, the identity narrative is structured in the form of and through language and unfolds within the structure of time including the past, the present as well as the anticipation of the future. The life story narrative represents the way participants construct a life story at the time of the interview in the interrelation of the people involved, the context, content and the research questions. It is a narrative that refers to particular times and spaces narrated in a different time and space. The narrator makes sense and constructs identity while narrating stories which are created to 'fit present circumstances' and it is not always important if they are 'archaeologically true to memory' (Bruner 1990 p.112). In this way an identity is created as a point of reference for a meaningful coherent life story to unfold.

Therefore identity is partially shaped at the moment the interview unfolds by linking past stories as they are seen at this point in time while maintaining an

orientation towards the future. Providing a temporal structure to experience can be linked to the human propensity for order explained by Berger (1969a, 1969b) and to the role of religion, or in this case ‘spirituality’ to provide a meaningful ordering system. As Berger (1969b) explains, ‘the argument from ordering is metaphysical rather than ethical’ in that ‘in the observable human propensity to order reality there is an intrinsic impulse to give cosmic scope to this order, an impulse that implies not only that human order in some ways corresponds to an order that transcends it, but that this transcendent order is of such a character that man can trust himself and his destiny to it’ (pp.74-75). In this way each ordering gesture, such as the ordering gesture of a mother reassuring her child that everything is alright, is ‘a signal of transcendence’(p.73).

3.2.4 Ethical Considerations

The ethics of doing a life story interview are about the interviews being fair, honest, clear and straightforward. It is a relationship founded on a moral responsibility, primarily because of the gift you are being entrusted with (Atkinson 1998 p.36). This is reflected in the ontological, epistemological stance adopted and in the overall research process as explained in this chapter. Apart from conforming to ethical considerations arising from the ontological and epistemological stance adopted (explained above in section 3.2.1), particular emphasis was given to other ethical dimensions of the research.

An important factor that was considered was informed consent as researchers on the subject of ‘spirituality’ tend to find that creating solid communication grounds from the start, can reduce attrition rates and increase the quality of data gathered (Mitroff and Denton 1999, Lund Dean et al.2003, Plummer 1983). In this respect, the interviewees were given a clear explanation of the nature of the research.

As the research involved people disclosing personal information privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity were promised to the interviewees. This has been attended by conducting the interviews privately, mostly in participants’ work spaces, keeping the recorded disks with changed names in a secure place, changing participants’ names and eliminating names of companies or places that could reveal the participant in the transcripts. Also the demographics of the research are depicted below in section 3.3.1 separately so that participants’

identities can not be revealed. More importantly, ethical considerations concerning emotional responses were addressed within briefing and debriefing discussions. Briefing discussions on the way the life story interview was to be conducted were made at the beginning of the interview and discussions on particular incidents were made during the interview where a participant needed to appraise a particular experience. Also at the end of each interview a debriefing discussion that would bring together the whole life story in a positive manner was conducted. My training and experience in carrying out outplacement, career counselling, and development centre projects, in which people have to disclose sensitive data, developed my interviewing, counselling and listening skills. In this way, an ethical stance from my side about my role as the interviewer, my ability to deal with reflexivity as well as my respect for participants' beliefs and emotions facilitated the process of life story research.

3.3 Research methods

3.3.1 Research Design and field work

This research involved approaching individuals and effort was placed in the access phase of the research since the activities that occur during this phase can influence the ways in which respondents view the research and the researcher (Burgess 1984). Generating access involved participating in SaW related events and negotiation with SaW professionals, trainers and academic conference organisers who were identified as gatekeepers. Their contribution was to enable a short introduction to the research at the end of the training, giving out the research flyers to training participants and forwarding the research flyer to their 'grapevine' which resulted to further referrals.

Participants' profile, apart from an involvement in SaW, was not tightly specified to allow for different kinds of cases to be included in the research. According to Patton's (1990) cases for purposive sampling, at first an 'opportunistic' strategy was followed by approaching directly participants at SaW seminars, related festivals and an academic conference on the subject. This generated 'chain referrals' from personal contacts or SaW professionals who forwarded the research flyer to their contacts. Since response rates were high, participants were finally selected in a 'mixed purposeful' manner paying particular attention to

maintain a balance in participant numbers between the various sources (seminars, festivals, academic conference) so that each participant would be approaching SaW from a varied viewpoint and therefore each case could provide a diverse view on the subject.

The participants were of varied age span, gender, educational background and occupation. Participants’ age span ranges from 28 to 60 and their educational background ranges from basic education to having a doctoral level qualification. The wide age span moderated historical effects on their upbringing such as those associated with the baby boomer generation in the work of Roof (1993-1999) and enabled a shift in perspective towards seeing participants through their location within interrelations rather than through their demographic characteristics.

Participants’ demographics are presented below in three separate tables. The first table (4.1) presents the participant’s nationalities, the second table (4.2) presents in numerical ascending order the age span and gender of the participants and the third table (4.3) is sorted alphabetically by occupation to present their occupation and educational level. The tables were split on purpose for two reasons **a) to enable confidentiality since certain participants are well known in their respective fields and could easily be identified b) to moderate the tabular presentation of participants as data so as not to compromise the stance of seeing participants as unique individuals and not as research objects.**

Table 4.1: Participant’s nationalities

Nationality	Number of Participants
English	13
American	1
Spanish	1

Table 4.2: Participant’s Age Span and Gender

Age	Gender
28	M

Age	Gender
32	F
40	M
41	F
43	F
43	F
44	F
45	M
46	F
47	M
50	F
56	M
57	F
58	M
58	M
60	F

Table 4.3: Participant’s occupation and educational level

Occupation	Educational level
Acupuncturist	Degree
Coach, speaker consultant	Degree
Company director	Degree
Company director	MSc
Complementary therapist	Nursing qualification, Diploma
Consultant	PhD
Consultant Clinical Psychologist	PhD
Executive coach	MBA
Freelance development facilitator	Degree and various professional diplomas

Occupation	Educational level
Freelance project manager in the voluntary sector and coach and facilitation head of projects in management	Degree
Hypnotherapist and graphic designer	Degree
Management Consultant in People and Change Area	Masters Degree
Psychotherapist	Basic education and self directed learning
Self employed consultant	Two Undergraduate degrees
Senior lecturer	PhD
Teacher	Degree and Teacher Training

The field research was completed in two stages with a time span of about 9 months in between. During the first stage which occurred in May-June 2005, I interviewed 16 participants for three hours each. Two of the participants were interviewed twice to complete the life story and the second interview lasted for about 2 hours in each case. This part of the research consisted of the life story interview which looked at the participant’s whole life with specific attention to how he/she located ‘spirituality’ and work in it. For this part a semi structured in-depth life story questionnaire (Appendix 2) was designed that touched upon the topics of work orientations, work ethic, meaning of work, self identity construction, and spiritual orientation /experience.

During the second stage on February – March 2006, the 16 participants were interviewed for about 2-2.5 hours each. This stage of the research focused on the experience of work and the role of participants spiritual orientation on this. Here it was a challenge to create a flexible tool to account for interpretivist research but at the same time specific enough to account for participants’ diverse experiences of work and spirituality. Finally an interview guide (Appendix 3) with several topics was created and used flexibly in the interview depending on each participant’s circumstances.

Interviews took place in participants’ offices, in participant’s houses (often used as offices), at Nottingham Business School and in one case in a coffee shop. The

interviews were MP3 recorded and played after each interview to keep notes. Then, the MP3 data was transformed to digital data using Cool Edit 2000 and the digital files were transcribed using Sony Digital Voice Editor 2. The most part of the interviews was verbatim transcribed and a few parts transcribed in summary. Overall the recorded interviews from both stages amount to 87 hours.

3.3.2 Inviting stories: the life story interview

Drawing on the above research strategy it was possible to set up a research design and identify the broad issues upon which to focus the life story interviews. The life story approach entails a long, thorough and extensive investigation of the depth, complexity and dynamism in the interviewees’ identity and sense making processes. Seidman (1991) affirms that at the root of in depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience. The interview was not simply seen as a ‘tool’ to obtain knowledge from the research respondents but as ‘dialogue’ in the sense of a socially constructed process in which meaning is created in interrelation. This points the attention to both the process of conducting the interview (from both the researcher and the participant) and to the content of the interview (as the meaning constructed within and throughout the interview process).

Therefore a semi structured in depth life story questionnaire (Appendix 2) was designed that touched upon the topics of work orientations, work ethic, meaning of work, identity construction, and spiritual orientation /experience. The interview had three aspects: the life history, the details of specific experiences and the reflection on the meaning of experience where participants were asked to explain their understanding of particular experiences and locate them in the overall context of their lives. The stance adopted regarding the interviews combined elements from the ‘life story interview’ (Atkinson 1998) and the ‘active interview’ (Holstein and Gubrium 1995).

Interviews on life stories entail mainly long narrations between questions, where the researcher does not interrupt the participant unless there is a clarification to be made or the interview gets out of course. This requires intense concentration and active listening from the part of the researcher so that the interview process yields stories. Chase (1995) explains the differences between inviting stories and inviting

reports at interviews. One important parameter is not to speak in sociological language so that participants are not disconnected from their experiences. During the interviews in this research the interaction in ‘spiritual’ vocabularies was at the same time a strength and a weakness as on the one hand the mutual understanding of the language facilitated ‘native’ stories but on the other hand there were terms (i.e. karma) and types of experiences (i.e. meditative experience) mentioned and left unexplained. Although for the more striking terms or experiences (e.g. the dark night of the soul) I requested clarification, I did not always do so for many others so as not to interrupt a story or push the participant in a state of consciously selecting ‘easier’ or more commonly understood words to describe an experience during the interview. Holstein and Gubrium (1995) explain that ‘it is the active interviewer’s job to direct and harness the respondent’s constructive storytelling to the research task at hand’ (p.39). This, in a research that understands meaning making in interrelation can be translated into that in the mutual construction of the story, the researcher’s responses shape the story towards the research context.

Another important issue is the types of questions asked that have to be open ended and invite the telling of a ‘personal’ narrative rather than a general opinion. I was particularly concerned that I was eliciting theoretical responses rather than personal stories from one of the participants who I was particularly interested to interview. This was the only interview that took place in a cafeteria and the noise and people around could not let us concentrate. Reading the transcripts I realised that I had been asking questions that reflected mainly my interests in particular research topics rather than questions that would trigger personal stories from the participant. In his turn the participant had been responding with theoretical views in certain cases and in other cases with monolectic answers. Reading the transcripts together with transcripts from other interviews I realised that during the other interviews I was often deviating from the interview guide to respond to participants’ experiences and interests whereas in this particular one I was following the interview guide and not listening actively. Only in a few parts the interview was flowing well, the participant was talking about his personal experiences and I was responding with relevant questions. This account still generated interesting narratives but it is disturbing to think how more interesting it could have been under different circumstances. As Chase (1995) explains ‘we are

most likely to succeed [to invite stories] when we orient our questions directly and simply to life experiences that the other seeks to make sense of and to communicate’ (p.12).

Even though for the most part of the interviews it was the respondent talking, all the interviews were settings of intense interaction. From my experience, I was constantly alert to immerse in the story told and at the same time ‘hear’ the stories behind it, make connections between stories and encourage storytelling without being absorbed in scrutinising and miss the interrelation. The interview was a mutual construction also because and in line with ‘expressive responsive understanding’ apart from talking there was nodding, grimacing etc. The experience of the interview for its most part is very similar to what Shotter (2005a) explains as ‘the interplay of living movements intertwining with each other, [where] new possibilities of relation are engendered, new interconnections are made, new ‘shapes’ or ‘forms’ of experience can emerge. [...] In short, we are spontaneously ‘moved,’ bodily, toward specific possibilities for action in this kind of thinking. They provide us with both an evaluative sense of ‘where’ we are placed in relation to our surroundings, as well as an anticipatory sense of where next we might move.’ (p.146)

3.3.2.1 An active interrelationship

Adopting the relational approach explained above, this research has revolved around the active interrelationship between the researcher, the researched and the process of researching. In this view that sees meaning constructed in interrelationship, respondents are referred to as participants since they participated in telling their lives and through this in influencing the way I wrote them. In the setting of the interview, the researcher, the respondent and the conversation are being shaped constructively (Holstein and Gubrium 1995, Shotter 1993). This has been reflected in the ‘fieldwork identity’ (Plummer 2001) adopted as well as in the whole process of doing the research. Regarding the researcher’s identity, there was a conscious decision to openly present to the respondents my identity as a ‘spiritual’ sort of person doing academic research. This was not presented as a split identity but rather as different aspects of an overall identity, in the same way as I viewed myself throughout the research. At the same time, there was an effort

not to elaborate about my views and spiritual background so as not to influence conversation towards specific ideas.

A 'life story interview is truly a collaborative partnership in every sense. It is a unique relationship that exists between the life story, interviewer and the story teller' (Atkinson 1998 p.37). Plummer (2001) explains that 'life history research, perhaps more than any other, involves establishing and maintaining a close and intimate relationship with the subject'. Despite the effort to use a relational approach where meaning is constructed in interrelation, the experiences we are used to are expressed in dualistic ways of having separate experiences. A few participants expressed that they enjoyed the life story interview simply because they got to tell their life story as well as in that it enabled them to make sense of certain parts of their lives. Atkinson (1998) explains that 'the win-win situation of a life story interview and the primary concern, is to help others tell their life stories in new, clearer, or more complete ways that enable them to see their own lives a bit differently than before and in ways that they can be pleased with and secondarily, having life stories that will also offer unique perspectives on lives and specific research questions. (p.62)

3.3.3 The process of analysis and interpretation

As explained in 3.2.1 an inductive analytic approach characterises the research. In this, the process of analysis of the field material does not start when the researcher begins to read the transcribed accounts but it is 'relatively open ended and also circular or iterative' (Wetherell et al. 2001 p.38). The analysis is founded in the research questions as well as in the particular approach taken; therefore the analytical process of this research started at the onset of the project when the questions about the material to be collected were asked.

This means that the analytical process was in progress even during the interviews, within the discussions about the interview material and during the transcription process. After completing the initial partial transcription of the interviews I kept reading them and listening to the recordings. When I would find a theme I would then read the transcripts to find examples relating to it and listen to the recordings again to see how it came up and how it was expressed. In doing this, new themes or new aspects of the theme I was exploring would surface. Listening to the

recordings of a specific respondent again after having worked with other respondents’ stories would provide new perspectives and then I would work on them anew. Therefore some of the themes that came up at the initial analysis were abandoned, some were integrated within other themes and some were expanded to incorporate further aspects and meanings.

Within this process I have been part of the process of constructing the story of the field research and the thesis overall. The process of constructing the field research story entails the making of the interview guide and the semi structured stance adopted, the interview process as well as the analytical, synthetic and writing process. Therefore the thesis produced is itself a story made from working through the life stories. I understand that in the shift towards the relational that this thesis is part of, new ways of writing have to emerge in order to include understandings and meanings of unity. Writing this thesis has been a struggle to incorporate this within acceptable and understandable linguistic constructs. Most prominent has been the effort to use passive voice to reflect the relational way this research was constructed, use ‘we’ to express the interdependence of people involved in this research (researcher, researched, supervisors, theorists, audience and others) and use ‘I’ or ‘he’, ‘she’, ‘they’ to value individual experience. If we could only speak as ‘we’ people could not claim to have an experience (Gergen 1991, Shotter 2006).

The unit of analysis then is not the individual, or the story itself but the process of creating meaning. The question is not whether a relational self is possible but how do participants make sense of the relational, which discursive resources (Kuhn et al. 2008) are drawn upon and shaped in the process, as well as what happens when participants activate these discourses. In looking at the discourses involved the wider societal ideas on ‘spirituality’ (expressed in books, religious texts, myths, seminar notes, the internet) and how they are being interpreted within participants’ accounts of their experiences to shape the overall discourse. Here usually the terms selected to be used in the thesis represent the term that was more often used from the participants and which is also used in wider cultural resources available. Therefore the term ‘ego’ introduced in Chapter 6 represents a ‘spirituality’ related construct available in popular ‘spirituality’ literature rather than the Freudian term used in psychology. In other cases as this of the term

‘presence’ introduced in Chapter 5, different vocabularies used have been merged into the term to encompass participants’ descriptions of what is often termed as ‘presence’ in ‘spirituality’ related literature (Senge et al. 2005). Moreover the conceptual vocabulary analysed in 3.1.2 has been used to facilitate the analysis of abstract or amorphous terms related to ‘spirituality’ and to provide coherence across the fields of spirituality, work and identity.

Particular attention was also paid in the narratives and stories (as ‘emotionally and symbolically charged narratives’ Gabriel and Giffiths 2004) as they add temporality (Ricoeur 1991) and positioning (Davies and Harre 1990, Benwell and Stokoe 2006) in identity construction. A recurrent structure in participants’ narratives included the transitions towards more ‘spirituality’ related work. This reflected wider societal narratives connected with the ‘voluntary simplicity movement’ and in most cases it was justified in a need to work with people. Another recurrent theme was the bringing together of the discourse of business and the discourse of ‘spirituality’ in narratives and stories about work. Participants’ narratives and stories were analysed in spatial and temporal contexts to relate the general with the particular and to look at the social processes in which identity is being constructed. For example Zoë’s account of her summer job in the factory in Chapter 8 reflects the ways in which time and motion studies have been imposed and resisted at an organisational level. The other workers expressing their liking of the situation can be linked to wider societal discourses of work as a means to earn money, etc.

Moreover the identity work was explored in an ‘expressive-responsive understanding’ (Shotter 2005a, 2005b) by looking at the back and forth movements of talking about an antithetical issue in an effort to make sense of it. For example Zoë in Chapter 8 feels compassion for the women doing a boring job in the factory and at the same time she says that they loved it because they could daydream doing it and get paid. She goes back and forth in her narration to conclude that this is not something suitable for her and her life. Zoe’s effort to make sense in this case reflects her effort to position herself within conflicting work repertoires of work as a means to make money and work as means of service and fulfilment and also her effort to justify the overall account of her life and her stories about her work. This is where the concept of ‘expressive-responsive’

(Shotter 2005a, 2005b) understanding as explained in 3.2.2 provides the ways to see participants’ accounts as responsive in interrelation rather than as strategic or arbitrary.

Within this process, the research outcomes are presented in a variety of ways expressing a response to the particular message provided each time. In most parts of the thesis, long quotes from participants’ accounts are presented unabridged to allow the continuity of the life story to come forward. In one particular case (see Chapter 6: 6.2.2) the quote is highlighted within a border frame as it represents a ‘poetic moment’ (Katz and Shotter 1996, 1997) that can make us sensitive to its meaning in an aesthetic rather than an analytical way. Two complex sections (6.3.1 and 7.2) are presented in tables setting side by side the ‘account’ and the ‘commentary’ in two adjacent columns. In the case of section 6.3.1 this facilitates the reader to follow unobstructed the participants’ complex meaning making process that includes oscillations between ascribed causes and effects of the experience together with the researchers’ commentary and the insights of the literature. It also allows the voices of the participant, the researcher and the literature to relate without obstructing the flow of the account. In the case of section 7.2 the table enables more voices to relate as more than one participant’s accounts are presented under each of the relevant points that the literature suggests. Therefore, in this case the voices that interrelate through the table are these of the participants, the researcher, other insights from the wider literature integrated in the researcher’s commentary and the main literature topic that provides the structure of the table. Overall the use of different ways to present the accounts is consistent with the ‘expressive-responsive’ stance of this research and with my effort to present the ‘relational’ within the research process.

3.3.3.1 Generating contextual understanding

From the approach taken in this research the analysis occurs within processes of social construction. The accounts are not judged by their validity or objectivity but are seen as constructs that reflect the participants meaning making processes. Plummer (2001) makes a case that representativeness, validity and reliability ‘may well not be appropriate criteria for life story work’ (p.152).

The issue of representativeness is in its basis antithetical with an interpretivist approach as in interpretivism there is no objective reality of an account to be representative of. Moreover, in relational life story research each account is seen as a unique account of a unique individual within socio-cultural contexts and in the context of the interview. Bryman and Bell (2003) contrast the quantitative research pursuit of generalisation to the qualitative search for contextual understandings. Instead of generalisations this research will provide ‘generalisable insights’ (Watson 2001 p. xiii) at the ‘level of process and of theory’ (p. xiv) focusing on ‘identity work’ processes and covering wider theoretical propositions (Yin 2003) on identity, work and spirituality. These insights can suggest implications about identity construction processes in relation to constructs of ‘spirituality’ and within work contexts.

Since this research is looking for participants’ identity making processes, then participants’ accounts, regardless of their historical accuracy or internal inconsistencies are ‘valid’ in terms of providing what is sought after. Gabriel and Griffiths (2004) argue that ‘the truth of a story lies not in its accuracy but in its meaning’ and that stories often ‘may contain inconsistencies, imprecisions, lacunae, non-sequiturs, illogicalities and ambiguities’ (p.115) Similarly Gullestad (1996) argues that ‘I hold that such so-called distortions of written life stories are the main source of their value as human documents. Both the fascination and the analytic problem of life telling thus stem from the same source. [...] I approach life stories from a different angle, working with consciously loose interconnections in many directions, rather than tight causal relations in one direction (p.7). When doing life story research, it is not possible to elicit the same story in different contexts, with different researchers or from different respondents. Moreover, life story interviewing cannot be standardised in this research since as explained above each interview case is seen as unique.

3.3.3.2 Internal consistency

Effort was placed in working with internal consistency in the interpretation so that the interpretation of the parts is consistent with the interpretation of the whole (Gabriel and Griffiths 2004).

The life stories have been read as wholes and parts at the same time, recognising the making of life narratives in interrelation. This means that the accounts have been read for processes, orientations and interrelations rather than for linear links or causal connections. In this regard the readings do not look for individual revolutionary actors resisting oppression and alienation but for interrelations of ‘living movements’ (Shotter 2006). Here the concept of ‘expressive-responsive’ understanding as explained in 3.2.2 provides the ways to see participants’ accounts as responsive in interrelation rather than as strategic or arbitrary.

While conducting the research, the cyclical process of working and reworking the research material under the light of new ideas represented for me a depiction of the processes in which identities emerge in interrelation. A thread running through the whole thesis is a shift towards the relational self. From my effort to present the ‘relational’ in the research process to the participants’ efforts to create the conditions to ‘feel interconnected’ or to relate in ‘free association’. Participants engage in identity work to incorporate ideas of “unity” into “who they are”. In this, they draw on spiritual and other cultural resources to construct aspects of their identities which will enable them to act as ‘whole persons’ in everyday situations they encounter.

Therefore in Chapter 5 the struggle between the self as observer and the self as observed finds compromise in the concept of ‘presence’ where the observer (the self as ‘I’), the observed (the self as ‘Me’) and the action of observing merge. In terms of work this is expressed in being ‘present’ to focus (Michael leaving the ego outside the door) and communicate better with others (Beth being ‘in tune’ with the group).

In Chapter 6 the tension between personal and social identity finds compromise in a constant engagement with ‘reality’ in order to bring together the worldly (or the world of separation) and the ‘other worldly’ (where everything is one). In terms of work this is expressed in responding to intuitive sources of authority, justifying ‘service’ as purpose contribution and reward through ideas of holism as well as in changing life and work towards one or a series of jobs that contribute to a fulfilling ‘life’s work’.

In Chapter 7 the self finds union with the generalised other (people, environment, organisation) through intense reflexivity and the conscious integration in the enactment of identity in ways of being with others that in their view uphold ‘unity’. In terms of work this is expressed in participants’ using of language that allows for holistic understandings and in their constructions of organisational structures and organisational interactional patterns where these understandings can be expressed.

Chapter 3, ‘Researching ‘spirituality’ and Identity at Work’, provided a detailed account of the frameworks used to conceptualise research outcomes as well as the strategy and the methods used to carry out the research. The frameworks, strategy and methods have been used consistently to address the aims of the study.

The research framework is based on the concepts of the ‘relational self’ and also draws on the concepts of ‘spiritualities of life’, ‘holism’ and ‘Spirituality at Work’ from the discourse of ‘spirituality’ as well as on the concepts of ‘business’, ‘creativity’ and ‘service’ from the discourse of ‘work’. The research strategy is based on the life story approach combined with the ideas of ‘the social construction of reality’ (Berger and Luckmann 1966) and ‘expressive-responsive understanding’ (Shotter 2005a, 2005b). This allows for a relational view of the ways in which participants engage in identity processes in relation to their work and to their ‘spirituality’ and most importantly of the ways in which a life story is located within social processes.

Finally particular emphasis has been placed in maintaining consistency between the research strategy and the methods of interviewing, analysing and interpreting research outcomes.

4 Personal and Circumstantial Factors Affecting Participants' 'Spirituality'.

Responding to the first objective of the research, this chapter will present the personal and circumstantial factors affecting participants' 'spirituality' and any relation this might have to their conception of work. At first participants' views on what is 'spirit' and 'spirituality' are explored to gain a view on their particular views on the subject and in relation to the existing literature. Then the participants' upbringing is discussed to identify early influences through socialisation processes and also explore particular events or sensitivities that they mention as important in their life stories. Subsequently, the process of becoming spiritual is analysed and the particular processes of constructing the identities through which this is achieved are described.

4.1 Understandings of the 'Spirit'

At the beginning of the interviews, participants were asked to provide their views on spirituality. In congruence with the literature apprehending the lack of an accepted conceptual definition (Giacalone and Jurkiewicz 2003) participants gave varied definitions of spirituality. Most descriptions had to do with 'spirituality' being everywhere and in everything.

Eric: 'The broad definition for me is the recognition that the spiritual affects and touches and imbues all aspects of life, there are none that can be taken out of it and the thought of which something which does not have any connection with the spiritual, it is a recognition in a very simple form of language that you could say God is everywhere, some say God is everywhere, well I'd say God is in everything if you like. If some people don't like the God word ...'

George: Oh...well now I think its, its something, it's almost like every breath. That it's not something apart from everything, it is in everything, it runs through everything that I do, think, say. It affects every action.

Along these lines, most participants relate 'spirituality' to their everyday life and their identity. Marina explained the salience of 'spirituality' in her everyday life saying: '*I don't clean my teeth without spirituality, to me keeping the intention is the most important thing about spirituality*' and Michael perceives it as the source

of his identity saying that: *What it is for me is the truest nature of who I am, that is really me essentially so I said, one of the definitions is I am a spiritual being having a physical experience and its that way round rather than a physical being having a contact with my spirit if you see what I mean. There is a significant difference there for me.*

Brenda takes it further explaining that 'spirituality' is what connects her with the world and the universe. She reveals that through 'spirituality' she can acknowledge 'the Ultimate' and tap into a reality that is not rational. The choice to enter to this reality means *'taping into this vastness out there and having my perspective of things change as a result and finding interconnectedness of all that'*.

Most participants during the early stage of the interview covering their initial views on 'spirituality' but also throughout the life story interview talked about a spiritual realm that they strive to be 'in congruence', 'in tune' or 'connected' with. In this they report benefiting from the spiritual providing them with a wider perspective of life. A lot of participants connected the spiritual realm with the 'Ultimate' (Brenda), the Creator (Glen), God (Eric), the Higher Self (Sheila). Some participants hurried to differentiate their views from a 'separate', 'punishing' or humanly formed God and when prompted they provided a view that this Higher Power was in someway everywhere and in everything and that human beings are part of it as well. George presents an interesting view that the spiritual is progressively created:

And I think 'spirituality' is the world and the cosmos discloses itself to us as we are open to receiving it. So I think in that sense 'spirituality' is a shared activity between us and the cosmos. It's not a revealed truth out there waiting to be found, it's actually created and I think that's really exciting, to be alive when the human story has begun to realise that. Cause I think fifty years ago, that was not a view held by many, now I think its an increasingly recognised view that the cosmos reveals itself to us as much as we wish to experience it, and I think that...that is going to change the human story.

Further on, participants tend to use the word 'meaning' in their narratives on their spiritual path. As Michael says: *'for years I have been exploring and trying to*

understand the meanings of things, the meanings of life, the meaning of my life'. He then goes on to explain that through this meaning making process he realised that the spiritual path is an '*almost inevitable route*' for him and that in this realisation he has to understand what his connection with the spirit is. Michel's account resonates with Berger's (1969a, 1969b) arguing that the search for meaning is important to maintain a sense of reality and identity but this search in relation to 'spirituality' involves a further process of trying to interpret reality and of unravelling its meaning by assuming that there is something which lies beneath or beyond it.

Some participants contrast 'spirituality' to religion and explain that their first encounter of 'spirituality' was through religion but they then challenged their beliefs and moved away from organised religion. Zoë combines her religious beliefs with her Taoist philosophy saying '*I do believe in God and still have the same feelings but not in a Christian way [...] 'spirituality' for me it is the belief in God but the religion is a man made thing that I've completely pushed to one side now [...] now I feel more like ehm a Taoist who ... (laughs) believes in God, who has Christian root*'. On the other hand, Summer who grew up in a Muslim family does not want to talk about religion and Corrine renounced her Catholic faith. These ideas are congruent with the literature linking alternative 'spirituality' with the secularization thesis arguing that people are feeling disillusioned with organised religion and therefore moving towards less organised and more holistic views of 'spirituality' (Ashforth and Vaidyanath 2002, Aupers and Houtman 2006, Bell and Taylor 2003, Casey 2000, Grant et al. 2004, Heelas and Woodhead 2005).

Participants' views correspond to the main ideas that the relevant literature on 'spirituality' analyses such as holism (Hadot 1995, Heelas and Woodhead 2005) and 'spiritualities of life' (Woodhead and Heelas 2000, Heelas and Woodhead 2005). However, they tend to value lived experience more than the ideas and concepts.

4.2 The emphasis on experience

All participants place the importance of 'spirituality' in the experience itself. Although throughout the life stories they provide several purposes of their

'spirituality' in their lives, when asked about their understanding of it, even the most eloquent or the most scientific do not provide explanations but seem content that the experience itself is of great importance. Marina's account is a representative illustration of this as she explains: *'How do I know it's me? I don't know, I could explain it with the theory of psychology or religion, I could intellectually display what different theories say about it but people write about things like that in different ways [...] other people talk about a Higher Self, other about God within, all of them are interesting. I am not interested in that, I am interested in my experience of myself, it helps with patients when you need to ask or explain to them but for me [...] for me the most important is the experience'*.

When prompted about the way they experience spirituality, participants revealed a belief that that we have more than five senses and explain their experiences through an increased sensitivity to feel the spiritual or even as an increased sensitivity to understand the world around them. Summer for example provides an account which parallels spiritual sensitivity to the ability to *'pick things up from people'* and to learning to *'become more aware of how you should behave and [...] what type of behaviour is appropriate'*. This links to the above mentioned point of participants developing early on social observation skills. Similar to this is George's account that *'its like getting atunement and I think that is the first stage that until people are willing to suspend who they are, to find out who we are then what I am talking about doesn't really start to appear.'*

He also reports following a more scientific way to explore this experience: *'oh I did, I did ...experiments if you like with groups and individuals where we set up ways to report what happens to us, what we think happens to the other and what we sense goes on in here and then we keep finding that understanding and talking about it and I think it's a bit like gradually getting sensitised to something. I don't think we'll ever know it, but it's a very rich place of new meaning to appear I think.'* Also Brenda says: *'I want to find out, I have come close to it with a couple of explanations, I have definitely felt that connection. It tends to happen if I don't have many anxieties, not looking into the future, when I am surrounded by nature, have a calm mind, meditate'* but she then explains that this is probably her rational mind trying to provide a logical explanation; she says that this might not be the correct paradigm to use. She then tries to explain her experience of feeling

'completely integrated with world around us' and that *'the boundary between my skin and the air is not real'*. Finally she resorts to her private experience again *'I had one particular experience in new Zealand I felt in tune with everything around'* when *'the interactions with people'* were different and there was an overall *'different sensation'* and (her) *'senses were alive to everything around me'*. She concludes that *'I would point to that and say it has something to do with that.'*

Brenda's narrative presents the negotiating process between what she distinguishes as her rational mind, her feeling of her experience and an aspect of hers that weighs her 'subjective experience' against her 'logical mind'. She follows a line of meandering within her knowledge of scientific ways to scrutinise her experience and her valuing of the experience itself. These experiences accord with the concepts of holism where the 'whole person' with its unique experiences integrates with the whole world. Moreover, linked to holistic milieu (Heelas and Woodhead 2005) is the valuing of subjective life 'as a primary force of significance' (p.82).

4.3 Personal and circumstantial factors

4.3.1 Early influences

As described in Chapter 3, most participants are English and grew up in Britain apart from two who grew up in Spain and America respectively. Two participants are in their late twenties – early thirties, eight are in their forties and six are in their fifties – early sixties. This means that the larger participant age group grew up in the seventies and another large group in the sixties. The 'baby boomer' generation is associated in the literature (Roof 1993, 1999) with the wider societal narratives of growing up in 'the sixties'. 'The sixties' are frequently mentioned in Roof's (1993) participants' accounts as an era of 'new morality' when 'things were happening'. Their English counterparts in this research do not seem to have experienced 'the sixties' with the same awe apart from George who was engaged in social criticism (partly influenced from the anarchic movement and partly from Buddhism) and travelled to America early on. Diverging from Roof's (1993) participants, the five people in this research who grew up in 'the sixties' in England and were not actively engaged in social movements mainly talk about

their family life rather than wider societal developments and describe their adolescent years as simply as going to school and engaging in boring summer jobs that they mainly did for money. A few might have later on moved on to embrace certain aspects of the hippie culture in the seventies but did not mention being involved in political and social activities during 'the sixties'. Further on, most participants who grew up in the seventies provide similar descriptions of a 'normal' adolescence mentioning mostly interests for the opposite sex and realisations about family life and social status. When prompted about work, they described summer jobs that were enjoyable only for the short period of time they were undertaken and for the money they provided.

Participants' parents' religion was mainly Christian with the exception of one Muslim and one Jewish. In all cases both parents were of the same religion although it appears frequently that Christian parents would belong to different denominations. In most of these cases the person from the most 'frowned upon' religion converted to the other parent's religion or was happy to be part of it without officially converting. Usually it was the mother who gladly accepted the father's denomination. In the case of Corinne, whose mother was a Methodist and converted to her husband's Catholicism, it was because the Catholics thought '*they were the chosen ones*' according to Corinne. Corinne was educated in a convent and later on in her life abandoned religion as she was disappointed by Catholicism. When her husband left her and she went to ask for an annulment, she realised that she could not get one because she was a woman '*and it's only the man that can make that decision*' and she would have to find her husband who would have to agree to say that he had '*no intention carrying out his marital bounds when he got married*'. She was then asked if she would say that and she didn't accept to say it because '*it would be lying*' as she had '*every intention of carrying my marriage vows; I am not going to say that to get an annulment*'. Corinne learnt that if she would get an annulment, her children would be '*bastards*' as the priest said. Despite her father's insistence that she should consult another priest, Corinne denounced the official religion and went to issue a divorce. In this case Corinne's values were stronger than her religious affiliation.

