'So you want to be a Manager?'

To what extent does the recognition and understanding of unconscious processes play a useful part in the Management of frontline Social Work Practice

An in-depth study of a Children and Families Resource Centre

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Abstract

This is an in-depth single case study of a frontline social work team based in the third sector. The Bromyard Team provided comprehensive parenting assessments in care proceedings and safeguarding matters. This research is partly derived from the author's own experience and makes use of ethnographic and psychoanalytically informed observations of ordinary day to day work processes in the professional team. The study aims to identify, understand and conceptualize the variety of emotional forces and relationship dynamics that impact on first line managers in social work and social care settings in order to deepen and extend understanding of these demands, and the stresses and conflicts managed by professionals in these roles. The author undertook Management Consultative Interviews (MCIs) with the managers of this service, in which they were afforded space to think about their roles and detailed field logs of researcher/observer experiences were used to gather data. The emergent data identified four emergent episodes, these were analyzed using aspects of thematic analysis informed by psychoanalytic theory.

The overall findings of the study are that the first line manager often finds themselves assailed from all sides: task related anxieties that filter through the front line workers, organisational anxieties and projections that trickle down from above, wider environmental anxieties that rock the stability of services and also impact on more senior staff, personal anxieties and projections that invade the professional space and organisational/systemic anxieties arising from inter-group, cross-boundary role tensions.

The author recommends that rather than being left to cope with such experiences, front line managers need effective and robust support, which would promote further understanding of the emotional and unconscious forces affecting their role.

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Introduction - Overview and aims of research

Research Question

This study sets out to explore the extent to which 'unconscious processes' play a part in the management of front line social work practice, with reference to one intensively studied case example.

Clare (1988) cites the DHSS Practice Guidance (1985) which states that: 'Managers deal with the problems, but social workers cope with the pain and are left to cope after the managers have moved to the next problem'. If we look closely at the roles of front line managers, these comments are not a fair reflection of their experience. In my own experience of wanting to pursue a more relationship-based approach to the task of managing practice I became acutely aware of the 'pain' in the work. I often found myself struggling to translate these experiences into something useful for the team members I worked with. This struggle was due in part to the limitations posed by the numerous tasks I had to perform in my role as a front line manager, and in addition the pressures to achieve tangible outcomes.

My difficulties also related to reluctance in my own supervision with supervisors to address the less tangible issues. My hypothesis, therefore, is that front line managers have an awareness of unconscious processes taking place between team members and themselves, and if this knowledge is made use of, it might lead to more effective social work practice.

My vision of an 'effective' team or organisation is one where there is less 'turbulence', more thoughtful practice and more understanding and containment of practice. Effective practice management should include seeking to address the emotional impact of the work upon practitioners as well as the outcomes. This material could then be used to give practitioners the support they need to sustain difficult work with their clients and importantly enhance the work with service users.

As a front line manager there were periods when I experienced tremendous difficulties recruiting and retaining staff, and whilst there were clearly external reasons for these difficulties, they were also due in part to how workers experienced support from their supervisors, with their emphasis on task completion and the lack of attention given to the

emotional impact of the work. It was also difficult to recognize and attend to some of the emergent unconscious processes within the team generally and between team members and myself as their manager, due to the need to take action with little space for reflection and thought in my role as a frontline manager.

This study has given me the opportunity to look more closely at the experience of other managers, the unconscious processes which emerged during the study and to reflect upon their significance and meaning when trying to think about how a team functions.

Kearney (2004) identifies the range of activities undertaken by the front line managers, and states that an effective team manager should be able to:

1. Manage practice, including supervision of individual and collective team practice; manage workloads, workflow, service development and the administrative and finance systems, which should support these.

2. Offer supervision that takes into account the emotional impact of the work and its effect on individual and organisational working.

3. Know about, understand and integrate required standards for practice within the team's work.

4. Contribute to the professional development of team members, collectively and individually.

5. Model and describe a professional approach to the work including appropriate use of authority, autonomy, responsibility and accountability, and expect and enable staff to understand and demonstrate this in their work.

In my experience as a front line manager I found that I spent much of my time trying to manage tensions between various casework and human resource 'issues', which were usually related to the fall-out from a practitioner's discontentment with work conditions, ever increasing caseloads and the overwhelming nature of the work. These tensions formed the basis of my curiosity, and prompted me to explore the extent to which further understanding of unconscious processes might be useful in social work management practice. This study has also presented me with an opportunity to deepen my own professional growth and development.

Structure

In Chapter 1 I present an account of my professional journey, which has been integral to this research as I seek to develop a deeper understanding of others and myself in the professional roles we have occupied.

Chapter 2 gives information about the research site, the circumstances of my entry and access to the team, a description of the research participants and their engagement in terms of the research project and the ethical issues in relation to anonymity and confidentiality.

Chapter 3 presents a review relevant literature and the theoretical ideas, which have underpinned my research and analysis of the emergent data. I discuss the psychoanalytic concepts of projection, introjections' and projective identification, and highlight the work of Ogden (1979), Hinshelwood (1991), Klein (1946), Bion (1959 a/b) and the exploration of these concepts by Goretti (2006). I also discuss the use of observation, transference and counter transference as research tools. In Chapter 4 an explanation of the research methodology and strategy are described along with the epistemological principles underpinning this research.

Emergent data from the study is presented in Chapter 5, in the shape of four stories about an organisation I observed. The first two of these stories take place before a significant announcement regarding the closure of a project, and the second two take place during the process of closure.

In Chapter 6 I discuss my findings, what I have learnt from the study and how this learning might be applied to the practice of front line management and finally I consider what further research might be required.

For the purposes of confidentiality and to protect the identity of the research participants all identifying details of the project and the organisation have been changed.

Chapter 1

My professional journey

Introduction

My professional journey is closely linked to this research. The impetus for beginning this project came from my own professional experiences and these have driven my ongoing commitment to its completion. This chapter will give an autobiographical account of my professional journey, which has been extremely valuable in the research process.

Professional experiences are a constant theme throughout this study, and frequently surfaced as I identified with, compared myself to or colluded with research participants. My professional biography has been characterized by transformation, from my qualification as a social worker with concerns about the social (political) world, to my interest in the internal psychological world, and lastly to my current understanding of psychosocial approaches to research, practice and management roles.

Ellis (1993) cites Krieger (1991) who suggests that orthodox research practices do not encourage scholars to document events in their own lives or even talk about themselves. Ellis (1993) shares a vivid and detailed account of her brother's death in a plane crash, and she states that in telling the story of her loss she seeks to 'reposition readers' in relation to her research, evoking feeling and identification as well as well as cognitive processing. Upon reading Ellis' very moving account of the loss of her brother this event, which resonated with the sudden loss of my own brother at a young age, I was struck by what she hoped to gain by writing and researching this experience.

Ellis goes on to say that her narrative is an example of a form that permits researchers and readers to acknowledge and give voice to their own experiences.

While I reflect on my professional experience I do so in the knowledge that there are some who consider this 'solipsistic and self-referential, thus forgetting the true purpose of the research project. (Nicholls, 2009) I believe, however, that as my research interests arose from my experiences of front line social work practice, they provide appropriate background information.

Like many others, my professional journey reflects the discourse, conflicts and developments that have taken place in the social work profession over the last three decades, some of which have been divisive and obstructive but also progressive and dynamic. Bowers (2005) has suggested that from the 1970s onwards, a sociological perspective, which has stressed the importance of external factors such as, has dominated social work: 'poverty, deprivation, trauma and racism coupled with a stress on the values of the profession'. She suggests that this predominant paradigm has unfortunately not been balanced with a psychological model, which takes into account the internal world and 'the interaction between external and internal realities.'

During my career I was not fully aware of and for the most part did not critically question the dominance of sociological paradigms. In the early 1980s these ideas felt like they were the 'best fit' in terms of the causes of many social ills of our society. Coming from an ethnic minority background and having a lived experience of discrimination and racism, it made sense to think of 'preoccupations with one's internal world' as self-indulgent and the preserve of the white-middle classes, I was more concerned with achieving equality. However, as my career progressed, I started to understand the importance of internal as well as external factors in the dynamics that shape social work practice.

Petrov's (2009: 210) remarks are helpful, as he refers to Freud's ideas about psychic processing and the need to move beyond the process of just remembering. If this is not done, the individual remains captive to 'repetition and to the symptom'. Ellis (1993) refers to the rewriting, editing and revisiting of the story of her brother's death, and describes how that helped with her grief. In the same way I would like to remember, process and make use of my career in social work, whilst thinking about the challenges I faced and my responses to them.

Bowers (2005) has commented that she has seen many social workers become interested and excited when they discover that there is a theory, which explains their emotional experiences, and how they can be harnessed as a tool. I too felt excited as I learned more about these ideas, and the internal changes I experienced at the same time. My increasing sensibility and exposure to psychoanalytic ideas and concepts, led me to become more curious about their application and usefulness in day to day front line management.

Who do you think you are?

I would like to see the front line management of social work return to a less macho, more emotionally responsive, firm but fair, wise, more creative and less reactive state. In referring to macho management I wish to stress that I am not linking this term to sexist masculine stereotypes, but to a form of management propagated by males, females, organisations and institutions. It is aggressive in nature, characterized by little regard for the emotional aspect of the management task. In thirty years as a social work practitioner, manager and educator I have experienced a range of developments in the field, and have been seduced by the various changes in the belief that they have been for the better, have been less wasteful and made more efficient use of limited resources. Whilst I remain committed to these issues I am also greatly concerned about the process by which these goals are achieved and feel strongly that greater thought and care needs to be given to the way the profession operates if it is to survive and hold on to effective and caring professionals.

At times my experiences have left me disappointed and disillusioned about leadership within social care. I thought I was destined to 'lead' and had ambitions of progressing up the management/leadership ladder. However, during my time on the doctorate in social work programme, as I continued to work in management roles, I found it helpful to be more thoughtful about my role and to really acknowledge how emotionally challenging and demanding I found it. The course also provided a space where I could think about the turbulence and conflicts I experienced in my role by providing a psychoanalytic framework through which I could understand my experiences. It was during these periods of reflection that I began to wonder how other front line managers were surviving and coping and whether this framework might be useful. I hoped that by undertaking this research I would gain insight into how others were handling the middle management

roles, and also how I might make sense of my own experiences by observing at others.

'So you want to be a Manager?'

My career began in residential care. I worked with adolescents, young mothers and their babies in my early twenties. After three years of working in a unit of this kind I wanted to become qualified as a social worker and left to attend a fairly left-wing polytechnic in the early 1980s. I had no real idea of the world of politics and gained much of my political awareness at this institution. In hindsight this political awareness altered my understanding of the therapeutic social work I was doing, and left me with strong views about the relevance of individual case work, which I considered 'pathologising' and did not address inherent inequalities in society. I became a strong proponent of radical social work and community development approaches.

However, I recognized that dealing with the 'mess' of people's lives was a frightful prospect and during the early period of my career I clung to the notion that community development and fighting for a more equal society was the only way forward. I feared being burdened by such issues as people's personal behaviours', their emotions and feelings. Radical/community social work approaches offered a framework for working on redressing social and political inequalities rather than thinking about these things.

So upon the completion of my professional social work training I secured a job with an Afro-Caribbean voluntary agency, I was drawn to work in this sector as I felt a strong desire to 'give back' to my community. My role involved working with and organizing affiliated youth groups. The role was an exciting one. I met and worked with many Afro-Caribbean youth organisations and felt that this was exactly what I was supposed to be doing. However, I found that statutory social work offered far more by way of career progression and after two years in community development I had gravitated towards the statutory sector to essentially undertake case work.

Powerful influences

Working as a hospital social worker in a paediatric team was a significant and transformational period in my early career. The team was led by a manager with a psychodynamic approach, and there were several members of the team like him. They had all undertaken training at universities where therapeutic approaches to social work practice were dominant.

Initially, I resisted this approach, but increasingly I saw its value in the work we were doing. Our team made real efforts to understand the experiences of our service users be they positive or negative, and our manager sought to engage with the challenges we faced working with parents: their distress, difficulties and behaviour's. He encouraged us to face the tasks we found emotionally difficult and he supported us in doing so.

As a team we also sought to make sense of the wider multi-disciplinary system. Often we provided containment for emotional distress that other parts of the system were unable to express. We were a listening ear to our colleagues who had nowhere else to express their concerns about the families we all worked with. Over time I developed a greater sense of empathy and was more able to put myself in the shoes of service users and sit alongside them in bearing the pain of their experiences. My time with this hospital team and importantly my team manager, greatly contributed to my development and understanding of effective leadership.

As I progressed and developed in my career as a practitioner, colleagues and managers encouraged me to pursue a career in management. I was often told that I would make a 'good manager', and by the early 1990s I worked for a statutory children and families team in west London, where my new manager nominated me to take up an in-house management training programme. The course was part of the authority's first line management training scheme, called: *'So you want to become a manager?'*

Management Training

The scheme was quite innovative at the time as its delivery was shared between the local authority's training section and supported by the local university. It was aimed at potential managers who were encouraged to sign up and was each allocated a mentor. There was also a real emphasis on encouraging black workers to undertake the training, it was the early 1980's during a period were anti-discrimination and anti-racism was very high on the agenda in local and national government. Black workers were underrepresented in the management teams and the local authority wished to redress this imbalance. We were few in number but I had a real sense at the time that a lot of thought and commitment had gone into this scheme and its delivery.

During this period I was also able to 'act up' in management roles, which gave me further insight and experience. Part of what drove my ambition, was that I envisaged myself as an

effective leader. I had ideas about how I would perform, and I saw myself in the future being supportive to my staff, modelling good practice and ensuring that service users were at the centre of the work.

Management Experience

By the mid-1990s I was a part-time team manager and training officer, which gave me the option of remaining in both camps. However, I began to feel increasingly overwhelmed by my dual role and the lack of space I had in which to think about my work. After a further two years I decided to take a career break and went to work overseas in the Caribbean. I took this sabbatical as I wanted new experiences and to work in a new environment, I was also beginning to feel somewhat overwhelmed by my work in frontline practice. I returned to the UK following a period of almost two and a half years in the late 1990s with new energy and purpose to pursue part-time study, and applied for a place on the doctorate in social work programme.

I decided to remain freelance and undertake short term team management contracts – as I felt this would give me more control of my time, and would allow me to pursue the course. My first posting following my return to the UK, was as a transitional front line manager in a statutory children & families team. Later I moved to another transitional post with a 'leaving care' team, and then became a manager within a non-social work front line team. This period was personally disturbing as the posts were challenging and difficult. The contexts for these postings were around managing the teams going through significant change and re-organisation. At the same time this was also an enlightening period as I was also studying and receiving intense supervision. The support I received on the doctoral programme prompted me to think about the 'awfulness' of managing on the front line and I wanted to look at this further. The front line management role in many ways mirrors the front line practitioner's role in that it is extremely challenging and often thankless. The expectation was that as a manager you should cope, 'suck it up' and manage! A great deal has been written about how service users may impact on social workers, but there has been less written about the actual experience and impact on the front line manager.

As a manager I often felt under pressure from two sources: firstly from my staff who expected unconditional support, containment and protection; and secondly from my

Managers, who expected 'results and outcomes'. Pressure was put on my staff to take on more work, carry higher case loads and throughput more cases. Staff faced with the relentless demands placed on them would often become overwhelmed and increasingly resistant to what they perceived as these relentless demands.

This situation fuelled the tensions between my staff and myself, and often led to a 'hot house' of raw emotions, which at times felt almost like a 'battle field'. Managing the powerful emotions being projected into me by the staff often made it impossible to make sense of the dynamics as they occurred.

There was little capacity within the organisations I worked for to view staff resistance as anything other than an individual being difficult and 'unwilling to change'. The organisations' response to this unwillingness was to ask managers to become more punitive, firm and unwavering in terms of their expectations.

The agencies I worked for varied in their acknowledgement of the emotional content of the work. There were those who seemed to be genuinely interested and concerned about how front line workers were coping with the levels of stress and there were others who were clearly more focused on outcomes, task completion and the bottom line.

These make the front line manager's job a very challenging one: the demands from senior managers, peers, staff and service users must be constantly negotiated, often with limited time and resources. The following section outlines my observations in this regard.

The Core Task and Context

The core task of social work is to deal with difficult social conditions, difficult human behaviour and family crises. Being involved in this work and in close proximity to service users has an impact on social workers and by extension the front line manager. Social work is often undervalued, the work is often highly charged emotionally, under-resourced and under continual financial constraints and scrutiny.

In my experience staff can be left feeling persecuted by the emotional demands of the work, but also by the demands placed on them by their line managers, who themselves are under pressure to push staff to take on more work. The effectiveness and value of the work is often measured in terms of simple numerical outcomes with seemingly little regard for the complexity of the human conditions being dealt with on a daily basis. The

boundary between the front line manager and staff is continually put under tremendous strain and struggles to contain conflicts and projections that frequently occur.

The following are two personal examples of the strains placed on front line managers and their staff.

'The poor inspection'

I have often wondered how useful the application of psychodynamic ideas might be to me in my role as a team manager. My most painful experiences as a transitional manager of social workers have been around the emotional intensity of staff management. I was often left feeling hostility, anger and at times very powerful urges to react aggressively and defensively to what felt like frequent verbal assaults from team members, and massive resistance to the change, imposed by new policies and practices. I have no doubt that the transitional nature of my position contributed significantly to the highly 'charged' environments. My brief often included the task of 'holding' the team together and steering them through a process of major change.

On one occasion, as a transitional manager of a social work duty desk in a local children's and families team, I was tasked with supporting managers who had received a very poor inspection outcome from the Social Care Inspectorate. The managers were collectively criticised for poor decision-making and front line staff had complained about their lack of confidence in the management team. Staff and managers were disgruntled, morale was low and there had been a clear breakdown in mutual respect between managers and staff.

Whilst I had not been part of the inspection and the subsequent criticisms, I observed and experienced some highly charged exchanges between the social workers and their managers. One such exchange involved a black senior social worker that I shall call Stacey.

Stacey was quite hostile towards and disparaging of all the front line managers, and I was told that she had recently been unsuccessful in her application for a management position. She initially presented as being supportive of me as a 'black manager' (her words), but as time went on, she seemed to resent my authority and would often challenge me when I asked her to undertake casework tasks. This situation eventually culminated in an incident, when she openly challenged me in the middle of the office, after I tried to establish why she had taken a day off without permission. I do not entirely recall the

details of our exchange; however I vividly recall her anger, belligerence and sense that I had no right to challenge her behaviour. This led me to become equally as angry in my communication with her. The whole incident left me feeling physically awful and drained, but I was determined that I was not going to 'back down' from my position and the following day Stacey called in sick.

On reflection, Stacey's resistance and hostility towards me was quite a complex matter, which involved a degree of envy, ambivalence in view of my temporary status and resentment of my authority. Whilst I was providing what I considered to be committed support from the team – although short term – staff may have felt there was little point in getting to know me and trust me.

During such a difficult period it was helpful to receive good external supervision from the Tavistock Centre, where I was undertaking my doctoral studies. This support provided a space where I was able to reflect upon and make sense of these emotionally draining experiences in a meaningful way.

The above is just one example of my difficult experiences in role as a manager, but contemporary social work practice faces many challenges and demands, many of these driven by a central government who regularly state their commitment to improving outcomes for service users. In work with children and families, and more specifically Child Protection, the detailed analysis of high profile cases, which have resulted in the deaths of children, have also had a significant impact on many of the changes taking place. I experienced some very turbulent environments in my role as a first line manager and often found the nature of my interactions with my staff were antagonistic and hostile as we all struggled to cope with the work, the required changes and the human resource issues. The challenges faced included: poor staff performance, high levels of staff absence due to illness, high staff turnover and difficulties filling vacancies. These difficult environments were set against a background of managerialist approaches, borrowed from the private sector which have reshaped the very nature of social work with its emphasis on managerial-technicist practice that fails to place due emphasis on the non- rational component of the human condition and the process of caring, as compared to earlier reflexive-therapeutic approaches. (Harlow, 2003)

Cooper (2001) refers to 'the dominance of the managerialist regimes through which government … seems to discipline and order the nature of welfare state activity.' He

describes an environment where social work managers are expected to impose discipline and order on front line staff.

My own in house supervision provided little support or space to think about some of the difficult emotional pressures involved in this task, amidst a organisational culture of macho management where other colleagues and peers would have to be relied upon to provide such support. Supervision was largely focused on outcomes from the range of managerial tasks for which I was responsible.

In these environments the 'turbulence' that Hughes & Pengelly (1997) refer to was in evidence. They suggest that this 'Turbulent Environment' is fraught with projections, introjections and projective identifications. They go onto say that just as the social worker is the container for the feelings clients cannot hold for themselves, the manager is the container for the intolerable feelings of their staff. The following example was another difficult experience from this turbulent environment.

'Karen'

For a brief period I managed a local authority 'leaving care' team in order to guide them through the changes brought about by the Children (Leaving Care) Act in 2000. The social workers in this team were thought of by their senior manager as 'difficult' and resistant to taking on new work. They were thought of as not serving their existing service users very well and were clearly unhappy about the changes and new expectations of them. I recall a very tense team/allocation meeting, when I sought to allocate a new case to a very experienced and competent practitioner who I will call Karen. We reached an impasse where I was insisting that she take on the new case and she was insisting that she had no space. Both of our voices were raised, we became very angry and I found myself angrily stating that 'I could walk out of here today.' In turn she replied that she could do the same. Our exchange was highly charged, yet I cannot recall how the matter was resolved. It is interesting how difficult it is to remember the precise details of exchanges like this and how highly charged emotional situations seem to paralyze the mind. I do however recall the awful physical feelings I was left with following that exchange.

At the time I tried to make sense of my own experiences, but due to my close involvement I was unable to 'stand back' and reflect upon its meaning. I would argue that it is virtually impossible to make sense of such experiences without support, no matter

how professionally experienced you might be. Leaving managers to rely on their existing internal resources is inadequate.

The 'Third Sector' political context

This research was based in the voluntary sector or the 'third sector', which competes alongside the private sector for Local Authority contracts. Most voluntary sector agencies have had to adopt corporate operating systems and have been similarly characterized by such events as mergers, take over's, loss of and winning of contracts and fierce competition. In terms of the organisation within which this study was undertaken, there was a constant climate of anxiety and uncertainty, partly brought on due to this competitive environment.

The survival of it's various projects was a constant preoccupation for the wider organisation and made for a very challenging environment in which the focus had to be shared between the agencies' core tasks and their need to survive in the long-term. This climate of uncertainty greatly impacted on agencies' functioning and strategic activities. There were anxieties about winning more and keeping existing contracts, managing pressures from commissioners who often wanted 'more (services) for less (cost)', keeping abreast of what other providers were doing so as to develop higher standards, and of course, as with all charities, watching the 'bottom line' so that expenditure did not exceed income.

Summary

This is a summary of the experiences and context within which my career was shaped. I share this brief professional biography as an important aspect of what has driven this research and my need to make sense of my career thus far. In the following chapter I will describe the research site and the process of gaining entry and access.

Chapter 2

The Research Site

Introduction

Entry issues

While I was part of a statutory children and families team, I began to have doubts about pursuing my research when I considered the pressurized, sometimes paranoid climate in front line settings, and the likelihood of managers cooperating who were already under immense scrutiny. I decided to make use of my existing contacts within the voluntary sector, and I approached a senior manager in the organisation for whom I had undertaken some contract work. The senior manager was very keen for the study to go ahead as he felt that this might offer the managers and their projects much needed support, and I recall him saying that this piece of work might go some way towards strengthening existing projects. He agreed to circulate a standard letter to all the projects in the region.