Even when parents were not perceived as 'religious', most participants had to follow religious education as school, attend Sunday school or were encouraged to

pray at school or at home. However, this is mostly described as a '*meaningless*' experience or a '*chore*' since they were asked to pray without consciously knowing why or how to do it. Eric said that he has a different view about praying now but at the time it felt meaningless. Further to this he had to go through a confirmation ritual of 12-13 lessons and '*I remember at the time thinking "this has no meaning for me" I was just being urged to do it from my parents. After two years I was irritated, I felt it had no meaning and I felt it had been quite a false thing to do*'.

Parents' social class is shared between working and middle class and parents' occupations varied from two participants' fathers working as workers in factories to being supervisors in banks. Other fathers' occupations included a farmer, a marine mechanic, an academic, a worker, a supervisor in a factory. Most participants' mothers were housewives, some engaging in dispersed part time work and very few working. Almost all participants reported having a caring mother.

However, in most life stories there is a perceived difference between participants' parents. Most participants reported their mother being different from their father in social class, religion, talent, intelligence or even breadth of emotional expression. Even though the differences mentioned were based on varied criteria among the respondents, the stories were of a similar pattern. They revolved around a mother and a father being different from each other in a specific criterion but nevertheless devoted to each other. Regardless of the type of criteria of the perceived differences, participants seemed to show a respect for both parents, even for the ones they reported as being austere.

This perceived difference later on, during adolescence, developed into a sensitivity to grasp differences or incongruences in social class and religion. For example Zoë explains how she could see her friend's parents trying to be of a higher social class than the one they belonged to and George talked about his mother convincing his father to buy a bigger house which gave her a lot of pride. Corinne remembers the discussions of her parents to send her to a private school like they did with her brother but in the end deciding not to. In terms of religion, participants either report an indifferent relationship with religion or a rebellious one. For example George decided when he was fourteen to become a Buddhist

and not to attend prayer at school which resulted in a funny story of his mother having to write a note to the school saying *'Can you for the time being please allow (George) not to attend assembly because he has Buddhist tendencies!'* The participants who rebelled against religion during their adolescence ascribe it mainly to their observation of incongruences between the religious doctrines and what they could observe in everyday life. Glen whose father was a Methodist preacher on the weekends states that *'I suppose I was confused about the difference between religion and spirituality, what the Bible said and what the people who claimed to be Christians would do. It didn't seem to me to add up'* and he remembers *'a feeling that in some respect I have been told lies and that what was true wasn't what was being said. People would talk about being a good Christian and then be angry or unkind so therefore what does it mean to be Christian? I had a big thing about hypocrisy, people being hypocrites, saying one thing and doing something else'*

Due to this ability to grasp differences in terms of social and personal criteria as well as incongruences between what they were being told and what they would observe, most participants reported developing a position of 'social criticism' early on. This was only in three cases developed within a particular philosophical or political ideology (George: Anarchy, Buddhism), (Summer: Marxism, Labour party marches) (Jason: left politics). In most other cases it did not have a particular structure or theme but dealt with developing observation skills, perceiving subtle differences in behaviour, reflecting on them and constructing strategies to cope with circumstances. As discussed above, most accounts link spiritual sensitivity to social sensitivity.

This is consistent to another recurring theme in the accounts, that of an 'artistic' sensitivity which is related in the accounts to understanding identity. More than half of the participants reported some sort of artistic inclination which in some cases developed during adolescence as for example Michael who won a poetry competition while at school. Through this poem Michael was trying to make sense of himself *'that particular poem was about life direction, what I wanted to do in my life, you know, my aspirations about life [...] it was always introspective stuff about understanding myself.'* Other participants, report developing an artistic quality later on in life but the accounts always link art with identity. Zoë made a

grotesque self portrait after being ill which she said helped her to become better and Glen sees his creative spiritual side as a part of himself that he wasn't encouraged to express, *'I felt somehow it was just a bit of a luxury, my mother has never been a particularly creative person so I feel like it was something she didn't particularly value and I just don't think my father understood it very much so I felt quite alone with my spiritual creative side'* When prompted about the way he experienced this side Glen described *'an appreciation of beauty and an awe and a wonder about, about things, that I could show with my father, I have a sister as well but I don't think I shared much of that with her. I suppose, you know, when I was fifteen or sixteen around, I found the girls attractive, I found the girls beautiful and being in awe of girls, I think that was a kind of it as well'*

Another common theme in the narratives is on an inquisitive nature in terms of existential or identity issues. Most participants report asking a lot of questions or asking 'the questions' meaning existential ones early on. Kevin reports asking naïve questions as a child about *'going to heaven when you die'*, which his mother would answer in a *'relaxed informal way'* since they were not a religious family. When prompted about the trigger of the questions Kevin did not remember a particular incident but assumed that the *'biggest set of questions'* must have come *'when (his) dad's mum died'* when he was about twelve or *'earlier when distant aunties died'* and he was around the age of eight. Michael remembers having an experience of *'realising my own mortality and that was quite a significant experience for a young child [...] I don't know what triggered it really I've no recollection now of the trigger, only of the fact I remember I sat in my room I shared with my brothers, looking at the room and realising "oh my God, one day I will actually die".'*

A few participants faced sudden changes in life which could have triggered existential questions. Eric was adopted together with his twin brother when he was one year old and apart from their surname which changed, Eric's first names were changed too even though his brother's first name was left the same. This became a source of intense identity work for Eric as he reports that when he was adopted *'everything kind of changed in my life because my names were changed, all of my names were changed. Even though my brother's were not so I had a new surname inevitably but my two Christian names were changed as well. So it was like I was*

born with one character and then it was like I was transplanted in to another character.' Other sources that could have triggered participants to engage in intense identity work are related to social issues with Summer facing racism as a second generation Pakistani growing up in London or to health issues with Zoë getting seriously ill when she was 18. Apart from stories of acute sudden changes in life, there were also those of more frequent changes like Corinne's story who was changing cities every three years during her childhood due to her father's work as a bank manager.

A number of participants gave accounts of '*having felt different*' or wanting to differentiate themselves from their families or from others early on in their lives. In most cases this account was not consciously intended to present a distinctive identity but came about as an explanation of one's idiosyncratic identity. Eric explained the differences with his twin brother who followed a mainstream career and life. Corinne, Sheila and Brenda also talked about their brothers being different in terms of being socially, professionally and financially successful but not always happy. Some accounts, like those of Marina, Glen and Eric, report feeling different specifically due to a sensitivity related to the spiritual. When discussing this aspect of 'spirituality' Glen stated: '*Maybe it was not that it was not welcome but more not understood so I felt like I was lonely and isolated, I felt I was different I suppose, a feeling of being a bit different [...] Yeah, that somehow I saw things in a way that they didn't see things or I valued things that they didn't seem to value or I treasured things that they didn't seem to treasure, so therefore I was an outsider*'. In terms of work a few respondents wanted early on to differentiate themselves from their parents' occupation. Michael who saw his parents making so many sacrifices, his father working as a merchant marine engineer away from home and his mother keeping a small family hotel and raising three children, said '*I guess part of me probably subconsciously was saying "that's not what I want in my life really. I don't necessarily want to live like that"*'. Zoë's grandmother was asked to leave after 34 years of work in the canteen in the Co-op and Zoë '*thought I would never put a job before anything I would always put my family and my life before going to work because after 30 or so years to turn round and someone else's say so asking my grandmother to leave, I felt bad so that really did have a big influence, yeah*'. Corinne wanted to be

different from her parents because she thought their lives were boring, so she didn't want to follow any career that would be close to numbers as her father was a banker but any other career that would allow her to be creative. Also she recounts observing her friend's big family and eccentric parents as well as her own eccentric aunt and she thought she wanted to have many children and not be conventional like her parents.

The common thread here behind participants' accounts of wanting to feel different as well as with accounts of developing social criticism is the early development of identity work. All the above stories follow a narrative pattern that involves an early in life trigger to observe their own or another family, a further thinking about their positioning within any perceived differences and finally a decision on the course they would prefer to follow. It is also common that participants seem to enjoy the process of identity work since most had already been involved in certain types of life story work with guidance in workshops or on their own. Most also reported enjoying the process of the life story interview and almost all participants were systematically engaged in identity work during the interview trying to find causes, effects and connections between events themselves.

None of the participants said that they were encouraged to think on their own and have a strong say in their family, but the stories told reflect an introspective dialogue where the participant observes a particular aspect of her/his world and processes it on her/his own rather than discussing it with parents, siblings or other significant others. Even in stories with significant others influencing their ideas, the participant is usually the receiver of the particular influence which she/he then processes and incorporates in her/his own life. In their larger part, the accounts report an internal identity work, thoughts, processes and conclusions drawn on ones own. Moreover, some participants explain that when they were asking (usually many) questions or when they were challenging beliefs they were not often given answers that would satisfy their curiosity but either '*informal, relaxed*' (Kevin) answers, dry technical answers (Jason) or even arguments like '*you've said enough now and if you say anything else I'll hit you*' (George). This has in most cases led to them going on and searching for answers elsewhere, challenging the options they were offered and in most cases rebelling against their parents or religion. The participants who said they became rebellious usually locate it in the

age of fourteen to fifteen. However, in general the stories do not include incidents of rebellious behaviour but are usually followed by an example of becoming antithetical towards the situation they were given and deciding to do something differently.

Certain participants also connect a feeling of not being understood with their creativity or artistic side. Glen reports that he didn't nourish his creativity early on as he didn't know what to do with it. He was writing a journal and appreciated poetry and music but did not feel he had anyone to share this with. This is also shared by Corinne who as a dyslexic at a time when *'people did not know what dyslexia was'* she says *'I began to feel I was stupid really, not particularly intelligent and being the person I am I gave up, some people would say I will just prove them wrong, I didn't'*.

4.3.2 Becoming 'spiritual'

The process of becoming spiritual is narrated in varied ways among the participants. Because of the continuity of the life story, some base their becoming on early influences (see 4.3.1) and then explain how they started later on in life, usually around their mid twenties to engage in reading books and following seminars related to 'spirituality'. Similarly to Carrette and King's (2005) psychologisation of religion, in Glen's account it was through psychology that he started engaging with spirituality:

Yeah at the time I think my sister had experienced something called transaction analysis, so she said she had found it helpful so I explored it and I think I read a book or two and then I went to see somebody for some counselling and I found it really helpful but then I stopped and then I started again a year or two later I think and it helped me ever since.

Other participants report coming across self-development or 'spirituality' related books and courses that brought about identity work and then led them into 'spirituality'. It is not clear whether the search for the 'spiritual' had always been lying dormant taking different forms or it initiated at a specific moment in time. Jason says: *'I read those books avidly and it just opened up in me'* but the decision to start reading *'those'* books is either described as *'I needed to find out what this*

constant search had been all about' (Sheila) or even just as *'someone suggested a book'*.

Becoming spiritual is always depicted as a process, a *'personal journey'* (Sheila), a *'path'* (Zoë) that led the person to start wondering about existential questions or a need that followed a feeling that *'something was missing'* (Jason). Kevin, who was sent from the company he was working as an engineer at an outdoors personal development training course, explains: *'I had never thought before about myself... I was looking at how things function but I was very distant in this [...] then I was clear that this ((a personal development trainer)) was what I wanted to do'*.

In some cases, what set off the interest in 'spirituality' had to do with new values adopted or realized in accordance with what Roof (1999) addresses as 'reflexive spirituality'. In this case participants start experiencing a conflict between elements of the 'spirituality' discourse and the working conditions within work organisations. Michael's environmental awareness was growing while he was working in a chemical company and he portrays the following image:

Every morning I would drive to work and I would drive over the this kind of hill and set out before me it was this appalling massive chemical company it was a huge huge plant dominated the coastline in the (area). Coming to work every morning and seeing those chimneys I thought 'what the hell am I working for this company?' Because you know my environmental awareness and my spiritual awareness was very much growing at that time and I found that I was working for the 'enemy' at the end of the day

At the time, Michael stayed within the organisation and tried to behave ethically and in an environmentally responsible way within the company:

I guess I reconciled that feeling that I could do more to change things from within the company than if I was outside of the company so that's how I was reconciling things within myself

Despite his efforts to maintain an identity of an environmentally aware person within the company, he described incidents where he couldn't change things as he expected until finally:

The last project I did was 200 million pounds chemical plant in Kuala Lumpur and there were tens of thousands tons of steel going to this beautiful location in

the world and I thought 'what am I doing?', 'Why am I involved in this', you know 'What is going on here?'. It really started to conflict with my personal values so [...]

He left his job, sold two businesses he was maintaining at the time and went to India. This coincided with separating from his wife. From the sixteen participants six linked directly their becoming spiritual with changing their work and their personal life. There is an overall thread of reflexivity and increased engagement in identity work from all participants. This is in congruence with the general 'self development' discourse that is linked to the discourse of 'spirituality'. Engaging in identity work causes transformations in all of the respondents' lives. Sylvia's ex husband said to her that if she was '*like that*' when he first met her, he '*wouldn't have married*' her. Participants usually describe a long changing process that changed their views and identities at work as well. They see their identity at work being influenced from the overall identity change. This means that they believe that when they internalise new values, they form their life accordingly. Since a big part of life is work, participants '*organise their working contribution to reflect their values*' (George).

4.3.3 Developing 'Spirituality at Work' views

In organising their lives to reflect their spiritual values, participants form relational understandings of themselves at work influenced by ideas of holism (Hadot 1995, Heelas and Woodhead 2005). These understandings are reflected in Paul saying that '*we constitute ourselves in our relationships*' and Beth, who is changing jobs from being a consultant in a multinational company to being a leadership development tutor in an educational organisation, starting to think about her new identity in terms of: '*I guess it is what you make of it*' (the 'tutor identity') rather than what it represents.

Furthermore, identity understood in relational terms is linked to both personal life and work. Zoë ascribes her work as an acupuncturist and her identity at work as a caring person to her illness in the past. She says:

Just about me now, oh heck, I suppose who I am now has been my ... life in the planet if you like that shaped me into the person that I am now. Some of those things have been really positive things and some of those (...) one of them was

very negative cause I was very ill when I was 18 so that is probably why I went into the profession of being an acupuncturist because I've been cared for all my life really [...] so after being ill I was so grateful that I didn't lose my life so when I did have a nice life [...] what I wanted to do with my life was to give it to other people. So that's (...) that's basically me really.

As Zoë above and as explained more in detail in Chapter 6: 6.4, most participants link their work to events or ideas that derive from their view of their life. Moreover, through this understanding participants tend to consider carefully the link between 'work' and 'personal life'. Brigit who is at a stage of downsizing said she understands she has to not separate work from non work but to maintain a balance.

I don't want to have a clear line, its like the phrase work life balance it doesn't make sense, I use it all the time but, work is part of your life they are not opposing ends of the spectrum it is not that you suddenly start life when, (.) if it was the fact that I only start my life when I leave this building I'd be wasting a hell of a lot there wouldn't I? I won't work to be in some enjoyable and fulfilling form that there doesn't need to be necessarily a clear line drawn between life and work. On the other side I need to be careful that I balance that which is often quite (.) intellectual as well with (...) communing with nature, with meditation, with family, with being (.) it's always my self, being very very relaxed, which I am not usually at work if you see what I mean. So I don't want a clear line between the two but I must realise that I need to keep some sort of balance. (Brigit)

In this way participants bring the 'spiritual' in everyday life and make it a priority. Kevin left his career as an engineer to work as a trainer in management development courses but: *after I kind of outgrew it and I felt a lot of focus on confidence and communication and self esteem but the big part the spiritual bit was missing. You can ask what you are doing and what is your bigger purpose but anything bigger than that was not to be talked about from the organisation and participants and that's where I wanted to work, I thought 'this is all very interesting and it is helping a lot but a big part is missing'. (Kevin)*

However, the 'spiritual' is not separated from everyday life but rather is linked to what Woodhead and Heelas (2000, Heelas and Woodhead 2005) call 'spiritualities

of life' where the spiritual is accessed to transform everyday life. This in the world of work translates into having to operate within the constraints of economic structures. George commented that for him it is never *'oh we don't get our hands dirty with your impure work, if Jesus could go anywhere to do his work, who the hell are we [...] if you are in the world you are of the world. You have to find a way so that you are not so pure so that you don't have an influence in the world'*.

As George above, in many cases participants linked their work to wider societal issues. Also detailed in Chapter 7, what is depicted in respondents' quotes is that people who draw on spiritual discourses understand the interrelationships between individual, organisation and society as well as the much more complex interrelation between the conception of the spiritual and the practical world.

Sheila who sees holistic approach as *'not just body mind spirit, it's much more about our health, our wellbeing, sustainable living, our connection with ecology all of this kind of thing, [...]looking at the world's energy resources, looking at greenhouse effect, all of that, I think is not going to be an academic thing that politicians talk about'* says:

I think that complementary therapy is going to be mainstream healthcare as well as health service. It's going to happen and I can neither say 'ok lets keep going until it happens and welcome the well of it, all I can say I want to be working towards that so that what happens here will be, will have contributed to it rather than just latched on to it. So it's like as we work towards that, rather than passively waiting for it to happen, then our contribution to society as a whole is going to be huge. (Sheila)

And in another way, 'spirituality' as a means of social change:

'is not a matter of belief and a challenge to the status quo so much as an act of continuous engagement with the status quo, moment-by-moment throughout my existence - if I am to live out my commitment strenuously. It is also a prerequisite, if I am to reflect and deepen my understanding of the interaction between my experience as a person as it evolves and emerges with my past and the future and those around me.'(George)

These general views on 'spirituality' and identity at work are analysed in depth and in three different levels within the following three chapters. Firstly, Chapter 5

Chapter 4: Personal and Circumstantial Factors Affecting Participants' Spirituality

addresses the influence of 'spirituality' in participants' identity processes of self reflection.

Chapter 4, 'Personal and Circumstantial Factors affecting Participants' Spirituality', addresses the first research objective to identify the 'Personal and circumstantial factors affecting participants' 'spirituality'. It particularly looks at participants' views on 'spirituality' and at their ways of integrating it into their lives. Then early influences through upbringing and processes of becoming 'spiritual' are discussed. In discussing 'spirituality' related influences, participants tend to emphasise subjective experience and while they interpret their experiences they reveal a combining of 'essentialist' with 'fragmented' and 'unitary' conceptions of identity rather than adopting one particular conception of identity. The chapter ends with general influences on participants' conceptions of work as well as their relating their work to their overall lives and to the society as a whole.

5 Understanding the Self and Constructing Identity

Following on from the previous chapter, where ideas of holism (Heelas and Woodhead 2005, Hadot 1995) and the importance of lived experience have been showed as central to the participants' understanding of their 'spirituality', this chapter looks at participants' identity processes of self reflection. This chapter is the first of a series of field research chapters (Chapters 5, 6 and 7) that explore participants' engagement in identity work to understand, construct and conduct themselves as spiritual persons. These chapters (Chapters 5, 6 and 7) are mainly dealing with the processes in which participants handle tensions in their sense of identity, the ways in which these processes are expressed at work and the social responses that these expressions consequently invite. Chapter 5 in particular first explores how participants describe themselves and then looks at the way they engage in identity work to manage the internal tension between the self as subject and the self as object. This tension is understood through James' (1890) and Mead's (1934, 1936) distinction between the 'I' –the self as knower / observer and the 'Me' the self as known / observed (See Chapter 3: 3.1.2.2). This distinction enables to look at the reflective process where one interacts with oneself and engages in evaluating and reviewing ones actions.

The participants of this research, people who are actively engaged in reflexive identity work, seek to find ways to reconcile the tensions created in their managing of their selves and of their identities. They do so by making use of the sense making resources of 'spirituality' and 'Spirituality at Work'.

The self cannot be reduced to particular tensions and the distinction between self as subject and self as object are used analytically to explain particular states that participants describe as states of the self. Therefore the different analytical distinctions overlap and interrelate and so the tension between the self as subject and self as object is extended to include further analytical aspects of identity as the social identity or group identity. To deal with the self as object – self as subject tensions participants employ the concept here described as 'presence' or a state where the self as object and self as subject are one. In this they describe moments of working in partnership when individuals were bringing in their 'presence' and therefore met in equality and were more able to focus on the work that needed to

be done. Subsequently, this points to the potential of setting up new grounds of communication and collaboration at work and provides the vocabularies for emerging and alternative forms of collaboration.

In this chapter and in specific sections, certain participant case studies are followed more intensively than others as this provides more continuity and allows the life story approach to reveal the unfolding of the themes.

5.1 Understanding the self

Exploring how ‘spiritual’ people make sense of who they are is intriguing, mainly because they are keenly engaged in this process and because they draw upon a wide array of resources to construct thorough viewpoints. It is important to state here that the participants responded to a life story interview about their ‘spirituality’ and their accounts reflect this particular context. Most expressed an understanding that the term ‘spirituality’ is related to specific stereotypes and that they do not want to be seen as ‘spiritual’ in contexts where people will not understand them. In accordance with Lips-Wiersma and Mills’ (2002) research on the risks associated with ‘spiritual’ expression at work, the participants of this research expressed comments such as: *‘but if you quote me [...] because I don’t think people understand what I mean’* or *‘it is not to go to an organization and shout it “wow this is [...] the spiritual guy”’*.

5.1.1 The worldly, the other worldly and the whole self

Michael below explains how he understands himself as ‘spiritual’ and how this is reflected in his everyday life.

‘I very much see myself ultimately as a spiritual being having a human experience here. So, on one level that’s the way that I would describe myself. (.) On another level, you know, I am a completely integrated person here, I hope, in the sense that I am trying to live my life in a very integrated way. So I am very conscious of the different aspects of me as an individual: spiritual, emotional, physical, all of these things within my consciousness and I try to live my life with all of those things congruent in my life. So that comes down to a very very practical level: what I do for a living, the relationships that I have in my life, the way I treat my body, the things that I eat, the things that I do on a day to day basis are driven by

that personal view of who I am basically. So I try to live my life, I try to be a person as completely congruent, as completely integrated as much as I can.'
(Michael) [q 5.1]

Michael here describes himself as a 'spiritual being having a human experience' and then he makes sure to explain that 'on another level' he is an active integrated member of this human experience. It seems that he distinguishes between two levels, the spiritual and the human or in Weber's terms the 'otherworldly' and the 'worldly' and presents himself as functioning effectively in both. This is consistent with the notion of 'spiritualities of life' (Woodhead and Heelas 2000, Heelas and Woodhead 2005) where there is an effort to integrate the otherworldly with this world. Michael's account points to a disciplined life style with the objective of a wellbeing that extends to both the worldly and the otherworldly. The discipline here can be seen as a way of constructing the self that requires 'regular exercise and constant working on oneself and one's relation to the world' (Kelemen and Peltonen 2002 p.8). Almost all participants gave accounts of nurturing their corporeal, emotional, intellectual and spiritual aspects of themselves and in general trying to follow a 'healthy' (in all the different aspects) lifestyle. This disciplined life style does not aspire to an afterlife salvation as Weber's (1963) 'otherworldly' or 'worldly ascetism' but to a better, 'congruent', as Michael says, life in both this world and the otherworldly. A person's life seems to permeate the boundaries of the two levels and 'occur' at the same time in both. This is an important position because it enables individuals to not face this life as an investment for the afterlife but rather as an experience of which they have to make the most. For this reason, participants draw upon the construct of 'wellbeing' very often.

Michael then goes on to explain how he integrates the various aspects of his self (he says the various aspects of **me** as an individual). There is an acknowledgement here that the self has different aspects which need to become congruent towards the development of a 'whole person'. The concept of the 'whole person' is a general theme among participants' accounts which is reflected in engaging to cultivate all (physical, mental, emotional and spiritual) aspects of the self, in integrating them to create a 'congruent' life (in terms of work, Michael says that 'what he does for a living' has to reflect his overall self as much as the

relationships he has or the way he treats his body. In Chapter 6 this is further analysed as most participants tend to strive to integrate their personal and their professional lives rather than to separate them) and in becoming a manifestation of the whole world (see 5.1.1.1).

5.1.2 Essentialism, the human experience and the construction of reality

Often the critical literature (Aupers and Houtman 2006, Bell and Taylor 2004, Nadesan 1999) concentrates on ‘spirituality’ promoting essentialist views of ‘authentic’ and ‘true’ selves. However, the terms ‘authentic’ and ‘true’ can be interpreted in ways that do not impose underlying and unchanged essential characteristics to a self. Heelas and Woodhead (2005) support that self understanding in the holistic milieu is sought through sources of significance which lie within the process of life itself and as George points out below, having an ‘undiscovered soul’ provides the chance to search for it and therefore construct it throughout life.

I think ...I don't think people as having a 'real' self, I think we have an undiscovered soul. And we know more about that if we start to look into it. But I don't know if we'll ever know what it 'really' is while we are in physical form. I think there is some kind of relationship we (.) we are offered that (.) we need to pay attention to or not. I mean if we don't pay attention to it we have one kind of life but if we pay attention to it, it enriches life deeply and because it is not a complete or finished thing, this thing called a soul, it is always potentially more available. So it is a bit like as the cosmos reveals itself to us, so I think our soul reveals itself to us. But only to the degree we are willing to listen. So I am not into 'real selves' in that sense. (George) [q 5.2]

Spiritual beliefs are often criticised as promoting an essentialist view of the self because of the concept of an immortal soul. In George's account there is an aspect of self which is connected with the ‘cosmos’ but for him it is not essentialistic as it develops together with the ‘cosmos’. These ideas will not be analysed in philosophical terms here but as a background to identity making it is useful to add that not all participants believed in an immortal soul. Most believed in reincarnation (that a soul returns to life in another body mainly to acquire

knowledge and experience) whereas a few did not believe that there is an immortal part of the self that survives physical death.

Moreover, none of the participants believed in predestination. George talks about the soul in the third person as something separate which reveals itself to us if we are willing to listen. However, further in his account, the self, the undiscovered soul and the 'cosmos' become one and are constructed in the course of life. Tracing the idea of living in the present back to Stoicism and Epicureanism, Hadot (1995) explains that 'because the sage lives within his consciousness of the world, the world is constantly present to him [...] the present moment takes on an infinite value: it contains within it the entire cosmos, and the value and wealth of being' (p.230). Below and further in George's account, the acceptance that as human beings we are limited is contrasted with a view that provides us with enormous possibilities.

I think that whole nature nurture thing is mildly interesting. So I think there is no way you can change your physical structure, you can't grow wings, you know, there are limits to what is possible. But I think in terms of imagination and in terms of possibilities, so long as you (.) if you want to argue we are limited because of the form we are in that is fine, for me that is fine, that is not an argument, we are in a form, sure and the form determines a lot, but it doesn't determine the most important thing which is we can construct ourselves and each other and the world we are in with enormous liberty. And that means we can get it badly wrong, [and...

[And the wrong and the right in that case?

Well (.) yeah, in terms of (.) a view from here it would be wrong and right in terms of social identity, eh sorry, social well being , you can create a world where people are not healthy, nourished and well looked after. That is wrong in a physically embodied sense, spiritually that may be exactly what we need. But I am not in a place where I am looking to say that, I am in physically embodied form and I have an investment in making it as healthy and life enhancing as possible. Because, I think, part of my job is to have some stewardship of what was given to me for those who are going to come after me and if no one is coming after me then

I'd like it to be nice and tidy (...) as the last person leaves the room ((laughing)) (...) because I think that is spiritual work. (George) [q 5.3]

Here George, provides a view on how the limitations of the form or any limitations we have as humans are something to be taken as given. This is contrasted with the view that we are given the liberty to construct ourselves and each other and the world we are in.

He says that what we take as right or wrong can differ among the different realms (the physical and the spiritual) but since his view stems from the physical world, he has to look at what is seen as right from this side. He sees it as an investment and at the same time as a stewardship. The coming together of the two worlds here provides immense opportunity to create reality.

5.1.3 The spiritual self and the social self

And when you say that it was given to you, from where was it given?

Well in the ordinary sense my physical circumstances, my family background and so on, but I think the more we do the work about freeing ourselves from those constraints and becoming open to the call of the soul and I think we get all kinds of things getting our way. Certainly in my case, there is no reason why I am in the circumstances I am in given the social background I came from that you could explain in ordinary everyday terms. So I do feel there is (.) an agency at work, if we want to work with it and say yes I want to go with this and I think things come and then we have to work with them I don't think there is just only nice things, by no means, but I think we invite things to ourselves in a way that we can work creatively. [q 5.4]

The difference here between the spiritual being which constitutes itself in the realms of the 'other worldly' and the 'worldly' and the social being which constitutes itself in interaction is that the interaction in the first case develops with the whole world as well as the realm of the 'other worldly' rather than other people and discourse. The difference lies in the perceived 'existence' of a 'spiritual' realm, the 'other worldly' where everything is connected. This realm offers the ability to detach oneself from social circumstances and therefore be able to change them. The relational integration of structure and agency here occurs as

the structure is not perceived as limiting; this is achieved on the one hand by accepting and getting used of what is given (that we are in human form) and on the other hand by an ability to break free from constraints. This resonates with Geertz's (1973) view of culture as webs of significance that man himself has spun (see Chapter 2:2.2.3). It seems that the structure is the form or the social constraints and the agency lies in the 'enormous possibility' where the construction of reality lies in the relation of 'decision' and 'the way we engage with things'.

To break free from constraints is an integral part in the accounts as well as in the relevant popular literature where authors encourage the breaking of our conditionings. In the best selling 'The work we were born to do' book of Nick Williams (1999) one of the twelve principles in relation to work is 'undoing our conditioning'. To achieve this participants engage in identity work through personal reflection as well as with help from books, audio cassettes, videos and practitioners in workshops. The ways in which participants engage in 'breaking free from constraints' are analysed throughout the thesis in relation to the three reflection process levels explained in Chapter 3: 3.1.2.2.

5.2 Identity process

This section analyses participants' processes of identity making and the concepts they draw upon to reconcile the tension between their self as subject and the self as object.

Participants engage in identity processes and construct experiences where they isolate their 'ego' as this part of their selves which is imposed from social norms in order to create a state of being 'present' in the moment and in this they can feel integrated with others and the wider world.

5.2.1 Isolation of the 'ego'

As discussed in Chapter 4, most participants developed an interest for social criticism at some point in their life which was triggered by and triggered in its turn a tension between the self identity and the social identity. Zoë describes how she went from feeling socially inferior to 'being herself'.

... I suppose it is in what I do really, what I think what I say. One think you try to be in Taoism is you try to be who you really are, so you don't try to be anybody else so a think that I was guilty in before, I had a family friend [...always aspired to be something better from what they were, they were working class, always try to speak in a better way, I spent a lot of time in their house, used to make me feel inferior, I suppose a lot of my childhood around them I felt inferior, and the school I was timid most parents were professional people and my mum didn't work, my dad in skilled manual job I felt very inferior I tried to look as I was something better something I wasn't I suppose I was ashamed of my working class background [...]] and I suppose I carried that with me until I started to read Taoism. In Taoism you be who you are, you be yourself and that is the best person to be and I think since I've done that, because you don't have to work hard at putting a façade up, you just have to be yourself, you know, so that is nice.

Who defines who you are? What defines who you are?

I think life experience, I think defining who I am now is everybody I come across, my parents, people that you interact with and things that you read that have a big influence on you that make you the person that you are, the experiences that you have in life. Zoë [q 5.5]

Here Zoë describes the tension between her individual and social identity saying that as a child she used to feel uncomfortable with her social class (also her parents came from different social backgrounds). She was confronting the tension of belonging to a social class which was categorized as inferior, in her relationship with her friend and her family as well as in the school by feeling 'inferior' and trying to look 'better'. In the first case there were people who did not actually belong to a different social class but they aspired to 'be something better from what they were' and in the second case there were people who belonged to a different occupational group (professional people vs her mother not working and her father in skilled manual work). Coming across the philosophy of Taoism Zoë faced another tension, that between being part of a social class system and being herself. Responding to this tension, she decided to be herself and part of this decision is her open way of speaking about her being guilty of feeling inferior during her childhood because of her social class.

Having ‘changed’ her way of understanding herself, Zoë (as well as most participants and as we saw George’s example in [q 5.2]) believes that she becomes who she is in interrelation. And as Paul says *‘Whilst I am comfortable in my own company we all are social animals in that we constitute each other and ourselves in our relationships’ and that ‘I don’t think we are here on earth how many houses we can build, yes I recognise that building houses is good for society’ but also ‘I recognise we have to learn something about living rather than just surviving.’ Paul [q 5.6]*

In facing tensions between their self identity and their social identity, participants report their conscious efforts to live more authentically (see also Chapter 6: 6.2.1. and 6.4) and ‘give up the image’ (Brenda, Zoë, Beth). To achieve this and while they are actively constructing their identities, participants express their effort to isolate and exclude their ‘ego’ from important activities or decisions. The use of the term ‘ego’ by most participants justifies what Carrette and King (2005) call ‘the psychologisation of religion’, that is, the integration of the psychological discourse into the realm of spirituality. Influenced from religious traditions as well as Western psychology, they describe their ‘ego’ as this part of their self which is developed in socialization from imposed societal imperatives.

I suppose when I am helping people I feel most my spiritual self [...] I guess the ‘ego’ is always motivated by approval, wanting to be liked, making money, recognition and all those things and they are all important I am not saying that they are not important but I think when I am in my spirit I am just here and now. [...] (Glen) [q 5.7]

In participants views their ‘ego’ is obstructing them from being authentic in their individual work or in their relationships with others.

Zoë’s account explains that through the readings of Taoism she realised tensions in her self identity having to do with having dispersed thoughts, or what Gergen (1991) calls the ‘saturated self’. *‘Well being, well being, it talks about how you can live in harmony with other people and with the universe and it talks about being non confrontational and living for the moment, so you live for now, because you live for now, now is a nicer place to be, you experience it fully. One of the passages in the first book that I read ‘the Tai Chi journey’ it said we live in such a*

fast world now, especially in the west. Our mind isn't fully on what we are doing ever and it is very difficult to have a peaceful approach to life now because everybody is running around, they've got this to do, they've got that to do, this goal to meet.

That is another thing you don't set goals, you never set goals, you just do things and you know it is saying if you are at home and you are in the kitchen and you are making a sandwich, the television is on and you are having a conversation with your husband and you know, when you are thinking about what are you going to cook for dinner tomorrow, you know, he said 'where exactly are you?' (Zoë) [q 5.8]

Paul asserts that *'the biggest difficulty is the stories we allow our selves to have, for me 'spirituality' is to find the real me beneath the ego and the stories and the mask.'* *'I think the bits that I'd like to leave behind me are the fear based responses, the looking for external recognition and confirmation, the less accepting parts of my self, the more judgemental we all have to make judgements to pass the road [...]' [q 5.8]*

Leila accounts for what she learns in her work saying that *'It is about the 'ego' and how mine gets in the way, I try to control people and things [...] I know this is the 'ego' because I have a motivation based on fears. ((to get rid of it)) I have to have self awareness, be alert, ask 'what are you doing this for?' and 'how is this serving...?' [...] I try to keep open hearted, open to possibility and what is the best step forward for a course, a group of people, me. [q 5.9]*

To separate the 'ego', participants engage in a reflective activity of being watchful of their fears and asking themselves questions about the origin of their motives: such as 'am I doing this because I want to show how important I am or for the best interest of the organisation/world?'. The rationale behind the effort to cut off the 'ego' differs among individuals and circumstances but it generally refers to the liberation from the need to control or from the need to appeal to others.

On the other hand, some recognise that the *'Function of society is to restrict who we are in order to function in the real'* and that *'the identity is just a convenient vehicle to navigate'*. (George) [q 5.10]

Recognising that the identity is a convenient vehicle to navigate and in their effort to manage their 'ego', participants engage in intense reflexive activity. Paul discusses a particular incident when he was giving a workshop:

I was in a workshop one day (.) with about 12-13 people (.) from the chief exec and other directors and some managers. And the chief executive and one of the directors were talking to one another while I was delivering something, you know and in a way my ego kicked in and (.) I said something about it which I really, you know on reflection I wish I hadn't handled like that. [...] I said something about 'I recognise not everyone is paying attention' and I didn't 'see why I should go on while some people are talking' ((laughing)) and I think I could have handled it in a more caring and compassionate way, because what they were talking about might have been a concern that they had and, you know, and to sort of put them down was not a way that would have encouraged them to share, if they did have a concern to share it. And (.) so, in doing that didn't just affect them, it affected the whole group, it created a context and sadly the context that it created was not going to be conducive to what I really wanted to happen. So I was shooting myself in the foot [...] ((he feels this was his 'ego' because)) There was a real judgement in my voice there was a real edge to my voice, there was a sense of I want to put these people down, you know, that isn't, that doesn't come from the Divine in me I don't think ((laughing)).

In this account, Paul provides an understanding of the relational nature of the workshop and takes on the responsibility of having negatively affected the context of the whole group by behaving in a strict way. He is being reflective looking at the incident in retrospect and thinks about how he could have handled it better. This is intense identity work with the intention to construct the self. Paul experienced an incongruence between his sense of identity as a 'spiritual' person (the Divine in me) and as someone who wanted 'to put people down'. Paul experienced this in observing himself (he talks about the judgement in his voice) and thinking he should have handled it in a more compassionate way. He says 'my ego kicked in' presenting the tension as what James (1890) describes as 'the rivalry and conflict of the different selves' (p.309). Denying the existence of a true authentic self James (1890) ascribes self evaluation on measuring one's

successes against one's objectives or expectations. Paul presents below his objectives and expectations about who he 'truly' is:

((if he had handled it differently)) there is something about, there is something for me when I connect with who I truly I am that is about how might I help these people if they have a problem and metaphorically slapping them across the face with my tongue isn't going to work, wouldn't come naturally to me if I am really connected with that care and support, that desire to help people develop, that is in me, that I know. There is a real core value in me that is around growth and development and supporting others in their growth and development. So I think if I truly were connected with the Divine in me it would have seem much more supportive and open to them, sharing what might be their concern and helping them recognise that whilst their talking might not be appropriate at the moment. I certainly wasn't going to try to make them feel little. Because hey I've talked in a workshop before that, to the person sitting next to me. [q 5.11]

5.2.2 Presence

5.2.2.1 Background and definition

The next part of the process involves participants' efforts to achieve a state called here 'presence'. Although participants describe this state in various ways such as 'being in the moment', 'going with the flow', 'being aware', 'being in tune' or 'being present', the term 'presence' has been chosen as the most frequent in participants' accounts.

So there is nothing else, I am not thinking about the past, I am not thinking about the future in a way I am not even trying to get anything; I am just being very present. So that's when I am in my spirit because I am in this moment (Glen) [q 5.12]

There is something about being able to let go of all the barriers and masks and pretences and seeing who you are [...] (Paul) [q 5.13]

In general presence seems to mean 'Being fully conscious and aware at the present moment', 'Deep listening, being open beyond one's preconceptions' and a dialectic between 'Letting go of old identities and the need for personal

confirmation or control' (as described in the previous section) and 'letting come' as consciously participating in a larger field for change (Senge et al. 2005).

I think I started to drive more slowly [...] there is both a social responsibility there and the environmental contribution because of using less fuel [...] I try to be more mindful about it and these things do get interweaved because meditation helps. The more I meditate, the more I am aware of what is around me, the more I am aware of what is around me, the slower I am going to drive because I am aware of the trees and the beauty of the trees, the more I am aware of the other people in the road and my contribution to their safety and things like that. [...] I recognise that there are times that (.) and it is interesting this year when I've become more energised about work and more focused I am finding that if I am not careful I am slipping back into that old way of just driving and just getting on with it. And so there are times when I recognise that and I slow myself down and there are times when I recognise that and I just say 'oh...'. [...] I set an intention to be a safer and a more environmentally aware driver but also there is something about the amount of time I am away from home. So, in some ways sometimes they seem to compete and I know we don't save that much time by driving that much quicker but if I have been away for two or three days and I am driving home, I might allow myself to drive up a bit faster ((laughing)). (Paul) [q 5.14]

Most accounts on how one understands themselves as being 'present' or 'in the flow' are general descriptions as looking at it from a point later in time when the 'I' and the 'Me' (James 1890, Mead 1936, see also Chapter 3: 3.1.2.2.) can function as observer and observed again. In Paul's account, when he is driving in a state of presence, he is fully aware of his surroundings and in control of driving slowly, however, when he is focused in thinking about work, he tends to slip back to his old habits of driving fast. He explains how the subjective – objective interplay of his self come into his awareness describing the state of when he is driving fast as being automatic and then he would 'recognise' he is driving fast and decide to slow down or not.

The concept of 'presence' is related to wider societal patterns in religion, psychology and epistemology. In the field of religion, the concept is linked to the Buddhistic concept of mindfulness which 'is most commonly defined as the state of being attentive to and aware of what is taking place in the present.' (Brown and

Ryan 2003 p.822). In literature related to ‘spirituality’ and management Senge et al. (2005) suggest a shift in awareness from the machine worldview where the ‘whole’ consisted of replaceable ‘parts’ to a new way of thinking about ‘parts and wholes’. They point to Goethe’s thinking on the ‘whole’ as something dynamic which continually comes into being in concrete manifestations and the ‘part’ as a manifestation of the whole rather than just a component. This thinking allows for the concept of transcendence between the individual and the collective to come through. If the ‘part’ is the individual and the ‘whole’ is the world, then the individual is an embodiment of the world and the world manifests through the individual. From this point of view the individual becomes a communicant of the world by shaping and being shaped within it in interrelation. Shotter (2002, 2005a) in developing his epistemology of ‘witness thinking’ is also drawing on Goethe as well as from Wittgenstein when he talks of intertwined wholes where ‘reality is not a set of separate elements of reality but life comes from other life, in an unbroken chain of creativity that occurs whenever two or more living forms meet and actively rub up against each other’. These ideas are linked again to holism and the ‘whole person’ discourse (see 5.1). Another important link to the concept of presence is Csikszentmihalyi’s concept of flow (Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi 1988) as an autotelic experience, ‘the holistic sensation that people feel when they act with total involvement’ (Csikszentmihalyi 1977 p.36). (These ideas do not form part of the conceptual framework of this research but rather represent discursive resources available to the participants to make sense of this experience.)

Nevertheless the process of achieving the state of presence is seen to require practice and ‘spiritual work’. As Paul states below:

I think being able to bring yourself to work I guess demands something of us, you know requires something of us around awareness and practice and those sorts of things. So bringing our soul to work is not as easy as it sounds perhaps, because I think for any of us to bring our soul to work there is some work to be done on our own or with others but yeah that’s basically what it means. [...] so there is something about being able to let go of all the barriers of all the masks and pretences and sink into who you are. (Paul) [q 5.15]

Again here the repertoire of ‘spirituality’ as a way of constructing the self comes to front (see also section 5.1).

5.2.2.2 Working individually

When participants discuss ‘presence’ during their work, they describe a state where they can work from their ‘centre’ or ‘source’ so that they are connected with their work. As Fox (1995) comments on a spiritual approach to work, ‘then no work is alienating; no work is just a job’ (p.23). In this state, participants give accounts of concentrating on the task itself, leaving their ‘egos’ in the form of attachments, ambitions, fears, false needs and conditionings aside.

Regularly really I suppose to some extent I don't know what am I going to write, I have an idea about what I am going to write but I think by turning up to write inspiration starts to flow. Yeah just a flow of ideas, a flow of thoughts which doesn't happen until I start doing some things

[...] I think for me inspiration is such an important part of it because I think when I feel inspired, I feel greater than my body and my ego, I feel like I am in touch with a bigger part of me [...] Well that's it, when I am inspired I feel connected to something bigger than just my small personality. (Glen) [q 5.16]

In Glen's account, being present or ‘turning up to write’ is what triggers his inspiration. Inspiration here is a flow of ideas that seem to flow as a consequence of what he does (‘it doesn't happen until I start doing some things’). At first Glen and his flow of ideas seem to be separate but later on he explains that he feels like he is a ‘greater person’ when he is inspired, that he is connected to something bigger.

In everyday life, interrelation is usually expressed as an external reality and here there is an evident interrelation of Glen and his ideas or his inspiration. Shotter (2006) explains that this is mainly because ‘the overall outcome of any exchange cannot be traced back to the intentions of any of the individuals involved’ (p.37). This ‘reality’ then is seen as a ‘third agency (an ‘it’) with its own (ethical) demands and requirements’ (p.38). Although Glen has only an idea of what he wants to write, the flow of ideas comes in the interrelation, when he starts ‘doing some things’.

The meanings/realities created are not objective formations that exist autonomously, but they are experienced, understood and confronted in different ways. That is because they cannot be ascribed to particular individuals but to the ‘dialogical space’ (Shotter 2006) which is not a separate reality from the individuals involved but transpires in an interactive way generating reactions. The dialogical space then acquires an ‘agentic’ power (Shotter 2006) through its capacity and potential to produce/bring about reactions. In this case, it is Glen’s connection to this ‘bigger part’ of him that generates the flow of ideas.

At this point it is interesting to follow Eric’s narrative about how he felt when he *‘had taken a job then in general horticulture learning to do landscape gardening’*. He first explains how enjoying his work fitted well with his life

[...] I enjoyed it mainly because it was outdoors and I love being outdoors so at that time my life fitted very well. It was a very happy time for me then, mainly because I could work outdoors and do something creative as well, so that was artistic and creative and I found I like working with plants, I like learning those kind of things it touched in the artist in me which I had not been aware of, so yeah, that was a happy time, until the age of 28.

He then describes the tasks involved in the job:

[...] There were all kinds of things like planting schemes or how gardens were set out, what shapes loans were, what shapes areas of paving were so looking at the whole design thing and look at how varied shapes fit together and how different textures fit together and styles of plants

And explains the feeling of being absorbed in the work itself:

[....] I can recognise those times as feeling inspired, that is the word I’d use. It’s like being a wave just moving forward in the sea of utterness so called in the flow, just completely taken up from what you do and time stop mattering and you don’t notice how late it is? [q 5.17]

Eric’s narrative is well structured moving between factual and emotive information. He uses here the ‘artistic-creative’ repertoire (as described in Chapter 5) even though he is not an artist in his profession (neither at the time the narrative takes place or at the time of the interview). In this way, he explains his experience of working in gardening in terms of both the ‘artistic-creative’

repertoire using words like ‘artistic’, ‘creative’ or ‘inspired’ as well as the ‘spiritual experience-psychologistic’ repertoire talking about ‘flow’ and the ‘sea of utterness’.

Although there is an emphasis on the task itself in Eric’s narrative, he does not describe the tasks as an active actor (which would be more ‘I was planting and ...’) but rather as a general account of what the work included. There is a tension here between being focused at work and at the same time being detached from it. Here the ‘I’ and the ‘Me’ are again relevant as it seems that in most participants’ accounts of being ‘present’ at work do not include the ‘me’ part. Having excluded the ‘ego’ as described in the previous section (5.2.1), participants do not ‘observe’ themselves working from an ‘I – ‘Me’ (James 1890, Mead 1934, 1936) distinction and therefore the accounts are not of what they were doing but they tend to describe the feeling of being focused and ‘taken up’ and ‘time stop mattering’. The ‘I’ and the ‘Me’ here (and as analytical distinctions only) are merging to become one. So the feeling of self in ‘presence’ is constructed to be experienced as more coherent despite the previous exclusion of this part of the self which participants call ‘ego’.

5.2.2.3 Working together

In terms of being present with another, participants draw again on the ‘whole person’ resource constructing experiences of a ‘whole person’ meeting a ‘whole person’ and that means that the relationship can occur in different levels. Paul provides a comprehensive explanation of how he experiences bringing his ‘presence’ to another person.

There is something about bringing all of yourself to that person, to that relationship at that time mentally, physically, spiritually, emotionally. And if we are, the other person recognises it even though they perhaps don’t articulate it but there’s (.) their body responds to it. And if we are not, then that body, that person goes away (.) in a different way. Even if I am looking at you in a conversation and my mind goes off somewhere your body picks it up, you pick it up somehow. So if we manage to have a conversation and I never go away from you (.) in my thought processes or in my being with you, then there is something about what you take away from that interaction which (.) I don’t know, it is a sort of a holding in

someway, an acknowledgment which you wouldn't have had otherwise. (Paul) [q 5.18]

Paul seems to understand 'presence' involving all different levels of a 'whole person' but uses the word 'body' to explain how a person understands that the other is also 'present'. Here the word 'body' seems to ascribe to the physical body abilities of perceiving the others' physical, mental, emotional and spiritual attention. The emphasis here is in the body but the bodies interacting are not restrained to the five senses. Further on Beth constructs an experience of feeling the 'vibration in the room' and shifts the emphasis in her mind, which she understands is 'quiet':

But there was certainly one occasion with just two others so it was just a very small group, which was an extraordinary experience [...] but completely different vibration in the room and (...) absolute connection with the two other people that were there, on a plane, completely different to any ordinary interaction. Quite a lot of use of imagery but the main thing was a real palpable sense of vibration between us (.) and that's a sure sign for me when I am kind of really linked in, when I am very alert [...] sort of vibrating with the energy that is in the room and completely clear to be able to react to that and very very in the moment with it. [...] I mean that I have a quiet mind, so there is not(.) there is some commentary in my mind but not very much, it is very very in the moment, it is not kind of like (.) an example would be it's not sort of me standing there thinking 'I wonder how I am coming across', 'I wonder whether they think I am a good facilitator', 'I wonder whether they are learning anything', 'he doesn't look as if he is enjoying it', you know this, all this the whole time. Rather than this, it is just beautifully clear and I am just flowing, going with the flow. (Beth) [q 5.19]

Paul refers frequently in the interview to his kinaesthetic abilities and this here is shown in his emphasis on the body as one's main 'tool' to perceive presence. On the other hand, Beth places the emphasis on her mind, she understands she is present when her mind is quiet and there is no commentary. Other participants report different ways of understanding they are 'present' as for example Kevin who focuses on the spiritual side which he links to life and 'living it': *I know I am on the right track when it is easy. I am more spiritually aware, more sensitive to signs or things that I pick up [...] they are millions and I pick up 2 or 3 [...] I*

am more attuned, more perceptive [...] keep a clearer focus, not get wound up in things that don't matter [...] [the spiritual] is walking the walk [...] 'are you living it?' [q 5.20]

In Beth's account there is an absolute connection with the other group members. Most participants' accounts have an underlying assumption that all the group members can be 'present' at the same time as well as that individual group members can put aside their 'ego' based needs for attention, power, etc. and concentrate on the task itself. Individuals are seen to bring their 'presence' in the group instead of negotiating an 'identity' so they can meet in more levels (as whole persons) and concentrate on the work itself. When Beth can achieve that, everything seems 'beautifully clear' (although she does not comment about it in her mind) and she is going with the 'flow'.

It is funny but you don't need every work meeting to be some sort of a spiritual event. It would be exhausting I think probably if that were the case. But again in all of my meetings I tend to be very, very business like now, which is ok sometimes but it doesn't allow me, it hasn't allowed me to be as good a consultant as I could have been.

Before, I felt the confidence to be able to say exactly what I thought was in the room and what I was feeling. I had a lot of confidence to be able to say the things that nobody else would say and that is a very risky thing to do but it can often be an immensely rewarding one and you can be a very respected facilitator by doing that skilfully. (Beth) [q 5.21]

She says that in her current work in a multinational work organisation she is in a position where she is '*not voicing the concerns in the room*' and explains that being 'present' in current work organizations is risky '*because it goes against the cultural way of doing things for example with the current client that I am at I have a concern that it wouldn't be received well and it wouldn't be the right thing to do*'.

Beth makes use here of the two contrasting repertoires 'being business like' and taking the risk to say the things that nobody would say in the room. It is interesting that the same traits (confidence, assertiveness, ambition to be a respected facilitator) that make her successful in her work in the multinational

organisation are the same that can be seen as risky in this environment. She seems to want to be a successful facilitator, knows how to become one, yet she is in a position where she cannot take that risk. She even says that 'being business like is ok sometimes' but that it has blocked her from being as 'good' as she would want to be in her work. This is part of a main concern discussed in Chapter 7: 7.1 about current work organisations not allowing people to 'be themselves' at work. Again there is an emphasis on the work itself here as Beth wants to be a good facilitator with her own criteria rather than the formal criteria of 'being business like' that she has to assume within her current position in the multinational organisation.

Subsequently Beth left this position in the multinational organisation to assume a position in an educational institution:

When I was on the course we did kind of a bit of group facilitation, which is what I will be doing a lot in this new role: facilitation, group teaching. And there it felt like an extremely spiritual experience, because I was in a place when I was very in tune with the vibe in the room, the energy in the room and where the individuals were and all the unspoken masses of noise that was going on within a group and the wonders of what a group could do together. So it felt extremely spiritual and probably over time since I have finished that course I have gone back into more kind of your standard work meetings where people don't say that much about where they are at, where it doesn't feel safe to say something like, you know, what's going on here, how are you feeling, that sort of thing. So I've lost a bit of that sense of 'spirituality' and interestingly, I am fairly sure that I was by far a better facilitator when I was linked into the 'spirituality' of the group than I am now that I've lost some of that experience. So one thing I want to try and do with this role is to link back into that and the only way that I can do that, it comes from within, it depends of where I am at as a person. So if I am being incredibly practical and thinking about weddings and selling houses and buying and money and it is difficult for me to be in the role with the group which is very feeling based and (.) relaxed. So that is going to be a challenge for me, is to make sure that I can do what I need to do for my self, to get myself into a position where I can be with groups where I have no fear inside of me and my mind is quiet and in that way I can hear what is happening in the group. [q 5.22]

This account links again to the ‘whole person’ development as Beth explains that in order to be ‘linked’ again in that experience she needs to be relaxed as a person, from ‘within’. This means again that she has to eliminate her fears and quieten her mind which she contrasts with her being very practical thinking about ‘weddings and selling houses and buying and money’. Here the analytical levels of reflection overlap where the tension between the self as observer and the self as observed (Beth feeling she has ‘lost a bit of that sense of spirituality’) is influenced by the level of tension between self identity and social identity as Beth was discussing in the interview that downshifting (see also Chapter 6: 6.3) her life (assuming a lower paid position and moving to the countryside), together with her forthcoming marriage, brought about issues of balancing ‘what she could have’ and ‘what she needed’ to create a life that is comfortable and nourishing but not consumeristic.

5.2.2.4 Setting up new grounds of communication and collaboration at work

Participants’ accounts point to the potential of setting up new grounds of communication and collaboration at work. They describe moments of working in partnership when individuals were bringing in their ‘presence’ instead of negotiating an ‘ego’ and therefore met in equality and were more able to focus on the work that needed to be done. Most participants state that ‘spiritual people at work’ ‘carry themselves in a particular manner, with uprightness and integrity’. They are less interested in ‘who’ they are but in ‘what they are here to do’, ‘they bring a presence rather than an identity’ (George). This cannot be explained as an altruistic act of self-devotion to work, but rather as a construct employed to free participants from the burden of having to present themselves in a particular manner.

The significance of the construct of ‘presence’ lies in its potential to a) point to the participants’ efforts to achieve collaboration based on equality and acceptance as well as b) reveal the participants’ capacity to provide the discursive frameworks within which this collaboration can take place.

In this participants responded to questions about ‘spiritual’ people at work with that they are concerned *‘to be aware where their rights end and the others begin’* that they *‘pay attention to issues of power’*, they are *‘interested in what is between*

us' they *'focus in meeting more than in results'*, they have *'less results orientation'* they are *'more harmonious'* and can be *'more of who I am and you more of who you are'*. In terms of the settings provided they describe *'a room free of anxiety'* because once one can get rid of the 'ego' then the barrier created from wanting to control or to get other's acceptance diminishes.

At an individual level it seems that 'being present' is a prerequisite or similar to being inspired. Inspiration is where the self is experienced in a way that does not distinguish between the 'I' and the 'Me' so that it can only be observed and described from a later stage in time. *'They carry themselves with uprightness and integrity, less interested in bringing presence rather than an identity, not to who but how thee are, they don't ask 'notice me, I am important' but rather they notice what is happening in interrelation'*

At a group level, there is connection between the individuals at different levels (physical, mental, emotional spiritual) using the 'whole person' discourse. The difference in collaboration is *'unbelievable, you can get things to happen in ways'*. They point to changing oneself rather than the world (George: *the world is fine, it is hard enough to manage me'*).

Paul describes how he can be free to express himself in his collaboration with two other men in a project. He says that before he used to present himself as knowledgeable *'in the past that would have been the case'*, but now *'the great thing with the people'* he works with is that he can easily say *'I don't feel strong in that area or can you tell me'* and he finds that *'it is so much easier to reveal ones weaknesses. It is almost as if, it's a relief, it's a release to let go of the posturing and the pretending'*. He continues that *'there are occasions when I go back to that position'* with people he feels threatened so he is protecting himself but *'possibly sometimes that's ok'*. He says that years ago if he was not comfortable, he *'would have acted defensible, defensiveness is how I know I feel threatened', 'a fear based area'*. [q 5.23]

Beth explains how she would have been freer to take the risk of being 'present' at work meetings if she was working in an organization that valued spirituality: *Because I know that that is what they would want me to do, absolutely and the ground rules would be 'you just go with the flow, you do what you want' and in a*

way nothing can go wrong in a sense that 'if something goes wrong, it was meant to go wrong [q 5.24]

The ways in which these ideas of unity manifest in the workplace and within organisations will be analysed in Chapters 6 and 7 respectively.

5.2.3 Interconnectedness

An important implication of the construct of 'presence' is the conception of a sense of interconnectedness which links the reflection process at the internal analytical level of self as subject and self as object with the external analytical level of self and other. Cacioppe (1997) explains that the individual cannot be completely free and isolated from the society; neither can it be a mere 'humanoid unit of production'. In turn, literature on the subject adopts a 'relational thinking' where the part can be seen as a manifestation of the whole rather than its component (Cacioppe 1997, Senge et al. 2005) and therefore the individual becomes an expression of the universe. From this standpoint, many participants construct a state where they can 'be one with the universe', 'have a feeling of interconnectedness' and be 'tuned in the moment'.

I've been up there ((at Findhorn)) two or three times, I think the first time I went up there I did some work experience, I worked in the kitchens there for several days and I think I was quite judgemental of doing things like chopping carrots and making food as if that wasn't very important job to be doing and I think after four or five days of working in the kitchen I realised how important everything was. Because the food I was preparing was going to be for some other people and those other people would be preparing my food tomorrow, so I saw the interconnectedness of everything and I saw the value of everything and that I wasn't just making food, I was helping to nourish other human beings. So I think that to me, I started to have awareness about the importance of everything and how interconnected we all are and how there is no such thing as trivial work, everything is important, everything can be an active worship in a way. (Glen) [q 5.25]

Glen is bringing the notion of interconnectedness to its 'this worldly' dimension in everyday life and work and explains how it works in social interaction. He provides the example of people working together to nourish one another. Here the

practical level of interconnectedness links to ideas of holism and unity through harmony, social interaction and work. Michael below links the spiritual and practical sides of interconnectedness in how he reminds himself to remain connected. He provides an image of unity where we are all connected:

Part of my philosophy is that we are all one eventually. You know ultimately we are all connected [...] I am a fragment of God as you are as everybody else is so ultimately we are all one we are all of the same stuff here so by making a difference on an individual basis that's a kind of growth effect will happen eventually. [...] I try to remind to myself all of the time so as I am sat talking to you here I realise that (.) you know (.) you are a manifestation of spirit also, so on one level we are very much connected here [...] That has some very practical consequences really. So if there is anything that I do to you I am ultimately doing it to myself. If I am causing you some harm in some way I am causing myself harm in some way. (Michael) [q 5.26]

Then again, most accounts report that it is not possible to achieve this state of interconnectedness constantly 'because you need time for daydreaming and other creative stuff' (Beth) or because there have to be particular conditions in place for this to occur.

I don't think it would be human to be in the moment the whole time, and almost you can't be cause you have to allow some sort of outlet and you have to allow yourself to mutter and enjoy and daydream and stuff like that cause that's enjoyable as well and it's where some real creative stuff can emerge. But I think it would make a big difference to my fulfilment at work and my values at work if I could be more in the present moment than I am. I am hardly ever in the present moment I am somewhere else [...] planning or commentating on things that I am seeing or worrying about something or guessing or hypothesising or something. (Beth) [q 5.27]

This final phase where the individual can feel 'interconnected' with the universe creates in its turn the need to isolate and exclude the 'ego' (as the carrier of fears and selfish needs) and therefore the identity process described above becomes ongoing.

Well as physically embodied being who walks around with an identity, I have to be careful not to get attached to that (.) and to let that fall away in order to enter into the experience of myself in the here and now. If you are willing to do that too, then we start to (.) like tuning forks, we are starting to resonate at a different vibration that is neither yours nor mine and ought to that, things may happen. (George) [q 5.28]

Here George uses the term ‘identity’ as something separate from himself and something that he has to make an effort not to be attached to. He further suggests that he has to let the ‘identity’ fall away so that he can enter into the experience of himself. Using the distinction between the ‘I’ and the ‘Me’ as knower and known (James 1890) or as observer and observed (Mead 1934, 1936) respectively, it is George as ‘I’ that becomes conscious of and separates the part of himself as known or ‘Me’ and tries to manage it. Successful managing of this part of himself will enable him to enter into the experience of himself in the here and now. If another person can be at this state at the same time then as he explains at the interview they are both freer to let go of the *‘detritus, the rubbish, the unnecessary accretions’* that when they are gone we can be more permeable in *‘what goes in and what goes out’* and in this way be *‘connected in a much bigger set of relationships’*. This is in accordance to how Hadot (1995) explains the meaning of ‘spiritual’ exercises saying that ‘the individual raises himself up to the life of the objective Spirit; that is to say, he re-replaces himself within the perspective of the Whole’ (p.82).

Summary

Chapter 5, ‘Understanding the self and constructing identity’, addresses the third objective of the research looking at the identity process of dealing with the tension between self as object and the self as subject. This process consists of participants isolating the ‘ego’, achieving a state of presence and finally enabling experiences of ‘interconnectedness’ to come to the fore in their lives. In this way aspects of unity are endorsed through the state of presence where one has to ‘be connected’ and the state of interconnectedness where ‘everything is one’. Locating this in the context of their lives, in relation to the second objective of this research, participants then talk about moments at work where they are concentrating on the task itself and where they are ‘connecting’ to their work and their colleagues

thereby constructing an atmosphere of equality and understanding. Addressing the fourth research objective, the chapter links participants' accounts of 'presence' and 'interconnectedness' to broader relevant societal constructs in the contexts of religion with the Buddhist concept of mindfulness, of 'Spirituality at Work' with Senge's (Senge et al. 2005) concept of presence, of psychology with Csikszentmihalyi's (Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi 1988) concept of flow and of epistemology with Shotter's (2002, 2005a) concept of 'witness thinking'. Finally, it emerges from this chapter that through the notions of 'presence' and 'interconnectedness' participants lay the discursive basis for more relational perspectives and subsequently towards more relation centred practices at work.

6 Career Choices and Work Orientation

Following from the previous Chapter 5, 'Understanding the self and constructing identity' participants express their relational perspectives at work in trying to incorporate ideas of 'unity' within their everyday work and life. As explained in Chapter 2, part of the 'spirituality' discourse emphasises breaking away from social institutions (Heelas and Woodhead 2005) and social conditionings. Participants often refer to their 'internal' struggle of not being able to express their spiritual values in their everyday work and life and the tension they experienced between the private part of their identity which projected these values and the social part of their identity which was conditioned to work in specific ways within formal work institutions. As explained in Chapter 3 the private and social identity of an individual can be perceived as distinctive through the construction of a 'personal discourse' which is modelled in 'public discourse' (Harré 1983). Therefore, the tension between private and social identity can be experienced to be occurring in the intersection of societal discourses (spirituality discourse) and 'inner worlds' (participants' personal discourses). This chapter explores how respondents deal with this tension in gaining authority over their lives (to break away from social conditionings), shifting their orientations to work (to accommodate the new meanings of work) and constructing notions of 'a life's work' (to integrate work and life).

The main tension between private and social identity among participants seems to occur in relation to their adoption of humanistic values and the reclaiming of authority over oneself as mediated through the 'spirituality' discourse and especially this part of the discourse that Heelas and Woodhead (2000, Heelas and Woodhead 2005) call 'spiritualities of life'. This is related to notions of detraditionalization (Heelas et al. 1996) which advocate an emancipation from formal institutions, 'a decline of the belief in pre-given or natural orders of things' and a 'shift of authority: from "without" to "within"' (Heelas et al. 1996). It is suggested that the engagement with the 'spirituality' discourse which embraces ideas of detraditionalization and especially breaking away from formal religions, can create tensions related to issues of gaining authority over oneself. The practises encouraged from the 'spirituality' discourse socialise participants into

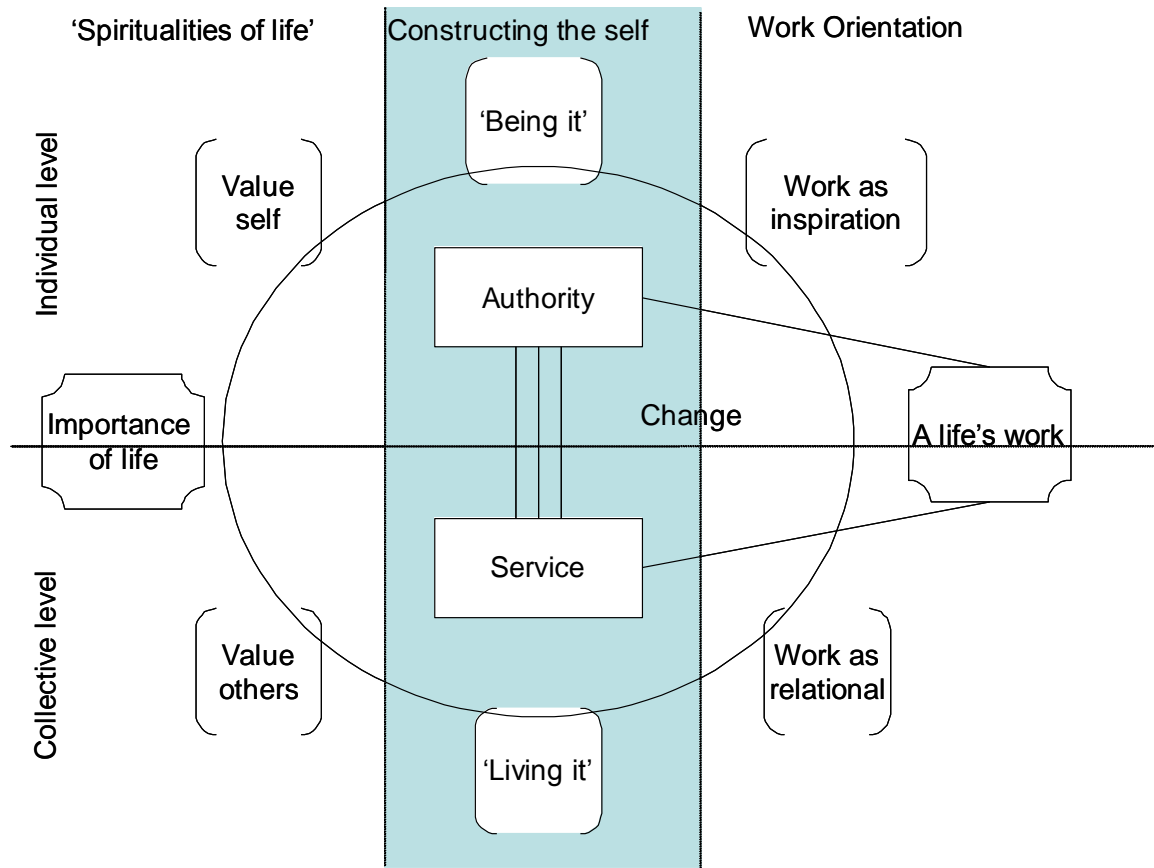
gaining authority over themselves to ‘being’ life itself and choosing careers where they can be of service in order to manifest the valuing of life and ‘live it’.

This is a process (see schema 6.1: spiritualities of life level) embedded within engaging with ‘spirituality’ (see schema 6.1: constructing the self level) and expressed at work through the adoption of more creative or social kinds of work (see schema 6.1: orientations to work level). This means that participants frequently change their orientations to work and often change careers. These shifts in their orientations to work reflect influences from the ‘spirituality’ discourse, the rhetoric of self-actualization (Casey 1995, Rose 1990) as well as from trends like ‘downshifting’ (Schor 2001, Elgin 1998) or the ‘voluntary simplicity movement’ (Johnson 2004). The most common new meanings attached to work are related to inspiration at an individual level and to service at a social level. The new careers that participants tend to pursue are mainly associated with consulting, coaching, healing or artistic work (painting, writing). These kinds of work are thought by the participants to be related to ‘working with people’ and to being ‘creative’ or ‘artistic’.

Work then loses its significance in itself as labour but acquires its meaning from its congruence with the meaning of one’s overall life path. Participants talk about work as an integral part of their life and change their careers to integrate work and life. The importance of integration lies in participants’ understanding of these career moves as choice and purpose at the same time.

A schematic representation of the concepts developed in the chapter and the different levels in which they operate is presented below in schema 6.1.

Schema 6.1. Addressing the tension between private and social identity



Schema 6.1 is a schematic depiction of the different levels that the concepts developed in this chapter operate and their interrelations. The horizontal levels are the individual and collective level where the private identity and social identity respectively intersect. The vertical levels are the level of 'spiritualities of life' as a part of the wider level where the 'spirituality' discourse is being produced, the level of 'Constructing the self' where the various practices encouraged socialise individuals into 'being it' and 'living it' and finally the level of 'orientations to work' where individuals adjust their orientations to work in a dialogical relation with the overall 'spirituality' discourse. The schema concludes in funnelling the elements of discourses and practices mentioned into an integrated way of life that most participants call 'a life's work'. This is a way of life where work becomes an integral part of one's identity and life.