I received one positive response from the manager of a children and families resource centre. I prepared a written summary of the research project (please see Appendix I), which was to be discussed at their team meeting. Then I attended the meeting to present my proposal in person. From that point on I began to make entries into my research journal of all the events, contacts and activity, which will be discussed, in greater detail throughout this thesis. I met with the manager on two further occasions to discuss the research proposal and meet the team.

How the setting was found.

This research is based on an in-depth single case study of The Bromyard Children & Families Resource Centre. It is a qualitative piece of research. The Centre is a London based project commissioned by the local authority to undertake complex parenting and core assessments for families where there were safeguarding concerns or where the local authority was considering applying for a full care order of the child(ren). The Project was one of several managed by a large national children's charity.

I sought to discover the extent to which the application of psychoanalytic lenses could promote the understanding of 'projective processes' and thereby play a useful part in the management of front line social work practice. When I embarked on this research, I wondered how useful the application of psychoanalytic ideas might be in my role as a team manager. I wanted to make sense of the painful experiences the front line staff often left me feeling, which included anger and powerful urges to react aggressively and defensively. I was curious about whether a more therapeutic approach might minimize tensions and the reactive nature of front line management.

I was originally very keen to study a statutory children & families' social work team, as this would have been close to my own professional experience. I had struggled to provide the kind of supervision, which took into account the emotional impact of the work and its effects on my staff, in a way, which could be experienced as constructive and positive and not oppressive and pressurized. Particularly, I wanted to deepen my understanding of how other first line managers approached these tasks. I felt that I could learn much more if I took a step away from being directly involved in the operational function and took more of a 'third' position.

However as I set about locating an appropriate statutory team, I began to have grave reservations about the likelihood of securing agreement from a team willing to be research participants. From my experience and what I knew of the context the prevalent climates in these settings were: mistrust, suspicion and fear of the pervasive 'audit culture'. My intended research activities might only serve to heighten mistrust and suspicion. I was also keen to secure a research site within a timely manner so as to start the data collection process. My reservations were discussed at length in sessions with my supervisor and research group, and we agreed that from a pragmatic point of view I should make use of my existing links within the voluntary sector to secure a site.

Participants

I decided to approach one of the Senior Managers (AD) within the voluntary organisation I worked for. He agreed to assist me with identifying a suitable and willing team to participate in the research. He asked me to draft an initial correspondence requesting that an email be circulated to all projects in the region, and he advised that my letter should give a brief overview of my research interests and what I was proposing to investigate.

The email stated that I wanted to research 'team dynamics' and would like the opportunity to meet with any interested teams to discuss my proposal and how I intended to proceed.

The email was circulated to all the projects in the local region by the AD. He was enthusiastic about the project and later I learnt that he felt my research could provide support and potentially strengthen the first line manager role. He also had particular projects in mind that might benefit from participating in such research, but it was later agreed that a letter would be sent to all the projects seeking volunteers – rather than 'imposing' the research on an unwilling manager.

I received a response from Verna, the Project Manager of The Bromyard Children & Family Resource Centre, quite soon after I sent out my letter. She was keen to participate in the research and advised that I contact her Deputy Project Manager (DPM) to arrange a site visit and a meeting to discuss the details.

I managed to arrange a meeting and site visit with the DPM after the third attempt. I had become quite fearful that perhaps the DPM was not entirely in agreement with my research, and this might be the reason for the delay in response. When I finally managed to speak with the DPM on the phone, I was pleasantly surprised however as she sounded keen to participate. The aim of our initial meeting was to discuss the title of the project, what I wanted to research, how I was going to collect the data and ethical concerns.

Pre-research site visits

Upon my arrival at Bromyard, I was greeted by the DPM, a white woman about 35/36 years old and she presented as quite anxious and nervous. During our meeting the DPM shared the following information about the team:

4.1 Between the Project Manager and herself they supervised the entire staff team, but were also carrying a DPM vacancy

4.2 The team met regularly and also received regular group supervision from an external consultant

4.3 That they had co-working practice protocols and guidelines, as there were sometimes disagreements and differences between practitioners who were co-working cases. Team

members received regular supervision split into two parts: professional development and case management – these sessions also took place at different times.

4.5 The team was ethnically diverse and she valued her current experience and the input she received from her manager.

4.7The DPM felt that her current experience differed from previous roles in as she felt there was more time to think.

4.8 She also highlighted that the team were about to change, and three locum social workers were about to join them.

She also told me that a new DPM was due to join the team, which would mean that they were fully staffed. The staff would receive supervision from them both

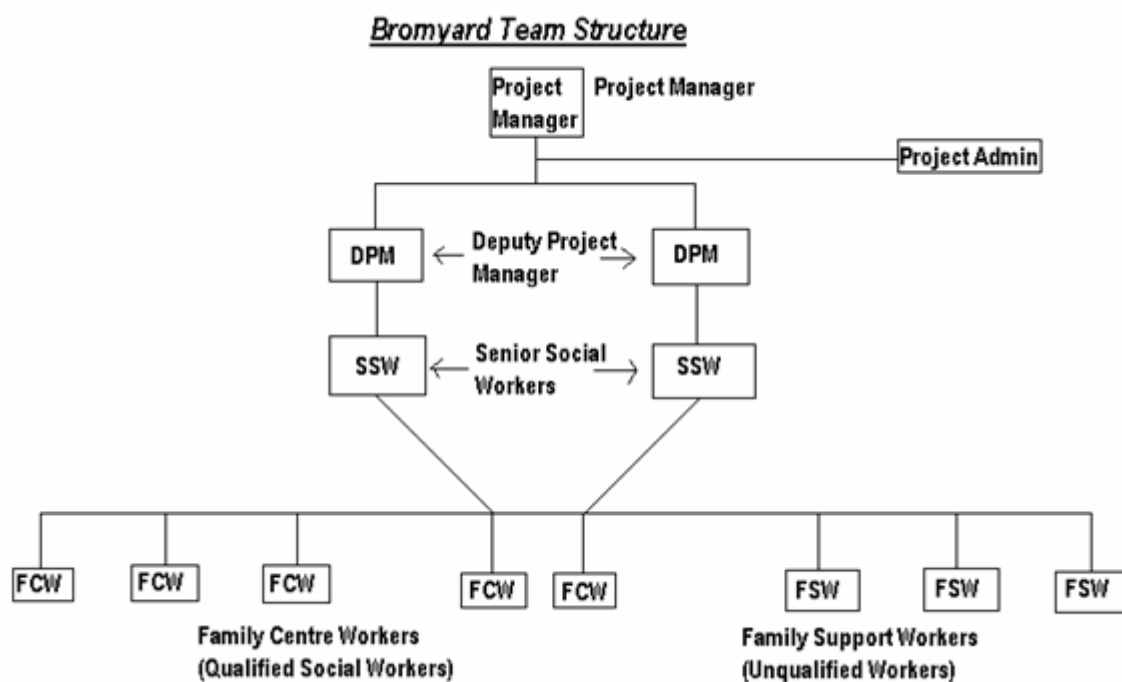The team's structure looked like this:

Fig 1 Bromyard Team Structure

We agreed that I would meet the rest of the team prior to commencing my research field work, and that I would write a summary of the research and its purpose. Writing the summary gave me the opportunity to further modify my thinking about the purpose of the research and helped me be more specific about what I wanted to research. Once the summary was completed (see Appendix II) this was sent to the DPM for circulation amongst team members prior to my second pre-research visit. The DPM later confirmed that my summary had been circulated and had been discussed with the team who then wanted to meet me.

Ethical issues

Rubin & Babbie (1997: 60) suggest there are four main ethical issues, which must be addressed by social work researchers:

- The voluntary participation and informed consent of participants

- The potential harm to participants

- Anonymity and confidentiality

- The analysis of findings

They go onto suggest that 'all participants must be aware that: they are participating in a study, must be informed of all the consequences and must consent to participate in it.' These issues were being related to clients/service users, but have equal relevance to the study of staff teams.

I was advised by my supervisor during this period that I should consult the ethics committee of the organisation to confirm that my research project was consistent with the organisation's policies. I went on to further discuss my proposal with the regional Research Officer (RO). He advised that there was no formal ethics committee, only a press office to manage media issues. The RO advised me to discuss my work with the policy unit. The policy unit advised that whilst there was no formal ethics committee, there were protocols around confidentiality and these were available on the organisation's intranet. I was also advised to keep my line manager informed of my research activities.

I was somewhat anxious about meeting the team, as I was unsure how keen the staff members were to participate. I feared that Verna was keener than her team to be involved in this piece of work.

I met the team for the first time on my second pre-research visit. In attendance there were four family centre workers, one family support worker and Verna. The meeting went well and I learnt that Bromyard was one of three sister projects in the borough. The team was due to move to a new location in January of the following year and there were to be personnel changes. As the entire staff team was not present, I agreed to undertake two further pre-research site visits to meet the absent members. At this initial meeting I shared how I was going to undertake the research and what I was interested in. The team members who were present at the meeting stated that the research sounded interesting and they agreed to participate. However, Bartunek & Louis (1996) state that very few people openly express their most private opinions and emotions in public, and I had to bear in mind that there were staff missing from this initial meeting and consider whether Verna had influenced them – was their consent genuine or superficial.

Following this initial meeting I met with Verna alone to establish and strengthen our rapport. She shared further contextual information with me about Bromyard. She was pleased that a black female was undertaking this piece of work. She felt it was positive for the team to see a black person in this role. I did not ask Verna to clarify and assumed she meant that it showed her staff a black person could hold a researcher role, which was uncommon. However, as will be seen later in this thesis, Verna had some concerns about her role and authority in the team and my involvement as a black researcher may have represented a potential ally to support her in the often isolated leadership role. Verna went on to tell me that she had started working at the Resource Centre in 2002 and had been initially appointed as a consultant to support the temporary project manager, then she had held the deputy manager position. In the past Bromyard had been close to closure as it was underperforming with a long-standing staff group in place. By October 2003 Bromyard had sufficiently recovered, the old staff had moved on and the permanent project manager role became available. Verna applied for the post and was successful. Upon her appointment she had one deputy to assist her and was assured that a second DPM would be appointed so she could attend to the strategic development of the project.

As Verna shared aspects of her professional history with me, it became quite apparent that we shared similar professional experiences. At the time these similarities felt positive and enabled Verna and I to develop a good rapport. We were both black, around the same age, female and first line managers. These similarities are worthy of note and will be further explored as the findings in this research emerge.

In the course of this meeting she went on to share that the DPM I had met previously had been asked to leave. Verna explained that the previous DPM had been 'sabotaging' various team processes. Diarized and case management tasks were often not completed as agreed, with the DPM's response when challenged about these issues being: 'I know I should have done that, but … ' Verna went onto tell me that a new DPM, Judith, was due to start at the centre, and she was described as 'brilliant!'

During our pre-research discussions Verna also shared that the team had received input from an external consultant. This was aimed at helping the team prepare for the changes ahead and how they were going to adapt positively. One of the outcomes was a pretty impressive diagram of a fast car – symbolizing movement forward. The diagram also plotted various points and dates, at which expected changes would take place and the action needed to respond to those changes. The image was powerful, well-drawn and placed on the corridor wall of the first floor of the centre in full view of the staff. Its purpose was to motivate the team and serve as a constant reminder of the changes and the progress they would make, but it was also a constant source of pressure, as it appeared to discourage them from stopping and thinking.

Meeting other team members

I agreed to meet with those staff members who had not been at my initial meeting the following week. I arrived following a team meeting, as suggested by Verna. She thought this would be the best time to 'catch' team members. When I arrived however I got a real sense that some staff wanted to 'flee'. I managed to speak with two senior practitioners one black African-Nigerian male called Henry, one white British female called Mandy and one family support worker from Eastern Europe called Anthea. Briefly, I also met another family centre worker a white European called Tammy, who asked if we could meet the following week as she was 'too busy' that day. I sensed some avoidance from

Tammy. Her lack of eye contact and her rather dismissive body language seemed to indicate how she felt. I later learnt from Verna that she had been supervised by the previous DPM and harboured resentment about her departure, particularly towards Verna. Henry, one of the senior practitioners presented himself to me but seemed quite anxious about whether I was from the local authority. He assumed I had an inspectorial role and was visibly relieved to hear that I was not from social services. He went onto explain that he hadn't yet had lunch and agreed to meet with me after lunch however when Henry returned from lunch he apologized and said he had another meeting so could not spare anytime that day.

I waited in the kitchen to meet with any other staff members who were not present at the team meeting. One of the social workers, Anne, appeared and was keen to discuss my research. She shared her 'love' of research, and how much she missed this activity now that she was a practitioner. She went on to state that in her current practice she feels able to incorporate current research. She also stated that she felt the work of the team was 'real' social work, I assumed Anne meant that she felt able to work from a relationship based approach with more time to develop deeper and more intense relationships with service users.

I arranged to undertake a third pre-research visit two weeks later, again with a view to meeting team members I had still not met. On my third visit to Bromyard, I arrived to find the team having a joint lunch with staff from one of the other 'sister teams'. I wanted to meet with the two remaining staff members I had not yet spoken to; Henry and Tammy. On this visit there were still difficulties in meeting with these workers. Henry was away on training and Tammy managed only to speak with me briefly. I decided that a brief meeting with Tammy would have to be good enough, and Henry's overall awareness of the research would have to do. These two workers had been somewhat avoidant but perhaps it was unrealistic of me to expect 100% compliance.

Potential harm to participants, anonymity and confidentiality

In some medical research the potential physical harm to participants is a serious consideration and as far as possible this is safeguarded against. In this study there was a negligible risk of physical harm but the possibility of some emotional harm had to be thought about i.e. how senior managers would receive any critical material the staff team might share with me. There was also the possibility that I might have to feedback concerns about risks to service users.

To mitigate some of the anxiety I assured the team that my work would be completely anonymized. I will return to the issue of confidentiality and anonymity later in the dissertation, when I address the issue of undertaking research within one's own agency.

Analysis and reporting of findings

During my initial pre-research visit I told the Bromyard team that I was part of a research support group who met regularly to pool our knowledge and discuss our work. I assured the team that these sessions were confidential and would only be used to help me with my analysis of the data. I also assured them, as they were understandably anxious to know if my work had been commissioned by senior management, which this research was specifically for my own learning and would be used to achieve a doctorate in social work. I expected the issue of confidentiality to be revisited regularly.

A theme seemed to emerge related to how the team was going to manage and adapt to the changes, which lay ahead. In discussing my early impressions with my research group, they suggested I use future site visits to observe the teams day-to-day functioning. They also suggested I track the impact of the planned changes, as this would lead to a gradual build-up of useful data over time – not dissimilar to the activity the Bromyard Team would engage in when assessing parents' capacities.

The setting & the team profile

The Bromyard Children & Families Resource Centre is a project run by a national children's charity that have a number of projects across the UK. It is based in an inner London local authority with an ethnically diverse population, characterized by pockets of wealth, deprivation and a transient immigrant population. The project was commissioned to undertake complex Parenting and Core Assessments of families presenting with significant concerns. The team also provided expert witness evidence in Child Care Court

Proceedings. The project was entirely dependent upon local authority funding, which was managed centrally and at a local level.

As mentioned earlier the team was managed by the project manager and her deputy, but also carried a vacant deputy post. There was also one administrator, three senior social workers, and four social work/family assessment workers, two of which were qualified social workers and two who possessed other qualifications in teaching and play therapy. When I commenced the research there had been a significant staff change in that the previous deputy manager was dismissed and a new person came into post. This was an ethnically diverse team but contained only one male.

Role	Ethnicity
Project Manager & Deputy Manager(s)	Both managers were black (one of Caribbean descent and the other of dual heritage African-Nigerian and white British). The deputy I had initial contact with was of white British heritage.
Administrator(s)	The administrator's post was initially held by a black Caribbean female, but she left and the post was taken up by a young white British male.
Senior Social Workers	One white British female and one black African male.
Social Workers/Family Assessment workers	Two were white British females and two were females from the Middle-East.

Fig. 2 Team Ethnic Breakdown

Summary

In the following chapter I will review the relevant literature and discuss more fully the theoretical concepts underpinning this research study.

Chapter 3

Literature Review & Relevant Theory

Introduction

Statham et.al names (2004) have suggested that there is a need for further research into the management of practice. The classic text 'Mate and Stalemate' (1979) grapples with three perspectives: an analysis of what social workers do with their clients, what clients do to their social workers and an examination of the structure and functions of social work organisations. This is useful material as it provides a vivid context for the environments within which practice takes place. Hornby (1983) also discusses the misuse of the professional and agency boundary for defence purposes in social work practice. She also discusses ways in which an understanding of defences can be used to reduce, modify or contain inevitable anxiety, experienced in practice.

Dearnley (1985) looks at the supervisor role: the transference, reflection process and the triangular relationship of client and worker supervisor, and suggests that building an internal supervisor model is essential to the training of supervisors. Additionally Menzies (1970) has written about how nurses cope with the levels of anxiety they experience in their work, and the impact of this anxiety on their practice. Woodhouse & Pengelly (1991) have described how the anxieties and defences of clients and patients impact upon the responses of practitioners in five settings.

These texts also examine how practitioners are affected by institutionalized defences against task-related anxiety specific to their agency and profession, and they have also been useful in terms of understanding the nature of anxieties experienced by practitioners and their supervisors.

In this chapter I review additional literature, which also considers the practice of management roles.

Questions for the literature

The aim of this study is to question the extent to which illuminating unconscious processes present in social work teams might assist in the management task.

To support my review of relevant literature I had several questions:

- Firstly, what is the value of a psychosocial approach to understanding the research data?

- What management theories have influenced social work management and practice?

- Is it possible to 'manage and lead' differently in a climate dominated by rationalistic approaches?

- Is it possible, as Coulshed (1990) suggests, to hang onto our 'social work values once we enter the management arena, where we must combine efficiency, effectiveness and economical with compassion [and] integrity' and uphold the humane purposes of social welfare organisations.

Structure of chapter

In responding to these questions, this chapter has been divided into eight sections:

I begin by discussing the rationale for using psychodynamic approaches against a backdrop of dominant managerialist approaches. Psychosocial approaches and research are then discussed in more detail, in Section Two. This has been my overarching approach to the analysis of data in this study, where I have used psychoanalytic concepts along with sociological approaches to make sense of the emergent data. However, this synthesis has seen huge academic conflicts, which I have also referred to in this section of the chapter.

In Section Three the psychoanalytic concepts of projection and projective identification are discussed. Goretti (2007) provides an interesting analysis and relates this to the influence of Wilfred Bion (1948b) and his work on group behaviour.

Countertransference and access to unconscious processes is discussed in Section Four, particularly as it relates to the research task.

In Section Five the value of containment is discussed. I was clearly able to provide some degree of containment for the managers as researcher as I felt contained by my research group and my supervisors. I had somewhere to deposit difficult thoughts, feelings and emotions and the managers were also able to express difficult thoughts and feelings in the consultation sessions.

Systems and open systems theory is discussed in section six to open up some thinking about ideas underpinning organisational and institutional functioning.

In Section Seven ideas underpinning Management and leadership are focused upon. This section also includes aspects of Bilson & Ross's (1999) ideas on the value of Open Systems Theory in social work.

Bamford (1990) describes contemporary front line management in social work as being primarily informed by commerce and industry. Coulshed (1990) rejects this image of the frontline and states that it in is crucial that front line managers have a sophisticated understanding of unconscious processes and the impact of such processes on team and organisational dynamics.

Finally, in Section Eight I spend some time addressing the ideas, which have informed the issues of ethnicity, and race, which have arisen during this study. The work of Frantz Fanon is referred to in this regard, particularly when thinking about feelings of inferiority and self-doubt in black managers.

Why the psychodynamic approach?

In my early management career I was convinced that goal-oriented practice was the answer to chaotic and pressurized work environments. A goal-oriented approach seemed to offer the 'order' and practice accountability I yearned for, which was consistent with my concerns about unequal power relations between service users and professionals. This approach also seemed to offer a sense of certainty alongside the increased use of tools such as contracts and agreements designed to encourage commitment to change. However, as my personal and professional maturity increased, so did my appreciation of the complexity of individual human behaviour in groups, families and work teams, and therefore I became aware of a need to embrace an approach, which integrated an understanding of the internal (sometimes unconscious) and external worlds.

Preston-Shoot & Agass (1990: 76) state that psychological and social problems are interlinked, and that they influence each other. I agree with this statement, and believe that we must continue to search for synthesis and balance rather than engage in 'fruitless debate about the superiority of psychological or social explanations and interventions' (1990: 74). The authors offer four reasons why conflicts in this regard are unhelpful; firstly, it is important that practitioners make sense of the complex interactions between personal, social and organisational pressures, and look with greater understanding at themselves, service-users, organisational systems and wider contexts in which social workers and users meet. Secondly, reliance on one method produces a narrow vision, fragments or distorts the reality of users' lives and courts failure, since it oversimplifies situations and overlooks some vital dimensions of problems (1990:74) Thirdly, the authors state that Social Work is ill served by either/or splits. The public-private or individual-social splits are not polarities but circular interactions. Each interacts and feeds into the other. Fourthly, the user-worker relationship must be understood from both psychodynamic and social perspectives if its dynamics are to be appreciated and effective ways forward found. The authors further state that it is essential to consider the context in which a problem occurs, as without synthesis in social work, where there is greater emphasis on controlling individuals and families, slotting them into inadequate and inappropriate services tailored not to their needs but to economics, society at large may become a fertile ground for pathologies in families and individuals.

The authors also pose the question as to whether such connections in the two explanatory approaches can be sustained. Are they 'antithetical and contradictory, or [do] connections merely produce a fudge rather than a model which can make sense of the complex interaction of personal and organisational pressures that is social work' (1990:74). The authors also suggest that the naysayers usually possess an outmoded understanding of psychodynamic theory, which equates psychodynamics with instinct theory, linear causality and the discovery and working through of early repressed trauma, and ignores the development of object-relations theory which bridges intrapsychic and interpersonal phenomena by stressing individual–environment interaction and exchange, meaning and subjective experience (Cookin, 1979; Zawada, 1981). The following section looks more closely at the challenges, which have faced efforts to synthesise the internal and external worlds in terms of psychosocial approaches.

Psychosocial Approaches

As a social worker, I trained at an institution with left wing political views and a very strong sociological emphasis with major concerns about state power and the need for the mobilisation and the politicisation of the working classes. Coming from this background I felt pulled towards community work upon completion of my social work training. However as I moved into statutory social work and in particular case work, I became more intrigued by the internal worlds of service users, and I have since felt the importance of working with both the inner and external worlds, both of which impact on the lives of human beings.

Psychosocial approaches seem to offer an ideal paradigm and framework within which to pursue this research. I found helpful Newman & Newman's (2006) definition of the psychosocial approach in 'Development Through Life – A Psychosocial Approach' in which they state Erik Erikson's view (1963: 37) that human life as an individual experience is produced by the interaction and modification of three major systems: the biological system, the psychological system and the societal system. Each system can be examined for patterns of continuity and change over the life course. Each system shows evidence of adaptive capacities that respond to environmental demands. Each system can be modified by self-guided choices. The integration of biological, psychological and societal systems leads to a complex, dynamic portrait of human thought and behaviour (Newman & Newman, 2006). The authors go on to suggest that the psychosocial approach seeks to understand internal experiences that are the product of interactions among biological, psychological and societal processes, where changes in the three systems generally bring about changes in the others.

Trevithick (2012a) provides a helpful definition of psychosocial approaches, stating that they draw on psychoanalytic theory and practice derived from the work of Freud and his followers. Trevithick describes the main elements, summarized by Hollis (1997: 1308), as:

'an attempt to mobilize the strengths of the personality and the resources of the environment at strategic points to improve the opportunities available to the individual and to develop more effective personal and interpersonal functioning.'

In terms of case work, the definition stresses the importance of both internal and external factors in relation to people's capacity to cope with the everyday stresses of living. It contradicts the myth that psychosocial approaches are only concerned with the inner emotional life, as the external world is also an important area of analysis and concern.