6.1 Spiritualities of life

As explained in Chapter 2, the rising importance of individual life or what Heelas and Woodhead (2005) call 'subjective turn' emphasises the value of the self at an individual level and of humanity as a whole at a social level. This enabled the emergence of 'spiritualities of life' (Heelas and Woodhead 2005) which emphasise spiritual experience, authenticity of self and interrelatedness. Within this framework, ideas, beliefs and traditions are questioned and subjective life acquires outmost significance.

6.1.1 Questioning ideas, beliefs and traditions

The questioning of ideas, beliefs and traditions can be seen as part of a wider trend of detraditionalization which is not eradicating all traditions but is 'competing, interpenetrating or interplaying with processes to do with tradition – maintenance, rejuvenation and tradition construction' (Heelas 1996 p.3). Although respondents show a high respect for traditions and religions, most tend not to follow one in particular but rather adopt a 'pick and mix' approach to spirituality. Those that follow this approach choose and combine elements from various traditions to construct their world view.

This mixing of various elements creates varied worldviews and varied positions on existential issues that can be experienced as incongruent between different people or even within one person's worldview. On the one hand there are people who are highly critical of the 'New Age' beliefs created through this approach and support a more consistent following of particular traditions. Frequently, during the interview or during our discussion before and after the interview, most respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the New Age movement, the ideas it promotes and the ways it promotes them. Their main concern was the commodification, oversimplification or arbitrariness with which certain ideas have been drawn from solid traditions or cultures and are being sold as remedies for lives.

When I first started doing it ((acupuncture training)) my lecturer said to me 'you will only get people come to you who you can deal with' and I thought I don't know if I believe that, you know, there is a New Age philosophy at the moment that I just can't go along with and that is one of the stupid things that they say 'oh put

up to the ether what you want and it will come to you back', I think it is a load of rubbish and another thing that they say that I really don't agree with is that 'you cause your own illness'

I mean I had a lecturer stand up in front of my class and say 'we create our own illness' that really [...] how can a little child so innocent create its own illness, rubbish, it is rubbish [...] I was so angry, I didn't deserve to be ill, who does? So I wrote it and that lecturer never taught to us again. [...] and that was neither acupuncture philosophy nor Taoist, it wasn't either, it was her own New Age belief but she presented it as an acupuncture lecturer which I was really annoyed about. [...] acupuncture is an ancient science based on Taoist philosophy and even the Taoist philosophy is based on observation it is not what somebody just dreamt up. (Zoë) [q.6.1]

From Zoë's account stems a respect for traditions and the solid base on which they have been founded. Looking at her own life, having been ill when she was a child, she can not justify the lecturer's view that she had caused her own illness. She conducts herself as someone who has gone through an illness and therefore can know more about it than her lecturer with the new age beliefs and so she derives her authority in this case from lived experience to take action and report this. Zoë makes a distinction between New Age beliefs that 'somebody just dreamt up' and acupuncture which is a 'science based on Taoist philosophy' which 'is based on observation' showing her respect not only for traditions but also science.

On the other hand there are some participants that feel this is a necessary phase in order to move on from traditional religions even if it will have to be expressed in a 'whacky way'. George thinks we are at a stage where traditions cannot solve the spiritual problems we are facing and we therefore have to find our own bizarre ways to move on. In our discussion on 'spirituality' expressed in a 'whacky way' he says:

I'd hope so, wouldn't you? I mean, I don't want froilly holy, I don't like that, [...] in my language [...] there isn't a tradition any longer that holds up to the spiritual realities of the age we live in. You can draw upon them if they can be useful (.) but they are not, there is no answers there, there are no texts that you can rely on to answer the spiritual problems we've got [...] and there are certainly no teachers

to tell us how to do it. We are on our own, we are making it up together and that means we are going to have to do it in a whacky way. You know, I think it's going to be very bizarre, odd, strange. (George)[q. 6.2]

For George, the ‘whackiness’ of spiritual people is beautiful and necessary for social change since there are no traditions to provide solutions and it therefore lies in the hands of every individual to keep creating the world we are in. He talks about the spiritual problems and realities of the age we live in and the inability of any single tradition to fully address them. In most ways, the discourse of ‘spirituality’ seems to provide a source of lessons for life in the modern world. Hadot (1995) in response to George Friedman’s statement that ‘there is no tradition [...] compatible with contemporary spiritual demands’ (p.81) traces the idea of spiritual exercises in antiquity and presents the links to show how this spiritual resurgence is a continuation of ancient Greco-Roman tradition. For some commentators, ‘spirituality’ has been seen to combine religion and science and to repackage values to suit industrial and post-industrial society (Sutcliffe and Bowman 2000) and to fit the western way of living and the market (Heelas 1996). Finally, Hervieu Léger (2002) explains that it is difficult to organise the amount and complexity of information that is available in the modern world in causal relationships and therefore the scientific mind replaces the legendary memory.

This prominence of science and critical reasoning provided a discourse for liberation from social and institutional constraints that is also evident within the ‘spirituality’ discourse. To support Hadot’s (1995) view of spiritual exercises as a philosophy of life there also seems to be an element of being down to earth or of ‘being grounded’ in a sense that ‘spiritualities of life’ (Woodhead and Heelas 2000, Heelas and Woodhead 2005) suggest that the spiritual and the ‘this worldly’ are inseparable. In this way George strongly expresses throughout the interview his view of ‘being of this world’. He expresses himself as someone with a functioning balance between ‘whackiness’ and ‘being of this world’ when he talks about his encounter with a coaching client whose ‘whackiness’ he appreciates but at the same time he advises her to ‘be of this world’: *‘Part of it is I am somebody who is really whacky I can sit and discuss very ordinary things as a consultant in an organisation but I can go into places in myself that are bizarre according to the world and people who are whacky feel validated, she is completely nuts. I am*

trying to say, I think your gifts are wonderful but you need to organise yourself a bit. [...] If you are going to function in the world you are going to need to sort yourself a bit. (George) [q. 6.3]

All participants like George above, present themselves as both ‘different’ and ‘congruent’ in that they can be considered ‘whacky’ because of their ‘spirituality’ and at the same time they can function effectively within society. This can be part of spiritualities of life emphasising the here and now and is also in line with the subjectivization thesis (Heelas and Woodhead 2005) that acknowledges individual experience as a source of authority. In this way a person can be ‘different’ or ‘whacky’ in separating its self from social norms and at the same time be a congruent member of a society that accepts individual expressions of self and spirituality.

6.2 Constructing the working self

6.2.1 Being it: Authority

The issue of gaining authority over one’s self becomes complicated in the case of people who consider themselves spiritual. On the one hand as supported by the detraditionalization (Heelas et al. 1996) and the subjectivization thesis (Woodhead and Heelas 2000, Heelas and Woodhead 2005) there is a rejection of formal and rational authorities of any kind and the shift of authority to individual selves. On the other hand there is a devotion of one’s life to God, the Spirit, the Divine, a state of Enlightenment or any other name that is given to a higher power or state of being. The link between the rejection of authority and deference to God is intuition as it seems that participants find ways to construct selves that can trust their intuitive guidance towards their personal spiritual path. Intuition is often described as insights that are not always logical and do not always make sense. To follow them, requires trusting oneself, which again in its turn is related to the emphasis on subjective experience that the subjectivization thesis (Woodhead and Heelas 2000, Heelas and Woodhead 2005) supports.

For Glen, the conditionings we have are seen as hiding places where we can discover our gifts and gain our authority from:

I think on one level what we do is we, this is my understanding, in a way we choose a lifetime where we are going to take on a lot of crap conditioning on the whole but we don't take it all in order to be burden by it, you know we often end up being burden by it. We take it on in order to heal it and ultimately to transform it and turn it into something with value. You know taking that shit and turn it into gold so I do think that often the places where we most struggle whether it's with self belief or self worth or confidence or all those things are often the places where actually we have huge gifts. Always when we have addictions or problems or all that kind of stuff ultimately when we begin to understand them and heal them they become the cornerstones of our life. So and I feel a much stronger person in a way because of all the problems I have experienced within myself, things that I've most struggled with, they are often... this is where I now feel that I have grown authority because I can tell to people, 'yeah I can understand you feel like that' and that 'I used to feel that' and 'I know the way through it'. So I think often our biggest challenges can become our place of greatest authority. (Glen) [q. 6.4]

Glen feels he has gained his strength from his experiences and mostly from the most difficult life experiences he had. He uses the main alchemistic metaphor of turning matter (in this case 'shit') into gold to explain how 'crap conditioning', lack of self esteem, addictions and problems can be the sources of authority if one works on them. He conducts himself as someone who has been able to transform his own burdens to self authority which he then uses to help other people.

Lived life as authority

As participants place importance on individual experience, 'spirituality' can be seen as a source of wisdom on living life and therefore following a spiritual path can be at the same time a discipline of living, a course of learning from own experience and an expression of individual choice. Zoë above in 6.1.1, derived her authority from her experience similarly to what Heelas and Woodhead (2005) express as people exercising their 'authority to "be" or "turn into" themselves by finding their own paths on the basis of their own experience; they enable people to remain true to their unique subjectivities whilst developing the quality of subjective life' (p.87). Then, living one's life in this way is seen to reflect

authority and authenticity. Glen below admires and learns from people who live ordinary lives in an ‘authentic’ way.

L But are there now spiritual teachers that really appeal to you? That you still think you can learn from them?

G Not so much spiritual teachers, you know, some, but I think who I admire is just ordinary people living authentic lives

L This means that you are also trying to learn from the people that you coach or ...

G Yeah I just think, where I’ve got the eyes to see it there are inspiring people everywhere...you know often living ordinary lives but being really authentic

L And when you say ‘authentic’, how do they live their lives authentically?

G Not trying to pretend they are not anything they are not, they are listening to their hearts and I suppose wanting to leave the world a better place and they are positive [q. 6.5]

The traits Glen describes as authentic represent recurring themes of this research that are grouped under the theme of ‘being it’ that participants say they achieve through *not being anything they are not* and through *listening to their hearts* as well as the theme of ‘living it’ inspired from *wanting to leave the world a better place* and from *being positive*.

Following a spiritual path

Gaining authority over one’s self and life is described from the respondents as a process. Most respondents describe the growth of their spiritual awareness as a changing process where at first they build a strong holistic self (body, emotion, mind, spirit) mainly through spiritual exercises that - as is the philosophical act for Hadot (1995) - are not only situated at the cognitive level but at the level of self and of being.

Finding and following a spiritual path is a process often described as hard work. The spiritual path, as Kelemen and Peltonen (2002) explain, can be an art that requires ‘regular exercise and constant working on oneself and one’s relation to the world’ (p.8). Respondents explain it requires a sort of discipline (although some do not like the term) and work on the self. This path is personal, unique for

every person, which although described as weaved as one's life unfolds and creates itself by the choices made along the way. Throughout this process participants usually have to make choices that change significant aspects of their lives, such as their marriage, their job or even their whole life altogether.

At the same time this process is not presented as arbitrary, but that the life choices made somehow determine the path one takes. Evidently, the best choices are said to be the ones that enable spiritual development for the individual and for the whole of humanity. These choices acquire legitimacy through intuition, which is what guides the path especially when assuming an identity as a 'spiritual being' (see Chapter 5). Particularly in participants' work decisions, intuition is considered a more sensitive tool than logic. This is supported by an increasing popular (Klein 2004, Gladwell 2006) and academic (Mintzberg 1976, Simon 1987, Lank and Lank 1995, Patton 2003, Dane and Pratt 2007) business literature on intuiting decisions at work. Intuition in the case of respondents supersedes rationality because purely rational choices can be thought to be directed from cultural/societal norms or selfish motives and can therefore lead to decisions that harm the self or the planet (or to take it further: harming a self evidently harms the planet). Cultures, religions, traditions, institutions and conventional ideas are under scrutiny leaving personal insight as the essential source of authority in accordance to the subjectivization thesis (Woodhead and Heelas 2000, Heelas and Woodhead 2005). Moreover, the general emphasis on human life legitimises 'authentic' individual lives expressed and guided through intuition.

M: I am a spiritual being having a physical experience and it's that way round rather than a physical being having a contact with my spirit if you see what I mean. [...] So even when I make business decisions for example I try to come from this place of connection all of the time basically. So that is how it affects me on a day to day basis.

R: And how do you experience this connection, what is the difference when you make a business decision from your spirit or from your (.) mind?

M: My intellect, yeah, I don't know basically, (.) where it's coming from in a sense. I intuit decisions much more than I intellectualise decisions now. So, you know, we've been brought up in a western society we are actually trained to think

intellectually and rationally and I started off life as an engineer, as a scientist if you like, therefore I had a fairly high level of conditioning in an intellectual sense so most of my decisions some years ago - certainly earlier in my adulthood - were based on my intellect. So what differentiates it for me now is that the decision making is much more intuitive, based on my feelings, whether it feels right and whether it fits with my philosophy of life, the world, the universe [...] so that is how I see it in a practical way. I guess the answer is I intuit my decisions rather than intellectualise them. [q. 6.6]

Michael's account expresses his own shift in authority from rational to intuitive. This shift however does not go to the limits of antirationality, which for Weber (1963) can manifest as 'unconditional religious surrender and a spiritual humility that requires, above all else, the death of intellectual pride' (p.196). As described in 6.1.1 'spirituality' combines elements of science and religion to address contemporary life and work issues. Michael's emphasis on intuition does not reject rationality but the conditionings he had as an engineer to rationalise decisions. His intuitive decision making contains rational and emotional elements such as a check in the fit of the decision with his philosophy of life. Here the holistic approach is evident as Michael's view of intuition seems to contain his whole self (body, emotion, mind and spirit). The same applies for Glen below:

G: A mixture of whether something is really exciting, 'is my heart in it?', 'Do I really want to do it?', 'how long is it going to take?', 'how quickly can I do it sometimes?' and then 'how much money is it going to make?' or 'how helpful is it going to be?' So I use a lot of different criteria

R: So are they rather rational or value criteria or feeling based criteria?

G: It can be inner or outer. So it can be inner sometimes I feel inspired to do something and if I could do something in a couple of hours, 'right, great I'll do it' I can even see it coming, if I get inspired to do it I could write something. And sometimes I have to be more pragmatic and say 'ok I need to earn some more money what can I be doing that is going to generate me some more money'. Hopefully the two go together as well, you know if I need to make more money what can I do that can help people that they are going to pay me for. [q. 6.7]

Where rational - legal authority is based on rules and procedures, intuitive authority is based on one's insightful discernment. The way to achieve it requires a particular way of living that follows the spiritual path. Although the self appears to be the focal point, following the holistic approach this is not just the self as an individual, rather it is a union of the person and the whole (Hadot 1995, Heelas and Woodhead 2005). This is where placing authority on individual selves is described as different from self esteem as it includes the spiritual aspect of devotion to the Divine and the question of deference arises.

6.2.2 Deference

Through the rise of detraditionalization as a shift in authority from “without” to “within” that entails the decline of the belief in pre-given or natural orders of things (Heelas 1996), and through the subjectivization thesis (Woodhead and Heelas 2000, Heelas and Woodhead 2005), placing the emphasis on subjective experience, it might have been expected that deference, as submission to a higher authority and devotion to God, would have declined or diminished.

For Woodhead (2001) ‘the flight from deference is the other side of the turn to life’ (p.121) where, using as an example the autobiography of Alan Watts, deference is not ascribed to anything apart from the self. Woodhead (2001) goes on to explain that the ‘flight from deference’ can take more or less radical forms’ but ‘where alternative ‘spirituality’ is concerned the flight is likely to be radical’ (p.120). Although as explained above, there seems to be a shift in authority towards the self among the research respondents, the spiritual self is not the self contained individual but a union of the person and the whole (Hadot 1995, Heelas and Woodhead 2005). The spiritual self that has gained authority over its life is a self in the spiritual path, in the process of diminishing societal conditionings and in devotion to the Divine as part of it.

Five of the respondents expressed strong elements of deference and devotion of their lives to the Divine and most provided examples of how their lives are guided by intuition and signs. The respondents who described the stronger expressions of deference consider the process of devoting one's life to the Divine as a very hard path one has to take because it means that one has to be prepared to undertake challenging life directions, to go through difficult processes of releasing societal

conditionings and to surrender the self to the greater good. In this case the surrender is not to an institutionalised relationship with God and given life guidelines but to an 'inner' personal relationship where God's will is revealed through one's intuition and followed through the signs that appear.

The quote that follows is George's experience of deference:

I was driving the car on the way to a garage to have the car serviced and I happened to be just passing the end of the road to Rievaulx abbey. Never knew where it was, I drove down there, I found the entrance, it was late in the evening and it's at midsummer so it's still light and it was, the place was closed down and I climbed over the gate to walk in and I was just shaking, my whole frame was absolutely just shaking like it might fall apart and I got to the entrance and I knew if I got through the doorway I was going to be in something else, it was the most remarkable experience it was like being taken through a rituals', a ritual without knowing what the steps were but at each phase of it knowing what the next one was likely to be.

So it's like, I just felt I had to walk to the place and I got there and then I felt I had to go through the threshold and feel this immense sense of 'this is going to change my life' and I got inside, it's a ruined abbey and I just knew to walk all the way up towards the big big windows at the end that are open to the sky and the very description in tape in the meditation was exactly what I saw.

It was purple and crimson light of late summer, the sun setting on these window frames and it just bounced this incredible purple light and I just fell on my knees at the altar stone, which is still there, I didn't know that's what it was and I completely transported, absolutely gone, eternity, you know, I am just there and at some point in it I heard the words come out of my mouth and I was shocked as they came out I said ' I am here, I have come, I have come to do thy serve, to do thy work, make me a fit instrument (.) I have come, I have come to dedicate my life to thy service, make me a fit instrument to do thy work' (...) I knew I meant it, I knew I didn't know what it would entail, I knew it had to be part of what I was there to do.

I thought 'this is really' you know there is a part of me that could kind of sensed

'this is completely off the script' and I went to stay at this hotel overnight, the next day I went to Rievaulx terraces which is a landscaped garden above the abbey and I sat there for, I don't know, hours, just hours in this, the bliss state that people describe where I could see for miles and it was like I was everywhere I could see and it was in me and I was in it and the birds' song that was over here was singing in me and I was the bird there was no me and it, it was all part of, there was no me, there was no it, it was just being in creation and (...) I know the state I am in while I am in it. I know because I've read about it, I know because I've had glimpses of it but to be in it, it's just (.) 'What happens?' and the residual of that state stayed with me for nearly six months. It was like being in another state of consciousness the whole time. (George) [q. 6.8]

George's poetic narrative above promotes an understanding that in order to be of this world, one has to serve this world. This can be seen as a 'poetic moment' (Katz and Shotter 1996, 1997) (see also Chapter 3:3.1.1) in which George for the first time becomes aware of a sense of 'eternity' and of devoting himself to God. He says *'I heard the words come out of my mouth and I was shocked as they came out'* and in this way he participates in a new way to the circumstances he is experiencing. He feels connected to his surroundings and to the situation he is experiencing while he at the same time invites us to participate in his viewpoint of the incident. Through this, he explains and 'makes us sensitive' (Katz and Shotter 1996) to the way he experiences his deference and the dedication of his life to Divine service.

6.2.3 'Living it': Service

The concept of 'service' in participants accounts is linked to holism (Hadot 1995, Heelas and Woodhead 2005) in that finding one's place in this world is to express the whole in one's life and at the same time understand that this individual life is a manifestation of the whole. Practically, this seems to translate to a heightened sense of 'service'. The question 'how can I serve' often came up in descriptions of blocking the ego (see Chapter 5), decision making, interconnectedness and of the holistic approach.

Moreover, *helping people* is what all the respondents state in different ways as the drive behind their work, their purpose or their contribution but it is interesting that they also mostly mention it as their reward. Here again the integration of individualism and collectivism is shaped by the concepts of holism and interconnectedness. There are numerous quotes from respondents stating their satisfaction from helping others and the importance of *having someone appreciate your help*. Marina's work as a child psychologist is not always appreciated, yet her assurance that she helped and that she made her contribution to the world she is part of, becomes her reward.

M: I think helping people is for me the most important thing and I know that I help people in the things that I do.

R: What is about helping people that is important to you?

M: It gives me the satisfaction that I am part of the world to make it a better place, so that's my contribution. I am very glad for them that they do well, it's not that I establish an attachment or that they are grateful to me afterwards. A lot of people aren't necessarily very grateful. If I diagnosed somebody as being autistic, you are not going to come back and say 'oh thank you for that' but I know that the work I do can contribute to their finding a better place for them and an understanding of why they do what they do. [q. 6.9]

Leila, in the part of her work that deals with finance, tries not to focus on the pennies so that she can have *'More space to think about the direction in what will serve the Higher Good of the organisation.'* She also states that *'Before a meeting I'd take some time to be connected to myself and pull all resources that I have [...] so that I can serve well.'*

Together with 'corporate social responsibility' and 'sustainable development', a vocabulary of 'post heroic leadership' (Bradford and Cohen 1984), 'stewardship' (Block 1993, Davis et al. 1997, McCuddy and Pirie 2007) and 'servant leadership' (Greenleaf 2002) entered the business literature. These ideas link to the holistic approach and the idea of the interconnectedness. If the individual is a union of the person and the whole then working for oneself is working for the whole. In order to assume a position in the whole, one has to work for the whole. For Weber (1930) service was promoted from the Calvinist ethic where 'Brotherly love, since

it may only be practiced for the glory of God and not in the service of the flesh, is expressed in the first place in the fulfilment of the daily tasks given by the *lex naturae*; and in the process this fulfilment assumes a peculiar objective and impersonal character, that of service in the interest of the rational organization of our social environment.[...] This makes labour in the service of impersonal social usefulness appear to promote the glory of God and hence to be willed by Him.’ (Weber 1930 pp.108-109)

But with the shift of authority to subjective experience, needs cannot be expected to be covered by God but by the individual itself. In holism the individual is interrelated with other individuals and nature and therefore strives to make this interrelation work by working to serve the whole. Weber’s (1930) explanation of the Calvinist promotion of good works for salvation that ‘God helps those who help themselves’ (p.115) becomes ‘those who help themselves, help humanity and those who help humanity, help themselves’ (see Chapter 5 quote 5.26 from Michael: ‘*So if there is anything that I do to you I am ultimately doing it to myself. If I am causing you some harm in some way I am causing myself harm in some way.*’). It seems here that the humanity as a whole (including nature) has taken the place of an external God sending help or providing a living. This understanding does not only promote a unified image of self (self as part of the whole, Heelas and Woodhead 2005, Gergen 1999, Hadot 1995) but also places the responsibility of getting what one needs from one’s personal labour for the whole. There is here an element of the ‘whole’ acquiring an agentic power to be perceived as separate from the individual and this can be seen as an expectation of the whole as something external to or wider from the person to provide for the person if the person provides its labour in turn. Again this goes back to Goethe’s views on parts and wholes (see Chapter 5) where the whole is understood as a system that responds to individual actions of its members.

Glen links the ideas of a ‘calling’, an ‘authentic self’, ‘serving’ and ‘life as authority’ in saying: ‘*in a way it is still the same calling which is to, I suppose being fully myself and to serve and help as many people as I can through my own kind of insights, through my own life*’. Immersing in these ideas, participants work on themselves to gain authority and review the meanings they attach to work so that they can serve their selves and in a broader way the whole.

6.3 Orientations to work

Within a work context, the emergence of individual identity under the continuous renegotiation and re-evaluation of discursive resources is depicted by the concept of ‘work orientation’ as ‘the meaning attached by individuals to their work which predisposes them to think and act in particular ways with regard to that work’ (Watson 2003 p. 41).

Participants report a high influence of their involvement with ‘spirituality’ on their work orientations. For most, this is narrated as a process where they made career choices relevant to their changing values. As mentioned in Chapter 4, most participants explain how they changed gradually, even if they remember a focal point in their career changing process such as Michael when he narrates of one day driving to work (as many other days), seeing the chemical factory (that was his workplace) emerging behind the hills and experiencing a strong incongruence between his work and his environmental awareness. After a short period of time he decided to radically change his life, leave his job and go to India.

Work orientations change throughout people’s lives and in the case of the participants of this research, the deciding circumstances mostly mentioned in the life stories regard disillusionment with work, family issues and existential meanings. The disillusionment with work concerns mainly incongruences with personal values. Family issues mentioned tend to be explained as participant changing because of ‘spirituality’ and no longer tolerating relationship with partner or frictions with partner due to the participants’ change. The existential issues arise out of questioning life’s purpose. This concern with existential issues is often narrated as taking a decisive form in situations where participants were out of their everyday work environment. Particularly in the cases of Kevin and Glen, it was during vacations that -as they say- they could see more clearly and question the way they had been living and working.

6.3.1 Work, choice and narrative identity

Most participants have engaged in extensive identity work (see Chapter 5: ‘spirituality’ discourse encourages increased reflexivity) through specific reflective methods or personal reflective practice and have worked on formulating connections between events or people in causal relationships to construct coherent

narratives of their experiences. In line with Ricoeur's (1988) 'narrative identity', they interpret and justify their experiences to construct coherent narratives and maintain a self as a coherent entity. Therefore, when they are asked to describe the changing of their careers towards more 'spirituality' related kinds of work, they describe their experience as a process where they made consecutive 'choices' and they tend to justify these 'choices' in retrospective.

Contrary to most participants who have passed through a process of changing their work orientations towards more 'spirituality' related work, and are therefore presenting a decisive view of their current orientation, Brenda reports that she 'had' to change her work rather than 'choosing' to do it. She is still in the process of career change and she is still making sense of her work changing experience.

Below we follow Brenda's account as she describes all the introspective tensions she faces and as she is making sense of her experience. Her account expresses her identity work as a dialogue with herself, with the researcher and within the context of the interview where she lays her hesitations.

Account	Commentary
<p><i>What does work mean to me? That's an interesting question because at one time I would have thought it would be a means to an end, at one time that it would be a means of having money to live, which it is but I think now its something I find that I have to do and it is not purely about money now, it is about other things as well. You want me to put that into words don't you? (.) I think (.) it's very difficult because at one time, if you'd asked me that question about two or three years ago, I would have described myself by my work, sort of I would have identified</i></p>	<p>Brenda here starts by saying that her previous work used to be about earning a living showing an instrumental orientation to work and then she contradicts that by saying that her previous work would be providing her with an identity and a way of living her life. This is an evocative unfolding of the complexity and dynamism of people's orientations to work. Watson (2003) suggests we recognise that orientations to work as well as 'definitions of a situation are not necessarily fixed but are</p>

<p><i>my self as this and I would have (.) sort of lived my life by what people would perceive my job to be.</i></p>	<p>dynamic' (p.187)</p> <p>Brenda seems to be looking at her past experience from her present position that her work 'now' is about 'other things as well'. At the same time she unintentionally provides the way that her work 'before' was about 'other things as well' like providing an identity and a way of life. Her previous 'instrumental' orientation to work did not occur in a pure ideal form but was providing her with an identity and a way of life as well, nevertheless she is trying to make sense of her changing orientation by discarding the kind of identity she was gaining from her previous work and claiming she then had a purely instrumental orientation.</p> <p>At the same time Brenda is including the research context in her narrative by articulating her understanding of the researcher expecting her to explain or 'put into words' what she means. In this way her account is a clear depiction of identity work occurring as a dialogue with oneself, with the social context and in this case with the researcher as well.</p>
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<p><i>[...] I would have said I was in marketing and to me therefore I had a certain image that I wanted to portray to the people because I was in marketing! ((laughs)) and then work came more about not just a title or an image really, it's something that has to, now, I don't know how to put it, it's just something that I do that I need to do for whatever reason, its not about anybody else now it's just about me doing something that suits me (.) and I am not really bothered about what other people think about.</i></p>	<p>Because her priorities have changed now, she considers the identity - or 'image' as she calls it - she was getting from marketing in her previous job as not genuine. She contrasts this identity with her new identity as a person that is 'not really bothered about what other people think about'. This identity is congruent with the subjectivization thesis (Heelas and Woodhead 2005) that emphasises subjective life and experience as a primary source of significance.</p>
<p><i>You know, again a year ago if someone said 'what do you do for a living' I'd say I am a hypnotherapist and actually tried to get an identity because of that, by what I did, so again I had a perception of what hypnotherapy should be and then I found out that I don't want to be like that, I still like the work but (.) my work, I do all sorts of different things now and I've been forced into a position whereby I have to do different things and I can explain, [...] I was a hypnotherapist and I did marketing. Eventually, the secure part of my work, which was in marketing, I lost last November, so I lost half my income overnight and what I was left with was hypnotherapy</i></p>	<p>Here Brenda is showing a conscious effort to separate her occupation from her identity. Even before she lost her job in marketing she was not purely relying on this but she was also a hypnotherapist. However, having lost the 'marketing' identity she is left to criticise herself for being proud of her 'marketing' identity and also 'free' of that identity that she now explains as socially imposed. This enables her now to dis-identify herself from her occupation and feel free to experiment and engage with work that will not provide her with particular social roles but work that she can just enjoy doing</p>

<p><i>and I enjoy doing that because I am trained to do it, I like the communication with people, I like the fact that I can help people resolve certain problems but I don't want to do is do that full time. So I started ...</i></p>	<p>without identifying with it (that would perhaps risk another forced dis-identification). Work for her now is at the same time a need and an expression of certain aspects of herself.</p> <p>Now, (at the time of the second interview) Brenda is working at four jobs, each one addressing a different aspect of herself as she says:</p>
<p><i>So everything that I am doing is right for me this moment in time, I don't know how it defines me though but I know it's sort of, whatever there are four very different parts of me, you know, there must be different parts of me and each one is, at this moment in time, something in me, a need.</i></p>	<p>Although she wants her work to be 'right' for her and every different kind of work she is doing addresses an aspect of her self, she still does not want to be identified by her work. Throughout the interview she strongly expressed her process of freedom from social imperatives contrasting her new life with the previous. Even though, as she says, she was 'forced' to downsize, she feels that this process has freed her from having to maintain an image. Roof (1999) explains that 'as the cultural layers are striped away, freeing the individual, personal and experiential aspects of identity rise to the surface' (p.108). Now Brenda feels she can be more of her 'essence' :</p>
<p><i>I think I know what the essence of me</i></p>	<p>Here Brenda looks in retrospective</p>

<p><i>is, I can't put it to words but I think you know when things are right and I did that job for a long time but I was always wanting to get out of it, you know I was always looking for another job and 'I'll look for another job tomorrow' and 'next week I'll look for another job' and 'oh I hate this job, I want to do, I am going to go and find something else' and I never did so [...] was forced into not doing it anymore and I think by, just the thoughts that I was having, you know being there for 10, I was actually there for 16 years and since the first year I was going to look for another job the whole of time.</i></p>	<p>and sees that she was never happy in this job but did not do anything to change that until she had to leave. She enters this retrospective thinking about her everyday struggle with a job she didn't enjoy to explain what her 'essence' is. She explains that one is not following their 'essence' when things go wrong. Below she goes on to explain what prevented her from following her 'essence'.</p>
<p><i>So to me that should have told me that I was in the wrong job, so therefore I wasn't following (.) the essence of me, you know I wasn't true to myself, but it was pay, it was giving me the money I wanted the lifestyle I wanted at that time and that I think was a lot to do with who I mix with in this world, because it's very easy to try and keep up with and try and be like other people that are around you. So for example, when I was married, my husband always wanted the biggest house, best car, so you sort of became used to this, you know this is your lifestyle, cause 'I've got a nice car' (...) and that was taken away from me, that</i></p>	<p>Brenda's account is about her discovering the sense of freedom from social imperatives from her experience of losing her job rather than it first being an idea or belief and then turned into life experience by choice as most participants convey.</p> <p>She speaks in an open, straightforward way that is consistent with her overall account of a person who is giving up socially imposed images and imperatives. She is saying that before she wasn't true to her self and then she says that she wanted</p>

was a relief in a way not having to live like that anymore because I can live like me, I can live in a house I want to live and it doesn't really matter how I live, I can live how I want to live. I had constraints with (daughter) because I hadn't got total freedom because I had to do things for her, not necessarily what I wanted to do. So wherever I was bringing her up I had to do certain things and you had to conform to a certain extend but then I suppose...

the money at that time. Watson (2003) explains that in order to understand work behaviour 'we must recognise that individuals see things differently and act accordingly in different situations and at different times' (p.188).

Brenda then explains that this was not her true self because it was influenced by the people she was socialising with. She here brings together different aspects of her life, weaving her narrative identity that Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003) say is 'associated with personal history and orientations 'outside' the immediate work context' (p.1185).

In her account she is rigorously reflective and critical of her previous compliance with social imperatives. She also refers to the consumption discourse (Du Gay 1996, Rose 1990) in mentioning her husband's need to have the best car and the biggest house. She explains that when she changed her life, she still had to face constraints because of bringing her daughter up. In that case compliance was needed in order to not exclude her daughter from social norms.

	<p>For herself Brenda preferred a situation where she is doing four different jobs that as she says, correspond to different aspects of her self. In this way she is utilising the repertoire of making choices which is relevant to both the consumption discourse (Du Gay 1996, Rose 1990), where individuals construct their identity based on their freedom to choose products or services available in the market, as well as the 'spirituality' discourse where individuals construct their identity through selecting and combining ideas from various religious, philosophical and psychological traditions.</p>
<p><i>I just feel that I am finding my levels in work, I am finding things that actually suit me and whenever I am doing things that suit me, it's making my life a whole lot better, now I know that's not defining me but I think if you are true to the essence of you and stick with it, then your life is going to be fantastic, once you start to go off that and start to do things you don't like - I know you have to do things you don't like some of the time - then life becomes a whole lot harder. But if you stick to things that are true to yourself</i></p>	<p>Brenda finds that she is trying out different jobs to find things that suit her. Whenever she finds something that suits her she sticks to her 'essence'. Her identity is continuously revised in the light of every new experience faced but still informs the story of a self with a true essence and a coherent linear life course. In this way she is following a thread that she considers her 'essence' to make her life perfect. The concept of a life plan according to Berger et al. in</p>

<p><i>then your life is perfect or would be.</i></p>	<p>the Homeless Mind (1973) ‘becomes a primary source of identity’ because ‘the life plan is the basic context in which knowledge of society is organised in the consciousness of the individual’ (Berger 1973 p.70). Life planning then becomes central ‘in the meaning the individual attributes to his own biography’ (Berger 1973 p.72). Brenda sees that if she follows her essence in her life planning, then her life would be perfect.</p>
<p><i>So everything that I am doing is right for me this moment in time, I don't know how it defines me though but I know it's sort of , whatever there are four very different parts of me, you know, there must be different parts of me and each one is, at this moment in time, something in me a need. I mean my life isn't totally perfect, there's lots of things that I'd like to change about it but at this point in time it's as good as it's been in a long time because I am going with things that are suiting me and not doing things because I have to do it for other people or because I feel I ought to, to maintain an image. I am doing things because I, that's</i></p>	<p>From the two final quotes, it seems that Brenda is trying to make sense of how work is ‘defining’ her. Because she is finding it freeing to do four different types of work, she cannot gain a typical occupational identity from it as the one she had from her previous job in marketing. At the same time she seems to work on constructing a narrative that brings together all these four ‘different parts’ of her self. The reference point that brings all her ‘different parts’ together is her self as she says that she is ‘choosing’ these four types of work because she follows what she (her self) wants rather than doing things because of imposed imperatives or</p>

<p><i>what I want to do. And I thing if everybody did that in all areas of their life, life would be wonderful. ((laughing)). [q. 6.10]</i></p>	<p>for other people. This means that she excludes the internalised imperatives that she does not approve off (like guilt or obligation) as not of her self. In this she is congruent with this part of the ‘spirituality’ discourse explained in Chapter 5 that rejects the parts of the self that are perceived as socially imposed and encourages their rejection as ‘ego based’ or ‘fear based’ elements of the self that are not useful.</p>
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As stated above, Brenda’s account has been chosen as she is still in the process of career change and she therefore engages in making sense of her work changing experience. Following the above narrative, Brenda goes on to relate her previous conclusion about having to be ‘true’ to oneself at work with having to be true to oneself in relationships. She again explains that in relationships one should ‘go with a natural sort of essence of you’ rather than trying hard to make it work or trying to change the other person. In this way she is validating her explanation and extending it to other important aspects of life. This reveals again the permeable of the different aspects of life and again a link between work and relationships.

It seems that through this sense making narrative above, Brenda’s work identity process follows a circular pattern where she is going over her ideas and seems to be working with them until she is content with the answer she provides. She started off by contrasting her previous identity gained from her occupation with the freedom she has now to be herself, explained how this came about after her losing her job in marketing, went on to link her previous involvement in this type of occupational identification to other aspects of her life and to her social connections and she finally worked out how all this would define her. She

concluded using her self as a reference point from where she makes choices that she experiences as of her 'essence' rather than as socially imposed.

In this case Brenda seems to be making sense of her self by exploring and enjoying - as it came out of her overall account – doing four different types of work. The types of work she was doing at the time of the interview were data entry, hypnotherapy, marketing (for an alternative healing clinic now instead of a commercial company) and aura imaging. It is interesting here that Brenda has not chosen to change her career towards one more 'spiritual' occupation but she is choosing to follow four different types of work, two of which are related to 'spirituality' (hypnotherapy and aura imaging), one which is considered mechanistic (data entry) and the final one which is related to her previous work in marketing. The difference is that she is now working in marketing for an organisation (alternative healing clinic) in which she says she has developed a friendship with the people she works with as they *'talk same language and understand where I am coming from'*. She contrasts her previous work with her work in this organisation, observing that before *'more people (higher in the hierarchy) were making the decisions and nothing was really getting done'*, whereas now it is *'more down to me what I am doing'*, they have *'trust in me'*.

For Mead (1934) there are as many selves as social roles and, in the case of Brenda, choosing variable work roles would mean she is choosing to express variable aspects of self or variable selves. She is saying that this multiplicity of roles is freeing her from social constraints and also enables her to express four different aspects of herself. It is interesting that although Brenda talks about her essence, she at the same time finds freedom in expressing four different aspects of her self. This in relation to Brenda's choice of doing four different jobs to express herself might represent a view that the self is comprised of different aggregates that cannot be considered as separate from the 'realities' of everyday life.

6.3.2 Work as functional or inspirational

When talking about work most respondents distinguished between work as a means to sustain oneself and work as a meaningful activity or as a purpose in life. They often spoke about their early orientation towards work being instrumental (Goldthorpe et al. 1968) where they only needed the money or arbitrary where

they followed a particular occupation because that was what was available at the time. They then usually move on to comment on their changed orientation to work that is now meaningful and in most cases linked to a life purpose. At the same time they comment on being 'blessed' that within the current economic structures they can sustain themselves by doing work that is meaningful and enjoyable for them.

Glen below describes the inconsistency between his ideal and the prevailing view of work. Again he does not ascribe the problem to work itself but to a lack of the principle of genuinely valuing people. Similarly to popular writing in the field, he uses the discourse of work as a means of self actualisation where, through discourses of 'freedom of choice' and 'personal development', the individual at work is portrayed being 'in search of meaning, responsibility, a sense of personal achievement, a maximised 'quality of life' and hence of work' (Rose 1990 p.103). This in turn is thought to provide a sense of multiplicity of choice and authority to construct oneself. Gaining authority of self creation provides therefore the context to acquire the strength to choose a 'self fulfilling' (Rose 1996) path and work can be seen as a context within and through which the individual can be self fulfilled.

G: You work to earn money. You do a job to earn money, that's the kind of prevailing view of work; we don't see work as a vehicle for personal spiritual growth for discovering your greatest talents, for being creative, you know for most employers that's not what they are looking for, they

R: Would there be a place for everyone being fulfilled?

G: Yeah my vision in the world is that you could have a world like that, I don't know if it's ever going to happen but now I like to think that, you know in the past when I've done interviews people said to me things like 'who is going to drive the buses?' and 'who is going to clean the toilets?' and all those kind of things. But one of the things I talk about is that it's not just the work you do, it's the spirit with which you do it and I've seen people that have been street sweepers who are very fulfilled in what they do, I have seen people that drive trains who love it and I have seen people that clean toilets who love it and I have seen people who do all those things and hate it as well, so it's not just the work that we do, it's the attitude and consciousness with which we do it, it's simple.

[...] I think that the most important thing is that we genuinely value people. If you genuinely value somebody whatever job they are doing, to me that's part of spirituality. Not to use people but to value people, you know and somebody who answers the phones or cleans the toilet or carries the mail around the office they are very important people and they are valuable people, so to me it's got to do with valuing all human life and all work. So that's how we would get around this is to truly treasure people [q 6.11]

Although some participants elaborate on that every work, even work that can be considered menial is meaningful, most tend to discriminate between work that they consider creative to work that they consider purposeless. Eric said that he wouldn't be able to do a work like *'stashing shelves in a supermarket'* and Glen explains that he had to change his work because *'I think I got clear that I wasn't put on this planet to sell computers to Japanese bankers'*. This demonstrates the link participants construct between the type of work they are doing and their overall life and sense of self. Eric prefers to work with nature and people. He says *'I am not somebody who spends much time in small talk I am somebody wither is talking about something that seems to have some meaning or interest about the people or else I either go into humour or I shut up. I have three switches really. [...] Yeah in terms of what you are looking at here the spiritual imbues all aspects of my live now [...] now doing it with more deliberation because it affects the work I do and the way in which I do it with other people.'* And Glen presents himself saying *'I 'd probably describe my self as a creative soul, as an artist, I think artist and expert are the two things I would use to describe my sense of identity'* and he explains *'I suppose one of the ways I would see an artist is somebody who brings something from a higher spiritual dimension into the dimension of time and space, so I suppose an artist is like a portal in time, you bring something from the realm beyond time and space to the realm of time and space.'* [q 6.12]

All participants dress their work with meanings closely attached to their lives and identities. In this they seem to engage in an identity work process where the work they enjoy doing acquires meanings that provide a desirable identity and at the same time their sense of identity provides desirable meanings to attach to their work. Even Brenda in q. 6.10 above that seems to want to stop gaining her identity

from her previous work in 'marketing' explains her four different jobs now as reflecting four different aspects of her self. She does not detach her identity from work but provides new meanings to work and finds new links to her identity. Her identity work process as presented in quote 6.10 seems like a dialogue between making sense of her work and making sense of her identity. Since Brenda is still in the process of changing her work orientation and as she said, she 'was forced' to change jobs rather than deciding to do so, she seems to be working out the connections she wants between her work, her life and her identity. That is she tries to understand who she is by looking at what she does in her work and at the same time she explains what she does in her work as reflecting who she is (a multidimensional person expressing at work the four different aspects of herself).

It might seem that Sheila's account of work below has a more functional role than self-fulfilment, which is to provide her with structure and motivation. However, as she elaborates, it seems her view of structure and motivation in life is that they can provide meaning to her life such as that of seeing the clinic evolve. She says:

It keeps me occupied, truly over the last 18 months since (partner) died, work has just kept me occupied (.) to have motivation to get up and do something, it has been very important. But it has been more than that because I have been watching the clinic evolve and change and that's been really important too. But as much as anything it has given me a structure to my life, more structure than I've had for a very long time, because when I lived on my own and was just seeing individual clients there would be days when I didn't see anybody so I just stayed home and not do a lot but when I (.) I come here every day, every workday and sometimes weekends even. So it has become very important to me, more than just earning a living - and I don't earn a living. So yeah, it gives me structure and motivation. (Sheila) [q 6.13]

Like Sheila above, many participants defined work in both functional terms and self-fulfilment. Leila for example explained that: *part of it gives me purpose, part of it is economic, part of it is an expression of the intangibles of live, in that sense of spiritual practice. I wouldn't say my work is spiritual practice - it is in there somewhere...* Leila's work is both functional and self-fulfilling whereas Erica below is at a stage where although she is doing a fulfilling work in organisations, it has started to be more predictable and therefore not as interesting for her:

It's very important, it depends kind of how you define work as well, doesn't it? Cause you could say work is what you do for pay, but then work could be larger than that as well [...] Well there are different types I guess because the work that I do for my clients which is paid work that's always occupied an important place in my life but probably since I've taken up the yoga it's sort of become less important and I think I get more back from the yoga than I do from the work, so the balance has shifted a bit

And what do you get back?

I think more stimulation and development than the work for people in organisations it's always new and different but it is more predictable. So and maybe I don't have the same kind of passion for it that I did have and then I am now, it's not exactly that I have passion for the yoga but I feel it's more genuine, more authentic

[...] I think the people I meet through yoga are more genuine in their commitment to yoga certainly and we have a kind of shared interest base whereas people in the organisations there are all these different things going on so you have different drivers, there is quite a lot of cynicism which is understandable because of what people have been through and are going through. And that's very wearing, that sort of takes away energy rather than giving energy. So I'd rather be in an environment where I am getting positive energy not feeling I am giving a lot but getting drained. (Erica)[q 6.14]

Erica's account is reflective of a transitional period between doing a job as a business consultant in organisations that used to be interesting for her but now disappoints her due to the predictability of the problems or the cynicism she faces and moving the balance, as she says, to yoga that she finds more authentic. Again here the problem of people not being fulfilled in organisations owes to general cynicism and competitiveness. As in 7.1.4 at an individual level the perceived problem is that people do not gain authority over their lives and get stuck in doing non-fulfilling kinds of work.

Participants reported both functional (provide income, provide structure) and inspiring (to help people, to fulfil personal ambitions, to be inspired, to be fulfilled) attributes to work but they mostly seemed to follow certain types of

work that linked their need to maintain authority of self with their view of serving. The jobs they tend to follow are therefore mainly in self-employment and have to do with working with people.

6.3.3 Private and social responses to ‘Spirituality at Work’

Ashmos and Dunchon (2000) claim that ‘Spirituality at Work’ is about employees who understand themselves as spiritual beings experiencing a sense of purpose and meaning in their work as well as a sense of connectedness to one another and to their workplace community. ‘Spirituality at Work’ extends further than the individual, not only because individuals cannot be considered as separate from their social context but specifically in the case of this research’s participants because relatedness is a key concept in the way they see themselves and live their lives (see Chapter 4: 4.4 ‘spirituality’ and Identity at Work). Participants understand themselves as inseparable from the whole, they are highly reflective, show increased sensitivity to the social structures around them and chose occupations that involve working with people.

Within this process, they tend to shift their work orientations under the light of ‘spirituality’ related subjectivities and enact this shift by leaving work organisations and engaging in work that usually relates to working with people. All of the 16 participants work in occupations where they directly relate to people through teaching, consulting, coaching and therapy. Moreover, most engage in artistic endeavours that again reach other people through writing, painting, sculpture or music. In this way they become ‘ambassadors’ of their preferred way of working either through their own lives as an example or through encouraging the people around them towards it.

6.3.3.1 Changing life and career

So I think you know the work ethic then was very much in all that generation that you ‘had to do what you had to do’ really and ‘life is meant to be hard isn’t it?’ and you know ‘you shouldn’t be expecting to do what you really want to do in life’ ‘you just got to do what you have to do in life’ [...] my role models were really about that and my mother was experiencing angst on occasions on this busy lifestyle. She had to run a business, her husband was away, bringing up these kids

and you know she was really unhappy and pretty stressed at times about this, so you know, she was a role model in my life and I guess (.) part of me probably subconsciously was saying 'that's not what I want in my life really. I don't necessarily want to live like that'. (Michael)[q 6.15]

Michael gives in retrospect an explanation of his divergence from his parents' work ethic. Although he says that his role models were about having to work hard and not do what you enjoy doing, he is now providing continuity to his current view with the past by linking it to his subconscious. In this way he can remain the same person who had these experiences and chose to live differently. Utilising the term 'subconscious' enables the justification of work orientation shift and at the same time provides continuation of the self in that it can be the same self that had these role models but differentiated its course. As Carrette and King (2005) explain, 'psychology has an explanation for everything because it locates the sources of everything within the self' (p.64). Moreover, by locating the influences and decision within himself, Michael can provide a meaningful narrative of his starting off as working in a chemical company while at the same time maintaining two businesses to then selling everything to go to India and finally returning to England to become a writer and lifestyle consultant. There are nine more participants with narratives that follow the same pattern and have an element of development throughout the life course. All explanations given for major life changes are related to 'growing awareness' (through engaging with spirituality) which entails a change in values. This narrative pattern presents selves that gain authority of their lives, change their careers and personal lives and then explain it as both choice and purpose.

Gaining authority over one's self and life is usually expressed with acts of changing the self while changing the aspects of life that are considered incongruent with it. Sheila amusingly described her ex husband's disapproval of her new 'stronger' self when he said to her that if he had met her as she was after she changed, he would not have married her. She later described that her next partner enjoyed seeing her changing, he told her he noticed she was coming back changed from the workshops she was following and he wondered how she would come back every time.

Within a discourse that values subjective experience (Heelas and Woodhead 2005), change is welcomed and continuity is maintained through ascribed causal relationships and through the reference point of a self that can change but still maintains a sense of continuity. In the case of Michael the reference point is his subconscious that acquires the agentic power to choose how he wants to live and in the case of Sheila the reference point is her self who is changing and therefore can relate differently to different men in her life. In both cases the change is located within the self.

Choosing to change careers is described as the decision of an individual that gains authority over itself and takes life in its own hands. In this sense the self is agentic in making decisions, undertaking responsibility and at the same time expresses identity through decisions made. This pattern can be explained by Hall's concept of protean career (Hall and Associates 1996, Hall 1996, 2002, 2004, Briscoe, Hall and DeMuth 2006) where the person is responsible for the making of its career guided by its own values and identity. This research argues that one's values and identity do not guide one's career but rather identity, values and career interrelate and shape one another within processes of reflexivity and everyday life. However, the concept of protean careers is helpful here to explain an emphasis on subjective career success through self directed vocational behaviour (Briscoe et al. 2006) where work success is not driven by general socially accepted values of pay or promotion but rather by subjective criteria. Glen below explains how the incentives given by his boss did not appeal to his sense of self at work:

Ehm I think started expressing that and I think I started talking to my boss about it and it was partly, you know there was this kind of conversations where what was missing was nothing that he could give me [...] His answer was 'do you want more customers or a bigger territory or do you want more help?' and the answer was I didn't want any of that. I wanted more creativity, I wanted more passion, I wanted more ...more of me. I realised what was missing was me, you know, I was just playing a role to some extend (Glen)[q 6.16]

Subjective criteria for career success can explain participants' accounts of their choice to move towards careers which they feel have more inherent value and their career transitions to follow 'spiritual' work. They therefore choose more 'spiritual' careers and also downsize in the fashion of what Dehler and Welsh

(2003) call the 'oil-executive-to-schoolteacher style of transition' (p.118). This can be linked to wider societal movements such as 'downshifting' (Schor 2001, Elgin 1998) and the 'voluntary simplicity movement' promoting a 'less materialistic lifestyle as a more personally fulfilling, spiritually enlightening, socially beneficial and environmentally sustainable lifestyle' (Johnson 2004 p.527). The research of Moynagh and Worsley (2005) showed that there is no significant trend towards self employment or employment in micro companies and that this trend is unlikely to accelerate. However, Hamilton (2003) presents data that 25 per cent of British adults aged 30-59 have downshifted from 1993 to 2003, giving reasons as 'time with family', 'more fulfilment' and 'more balance'. Respondents' accounts mostly revolve around leaving formal work organisations for self-employment or to join a more 'spirituality' friendly organisation that is either an alternative organisation or a university in two cases. When they come across the overall 'spirituality' discourse, they acquire values and principles that clash with the priorities of profit making, environmental damage, disrespect for other human beings as well as with bureaucratic processes that reduce discretion and obstruct work.

In Sheila's words:

I realised I had enough knowledge, I had enough confidence and self belief to do things my own way. And I no longer wanted to be part of an organisation that told me what to do. [...]

They were very judgemental and speaking in such a degrading way (about the patients) [...] and I thought a lot about that, I had been like that and changed. I no longer wish to be part of the health service the way it is. [...]

There was something I also realised strongly. We had support meetingsthere was actually no great debrief it was more like a training session and we were told of the practicalities. Now I realise the role of 'supervision' [...] (Sheila) [q6.17]

It is also useful to say that in most cases people who left their jobs for more 'fulfilling' kinds of work are people who were professionally successful in their previous position.

Glen describes how he made a gradual transition to a less stressful environment to finally leave sales overall.

I think because I neglected my spiritual side I was very much focused on my kind of material ambition side. So I then switched to this other company and that time, you know, I earned reasonable money and I was very successful but you know looking back on it I know that my drive to be successful was partly driven by actually feeling a failure, so I was driven to be successful because I actually felt like I wasn't a success. So I was trying to prove what I didn't feel I was.

[...] Yeah reasonable money for that time of my life I did very well, yeah but I found it ultimately very stressful and I think increasingly I found it very unfulfilling and that is when I had my kind of turnaround time really, which was I did win a trip to Antigua, I did very well and I won a trip to Antigua and a trip to Austria skiing so in a way it was my most successful year and but when I was in Antigua I basically realised how unhappy I was, you know when I was lying on the beach with a beer I thought 'oh I don't want to go home, its too much stress, too much pain involved' [q 6.18]

Although the process of shifting to more 'spirituality' friendly work translates in most cases to a sacrifice of money, it also provides a way to compromise between being spiritual and of this world, since within the holistic discourse (Hadot 1995, Heelas and Woodhead 2005) the material world is not separated from the spiritual world.

Yeah because it was quite a high pressure business, it was 'every month can you bring me more business' so every month it was pressure. It wasn't every six months or every three months, it was every month so I think even at that stage I knew I wanted to get out but what happened was that some of the people that I worked for in that company went to work for a new company called (name), although they weren't a new company but they were a different company. It was still sales but I could see it was less pressure so they didn't pay commission they just gave you a salary so I got an interview there and I moved, I saw it as if I would move sideways with a view to moving out. So yes so I wanted to be in a sales environment where there wasn't so much pressure, with a view I think to get out of sales completely and but I never really enjoyed the company from the day I arrived

[...] I think I just got to the place where it became too painful not to leave. Now I am a great believer that we are motivated by inspirational desperation, you know, pain or joy and it was just becoming too painful for me to stay, I literally felt that if I didn't leave I would I was dying emotionally I might, I don't know if I'd die physically, I'd become one of the living dead (Glen)[q 6.19]

Most participants tend to follow a thread of explaining the transitional period from coming across 'spirituality' by mostly using the expression 'my awareness was increasing', to realising nuisances and value clashes in their (working and personal) lives, towards leaving the work organisation they used to work in (sometimes combined with leaving from relationships as well) and to finally going into self-employment or joining a more 'spirituality' friendly organisation. From then on most accounts utilise a repertoire about 'finding a way to do what they love most and find a way to survive in this world at the same time'. Through this repertoire, participants position themselves in the world as on the one hand fitting in through providing help to people and at the same time as rebel-heroes who manage to make a living doing 'what they love' within a capitalistic system that they perceive as stifling spirituality.

6.3.3.2 Influencing other people's lives and careers

Respondents do not only consider this process as important for their own lives, but they also encourage other people to go through it.

We all have authority to declare how our lives are going to be. And if we find ourselves in a context where that's not possible to be how we want to be, recognising what's truly important to us, our values and our standards, then we have the choice to move and find somewhere that does. Now (.) its there that people get trapped, it's when you say to them 'you could move' and some of them say 'I couldn't I need the money', well 'do you? Do you need as much money? Could you get this amount of money somewhere else?' you know its (.) I don't know (.) I think sometimes it is convenient for all of us to think we are trapped, to think we have to respond as others tell us to respond or as systems force us. No no, we are free to choose and part of that freedom to choose is to connect with ourselves and find out what is important to us. And I think that, I mean without ever using the word spiritual, that's the gift I already bring, that's the offer I

already bring to my clients: 'who are you? What is important to you? How do you want to be in this organization? Does this fit for you?' (Paul)[q 6.20]

Paul is encouraging his coaching clients to gain authority over their selves. He considers that some people can see themselves as 'trapped' but he sees this as a convenient excuse. The solution and the strength can be acquired through 'connecting' or knowing oneself and understanding what is subjectively important to one. Paul says he is bringing this gift to his clients, to encourage them to see what is important and what fits for them.

The change of life usually influences aspects that are considered to be socially imposed, such as status or money. Most of the times, respondents consider that it is very easy to be stuck in convenient jobs and relationships and that it requires a kind of discipline in order to change. Erica below discusses the balance between 'working to live' and 'living to work'. She comments on people using 'working to live' to justify their working in jobs they don't enjoy. She evaluates life and work and discusses the balance there.

It's that thing about whether you work to live or live to work. There are a lot of people in organisations who would say they work to live so they are doing a job that doesn't really connect with them always and they through a variety of different reasons they feel they have to do that job. So for example there is one person I work with who comes to mind who is a very, he is very interested in spiritual issues [...] he has a job in an organisation which is in audit, in accountancy, which he is very good at and I've been working with him about two or three years and the whole time he has been saying 'I really want to get out of this, I want to do something that is more meaningful but I can't because of the money and my lifestyle' and he is not prepared to make certain shifts like for one thing it would be giving up smoking which costs a lot to fund in doing something that could get him out of this work into something more meaningful. So we go over the same ground, I like him he is very interesting, he is stimulating, I understand his issues, but it's 'you are sort of stuck in this place' because it's their attitude towards work partly and things stuck in certain habits or patterns (Erica)[q 6.21]

Participants not only participate in the making but also in the maintenance of what Dehler and Welsh (2003) call the 'oil-executive-to-schoolteacher style of transition' (p. 118). They do this with their own example foremostly as the stories of transition acquire symbolic value where subjective life is valued. The example of someone leaving their corporate job for a more 'spiritual' one can act as a strong symbol for this transition. Since I started this research, I have heard numerous stories of people who experienced this kind of transition. Moreover, participants tend to communicate their example and encourage people who do not consider themselves 'spiritual' to follow the same path, particularly because the occupations participants choose to follow are related to working with people. In most cases, where participants are involved in coaching or consulting, they communicate frequently on a one-to-one basis with people who are disillusioned with their careers and work organisations in general.

6.4 A life's work

All participants considered their work an integrated aspect of their life and most do not value work as such but through its capacity to acquire meaning from and provide meaning to a whole life. Similarly to the concept of protean careers (Hall and Associates 1996) participants take ownership of their career decisions and adapt to changing circumstances throughout their lives, guided by subjective criteria of success. Influenced by the holistic discourse (Hadot 1995, Heelas and Woodhead 2005) they try to integrate the practical, tangible aspects of their work with the meaning it provides to their lives and according to the subjectivization thesis (Heelas and Woodhead 2005) they strive to maintain a congruence between their sense of self and the way this is presented through their everyday life. In this way they construct 'authentic lives' that as Svejenova (2005) asserts, 'in career terms, it can be hypothesized that an authenticity seeking individual is one willing to take initiative and responsibility for his or her career and able to achieve congruence between past and future, as well as between the private and public domains of one's self.' (p.951).

Participants express this process of life and career construction as both choice and purpose. Michael explains this as:

And in that sense I think that maybe we got a particular sense of direction for this particular lifetime and it is our job to find out what that is, get in touch with it as much as possible and express it with as little limitation really.

And then

Yeah, I guess the analogy is (.) we arrive in this life with the tools in our toolbox or the pallet with the colours for our painting and then it doesn't actually matter what we actually paint or what we build with those tools [...] (they) are decisions we take, choices we make [...] and we can apply those in almost unlimited ways really [...] that's a metaphor for me. (Michael)[q 6.22]

Summary

In Chapter 6, 'Careers Choices and Work Orientation', the identity process of addressing the personal and social identity tension is analysed. This process involves participants gaining authority over their lives (to break away from social conditionings), shifting their orientations to work (to accommodate the new meanings of work) and constructing notions of 'a life's work' (to integrate work and life). Aspects of unity here are endorsed through linking meanings of work with life, through holistic understandings of lived life as authority and through notions of service to humanity as a whole. Participants enact this process in ascribing new meanings to work, in changing their careers towards more 'spirituality-related' kinds of work and in striving to construct their life's work. Choosing to follow occupations that involve 'working with people', participants do not only change their lives and careers but encourage people who do not consider themselves spiritual to follow similar paths. Moreover, participants through their life and career choices participate in wider work narratives of protean careers and of downshifting.

7 Organising Work

The previous chapter dealt with the way respondents handle the tensions between their personal and social identities and change their lives and careers to accommodate their shifting orientations to work. This chapter presents the respondents' handling of the tension between their self and others. In particular it looks at the way identity is created in interrelation with the organising of work and at the same time how 'spirituality-related' notions of work inform participants' forming of networks, partnerships and organisations. Although certain critical writers assert that 'spiritual people' follow individualistic patterns and do not understand the relation between self and society, this chapter argues that the interrelation between self, organisation and society is ingrained in the spiritual discourse through subjectivities of holistic thinking, reflexive relationships and creative interrelation with 'reality'.

The chapter is divided in three main sections. The first section presents respondents' disillusionment with current work organisations. Similarly to academic research (Cavanagh 1999, Ashmos and Duchon 2000, Giacalone and Jurkiewicz 2003, Krishnakumar and Neck 2002) that sees 'spirituality' as a response to the worsening conditions of modern workplaces and the stifling of the human spirit, most respondents of this research express their concern on issues such as the imposing of irrational and meaningless tasks, rules or procedures that block everyday work as well as with the habituation of unhelpful ways of relating. The second section looks at how participants bring together elements from business related and 'spirituality' related discourses to develop alternative viewpoints and structures of creating and sustaining various forms of organisations. In this process, subjectification occurs in dialogue with wider organisational manifestations through increased reflexivity (in person and with others), constant engagement with 'reality' as well as through combining elements from business related and 'spirituality' related discourses to try out new ways of organising work.

7.1 Disengagement from work organisations

The critical literature on SaW focuses on exploitation (Bell and Taylor 2003, 2004 Milacci and Howell 2003), the new Protestant ethic (Bell and Taylor 2003) and whether work organisations will want to get the employees soul or even if SaW is just another management fad (Fernando 2005) to encourage enthusiasm at work and motivation. From this perspective, the phenomenon of ‘Spirituality at Work’ can be seen to contribute as a moral justification to what Boltanski and Chapello (2005) call the the new spirit of capitalism (see also Chapter 2). On the opposite side, the more affirming literature (Dehler and Welsh 1994, Milliman et al 2003, Tishler et al. 2002, Giacalone and Jurkiewicz 2003) supports spiritual initiatives within organisations and suggests new ways of integrating ‘Spirituality at Work’ in order to increase efficiency and even profit.

In accord with the theoretical argument, people who consider themselves spiritual seem to be as disappointed from work organisations as many employees in current work organisations. Current work organisations are not a satisfying place to work for many people, whether they ascribe to spiritual values or not, and there is a growing trend to leave formal work organisations in order to pursue a simpler life (Johnson 2004) or self employment (Roberts 2006). In the wider literature on work this disillusionment is attributed to changes in the employment contract (Robinson and Rousseau 1994) that are weakening the employment relationship such as job instability, risk, increased insecurity (Heery and Salmon 2000, Burke and Cooper 2000) as well as to the consequent negative emotional effects on the individual such as feelings of isolation, increased stress, decreased trust and commitment to the organisation (Robinson and Rousseau 1994, Thornhill et al. 1997, Sennet 1998, Worrall et al. 2000, Burke and Cooper 2000).

From the sixteen participants, nine left their jobs in formal work organisations to follow a more ‘spirituality related’ career, three are in the process of changing their careers, three had followed various alternative work paths from the beginning of their career and one was made redundant from one of her jobs (see Brenda Chapter 6: 6.3.1.). It was only Brenda who was affected by corporate downsizing that the literature (Tombaugh and White 1990, Thornhill et al. 1997, Heery and Salmon 2000, Burke and Cooper 2000) uses as an explanation of

employees' disillusionment and therefore research participants can be distinguished from the literature on job insecurity. All the above pressures and job insecurity affect the overall culture of the organisation (Worall et al. 2000) and can therefore influence everyone working in current work organisations but, there are still people who do not leave their corporate jobs (Peiperl et al. 2000) to find meaning in their lives.

An explanation might be found in considering identity issues as it seems that the underlying pattern is the incongruence of the personal story with the collective story of the organisation. In the case of most participants of this research, what caused their leave from formal work organisations appears to be linked to identity issues. In their narratives 'spirituality' related subjectivities emerge to generate new viewpoints and approaches to work. As the spiritual discourse provides an overall worldview as well as values and principles to guide everyday living, it has the capacity to affect participants' work orientations (see also Chapter 6: 6.3).

7.1.1 Identity and organisational control

As we follow Zoë's narrative on her work experience at a factory, the principles of scientific management and their unintended consequences are unfolding.

Zoë on organisational control A

I used to get a summer job and it was at (product packaging industry) the factory. Another friend found the work for me, she was working there for the summer [...]. Paid really well because we didn't have to pay in the way of taxes you see. [...] It was as easy as that [...] now that was a really big influence, that really did open my eyes because at that time we had to start at 7 o'clock and we finished at 3:30 we were only allowed a morning break of 15 minutes and we were allowed a lunch time of half an hour and it was very very very strict and we would go in there and the women who worked there what they had to do was wrap a little finger bandage as big as this; and they gave the students the jobs that the women didn't want to do so they gave me this job of wrapping a tiny little finger bandage in a piece of paper. So I had a pot of glue, I had to wrap this bandage and stick it. I had to do so many a day and what happens is, I don't know if you have heard of Time and Motion, it is piecework so when you start a job they say for example 'you have to make 300 of these bandages in a day' and they've got someone in

with a stopwatch to time everybody doing the job, Time and Motion, and they get this person in and they say 'this job can easily be done 400 in a day' so you have 4 days in which you have to get up to the number 400 and if in the end you didn't get to the number, it is a disciplinary thing and if it goes on you can be fired. So that is your basic wage and anything that you do over that you get a bonus for up until a time and a third. [q. 7.1]

At the beginning of her narration, Zoë seems to feel the need to justify her reasons for getting a summer job at a product packaging factory, explaining that she was doing this job because it paid well. This need can be linked to Zoë's identity as an artistic person, a spiritual person as well as someone who chooses not to be paid for her work most of the time. As she also explains in the last part of her narrative, she could only cope with this work in the factory because it was just a summer job and she realised through this experience that this would not be a suitable work for her (see also Chapter 6: 6. 3.2).

In this first part of the narrative Zoë is listing elements of scientific management saying that she had to perform a very specific task of piece work on her own, the task did not require any skill so students were hired over the summer to do the same job with the workers (even though the workers seemed to give away the tasks they 'didn't want to do'), during their work there was someone with a stopwatch measuring output numbers and setting the standards and finally remuneration was linked to output providing a basic wage on the standard and higher incentive for further output. The whole process was very strict in terms of timing, monitoring, measuring and disciplinary action. Zoë's account listing Taylor's principles, without having any business training, demonstrates the simplicity of scientific management as a system (Nelson 1992). Time and Motion studies are an explicit example of scientific management to monitor and to coordinate the fragmented parts of tasks in order to maximise control and efficiency. Nevertheless, the following part of Zoë's narrative presents a different image:

Zoë on organisational control B

Because I was very artistic and very used to using my hands and making sculptures and things I was quick, I was so quick so after a day I could do 400 easily and after two or three days I was up to the maximum that I was allowed to do. I was up to time and a third

and I thought everybody would be pleased with me and the supervisors were pleased with me but I went to the toilet at the end of the day and this old lady followed me and she said 'how many of those are you doing in the day?' and I said (...) I can't remember what the exact number was, and she said, 'don't you go over I am telling you, we had one girl having nervous breakdown on that job' she said, 'what happens is you go over time and a third and you go back to your college or school or whatever and we have to have Time and Motion to come in and they'll put the day number up, so don't you dare go over' and I was terrified I was sixteen, I was shocked, I was so shocked... So I said 'no I won't', so then I was in the position of, I didn't know what to do, when I was getting to the end of the day I didn't know what to pretend and I would do 50 for the next day. So that really bothered me and it surprised me that that happened [q. 7.2]

Zoë here presents herself as an artistic person who can use her hands efficiently. She interestingly uses artistic resources to explain her efficiency in a deskilled job bringing together elements from craftsmanship and the scientific model of fragmented and deskilled manual work.

She is trying to make sense of her experience as she is talking about being proud to be efficient and to rationally expect to be pleasing everyone with her work but although the supervisors were pleased, the other workers were not. The older lady who frightened her about not going over her number of output represents what Zoë is not; that is a part of the system, the worker who does this job for a living and at the same time does not enjoy it but makes an effort to maintain it at the same level. The linking of remuneration to output in order to combat what Taylor termed as 'soldiering' does not seem effective in this instance as workers prefer to maintain the standard output and receive the standard wage. The irrationality of rationality here is that by changing the standard of daily output constantly the value of the reward is diminishing, since the effort to produce more than the standard would only provide a short term reward until the standard would be raised for everyone and from then on a higher amount of effort would be needed only to reach the standard output. Therefore, even in economic terms, the relative value of reward to effort would be decreasing.

As it is apparent here, scientific management demonstrates the flaw of being single-mindedly rational in that it failed to look at rational calculations from different sides (the paradox of organising) as well as in that rationality is not based on universal laws but socially constructed and it is therefore subject to power

structures, arbitrariness and unfairness. The strongest critique of scientific management is that it does not account for the human factor trying to appeal one-sidedly to economic rationale, that it changed the balance of power towards management and that, contrary to what it proclaimed, it was an unfair system supporting capitalistic structures (Braverman 1974). In terms of morality, Weber (1930) contemplated on whether rationality would create ‘specialists without spirit’ and ‘sensualists without heart’ (p.182) that would act on individualistic grounds. Zoë was facing the tension between what she principally thought was right and the supervisors encouraged and what she realised was also justifiable in terms of people’s actual lives.