Psychosocial research

There has been intellectual opposition to this approach. Frosh and Baraitser's critique of Holloway and Jefferson (2008) has been the subject of intense intellectual debate. Frosh and Baraitser express concern about the dominance of psychoanalysis in the uneasy partnership between psychoanalysis and sociological approaches to research. Volume 13 of the 'Journal for the Psychoanalysis of Culture & Society' (2008) contains several papers written by various academics on this issue: Hook, Burman, Hoggett, Rustin and Walkerdine.

Hollway (ibid) takes issue with comments made by her colleagues Frosh and Baraitser who are critical of the disproportionate emphasis, in their view, on psychoanalytic certainty. Hollway accepted that there were grains of truth in her colleague's analysis, however, she believes that psychoanalysis is the key to a psychosocial approach. She has found no other b o d y of theory that illuminates experience, action and subjectivity in ways that enrich otherwise reductive social accounts.

I sympathize with Hollway's view, as I also believe the language and concepts within psychoanalysis have certainly supported and provided an articulation of the emotional experiences I have encountered professionally and personally. However, I also believe that to speak of the 'inner world' in isolation does not portray the full picture in terms of human experience, so I have some sympathy with Frosh and Baraitser, whom Hollway quotes as having stated that there are dangers associated with psychoanalysis.

Hollway feels that Frosh and Baraitser have based their critique on a caricature of a Kleinian approach, which is prevalent but not necessarily best-practice in psychoanalysis.

Walkerdine (2008) sets out to provide a brief background and introduction to the debates that have framed the emergence of psychosocial research in Britain. She states that

psychosocial studies in Britain are 'completely intellectually diverse and pluralist and this has been borne out by the intellectual conflicts which have ensued in relation to this approach.'

Burman (2008) is more concerned with the role of feminist theory and politics in the therapeutic relationship and presents the following view of psychosocial approaches.

Hoggett (2008) is in agreement with Frosh and Baraitser's critique of psychoanalysis, and states that it presents as 'the one who knows.' He describes this presumption of knowledge, as sometimes arrogant in its refusal to doubt, as a feature of Kleinian psychoanalysis in the UK. However, it is not an arrogance shared by all Kleinians. Hoggett also states that:

'we should not forget that arrogance is a facet of all disciplines, psychology and sociology no less that psychoanalysis. The imperialist impulse to reach out, subsume, and explain all aspects of life as if the particular spectacles one is wearing have a magnifying power that others lack seems never to be slacked.'

Rustin's (2008) rather ferocious response to Frosh & Baraitser is essentially a defence of psychoanalysis and states that the authors have overstated the intellectual and academic strength of psychosocial studies. He does however consider that disciplinary boundaries within the social sciences have become intellectually obsolete and unproductive, but goes onto suggest that it might be interesting to explore the genealogies of the component

traditions that are now coming together in psychosocial studies, and consider ways in which they reflect and give definition processes of change outside the academy rather than the pursuit of arguments about the most fruitful and defensible methods of investigation.

Rustin also states that psychoanalysis is no longer individualistic in its approach and has moved out of the consulting room setting into an exploration of the broader phenomena of group, institutional, social and cultural life, so that the development of psychosocial studies creates contexts in which broader non-clinical phenomena can be given fuller attention.

This study has made use of psychoanalytic lenses to understand the emergent data; the following sections explain more fully which psychoanalytic concepts have informed the interpretation of this data, particularly the defence mechanisms of projection and projective identification.

Projection & Projective Identification

Choosing to research projective processes on the front line presented various challenges in terms of how I would collect and make sense of the emergent data. I was concerned about making use of psychoanalytic theory, which is complex and can be difficult to grasp without clinical experience. Yet I remained intrigued by its ideas on challenging dynamics, complex interactions and its focus on activity beneath the surface of consciousness. With the support of my studies at the Tavistock, Psychoanalytic ideas have helped my own practice in terms of how I think about challenging work and how I interact with, tolerate and manage painful dynamics with staff and service users. It has provided me with a framework for a more mindful and thoughtful approach to my work, which is consistent with my values. This being said, however the concepts of projection and projective identification are not isolated single phenomena, but part of a wider range of defences, and on a continuum of the defence mechanisms employed when people feel threatened. As a front line manager, I became rather preoccupied with my own experiences, the bulk of which appeared to be projections of my staff's intolerable feelings, it was often quite difficult to know the difference between my feelings and my staff's projections. In my early contact with the Bromyard team I learnt some interesting things about the emotional life of the team, their dynamics, management relationships, the

impact of race and ethnicity on their work, and also I became aware of how my role as a researcher became a source of support for the managers in their roles. This intensified as the positions of the managers became increasingly threatened and my role had to adjust to include a more supportive element.

Definitions

I was often the object and recipient of projections from my staff in my role as a team manager. These projections related to the nature of the work and the conditions in which the work took place. My staff members wished to evacuate and dispose of their anxiety, stress and conflicted emotional states and locate them in me, so that they felt they were no longer in possession of them. This was a constant source of pain. I was often gripped by the powerful emotions, and desperately sought to understand my experiences rather than continually react defensively with hostility or aggression.

Learning more about projective processes and being able to name the difficult emotions I experienced as a manager was a good starting point. The following is a more detailed exploration of these concepts.

Melanie Klein's classic 'Notes on some schizoid mechanisms' (1946) first defined our modern understanding of these concepts. One of her main points was the suggestion that in the first few months of life anxiety is predominantly experienced as fear of persecution and this contributes to certain mechanisms and defences, which characterize the paranoid and schizoid positions. Klein suggests outstanding among these defences is the mechanism of splitting internal and external objects, emotions, and the ego. These mechanisms and defences are part of normal development. She goes onto describe the processes underlying identification by projection as a combination of splitting off parts of the self and projecting them on to another person, and some of the effects this identification has on normal schizoid object relations.

Ogden (1979) stated that projection (P) and Projective Identification (PI) should be viewed as two ends of the gradient in which there is increasing preponderance of interplay between the projective and introjective processes as one moves toward the projective end of the gradient. He also makes the distinction between projective identification and projection as an independent process, in the former, the individual employs a projective mode of thought in his mode of fantasy of ridding himself of a part of himself and inhabiting another person with that part. The subjective experience is one of being at one with the other person with regard to the expelled feeling, idea, self-representation, etc. In contrast in projection as an independent process, the aspect of oneself that is expelled is disavowed and is attributed to the object of the projection.

In Hinshelwood's (1991) 'Dictionary of Kleinian Thought' projection is defined as: '(i) perception; (ii) projection and expulsion; (iii) externalising conflict; (iv) projection and identity; and (v) projection of parts of the self.' I am particularly interested in the second, third and fifth uses of the term in relation to my study. These resonate with my professional experiences and in the emergent data from this study.

Projection and expulsion – Freud (1895) had already noted links between projection and paranoia. Abraham (1924) went onto make links with the 'impulse for anal expulsion with the mechanism of projection.'

Externalising conflict - In her work Klein (1927) found the mechanism of projection was an important one in externalizing internal conflicts.

Projection of parts of the self – both Freud (1895) and Klein (1946) used the term whereby the patient is said to attribute certain states of mind to someone else.

Origins of projection and projective identification

In Melanie Klein's seminal paper 'Notes on Some Schizoid Mechanisms' (1946) these concepts became cornerstones of modern psychoanalytic thinking. They were later elaborated upon and applied by British psychoanalyst Wilfred Bion (1959a/b). These ideas were based on Freud's discoveries about unconscious phantasies, which have played

a supremely important role in the theory of psychoanalysis and its clinical practice for certain schools. Unconscious phantasies are said to represent the most primitive functioning of the mind. Projection and projection identification are in turn the most primitive forms of communicating the contents of that mind. Klein described these processes arising in the paranoid-schizoid phase, a state of mind common in young infants but also present amongst adults in everyday life, where bad parts of the self are split off and projected into another person in order to rid the self of badness, which is felt to be threatening.

Ogden suggests that projective identification as a concept has been the source of much confusion in terms of; what it means, when it is used, how it differs from projection on the one hand and 'identification' on the other. Ogden presents definitions proposed by Schafer (1974) and Segal (1964): 'The term has been used to refer to a type of projection wherein the person projecting feels at 'one with' the object of the projection' (Schafer, 1974). This differs from projection where the person feels estranged from, threatened and bewildered by, the object of the projection. The term is also commonly used to refer to a class of fantasy wherein a part of the self is felt to be located in another person (Segal, 1964). Ogden states however that projective identification has been used in a variety of different but complementary conceptualisations and in his paper presents what he calls a 'synthesis of, and extension of, contributions made by a number of analysts.' Projective identification involves the disintegration of the mind due to parts of it being expelled.

Projective identification involves a group of fantasies and accompanying object relations concerned with ridding the self of unwanted aspects and depositing those parts into another person. Hopefully, if the other person can contain and digest these part-objects they can be returned and understood in a less toxic form, which is the 'good-enough' mother's task, although inevitably even she will fail in this task and the infant must learn to contain its own aggressive impulses.

Ogden refers to the development of the concept as having taken place most significantly amongst non-Kleinians, and gives the example of English paediatrician and psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott who rarely used the term projective identification but a great deal of his work involved the role of maternal containment in early development e.g. the concepts of impingement and mirroring (1952; 1967). Ogden also cites

Hungarian psychoanalyst, Michael Balint's (1952; 1968) work around therapeutic repression (especially during the phase of treatment he called 'new beginnings') who pays close attention to technical considerations which have a direct bearing on the handling of projective identification – he warns against having to interpret or in other ways act upon the feelings the patient is struggling with and asks the therapist to 'accept', 'feel with', 'tolerate' and 'bear with' the patient.

Ogden (1979) stated that there was a growing body of literature that attempted to clarify the concept of projective identification, which also made efforts to integrate the concept into a non-Kleinian psychoanalytic framework. He wrote about Searles (1963), who discussed the way a therapist (or parent) must attempt to make himself open to receiving the projections of the patient (or child), and discussed the importance of 'the therapist refraining from rigidly defending against experiencing aspects of the patient's feelings'. Ogden suggested that the patient can be helped in this approach but the therapist must be open to the patient's projections, must understand and vocalise them, so that they are available to the patient for re-internalization. Ogden also cites Malin and Grotstein (1966) who discuss projective identification in terms of three elements; the projection, the creation of an 'alloy' of external object plus projected self, and re-internalization. The aim of therapy in this approach is to modify the patient's internal objects by the process of projective identification, in that the patient is helped to observe how his projections have been received. Ogden also cites the work of Langs (1975; 1976) who further developed and used projective identification as a means of understanding the therapeutic process:

'it was necessary for analytic theory to shift from viewing the analyst as a screen, to viewing him as a container for the patient's pathological contents who is fully participating in the analytic interaction.'

The origins of projective identification in relation to early human development.

If we look at early human growth and development to grasp the significance of projective identification in our functioning as human beings, we can see that it serves four functions:

1. As a defence – it creates a sense of psychological distance from unwanted aspects of the self.

2. As a mode of communication – where feelings congruent with one's own are induced in another person.

3. As a primitive form of object relationship – which constitutes a way of being with and relating to a partially separate object?

4. As a pathway for psychological change – where feelings are psychologically processed by another person and made available for re-internalisation in an altered form.

These functions are also said to be attempts to perceive, organise and manage internal and external experiences and they help us to communicate with our environment. Psychoanalytic theory states that our earliest forms of behaviour continue into our adult lives. During infancy we discover the value of keeping dangerous, painful, frightening experiences separate from comforting, soothing, calming ones (Freud, 1920). This form of 'splitting' becomes established as a basic part of the early psychological modes of organisation and defence as the infant learns to keep separate psychologically in fantasy what is safe, from what is felt to be dangerous and destructive (Jacobson, 1964) (Kernberg, 1976). These dynamics are said to occur within the mother – infant dyad and are said to be 'quasi–telepathic' in nature and of a 'kinaesthetic type' (Ogden, 1979).

Winnicott (1956) describes this as a heightened state of 'maternal receptivity', w h i c h occurs in the mother of a new-born. Ogden states that aspects of the infant can be deposited in another person in such a way that the infant does not feel that he has lost contact either with that part of himself or with another person. In terms of communication then, projective identification is also a means by which the infant can 'feel that he is feeling.' He cannot describe his feelings in words to his mother but instead induces those feelings in her.

The debate - does projective identification really exist?

The concepts of projection and projective identification have not remained fixed and continue to expand. The following is a review of more recent commentary on these concepts and illustrates the challenges they present in terms of research.

Goretti (2006) sought to examine in greater depth the concept of projective identification. She gives a comprehensive description of the many meanings of the term, and acknowledges that while the terms' origins are to be found in Klein's work (1946), the immense literature on the subject very rarely makes reference to these texts in the bibliographies. Whilst the concepts have been around for the past sixty years and have been adopted into clinical practice and various theoretical frameworks, Goretti suggests that there continues to be uncertainty around the theory of projective identification.

The concept has been contentious amongst some who feel that because there is no singular definition of the term, it is difficult to study the phenomena with any scientific rigor and logic. Goretti cites Kernberg (1988) who stated that the term is used to describe: 'too many different things by too many different people under too many differing circumstances.'

In clinical terms the definitions includes:

• Putting oneself inside

• Striking, controlling, taking possession

• Appropriating qualities of the object for oneself

• Living omnipotently and identifying with the object (totally alienated from one's own identity)

• Living an experience of shared intimacy with object

• Transferring oneself into the object to know it better empathetically

• Putting oneself inside the object to live in it parasitically or

• Forming oneself into the object in order to control it.

Goretti wonders with such a 'multiplicity' of phenomena included in the concept of projective identification, is it still useful to maintain a term covering these phenomena or should a more appropriate scientific term replace it. She went onto suggest that replacement of the term was inevitable in the future.

Goretti's paper examines line by line the semantic content of works by Klein (1952a, 1955) and Rosenfeld (1947, 1949), and suggests that to settle for one definition of projective identification would deprive psychoanalytic theory of the full richness and value of the concept. In her 1952a paper, Klein explains the difference between projective identification and projection. Projective identification starts with a basic appreciation of otherness to arrive at the disconnecting result of confusing symmetry between the self and other. Klein's dual use of the term 'identification' is not dissimilar to Freud's, where he writes that identification 'endeavours to mould a person's own ego after the fashion of the one that has been taken as a model' (1921: 106). Projection on the other hand allows separateness to be revealed, and involves the expulsion of 'undesired mental states' into the object. Goretti (2006) feels that in Klein's 1955 paper, where she analyses the phenomena through the novel 'If I were you', projective identification is described as different to projection in that it 'requires a particular mental disposition both on the part of the person who carries it out and on the part of the object that receives it.'

Goretti also highlights the controversial debate about whether 'PI is an intra-psychic process with repercussions on the inner world of whoever uses it,' or whether its felt impact is on the phantasy of the object, and is to some extent modified by the object (2006). The controversy relates to whether the object 'imagines' that its boundaries have been violated and inner space occupied. Goretti suggests that Klein's papers do not really help us fully understand this. Sandler (1988) suggests that Klein's original formulation occurred 'in fantasy,' and that it has only been with the growth in importance of the theory of countertransference that the concept of projective identification widened to include real changes in the object. The theory of countertransference attributes these changes to the 'analyst's' countertransferential responses to the patient, and are not necessarily the feelings of the patient. Goretti feels however that Sandler's position cannot be said to derive from Klein's ideas which appear to be underpinned by 'fleeting intuitions' and goes on to state that in Klein's 1952 paper nothing is said about the 'conditions' in which projective identification takes place, which suggests that clinical

phenomenology to some extent continues to be a mystery. This debate suggests that the countertransference response of the analyst greatly influences the emergence and recognition of projective identification. Winnicott (1974) captures the dilemma inherent in the concept when he points out that unconscious dialogue makes it hard to be certain whether we are feeling through projections from the patient or through our personal responses to the patient's world.

These concepts may shed light on aspects of unconscious individual and group behaviour. The following section examines Bion's work on group behaviour.

The Influence of Wilfred Bion

Bion developed theories concerned with group behaviour and functioning. He accepted Freud's claim that the family group is the basis of all group functioning. But his ideas are also underpinned by Kleinian concepts, namely that adult behaviour can 'regress to infantile mechanisms characteristic of the paranoid schizoid and depressive positions' (de Board, 1978).

Young (2003) suggests that Freud wrote best about the structure of the mind, but Klein wrote best about the content of primitive anxieties and Bion integrated the structure of these primitive processes with their contents. He mapped out how unconscious processes are always at work and sometimes take charge of individual lives, groups and institutions.

Based on his observations Bion believed that groups operate in three ways, and that members of groups hold assumptions in common. According to Stokes (2000) these are:

• Basic assumption dependency (baD) – the group behaves as if 'its primary task is solely to provide for the satisfaction of the needs and wishes of its members'. The leader is depended upon for nourishment, material and spiritual protection (Bion, 1968: 147). This assumption prevents growth and development 'for it acts as if power flows from the magic of the leader who is maybe idealized into some sort of god' (de Board, 1978:39). De Board goes onto state that the idealised leader, or 'cult' figure, will flourish if he is prepared to play the role in the way the group wants. However, if the leader does not live up to the group's expectations – as is inevitable – disappointment and hostility is aroused. The group rejects the leader and appoints a new one.

• Group basic assumption pairing (baP) – is characterised by hope, 'hope that a Messiah will be 'born' to deliver them from their anxieties and fears.'(1978:40) Bion suggests that this hope can be expressed in several ways, such as the belief that a 'new person' will be more agreeable than the current one. Yet within this hope 'lies the seeds of the future disappointment, for the hope exists only as long as the leader, whether Messiah or idea, remains unborn' (de Board, 1978), as the hoped for person will inevitably fail to deliver the group from their fears, because these arise from within the group and include such emotions as destructiveness, hatred and despair. This basic assumption is viewed as a defence mechanism. It prevents the group from coming into contact with reality by keeping it a closed system.

'The dynamics arise entirely from within the group, allowing phantasies of what may happen to obscure what is actually happening. This allows the group to deny any difficulty and possibly painful actions which a realisation of what is actually happening must bring' (de Board, 1978).

• Basic assumption fight/flight (baF) – when the group has met to fight something or run away from it. Group members look to the leader to devise some appropriate action. Their task is merely to follow. 'Instead of considering how best to organise its work, a team may spend most of the time in meetings worrying about rumours of organisational change' (Stokes, 1994).

Bion viewed projective identification as the single most important form of interaction between patient and therapist in individual therapy, and used it to understand group behaviour of all types in relation to the group leader. Bion's line of thinking was that the analyst is manipulated so that he plays a part, no matter how difficult to recognise, in somebody else's phantasy (1959a). He describes projective identification as being a phantasy, where another is manipulating one person. He developed the concept of the 'work group' f as the opposite of the basic assumption group. Work group functioning results in development and growth.

The basic assumption group acts as if it is a closed system, ignoring reality and defending itself from it' (1978: 42). Bion likened the characteristics of the work group to the Freudian concept of the ego, which it is part of the mental apparatus that mediates between external reality and the rest of the self.

In combining the concepts of the basic assumption and work groups, Bion was able to put together a theory of group behaviour which was unique and comprehensive at the time. The theory demonstrates that a group is able to function when it has a task, and as a result is in touch with reality, and able to develop and change as it succeeds in the task. It would be tempting to think that the 'basic assumption group' and the 'work group' are different and distinct types of groups, but de Board states that the same group can operate on the basis of a basic assumption, whilst having a task at the same time. 'The work group and the basic assumption groups are not different groups containing different individuals, but the same individuals working in different mode' (de Board, 1979). The emotions generated by the three basic assumptions can at any time affect more rational functioning, and conflict can arise at the junction between the basic group and the work group. These are not static modes of functioning and can arise whenever the group feels threatened.

I have so far discussed in some detail the development of the concepts of projection and projective identification. I have also discussed aspects of Bion's work on group functioning, which provides a lens through which we may understand unconscious group behaviour. These concepts have influenced, supported and provided the lenses through which I have analysed the behaviour of the teams I worked in. At all times I was attempting to understand the behaviour and interactions of individuals, the team as a whole and the managers of the team. Other psychoanalytic concepts which supported my study were those of transference and countertransference. The next section will discuss the origins of the concept and its use as a research tool. This material is complex but helpful in terms of thinking about the task of leadership and management, and it enabled me to name processes such as: splitting, alpha and beta modes of thinking and object

relationships - these processes are often found beneath the surface of individual and group functioning and are not always visible or clear when one is also enmeshed in these dynamics.

Countertransference and access to unconscious processes

Freud (1910) initially saw countertransference as a 'minor irritation' to the analyst, and understood it in clinical terms as the patient's influence on the therapist's unconscious. He was of the view that the 'feelings' of the analyst were best kept to himself. He believed the analyst should present himself as a 'blank screen' in the therapeutic process. This arguably unfeeling approach was common amongst psychoanalytic trainees up until the 1940s but Hinshelwood (1991) notes during this period a critical reaction emerged (Winnicott, 1947; Racker, 1949; Berman, 1951; Heimann, 1950; Gitelson, 1952).

Heimann (1950) contended that countertransference was an important tool for inquiry into the patient's unconscious, and that the analyst's role was to recognise and master her own countertransference so as to increase her ability to sustain and tolerate feelings stirred up in her by the patient, as oppose to discharging them as the patient did in attempting to devalue the analytic task. Heimann (1950) went onto suggest that the analyst's feelings could be used beyond symbolic interpretation. Ignoring one's feelings, Heimann suggested, resulted in poor interpretations. In her 1950 paper Heimann suggested that the analyst's emotional response to the patient was one of the most important tools in her work. But she observed worrying signs that some analysts were becoming quite literal in their use of her ideas around countertransference, and thought that they needed to reveal their feelings in their efforts to understand their patients.

Hinshelwood (1994) thought that, 'countertransference feelings alone [are] not the basis for an interpretation – just as interpretation of symbolic content can no longer stand alone either – both have to be interwoven together to support each other.' The countertransference deepens the symbolic interpretation and content, steadies and directs an understanding of the patient with the therapist. Heimann maintained that the analyst's counter-transference response was part and parcel of the analytic relationship, part of the patient's creation and personality being conveyed.

Bollas (1987) further strengthened the validity of the countertransference by linking the concept to 'the unthought known,' or 'reverie.' He suggested that 'countertransference readiness' in the analyst creates an 'internal space' which allows for a more complete and articulate expression of the patient's transference, rather than closing down the capacity to replace it with some ideal notion of absolute mental neutrality or scientific detachment. In contrast Lopez-Corvo (2005) proposed a different view, suggesting, as Klein did earlier, that countertransference in the clinical and treatment process is an intrusion and that:

'interpretations for which the strongest evidence lies, not in the observed facts in the group but in the subjective reactions of the analyst, are more likely to find their explanation in the psychopathology of the analyst than in the dynamics of the group.'

Aspects of Lopez-Corvo's view resonated with me as I trawled through my research data with concerns about whether my responses were merely subjective, provoked by my personal values and concerns. Despite these reservations, it felt wholly appropriate to make use of my experiences as there was clearly something to be learnt from this study about myself in role as a manager and a researcher. The use of my countertransference responses allowed me to regain some degree of trust in my intuition and 'gut responses' and seek meaning beneath the surface of ordinary functioning.

As an 'instrument of research'

In my analysis of the data, I could not ignore my countertransference responses to the material and used these responses to generate propositions around possible meanings. I began paying attention to my own responses and expressed these feelings in supervision sessions. My supervisor suggested I pay closer attention to my responses to the data and use these to direct my selection of data for closer analysis.

Hanna Segal (1993) describes 'countertransference' as developing in analytic work as the concept of 'transference' changed and developed. There was a shift away from the view that the analyst was projected onto by the patient, toward thinking that the patient projected into the analyst.