In the last stage of this part of the narrative, Zoë explains her frustration of being forced to consent to the shop-floor culture. Her example is consistent with Burawoy’s (1979) ethnography of a factory where the piece rate system enabled a culture of ‘making out’ and workers were creating a ‘kitty’ for the output over 140% that was not rewarded. Zoë found the reasons provided by the lady as fair but she did not know what to do at work and she could not react to the lady’s oppressive behaviour (she says: I was only sixteen). She did not only get bored because of the type of the task but also from not doing as much as she could and she therefore used to prepare 50 more pieces for the next day, hiding her actual output. Zoë chose to comply by creating her own resistance of producing extra output and hiding it. But it was not only Zoë who could not make sense of the situation, the lady talked about a girl having a ‘nervous breakdown on that job’ revealing organisational talk that emphasised employees’ mental health and undermined the system’s mechanistic direction for efficiency. This story was justifying the workers’ keeping down the standard rate and at the same time maintained the system of a mechanic work completed without many side effects (such as having nervous breakdowns). Choosing to maintain the output levels at an achievable rate was an unintended consequence of the system’s design but at the same time it was preventing the system from collapsing. In the final part of the narrative below, Zoë provides the grounds behind the whole process she explained, validates the workers’ doing of this job and separates herself as someone who decided she did not want to do it as a permanent job:

Zoë on organisational control C

and the other thing about the job was that I couldn't believe that people spend such a big part of their life at work [...] I am thinking, this becomes your life you know and these poor women would sit in one position the whole day wrapping these bandages and they loved it, they said they didn't like to be on holiday, they enjoyed it, they liked the money, they liked the situation and they said they used to daydream because it was so easy to do they would daydream and things and I made my mind from that day on 'this is not something that I want to do' but because it was only a student job then I could cope with it and I did that for three years during the summer and that really did open my eyes on to what the working environment could be, when you have to sit in one place doing such a boring job and that was somebody's life and it was a big part of their life, I thought that really isn't for me at all. (Zoë) [q. 7.3]

At the final section of the narrative Zoe's frustration for her own experience turns to compassion for the other women who were permanently working in the factory 'in one position the whole day wrapping these bandages'. Although she feels sorry about the 'poor women', she justifies their situation by saying that they loved it, liked the money and that the work was so easy they could daydream all day. Combining the 'work as a means to an end' with 'resistance by daydreaming' elements of work discourses, the workers were resisting the factory's oppression and at the same time maintaining it a bearable (to the point of not having nervous breakdowns) level while using it to daydream (which is not a rational or economically effective activity). It seems that Weber's term 'specialists without spirit' would mostly describe the way work can be designed for machines, whereas the agents in it seem to be more daydreamers without a purpose.

The workers in Zoe's account avoided their 'reality' of working in the factory choosing to escape to their daydreaming. They achieved that in separating their doing (wrapping the bandages) from their thinking (daydreaming) in order to maintain their mental health (not to have a nervous breakdown). Zoë is explicit about the subjectification power of this situation, she says 'this becomes your life', 'that was somebody's life' and 'this is not something that I want to do'. For her it would probably not be bearable to separate her thinking from her doing. Working as an artist and an acupuncturist she is used to concentrating and putting all her bodily, emotional, mental and spiritual effort into her work and in saying

that the way of working ‘becomes your life’ she justifies her holistic approach (Hadot 1995, Heelas and Woodhead 2005).

7.1.2 Identity and ‘post-bureaucratic’ initiatives

To handle disillusionment with bureaucratic structures management literature (Meyer and Allen 1997, Johnson 2004) emphasises the replacement of control with commitment as a post-bureaucratic way of organising. Academic commentators criticise the argument on a transition towards post-bureaucratic management (Grey 2005, Williams 2007), suggesting that a trend towards more flexible structures relates mostly to hybrid organisations. Alvesson and Thompson (2005) present evidence to demonstrate ‘that existing and new forms of bureaucratic structure and action remain dominant in most areas, though in more complex hybrids than earlier periods’ (p.486). As Williams (2007) argues, employees are not passive objects and therefore schemes that are seen as ‘post-bureaucratic’, such as HRM initiatives do not have the capacity to change employees’ subjectively held values and belief systems (p.175).

Due to holistic ideas linking mind, body and spirit (Heelas and Woodhead 2005) as well as the subjectivization thesis (Woodhead and Heelas 2000, Heelas and Woodhead 2005) emphasising subjective life, participants seem to place more emphasis on values and beliefs that sustain a spiritual identity than on organisational initiatives, even when these organisational initiatives are part of the ‘post-bureaucratic’ efforts to ‘transform the identity and associated priorities of employees’ (Knights and Willmott 1999). As it seems from participants’ examples, it is not mainly the initiatives as such that create identity tensions, but mainly the way the initiatives are implemented and the relationships within work organisations.

In the quote below, Zoë explains why she preferred to leave her job as a college lecturer and gives the example of her encounter with the quality manager of the college asking her to provide a program for the Tai Chi programme she was teaching. Providing a program with goals and points of achievement is an action that threatens her identity as someone who follows a Taoist way of life:

[..] now my way of life is the Taoist way of life which is you don’t set goals, you don’t try to achieve anything, you try to be who you are and let life take its course

and live in the moment. But try being that and a college lecturer oh, it doesn't mix very well. [...]

I kept having a phone call from a woman who was the quality person [...] She wanted me to write what I wanted them to achieve ... so I wrote what I thought and sent it back. She said I don't understand a word of this— because it was all Tai Chi terminology so I said 'Look we are coming from two very different angles here, can we get together and kind of thrash something out between ourselves?' So she said 'ok ok ok'. So... she invited me to the college and I went along, she was late she'd been in a meeting or something and you will find that they are always stressed they've always been to a meeting and they've always (.) carry these papers and 'oh do you know what such and such said' and I here am sitting all lovely and calm and she, you know, she said:

- Now let's do this program: what do you want them to achieve at the end of the ten weeks?

-Nothing!

-Nothing?

-Yeah... ehm... you know Tai-Chi is based on a philosophy called Taoism and... you know... you don't set goals.

-You are a college lecturer you have to set goals.

-Well no in Tai-Chi they don't set goals. She could not get her head round it, so I said look [...] and then I look at the old move and if it needs adjusting I will correct it.

-Oh consolidating learning that's what you are doing!

-[...] and that happens every week...

-Right... ok... so... what do you want them to achieve at the end of the ten weeks?'

[...] So that was one of the deciding things for me not to teach in the college, I would like to go back to teaching but not like that

Zoë said that in the end she devised a plan and handed it in for all her classes. The quality manager did not care if the plan was accurate or not but rather cared to complete the processual aspect of her job. This is contradictory to the notion of

‘quality’ in the first place but also shows the quality managers’ power to demand a program, to indicate to Zoë that as a college lecturer she has to set goals and to dress Zoe’s Tai Chi jargon with TQM jargon -‘consolidating learning’. In response, Zoë exercised her power to mock the system by creating a fake program and her power to leave from the organisation. As Knights and McCabe (1999) assert, ‘the concern in TQM to reconstitute employees or to achieve a culture change through internal/external customers and empowerment discourses are rarely realized in practice, because they fail to address the more fundamental structures of power and identity’ (pp. 203-204).

Apart from Zoë’s experience above there are numerous similar examples where ‘post-bureaucratic’ initiatives fail to engage participants’ sense of identity. Leila and Sheila who used to work in the NHS also mentioned their dissatisfaction with the way supervision was carried out. Beth, who worked as a consultant in a multinational corporation and at the time of the interview was engaged in a change management project for another multinational corporation, expresses her feeling restrained from doing her work as she would want to:

here I am in an organisation where I am not just representing me, I am representing (company), so if I am representing my company, I feel like that puts more of a boundary around the risks that I can take with other people (Beth)

These examples do not only question the efficiency of ‘post-bureaucratic’ initiatives but also challenge the implementation of similar ‘Spirituality at Work’ initiatives within current work organisations. The next part of this chapter presents the ways in which participants report how they create networks, partnerships and organisations that foster the expression of ‘spiritual’ identities at work.

7.2 Creating networks, partnerships and organisations

Organisational structures and culture are part of the wider structure and culture of society as a whole. Because of holistic discourses (Hadot 1995, Heelas and Woodhead 2005) underlining the connection of parts and wholes, participants in this research understand they have to manage the interrelation between wider societal structures / cultures and the organisations that are part of them. Therefore participants often comment on their efforts to find ways to do the work they love and manage to survive within structures that are prioritising profit. To achieve

this, they bring together resources from spiritual and business discourses and create interesting approaches to organise work.

The new organisations that participants own, construct or become part of emphasise flexibility and seem to mainly adopt managerial practices that Watson (2003) categorises as ‘indirect control attempts’. Watson (2003 p.112) presents the ‘ideal types’ of direct and indirect approaches in the pursuit of managerial control and lists practices related to each of the two types of control. He emphasises that organisations will attempt to maintain a balance between the various types of flexibility and lean towards either direct or indirect control managerial practices. Below, participants’ descriptions of organisational control in formal and alternative work organisations are presented along Watson’s (2003, p.112) list of practices related to the ideal type of indirect approach in the pursuit of managerial control. For each practice, Leila’s description has been used to demonstrate its application in the organisation and its link to Leila’s identity. This section focuses on Leila’s account since her description of the organisation she is a director of and her identification with this organisation are closer to the ideal type of indirect control. Views of other participants have been added where appropriate.

a. Empowerment and discretion applied to activities	
<i>I wanted to work with (organisation) because I wanted to have a direct influence over what I do in my working life and I like what (organisation) does so it's the influence and actually what they do that made me want to be part of it. [...] (Leila) [q. 7.4]</i>	Leila here expresses her need for gaining authority (see Chapter 6) over her life and work. She says she wanted to have direct influence over what she does in her ‘working life’ rather than just saying that she wanted to have an influence on her work. She also explains that the way the organisation operated made her want to ‘be part of it’. In this she again links her working identity to her overall life and to the organisation.
Also regarding this point, Brenda	Brenda argues here that managerial

<p>contrasts the organisation she was previously working with the organisation she is working in now: <i>In that larger org, if I can give you bit of history, they brought new management and got rid of middle management so you were either staff or director, in between, you are an adult, but they didn't include you in meetings, the communication was poor. So what was happening is that one manager would come in and say 'do this' and another one 'do that' and then 'oh we changed our mind' [...] Now they are saying to me 'this is what we want to achieve', they have got ideas, we will discuss it and then I will plan and (do the work that is required) [...] Before, everybody seemed to come from different directions, they didn't seem to get a clear idea of what they were doing. (Brenda)</i></p>	<p>efforts for lean structures and directive control can be very disorganised and unstable in their direction. She contrasts this with the more laissez faire style in her new work and finds that the latter is more effective. This also relates to the point 'f' below concerning 'high trust culture' as Brenda implies that in this new organisation she is trusted to turn the owner's ideas into practice.</p>
<p>b. Loose rules (policies)</p>	
<p><i>So we have the minimum (policies) and they tend to be principle based rather than procedurally based in (organisation). So you have to work it out, it's like 'ok that's the principle I am working to what do I need to do in relation to that?' so you always have to think through. (Leila) See also section 7.2.1.1</i></p>	<p>The principle based policies enable Leila to 'think through' and not to have to follow strict procedures. Apart from providing her with more freedom in terms of policies, Leila suggests they enable her to be reflective about her work. During her life story narration, she often expressed that principle based policies allow for more discretion at</p>

	work and do not block actions that would require ethical decisions. Her opinion is mainly based on her previous experience with the health service where she experienced bureaucratic blocks in her efforts to help others.
c. Flexible procedures	
Rational organising can be constraining even for management. Leila says that in her role in the management of the NHS there was <i>‘Lots of Expectation of what I had to do rather than what I saw was needed and I couldn’t act on that. So I felt constrained.’</i> She explains that <i>‘In management I was very interested in staff being happy and I felt management needed to support the practitioners that was what’s important to me and part of that would be have some interest in the development of those practitioners nurses or paramedics so training might be important but I was told “no you can’t do that, you have to be a trainer if you want to do that, you are a manager so you have to write policies”. I just find that really boring’ (Leila)</i>	As a link to the above point, this is Leila’s description of the blocks that very structured procedures and policies create. She supports that these blocks did not enabled her to train, develop and support her staff. Another drawback was that they did not allow her to make her work more interesting. In this Leila presents herself as a person who enjoys working with people and who also enjoys challenge in her work. Below, in point h ‘loosely bureaucratic structure and culture’, Summer believes that putting in place a flexible system is the key to success in organisations.
d. Decentralised structures	
<i>Like I said at the moment we are working out in which direction do we need to go in. [...] So we are all in it</i>	Leila stressed many times that the directors of the organisation are together in free association. This relates

<p><i>and we are part of it but we haven't reconfigured the shape. So I feel absolutely part of it but I think it is a question at the moment for some people who are directors currently of 'do I want to continue that, having that role?' because it's very demanding and I know for example one person is going to decide, has decided not to continue so and that's not that they are leaving (organisation) but not to hold the direction of the organisation. So that will change the shape again. [...] I think that's where we have to see because we have to be together in free association (Leila) (see also 7.2.2.1)</i></p>	<p>to her above observations - that they don't follow strict rules and procedures - as well to the wider inclination to dismantle formal authority and place authority on personal insights (Woodhead and Heelas 2000, Heelas and Woodhead 2005) (see also Chapter 6).</p> <p>Through this narrative Leila is trying to balance the tension between being in free association and being committed as part of the organisation.</p>
<p>e. High commitment culture</p>	
<p><i>When (organisation) first started in 1993-94 I worked a ton, you know long long hours, that is like the same for any organisation that is just getting established, you have to put the hours in. but over the past few years I've worked less. It's still over, it is more than a 40 hour week but, you know, that is by choice. (Leila) [q. 7.5]</i></p>	<p>Leila's eagerness to work in the organisation does not seem to come from coercion, neither from instrumental orientation to work, but as in Kunda's (2006) analysis of commitment in a high tech corporation, it seems to stem from her commitment, her identification with the organisation as well as from 'experiential transaction, [...] in which symbolic rewards are exchanged for a moral orientation to the organisation (p. 11). Kunda (2006) argues that corporations might use normative control to achieve a high commitment culture with the</p>

	<p>application of the minimum traditional controls. He supports that ‘in short, under normative control it is the employee’s self – that ineffable source of subjective experience- that is claimed in the name of corporate interest’ (p.11). However, in this case, the organisational interest was Leila’s interest as she was participating in the organisation’s establishment and she identified with the organisation. Therefore Leila has been developing her self and the organisation at the same time through a relational identity process.</p>
<p>Further on during her life story telling, and in response to my observation that she uses more ‘we’ instead of ‘I’, Leila says:</p> <p><i>I think its because the bits that we commit to is probably what we have in common, I think that’s why, how I can say ‘we’, so the bit that I identify myself would be I’d always want to work in a place where I felt I could make a difference and that it was developmental, it was towards sustainability of people and the planet rather than destroying it. Yes I don’t want to be involved in arms, I don’t want to be involved in...[...] those kinds of things and I’d say everybody in</i></p>	<p>Leila’s account presents a strong sense of identification with the organisation of which she is a director and with the other members of the organisation. Leila’s identification is related to Pratt’s (1998) explanation of holistic links to organisational identification where ‘individuals may seek to identify with an organisation in order to find meaning and sense of purpose in one’s life’ (p.183).</p> <p>While Leila states that she can express her values (Neck and Milliman 1994) and ‘spirituality’ (Cash and Gray 2000, Lips-Wiersma and Mills 2002) in the organisation, she also actively participates in the construction of the</p>

<p><i>(organisation) would subscribe to that so I think that's why the 'we' is pretty strong and it is just that the places we can fulfil that are many and varied so unless we choose one that we can all continue with, we might stretch ourselves too thin and it may be that actually it would be better to split into two in order to ease the tension. (Leila)</i></p>	<p>organisation's values and direction to 'make a difference'.</p>
<p>f. High trust culture</p>	
<p><i>Oh yes all the time, and petty, the pettiness of some colleagues would get in the way so and I think that was often envy, you can not have that good a time so there was a time when I was working part time with (organisation) and part time with the health authority and the health authority had brought (organisation) in and I was asked to do the work and I cleared it out with personnel but someone reported me saying I was being paid twice, once by the health authority and once by (organisation), it wasn't the case at all and I just think that is just petty, just like, why not speak to me, but (...) and other times just the, you know, not getting support, like nobody, we didn't</i></p>	<p>In her description of the distrust she experienced in the health authority when someone reported her unfairly for being paid twice, Leila says that 'pettiness [...] would get in the way'. This seems to be an important episode for Leila as she shifts from identifying with the organisation she is 'part of' now (and her consistent use of 'we') to expressing her disappointment due to the distrust and the uncaring responses she received in her previous work.</p> <p>She links trust, support and collegiality to fulfilment and interest at work by implying that it would have been useful if she would have been asked about her fulfilment and ways to develop her role. This also links to point 'a' concerning</p>

<p><i>have appraisals when I was in the NHS, that was one of the things I was bringing in but I never had an appraisal, never had supervision, never I was asked about do I get fulfilment in my role? How might I do that? What scope is there to develop the role? It was so boring, it was really really hard. (Leila)</i></p>	<p>‘empowerment and discretion applied to activities’.</p> <p>Moreover, lack of trust seems to be associated with procedural blocks in organisations as Leila’s colleague’s reporting would stir a procedural set of transactions. Similarly in point ‘a’ above, Brenda’s managers would not include her in the meetings and then each one would give different directions to her.</p>
<p>g. Culture of mutual interests</p>	
<p><i>I found that quite a hard time really, I enjoyed the work that I was doing but I couldn’t hold my head up as high as I feel I can now, I guess because we were testing it out and seeing, and ‘is what we think right?’, ‘will it work?’, ‘will other people be interested?’ so as we, afterwards we found actually ‘yeah that’d be great’, ‘tell us more’ then it was like ‘oh oh ok then’. So that’s been good and much more above ground I think it’s, there’s many different directions we could go in and it is like have we moved together or not, that is the question.</i></p> <p><i>More and more so, I feel more and more confident, I remember when I was first, we were first working it felt like</i></p>	<p>Leila presents here the work they do in her organisation as distinct and innovative. She explains that when they first started she didn’t feel as confident as she felt when people outside the organisation started expressing their interest. Being identified with the organisation and its work from the start, Leila presents her work identity as changing with the circumstances. She says that at first she was feeling they (her and her colleagues) were reserved until they found response from clients and they gained a good reputation. She is now confident and eager to go out and present the organisation’s work. Leila tends to speak for the group and uses ‘we’ whenever she talks about the work content rather than using ‘I’ or</p>

<p><i>we worked as an underground organisation really, like ‘we are doing this but lets not tell anyone in case they want to stop us’ it s felt like that. But now it feels like ‘actually now we are more established, we’ve got a good reputation’. I feel like [...] I am wanting to ensure that the finance does not take a lot of my time up because I do want to get out in the world and let other people know about what we do(Leila)</i></p>	<p>even the name of the organisation.</p> <p>Kunda (2006) observed that people in high commitment organisations can become ‘submerged in a community of meaning that is to some extend monopolized by management: a total institution of sorts’ (p.224). In this case, Leila seems to be submerged in the meanings related to the work she and her colleagues do in the organisation and the ‘whole person approach’ (see below point ‘h’). This approach seems to provide meanings that are relevant for both the organisation’s work and Leila’s identity. However, in this case, the meanings linking the organisation with Leila work in a relational manner rather than as ‘a total institution’. The difference might lie in the direct input of Leila and the rest of the community (the other people included in Leila’s we) into the creation and development of the meanings. This is reflected in Leila’s account of ‘their’ concern of whether they have moved together and - as stated in other parts of her narrative- in which direction they should be going.</p>
<p>h. A loosely bureaucratic structure and culture.</p>	
<p><i>I think right from the beginning I ...doing something that has never been done before.... and bringing people</i></p>	<p>An emphasis on the relational set up of the organisation is evident from all the above points. In Leila’s organisation, it</p>

<p><i>together who historically never work well together and to listen to people, to listen to the right people, to involve the right people because that's what's made it work and it still, the project is still going on and it is still successful. And that's what's made it successful. So for me what I brought in was how I approach things and being aware of who you need to involve and developing that relationship. Because it is the relationship and the understanding that is going to make it work (...) and having (.) a system in place that allows for flexibility not a system that is rigid. This is the way you can do it, if you do it that way then it is not going to work, it's having something that is fluid and that responds to a need to change, you can work round it and that's when I know that I am good at starting things and getting it going and where I get bored it's just maintaining it (...) everything is the same, no challenge, and that is when I knew I needed my next challenge in life. (Summer)</i></p>	<p>is the open to interpretation policies, the use of 'we' and the continuous reflection from all the members of the organisation on 'where they are going' that represents a loosely bureaucratic structure and culture.</p> <p>In addition, Summer explains that it was the relationships and involvement of people who hadn't worked together before as well as the flexibility of the system that worked in a project she did with the public sector and received an award. She links her success to her identity as a person competent in building relationships and who is also 'good at starting things and getting it going'.</p>
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<p><i>It does feel, changing time, transformational time for me in terms of that being confident that what we do is quite different to certainly many training organisations and I think that is the whole person approach that embodies the spiritual as well as the functional. (Leila) [q. 7.8]</i></p>	<p>Finally Leila expresses her confidence that the work ‘they’ do is distinctive and she experiences this as having a transformational impact on her identity. She emphasises, like all the participants, the importance of relating the functional with the spiritual (see also Michael q 5.1). While in her terms it is the ‘whole person approach’ that seems to enable her and the organisation to bring together the spiritual and the functional. As seen through the previous points, this might translate for Leila’s organisation into a ‘loosely bureaucratic structure and culture’ as although there are policies and procedures in place, they tend to be ‘loosely’ defined and ‘flexible’ or subject to interpretation (see point b on principle based policies). Moreover, relationships within the organisation are constantly defined and redefined through everyday work as it is depicted in Leila’s account when she states that ‘they’ keep reflecting on how they have grown and where they are going.</p>
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As it is evident from the quotes above, when creating various forms of organisations, participants combine elements from spiritual and organisational discourses. Most importantly they link their identity construction to their working lives. The critical theorists support that organisations seek to create high commitment cultures and a flexible and adaptable workforce that will accept a potential downshifting (Casey 2002) or accept situations as they are (Wallis 1984) in order to serve specific organizational goals. However, from Leila’s account, as

well as from other participants' accounts, it seems that although participants engage in high commitment cultures, they do not tend to accept situations as they are (considering that nine participants left their jobs in formal work organisations to seek 'spirituality' related work, see also Chapter 7: 7.1) but they rather engage in continuous reflection both personally and in organisational contexts. Moreover, the organisations they form or describe as operating with 'spiritual' values are of small scale and tend to engage in reflective meetings about their direction. Therefore the organisational direction is seen to be formed in interrelation rather than being imposed on organisational members.

Further on this section is divided in two parts, the first dealing with constructing organisational structures and the second with constructing relationships.

7.2.1 Constructing organisational structures

7.2.1.1 Rules, policies and procedures

As analysed in the previous part of the chapter, bureaucracy and rationality are seen as constraining the human spirit but also as imposing irrational and meaningless tasks, rules and procedures that block everyday work rather than facilitating it. Taylor's removing of discretion from the worker has moved up to the higher levels of hierarchies and seems to be removing thinking from work overall. Rules, policies and procedures are becoming more significant and although there have been certain efforts for their simplification they are expanding to permeate all aspects of working life.

Kleinman (1996) proposed that radical organisations in the sixties adopted anti-bureaucratic images of rejecting formal rules, procedures and structures. Throughout this research, participants report this in relation to 'alternative' organisations that they have created, that they work in or that they have encountered through their work (the term 'alternative' here is used to include organisations that are built on spiritual principles because most of these organisations are not openly presented as 'spiritual' due to the connotations of this word with 'religious', 'cultic', 'non serious' etc.).

I think I identify with more people, I think there is much more of an interest in relationship in (organisation) and it is interesting now I am still not interested in

writing policies but I can see their usefulness and I'd like it to be the bare minimum anyway, you know, cause they are there to help you work and they are not there for their own sake. So we have the minimum and they tend to be principle based rather than procedurally based in (organisation). So you have to work it out, it's like 'ok that's the principle I am working to what do I need to do in relation to that?' so you always have to think through. (Leila) [q. 7.9]

Leila talks about policies not being there 'for their own sake', making a reference to the many irrational and constraining policies in work organisations. The policies in the organisation she is now a director of are principle based - meaning that they only provide principles which one has to 'think through'. This can reflect a need for creative expression at work and the conscious endeavour to address this in the structuring of the organisation.

However, organisations as parts of wider societal structures have to comply with certain formal standards and there is the need for compromising. George says that *'One of the problems we have as we get more secure is there are standards you have to have, standard responses you have to develop that absolutely compromise the human relations approach. You know, I don't want a diversity policy! I think that's an insult; this organisation is based on embracing the uniqueness of people. I do not want some fatuous statement on the wall, but we might have to have one. [...] they wanted us to have statements about 'equal opportunities' [...] for God's sake, read what we believe! [q. 7.10]*

For human resources practitioners who devote emphatic endeavour to create feasible and effective diversity policies or equal opportunities statements, George's response might seem implausible. However, within the context of George's organisation subjectivities of 'trust', 'embracing the uniqueness of people' and 'working with differences among people' interact to create a culture of respect and acceptance. Moreover, there are regular meetings, learning courses and other structural elements in place for addressing these issues. Having followed a director's meeting within this organisation and although it was called a 'director's meeting', I noticed that there were no obvious hierarchies held as non-directors were participating 'equally', problems were discussed openly, people felt free to discuss their mistakes and there was time and patience for everyone to involve, reflect openly and participate. Moreover there was time for meditation at

the beginning to reflect on the day and handle expectations. Within such a framework, a diversity policy or an equal opportunities statement sounds ‘absurd’. It would also sound out of place within an ideal bureaucracy where judgements would be made neutrally based on purely rational criteria but this would assume people without emotions and prejudices. The approach described above in George’s account does not assume that people will put aside their emotions and prejudices and will automatically respect others. Nevertheless it provides the discursive and structural platform for active involvement, open reflection and unguarded addressing of problems. This constant work on the self in interrelation (that is through others) has the potential to cultivate the necessary valuing and respect of individual and collective interests.

7.2.1.2 Energy and structure

Participants’ realising of the interrelation between societal and organisational structures also led to a realisation that structure is not something fixed and permanent but subject to cultural influences and points of view. Furthermore participants seem to use vocabularies of a varied repertoire for creatively changing ‘reality’. This repertoire is varied in the sense that its components range from popular culture ideas of positive thinking (that ends up to thousands of people thinking about winning the lottery or the love of their life etc. and forgetting hand in a lottery ticket or to live), to links to quantum physics ideas of the observer influencing the observed, to more esoteric views of world creation. This repertoire is linked to subjectivities of dealing with problems (as explained below in 8.3.2) and with the notion of presence and actively engaging with ‘reality’ in the present moment (as explained in Chapter 5:5.2.2).

As explained before most accounts included an effort to manage the way of seeing things and therefore structures (either related to organisations or not) are often seen as choices. This does not mean that the power of societal structures is overlooked but that rather it is understood as a wider point of reference which interrelates with individual experience and creative capacity.

It is all about energy isn't it? Orderliness is only energy. Structure is only energy, is putting something there or there as a reference point but it is imaginary and therefore it is energy. It is a bit like what I've been doing on the website in order

to get things aligned, I've been putting them in a table and then I can take the lines out of the table but the text stays there, so it feels like that. But the lines have to be there in the first place in order to do the positioning but then I can forget about them - then it all goes wrong and they are all lined up on the top and I have to do it again (laughing). It s like I have a feeling that it is pure illusion that it helps me to live my life. (Sheila) [q. 7.11]

Sheila here makes the comparison between putting lines on a table to align writing on her website and organisational structure. She explains that structure does not exist on its own but is used as a reference point. This is a different way of seeing structure that influences the very definition of structure. At the same time the way participants talk about energy influences definitions of energy. The importance of this way of understanding and talking about structure and energy lies in the way it works in everyday life and within relationships. Reducing the solidity of structure and talking about energy instead also reduces the distance in relationships with others and the world. It is interesting that Sheila asserts that seeing structure as pure illusion helps her live her life. Below, Leila shows how a change in the way she sees finance feels different and gives her more space 'within'.

I think it's partly because we've got structures in place that we didn't have before so other people are contributing and that helps in the finances so I don't have the 'oh it's all down to me' but I think our relationship to the finances is changing so. I wrote an email just this morning to someone saying what I am wanting to attend to, because we've got big questions about what direction (organisation) is going into at the moment and that would include the big financial questions there because if we go one route it will make us money and if we go another one it won't at all.

So finances are there but I am also interested in the day to day finances in issuing cash flows and that kind of thing and someone was saying they are not sure what to do and I said 'well the finances really confirms what we know already, if you look at the finances of the organisation, it will confirm what we know already, or it will highlight what we are not paying attention to so if there is a cash flow deficit we are not paying attention into something in the organisation'. But it's not the finances per se that tell us what to do about it, they are just a symptom. So I think that's, I think I have always known that but I've not been able to articulate it

or be as (.) I've been more attached to the crisis of cash flow like 'get some money in' rather than 'oh what's this a symptom of?' That feels very different. (Leila) [q. 7.12]

Leila starts her explanation by showing that structures are in place to manage the division of work within the organisation and this translates into a different approach to finances. Although she then connects the finances with the direction of the organisation and therefore gives a strategic view and a tough decision that does not prioritise profit, she says that she is interested in the day to day finances. The day to day finances have become more interesting and less stressful because she now connects them to the organisation as symptoms rather than concentrating on the cash flow crisis.

And when I asked Leila if she thought her new approach to finance was a more spiritual approach, she said:

I think it is but I also think that is a more business like approach. But I don't think you can do without, a businessman would say 'there is nothing spiritual about that, that's common sense, that's what you do in business', you know 'cash flow, what's the problem?' cause it is not the cash flow that's the problem, you know, 'there is nothing to do with spirituality' and I can see that, that's true but for me I think the intangible element in it is I've got more space inside myself when I am not tightly focused on the pennies. More space to think about the direction in what will serve the Higher Good of the organisation. (Leila) [q. 7.13]

For Leila the link between the spiritual and the practical approach is that the spiritual takes out the stress of 'get some money in', helps detach 'from the pennies' but most importantly provides 'space' within the self to concentrate on the higher good of the organisation. Shifting the way of seeing things and removing attachment from trivial aspects or narrow concerns is for Leila a way of increasing her attention to the organisation or to a larger purpose. In this she exchanges the menial parts of her self and focus (the space inside herself that was taken up from focusing on the pennies) to the larger parts of herself (the organisation and its direction).

Moreover, as it is evident from Sheila's quotes below, the combination of action in both the spiritual and practical level is seen as a way to creatively involve in one's 'reality'.

S: The more I look at the inspirational stuff and the strategic stuff in the clinic, the more I give that form the more likely that is to manifest. It's about expressing the strategic stuff inspirationally. If the inspirational stuff is the vision it is then about working out what is the strategy for making that vision happen and the more that happens then the stronger the vision. [...]

R: So the more you do the practical things then the intangible things, the vision becomes stronger?

S: Yes, and then as the reality gets bigger and stronger then the vision can be reviewed because the vision might change, might expand. [...] once that vision is complete, then there will be a move on so it will be that the original vision won't go but there will be an expansion to it. [q. 7.14]

Sheila provides the process through which the vision about the organisation (clinic) she runs manifests. She sees an interrelation between the spiritual and the practical level explaining that working on one level strengthens the other (see also Leila's account in section 7.2). In Sheila's account below, the issue revolves around a creative interrelation with reality where the capacity to act in both levels (the spiritual and the practical) can pull one within the creative process of 'reality' in both levels. In this way, Sheila involves in constructing particular structural and discursive platforms in a creative interrelation with 'reality'.

We were creating a leaflet for me to put out and he said the way to make a leaflet is you don't tell people what you are doing now, you work out the way that you are going to be working in twelve months time and you put that in your leaflet and you put that out and that will attract the kind of people who will help you to get to that point in twelve months time. So that's the same kind of thing, so you work out the vision and put it in concrete terms and that's what attracts the energy that will get you there. (Sheila)

She combines business practice with spiritual practice:

But I've now got a nice program on the computer and I am getting better and I have really resolved to be very methodical in the hope that it will cost me less.

And also I have the belief that doing the accounts like really looking at how much it is costing to run this, is then, it gives whatever is out there a sense of what it is I need. When I first went to live by myself I was very cautious about running a profound bill and then I realised, well how on earth would the universe know how much money to give me for my phone bill if I didn't use the phone. So you know, I think that doing the budget is like that, working out how much we need for the year, it's not just good business practice, it is good spiritual practice too.

[...] sending a message saying this is what I am going to need to run the place and live on for the next twelve months. There is something about clarity in it. [...] because I think the universe will give us whatever we ask for and if we are not clear, it will give us a lack of clarity, you know, we'll get back exactly what we put out. The clearer the message we put out, the clearer the message we get back and that's partly why I am tidying up (laughing). But you know, I think if we put out a confused message, then we will end up in confusion. I know that (laughing) (Sheila) [q. 7.15]

Sheila is still talking about marketing, budgeting and organising the physical resources of the organisation and discusses issues that a consultant on marketing, budgeting and operations management will advise her to do but she is using a different language to share a different understanding. Although part of the content is still business practice, Sheila is transforming it to spiritual practice in dressing it with meaning drawn from the 'spirituality' discourse. Using this language of energy allows for an experience as being part of the world rather than an experience of an external tangible world. Thus Sheila is tidying up to clear her mind and the strategy for the organisation. In her relationship with the marketing consultant and with other people around her that share the same views they are creating a plausibility structure (Berger and Luckmann 1966) for a 'spiritual' approach to business practice.

7.2.1.3 Experimenting with alternative ways of doing business

One of the most important influences of the merging of spiritual discourses with those of business is that people experiment with alternative ways of doing business. Most started experimenting within formal organisations while they were working in them and came across 'spirituality'. They talk of their efforts to 'make

day to day decisions that would influence [...] in as positive way as possible' (Sheila), influence ethical decisions to protect the environment (Michael) or promote mutual respect for colleagues, clients or patients (Sheila). Most endeavours failed: 'I couldn't change anything really' (Michael) and respondents left these work organisations but keep on trying out new ways of doing business.

Again here the kind of work that participants engage in facilitates the experimentation with alternative ideas. Being consultants, coaches and writers, participants mention their researching or applying of new ideas to their work. Most ideas have to do with ways of addressing relationships but there are other efforts that appear more tangible as Sheila's experimentation with exchange economy:

It is not useful to do too much of it because it doesn't pay the rent, it is a peer working relationship and it feels very much like an exchange of energy. I think perhaps, because we are doing it that way, neither of us is deterred by the cost and so we can do it more frequently. If I was having to pay for it I wouldn't be receiving quite as often as we do meet up. So for that particular thing it is really useful. But I think it has to be an absolute well contracted peer kind of thing because otherwise it becomes very one sided. [...] So if somebody wants that it'd have to be extremely well (contracted) [...] because I had been on the receiving end of sessions from people here at the clinic and I prefer to pay them...