I found myself increasingly expressing how the data made me 'feel' in supervision sessions, as though the material was getting 'inside' me. Segal suggests that in patient/analyst relationships there are some differences between transference and

countertransference, and that there still needs to be some distance maintained from one's own feelings and reactions to the material, as this enables one to use one's own state of mind for understanding, and not be too swayed by emotions.

In the data selection process I had to make use of my reactions, feelings and emotions as a mode of reengagement with the material.

Containment

In previous management roles, I yearned for alternative, more constructive ways of responding to staff and colleagues. I needed guidance and conceptual tools to support my understanding of the powerful transference and countertransferences feelings I experienced so as to achieve greater wisdom as a manager and leader. I needed a sense of safety which allowed me to move through the emotions I experienced in role. In short I needed 'containment'. In terms of this study and my relationship with the managers of the project, it soon emerged that in my role as a researcher, I provided a safe space for them to express their emotional concerns about their work and their struggles in their management roles.

I had previously likened containment to 'resilience' in my role as a front line manager, resilience being a crucial trait for withstanding pressure from senior management and demands from staff teams and service users. However, learning more about the psychodynamic meaning of containment led to a deeper understanding of the more supportive aspects of the role.

Bion (1962) refers to containment as our capacity to hold onto a feeling without succumbing to the urge to get rid of it, but instead using the energy of the feeling to think about what it communicates. He stated that containment is also about a person's capacity to be emotionally receptive to the other and having the strength to be able to receive someone's anger and survive it without crumbling or 'slinging' it back. These ideas particularly resonated with me in my practice as a manager, and in many respects I undertook this research because I felt increasingly pushed to retaliate to the negative projections I experienced as personal attacks.

Whilst I developed some degree of resilience, in order to provide containment I was required to demonstrate what Winnicott referred to as a 'holding' function, which is not

easy to achieve nor sustain unless one feels supported. In the course of this study it became apparent that the managers were not being effectively held in their roles. Smith (2010) describes containment as a deep process of taking 'on board' and into oneself all that someone projects, and holding it for them so as to make the experiences 'digestible.' In my role as researcher I was able to provide a supportive function for the managers, which intensified over time. This began early in the research process and increased as the team became increasingly under threat.

The following section looks more closely at systems theory, which has contributed to a conceptual framework for understanding the wider contextual issues in this study.

Systems Theory

Preston-Shoot and Agass (1990) provide a helpful explanation of systems theory in relation to social work practice: 'A system is a set of objects together with relationships between the objects and between their attributes.' Hall and Fagen (1956) go on to describe closely interrelated common characteristics, patterns and attributes: wholeness, structure, boundaries, self-maintaining and adaptive capacity and open or closed systems. 'Objects' in this regard means the component parts of a system, and attributes are the particular properties possessed by these objects. These will vary depending on the part they play in helping each object function properly as a component of the system. A system is an organised arrangement of elements, a network of interdependent, interrelated and co-ordinated parts that function as a unit (Gorell-Barnes, 1985).

This approach supports the notion of the interrelated nature of human functioning. Freidman & Allen (2011) state that systems theory is a way of elaborating increasingly complex systems across a continuum that encompasses the person-in-environment (Anderson, Carter & Lowe, 1999). It enables us to understand the components and dynamics of client systems in order to interpret problems and develop balanced intervention strategies.

Significantly, the authors state that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts and the crucial point they say is the interconnectedness of component parts. The way these parts relate to each other gives the system its distinctive quality (1990).

In terms of self-maintaining and adaptive capacity Hall & Fagen (1956) state that systems give priority to processing information which is needed to relieve a strain, neglect neutral information and positively reject information which will increase strain. Systems have their own built-in mechanisms for adapting to changes in their environment or for maintaining their stability (Miller, 1965). Interestingly, this includes the crucial notion of negative and positive feedback. Negative feedback operates to keep things as they are whereas change is brought about by positive feedback which pushes the system toward a new state (1990).

Open systems and challenges to social work

Open systems interact with their environment and are 'closed' if they do not. Preston-Shoot & Agass state that all systems are open in this sense although some are clearly more open than others. The distinction between open and closed systems lies at the heart of systems theory. The authors state that this metaphor can be applied to many aspects of human functioning, as well as to theories and belief-systems. They give examples of open and closed individual behaviour and human relationships.

The authors apply these ideas to family functioning, however they also suggest that the picture is apparent in institutions or organisations. They go on to explain that like an individual, couple or family, an organisation can get tangled up in its own internal processes until it becomes more and more closed to the outside world, and less and less effective at performing the task for which it was originally set up. The authors refer to the classic Menzies study (1970) which gives a psychodynamic account of a closed system within a hospital. The author goes onto make the following observation:

'In social services teams, the stress generated by the work can create a defensive, closed system characterised by conformity to guidelines and procedures rather than discussions about practice dilemmas within social work tasks; the system leads workers to minimise error rather than acknowledge the inevitability of risk, and to the closing down of communication with staff and users rather than reviewing the position and possible courses of action.'

These ideas offer a way of understanding institution and organisational behaviour in terms of how activity at the boundaries of systems/organisations impact on other areas of the system.

Management/leadership in social work

The following section of this chapter moves away from psychoanalytic concepts to more rationalistic themes, underpinning ideas which have impacted on management and leadership, then more specifically social work management. Finally I will discuss how my status as a black researcher and manager impacted on my functioning within the role.

The impact of neoliberalism

Since the late 1970s, the gradual adoption of neoliberalism in institutions of global governance, such as the European Union, World Trade Organisation, International Monetary Fund and World Bank, has fundamentally altered the conditions under which social work takes place and the lives of service users (Penna & O'Brien, 2009).

The writers also state that neoliberalism is an important factor in understanding contemporary social work and I would add by extension developments in social work management practices. Social work is thought to be one of the key operational embodiments of the welfare state (McDonald, 2006), so it is a main target of the perceived need to dismantle the latter's institutional foundations.

As services become more rationed and regulated according to market criteria, consumers of those services are to be found in increasingly desperate circumstances. The aim of creating wealth through neoliberal policies has actually led to increased poverty throughout the world, with corresponding increases in inequality and all of the attendant problems that accompany it. Neoliberal pressure on welfare delivery systems results in former public care structures taking on increasing control functions, with the responsibility for caring getting pushed into the private and voluntary sectors.

Penna & O'Brien (2009) also point out that the drivers for the development of services and the criteria for success are so different for profit and non-profit organisations that perverse outcomes are generated. The writers maintain that these strategies generate as many problems as they intended to solve and it has also been argued that the process of change has, in fact, done a great deal more harm than good. The strategies of

privatisation and marketization, for example, have generated sharp conflicts in the EU. The passionate argument offered by the EU's Framework Directive on Services of General Interest proposes the further commoditisation of health and social services, and highlights the inherent contradiction between, on one hand, neoliberal economic policy objectives which advocate developing an entrepreneurial competitive economy and, on the other, social cohesion and inclusion, of which public welfare is a key expression.

Another significant development in social welfare worthy of note has been the introduction of 'New Public Management' (NPM) techniques into the organisation and administration of public services. These approaches seek to modernise and render a more efficient public sector. NPM presupposes that that market-orientated management of the public sector leads to greater cost-efficiency for governments, without the negative side-effects of other objectives and considerations.

NPM represents different things in different countries, especially in the UK and US. The US has a history of self-reliance and free trade due to its immigrant population. The UK on the other hand has a history of a post-war welfare state where citizens have collective obligations for each other's welfare (Marshall, 1963). NPM was introduced to the UK after the OPEC crisis and the 'Winter of Discontent' when Thatcher attacked the social democratic approach to social services provision through local government agencies. It is here that we see the operationalization of neoliberal ideas in social work management and practice. Sweeping changes in the conditions of service delivery, more control and accountability, the introduction of performance measurement – a mechanism that, together with bureaucratic standardisation, paradoxically enables the central control of service delivery by government (Jones, 2001). Additionally it allows for the adoption of a corporate management language and the prioritisation of budget management and control through an intensive gate keeping of access to services. Therefore, the context within which UK social work management approaches has developed is characterised by an emphasis on the hierarchical nature of organisations through such statements as the 'manager's right to manage,' with focus on top down targets and objectives (Clarke & Newman, 1997; Harris, 1998; Jones, 2001; Lymberry, 2001). In terms of management theories I will now look briefly at the history of organisational development, which has been predominately underpinned by scientific theories, motivation, leadership and systems principles.

Scientific theorists

Scientific management theory (SMT) was coined by F.W. Taylor in 1911. During that era Taylor suggested that the purpose of management techniques was to bring greater discipline into manufacturing, clerical and professional work. SMT likens organisations to machines where employees are cogs in the process who carry out specialist tasks. In this paradigm, the organisation is concerned with continuous processing and mass production. It has a top down approach to planning, monitoring and controlling the work of its employees. The following section will explore the impact of motivation and leadership ideas and on social work management theory.

Motivation and Leadership

Elizabeth A. Fisher of the Dept. of Social Work in Shippensburg University, Pennsylvania, provides a useful review of relevant theories on motivation and leadership and how they have been applied to social work (2009). She attempts to synthesise some of the major theories, empirical literature and implications that may be applicable to social work management and research.

Of the theories presented in Fisher's paper Atwater and Bass's 'Transformational Leadership' carries the most resonance in terms of what I would consider to be a leadership style. This theory emphasizes exchanges among leaders and followers primarily based on rewards in return for meeting the established conditions. It considers other motivators for effective performance and is conveyed by four central principles: idealised influence, intellectual stimulation, individual consideration and inspirational motivation (Bass, 1985). It is empowering and participatory as it promotes input onto decision-making, delegation of tasks and responsibility, and it fosters local leadership. Fisher also states that social work's emphasis on understanding systems is congruent with transformational leadership. This type of leadership recognises organisations as systems and understands that leaders cannot be studied or considered independent of their organisations.

Social Work Management

Bilson & Ross (1999) seek to define an epistemology for social work based on concepts about how social systems change and develop. They refer to the work of Gregory Bateson, who has been described as 'one of the most important and least understood

thinkers in the 21st century' (Brockman, 1977), but whose contributions to anthropology, biology, psychiatry, genetics, education and ecology are considerable. Bilson & Ross make use of material from three periods of Bateson's work: the anthropological analysis of the Naven ceremony and the work of the systems scientists at the Macy conferences on feedback; his work at the Palo Alto Mental Research Institute in the 1950s and 60s; and his later work on ecology and social change. Bilson & Ross show how creative social work can bring about real and positive change in the ecology of people's lives. They characterise the development of social work as having followed a bureaucratic model based on Weber's lines of accountability, rational structure and spans of control. In more recent years however social work managerial ideas have been absorbed by the new managerialism of market economics.

The authors suggest that the introduction of a linear rationalistic approach to management is not limited to social work, and argue that it stifles creativity under procedures and guidelines. The authors refer to Ritzer's description of the way in which the autonomy of physicians is being increasingly constrained in order to impose more and more predictability (1993). A similar approach can be seen in the increasing regulations and controls produced by central government in the fields of child protection, the probation service and community care. Ritzer (1993) persuasively and interestingly argues that this represents an approach to management epitomised by the McDonald's food chain and which he calls 'McDonaldisation'. He describes McDonaldisation as a modern extension of Weber's theory of rationality, which has many benefits in terms of bureaucratic accountability but is essentially dehumanising and leads to irrationality. Evidence of this can be seen in the performance indicators most social workers are required to use. They have led to the employment of accountants and sophisticated accountancy systems to cost individual care programmes in fields such as community care.

Bilson & Ross (1999) contend that a rationalistic approach in its increased regulation of social work practice attempts to constrain the scope of human judgement through ever more rigid procedures. Whilst this approach may bring more predictability and greater conformity, Bilson & Ross argue that it will bring few real benefits to social service users. To support their argument they refer to research undertaken by Thorpe & Bilson (1998) into the careers of children who were involved in child protection investigations. They suggest that the rational approach to managing social work can create problems for

families rather than offering them support and demonstrate this in their paper. They argue that the 'personal' should be a central component in the work. Bowen & Schneider (1988) reinforce this in their research evidence on service organisations.

Bilson & Ross challenge the established social work culture of managerialism. They argue that social work is based on a flawed epistemology. They go on to state that there are deep errors in our understanding of social systems, and these errors lead to serious problems in both social work practice and its management.

The authors draw on key principles from the work of Bateson, who suggests different ways of perceiving and thinking about the world. Bateson talks of science having inherited an Aristotelian framework of analysis in which there is an assumption that there are simple chains of causation whereby A leads to B and soon to C. Bateson suggests that these linear notions cannot be applied to living systems and advocates a circular epistemology which acknowledges ways in which all elements of a system interact, influence and are influenced by each other.

However, there difficulties with adopting this approach. Bilson and Ross quote the work of Selvini-Palazzoli et al. (1978) who talk of a 'linear conditioning' possessed by human beings, which encompasses ideas in a linear static epistemology rather than a 'systemic circular sense which can portray the interacting nature of feedback behaviour'. They say we are imprisoned by the incompatibility between two primary systems in which human beings live.

Systems theory is consistent with my thinking in terms of its inclusion of the impact of both internal and external forces upon the object, be it an individual, couple or family. Preston-Shoot & Agass (1990) state that social work has been criticised for its myopic narrow focus, locating problems and pathology within individuals or families and ignoring structural inequalities. In my own left wing social work training course, we were very much encouraged to turn away from psychological considerations in our casework and take up the issue of social inequality. The division between these schools of thought is not helpful as we move toward times when both approaches are equally as useful in our complex pluralistic world.

The relevance of a colonial past

The last issue I wish to discuss in terms of its impact upon this study is colonialism. This issue impacted upon my role as researcher and was at play within the dynamics of the team I observed. The managers and I were of had African and Caribbean heritage, with a shared history of colonialism, albeit as second generation black women. It is my view that this past affected, and still affects, self-confidence and sense of self. Reference to the work of Franz Fanon is very useful in this regard. Fanon (1925-1961) was a Martinique-born French psychiatrist, philosopher, revolutionary and writer whose works were influential in post–colonial, critical and Marxist studies. Clarke describes Fanon as having showed us 'how black identity has been forged out of a complex amalgam of the colonial and post-colonial situation' (2006). It is my view that this has had an impact on me as a black manager and leaders. At times I felt not 'good enough' to lead. And there have been numerous occasions when I felt a sense of uncertainty when leading staff groups.

I was keen that this study was not only about race dynamics related to myself as a black researcher working with a black manager. I wanted this study to reflect how I was supported and greatly benefitted in developing my capacity to think beyond the superficial, through deeper reflection and use of thinking space. However, in discussions with my supervisors it became apparent that racial dynamics were quite central to my research and could not be minimised. These discussions led me to reflect more deeply on why I sought to minimise the impact of race.

Fanon (1952) writes about the 'colonised mind,' and presents the concept of 'internal inferiorization' using psychoanalysis to study the effects of racism on individuals, particularly on black self-perception. In this text he investigates the psychology of colonialism, how it is internalised by the colonised and how an inferiority complex is inculcated through the mechanism of racism.

I suggest that this colonial legacy contributed to my reluctance to think about the race dynamics in the research data. I thought that this issue was not valid enough to discuss as a legitimate part of the research experience, and this was closely allied to my feelings of not being good enough. Fanon suggested that the internalisation of colonialism led to the colonised becoming like the oppressor. And Davids (2011) argues that Fanon was seeking a theory that would not reduce the internal colonial relationship to individual

psychopathology. He found Jung's (1959) explicit emphasis on collective psychic experience promising but ended up rejecting his ideas as Jung believed that these personality difficulties derived from inherited archetypes. Fanon instead thought that the black man's condition was a consequence of the shared reality of colonialism. Fanon's partial rejection of Jungian ideas led him to be influenced by Alder (1927) and the centrality of inferiority in his theory. However, Fanon could not agree with what Alder stated about the acceptance of and adapting to inferiority. Fanon maintained that Alder's explanation of acceptance could not work for the colonized or in matters of race, as this would lead to a false adaptation by the colonised.

I think it is this state of mind which can at times prevent more open discussion about black experience, culminating in the fear of being told that you are 'playing the race card'. Fanon's ideas are helpful in understanding something of the shared experiences of the project managers and myself. Black professionals are often caught internally in what Davids describes as the 'fight against the notion of black as inferior, which can lead to overcompensation – an obsession with proving that despite a black skin, one is, at the very least, the equal of the white' (2011). This idea rings true for me. But I shied away from thinking about it and was more concerned with presenting a less subjective view of the data.

This material has been complex and difficult to think about as it is far more preferable to believe that as black professionals we are now beyond this dynamic, and that we have become liberated from such anxieties and inadequacies. In reality, however, beneath the surface there is a continued sense of self-doubt. I regret not having these realisations during the field work as I would most certainly have explored them with the project managers, and this is clearly an area which would benefit from further research.

In the data chapter which follows I make further use of Fanon's idea's to discuss issues of self-doubt and self-esteem as they surface in relation to some of the emergent data.

Summary & reflections

In this chapter I have discussed the concepts and overarching theories which have informed my research and how I have made sense of the data. My prime concern has been

to explore how useful psychodynamic theories are in ordinary day to day social work. I have looked at aspects of psychoanalytic theory relevant to my study, psychosocial theory and the academic tensions between practitioners in these fields, and ended the chapter with some thinking about the relevance of race and colonialism.

What has emerged from this review is that definitions of projection and projective identification are not static and are quite varied. I have learned that individual and group behaviour may shift in accordance with perceived threats. Goretti seems satisfied with the shifting definitions and argues that to deny these multiple meanings would be to the detriment of psychoanalytic theory, and she also accepts that in future these terms may have to adapt further. This situation throws challenges for researching projective processes.

In terms of my own training as a front line manager there was more emphasis on financial management, staff performance processes, setting and achieving targets and objectives. These rather functional aspects of management seemed to make perfect sense to me during my early management career, particularly as I sought to move away from the 'messes of front line practice.' My training as a manager included very little emphasis on understanding the emotional aspects of the role, this being seen as less tangible and quantifiable, despite the human costs. But psychoanalytic ideas and concepts can be of real value to front line managers with its emphasis on seeking meaning and greater understanding through attending to what is 'beneath the surface'. My most powerful experiences as a front line manager were the projections I received from staff and other colleagues. In terms of social work practice, the more stressful the work, the more powerful the emotions and projections being handled. The expulsion of difficult and intolerable feelings is an inevitable consequence of such tensions, and this is a natural human phenomenon. However, attending to the psychological as well as the social aspects of the management task offers opportunities for greater professional wisdom.

Chapter 4

Methodology & Research Design

Part One

Introduction

This is an ethnographic, psychosocial study within which participant observation and psychoanalytic methods were used to gain a greater understanding of the relational, projective and projective identification processes of a frontline Social Work Team located in the voluntary sector, also known as the Third Sector.   The data collection approach for this study combines several methods.   In Part I of this chapter I will discuss aspects of the theory underpinning the data collection methods used and in Part II I describe with whom the data was gathered and how, why certain methods were used and what was done.

Underpinning Methodology Theory

Research Philosophy

The philosophical assumptions underpinning this research were drawn from and influenced by the naturalist research paradigm. In contrast to the positivist paradigm where reality is fixed, directly measurable and knowable, where there is one truth, one external reality, the naturalistic approach accepts the possibility that there are multiple versions of reality, and these can be known only indirectly, through people's interpretations. Creswell's (2013) pragmatic approach to research is useful here where attention is focused on the research problem and pluralistic approaches are used to derive knowledge. This approach allows freedom to choose methods, techniques and procedures of research that best suit the needs of the research. Pragmatists do not see the world as an absolute unity. They believe truth is what works at the time, and they look at the and how research methods might be based on intended consequences. They agree that research always occurs in social, historical, political and other contexts, and that there is an external world independent of the mind as well as one lodged in the mind. This philosophical paradigm allowed me to make full use of my lengthy prior professional experience and knowledge alongside the application of

psychoanalytic and social theory. The following section looks more closely at quantitative and qualitative approaches and why chose a qualitative approach to this study.

Quantitative & Qualitative Approaches

I intend using a qualitative rather than quantitative approach to this study. Rubin and Babbie (1997) suggest that qualitative research studies produce phenomena in such detail and from multiple perspectives and meanings: the subsequent data is extremely rich and descriptive in this study. I am seeking to understand the depth as opposed to the quantities of the Bromyard Team's experiences.

Silverman (2000: 8) suggests that qualitative data 'exemplifies a common belief, which can provide a deeper understanding of social phenomena.' Qualitative data is also able to depict true accounts of people's life experiences, attitudes, feelings and beliefs (Patton, 1990). It is an approach that seeks meaning behind social interaction. In her paper 'Working with managers to improve services: changes in the role of research in social care' (2004), Ward refers to the importance of qualitative data as she discusses the benefits of research to social care managers. Her comments about the qualitative approach were extremely useful in terms of my own interests, in that collecting qualitative information is necessary to gain a true picture of what is happening. She states that quantifiable data may only provide a surface picture of individual experiences.

There are some disadvantages to this approach; these include the subjectivity and presence of the researcher; and this is thought to potentially affect the response and behaviour of the respondent(s). The researchers own assumptions might also contaminate the data. For example, I assumed that team managers mostly experienced challenging behaviour from their teams. However, I later learnt from a colleague that some if not most of her struggles and difficulties as a first line manager came from her senior managers. It then occurred to me that I would need to be open to hearing unexpected information, and be flexible enough to make necessary adjustments to my thinking during the process of gathering data.

There has been a long-standing philosophical debate between quantitative and qualitative

approaches to research. Much has been written about the ways in which philosophical positions have influenced research approaches. In thinking about my own research it has been important for me to further understand something of the competing paradigms underpinning research approaches. Lincoln and Guba's approach is briefly summarized below, as it helped me think about the value base from which I wanted to operate. Their approach has parallels with social work values. I also include aspects of Hammersley's very helpful commentary on the need for flexibility in the selection of research methodology.

Lincoln and Guba reject the traditional image of the knower and known, researcher and subject. They feel that the knower and known could and perhaps should not remain distanced and separated in the process of evaluation, and the relationship which becomes established during the course of the research is one of respectful negotiation, joint control and reciprocal learning. Finally Lincoln & Guba also state that as there are no enduring context-free truth statements, and all human behaviour is time and context bound, it is also doubtful that generalization from one site to the next is possible.

Whilst I do not agree with their position on generalization, as in my own experience I have transferred previous experiences and knowledge across various professional situations, the paradigm capture's what I seek to achieve, in that I will be looking closely at the team and its daily activities, providing feedback on what I observe, taking on-board any feedback I receive from the team and managers, and providing a supportive space for management consultation. The process will be reciprocal where I am not just 'imparting' wisdom but also equally if not more so, listening.

Whilst this study, given its focus on one resource centre and its exploratory nature does not claim generalized applicability to all front line services, I believe it might depict An aspect of the experience of many contemporary front lines teams today and may resonate elsewhere. I also hope that the methodological approach to the study will be of value in terms of allowing the opportunity to think in-depth about one case beyond the surface presentation, and may therefore afford valuable insight.

In Bryman (1988), Hammersley presents a less divisive view of qualitative and quantitative research approaches. He argues that the selection of an approach should be based on its suitability for the research purposes and circumstances of the research, rather

than being derived from methodological or philosophical commitments. Hammersley's argument in my view presents a more realistic view of the world we inhabit with its many uncertainties and less guaranteed 'absolutes'. He goes onto say that to make clear distinctions between qualitative and quantitative approaches does not capture the full range of options we face and therefore misrepresents the basis on which decisions should be made. I particularly value this view, which demonstrates the equal value of qualitative and quantitative approaches depending upon what we are seeking to achieve.