In this instance she explained about an exchange that did not work because it was not well 'contracted'. Therefore in her next attempt she devised a new way of exchange that included money:

I've done some exchange of sessions with a lady who does healing and what we do - this is another way of doing it - she does healing, I do counselling for her, we do it on different days, when I see her for healing I pay her, when she sees me for counselling she pays me and it is the same amount of money, [...] we've got much more choice and from a personal energy point of view, when she pays me it goes into the business, when I pay her it's a personal thing so it comes out of my personal money so actually it is a sort of circuit I think and she does the same. So although at one level it seems a bit silly that I give her money and she gives me

money, it is an absolute exchange of skills and an exchange of money, an exchange of money in accounts as well. (Sheila)

This experimentation reflects Sheila's view that she creates a circuit of energy and money in paying from her personal account and receiving through the account of the clinic. At the same time this binds Sheila's personal life with her work (see also Chapter 6: 6.4), broadening the relational aspect of her way of doing her work to her way of living her life.

7.2.2 Constructing organisational interactive patterns

When constructing the structural and discursive elements of relationships within organisations, respondents appear very involved, elaborate and persistent. Building up from relational and holistic repertoires, participants place the emphasis on relationships to construct their reality. George below explains how dealing with relationships and being able to handle what he calls 'personal transformative experiences at work in an organisation' has put his organisation thirty years ahead of the game:

In that sense I think what we were learning fifteen years ago, the world will be learning in another fifteen years, you know we are thirty years at least ahead of the game in terms of personal transformative experiences at work in an organisation. Because I think what we had to go through on our way to form, organisations are going through as they deconstruct and become less in a form because there is no doubt in my mind that organisations at the future have to be much more flexible. You cannot rely on structures, you cannot rely on systems, you have to rely on the relationship. And when you start to rely on the relationship this stuff that you haven't dealt with has to be faced and we know how to deal with that, we've lived it. (George) [q. 7.17]

George's point is that work organisations are beginning to realise they have to be flexible and focus on human relationships while they are 'deconstructing'. In contrast, his organisation adhered to these principles from the beginning of its creation and therefore the ways of dealing with relationships are inbuilt in the organisational structures and interactive patterns (i.e. engaging in reflective meetings on the direction of the organisation, agreeing on the principle to accept the uniqueness of individuals or even meditating for as long as each person needs

before directors' meetings - see also part 7.2.1.1). This point is part of the 'post bureaucracy' (Williams 2007) rhetoric that emphasises flexibility, trust and commitment. Moreover, George is making the point that once an organisation realises it has to rely on relationships, it also has to deal with managing them.

A recurrent theme here is dealing with problems that arise as most participants account for facing problems and not overlooking them. I often heard during the interviews examples from (non-spiritual) work organisations of problems being left ignored or overlooked. For example Brenda reported that when sales were not going well in the company she used to work, the approach was '*let's launch a new product*'. I also heard of simple rational solutions that could or should have been followed and were not, as well as simple commonsense measures that had not been adopted. Marina commented on her organisation's unrealistic budgeting and ineffective resource handling, saying that '*you don't have fifty thousand a year you don't spend fifty thousand a year*' and explaining that the organisation's work would be more effective if they were planning their resource allocation so that it would be spent where the needs were. To emphasise this point, she gave the example of when a senior executive with a vital role in the organisation died unexpectedly, the organisation did not have the resources to replace him and therefore many processes were blocked which created confusion. In contrast, when talking about the 'spiritual' organisations, participants provided descriptions of problem solving processes as well as stances towards facing problems and not neglecting them, for example: when you have problems '*you don't take away forty people and make them happy, you work out who has the questions*' (George).

7.2.2.1 Organisational relationships

Leila below is using the metaphor of an amoeba to create a relational image of the organisation. She then draws on spiritual and psychologicistic resources to explain how she can adhere to this relational thinking by not living through her 'ego'. In this way Leila is creating a way to deal with organisational relationships which respects and values others while being with them in free association. Again this passage looks at one person in order to follow the narrative process and Leila's account is chosen as one closer to the 'ideal type'.

Leila: Organisations as amoebas A

It is for me, I feel that connection yeah, and yes and at the moment it feels like if it is an amoeba. So a bit can lead and that will come back into the fold and then the little bit will lead yeah? That kind of thing. Like I said at the moment we are working out in which direction do we need to go in. So there is pulls in different directions and I feel there has been a real stretch and we are needing to not stretch ourselves so much. So we are all in it and we are part of it but we haven't reconfigured the shape. So I feel absolutely part of it but I think it is a question at the moment for some people who are directors currently of 'do I want to continue that, having that role?' because it's very demanding and I know for example one person is going to decide, has decided not to continue so and that's not that they are leaving (organisation) but not to hold the direction of the organisation. So that will change the shape again. [q. 7.18]

Leila has chosen the amoeba, a single cell organism for her metaphor. Organisations as organisms (Morgan 1998) is a metaphor that leads to thinking about organisations as more adaptive and relational to their environment. Leila feels strongly connected to the organisation even though some of her colleagues have different opinions on the direction they are about to take. The different views within the organisation are stretching it towards various directions and therefore Leila is concerned that they are stretching too much. She uses the wording 'we are needing to not stretch ourselves so much' presenting a strong identification with the organisation. She further on says 'so we are all in it and we are part of it' and 'I feel absolutely part of it'. Her concern relates to a person deciding to leave their position as a director because it is very demanding. She explains that this does not mean that the person is leaving the organisation but will not be in a position to 'hold the direction of the organisation'. By using this expression, Leila is presenting an image of the directors being connected to the direction of the organisation.

Leila: Organisations as amoebas B

I think that's where we have to see because we have to be together in free association. So if it was to pull it like that (makes a sign of the amoeba) too much it may be that it would split into two and that, we'd have to live with that. But I think that's the kind of, that's the difference to me. If I was living into my ego then I'd be really fearful of that because there so many things that would change and that would be very scary but at the same time if our principle is to be together out of free association it has to be open to that happening too as a possibility. So we are working with our differences to see well 'are we still here,

close enough, committed enough to what (organisation) is about to continue? (Leila) [q. 7.19]

Leila continues her metaphor to the amoeba's reproduction by splitting into two single cell organisms. She realises that if they (the organisation) stretch too much, they will have to split and then she explains how she can have a different approach to this from a spiritual perspective. To cope with change and separation and in order to maintain the status of free association, Leila is drawing from psychologicistic and spiritual resources. She draws her strength to deal with this situation from not living from her 'ego' since she separates the 'ego' (see also Chapter 5: 5.2.1) as this part of herself which would make her fearful of change. Creating a strong self to cope with change for Leila means also creating a self that recognises the freedom of others and connect to others in free association. Moreover, the relational reflexivity of the spiritual discourse is evident here to the directors working with 'their differences' meaning not only their differences in opinion but their differences as people.

Leila: Organisations as amoebas C

Yeah, I think the organisation is us, so I think it is that. We are just looking at that very question of 'is there an organisation that's not part of us' and I think that's like the syllable apart there is something more than us and I am finding that as we've created structures and a market I guess its like the organisation almost becomes an entity and needs feeding itself as well as us needing feeding literally for our livelihoods but there is so much a month that, salaries we need to get to feed the organisation, that we wouldn't have to do if I was just working as a consultant or as a facilitator. I don't really get my head around it completely (Leila) [q. 7.20]

By using the amoeba metaphor Leila is creating a relational image and at the same time she is analysing and diagnosing the situation in the organisation. Because at the time of the interview Leila and her colleagues in the organisation were still in the process of deciding on its direction, she cannot conclude on the metaphor to find the solution. She is still making sense of the two main problems she is facing, choosing the direction of the organisation perhaps towards a course that will feed the organisation financially and dealing with the issue that sustaining the organisation requires sacrifices that other colleagues are not ready to make. Leila is thinking in wholes and parts - she sees the organisation as the larger whole that

needs feeding and the members as the parts who are wholes in themselves (and can therefore leave and pursue a freelance career) and need feeding as well which they will feed back to the organisation. In this way she understands her colleague's decision to 'split' (if we are using the amoeba metaphor) from the organisation and maintain a freelance association.

7.2.2.2 Organisations and commitment

Green (2006) sees commitment as part of a 'paradigm' that started among management writers in the 80's, was proved useful during downsizing in the 90's and is now turned to a vision of 'high performance work organization'. This 'paradigm' involves practices of 'granting workers various performance incentives, more discretion and influence on their everyday work practices, and more of a say in organizational decisions' (p.100). Despite the fact that many organisations do not adopt the above practices because of the high cost of introducing them, Green proposes that there are two sides of the argument on high performance workforce: on the one hand workers exercising discretion would be more flexible and therefore more effective and on the other hand high performance work practices can have exhaustive effects on employees. In a CIPD publication about the new rules of engagement, Johnson (2004) supports the harnessing of the lifestyle/workstyle trend that organisations adopt in 'turning on the talent magnet by differentiating themselves from others – and letting people know what they stand for, what their values are.' (p.158). This links to Alvesson and Willmott's (2002) analysis of the 'employee as identity worker who is enjoined to incorporate the new managerial discourses into narratives of self-identity.' (p.622). George below provides an extensive account on the importance of commitment for any endeavour and the ways in which people's commitment can be assessed and cultivated. George's account has been chosen as he elaborated extensively on the subject and therefore his account leans towards the 'ideal type' of high commitment culture (Watson 2003, see also part 7.2).

George on commitment A

I think when you are creating something new especially, there is a difference between the enthusiasts who never get committed because their enthusiasm passes and they want to go and find something else to be enthusiastic about but the

enthusiasm of people who will stay at it for long enough I think people from sales don't know that about themselves often and I see that, a lot of that in (organisation). People who come and see what we do and want to do it or people who come on long term programmes because they've got to change the world and they have not a clue as to the systematic dedication you need to do anything, to do anything. You know, whether it is to draw a tree whether it is to run a marathon, whether it is to bake a cake to be any good at anything you've got to give a lot of time to it. And we don't live in an age that values that and that's the first thing that people hit when they go through (organisation) like 'ooh it takes this long?' It does! (George) [q. 7.21]

In this quote, George is arguing against a general trend that values the fast and easy instead of giving time, effort and commitment to a task or process (Bauman 1991). This trend is related to consumerism (DuGay 1996) and to the increased flexibility and job insecurity of working life (Worall et al. 2000) where individuals cannot invest in a job or even in a profession. This according to Sennet (1998) leads to the corrosion of character in terms of trust, loyalty and mutual commitment. To this, George contrasts the rhetoric of discipline which certain authors (Kelemen and Peltonen 2005) link to the spiritual path and other authors (Rose 1990) explain as the uncritical devotion to imposed organisational imperatives. George here sees commitment as the systematic dedication needed as a prerequisite for any project.

George on commitment B

There are those ways it does express itself, you can take people who find commitment in some parts of their life and the rest of their life is fairly chaotic and they seem to be fine about that. And there is some of us who unless we can get committed to it to start with we won't even begin. That is the nature of persons there is a very very wide range but in terms of a specific whether the commitment is to the activity or the commitment is to themselves and this is the activity they happen to come to, one way or another the commitment issue is the single most important issue to the value of any enterprise I think because if people don't understand commitment then when the time comes for them to leave they don't do it well because they were never in it properly. [...] Unless people understand the conditions that they are in and the contract that they are using to work this out,

then it'll be a mess. Maybe a passable mess as far as the world is concerned but it will be a mess and it will mean that when people leave, there will be no clarity about where they are going because there was no clarity about where they were in. So a project can hobble along through the attendance of people who aren't committed and aren't willing to say they are not committed and aren't willing to face the fact that if this is going to actually get to where it needs to, it needs a lot more than we are putting into it. (George) [q. 7.22]

When asked if commitment is related to the activity or to the person who commits to it itself, George presents himself as a person who needs to be committed to his endeavours. This might mean that he needs to follow tasks that are meaningful for him. He sees that as the nature of persons and it doesn't matter what you commit to but that commitment itself is most important for any enterprise. He makes the link between commitment and detachment, showing that when one is not committed to a task, then, when the time comes, the detachment will not be easy as the person was never properly committed in the task. This thinking is in line with the repertoire of 'spiritualities of life' (Heelas and Woodhead 2005) where one is involved in living out 'life' or 'reality' as well as with subjectivities of confronting problems as explained above (7.3.2).

George subsequently explains the structures his organisation has in place to assess commitment:

George on commitment C

All those things get hidden in a way that I think the word commitment for me ensures people have to raise their awareness about 'do you understand what is going to be asked of you and prepare to meet what is asked of you?' 'Have you thought about the things that are going to get in the way when those things are asked of you?' and 'how are you going to overcome those obstacles?' because 'if you are in this, you are in it'. But when you take people through that kind of rigorous process they seem to learn that they have favourite ways of slipping out or avoiding the commitment issue. And (organisation) has some very clever ways to stop people sliding out of it because we ask the questions at the beginning; you know, 'what is the way you are going to use to sabotage yourself' (George) [q. 7.23]

He takes us through the process of assessing one's commitment while enabling the person to realise the project ahead. The questions George asks (which are part of a process followed within the organisation) are highly reflective. He supports that because in the organisation they ask these questions at the beginning, they are able to increase people's awareness of their commitment. At the same time, reflecting and discussing these questions enables the creation of shared understandings and the construction of meaning within the organisation. Similarly, in Walton's (1985) analysis of workforce strategies, coordination and control in organisations that emphasise commitment is based more on shared goals, values and traditions. Williams (2007) links this to ideas of 'post-bureaucratic' management and explains that this shift from external to internal control occurs through 'indirect control methods that engender their commitment to the organisation' 'rather than direct control methods that seek compliance with the rules' (p.158). This literature focuses on what Meyer and Allen (1997) categorise as continuance (costs are associated with leaving the organisation) and normative commitment (feeling of obligation to remain with the organisation), whereas George seems to emphasise affective commitment that refers to emotional attachment to, identification with and involvement in the organisation. (1991 p.67). He explains commitment as linked to one's way of living and subsequently one's way of being oneself among others:

George on commitment D

[...] this is a description of what any effective educational developmental relationship is likely to encounter and commitment is part of that. Now what you and I both know is that commitment is the first step that any person in any spiritual endeavour has to learn about. But you can learn about commitment without it being an explicitly spiritual activity. We are committed to learn to play tennis, so it just happens to be that we learn about commitment in (organisation) through your own participation in programs cause it's required that, you engage with each other and if you want to engage then I need to know if you are in it with me and if you are not, how come? So that creates the requirement for commitment that I think does help people to begin to think there is a practice to commitment that isn't saying a few words, it isn't embracing an idea, it is living something out. When you get to that, then I think you are close to spiritual practice but I don't see

it as (organisation's) job to make those links explicit so much as to help people see 'yeah, that is true, that's true'. (George) [q. 7.24]

In this final quote on commitment, George explains how people learn about commitment within the organisation. That is through engagement and interrelation which is related to 'living something out'. Identity in this case is constructed while one learns to interrelate and assess one's and other's commitment. All this process of interrelation is seen as inherent to life and work and is also augmented through constant reflection (on one's own or with others), reflective interaction and the creation of shared understandings of the project at hand.

Summary

In Chapter 7, 'Organising work', the identity process of addressing the tension between the individual and others is analysed. This process is strongly influenced by ideas of holism (Hadot 1995, Heelas and Woodhead 2005) and unity (Gergen 1999). Participants manifest these ideas in their everyday life and work in creating a new language that combines 'spirituality' and business talk, transforming their work to more discursive by replacing interactional business relationships with relational understandings of energy exchange and finally in creating networks, partnerships and organisations where they can apply and experiment with these ideas.

8 Discussion of Research Outcomes: Towards an Understanding of Spirituality and Identity at Work

8.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the contribution to knowledge of this research project and concludes the thesis by outlining and discussing the research outcomes. The discussion draws on the various themes and insights explored in each field research chapter (Chapters 4-7), outlining in detail these principal outcomes and relating them to the research objectives. The field research chapters relate to the three levels of 'Spirituality at Work' described in the literature review (the personal identity level (Chapters 4-5), the work level (Chapter 6) and the group-organisational level (Chapter 7)). I then outline and consider the limitations of this research project, suggesting future research that responds to these limitations, and which may be of practical and theoretical benefit to this field.

Contribution to Knowledge

As discussed in Chapter 1, this research provides 'generalisable insights' (Watson 2001 p. xiii) at the 'level of process and of theory' (p. xiv) which can suggest implications about identity construction processes within the more general phenomenon of 'Spirituality at Work'.

Lund Dean et al. (2003) assert that the domain of 'Spirituality at Work' needs more inductive research to gain a better understanding of the main themes surrounding it (See also Chapter 3 section 3.1.1). Many parts of the literature from the fields of psychology tend to look at 'spirituality' as something fixed and contained within the individual, whereas writers in the field of SaW (Lund Dean et al 2004, Lips Wiersma 2004) propose the use of new and alternative ways of researching SaW which can incorporate the vocabularies and idiosyncrasies of the field. This research responds to this call in that it provides a view of the particular ways in which participants construct their conceptions of 'spirituality' and the ways in which they narrate their experiences at work, as well as the processes within which they construct their identities in relation to their 'spirituality'. It therefore contributes to the research on SaW by linking Spirituality with Identity and Work through the life story approach. Using life stories is customary in

'spirituality' related practices but it is not widely used in researching Spirituality or Identity at Work and it can therefore be seen as a new way to research SaW that incorporates the vocabularies and idiosyncrasies of the field. Thus, George's 'poetic moment' (Katz and Shotter 1996, 1997) in Rievaulx abbey (see section 6.2.2.) allows the sharing of his experience in an aesthetic rather than an analytical way. Similarly, Sheila's view of budgets as energy (see section 7.2.1.2.) is not evaluated as a business practice but seen as her way to combine business practice with spiritual practice and Leila's metaphor of organisations as amoebas (see section 7.2.2.1) is not analysed for the usability of the metaphor but as a means to uncover Leila's understanding of 'unity' within the organisation.

Furthermore, this research approaches the field from the distinctive angle of the 'relational self', thus reformulating the question on 'Spirituality at Work' towards the processes and vocabularies within the practical, day-to-day context of work as presented by the participants. The emphasis on the relational self replaces the main approaches in the literature, which view the individual as 'self-contained' and therefore either 'transformed' or 'oppressed' by SaW. Thus Brenda narrating her identity at work (see section 6.3.1.) is not seen as a victim of circumstances externally imposed on her; the ideas and beliefs she expresses are not evaluated for their belonging to 'essentialistic' or 'fragmented' views and the stances she adopts are not ascribed to her owning an 'inner spirituality'. Instead, Brenda's identity work is seen as 'relational' while she expresses her account as a dialogue with herself, with the researcher and within the context of the interview. It reveals the processes of identity work combining essentialistic, fragmented and unitary views of self which cannot be considered as separate from the 'realities' of everyday life

Allowing meanings and identities to be constructed in interrelation, the life story approach in this research has allowed the themes of 'unity' and 'interconnectedness' to come forward, weaving together levels of individual lives, organisational frameworks, societal contexts and spiritual realms.

This research contributes to the theory in the field of identity and spirituality in embracing the 'relational' where identity and spirituality at work are approached as a process and cannot be understood in isolation but rather through the interaction of the societal, organisational and individual levels. Through the

concept of 'unity' where the 'I' and the 'Me' (see also Chapter 5), the 'private' and the 'social' identity (see also Chapter 6) and the 'individual' and 'others' (see also Chapter 7) can be seen through the process of their interrelation and explained through consistencies and associations but also through reversals, setbacks and turnarounds. This relational process allows participants' experiences of unitary, developmental, fragmented or essentialist images of self to interrelate in a coherent, creative sense of balance.

Finally, this is – to my knowledge - the first qualitative study undertaken that seeks to understand identity at work constructed through the experience of 'spirituality'. It adds to the understanding of identities at work, as well as contributing to the growing literature examining 'spirituality'. Moreover it is the first time that a research project examines the identity processes of people involved in 'spirituality' in the context of their life stories and within the socio-cultural discourses surrounding them. It can thus enhance the understanding of the phenomenon of 'Spirituality at Work', further contributing to the research describing the changing boundaries and dimensions of work.

8.2 Addressing the research objectives

The aim of this research is to explore the processes in which people who consider themselves spiritual construct their identities in relation to work contexts. This aim is divided in the following four objectives:

- to identify the personal and circumstantial factors that inform individuals' interest in 'spirituality'
- to locate participants' understanding of their 'spirituality' in the overall context of their life - past, present and future – and in relation to their work
- to explore the processes in which participants construct their identities in relation to their 'spirituality'
- to locate participants' accounts in broader discursive patterns and processes in contemporary society

These objectives have been addressed throughout the research to contribute to the understanding of the processes of identity formation related to work contexts of people who consider themselves spiritual.

8.2.1 Personal and circumstantial factors that inform individuals' interest in 'spirituality'

This objective has been addressed to set the scene of the research and look at participants' understandings of what influenced their 'spirituality'. It is mainly addressed in Chapter 4: 'Becoming 'Spiritual' by discussing participants' understandings of 'spirituality', their views on various influences during their upbringing as well as their narratives of becoming spiritual. The scope of addressing this objective is not to generalise from the life stories as mainly this would not be representative depending only on 16 case studies. Moreover, personal and circumstantial factors cannot be generalised through the research stance adopted which values unique life experiences and stories. It might have also been interesting to write the life stories as they have been told and to present the whole narrative, however this would change the focus of the thesis and it would affect its readability, but more importantly it would enable the identification of participants since a few participants are known in the field or have written books containing parts of their life experiences.

Participants' understandings of 'spirituality' have been discussed together with their personal and circumstantial factors. As through the approach of social construction, participants' understandings of 'spirituality' as a wider resource interrelates with participants' narratives of their 'becoming spiritual' and their 'spirituality'.

Participants provided varied understandings of 'spirituality' confirming the multiplicity of the phenomenon as also the literature (Giacalone and Jurkiewics 2003, Freshman 1999) suggests. On the other hand, participants' understandings and within the context of their life stories present themes that are relevant to the framework employed in this research of 'spiritualities of life' (Woodhead and Heelas 2000, Heelas and Woodhead 2005). Within this framework participants strive to link the 'other worldly' with the 'here and now' emphasising lived experience which is also depicted in their overall effort for congruence in their

lives that is further discussed below in 8.2.2.1. The self through this view strives for unity and interrelatedness as Heelas and Woodhead (2005) assert and this research supports. This relates to participants' general understanding that the spirit is 'in everything' linking everyday life to the wider cosmos and in this way imbuing life with a wider perspective or purpose.

In agreement with a frequently mentioned topic in the literature (Ashforth and Vaidyanath 2002, Aupers and Houtman 2006, Bell and Taylor 2003, Casey 2000, Grant et al. 2004, Heelas and Woodhead 2005), participants' accounts separate religion from 'spirituality'. This is in congruence with Roof's (1993) respondents who clearly distinguished between the two terms as well as to Mitroff and Denton's (1999) respondents who found 'spirituality' as 'highly appropriate' in work organisations in contrast to religion. Although research shows that both terms are being used in a variety of ways and that there are 'intergroup differences in the meanings of these two constructs' (Zinnbauer et al 1999 p.896), most theorists (Mitroff and Denton 1999, Roof 1993, Heelas and Woodhead 2005) separating 'spirituality' from religion ascribe to religion the static, formal, institutionalised character that James (1982) ascribed to 'institutional religion' as opposed to 'personal religion'. Especially in thinking related to 'Spirituality at Work' or in the workplace, writers propose to discard the term 'religion' in order to avoid the divisive role of religion (Wiersma 2002) that can convey political sides or intrude to private spheres (Laabs 1995). Participants' narrations of their early experiences (or even of later experiences in life as in the case of Corinne) demonstrate their separation of their 'spirituality' from religion which they tend to reject. This relates to their overall thinking about gaining authority of their own life as explained in chapter 6 and placing outmost significance to lived experience.

Participants' emphasis on lived experience is also in congruence with the construct of 'spiritualities of life' (Woodhead and Heelas 2000, Heelas and Woodhead 2005). In particular, participants of this research emphasise the experience of an aesthetic sensitivity that can be expressed as artistic sensitivity or as increased observation and awareness of the world around them. In many cases the first is explained by participants as expressing artistic inclinations and the latter as witnessing differences in social class and religion. Further to this aesthetic sensitivity participants tend to emphasise the experience of

interrelatedness that is also central in the constructs of 'spiritualities of life'. This idea as explained in chapters 5, 6 and 7 enables participants to experience a connection to themselves, to others and even to the whole world. The idea of interrelatedness places the self in interrelation linking to ideas of holism (Hadot 1995, Heelas and Woodhead 2005) that support the interrelation and interdependence of all beings.

This self then in its turn is realised through everyday experience and formed in reflection upon itself. Thus participants, further to placing emphasis on lived experience, they engage in self reflection to understand, monitor and develop the self. This is evident in that it has been common among participants to engage in reflective or life story work with guidance in workshops or on their own. Therefore most participants reported that they enjoyed the process of the life story interview and almost all participants were in a systematic way engaged in identity work during the interview trying to find causes, effects and connections between events.

Further to self reflection, participants' heightened sensitivity to the world around them seems to trigger existential and identity questions early on in their lives. Most of the stories told reflect participants' engagement in introspective dialogue and internal identity work that is processed on one's own rather than discussing it with parents, siblings or other significant others. This perhaps relates to a number of participants reporting that they have felt being different or that they wanted to differentiate themselves from their families or from others early on in their lives. In most cases this account was not consciously intended to present a distinctive identity but came about as an explanation of one's idiosyncratic identity. Here the early engagement on conscious identity work is reflected in participant's accounts of wanting to feel different as well as accounts of developing social criticism. Most stories follow a narrative pattern that involves an early in life trigger to observe one's own or another family, a further thinking about one's positioning within any perceived differences and finally a decision on the course the participant would prefer to follow.

Later on in participants' lives where most locate their 'becoming spiritual' the interest in 'spirituality' was in most cases related to new values adopted or realized in accordance with what Roof (1999) addresses as 'reflexive spirituality'.

However, there are no similarities among participants in terms of influences and life incidents but there are similar patterns with regard to identity development. In relation to 'becoming spiritual' participants usually describe a long changing process that changed their views and identities at work as well. They see their identity at work being influenced from their overall identity change as they seem to believe that when they internalise new values, they form their life accordingly. Since a big part of life is work, participants adjust their work orientations to reflect their values.

8.2.2 Exploring the processes in which participant's construct their identities in relation to their 'spirituality'

This research is positioned in the tradition of the social construction of reality (Berger and Luckmann 1966) and it therefore does not look at identity as static but as dynamic and always in the process of becoming. Identity processes have been explored in depth through the study of three analytic identity tensions and in three empirical research chapters respectively. Chapter 5 addresses the 'internal' tension between the self as subject and the self as object, Chapter 6 looks at the 'intermediate' tension between personal and social identity and Chapter 7 focuses on the 'external' tension between the individual and others. The processes described in the above chapters have been only examined as separate between the different levels for the purpose of analysis. This section brings together these processes across the different levels to discuss how participants incorporate ideas of "unity" into "who they are" drawing on spiritual and other cultural resources.

A thread running through the whole thesis is a shift towards the relational self. This has been reflected in the effort to present the 'relational' in the research process, in the writing and to the participants' efforts to create the conditions to 'feel interconnected' or to relate in 'free association'. This might be relevant in a way to what Gergen (1999) calls that 'we in the Western culture may be on the verge of a major transformation in our way of conceptualizing ourselves' (p.138). This process of changing the way of conceptualising the self has been prominent among participants and mostly from their engaging in identity work to incorporate ideas of "unity" into "who they are". In this, they draw on spiritual and other cultural resources to construct aspects of their identities which will enable them to act as 'whole persons' in 'unity' in everyday situations they encounter.

In Chapter 2 As expressed above, the literature tends to be polarised on the 'spiritual' view of the self. The affirmative literature (Ashmos and Duchon 2000, Cacioppe 2000, Fairholm 1996, Lips-Wiersma 2002) supports holistic views of a self striving to fulfil its full potential whereas the critical literature (Bell and Taylor 2004, Casey 2000, Driver 2005, Heelas 1996) suggests that 'spirituality' promotes essentialist views of the self.

Throughout the research it is apparent that participants' conceptions of self and identity are not purely unitary neither purely essentialist. Participants, try to make sense of their spiritual identity borrowing from various discursive resources that present unitary, developmental, fragmented or essentialist images of self. These discursive resources (Kuhn et al. 2008, see also Chapter 3: 3.2.2.1) are mainly texts related to spirituality, the language used in 'spirituality' related workshops, philosophical and political traditions that they link to their views. Also participants draw on resources not related to 'spirituality' such as on ideas and texts that have been presented to them throughout their upbringing, readings and engagement with their favourite subjects and other resources that are available to them. In this, it is apparent that different people do not experience 'spirituality' in the same way, and it is therefore not possible to categorise a 'spiritual identity' or any identity as such. What one can look at in a research inquiry is patterns of identity processes that people engage in. That is how participants search for 'unity' became apparent after the analysis of the identity processes they engage in.

Moreover, participants provide alternative understandings to themes like the essential self as for example George in Chapter 5:5.1.2 discusses an aspect of self which is connected to the cosmos but for him it is not essentialistic as it develops together with the cosmos.

Participants talk a lot about achieving 'congruence' in their lives which seems to translate into their efforts to bring together different parts of their selves. Also participants' understandings of a spiritual life and experience as depicted in Chapter 4 (4.1-4.2) portray a process of striving to integrate various aspects of 'spirituality' in one's life. This process consists of an effort to link what they perceive as the different levels of themselves as most comments included a listing of the different levels as spiritual, intellectual, emotional, physical and not necessarily all together or in this order. The different levels are in some cases

perceived as to oscillate between the 'worldly' or the 'other worldly' as for example Michael explained that although he is 'a spiritual being having a human experience' he is 'a completely integrated person here', 'here' meaning in this life as a human being. To integrate the two worlds or the different levels, participants try to maintain a balance in the way that Michael puts it in Chapter 5 (5.1.1) this 'comes down to a very very practical level: what I do for a living, the relationships that I have in my life, the way I treat my body, the things that I eat, the things that I do on a day to day basis'. That is most participants mentioned paying attention to the above mentioned levels of their selves by engaging in cultivating them separately or congruently (i.e. Erika inferred that yoga could benefit different levels) (also see Hadot 1995 on 'askesis' as 'inner activities of the thought and the will'). This shows that despite the differences in personal beliefs, philosophical backgrounds or religious traditions, all participants conduct themselves as progressing by engaging in cultivating the self. This is in congruence with Kelemen and Peltonen (2002) stressing the importance of cultivating the self and the way it relates to the world. The cultivation of the self entails intense self reflection which triggers a systematic approach to engaging in identity processes to cultivate the self.

One of the most prominent part of participants identity processes is 'isolating the ego' (Chapter 5: 5.2.1) where participants try to strip their thoughts, emotions and actions off what most, borrowing from the language of psychology, call the 'ego'. When prompted, they express that they know when something 'comes' from their ego when it is 'fear based'. In this they reveal an effort to construct a strong or 'whole' (see Chapter 5) self by removing this part of their self that causes fear. What causes fear varies among participants and they invariably mention issues as recognition (Zoe, Glen, Paul, Beth, Brenda, Glen), acting defensible (Paul), being judgemental (Paul, Sheila, Glen), not accepting others (Paul), putting others down (Paul), controlling people and things (Leila), focusing on material things (Paul, Glen), getting wound up in things that don't matter (Glen, Zoe, Kevin, Beth, Brenda, Paul) or not paying attention to everyday important things (Glen). Participants describe their 'getting rid' of their 'ego' either using metaphors of disconnection such as 'leaving my ego outside the room' (Michael) and 'coming from a different place than my ego' (Paul, Sheila) or through constant monitoring

asking questions as 'Why do I need to do this?' (Paul, Leila) and 'Who is this serving?' (Leila). This creates incongruence since rejecting the 'ego' as a part of self does not seem to agree with holistic discourses of the development of the whole person. Participants' opinions here vary as although some recognise the 'ego's' use for everyday - mostly formal or typical - interaction but, most reject the ego as a socially imposed part of self that is obstructing their being whole persons. The way in which ego is considered to 'interfere' with 'being a whole person' in participants' accounts is through getting in the way of being 'present' (or 'living in the moment' see Chapter 5).

Presence is only one of the terms that participants use when they describe a state where they as 'whole persons' engage with their life. Other terms are 'mindfulness' (borrowed from Buddhism), 'living in the moment', 'being in tune' or 'going with the flow'. The different terms have been differently explained within different disciplines but as Gergen (1999) discusses it is more important to look at the way the terms function within various relationships rather than to look at their content. The significance of this state of being lies in that all participants in one or other way mentioned it as the desirable way of experiencing life. Achieving this state is a part of identity process that participants interpret as worry free but also as connecting to others and to the world (this includes the 'other worldly'). Again there are several instances of mentioning this state as alleviating stress (as in Zoë, Glen and Beth's accounts), connecting with self (Zoë and Paul), connecting with people (Zoë, Leila, Paul, Beth, Michael, George), connecting with work (Paul, Glen, Eric, Beth) connecting with the wider experience of life (Glen, Paul, Glen, Kevin, Beth, Michael, George).

Participants' emphasis on being connected to the task at hand, to the overall work, to others and to the wider experience of life brings forward their intend for congruence in different aspects of life. Work therefore becomes linked to personal life etc (see Chapter 5) but also what can be called 'spiritual identity' (as the part of identity that ascribes to and borrows from spiritual discourses) diffuses into the working and socialising parts of identity. This can be seen in participants' narratives on work and relationships that utilise 'spirituality' related discursive resources. A few examples are the use of the word 'energy' in work related narratives (Erica, Sheila and also Michael, Sheila, Jason) (see also Chapter

7:7.2.1.2.) as well as recurring themes of making the world a better place through work (George, Marina) being true to oneself (Brenda, Glen, Paul, Erica) and work as a vehicle for personal growth (Paul, Glen, Sheila, George).

Furthermore, Leila in Chapter 7 in using the amoeba metaphor provides a relational image of the organisation revealing her identification with it. Leila is thinking in wholes and parts, seeing the organisation as the larger whole that needs feeding and the members as the parts who are wholes in themselves and they need feeding so that they can support the organisation but they are also free to leave the organisation when they choose to do so. This relates to Heelas and Woodhead's (2005) subjectivization thesis that differentiates from individualism in that although emphasises individual experiences as a 'source of meaning, significance and authority, this need not imply that they will be atomistic, discrete or selfish' (Heelas and Woodhead 2005 p.11, see also Chapter 2).

From a methodological point of view participants' relational orientation is evident in various points of the life story research. As most participants had engaged in some form of life story reflection before the interview, they had already reflected upon and evaluated certain past events charging them with meanings to maintain coherence of their life story. In most cases this included their disillusionment with work organisations that they tend to present as a result of their 'growing awareness' and their subsequent inability to accept values or behaviours at work that would be incongruent to a person with increased 'awareness'. This word 'awareness' came up in the interviews as a point within the life course that refers to a sensitivity on life's meaning and wisdom but it was also linked to an alertness to understanding, evaluating or solving everyday issues as well as wider social issues. Moreover, in narrating their work, participants mostly provided narratives on their relationships at work or the relationship of their work to their personal life rather than their tasks or achievements. They also frequently included within their life story narrations examples of incidents and stories from relatives, friends, colleagues and clients to support their views.