My overall research objective is to determine the extent to which the application of psychoanalytic concepts can be useful in the management of front line social work practice. This interest has persisted particularly at a time when outcome-based approaches dominate our practice. At various times as a manager I have felt 'pushed and pulled' as to where I place greater value: 'outcomes' or 'deeper understanding'. This research offered the opportunity for deep reflection and understanding of the emergent research data in this study but also in terms of my previously unprocessed professional experiences.

The Strengths of a qualitative approach

In seeking to gain greater understanding of the experiences of others, a qualitative approach was most appropriate. Whilst quantitative research methods have certainly supported my professional knowledge, the approach produces limited results, and lacks the detailed narrative accounts of human experiences. Quantitative methods collect a much narrower and sometimes superficial database making it difficult to get a deeper sense of meaning. Such research is often carried out in unnatural and artificial environments, where levels of control may be imposed where they might not normally exist in the real world, therefore yielding laboratory results as opposed to real world results (Silverman, 2005).

In terms of this study, I was not in a position to undertake a large-scale research project with resource implications that I did not have as a front line manager. I did however want a much deeper understanding and more meaningful engagement with my professional practice. Psychoanalytic thinking offered the understanding and engagement I required for this study.

Silverman refers to the value qualitative data can provide in understanding social phenomena (Silverman, 2000: 8). An additional strength of qualitative data is that it depicts true accounts of people's lived experiences, attitudes, feelings and beliefs, as this approach seeks meaning behind social interaction (Patton, 1990).

There are three major differences (Stake, 1995: 37) between qualitative and quantitative emphasis which deserve attention:

(1) the distinction between explanation and understanding as the purpose of inquiry

(2) the distinction between a personal and impersonal role for the researcher, and

(3) a distinction between knowledge discovered and knowledge constructed.

Quantitative researchers press for explanation and control, but qualitative researchers seek to understand the complex interrelationships among all that exists. Stakes cites Finnish philosopher Georg Henrik von Wright's (1971) text: 'Explanation and Understanding' who emphasises a useful difference for the case study which seeks to identify cause and effects relationships and those seeking understanding of human experience. Von Wright also spoke of empathy and qualitative research trying to establish an empathetic understanding through descriptions, which would convey to the reader the experience itself. Quantitative research methods on the other hand have grown out of the scientific search for cause and effect, expressed in grand theory where researchers regularly treat the uniqueness of cases as 'errors' and outside the system of explained science.

Qualitative researchers on the other hand treat 'the uniqueness of individual cases and contexts as important to understanding' (Stake, 1995: 39). Stake also cites Denzin & Lincoln (1994) who state that experiential understanding and multiple realities are also expected in qualitative studies.

ETHNOGRAPHIC CASE STUDY RESEARCH & PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

Ethnography

For this study an ethnographic qualitative approach offered the opportunity to observe and understand social interactions beneath the surface of consciousness in the team, which was crucial to my interests in unconscious processes. Riain (2009) says of ethnographic research that it has long been synonymous with case studies and allows for personal, theoretical and empirical extensions. I found Riain's personal extensions of ethnography helpful as she states that it is irreducibly personal 'where the definition of the ethnographic case is in part traced by the ethnographer's personal journey through particular situations, roles, identities, networks, institutions and spaces and their embodied and interactive experiences with that journey' (Wacquant, 2004; Eliasoph, 2005; Riain, 2009:292). This resonated with my experiences as a frontline Manager and my research interests.

Yin's (2009) commentary and tone are rather prescriptive but he provides some helpful guidance on conducting single case study research. Yin describes a case as 'an empirical inquiry that – investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident' (2009). He states that case studies used as a research method may contribute to our knowledge of individuals, group, organisational, social, political and related phenomena and they have three phases: exploratory, descriptive and explanatory. However, Yin's comments about the weaknesses and strengths of the case study are worthy of note. The weaknesses include: the method being time consuming, limited selectivity of cases, the fact that a broad coverage is difficult unless there is a team of observers, reflexivity may be affected if events proceed differently, and the cost in terms of observation hours. He considers the strengths of this approach to include: the reality of such studies, as it covers events in real time and is contextual as it addresses the context of the case.

Participant Observation

What is participant observation?

A significant aspect of my data collection method was that of Participant Observation (PO). The actual form this activity took is described in more detail in part II under Research Design. The method originated in the field research of social anthropology and was extensively used in studies of non Western societies in the later part of the nineteenth century, whereby the researcher would live amongst the societies they studied. The method is distinctive because the researcher approaches participants in their own environment rather than having participants come to the researcher. Generally speaking the researcher engaged in PO tries to learn what life is like for an 'insider' while remaining, inevitably, 'an outsider' (FHI, 2005)

PO is not just about naturalistic 'observation' as the observer also participates in the action. The researcher seeks to get an insider viewpoint whereby the information gathered has a rich and thick descriptive quality. It is a qualitative method with its roots in traditional ethnographic research where the objective is to help the researcher learn from the perspective of the research participants. PO is also well suited to the analysis of complex forms of interaction and is integral to understanding the breadth and complexities of the research participant's environment, social and cultural surroundings. Features of Participant observation also include writing personal narratives of how and what was studied (Pratt, 1986:27).

The method can also be stressful as those with whom one is interacting may make demands and ethical dilemmas may arise. Below and in part II of this chapter I further discuss features of the PO methods used in this study and the emergent dilemma's, in terms my 'insider status' and role as employed within the organisation where this study was undertaken, and my relationships with research participants, namely the managers.

Limitations of Participant Observation

Reliability is always a problem in observation, as the method relies on memory, personal

discipline and the diligence of the researcher in ensuring care and consistent research notes are taken. The method is subject to the biases of the observer and the reactivity on the part of the observed; observer bias can be counteracted by using multiple methods to gather data, reactivity on the part of those being observed is reduced by the observer's being unobtrusive or relying on habituation. It is also advised that the researcher checks on reliability with other independent researchers, so as agreement may be achieved as regards data interpretation.

In the following section I discuss 'thick description' as developed by anthropologist Clifford Geertz as it relates to the data collection method.

Thick Description

Thick description was a term used by cultural anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1975) adopted from the philosopher Gilbert Ryle. Geertz used the term to describe his own method of ethnography and interpretive inquiry. Geertz, also considered the founder of interpretive, or symbolic, anthropology. He is said to have had a profound impact on human sciences, influencing both theory and method across a range of disciplines from anthropology to history, sociology, religious studies, science and cultural studies (Alexander et al, 2011). In his essay 'Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture' (1975) Geertz explains that his understanding of the culture of a people was not their 'total way of life' or 'a storehouse of learning' let alone their art, music or literature, but 'webs of significance.'

The fieldwork process for this study was a partial immersion into the life of the team, which provided significant material by regular observations of segments of the team's functioning over a period in search of meaning. I concur with Geertz description of the process where he states that first, we write and then we work out what we are writing about. He maintained that we do not start out with well-formed ideas; instead he suggests that we have some general notions of what we would like to look at and how we might go about looking at them (1973).

Geertz ideas and influence extended beyond anthropology. Carter & Sealey (1989) define thick description, as opposed to thin description, as having the following features:

Geertz's ideas moved away from those of Parsons in the 1960s, he did not favour approaches that were 'too formalist, too abstract, and too perilously close to the kind of 'High Science' and universal rationalism of Claude Levi- Strauss (1967). In the decades, following his work his subtle and elusive approach to the search for meaning, was pushed aside by more muscular post-structural and more cynical post-modern alternatives. In the 1970s, 'conflict sociology' thrived, where meaning was taken to be irrelevant to explanation and discussions of elites, class and power. I was certainly part of that era during the mid-1980s. I am more drawn to what we have today, which is a far more inclusive psychosocial model of human relations, which e n c o m p a s s e s psychological, structural, power and systems relationships.

REFLECTIVE USE OF SELF

Reflexivity & Generalisability

The idea of constructing professional knowledge by reflection on practice is attributed to Argyris & Schon (1976). Schon developed the idea into a model of reflective practice that has been well accepted and found useful in professions such as education, nursing and in social work (Napier & Fook, 2000). Fook and Askeland (2006) felt it was important to make the distinction between the terms 'reflection' and 'critical reflection' and went onto discuss the dimensions of the critical. Critical reflection involves creating one's own practice theory through lived experiences in contrast to the dominant epistemology that tends to privilege knowledge created through a more 'objective' research process. Engaging in reflexivity recognises our own influence – and the influence of our social and cultural contexts on research, the type of knowledge that we practice in and by so doing recognises how we influence the lenses (physical, emotional, social and cultural) through which we see and interpret our contexts and ourselves. The authors think of critical reflection as a way of researching personal practice or experience in order to develop our understandings of us as knower's or makers of knowledge.

Reflexivity underpinned by psychoanalytic theoretical concepts has been an integral part of my research methodology. My research methods needed to allow some level of self- exploration, particularly as my research interests had their origins in the

troubling experiences I had as a front line manager. Equally, I wanted to use research methods, which would enhance my professional practice and further equip me with greater analytical skills in the longer term. Jervis (2009) discusses her research method and the need for an approach that allowed her to address unconscious dynamics that would potentially help her reach a deeper level of understanding and so selected the reflexive psychoanalytic research methodology.

In a post-modern era where discourse about objectivity and rationalism pervades our thinking and professional practice, I initially found it difficult to access my feelings during the data collection phase of the research. My view was symptomatic of the dominance of the positivist discourse.

One of my major preoccupations has been the generalisability and applicability of this research to other situations and how it might be used in furthering knowledge in the field.

Robert Donmoyer (2000) suggests that social scientists' traditional, restricted conception of generalisability is problematic for applied fields of education, counselling and social work. He goes on to argue that thinking of generalisability solely in terms of sampling and statistical significance is no longer defensible or functional. Donmoyer offers an alternative conceptualization: he refers to Stake's notion of naturalistic generalization rooted in a conception of experiential knowledge. He begins the discussion at the experiential level; then suggests why talk of working hypotheses and transferability is inadequate to describe the experience. He goes onto propose a more adequate theoretical language, and finally indicates how all this relates to questions about the utility of single- case studies.

Donmoyer offers the 'language of schema theory' as a way of characterizing how generalisability occurs in experiential learning. He suggests a rethinking of generalisability in the context of research utilization and cites Stake's comment that case studies provide vicarious experiences, whereby narrative can create a virtual reality that exists in our imaginations. He cites three advantages to the reading case studies: accessibility, seeing through the researcher's eyes and decreased defensiveness.

- Accessibility – he suggests that case studies take us to places where most of us may not have had the opportunity to go and thus allow for a vicarious experience. This study has given me access and insight into the relational dynamics between three black female managers including myself as black researcher/manager.

- Seeing through the researcher's eyes – Donmoyer poignantly includes, amongst others, the point that the researcher's perspective might be the intersubjectively shared theoretical perspective of a discipline or field of study. In this research my subjectivity has been influenced by emergent psychosocial approaches and over thirty years of experience in the field of social work practice, management and education.

- Decreased defensiveness – Donmoyer suggests that the vicarious experience provided by case studies might be preferable to real experience and therefore less likely to produce defensiveness and resistance. In Donmoyer's view the traditional way of thinking about generalisability as no longer adequate, as we are increasingly concerned with questions of meaning and perspective.

Reflexive and analytic approaches has increased in prominence and in thinking about my own development in this regard, I was influenced by what I learnt about the concept of the 'Internal Supervisor' (Casement, 1985). This is a form of self-monitoring, which helps ones responses to the immediacy of the present moment. Making use of my internal supervisor certainly supported my development as a practitioner and enabled me to be more reflective and less reactionary during client/service user and professional/peer encounters. Therefore, including reflexivity as part of my research approach felt entirely appropriate and suited my style of practice.

Hollway & Jefferson (2000) and Oakley (1981) have argued that over the years there has been increasing resistance to the notion that emotional responses evoked in researchers might be useful. It is only relatively recently that researchers' feelings have been recognised as another form of data. Jervis (2009) states that these paradigm shifts have replaced the traditional neglect within sociological research, where the idea of irrational feelings has been replaced by the value of the researcher's subjectivity. A shift

is occurring within sociology to that which occurred within psychoanalysis after the discovery of both the ubiquity and of countertransference (Jervis, 2009). In addition Archer (2003:26) defines reflexivity as an 'activity in which the subject deliberates upon how some item, such as a belief, desire or state of affairs pertains or relates to itself'. Clarke & Hoggett (2009) view reflective practice as involving sustained and critical self-reflection on methods and practice, 'to recognise our emotional involvement in the project, whether conscious or unconscious.' Hunt (1989) suggests that subjectivity and self-understanding are critical to well-executed fieldwork, suggesting a synthesis of ethnographic methods, which incorporate psychoanalytic tools of interpretation.

Autobiographical material

My research interests have emerged from my particular experiences as a front line manager. My professional journey has been an important aspect of this research study. Throughout this study, I have included personal reflections, which have helped me make sense of professional experiences.

Autobiographical material has become increasingly useful in social research. Feminist thinkers have been influential in legitimating the use of such methods with the belief that research should start from one's own experience (Smith, 1979). Ellis & Bochner (2000) state that the vulnerability of revealing oneself, not being able to take back what you've written or having control over how readers interpret the material, is a risk taken by researchers who include personal material in their work.

In terms of my research interests, I could no longer continue to live an unexamined professional life and this research process has been crucial in supporting my personal and professional development as a manager. I strongly agree with Ellis's idea of a supported self-narration and how it is essential to producing a sense of continuity and coherence, without which I would suggest our lives merely become a series of daily occurrences.

Researcher Bias

I had a similar status and strongly identified with the managers of the Bromyard. Their experiences and background mirrored my own and impacted on various aspects

of this research. For example, early in the research the project manager openly declared her positive feelings about the fact that I was a black researcher. She went onto share that she was pleased that I as a black person would be undertaking this research. She assumed I had some understanding of the challenges she faced as a black manager, coming from similar ethnic backgrounds. During the initial stages of the fieldwork I viewed my bias as a strength; it helped the managers feel at ease, and enabled them to 'open up' in the MCIs with their thoughts and feelings about their team's progress and the organisational issues, which concerned them.

It is important however, that the interviewer and interviewee be aware of how mutual expectations might affect the data collected, for example early on in this research the managers and I assumed there would be very few difficulties with openness, communication and transparency, and these were quite possibly based on our points of early identification. As the research progressed however there were inevitable changes and developments that occurred.

Accumulated wisdom and Intuitive Knowledge

Cooper (2011) comments that in her interim report on child protection social work, Professor Eileen Munro includes intuitive reasoning and critical reflection among the theories that social work practitioners should apply in day-to-day practice. Munro states that 'our intuitive capacity is vast, swift, and largely unconscious. She suggests that analytic reasoning alone will not provide a holistic analysis of any given practice situation and it is a combination of both intuitive and analytic reasoning which is required in practice. Intuitive reasoning looks for patterns and pictures and the more experiences the worker has the more patterns they are able to see.' I believe this to be true of my research. Four stories emerge from the data in this research, and each story represents a period in the life of the team at that time: the hopeful beginning, dilemmas in practice, management stress and the personal impact of organisational change. These aspects of team life were familiar to me as an experienced front line manager. My selections of emergent data for further analysis were informed by many years of professional experience, supported by group and individual research supervision, which greatly contributed to

my analytic sensibilities.

PART II

In the section of the chapter, I describe in further detail the research design research design, data collection and Analysis methods used.

Research Design & Data Collection Methods

Introduction

The function of my research design was to ensure that the evidence obtained enabled allowed exploration of my research interests as fully as possible. The design needed to enable access to aspects of unconscious functioning, as these were my areas of interests. The research design used multiple methods to explore the emotional life of the team. It was loosely structured and 'fit for purpose' to enable breadth and depth in terms of data collection (Watts, 2009). The use of one method would not have captured the 'fuller picture' of the team's functioning. A further consideration was that as a part-time student working fulltime as a manage, I needed to be realistic and pragmatic about how my time was best managed during this process.

Research Participants

At the time of this research, I worked in another team for the same organisation. I approached one of my senior managers with my research proposal and was encouraged to undertake the research with an agreeable team. The Senior Manager in question felt that my research project could offer middle managers further support in their roles. This approach is further supported in Ward's (2004) paper 'Working with managers to improve services: changes in the role of research in social

care', where she refers to the importance of qualitative data and discusses the benefits of research to social care managers in support of their roles.

Data Collection Strategies

There was a combination of five data collection strategies:

- (1) Site Observations

- (2) Management Consultation Interviews (MCIs)

- (3) Systematic Journaling

- (4) Research Support Group Seminars

- (5) Research Supervision

Site Observations

This method of ethnographic data collection has strong parallels with the baby/infant observation method used by the Tavistock Centre. Established and developed by Esther Bick (1964), who used it as a teaching and learning method with trainee psychotherapists and analysts so as to sensitize them to the infant's r e l a t i o n s h i p s , anxieties and their ensuing defensiveness.

Hinshelwood (2002) explains that in psychoanalytic terms, the method was developed further in the work of Jacques (1953, 1955) who used it to develop his concept of social defence systems. Jacques inspired Menzies (1959) classic study of the nursing service and Hinshelwood's work with trainee psychiatrists, further developed the method in terms of organisational observation, where he sought to sensitise psychiatric trainees to human relations, anxiety and defensiveness.

I was drawn to this kind of 'naturalistic observation' as a research tool following my own experiences of infant and organisation observations on the social work doctoral programme. I particularly valued the rich detail we were able to reflect upon in our seminars following observations of organisations, with close attention to minute details. I also valued the consistency and regularity of the method and how it allowed the observer to take in and 'hold in mind' physical experiences which then allowed us to think about meanings. This method requires the observer to remain emotionally engaged with the material yet sufficiently distanced to reflect upon the emotional dynamics under observation.

Silverman (2005) also supported this approach and shared in his text that one of his students valued the ability of observation in bringing out the 'micro analysis of social interaction' between professionals. The researcher (not unlike the observer) takes an appropriate observation stance, which is not a static position, but a dynamic one that needed to evolve in response to constantly changing situations. Rustin's (2006) work reviews the development of psychoanalytic infant observation and highlights some of its challenges as a research tool, but also views it as a viable research method distinct from its use in clinical practice. He suggests, the method is productive as a source of new knowledge – particularly in terms of its interest in the unconscious – and its inclusion of the subjective experience of the observer.

Site Observation - method

I was positioned at the boundary of the team's functioning but I also gained insight into the wider organisational context. I greatly valued this approach in its capacity for developing analysis and insight beyond the superficial. This approach was also low in financial cost, in that aside from the time invested in being present, there were no further additional resources required. Following (and not during) these observation sessions I would write detailed accounts of what was observed during the site visits.

These write ups were circulated amongst my research group prior to supervision sessions. At each session, as the author, I would read out my observations following which my colleagues would offer support, share insights on the material, we were able to generate hypotheses and engage in preliminary first level data analysis.

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I visited the project once a week for one to one and a half hours for five months. During my visits I observed much of the team's activity and interactions. There were occasions however, when there was very little activity, and this was not unlike to observing an infant who 'sleeps for most if not all of the observation session.

The less active visits were challenging and it was during such visits that I found myself yearning for activity. I questioned whether the observation method was too passive an approach for generating data. It was useful to have had similar experiences in the past. These memories helped me tolerate feelings of boredom, inactivity and uncertainty. During quieter visits my attention was drawn to the physical aspects of the teams functioning: the staff's movements in and out of the building, the staff notice board, activity visible on the security CCTV camera – which monitored comings and goings. I also gained more insight into the project administrator's role and his daily tasks.

As my research progressed, staff members appeared less perturbed by my presence, but curiosity remained about what I could possibly be gaining from sitting in a corner saying little and taking very few notes. The project administrator, during one of my observation visits actually asked, 'what are you getting by just observing?' I responded that I was trying to get a 'real sense' of how the project worked. He went onto suggest that it must be like being 'a fly on the wall', and this analogy seemed to reduce his anxiety about my quiet presence.

Maintaining distance from research participants presented challenges, and whilst I limited my communication during observations, there were occasions when it was necessary to respond to direct questions or comments from team members who were understandably curious and possibly anxious about what I was doing by just observing.

Despite reassuring the team before the commencement of the research that my intentions were to learn more about processes and would not be about reporting my findings back to senior management, being a quiet observer brought with it a degree of understandable curiosity about what I might be making of my observations.

The team's core task was to undertake parenting assessments on behalf of the local authority in family proceedings; this involved the observation and assessment of parents with their children over sustained periods in role. The practitioners in the team were well versed in observation methods, so when I discussed my intended approach

with the manager and then subsequently with the team, it was an approach they recognised. We gave some thought as to where I might locate myself to carry out observations. This was important, as team members needed to become familiar and at ease with my presence. We agreed that I should sit in the main front office, where the administrator and the duty desk were located, and where staff members undertook rotation, daily duty tasks for unallocated cases, took new referrals, responded to queries from callers and visitors to the project, and where interactions with other colleagues would take place each day. Elements of the team's core task were mirrored in the observational aspect of my data collection methods, and my presence clearly reminded them of the discomfort their clients experienced.

The main office was also where many of the project's internal administrative systems were held, such as the view of the CCTV camera, the staff attendance and movement board, the project's valuables safe, a cupboard containing archived case files, the internal switch board and fax machine. From this focal point I was able to observe the physical 'comings and goings' of team members and visitors to the project, the administrative workflow processes and the dialogue and interactions between team members

Management Consultation Interviews (MCIs)

The idea of MCIs emerged in a supervision session with my supervisor where I shared how other middle manager colleagues were increasingly telling me how they felt about their teams and the organisation. They seem to find it easy to engage with me and our discussions seemed to offer them some relief. My supervisor and I agreed that this might be a useful strategy to include in my research design and would complement the site observations.

My role within the management consultant interviews (MCI) would primarily be one of facilitation, akin to a traditional consultant's role. During the interviews, I was actively listening as the managers shared their concerns. I hoped to notice subtle themes and unconscious phantasies in their reflections. The overall purpose of these sessions was to offer space for the managers to reflect on their teams' functioning and the wider

organisational dynamics.   The focus of each session would be determined by the manager's current preoccupations and concerns.

A psychodynamic consultant listens to people, encourages reflection and takes anxieties and resistance into account (Obholzer, 1994). The MCIs aimed to provide a space for consultation based on what I had observed during the site visits but also they were an opportunity for mutual sharing and learning.   The MCIs were an additional source of data, similar to what Watts (2009) called 'Interactive interviewing'. She used interactive interviewing methods to open up dialogue. Many of the managers involved in her research project described the process as therapeutic. I have some degree of resonance with Watts' approach, as in my research the MCIs were set up to provide the manager and her deputy with further thinking space. My outsider position seemed to lend itself to facilitating this role. The managers were open, communicative and honest about how they felt at the time.

This approach also accepts the inevitability of interviewee bias, never the less there are advantages and disadvantages to interviews, which are worthy of note:

Advantages	Disadvantages
Flexibility	Reliability
High response rate	Lack of comparability
Check on questions	Time consuming
Probes	Costly
Clarification	Interruptions
Confirmation	Lack of anonymity
Connecting	Non-verbal communication

Timing of interview	
Prompts	

Fig. 3 Use of Interviews

Management Consultation Interviews (MCI) -Method

Initially the managers wanted to be interviewed together, but as the research progressed and their schedules became more independent I gave them individual sessions. We agreed that the sessions would take place immediately following my site observation visits so as to maximise my time, however they seem to struggle with their commitment to these sessions and would often forget about our agreed times. I discussed these difficulties with one of my supervisors; we agreed that there was probably some unconscious wish to avoid the sessions masked by their busyness in role. My supervisor suggested that I seek to re-establish firm meeting times with both managers and make a clear agreement that the MCI sessions would be used to think about organisational and team preoccupations in their roles as managers, thereby giving the interviews a clear focus.

Eventually I was able to get a firm commitment from the managers to the MCIs. They agreed to the interviews being audio recorded so as I could be freed from note taking during the sessions. The managers t had the option of switching off the recorder at any time if what was being discussed was felt to be sensitive. These recordings, were then later transcribed for further analysis (see the appendices for an example). The interviews took place about once a fortnight, and each lasted between one to one and a half hours. Each session alternated between the project manager and the deputy. The interview model was flexible and semi structured which enabled the dialogue to be adapted in accordance with the material being shared. Once the managers committed more fully to the process, these sessions became quite central to the research process and contributed significantly to the data.

Interviews were incorporated into the research design as it became evident that the

project managers might value a regular 'space to think' about issues in their team and the wider organisation. The MCIs offered the managers support and facilitated a mutual two- way learning process between the managers and myself. These sessions proved to be extremely valuable as managers went on to experience significant changes in the organisation. In my experience as a middle manager, having space to think is particularly rare in day-to-day professional practice. The MCIs provided a protected and empathetic space where the managers could share more troubling thoughts about aspects of their work, the team and the wider organisation without fear of judgement or criticism. The MCIs also aimed to provide a learning space, where observations of the team's functioning could be reflected upon in more detail. The managers went on to make good use of the supportive sessions, as it was safe to be vulnerable and uncertain in their roles.

Systematic Journaling

Ortlipp (2008) shares her experience of using self-reflective journals in her research and states that research journaling is part of a reflexive approach to the research process and is widely accepted in qualitative research. Journaling should be aimed at making visible to the reader the constructed nature of research outcomes, a construction that originates in the various choices and decisions they undertake during the process, and this is said to be a method situated within feminist, critical and poststructuralist paradigms. Ortlipp also states that keeping a reflective journal can facilitate reflexivity, whereby researchers use their journal to examine 'personal assumptions and goals' and clarify 'individual belief systems and subjectivities.'

I have for many years found journaling a very useful tool for thinking, self-reflection and learning, so was drawn to include this method within my research. I used the method in the three phases of the data collection process;

- I used systematic journaling firstly in my pre-research activities prior to the actual commencement of the research.

- Secondly, when the research commenced and began to take shape in terms of my regular contact with the team where a more structured format for data collection was used.

- Thirdly when additional thoughts came to me, during and following my supervision sessions. I also audio recorded further thoughts or reflections I might have, often whilst travelling in my car. This proved to be valuable thinking space. I made journal entries during and following the consultation interviews (MCIs) and also transcribed material from the audio recorded MCI's.

I used my journal entries to note any provisional hypotheses or ideas that arose following my observation visits. Creating a space to think as a part-time student away from the all-consuming day job was a constant challenge and under these circumstances, my written and audio journals were essential learning tools.

The following is an example of an entry made quite early on in the research process, when I was still undertaking preliminary discussions with the deputy manager, who agreed to participate in the research. At that stage I had initially struggled with thoughts about how I would gain entry to local authority children and families team, as the climate was such a difficult and turbulent one. My research journal allowed me to reflect upon the on going adjustments I had to make to my original research plans, the following an excerpt from a journal entry was made as I was experiencing some degree of doubt about the adjustments I had to keep making to the research design along the way, during this phase of the research ;

'September 2009 – Drafted Research Summary as agreed with DM [Deputy Manager] – what strikes me is that each time I attend to the project, I'm refining and adjusting the terms as I go along. For example, now that I'm thinking about the family centre as the research site I have adjusted some of the wording in the title. I'm also wondering if this happens a lot to other researchers, in that one has to continually make adjustments to the project in line with opportunities (the real life situation) presented to you. I wonder if I should not consider this as a pilot and put off embarking on the real thing until next year.'

In her paper Orttlip writes about how keeping and using a critically reflective journal helped with her emerging understanding of research methodologies and to make changes to her research design. She goes onto state that critical self-reflection prompted her to change her approach during the research process to use methods she had not initially planned to use, and to discard pre-planned ways of going about the research that she had not included in her proposal (2008: 699).

Journal template – method

As the data collection process began to take shape, a more systematic method was required. I became aware and anxious that I would collect copious amounts of descriptive

data with little means of identifying any thoughts or feelings I might have had at the time. As I wanted to log my insights, I designed a simple template, which gave my journal entries coherence and structure.

Each journal page was divided into three headed columns.

Fig.4 Journal Template

Date	What took place	Reflections / notes

The use of this template helped to order my thoughts. Following site observations the first and second columns were completed quickly, as this material was more immediate and accessible. The third column tended to be completed one or two days after the visit, and allowed for further reflection. Quite often, following visits, I would have to return to my busy place of work that took up my attention. I needed to distance myself from the material then later return to it for clarity of thought.

The next section will discuss the work of my research support group. These sessions were crucial in terms of providing thinking space and were of enormous value in helping with formulating preliminary hypotheses about aspects of data.

Research Support Group Seminars

During the course of my fieldwork I received regular supervision support from my supervisors and benefitted greatly from research support group meetings. The focus of the meetings would be support with such issues as: data analysis, pieces of writing in progress, ethical dilemmas and research methods. The group consisted of two seminar leaders, and between two-three research colleagues. These sessions took place at regular intervals – approximately every three weeks, depending upon the work commitments of group members.

Prior to each session the presenting researcher for that week would distribute her material to be worked on via email, allowing colleagues the opportunity to read and

note any preliminary thoughts. This process also gave each researcher the opportunity to learn from the material of other researchers, share hypotheses and think about why the pieces of data had been selected. These sessions were invaluable to my data analysis process, as colleagues would interrogate the material in detail and creatively share insights using psychoanalytic, systemic and psychosocial concepts.

There are parallels in this approach to that in clinical work, Ogden's (2005) 'collective dreaming' describes a process whereby detailed clinical material is presented by the clinician in a seminar forum for the group to work on; this process would be difficult to undertake alone. Whilst my research was not a clinical study per se, and did not require that I undertake personal analysis, the approach to data selection and analysis were not dissimilar and the role-played by my research group peers.

The research seminars and supervision sessions were also spaces in which significant self-discovery and transformation took place. It was during these periods of reflection that I was able to reconsider my previously held binary position relating to the black male service user discussed more fully in chapter four. In the research seminar I was able to think with more clarity about the 'rescuer' stance I had taken alongside the black female managers of the agency with my supervisor. Lastly, this was also a space where I used my many years of accumulated professional experience.

Academic Supervision

I received regular academic supervision sessions from my academic supervisors. These meetings took place consistently throughout the research and provided the additional opportunity reflect more deeply about fragments of the selected data and discuss the application of theoretical concepts. I benefitted from a consistent supervisor with additional support from appropriate experts at crucial phases during data analysis.

Data Analysis Model

I required a systematic analysis method, which allowed for the development of broader interpretations of data so as to achieve deeper understandings of the participants' experiences. An immediate and deep understanding of the material was not possible to achieve while the data was being gathered, nor upon a first reading of data at the analysis stage. I therefore designed an analysis method that allowed me to revisit the data several times, with the added support of my research group and supervisors along the way.

Marshall & Rossman (1989) suggested that, research design needed to be efficient but also flexible. My approach to the analysis aspect of the data ran the risk of analysing the material too early and becoming quite formulaic so to minimise the prospect of arriving at less considered and perhaps too superficial data analyses, the supervision sessions were used to share ideas about possible meanings in the material. This approach enabled me to think with others more carefully about relatively small fragments of data so as to suggest a broader set of ideas around possible insights and meanings.

I developed three levels of analysis:

- *Level One Analysis* – I used a process recording approach to write as fully and as descriptively as possible about the extracts, then I went onto elaborate in an almost free associative manner. This 'free writing' approach had immense value as it allowed me to express how I was disturbed or unsettled by the data.

- *Level Two Analysis* – I sought to find meaning beyond what had been observed by more closely examining the narrative and content of the extracts. This second level analysis was also informed by my existing knowledge, professional experiences and thinking with my research group.

- *Level Three Analysis* – With additional supervision I was further supported in making use of psychosocial and systemic theory to interpret the data, which then formed the basis of making sense of the material.

This approach to the analysis of the selected data assisted in building the four significant stories emerging from the data collected. This analysis model enabled me to use my professional experiences and accumulated wisdom supported by relevant theoretical constructs.

Appropriate Ethical Considerations

Confidentiality

To ensure confidentiality I have changed the name of the project and all the names of participants in this research. In terms of time frames I have referred to months as opposed to the year, so as to further protect the participants. This was a difficult period in the organisation's history and not unlike many other organisations it was a struggle for the organisation to take a self-reflective view. Out of necessity many organisations subscribe to maintain strong corporate identities, leaving them particularly sensitive to constructive feedback, especially within the voluntary sector. It was therefore virtually impossible to admit to difficulties within or to express concerns about one's own agency in a public forum.

This type of organisational behaviour has become the norm, and is unlikely to change any time soon as competition for contracts intensifies. Critical observations are seen as negative rather than something from which to learn from, develop and grow. So within acceptable limits, I offered research participants assurances that I would not be reporting back to their senior managers the content of my observations.

Hollway & Jefferson (2013) offer what they consider three appropriate ethical principles for this type of research. These are the principles of honesty, sympathy and respect. The authors cite the British Psychological Society (1996: 1), which states that ethical issues in social-science research must be concerned to 'ensure that the interests of participants are safeguarded'. The author's highlight that until relatively recently, such issues was not taken very seriously when weighed in the balance against the interests of advancing knowledge. This situation has changed dramatically and researchers in the areas of medicine, sociology and psychology are often required to get clearance from ethics committees before proceeding with a piece of research.

In the case of this research there were three ethical phases for consideration: the pre-research, the actual research activity and the post- research write-up.

Pre-research

Once I had secured approval for my research title and proposal from the course programme leaders, I approached a member of the senior management team. I was advised by my research supervisor to consult the organisation's Research and Development Officer (RDO). The RDO in turn advised that I keep a senior manager informed of my research progress.

Hollway & Jefferson (2013) also state that ethical considerations must include valuing integrity, impartiality and respect for persons and evidence. Before the commencement of this research I assumed that the team might have concerns about my reporting findings to senior managers, so a pre-research meeting was convened. In this meeting I gave assurances to the team that my research role did not include reporting to senior managers unless I felt a child or family were at risk. The team accepted these conditions, which akin to the professional codes of conduct they work to as professional Social Workers.

The purpose of meeting with the managers and the team subsequently was to gain their agreement or informed consent. Hollway and Jefferson suggest that the issue of informed consent is a much more complex issue in psychosocial research. They put emphasis on the researcher's responsibility to create a safe context, in which issues of honesty, sympathy and respect are central to ensure continuing emotional awareness rather than reducing the decision of consent, to a 'conscious, cognitive process.' Interestingly, they add that informed consent is based on a very different theory which emphasises people's capacity to process information and reach a rational and considered decision as an autonomous subject, sealed off from the influences of others.

Actual Research Activity

Relationships of openness, trust and honesty were crucial. This was established quite quickly with the project managers, with whom I had the most direct interaction, primarily because of our mutual identification. I gave the managers the option to turn off the

audio recorder during interviews if there were topics they did not wish to have recorded. This only happened on two occasions however, and the material was omitted from my written accounts. I also maintained confidentiality between the managers in their individual consultation interviews.

Post Research

Once my fieldwork was over and I entered the writing-up phase, I felt increasing concern for the research participants and the agency, how I would portray them and my sense making of their experiences and the agency's actions. The project managers had been forthcoming with and honest about their thoughts and feelings and I was particularly sympathetic toward the project manager, whose experience during the closure of the project was distressing for her and distressing to watch.

I offered both managers' post-project closure sessions, during which they were able to express how they had experienced the projects closure, what sense they had made of it and how it had left them feeling. Throughout this research, I have sought to operate within the parameters of professional social work, with honesty, empathy, and adherence to the professional codes and conduct of my profession.

Limitations

There are limitations to using qualitative research methods, and these have been indicated earlier. However, my main aim in this research has been to make sense not only of what I observed as a researcher, but also to obtain a deepening understanding of myself and my experiences in my role as a front line manager. It was therefore entirely appropriate that I paid close attention to my reactions to the data material. My identification with the managers of Bromyard may be viewed as a weakness in my work but my identification and empathy with the managers' roles and positions enabled me to gain their trust very quickly, so they were able to be open and honest. They also felt understood as black female managers and I would argue that my close proximity to their experiences was also a strength in the research and valuable in terms of seeking to understand what lay beneath the surface of their experiences.

Once I had completed the fieldwork I had to consider the implications of undertaking research within my own organisation. My initial negotiations took place with a Senior Manager (SM), who at the time thought the research would be useful to the organisation. The SM provided me with assistance in locating a willing team and entirely supported the research. However, by the time I completed my fieldwork this SM had received two promotions so was no longer available for comment. I too had experienced changes

within the organisation – in that I secured a new project management post, which resulted in being line managed for a

short period by the same SM who had previously lined managed the managers of the Bromyard.

These changes made it difficult for me to write up my research. I seemed to experience a blockage and struggled with the task. I felt inhibited and torn by my loyalty to the organisation and the research participants. I began to have concerns about how my research would be received by the organisation and those who had participated: would they feel criticised? Would they feel betrayed by me? These questions troubled me greatly.

In seeking out literature on the issue of research from within I found that much of the commentary and protocol regarding ethical concerns tended to be client/service user focused, which rightly aims to regulate and protect research participants, particularly in such areas as health. These safeguards exist for participants who are unlikely to read the research studies in which they participated. In my research however the participants were my colleagues and peers, and my research site was within the organisation for which I worked at the time.

Thankfully, I had some physical distance from the Bromyard Centre in that I was not based at the same site, and my role at that point in the organisation meant I would not encounter these managers in peer group forums and there were fewer dangers of 'role confusion and duality' as suggested by Coghlan & Brannick (2001).

However, when I accepted a newer role as a frontline manager within the organisation I became part of the same management team as the managers in this study. My new role involved being a part of the organisation's drive for 'prominence in the market place' as a service provider. As a front line manager I was very much a part of the drive to protect the organisation's brand, and I was expected to maintain a degree of loyalty to the organisation and not air its more challenging inner workings. My new position and role within the organisation had a major impact on my ability to write about my research findings, in that I continually 'second-guessed' myself and worried an enormous amount about how I could report my findings.

To a certain extent I was able to overcome these fears, as I believe my intentions were constructive and not destructive. This study explores some of the emergent dynamics in the Bromyard team; the research also considers the organisation's management activity

and the organizational dynamics in a climate of: contract tendering, managerialism, branding, targets, league tables' audits and inspections. In such a climate it is nearby impossible for organisations to tolerate any level of critical feedback. Nevertheless, despite these challenges, I have sought to convey what I have learned with honesty and respect for the research participants. My intention has not been to be excessively critical of an organisation and its personnel; it has been about making deeper sense of t h e emergent data in a quest to understand more about team and organisational dynamics and projective process.

Summary

Part I of this chapter describes the underpinning methodology theories and part II describes my research methodology and the data analysis model. Finally, I discussed the limitations of my methodology and in particular the ethical considerations, in particular the challenges of my 'insider' status within the organisation. The following chapter will deal with the emergent data from this case study.

Chapter 5

The Data

Introduction to the data

The time line below plots the chronology of significant events as they occurred during the fieldwork. Its purpose is to act as an aide memoir for the reader, holding in mind details and the sequence of events.

Fig.5 Timeline

1. (Oct/Nov) My Entry	*Entry with first DPM* *Met DPM who disclosed issues concerning first DPM.* *Arrival of a new DPM.*
2. (Jan) Bromyard Project visits begin	*Staff team respond to the research project. Previous DPM had left by now.*
3. (Feb) *'Team Away Day'*	*I observe team dynamics.* *Tamia's acting out behaviour stands out*
4. (March) Black Male Client	*Managers share the details in a management consultation interview (MCI).* *I experience massive identification with the managers.*
5. (April) *'Secrets Secrets'*	*Managers are aware of closure and are asked not to disclose to wider staff team.* *PM tells me about her own hospital admission and asks that I tell no one.*
6. (May-July) Managerial Couple	Team are told about the closure. Managers are angry with commissioners, their line managers and the organisation. PM goes off sick with stomach complaints. Managers' relation

	becomes tested and strained.
7. (Aug)	**Bromyard Closes**

In this chapter I look more closely at the data extracts which are then subjected to further analysis. A series of events took place during the course of the research and I have selected four main themes. The timeline above plots these events and may assist in reducing confusion about when they occurred. As the diagram shows, my entry to the Bromyard project started before the actual research activity. The circumstances of my access to the project were described in an earlier chapter. Shortly after my access had been achieved, my project visits, management consultation interviews and research support seminars commenced.

The first selection of data followed my attendance and observation of the team's away day event which took place at the early stages of my field work. Prior to the away day I picked up a sense of the emotional climate in the team. The project manager's agitation and frustration were openly communicated during an earlier site visit. She had expressed concerns about the team's lack of adherence to various workflow procedures and systems, and she felt concerned about the slipping standards – these were among the frustrations which formed the impetus for the away day event. In this same extract I also begin to think about my relationship with the project managers in my role as a researcher and in the context of our shared experiences as black female managers. On the day of the event I also gained a greater understanding of the team's emotional state and their anxieties about their tasks and contributions. These included remarks made to each other in the kitchen, which were also worthy of further exploration. Then I look more closely at the initial part of the event, where the acting out of one team member seemed to represent something of the team's unspoken anxiety and possible anger about recent changes, namely the dismissal of the previous deputy project manager.

The second extract focuses on material from a management consultation interview. As I reviewed the material I experienced powerful countertransference responses and felt compelled to examine the data in more detail. The new deputy manager, Verna, described a situation involving a challenging black male service user. In my analysis I look more closely at how we strongly identified with the service user and aligned ourselves with what we perceived to be his experience of the discriminatory attitudes of two white workers. Later, upon my reviewing of the material, the memory of an incident from my past practice was triggered and a new understanding arose. The third extract is titled 'Secrets, Secrets' and explores more closely the impact of the holding of 'secrets' by

project managers and myself, and what these might have represented. In the fourth extract I look more closely at the managerial couple and the impact of Bromyard's closure on two managers, their sense of professional identity and also the relationship between the project manager and her deputy manager, where the inherent fault lines in their relationship surfaced as the project's closure grew closer. Each extract is preceded by a short account of the context within which the material came to light, followed by the extract, three levels of analysis, and each section ends with some reflections on the insights gained.

'No emotional experience in organisational life is a suitable case for treatment. It is rather a resource for thinking, releasing intelligence.'

(Armstrong, 2004)

Introduction

Initially my research interests were about seeking to learn more about the impact of projective processes on the emotional life of this team and as stated elsewhere in this thesis these interests were driven by my painful experiences as a first line manager. I was also curious about the experiences of other managers. In the course of this study I soon learned that projective processes are part of a range of defence responses to anxiety, stress, internal and external pressures.

Spillius (1992) describes how Klein's introduction of the concept of projective identification led to developments in clinical technique. She refers to her own clinical experiences and helpfully describes how this led her to abandon fixed expectations and rigid definitions in favour of trying to be prepared to experience whatever forms of projection and transference dynamics come to life in the session. This realisation was quite 'freeing', as I had some concerns about how I would begin to recognise projections and unconscious processes in light of my research design. What also became apparent was how connected the recognition of instances of projective identification was to my own emotional awareness in terms of countertransference responses to the data.

Spillius explains Klein's view that splitting, projection and denial are the main defences of primitive mental life, characteristic of the paranoid schizoid position, where there is a fear of annihilation from within the personality. In order to survive the individual projects this fear into an external object. Bion develops the concept substantially further as he makes the distinction between normal and pathological projective identification. Bion thinks that when the infant feels assaulted by feelings he cannot manage, he has phantasies of evacuating them into his primary object, his mother. This is fine if mother can withstand the distress, however if she cannot the infant will not be able to internalise an experience of being able to tolerate its feelings. Bion's distinction between normal and pathological projective identification and his formulation of the container/contained model have led to considerable development in technique. Bion's focused on how the

patient unconsciously seeks to induce the analyst to feel what he is feeling and the analyst seeks to contain these projections. It is more accepted today that patients can behave in ways that will get the analyst to feel the feelings they cannot contain within themselves, or cannot express in any other way except by getting the analyst to have that experience too. This is a communication to the analyst.

Joseph's (1987) position is not too far from Bion's in that it further stresses the way patients attempt to induce feelings and thoughts in the analyst, and try to 'nudge' the analyst into acting in a manner consistent with the patient's projections. In summary, the British school of thought focuses on three clinical models:

- Klein – focuses on the patient's use of projective identification to express wishes, perceptions and defences

  - Bion – develops the container/contained formulation

- Joseph – the analyst expects patients to constantly bring pressure to bear on the analyst, to get analyst to act in a manner consistent with their projection

  These models refer to clinical experience, but may be used as points of reference for my data analysis. In the research I have sought to be aware of projective processes via site observations, my systematic research journal entries, and via the management consultation interviews with both project managers.

Context – Part I

Once I had completed some pre-research visits I began to visit the project every fortnight and met most of the staff team. There had been varied responses to the research from the staff, ranging from great interest to indifference. In the early stage of the research the managers organised an away day for the Team. I was invited to attend the away day and the following extracts come from my research journal following an observation of the entire day. The extract is in two parts: Part I describes what took place during the visit prior to the away day, and Part II describes a portion of what took place on the day. These extracts were selected because in my view they represent early efforts by the managers to 'recruit me' into the management team, and secondly they provide a sense of the emotional climate at this early stage.

Data Extract1

I took up my usual position in the main office, where I was able to observe. I was greeted by Judith, the project manager, who went on to tell me that there had been some developments in the project administrator situation, namely that the administrator had returned from the Caribbean following her father's funeral but had not yet returned to work. She was now off sick. Judith seemed quite agitated about this situation as it 'showed up,' in her view, how much was 'not known' by herself nor the team about the various office systems and processes. Telling me about this seemed to offer Judith some relief. She hadn't expected me to be there as Verna had not told her I was coming in. I felt like a social worker who, having undertaken a home visit, finds that the client hasn't remembered the visit nor received an appointment letter.

Judith expressed frustration about several things: she seemed to be under pressure and stressed. There was frustration about the IT difficulties. The fax machine was also not working and she was concerned about how the project would be seen by partner agencies if they didn't respond to referrals. The photocopier was not working either. She went on to express grave concerns about her budget being overspent. Judith left the main office and a few moments later Tammy (a family centre social worker) appeared seemingly unaware of what had taken place moments previously. She seemed to be quite pleased with the fact that she had just had some annual leave authorised by Judith.

I thought about the contrast in mood to Judith's. I understood how much frustration and stress was carried by managers on behalf of their teams who were often unaware of the bigger picture. I thought they were like children whose parents protect them from the stresses and strains of life.

Following Judith's interaction and Tammy's short appearance, the bulk of the observation was fairly uneventful. Towards the end of my visit Judith again appeared and invited me to attend the team's away day in a week's time. I agreed but then to my surprise, she asked if I wanted to facilitate the event. I instinctively and politely declined. She went on to share that the purpose of the day would be to: review existing systems and look at the team's future direction and where it was going.

Reflections following the visit

Initially I was pleased to be invited. I thought the away day would provide a great opportunity to see how the team functioned, but as I undertook the write up following the visit I began to feel a sense of unease about what might lay behind the Judith's invitation to ask me to lead. The visit started with Judith expressing frustration and irritation and ended with an invitation to take charge. I felt perhaps that I was being recruited to help sort out the team. This begged the question: what was her perception of my role and why had she really invited me to attend the away day? Was I being set up to manage and discuss issues Judith struggled to deal with? Did she think my research function was an opportunity to support her? Or was she seeking to have me experience some of the challenges she faced daily?