As it is discussed in this section, the notion of a relational self realised through the idea of unity is present in participants' identity processes throughout the thesis. It relates to their engagement in identity processes to cultivate the self as well as to their assuming of 'congruent' identities integrating mind, body and spirit as well

as the 'this worldly' with the 'other worldly'. In relation to work the relational is evident in their linking of work to personal life and in their emphasis on working with people. It also manifests in their construction of conceptions of 'presence' (where one is 'in tune' with the surrounding environment) and 'interconnectedness' (where one becomes 'one' with everything). Finally it is evident in various aspects of the life story research such as their way of maintaining congruence in their life story, the kinds of narratives they provide and their including other people's narratives in their narrations.

8.2.3 Locating participants' accounts in broader discursive patterns and processes in contemporary society

This research's stance begins with the realisation that selves and realities are constituted in interrelation. Therefore participants' accounts cannot be considered separately from societal relationships. From this relational view point, a life story does not simply represent a static case study of an individual person's history but mostly the location of a unique person within interrelations. These interrelations are social processes of relating among people, the environment and cultural resources. 'spirituality' then is not seen as a human trait that organisations have to accommodate but as a construct produced in interrelation. Therefore the effort is not to understand 'spirituality' as such but to look at how the process of constructing 'spirituality' interrelates with participants' identity processes and wider societal processes.

Participants' accounts, their way of explaining their understandings of spirituality, their way of talking about their experiences and their way of acting can reflect expressions of wider societal discourses. The point where the wider societal discourses link to participants' understandings and their way of acting reflects participants' constructing of reality. From a relational point of view, reality is constructed in interrelation so the moment one tries to make sense of reality one is constructing it (see also Chapter 3, 3.2.2). It is important in this process not to 'essentialize' (Gergen 1999 p.45) participants into 'spiritual people' listing a number of characteristics or typical processes, that distinguish them from 'non spiritual' people or 'others'. As it is depicted in this research, the vocabularies used, the identity processes pursued and the actions taken are related to various spiritual discursive resources but they are not separate or distinctive from their

wider society. These vocabularies, identity processes and actions are depicting and at the same time constructing wider societal processes.

Gergen (1999) asserts that new patterns of social life are not constructed by rejecting meanings as given but rather through 'the emergence of new forms of language, ways of interpreting the world, patterns of representation' (p. 49). Thus in chapter 7, participants' accounts contrasted on Watson's table of managerial control represent a wider trend towards indirect approaches while at the same time challenge existing traditional organisational understandings and offer new potentials and ways of working. They do this in using a different vocabulary (for example Leila's 'we are together in free association'), promoting a new understanding of organising work (Leila explains 'free association' as accepting the choices of organisational members even if they affect the direction of the organisation) and acting to integrate these interpretations in everyday life (Leila's organisational meetings to communally decide on the direction of the organisation and her effort to consent to her colleague's choice even if it will affect the direction of the organisation).

At the level of individuals

As discussed above, the life story approach addresses the construction of identity in locating unique persons within interrelations thus looking at the creation of coherent selves through the synthesis of discursive and experiential elements within social contexts.

Participants' emphasis on lived experience and increased reflexivity generates a close engagement with reality and its creation. Referring to the state here called 'presence' Kevin (in Chapter 5) is suggesting a kind of sensitive awareness where he knows he is connected to reality ('on track') when what he engages in seems easy to him. He understands the 'spiritual' embedded in the here and now as 'walking the walk' and he asks 'are you living it?' In this way reality is constructed in interrelation, or as participants' put it, through 'living something out'.

The process of interrelation is seen as inherent to life and work and is also augmented through constant reflection (on one's own or with others), reflective interaction and the creation of shared understandings. Participants' accounts

justify the literature (Ashforth and Pratt 2003, Bell and Taylor 2004, Heelas and Woodhead 2005, Howard 2002, King and Nicol 1999, Kelemen and Peltonen 2002, Tischler 1999) linking 'spirituality' to self knowledge and development. At the first level of internal tension, the construct of 'ego' seems to be important as a way to understand the self mainly due to its strength to create identity tensions and compel participants to separate it from what they perceive as their self. Moreover, the constructs of 'presence', 'interconnectedness' and 'authentic lives' present new ways of experiencing reality. As discussed in chapter 5, these constructs relate to wider societal processes that emphasise the diffusion of Eastern religions in the West (the Buddhist concept of 'mindfulness'), the diffusion of psychological constructs in various fields of life and 'spirituality' in particular (Csikszentmihalyi's concept of 'flow'), the increasing influence of popular literature on 'Spirituality at Work' in management thinking (Senge et al.'s concept of 'presence') and the development of new relational epistemologies (Shotter's 'witness thinking' drawing from the thinking of Goethe and of Wittgenstein).

At the level of personal and social identity participants are taking authority of their own selves and lives as for example Glen and Michael when they talk about changing the way they have been socialised to think (their 'conditioning'). Gaining authority over one's self and life is usually expressed with acts of changing the self while changing the aspects of life that are considered incongruent with it. Lynch (2007) contrasts Berger's view on subjectivization as 'a by-product of a modern culture in which people are forced to make more choices about their lives' (p.117) with Heelas and Woodhead's view who 'see subjectivization as the driving force behind cultural change in the West' (p.117). He points to Heelas and Woodhead's emphasis on forms of 'spirituality' which emphasise individual freedom and autonomy' (p. 117) explaining that they are more likely to flourish since they value personal experience and address issues of personal concern. This research supports that the becoming of the self occurs in interrelation and consequently the construction of reality lies in the relation of 'decision' and 'the way we engage with things'.

At the level of work

Within the above framework, participants decide to change their work orientations to reflect their values. Their understandings of 'gaining authority, 'service' and of

a 'life's work' demonstrate a capacity to generate patterns of social life. Moreover, influenced by the holistic discourse (Hadot 1995, Heelas and Woodhead 2005) participants try to integrate the practical, tangible aspects of their work with the meaning their work provides to their lives maintaining congruence between their sense of self and the way this is presented through their everyday life.

They therefore tend to leave formal work organisations and chose to pursue more 'spiritual' careers and usually to downsize their lives. As discussed in chapter 6, this process is related to wider societal movements such as 'downshifting' (Schor 2001, Elgin 1998) and the 'voluntary simplicity movement' (Johnson 2004). The relational aspect of reality here is manifested through participants' understandings of their career changes as choice and purpose at the same time.

More importantly, participants influence other people's lives through their career choices. They mainly choose occupations that involve working with people (such as becoming coaches, consultants, counsellors and trainers) and they engage in writing books or conducting seminars that reach a wide number of people as well. Rose (1990) sees that wider trend of an increasing number of specialists as a mechanism that has been set up to enable conformity and orientate towards accepted norms and rules. He asserts that life has become a 'skilled performance' where we learn and are advised by a whole system of specialists set up to guide human behaviour. Although this view recognises the interrelation between the individual and its surroundings, it views it as a two way interaction separating both sides in a process of exchange rather than viewing the intertwined relationship. Nevertheless, participants' career choices place them in a position from where they can confer with and counsel a number of people. In this way they disseminate spiritual discursive resources into wider audiences in the business world.

Furthermore, 'Spirituality at Work' cannot be located within individuals not only because they cannot be considered as separate from their social context but specifically in the case of this research's participants because relatedness is a key concept in the way they see themselves and live their lives (see chapter 4: 4.4). Participants understand themselves as inseparable from the whole, they are highly

reflective, show increased sensitivity to the social structures around them and chose occupations that involve working with people.

At the level of work organisation

As argued in chapter 7, the interrelation between self, organisation and society is ingrained in the spiritual discourse through subjectivities of holistic thinking, reflexive relationships and creative interrelation with 'reality'. According to Lynch (2007), the religious and spiritual organisations emergent over the past twenty years 'are engaged in a range of activities varying from those which focus on the internal life of the progressive milieu (e.g. providing support and resources for the spiritual development of individuals, building up the infrastructure of the progressive milieu) to activities which are focused beyond the progressive milieu (e.g. seeking to influence wider religious institutions and to shape debates and policies in the public sphere)'(p. 99).

This is justified in this research as participants bring together the discourse of 'spirituality' with the discourse of business to construct alternative ways of understanding ('budgeting is energy work because money is energy' – Sheila) and experiencing ('absolute connection with the two other people that were there', 'a lot of use of imagery', 'a real palpable sense of vibration between us', 'I have a quiet mind' -Beth) work realities. Furthermore, as discussed above, through the career choices they make as counsellors, consultants, writers and trainers participants influence these constructs at wider levels. As Lynch (2007) also argues 'activities which have a stronger internal focus on the life of individuals and groups within the progressive milieu (e.g. conferences, rituals, or religious and spiritual educational programmes) are particularly likely to be influenced by the work of writers and thinkers who advocate the core tenets of progressive spirituality' (Lynch 2007 p. 99).

In creating organisations, participants work towards integrating the discourse of 'spirituality' and the discourse of business to construct new ways of organising work. Through a relational identity process, they develop their identities and the organisation according to these new ways of organising. In Leila's account she engages in this relational process in expressing values and 'spirituality' in the organisation while she also actively participates in the construction of the

organisation's values and direction to 'make a difference'. By using the amoeba metaphor in chapter 7, Leila is creating a relational image of the organisation while at the same time she is analysing and diagnosing the situation in the organisation. Integrating the organisation with the self is facilitated within organisations operating with 'spiritual' values as they tend to be of small scale and they therefore allow the engagement in reflective meetings about their direction as well as the setting of flexible structures and procedures (principle based policies that you have to think through). Subsequently, the organisational direction is seen to be formed in interrelation rather than being imposed on organisational members.

Within this relational process of reality construction, participants use vocabularies that borrow from both the discourse of 'spirituality' and the discourse of work to talk about energy and structure. The importance of creating new ways of understanding and talking about structure and energy lies in the way it works in everyday life and within relationships where participants combine the tangible with the intangible elements of their work to construct practices that work across the spiritual and the business world. Reducing the solidity of structure and talking about energy instead also reduces the distance in relationships with others and the world.

Participants' creative interrelation with reality relates to their capacity to act in both the spiritual and the business level. In this way, participants engage in the construction of particular structural and discursive platforms in relation to work that draw on both the 'spirituality' and the business discourse.

8.2.4 Locating participants' understanding of their 'spirituality' in the overall context of their life - past, present and future – and in relation to their work

This objective brings the whole research in coherence as it requires the interrelation of the research stance with the analysis, interpretation and writing process. It is mainly addressed through the overall research stance of the life story approach within the framework of the social construction of reality (Berger and Luckmann 1966).

Behind the life story research is the view that we understand our lives as linear in time coming from the past, experiencing the present and leading to the future. Thus, adopting a life story approach is not just to take participants accounts on several themes but by locating participants' narratives within the context of their lives it is to look at the way these accounts function within various relationships. In this way Beth's 'I was in-tune' is seen within her contrasting of working within two different organisational contexts, within her being in the process of downshifting her life, within her participating in the overall spiritual discourse as a person who considers herself 'spiritual' and within her relating with the interviewer at the time of the interview. Similarly all accounts would not have any meaning if they were not seen in the light of social contexts but also seeing these accounts within the context of overall lives enabled the research of the meaning making process.

In addition to this, the relational platform of social construction allowed the process of conducting the interview to interrelate with the content of the interview. Therefore participants' accounts were analysed with regards to their content and within the context of the interview. For example, participants' eagerness to recount their life stories as well as their accomplished ways of reflection confirmed accounts describing the customary nature of such engagements among 'spiritual' people.

Moreover, the life story approach has brought forward insights on the links of individual identities to wider social spheres. This has come about by enabling participants to narrate their experiences in relation to the contexts of the societal environments they have been part of throughout their lives and at the same time by looking at how participants construct their experiences and present them in meaningful narratives.

The continuity in narration of the life story approach enabled the concepts of the 'relational self' to emerge as the unifying thread that runs throughout the research. Although I was aware of the theoretical perspectives on the relational self (Gergen 1991, 1999, Shotter 2006) and followed a relational approach to the research, my understanding of the wider shift towards the relational self did not occur until I had analysed participants' accounts on the level of identity processes. Moreover, continuity in participants' narration revealed the processes behind the shaping of

experience with regards to various 'spiritual' discursive resources. An in-depth interview with thematic questions could provide opinions and fragmented experiences whereas the life story approach elicited the participants' linking of experiences into meaningful narratives. In this I was able to look at participants' constructions at the level of process which moderated the impact of my previous understandings of various terms or my personal experiences.

Nevertheless, an important issue relating to the suitability of the adopted approach is that embarking on this research project, and apart from holding my own theoretical predispositions and inclinations, I had pursued several studies of various 'spiritual' philosophies and had already formed a personal understanding of 'spirituality'. I therefore found myself in the middle of two worlds that I could distinguish at the onset of the research as: the academic and the spiritual and was concerned of doing justice to both. After immersing into the research process and engaging in personal reflection, I appreciated my supervisors' cautions against going native and their reminding that this research was an academic piece of work looking at spirituality. The strength of the relational approach here helped me see that the research is constructed through the interrelationship of the participant, the researcher and the reader, while beneath lie socio-cultural influences. As Bertaux (1981) indicates all stories are imbued with the nature of the world in which they took place or in which they are told and this research's story takes place in a world of relationship.

Finally, the practical aspects of the approach provided valuable insights towards the research outcomes. For example most of the participants who were self employed (six out of nine) used part of their houses as a working space and therefore the life story interview was conducted in their home-office revealing the practical aspects of the way they are acting out their 'life's work' (See also chapter 6: 6.4).

Overall the relational research stance adopted set the research aim in context. Exploring the processes in which people who consider themselves spiritual construct their identities in relation to work contexts. In this it looked further than asking opinions and views to looking at the ways in which participants make meaning and construct their identities.

8.3 Limitations of the research

There has been an effort, while conducting this research to maintain coherence between the research strategy, the research design and the actual research process. This coherence enabled me to conduct a field work that addresses the main research objectives and to maintain throughout the whole research process a high level of flexibility to allow for the voices of participants to come forward.

This could not prevent certain obstacles appearing in the process, such as managing a whole life story interview at one meeting, while putting an effort not to tire the respondent. There was a need to manage a whole life within one meeting because of time constraints, and in order to let the respondents put their whole life in context. This would help to avoid any emotional blockages from the side of the respondents. This issue was addressed by being cautious of participants being tired and in one specific case the interview was split in two halves.

Other practical issues faced during the research process relate to the difficulties with interviewing one of the participants in a cafeteria and having background disturbance (see also Chapter 3: 3.3.2). Although the interview still yielded many interesting and significant insights I felt that if the interview were conducted in a more appropriate setting 'free of background noise and interference' then the research participant would have contributed even further, potentially disclosing many more important and relevant stories about the discourses of 'spirituality' and work.

Although this research provides insights at the level of process, the research outcomes reflect identity processes of people who consider themselves spiritual and might therefore not be relevant to wider populations especially because of the increased reflexivity that participants have demonstrated that does not seem to be the norm.

It would also be important to state that this research views work and identity within the particular socio-cultural context of England in 2004-2008. Although two of the participants are American and Spanish respectively they have both worked only in England and have also been educated and lived in England for a long time. Thus the research outcomes reflect discourses of work that mainly relate to English workplaces.

Concerning the overall research stance, the life story approach has been criticised as providing limited generalisability, however, due to its dynamic form of emphasis on the process of identity and social life formation, it can reveal the development and interrelation of events in people's lives (Bryman and Bell 2003). As life stories resonate with wider societal processes, they can be a fruitful source of sociological insights. The lives examined in this research have been narrated within the contexts of time, wider societal processes and relational interactions. Thus the research has generated 'generalisable insights' (Watson 2001 p. xiii) on identity processes within work contexts.

In many parts of the research consecutive narratives of a particular participant have been followed to present the congruence or incongruence of meanings and actions. Moreover, some participants have been more frequently quoted than others and that has not meant to place the emphasis on particular individuals, neither does it denote that the accounts were not equally analysed. It rather suggests that the particular themes that came about were more comprehensively represented in certain narratives.

8.4 Next steps and future research

In examining identity processes within work contexts of people who consider themselves spiritual this research suggests that future research on the topic concentrates on the relational aspects of organising work rather than seeing 'Spirituality at Work' as an oppressive management tool for organisational control or as a panacea for organisational performance.

Interesting approaches came up in looking at identity processes in relation to creating work networks, partnerships and organisations. As shown in chapter 7, a few participants tend to create their own networks, partnerships and organisations constructing interesting approaches in the organising of work. Participants reveal interesting interpretations using a particular vocabulary towards the approach of working together with spiritual values, alternative ways of structuring the formal aspects of the organisation such as policies and procedures or the organising of work in general. It would therefore be interesting to conduct ethnographic research in one or more of these organisations to look at the ways in which individuals who consider themselves spiritual come together at work, cooperate

and construct organisational structures and procedures. These organisations, as organisations constructed on 'spiritual' principles, would be expected to differ from Milliman et al's (2003) or Khan's (2005) studies in that the organisations they researched were already operating and 'spirituality' was implemented as a management initiative.

Furthermore, as participants who form these organisations relate their connection to identity issues it would be interesting to look at the ways in which individual and organisational identities interrelate drawing on discursive resources that promote the ideas identified in this study and in the literature. Ideas such as 'principle based policies', 'free association', 'embracing the uniqueness of people', 'working with differences among people', 'structure is only energy', 'finances as a symptom of what we are not paying attention to in the organisation', 'the direction should be towards what will serve the Higher Good of the organisation', 'commitment' could be researched through the use of focus groups. The outcomes derived from focus groups (Bryman and Bell 2003) would constitute a significant source of complementary data. That would potentially entail bringing participants together who would respond to one another's narratives and thus would potentially stimulate fervent discussion and generate insights that did not emerge in the life story narratives.

Although participants were interviewed in two stages within the course of six to nine months and this proved valuable as most participants discussed having to come across new challenges at work, there is scope for conducting this research with the same participants later in time, for example in two years to look at their understanding of developing as a person and in relation to work. There would not be scope to extend this research using a larger number of participants since this would provide a large amount of very rich narrative accounts that would be too difficult to manage and hence might end up harming the very sense of 'identity' as a construct and of the life story approach that aims to place unique individuals within interrelation. Therefore, researching identity through a large number of participant life stories might well obscure, if not overlook altogether, the subtle qualities that individual stories have to offer.

On the other hand it would be interesting to extend this research across cultures and identify the identity processes within work contexts and within different

cultural contexts. Within an increasingly international environment discursive resources are shared within wider audiences and across cultures, books are translated, specialists travel to give talks, individuals travel to attend workshops and seminars are given through the internet at a worldwide scale. A comparative study between three or more cultural contexts then would be especially insightful in investigating the ways in which identity processes of people who consider themselves spiritual transfer across cultures.

8.5 Epilogue

During the course of this research, it has emerged that people who consider themselves spiritual engage in identity work to incorporate ideas of "unity" into "who they are". In this, they draw on spiritual and other cultural resources to construct aspects of their identities which will enable them to act as 'whole persons' in everyday situations they encounter. 'Spirituality' within work contexts as narrated by the participants seems to be a discursive resource which provides the tools (Kuhn et al. 2008) to create new vocabularies and practices that help constitute the relational self. Thus, the shift towards the relational self is not seen as a one way state of becoming but as dynamic potential.

The question therefore is not to adopt an 'either – or' approach, but there is a need to reformulate the question on 'Spirituality at Work' in relation to individual experiences at work. Most of the academic literature on SaW is polarised between the affirmative side arguing for introducing 'Spirituality at Work' and the critical side cautioning against the oppressive potential of 'spirituality' adopted as a management initiative. Both sides tend to locate motivations, performance and exploitation within individual selves. This research, however, places the emphasis on participants' identity processes within contexts of work. Participants' accounts suggest a move from the self-contained individual as transformed or oppressed, to the relational self. Thus the question becomes: Are the processes and vocabularies presented by the participants useful within the practical, day-to-day context of work? Moreover, could they replace other work processes, and so represent a move towards more relational ways of working?

In adopting a life story approach this research does not present only the viewpoints of the participants, but their identity making in processual terms, and

hence goes beyond their mere opinions and set ideas. Participants' identity processes simultaneously involve essentialist, fragmented and unitary views of the self. This is consistent with the notion that people, regardless of their spiritual orientation, use all these aforementioned views to produce the self and address a 'human propensity for order' (Berger 1967). Participants, as people who draw on 'spiritual' discursive resources, tend to be more reflexive and therefore use a varied repertoire of talking about the self. This however suggests an understanding that the outcomes of this research as participants' constructions are relevant to the field of 'spirituality' and might not be relevant in different contexts.

The identity processes investigated in this research involve participants' understandings of breaking free from societal impositions and at the same time of being one with everything. Despite these seeming antithetical processes, participants construct ways in which this makes sense for them and find ways to enact it in their everyday lives. In their efforts to discard the aspects of themselves that they consider as 'ego' or as socially imposed masks, they see themselves as open to the possibilities of becoming less defensive and less individualistic and immersing in lived experience. Being absorbed in lived experience, participants describe states of experience where they can 'break free from social constraints' and come closer to themselves, their peers, their tasks and the world as a whole. This implies a view that society and social relations might often put blocks to an 'authentic' relating with the world.

In denying formal authority and placing the emphasis on lived experience participants become the creators of themselves. Therefore 'spiritual' identity processes are closely linked to the making of the self through 'gaining authority', 'being of service' and 'making choices'. This in wider work contexts associates with conceptions of 'protean careers', 'fulfilling work' and 'a life's work'. Moreover, the need to relate drives participants towards occupations of 'working with people' placing on work the meaning of service (to give something back) and interrelation (to gain fulfilment through working with people).

Linking lived experience with work, as well as ascribing 'existential' meanings (as meanings related to life purpose or the purpose of humanity: we are all one, we need to nourish each other and the environment) to work contribute to the construction of the concept of 'a life's work'. This is linked to the overall

importance placed on life and lived experience where one's life is related to the engagement with the whole cosmos and hence acquires a higher meaning. Therefore, one's life needs to be congruent to make sense and to become a point of reference for self creation and for transcending the worldly and the other worldly.

Finally, participants tend to leave formal work organisations to pursue more 'spiritual' types of work where drawing on spiritual discursive resources, they generate discursive and structural platforms for new ways of organising work. They employ these platforms to form networks, partnerships and organisations. Moreover, through their choice of occupations that involve 'working with people' they disseminate these new vocabularies and ways of organising work to wider audiences. When constructing the structural and discursive elements of relationships within work contexts, respondents appear very involved, elaborate and persistent. Building up from relational and holistic repertoires, participants place the emphasis on relationships to construct their reality.

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Appendix 1: Research Flyer

Working identities and the ‘Spirituality at Work’ movement

My name is Lena Tzouramani and I am conducting research at Nottingham Business School. Currently I am looking for people who have an interest in the broader area of ‘spirituality’ to help me with my research. I am mainly interested to understand the part that ‘spirituality’ plays in people’s lives and their working lives in particular. This means that I will examine how people understand and assign meaning to the spiritual aspects of their lives and how these aspects relate to their notion of work. At this stage I have a very broad and open concept of ‘spirituality’ – in fact I am very interested to learn what people think.

Therefore I would like to invite you to participate in a research project on ‘Working identities and the “Spirituality at Work” movement’.

The research is set in the context of whole life stories, where people make interpretations and give meaning to their personal and professional life and to various events. Through semi structured interviews, I will discuss with you the role of ‘spirituality’ in your life and the extend to which this affects your working life (this can but does not necessarily mean radical life transformations).

As the interview will touch upon personal information, participant’s privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity will be protected. This means that throughout the whole process, the information given will be treated with respect, the records of the study will be kept private and participants’ identities will not be revealed at any stage.

If you are willing to let me talk to you, this will involve up to three meetings over a period of about eight months. The meetings can occur at a time and place that is most convenient for you.

To allow time for you to think about possible participation, I will contact you again in the near future. If you wish to contact me earlier however, I will be very pleased to speak to you. My contact details are as follows:

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Mobile: +44(0) 7891808362 /
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I am looking forward to your reply,

Thank you

Lena Tzouramani

Appendix 2: Life Story Questionnaire

The following questionnaire was used during the first stage of the field research interviews which occurred in May-June 2005:

Introduction

Let me start by telling you first a few things about myself and this research.

I am doing research at Nottingham Business School on the relationship between the 'spiritual' aspects of people's lives and their working lives. At this stage I have a very broad and open concept of 'spirituality' – in fact I am very interested to learn what you take it be. I don't want to limit the scope of our discussion too much.

I am setting my research in the context of people's whole life stories: looking at the part that their notion of 'spirituality' plays in their life generally as well as in their experience of work.

This means that today I will go back to your childhood and take things forward from there. I will be pleased to hear any stories about things that happened in your life that touch upon our broad topic.

Is there anything you would like to ask me before we proceed?

Let me now ask you:

Some quite general questions first

1. Can we start with some factual data - the demographics that I have to put down for my research, like age, gender, occupation, educational level ...
2. Now I would like to ask you to tell me a bit about yourself. If you found yourself having to explain to a stranger in just a few words 'who you are' – what would you say to them.
3. Do you think the way you see yourself and the way others see you are more or less the same?
4. Can you please tell me how you understand spirituality? What does being spiritual mean to you?
5. Can you please briefly describe your current involvement in the broader area of 'spirituality'?

And now, let's go back into your childhood years (up to 12)

1. Tell me something about your parents. What you think has been the main influence each of them has had on you?
2. Could I ask the same about your brothers – sisters, if you have them
 - a. Other family members
 - b. Other significant family or personal friends?
3. What sort of work did your parents do?
4. Is there any sense in which what your parents did had an influence on how you saw yourself?

- a. Did your parents' work have any bearing on what work you expected to do?
5. How do you remember feeling about your parents going to work?
 - a. When your parents left for work in the morning, how do you remember them behaving? And when they were returning from work, how do you remember them behaving?
 - b. What do think they felt about their jobs?
 - c. Did your parent's approach to their work influence your feelings about work generally?
6. What is the closest thing to a 'job' you remember doing when you were a child?
7. Now moving away from work to other things: What part did religion play in your family?
 - a. Did you attend or belong to any formal religious groups or churches?
 - b. Where you involved in any kind of religious instruction? Did you attend a Sunday school?
8. Where there any informal religious activities such as family prayers?
9. Moving now to your personal life, did prayer play a part in it?
 - a. What was in your prayers?
 - b. What part did God play in your life / prayers?
 - c. Did other people know you were praying?
10. When do you first remember, if at all, thinking about big questions like: 'Why am I here' 'Who am I'?
 - a. If neither of these – was there anything else of this broad 'wondering' that you recollect?
 - b. [IF YES] In doing so, did you turn to anybody else or to any writing?
11. Did you ever have any experiences that might be described as 'supernatural'?
12. Looking across your childhood, are you aware of any times in which you changed your idea of who you were?

Now moving on to your adolescence' years (13-18)

1. What would you say were the most significant changes that occurred in your life during your adolescence?
 - a. Where there any particular incidents you recall as important?
2. Tell me a bit about your adolescence friends. Would you characterise your relationship with them as being 'close'?
3. What did you mainly discuss with your friends?
4. During adolescence, did your relationship with your parents change?
 - a. [IF YES] In what ways?
5. Where there any other people that you think influenced you during your adolescence?
6. Would you consider this/ these person/ people as being your mentor(s)?

- a. In what way?
 - b. What do you think he/she taught you that was really important?
7. As an adolescent, how much thought did you give to your future working life?
 - a. What did you aspire to?
 - b. When you were thinking about work at that time, how did you imagine what your working days were going to be like?
8. We talked about the influence of your parent's work earlier when we talked about your childhood. Did any of those things change during adolescence?
9. What were your friends' thoughts about their work futures?
10. Did xxxxx (your mentor's) occupation influence you at any way?
11. As an adolescent were you involved in anything that was close to a 'job'?
 - a. How did it occur to you to go and work xxxxxx?
12. How would you compare this to your current occupation?
13. And let's talk a bit about school: how, generally did you feel about being at school?
14. How, at all, did you try to achieve and maintain a certain status among your schoolmates?
15. And could we talk about politics? Did you have any interest in the broader area of politics during your adolescence?
 - a. What was happening at that time in the world and what was your response to this?
16. What kinds of music, books, ideas took your interest at that time?
17. Can you remember how you imagined at that time an ideal world?
 - a. Did you have any idea of anything that might 'save the world'?
18. Did you belong to any youth groups or the like?
19. Now, still thinking about your adolescence' years, do you remember if you found yourself thinking about 'who you are' and 'who you wanted to be'?
20. Overall during your adolescence, do you remember being frustrated?
 - a. [IF YES] How did you usually deal with your frustration?
21. To what extent did this relate to any thoughts about deeper issues – questions about existence – that sort of thing?
 - a. Did you think about what you might do with reference to these matters?
22. When moved into adolescence from childhood, did your relationship with religion change?
 - a. [IF YES] How? (eg. continue to attend church)
 - b. Did you feel in anyway that your faith was coming into doubt – or being challenged?
23. Were there any 'supernatural' experiences during this stage of your life?
 - a. [IF YES] How did you deal with them?

Now coming to your adult life (19 +)

1. Which would you say have been the most important events of your adult life?
 - a. In what way have they been important? - How do you think they have influenced your life direction?

2. Which people do you think influenced you throughout your adult life?
 - a. Were you influenced by different people in different stages of your adult life?
 - b. [IF YES] How did you experience each transition when you would end your association with certain people or invite new ones into your life?
3. Now let us talk a bit about your work history.
 - a. What was your first job?
 - b. [IF NOT THE SAME AS CURRENT] How did you see yourself in this job?
 - c. And after that?
 - d. Why did you change/move to xxxx? How did you first experience being in a new environment.
 - e. Etc...
4. So finally to your current job, can you please describe to me a day at work?
 - a. What challenges do you usually face in your working life?
 - b. Which aspects of the job do you enjoy most?
 - c. Which aspects do you find the hardest to handle?
 - d. What would you say is the balance between the material rewards and the more intangible aspects of your job?
 - e. Have there been things that you would have liked to have done in your work and you have not been able to do?
5. If I asked you to rate different aspects of your life according to their importance, what percentage would you assign to your work?
6. Imagine that you didn't need to work, what would you be doing then?
 - a. Therefore, in what way would you imagine the various aspects of your life to change or be different?
7. Do you feel that your job has changed you as a person in any way?
 - a. Do you find a personal meaning in your work?
 - b. What are the required qualities of being an xxxx that you can identify with
 - c. And what are those for which you feel 'this isn't me'?
 - d. Do you feel that there is something from which you have to protect yourself in any way at your work? (It could be a situation, condition, person or anything.)
 - e. [IF YES] In which way would you be threatened by xxxxx?
 - f. What do you do to protect yourself?
8. Do you feel that you can live up to your personal values in doing your job?
9. What are the spiritual characteristics or values, if any, that you bring to your work?
 - a. In what way do you think this affects your job?
 - b. Do you think you could be described as trying to live a spiritual life at all?
 - c. What does this entail?
10. How far do you go along with the idea that each of us has a 'one true self'?

- a. Insofar as we can talk of a 'true self', do you see this as something that is already in existence ('predestined', you might say) and needs to be 'found', or do you see it as something that we have to create. In other words, is a true self something to be discovered or something to be made?
- 11. Some people suggest that we all have many selves within us. What do you feel about that?
- 12. We talked about your belief in one true self / many selves. At this point I would like to ask you if you can identify any 'spiritual' means / ways which you would say helped you understand more about yourself and your life.
 - a. [IF YES] In what way?
 - b. What do you believe about the role of fate and free will in people's lives?
 - c. Why do you decide to believe in this aspect of xxxxx (what your belief is) spirituality?
 - d. Does it make any difference in how you live your life?
 - e. How meaningful is the principle of redemption to you?
 - f. [IF YES] What part does the notion of redemption play in your life?
 - g. To what extent do you find yourself reflecting on big questions about 'who you are' or about God?
 - h. [IF YES] How do you deal with them? Is there something you do to put your mind at rest?
- 13. Were there any experiences that might be characterised as 'supernatural' during your adult years?
 - a. [IF YES] Can you please describe them to me?
 - b. Do they come as the result of the practice of specific spiritual exercises or do they just occur?
 - c. Do you ever doubt about your own experiences?
 - d. Would you distinguish between a transcendent experience and fantasy?
 - e. Let's imagine that you come to the conclusion that no such thing as a 'spiritual world' existed, what would that mean to you? Would that change your way of living in any way?
- 14. Do religious or spiritual signs and symbols mean something to you?
 - a. [IF YES] With which spiritual signs and symbols, if any, would you see as the most significant?
 - b. Do you use spiritual signs and symbols in your everyday life?
- 15. Can you recall if there was ever a moment (or more) in your life where your role in life was perfectly clear to you?

Appendix 3: Life Story Interview Guide

The following interview guide was used during the second stage of the field research interviews which occurred in February – March 2006:

The meaning of work

- What part does work play in your life?
 - p Is work self fulfilling? How do you become fulfilled in your work?
- How do you evaluate your work choices up to now?
 - p How does your work relate to your overall life?

The self at work

- What is a good day at work for you?
- Have you ever felt your soul was being stifled at work or you were being exploited at work?
 - p Can you give me an example when someone treated you in an unfair manner at work?
 - p An example of unfairness you spotted at your work towards others?
- Did you ever find that you had to bend the rules in order to get your work done properly?
 - p If not, did you ever have to conform to something you didn't believe in?

Spiritual identity and work

- Which do you think are the qualities of a spiritual person at work?
 - p How do you try to be spiritual or live up to your spiritual values at work?
 - p Now can you give me an example when you felt you brought your soul to work?
- How difficult is it being spiritual at work?
 - p Do other people expect things from you being 'spiritual'? How do your colleagues see you as 'spiritual'?
 - p Do you seek and / or receive spiritual guidance for your work? In what form?
 - p Does 'spirituality' help you cope with the difficulties in work and life? Can you give me an example?
- When you started involving in 'spirituality' and realised some new meanings and values, how did you change your work patterns to be more spiritual?
 - p Do you restrict your self of habits or acts that are not spiritual? (i.e. Do you stop yourself from having bad thoughts etc? How?)

- p What do you think or do when you are frustrated, sad or lose your temper?

Learning and overcoming barriers

- What do you think you are learning through your work?
 - p How is this related to your overall life?
 - p Which do you think is the bigger lesson you learnt at work?
 - p Can you give me an example when something held you back in your work? Of a barrier you came across? How did you overcome it?

Working with people

- You talked about realising a need to work with people. Why do you think it is important for you to work with people?
 - p What are the difficulties of this? What do you do so that in 'compassion' (or while healing) you don't end up taking the other's problem on yourself?
- How do you behave as a '(profession)' outside work? (i.e being a coach, do you find yourself giving advice to friends and family or tip yourself of how to behave or being reflexive while you are working with a client?)

Betterment of society

- Do you think you contribute to society in any way?
 - p What do you think society needs more? How can 'spirituality' help?