Data extract II

The team's away day was a significant event in the research. In the following extract I have tried to capture some of the emergent themes, but this represents only a small fragment of data from a whole day's observation. The observation was challenging as I needed to pay complete attention to all that took place around me; naturally, however, during the course of the observation I drifted into moments of reflection, which I also tried to capture in my journal entries.

I arrived at the centre just before the event was due to start, to find breakfast being prepared for the whole team by the manager, Judith. The new administrator was now in post and Judith seemed to be in good spirits. I joined the team in the kitchen area and positioned myself in a corner. Shortly after my arrival, Judith and Verna, the deputy, left the kitchen to get things ready for the session. There were some difficulties in securing an alternative venue for the event so it had to take place at the centre – not an ideal situation and I did wonder what else was being communicated by the away day being held in the centre – perhaps the idea that it is impossible to get away from the work.. When the managers left the kitchen area, one staff member remarked that she'd had an apocalyptic dream the night before, but didn't give any details about it. She admitted that she hadn't done much preparation for her slot in the day.

I wondered whether there was some resistance to the task and whether something of that resistance was being conveyed to me.

As we all made our way to the meeting room, a message was received that Tammy had called to say she was not feeling well and was suffering from 'period pains.' Judith did not respond to this news. As we all settled down in the meeting room for the first session, the new senior social worker shared with me that she was enjoying her time with the team so far and valued the opportunity to undertake a more 'thoughtful approach' in her work. We briefly discussed the merits of this more thoughtful approach and agreed that it was not always possible in a statutory team setting to undertake work in this way. She went on to say that she felt 'guilty' that to date she had been allocated no cases in view of her recent arrival and all her colleagues seemed quite busy.

The session started with introductions and the team agreed some ground rules which included; that they would respect each other's views and opinions and that they would listen to each other, challenge statements. The first session of the day began with a group exercise. Judith and Verna did not participate. They observed, as I did. I wondered about the wisdom of this approach as it seemed to be a good opportunity for them to 'bond' as a whole team. The 'non-participation' of the managers felt awkward. The first group exercise required team members to work together in agreeing what they would take on their 'desert island'. As the team discussed and negotiated, I overheard what sounded like 'power struggles' and disagreements about the most appropriate items to take. The most audible disagreements were between one of the senior social workers (the black African male) Henry, and an experienced non-social work qualified project worker (a white Australian female). For a short while voices were raised. The team finally agreed on the items they would take and the exercise ended. They shared with Judith and Verna the list of items they would take on the island and why.

Tammy (the project worker), who had previously called in sick, joined the team mid-morning. She presented as withdrawn and quiet and whilst being physically present clearly communicated via her body language her wish to be elsewhere. Throughout the morning session Tammy left and re-entered the room. Nothing was said about these disruptions, which left me wondering why there was no reaction, and that perhaps she was communicating the group's ambivalence on their behalf.

Following the first exercise Judith seemed more energised and went on to give a presentation about Bromyard's recent history and the many changes which had taken place in her time. She shared details of what sounded like a very turbulent and troubled period in their history which included:

- A period of being managed from a distance which resulted in staff 'self-managing'

- A history of poor assessment reports, a demoralised staff group, no trust within the team and poor IT support services, which resulted in the commissioning authority having very negative views about the project and the staff's competence

- Old staff left the team and Judith was part of the process of helping those staff plan exit strategies. 17 staff members have passed through the project within a two year period

- The departure of the previous deputy project manager was discussed, due to her lack of transparency around project management issues

- Members of the team went on to add that they often felt 'looked down' upon by figures in authority, in contrast to two other sister projects in the borough (as though they continued to carry the negative legacy of the past)

- Judith shared that prior to Christmas the team had seemed 'tired ' and 'burnt out', and she included the previous deputy in this observation. She suggested that this might well have been why the previous DPM struggled to cope with her role

As Judith spoke, Tammy continued to come and go – her departures began to annoy me and I felt increasingly hostile. I wondered whether her actions related to what was being said about the previous DPM, who had been her line manager and who she had a closer working relationship with. Judith and the new deputy, Verna, attempted to defuse the disruption by offering positive comments about the team as a whole, which led to members of the team responding equally with positive comments.

Later in the morning the team engaged in another exercise where they were all asked to stand up in a circle and throw a bean bag to each other. The aim of the exercise was for whoever throws the bean bag to say something positive about the recipient. The statement had to begin with the first letter of the recipient's first name. The managers joined in with

this exercise and Tammy soon ended up with the bean bag. She wanted to throw the bag to Judith but seemed stuck for something positive to say. There was an uncomfortable silence for several seconds until eventually she threw the bag to Judith without saying anything. Despite this occurrence the exercise continued. This incident felt powerful because it seemed that Tammy wanted to communicate something to Judith but could not. She seemed angry with Judith, who had paid her very little attention since her late arrival.

Analysis of extracts I&II

i) ***Level I***: Judith's request that I facilitate the away day left me wondering about her unconscious motives for agreeing to the research project. I wondered whether she was anxious about the away day and whether the outcomes she wanted would be achieved. I began to feel a strong sense that Judith saw my role as an opportunity to communicate something. There seemed to be some aspects of basic assumption functioning going on, particularly the pairing group, (Bion, 1948b, pp. 105,117). Perhaps unconsciously Judith imagined that my role was to support her.

ii) Judith indicated in our early discussions prior to the start of the research that she was glad I was doing this piece of work. She felt it was important for her team to see a black person in that role. This suggested to me that Judith may have had concerns about how she was viewed by her team. This was an issue I could identify with as a black manager myself, often leading racially diverse or predominantly white staff teams. In the past I had felt uncomfortable with the quality of their challenges to my authority, be they from black or white colleagues. The potential for feeling undermined as a black female manager was an ever-present concern, which reduced over time with my increasing experience and confidence. From time to time these nagging self-doubts re-emerged when I was confronted with situations, incidents or a crisis involving difficult manager/staff or manager/line manager interactions.

iii) Judith's presentation in the first data extract related to her frustration with the project administrator, who had not yet returned to work following compassionate leave. On reflection I wondered if Judith had in some strange way placed her frustrations about the missing staff member on the failing office equipment. This may well have contributed to Judith thinking about how the project's systems, knowledge and skills were held by 'absent' administrators and therefore magnified the project's vulnerability. My presence

seemed to provide some degree of containment for Judith, where in the first extract she gathered herself together sufficiently to have interacted positively with Tammy, in terms of her request for some annual leave, giving very little indication of her earlier frustration in the front office.

iv) *Level II:* Judith and Verna identified the objectives for the away day from the outset: to improve staff adherence to the project's internal 'systems'; to establish the future direction of the project and the team. However, I picked up a sense that team members were somewhat resistant to the task. They had all been asked to contribute by way of a short presentation but one of them commented on not having prepared very well.

v) One team member talked about an 'apocalyptic dream' she'd had the night before, and another member confessed that she'd done very little work. The overall atmosphere seemed to be one of 'reluctance' about the day ahead. Perhaps some of this was expressed for my benefit – signalling that I should not have high expectations from them.

vi) There seemed to be elements of Bion's basic assumption of dependency (1948b)) amongst the staff group in terms of their reliance on and expectation that the managers of the project would take full responsibility for the day. The 'leader is expected to look after, protect and sustain the group, to make them feel good' Bion, 1948b). Judith seemed to be happy to play this role but I suspected that Verna was less comfortable. She had made previous comments about her management style being more about 'empowerment' and self-reliance.

vii) *Level III:* The first component of these data extracts concerned the dynamics between the managers and myself, in relation to our 'understanding' as black women and managers. The material from the first extract suggests that Judith attempted to recruit me into the management support system, even though she had not expected me that day. My presence provided a container for Judith to 'offload' small but frustrating difficulties. What was clearly apparent that day was that Judith seemed under pressure and anxious about the project's systems and their effectiveness. No doubt these concerns and a sense that systems were 'slipping' greatly contributed to the away day, particularly the managers' stated aims and objectives for the day. Judith wanted to use the day to strengthen the

team's functioning around systems and processes. One would imagine this would be a fairly straightforward task, however complex projective processes emerged which caused disturbance and disruption. Whilst the entire event was not abandoned, the emotional 'climate' did have an impact on the full and total achievement of the manager's stated aims.

viii) In the second extract I was curious as to what lay behind Tammy's behaviour, what it represented and what was being communicated in relation to the rest of the team. Was she unconsciously acting out the team's resistance and possible anger about the tasks set by the managers? Was the team's non-reaction to Tammy's behaviour, an act of unconscious collusion? Were they quietly in agreement with her efforts to sabotage the event? In view of the earlier comments made about insufficient preparation, I wondered if Tammy's 'acting out' also symbolised something about the team's resistance, particularly as no one said anything about her constant interruptions. Judith was quite clear that she was not going to acknowledge Tammy's 'acting out' and later told me that she had no intention of giving Tammy her 'permission' to be absent. Judith seemed to interpret Tammy's behaviour as attention-seeking – whereby she wanted permission from Judith to be absent for the remainder of the day. I was surprised that no one in the group challenged Tammy's behaviour at any point; it was clearly disruptive and unsettling to the group's process.

ix) What might have happened had Judith and Verna sought to address the issue of Tammy's behaviour? Perhaps it was far too unsafe and potentially confrontational to do this and may have detracted from the aim of the event, but equally the managers may have risked hearing how they really felt about this project. There were hints about this in the apocalyptic dream, and also in the feedback that they felt undermined by their sister projects. It was much safer for the whole team to revert to basic assumption fight/flight functioning (Bion, 1948b), avoiding conflict and unconsciously colluding with Tammy's behaviour.

Summary & Reflections

Armstrong's quote at the beginning of this chapter highlights that I am not seeking to pathologise the behaviour of the Bromyard Team, but I am seeking to learn more about the impact of projective processes which are a part of its emotional life. In looking at my

own responses, as the data emerged, I found I had a tendency to possibly over-empathise with the experiences of Judith (PM) and Verna (DM), which led to my being recruited into the 'management system' as a person on whom anxieties could be left. I identified powerfully with the managers as a black female manager myself. This identification led to a sense of alliance. I felt that the staff (both black and white) resented being managed by a black Manager. The mutual identification I had with the managers and my 'nagging self-doubts' stemmed from actual negative experiences as black managers, but these were not openly discussed. The sense of mutual 'knowing' was implicit in our 'unspoken dialogue.' To have denied that our experiences were alive and close to the surface would have been to deny 'our' reality as black people – and this needed little discussion. The unspoken known was our connection as black professionals. Wimberley (1997) suggests that our need as black professionals for 'connectedness' to each other and our black communities is an important vehicle. This enables us to stay in touch with our cultural values and is a source of comfort and strength, which can make the difference between surviving or not in a hostile and racist society.

There was an additional emergent theme which is worthy of further comment. The nagging self-doubt I referred to earlier was painful to think about because its roots can be found in Britain's colonial past. Lowe (2006) writes about black-white relations and the ideology of white superiority which was developed and promoted by Europeans over four centuries, where colonization and slavery was an endorsed economic, social and cultural reality. Consequently, racialization and racism have become second nature in Western culture. The difference between races is a central organising principle which unconsciously attributes superiority to whites and inferiority to blacks. It is against this background that additional burdens of self-doubt and feelings of inferiority exist in black leaders. Fanon (1952) stated that 'black men want to prove to white men, at all costs, the richness of their thought, the equal value of their intellect.' Fanon suggests that black people have internalised deeper levels of inferiority based on our colonial past.

On reflection I have regrets about not thinking with the managers about our experiences as black professionals. Also, I wonder why we not explore this issue more fully during our management consultation interviews. Perhaps what underpinned our assumptions was the idea that we were all coming from the same position and experiences, and this may not have been true. Identifying with the managers was important at this time as it served a

clear purpose at the beginning of the research i.e. gaining entry and access to the project, but it perhaps also prevented us from getting to know each other in more detail. It felt important at the time that I completely understood what they faced as black managers. It would also have been useful to think about this in relation to the emotional life of the team, particularly how the team might have perceived the alliance between the three of us.

Projections, Transference & Countertransference in Practice

Introduction

This chapter focuses on two early extracts. The data is somewhat complex as it describes two episodes involving a black male service user and his interactions with centre staff. I have presented a verbatim extract from a management consultation interview (MCI) with both the project manager Judith and the deputy manager Verna. I have also presented an extract from my research journal. I go onto subject the data to further analysis then share a new understanding of the material, and how 'thinking space' offered an alternative perspective.

This chapter seeks to reflect upon and explore two emergent themes: firstly, the powerful projective processes I experienced as the researcher; and secondly, how my role as a researcher helped to free me from the constraints of the strong emotional identification I felt with the managers at the time of the interview and how I went onto take a more objective position. From this new position I became more aware of the complex projective processes at play, particularly in terms of the management of risk and the dynamics which emerged along racialised lines.

The Service User

The following material concerns a black male service user who had contact sessions with his baby daughter which were supervised by centre staff. The reasons for his contact being supervised were not made clear, and this omission was just one of several in terms of the managers relaying the story to me. I did not ask for more details about the circumstances but decided to allow the story to unfold.

I assumed that the contact arrangements related either to court proceedings, where a parenting assessment was being undertaken for the court, in which case staff at the centre would be collating evidence toward a comprehensive assessment of risk. This would also account for the involvement of the guardian.

Contact supervision sessions are often challenging and intense experiences for parents, as they are being closely observed by staff that will make observations about their parenting capacity, advice and feedback their observations and make recommendations for change. Communication between staff and parents can become tense and strained. The experience

is one of intrusive scrutiny and can be understandably uncomfortable and persecutory for parents. An additional dimension is that the eventual outcome of such assessments might result in the child not being returned to their parents' care, so there is a lot at stake for parents and a real sense that the authorities are in full control. Staff will also note how well parent(s) take on-board or not the advice and feedback given by the assessment staff.

In the research consultation interview session, Judith and Verna shared material about what had recently taken place at the centre when the male service user attended to have supervised contact with his daughter. On the day he arrived at the centre he was dealt with by two white workers, one being the previous deputy manager and the other being an experienced social worker. In the following extracts Judith and Verna tell of the difficulties which arose on the day of this man's visit. To add to the difficulties, on that day the baby's guardian arrived, and wanted to undertake her own observation of the father's contact with his daughter. There was some frustration and confusion because although the guardian had informed some of the staff about her visit, they had not told Judith or Verna. This was significant as far as the managers were concerned and indicative of their staffs' behaviour towards them as managers – implying that they were often undermined by members of their team.

This first extract comes from the MCI with Judith and Verna, one week after their team development day. In the course of the session the managers touch on several aspects of the away day. As the session progressed, however, it became clear that they were keen to share other thoughts about their team. Verna went on to describe the details of an incident involving this father – whose supervised contact with his daughter had previously been suspended by the previous deputy manager due to fears about his intimidating and aggressive presentation. However, following some further discussions with the staff members involved the managers reinstated this father's contact sessions as their view, the sessions had been unreasonably suspended.

The Data

This selection of extracts has been led by my countertransference responses as I reviewed the data. Briggs (2005) suggests that the value of this approach is that it gives one the opportunity to focus on the emotionality of relationships. This also allows some freedom to make use of one's knowledge and prior experience. Countertransference responses

therefore are valuable in terms of further understanding the data. I have discussed the value of countertransference responses in more detail elsewhere in this thesis, so I shall focus here on how I made use of these ideas.

Initially I felt a strong drive to further analyse this data, as there was something familiar about the terrain, namely white workers being afraid of black men. This issue felt familiar and clear in terms of the responses by the white workers toward this service user. However, as I began to commit my thoughts to paper, more profound and transformative memories began to emerge, helping me see the situation and processes described by the managers in a new light.

Verna the deputy manager started to talk about a father who had his contact sessions suspended because of his presentation at the centre and attitude toward staff. He had attended the centre expecting to see his daughter, and disputed the contact arrangements. Two white members of staff who dealt with him became increasingly more anxious because he was uncommunicative when spoken to and continued to be uncommunicative as he sat in the reception area. The staff members described him as intimidating and aggressive. Verna subsequently met with the service user to discuss his behaviour and decided to reinstate his contact sessions. Verna discussed the incident in supervision with the staff member in question and a less menacing explanation was arrived at.

Verna went on to share more details of a second incident where centre staff expressed more concerns about this father. The centre Staff sought to address these concerns with him and he reacted to their challenges. Verna also attended the contact session and had a meeting with the service user. Verna later overheard the guardian's remarks to the centre workers. Both she and Judith were shocked by the Guardian's remarks.

Data Extracts:

Part I (verbatim extract from the recorded interview) Verna: "there was a session on Friday with this man who'd come to have contact with his daughter. We don't know what the risks are in relation to him at the moment. What we are saying is that without all the information, we have the risk as high in terms of his previous drug use. He has criminal damage offences. He's assaulted police. But we don't know in what context. So until we know more we are not going to make assumptions, but we are going to ensure that we are thinking about risk. We reinstated the contact again, because at one point it   was

terminated because this particular worker thought he came in here quite agitated, aggressive and intimidating. But when you unravelled all of that, he hadn't actually done anything. He was asked a question and he decided to ignore them when they said hello. We decided to reinstate the contact sessions and met with him to ask him what made him really angry. What it was that really made him feel fed up with the local authorities, and fed up with professionals, was that some people didn't communicate."

Verna went onto share that as this meeting with the service user progressed she asked him to go through what had happened that day. She said that he went onto convey the details in the language he'd picked up from centre staff, who had described him as 'intimidating'. Verna suggested that in fact all he'd done that day was come to the centre for contact and disputed the arrangements as he'd been told that he had no contact that day. He'd then sat down stating that his time was 'being wasted', at which point the worker became anxious and relayed this to the DM. The DM's response was: 'oh, we'd better make sure all risks are covered.' He was then 'left' in the reception area. He later approached reception staff and asked: 'can you tell me why you're stopping me from seeing my daughter?' In the case file the worker recorded that 'he came over in a very agitated manner and was very aggressive towards me.'

Additional session notes

During the MCI Verna went on to state that in her view she felt the service user had not been aggressive. When she'd subsequently asked the worker in supervision to describe and reflect on what she thought was aggressive about him, another view emerged. The worker felt that with hindsight perhaps the service user had not been hostile or aggressive, but perhaps the worker's own anxieties and hysteria got the better of them. Verna also added that during the MCI session the centre staff involved in this situation were two white females. The second extract comes from my research journal.

Data Extracts: *Part II* – (summary from research journal)

Verna revealed further material about the same service user. Contact sessions with his daughter had resumed and during another contact session one of the centre workers had to challenge the service user about his persistent removal of his daughter's bottle as she fed and started to fall asleep. The father's reasoning was that he wanted to keep her awake. As the worker discussed this with him, the child's guardian arrived unexpectedly to also

observe the session. Her visit had not been arranged. She was present in the room as the worker discussed her concerns with the father. His response to being challenged about his actions was to reply that the worker should not tell him 'how to look after his child.' At this point Verna had also entered the room.

As Verna shared this account both she and Judith seemed more concerned and annoyed about the guardian's sudden unannounced visit, and felt this was typical of decisions taken on the 'shop floor' (by members of staff). They were convinced that staff members had agreed to the guardian's visit without prior consultation with either of them as the management team. What they found even more remarkable however, was the response of the guardian, who had witnessed the interaction between the service user and the centre staff member. The guardian had remarked to the worker in Verna's presence that had she (the staff member) been alone in the room with the service user, he would probably have attacked her. Verna, Judith and I were disturbed by the guardian's comments, particularly coming from a black woman.

Analysis of Data extracts partA

- *Level I:* As a black person hearing this account from another black person, I strongly identified with the service user in terms of feeling misunderstood by white professionals. As Verna shared this account there was an 'understanding' amongst the three of us, namely the ease with which black people are often perceived as 'aggressive and intimidating'. Much has been written about how cultural communications can be 'misread' by white professionals, particularly in the field of mental health and other social work. So all of this knowledge, personal and professional experience, made this explanation all too familiar. Verna took the view (as we all did) that the response to the service user was clearly an overreaction by the white centre staff, rooted in a learnt fear of black men.

- *Level II:* As I continued to review the research data for analysis purposes an alternative perspective began to emerge. When considering the salient aspects of this episode: a parent is denied access to his child, he 'sits down' (in protest) when told he isn't going to have contact with her, and he is non communicative with staff. This could be interpreted as hostility on the part of the service user. It began to seem quite plausible that he could

have become angry about being denied what he felt was his right. As I continued to review the data I began to question our initial view. I began to wonder about Verna's later discussion with the white worker and their apparently 'changed view' of the situation. I wondered if Verna's discussion with the staff member may have made it difficult for the staff member to be more open about her fears that day. She thought that blaming the previous deputy manager (who had by this stage left the organisation) for misreading the situation was a way of dismissing their earlier reactions. This may also have resulted in the worker feeling less inclined to disagree with Verna's view, for fear of being accused of racism, which would further minimise assessing the risks.

In reviewing the recorded account what also seemed apparent was that the guardian could clearly see the danger, but we (Verna, Judith and I) were more preoccupied with the guardian's remarks about the potential danger the staff member was in, how misunderstood this service user was and how unjustly he had been perceived. We considered the guardian's remarks as an overreaction and a 'betrayal' of this black man. *How could a black woman betray her race? w*as our implicit view.

- *Level III*:   In these extracts the following themes emerged:

   - Projective identification

   - Manager and researcher collusion and over-identification

    - A perceived undermining of management authority

I will now seek to untangle the various layers of this material, and describe the powerful transference and countertransference responses I experienced as I sought to analyse the data.

The managers sought to convey an alliance between the two white staff initially involved with this service user. They indicated that at some level the previous white deputy manager and white staff member were quite possibly fearful of this black man, which led them to a particular view of this service user. Thomas' (1992) description of a 'pre-transference' is quite helpful in this context. He describes thoughts about individuals (and their characteristics) known long before they are met in reality. The project   managers,

Verna and Judith, seemed to be suggesting that their colleagues' view of the service user was fuelled by prior stereotypes about black people.

The three of us identified with the service user, and particularly the experience of being misunderstood and discriminated against by white professionals. In the field of mental health it is well known that the misdiagnosis of black people is a common occurrence amongst white professionals. Littlewood (1993) has stated that: 'what many professionals, doctors and social workers take as unintelligible and thus insane may, at another level of understanding, be seen as legitimate and coherent human responses to disadvantage and racism.' As three black people, our suspicions of our white colleagues' perceptions would be influenced by this and other bodies of evidence, not discounting our personal experiences.

The managers also conveyed a sense of feeling that they were being undermined by their staff. During the MCI, Judith expressed some concerns about the guardian being allowed to attend the centre without prior consultation. This was not the first time this issue had surfaced. I got a sense of this in an earlier discussion with Judith about how pleased she was that I as a black researcher would be undertaking this research. This was quite a complex issue in terms of how these managers experienced me, and we did not discuss it openly. There was something quite familiar about this experience. As a black manager I have not always felt confident about my staff's acceptance of my leadership skills/authority, so Judith's remarks resonated with my own experiences and came from a place of understanding. Some of these self-doubts I have accepted those which would naturally occur to any leader in role. However, as a black female, I have from time to time experienced something quite complex in the quality of my interactions and dynamics with the staff when I have sought to exercise my authority. I would describe feeling racialised, and a thought being in the air amongst the white staff members along the lines of: *who do you think you are? Do you really know how to do this job? Are you really qualified or bright enough to manage me?* Equally, the black manager and black staff members may have had similar questions: *who do you think you are? Why are you treating me like this when I am like you?* I would suggest that these unspoken questions lay just beneath the surface and evoke emotional responses in our day-to-day interactions with team members.

As I revisited this material I experienced a shift in my view. In the next section I will discuss how psychoanalytic ideas enabled me arrive at an alternative understanding of this data by taking a 'third position'.

<u>Conscious realisation – a shift in thinking</u>

Halton (1999) calls a 'conscious realisation' the moment when one recognises the true source of one's feelings and behaviour. Whilst reviewing the data I recalled an incident which took place some years ago when I worked as a team manager in a London Local Authority. I was working in a busy referral and assessment team. On this particular day I joined a member of staff to support her in meeting a very angry service user and his partner in one of the small interview rooms.

They were a black couple. During the course of the interview the man became verbally abusive and channelled most of his anger towards me. I remained quite calm as he shouted for several minutes. At no time during this episode did I feel or show any signs of fear or anxiety. Once the tirade was over and the service user eventually left the building, I met with my white line manager to debrief. As I recounted what had happened she expressed her serious concerns about the incident and that she felt it was a potentially dangerous situation. She advised me to drive into the office car park in the mornings as it was quite an exposed area. I was not to enter the building from the front but from the side, which was safer, and I was not to leave the building alone at the end of the day. It was only during this discussion with my line manager that it began to dawn on me the potential danger the incident posed. I remained calm under the circumstances, as this was how I generally managed anger from service users, but there was something different about the situation related to the fact that he was black. I did not want to believe that a black person would hurt me, because I was black. This was a useful fall-back position when faced with a frightening situation. However, my manager's anxiety 'woke me up' and enabled me to take on board an alternative view of the situation.

The situation Judith and Verna described had a similar quality to the one I have just described. Judith, Verna and I may have denied the level of risk because we did not want to believe a black man could be dangerous, indeed that the danger was all in the mind of the white workers. Similarly the danger to the child was somewhat obscured by our preoccupation with racial dynamics.

In this situation the managers and I seem to want to demonstrate our solidarity with the service user, and we did so in our discussions by airing our understanding and empathy as members of the same ethnic group. My conscious realization developed further to include the following four thoughts:

1. The white staff members' perception of this 'angry' black man was derived from fear and anxiety, possibly fuelled by his behaviour.

2. The account given by the managers was based on their inherent fear of black men and their 'pre-transference' fantasies. They had misread the situation and quite possibly may have discriminated against him. This idea was more appealing to me as a black person.

3. The guardian communicated the risk because she was fully in touch with this aspect of the service user's presentation, and the child's experience of her father. We could not see the danger, and viewed the guardian's response as a betrayal of the black service user and our race, particularly as she too was a black women.

In her study, Bryan (2001) refers to Hooks who suggests that some black people are uncomfortable with the thought that our imaginations might be 'filled with whiteness' and therefore, in various situations, accuse other black people of the same. This leads to an 'us and them' dichotomy where some black people invert stereotypical racist interpretations so that black becomes synonymous with goodness and white with evil. Any black person imbued with 'white ways' is therefore met with disapproval.

4. My previous experiences allowed for a shift in my thinking, having revisited the data for analysis, and led me to recall an incident from my past where I was unable to see the danger I was in. This recollection contributed to my reformulation of the event.

The impact of projections

As a defence response, the service user may have unconsciously projected his own fear and powerlessness into staff members, who in turn experienced these feelings as their own. Unconsciously he sought to rid himself of these feelings, which were difficult to tolerate, by expelling them into other people.

The secondary purpose of the projection was to communicate the importance of these feelings by getting another person to experience them, in the hope that they will be able to

tolerate and give meaning to them (Hughes & Pengelly, 1997). An essential feature of both these modes is that projected feelings are aroused in the recipient, who then becomes identified with them in the mind of the projector.

In the mind of the service user the staff were as powerless as he was, and they represented his fears in terms of his situation with the child and his lack of control. However, in reality the staff had a great degree of control over whether he could have contact with his child.

The managers and I seemed to identify with his unconscious feelings of powerlessness, and what we saw was a man who was misunderstood and being discriminated against. I do not wish to minimise this perspective because it is a powerful one – we have a black man who enters a predominantly female domain where he has very little power– nevertheless in a world of competing needs the child's needs are always paramount. This perspective contributed greatly to our inability to see the potential threat this father posed to his baby and to members of staff that day, despite the view of the black guardian who was present at the time.

Supervision – openness and honesty

There were also some difficulties in the supervision process following this incident. In supervision with the white staff member, Verna could have been more open to exploring possible alternative perspectives. She could have worked with the staff member in looking at the possible sources of her fears. Supervision could have been used to think about how these complex processes were operating by thinking about what may have underpinned their anxieties.

The female African writer, Chimamanda Adichie, has talked about the 'the danger of the single story' (2009), she talks about finding her authentic cultural voice, and warns that if we hear only a single story about another person or country we risk a critical misunderstanding. The 'single story' adopted by Judith and Verna prevented further dialogue, and the worker went along with this so she was not seen as racist. Dialogue around race and racism is frightening, but we must continue to develop strategies to talk about it when they arise in our work. Not to do so will limit the effectiveness of our work with service users.

Verna's assumptions about what took place at the time were powerful and persuasive. They led the worker to a 'new view' of the service user. The worker shifted her view so that the service user's presentation was different to what she had thought, but this shift came about not through understanding but pressure from above.

Subsequently, when further conflicts arose between the service user and staff which involved Verna being called into the room in the presence of the guardian, supervision could have been used to explore what might have been taking place beneath the surface of the conscious interaction. This may have offered greater understanding and insight in terms of the potentially dangerous dynamics, rather than again jumping to a set of assumptions about the guardian's disloyalty and perceptions of black people in terms of black being all good and white being all bad, which only served to minimise and not fully explore the impact of the service user's behaviour.

There were some real struggles between the black and white professionals involved in this situation. The white staff harboured fears of being viewed as racist, and the black staff identified with the service user's experience of being discriminated against. Bryan (2001) talks about the importance of our 'connectedness' as black people, which helps us cope with hostile environments, but this may also prevent us from challenging dichotomies.

Understanding the transference

As I continued to review the data and listened to the recording of the MCI, there emerged a sense that at no time during the interview had the managers or I acknowledged that this service user's behaviour presented cause for concern. We were all so powerfully identified with his plight, and keen to seek 'connectedness', that we overlooked this feature of the event. I recall exchanging 'knowing glances' with the managers and murmuring my agreement. There was, perhaps, a sort of group transference response to this material. But had I been able to take more of a meta-position at the time, we could have further explored these dynamics. We could have tried to think more about what the 'knowing glances' and 'murmurs of agreement' were about. Perhaps we would have agreed that white workers harboured negative thought about a black service user based largely on his skin colour – I am not so confident however that we would have been able to consider alternative perspectives, as our identification was very powerful.

Whilst transference responses classically relate to aspects and dynamics in clinical relationships between therapist and patient, they are equally as helpful to think about. The transference consists of a range of feelings, conflicts, defences and expectations of relationships projected unconsciously into a current relationship, but originating in other earlier relationships. I am suggesting that our transference responses were influenced by our past experiences as black people in society, and our mistrusting relationships with white colleagues. These experiences were not openly articulated but they were expressed and shared in our body language and utterances. Our personal and professional life experiences may well have obscured our ability to separate our issues from those of the service user. Did this come about as a consequence of us trying to think as a group of black professionals? Was there fear on our parts about how a dissenting voice might be viewed? The reaction to the guardian's view suggested that this would be so. Bryan (2001) refers to a 'black professional consciousness,' a dynamic which takes place amongst black professionals where not much needs to be said but there is a kind of mutual knowing behind situations involving perceived racism. I suggest that our sense of 'knowing' what this situation was about may well have limited our appreciation of the risks.

How do these insights impact on assessing risk? There are two issues which require more focus: firstly, the potential difficulties in the absence of these insights and how they might negatively impact on assessing risk; secondly, the necessity for effective supervision structures to 'unpick' complex situations where race and racism may be more easily spoken about.

It could be argued that the service user presented early 'warning signs': (a) his passive aggressive non-communication and (b) the removal of his daughter's bottle. Reder & Duncan (1999) refers to a number of examples of covert warning signs in child protection cases, which 'confirm the need for increased awareness of their relevance when assessing risk to children.' In Reder's systematic review of all known reports into the deaths of children (1993) the effect of potential threats from professionals, by imposing controls over the parents, is discussed. They suggest these controls can exacerbate the feelings of powerlessness in the parent, who unconsciously seeks to redress this. By removing his daughter's bottle and not letting her sleep the service user may have been doing exactly this. The guardian rightly and clearly identified with this child's experience,   and

concluded that the father's behaviour was potentially harmful not only to the child (as he seems to put his needs above the child) but also to the staff members (who represented control and power in terms of access to the child).

I have since seen many examples in contact situations where parents prioritise their emotional needs above those of their children, often in quite subtle and unconscious ways. These parents clearly have their own unmet needs and seek to have these met during contact. I have not sought to present an 'absolute truth' here, but as Reder & Duncan (1999) suggest, 'assessments carried out by helping professionals should not be seen as striving to arrive at a truth; a greater understanding is the more acceptable aim.' I concur with this view in terms of what has been presented here.

Summary and reflections

My aim in this chapter has been to demonstrate how I arrived at an alternative understanding of the material described in the interview extracts. It has been important to include the service user's experience and its relationship and impact on the professionals involved. I suggest this service user's projections were at the root of the unconscious and conscious processes which took place, and they validate the notion that our actions as practitioners and managers are greatly affected by our clients/service users' projections and the subsequent transference responses.

Verna, Judith and I initially identified with the service user's powerlessness and could not clearly see the risks he may have presented to his child, but the guardian kept the child's needs in mind and clearly understood what may have been this child's experience of her father. It was only later on that I was able to move away from a 'single story' preoccupied with race and racism to think about risk to the child and our white colleagues. The use of psychoanalytic concepts was useful here, as the emergent themes resonated with lessons learnt from child abuse tragedies.

It has taken far longer to describe and make sense of the material than my initial reading and interpretations, and this, in my view, is the value of 'thinking space'. As Reder and Duncan (1999) suggest, this helps us expand our understanding of more complex situations and moves us away from 'fixed beliefs', which have potentially negative influences and prejudices. The guardian, in this case, seemed far more in touch with the reality of the situation. Whilst I cannot say with any degree of certainty how the issues

were resolved, I am confident that the guardian's perspective would have been pivotal to ensure the child's best interests were served.

It would be remiss of me not to share some of the personal dilemmas I have faced in writing this chapter. Bryan talks about black people preferring to keep 'private' their thoughts about race and racism, and in this instance my reluctance to discuss it relates to my struggle about raising these issues with white colleagues, coupled with wanting to maintain a level of solidarity and loyalty to my race. As a black manager I feel particularly challenged in this regard, often caught between personal and professional tensions around race, racism and leadership. In my experience many black people fear that if too much is disclosed and shared with white people they will be alienated and discriminated against. This view is not without validity and is probably based in part on prior and current experiences of personal and institutionalised racism. However, this state is not conducive to healthy professional relationships, and is not dissimilar to the paranoid schizoid position Klein speaks of (1946).

If possible in our professional work we need to move towards the depressive position as often as we can, particularly when we are thinking about safeguarding children. As black/white practitioners and managers, we need to get to a place where we can untangle complex projective issues at the boundaries of race and racism. But we must try to find ways of articulating difficult thoughts, and trust each other to receive them in the spirit of furthering knowledge rather than making criticisms about practice.

'Secrets, Secrets'

Introduction

Experiences of projections in my practice were often poorly understood by myself and by those I was line managed by. They were understood to be part of the job, something to be tolerated but not thought about, as 'going with the territory'. Turquet (1967) stated that leadership has to 'act as a projection receptacle and bear being used'. Acting as a projection receptacle has certainly been part of my experience as a front line manager, and this aspect of the role often led to overwhelming feelings of emotional disturbance, pain and defensive reactions, where primitive responses such as anger and rage were never overtly expressed.

The process of change is a much more complex proposition than is often thought, and in my experience the emotional price was underestimated. Perhaps the underestimation was necessary, as to pay closer 'attention' to these details, or contemplate more fully the 'price' of change, would be emotionally unbearable for those at the level of senior management driving through the changes.

Observing the managers of Bromyard gave me the opportunity to reflect upon my own experience as a manager. I was able to take up a 'third position' where I could observe and later examine the experiences of other managers seeking to cope with stress and projections. Turquet suggested that if the leader 'allows himself to become an observer, gliding above the fray as a non-participant, he will deprive himself of knowledge of certain vital aspects of the group's activities' (1967).

In this I see parallels with my position as researcher. I could not take an entirely 'aloof' position, and I had to make myself 'available' to the research participants in a very real way. As a consequence I found myself being recruited by the managers as a source of containment and support, and also as a 'receptacle' for projections during a very challenging period in the life of the team.

As infants we develop the expectation that we might gain relief from emotional pressures by seeking a container for painful feelings and the part of ourselves that experiences them. Unconsciously we try to rid ourselves of these painful feelings, but there is also the   hope

that the recipient might be able to bear what we cannot by articulating our unthinkable thoughts, and developing in us a capacity to think and hold on to anxiety ourselves (Mawson, 1994). Obholzer suggests the process of containment makes possible the shift from the paranoid-schizoid position, which involves fragmentation and denial, to the depressive position, where integration, thought and appropriate responses are possible (1994). Obholzer states that a leader must be a reliable container, as staff need to express their inevitably ambivalent feelings towards those in authority. If this containment function is not provided, ambivalent feelings will be expressed through 'individual and interpersonal disorder,' and this can replace a more 'appropriate and creative struggle with the task of the organisation.' Stokes (1998) makes useful reference to the role of the police and the importance of the containment function they provide in terms of projections from society. His account may be usefully applied to leadership, where it is essential to be psychologically available to work through projections so that tensions and anxieties within teams are contained appropriately.

In contemporary social care organisations, given the prevalence of 'market values' and the marketization of services, where there is an over-emphasis on cost and profit, the need for attending to psychological aspects is more pressing. The following data shows how my presence served as a container for the angry projections from both managers, Judith and Verna, in the absence of their Senior Manager (SM) Maggie.

Stokes suggests that increased levels of change within organisations results in there being less provision of receptacles for projections, which in turn results in increased levels of interpersonal tension. This is certainly true in terms of what took place at Bromyard, and is discussed in further detail in the next chapter.

Whilst this may not have been intended at the outset of the research, my researcher role provided containment for the management couple. As the project's life came to an end I was quite fearful of being 'too collusive' with the managers, but I was also aware of the tremendous sympathy I had for them, which partly stemmed from working for the same organisation.

In the following extracts I describe what occurred during an observation visit, when Judith (PM) asked me to 'keep a personal secret' and seemed to be overwhelmed by the circumstances. The second extract describes the consequences of Judith not sharing

enough information with her team. After this I go on to describe how both managers coped with having to withhold information from their team, news of Bromyard's closure, and the increased the pressure on them. In the absence of their SM I was required to contain their emotional responses to a series of stressful events.

The Data

The material in Parts I and II are sensitive in nature and concern Judith's health. For reasons of confidentiality I have sought to keep details to a minimum, however the underlying projective processes are worthy of further exploration and particularly my emerging responses to them.

Searles discusses the importance of 'the therapist refraining from rigidly defending against experiencing aspects of the patient's feelings' (Ogden, 1979). My role as researcher was not dissimilar to that of a therapist in terms of my seeking to look beneath the surface at various interactions and dynamics, thereby making use of psychoanalytic ideas and concepts to inform my deeper understanding of events. Having a level of psychic availability to all aspects of the emotional content of events is completely necessary. In the following account I describe the details of my site observations, my function as a container and the emotional impact of the material upon me. In part III I describe how the manager revealed in a consultation interview the news of Bromyard's closure, when she also asked that I do not disclose the information to the team.

Part I – PM's personal disclosure
Source: Site Observation Log – 12/04/

Context

I felt a powerful countertransference response to Judith's disclosure. Its significance speaks volumes about the relationship between Judith, her team and her line manager, Maggie. Part II was taken from my research notes following a management consultation interview (MCI) with the deputy manager, Verna. Interestingly this session was not audio-recorded as Verna was between appointments so did not have much time for our session. I have relied on notes written immediately following the interview. The content

links to part I of the extract and shows how Judith's withholding of information about her situation impacted on her team and required me to give her containment.

Part I

On this particular day Judith seemed to be tense. I took my position in the office, where I quietly observed the activity and dialogue.

Data Extract summary

I arrived as usual to undertake a site observation, I joined both Judith & Verna in the front office. The administrator and the family centre worker were also present.

Initially there were no obvious signs of tension, but as Judith began to speak, she seemed agitated and irritated about several issues. These issues included:

- The inappropriate use of email. She'd received an email from the previous project administrator, who had left the project and the country, and was sending her social emails. Judith had previously expressed annoyance at the departure of this administrator, who she felt had taken a lot of systems knowledge with her

- The inappropriate use of petty cash was another issue, the PM questioned how much an external sessional worker had charged for work with a service user

- She went onto express concerns about the use of the fax machine in the front office and announced that she no longer wanted staff using it because the cartridges were too expensive

- Judith expressed infuriation with an email from Maggie (SM) requesting that she read a large document in preparation for a presentation the following day

Verna, by contrast, 'seemed' quite upbeat, although I detected something in the quality of Verna's mood which suggested she was trying to defuse Judith's agitated state. Overall the observation was uneventful and as it neared the end, I sought to arrange a new time to meet with Judith, at which point she asked if she could see me privately.

We left the front office and met in an adjoining room. She disclosed that she would be unable to book a firm date for a future session as she was due to be admitted into hospital. She asked me not to share this with the team. She had told no one in the team nor disclosed any information to her line manager. I agreed to keep this confidential.

Part Two - The Abandoned Team

Source: Management Consultant Interview – 4/05/

Context

Judith was on sick leave but the reason for this remained undisclosed. Judith had shared very little with her colleagues about her health issues, and this included her deputy, Verna, who had been left in charge.

The following extract comes from the notes following a brief session with Verna. Verna told me that she could not meet for long as she had another meeting. I decided not to audio record the meeting as it was going to be short. I later regretted this decision as it was extremely rich in content, and worthy of further analysis. The session conveyed a strong sense of the desertion felt by Verna and the team at Judith's absence, with little explanation as to why. Verna also shares in this interview the team's subsequent response being 'abandoned.'

Data Extract Summary

Verna stated that Judith had called her several times at work. She felt this was understandable. It was only natural that Judith would be concerned about her the project and the team. However, Verna said that Judith not shared with her, nor the team, the nature of her health problems. Whilst the team had initially shown some concern for Judith's well-being and had frequently asked about how she was, now they were 'just getting on with it.' Verna said the team had not sent Judith a card. Verna thought the team felt 'abandoned.' Whilst she was enjoying the challenges of her new role, she had been very busy and felt that there had been little support from her SM, Maggie.

Analysis

Level I – emergent themes

- Build-up of tension early in the observation

- Mystery and secrecy around Judith's hospital admission

- Why did she tell me and not her colleagues?

- What did I represent for Judith?

- Containment

- Abandonment and disinterest

- Emergent Leadership and independence

Level II

At first the news left me with a sense of panic about how I was going to complete my fieldwork. I wondered what would happen to my research in her absence. Then I felt a strong desire to probe further the nature of Judith's medical difficulties. However, I resisted asking for more details as it felt too intrusive. I thought at the time, 'she doesn't look ill,' and was intrigued about the problem. Then I began to wonder why she hadn't told any of her colleagues or line manager. *Surely,* I thought, *you would say something to your team if you were about to have a planned hospital admission and subsequent sick leave*. It seemed to me as a manager you would want to be more open about ill health, as colleagues are usually quite understanding of such situations. This communication would also have provided a degree of containment for the team. Hughes & Pengelly (1998) suggest that uncontaining environments frequently serve to escalate anger or anxiety, and whilst they were discussing this notion in terms of service users, clearly the same would apply in terms of containment for staff teams.

I wondered whether she was so angry with everyone that she didn't want to share information with anyone, or really so anxious about her health she was too overwhelmed to even discuss the issue. At the time Judith's actions felt quite hostile, but I could not understand why, particularly as her managerial style was quite nurturing. I became   quite

preoccupied with Judith's hospital admission and why she had said nothing to her team but chose to tell me, then ask that I tell no one, almost as if she was transferring her responsibility for the situation. I was also preoccupied by what I might have done in her position; and whether I would have shared this information with my team. I really struggled with Judith's actions and found them difficult to understand. Judith had lodged something inside of me which left me troubled and puzzled.

I was positioned slightly outside of the team, which allowed Judith to offload some of her anxieties relating to this event. My supervisor and I reflected on Judith's medical problems and found ourselves speculating about whether she had a gynaecological issue, as I was aware that she had some challenges in this regard. My supervisor and I also reflected on what I represented for Judith. She clearly used my role to project feelings of anxiety, frustration and anger.

As a consequence of Judith's sick leave and the mystery surrounding it, Verna shared with me that she could feel the team's declining concern. The team had initially enquired about how she was doing, but after a while they 'got on with it.' Judith's absence seem to matter less and less. Her absence also offered Verna the opportunity to assert herself, 'pick up the reins' of leadership, and stamp some of her own authority on Bromyard. Judith had placed me in a difficult position as I felt unable to participate fully in a discussion with Verna about Judith's absence, but I was able to provide a safe space within which she could express her feelings about the team dynamics at the time.

Level III

Judith's initial tensions appear to relate to her overall frustrations with her team, her manager and organisational issues. I was used as a receptacle for her news about her hospital admission and required to hold this in confidence. The mystery and secrecy surrounding Judith's hospital admission seemed to represent more than a need for privacy, and my presence as someone available but outside the team offered Judith a space to project some of the personal and professional anxiety she was feeling at the time. In turn I became worried, but also intrigued by her situation.

Judith's inability to provide containment led to her abandonment of her deputy and her team. What developed was an almost 'every man for himself' attitude. This may well

have stemmed from the lack of containment she felt from her own line manager, Maggie, and the organisation. Hughes and Pengelly (1998) refer to Britton (1992) who suggests that the container must have two qualities: firstly it must provide a 'bounded safe place' similar to what Winnicott (1960) calls a 'sense of being held,' and secondly the container must have the 'capacity to apply understanding to anxiety-laden experiences in order to give them shape and meaning' (Hughes & Pengelly, 1998). My presence seemed to provide Judith with a sense of 'being held' although I could not entirely understand her actions in terms of withholding information from her team.

Judith's usual management style appeared to be maternal and nurturing. She told me in an earlier interview that she had in the past cooked an entire meal for her team, and during one of my observation visits I found her leading the cooking of a team 'bonding lunch.' At the time they were said to have been through a difficult period in terms of having heavier than usual workloads. Judith may have set up what Bion (1948b) described as the basic assumption dependency, where the leader is expected to care for, look after, protect and sustain the members of the group. However this is thought to inhibit growth and development as a fantasy is perpetuated that the leader has all the solutions. Verna's early observations upon joining the team were that the team 'took' a lot from Judith's management approach, but she questioned how much they gave back in return.

Management Consultation Interview – project's closure is announced.

Context

The following is a summary of the entire recorded and none recorded parts of the interview. This interview took place later in the month of May, by which stage Judith had returned to work following her period of sick leave. My intention was to get the research process 'back on track,' as it had been somewhat derailed by events.

The interview began by me trying to clarify a focus for future consultation sessions as I had become increasingly concerned about how sessions were going, where both Judith and Verna had missed appointments. I was so concerned I discussed this issue in my own supervision. The absences of managers from sessions felt increasingly like a baby observation where the observer turns up at the house only to find no-one at home has remembered the appointment. I saw this session as an opportunity to reassert the research project's prominence within the management's consciousness. My supervisor advised that

I meet with both managers and seek to re-establish the purpose of the management consultation interviews.

As the interview progressed, I felt I was making some headway in terms of gaining some degree of consensus from both Judith and Verna about the future direction of the interviews. About midway through the interview they asked if the recorder could be 'switched off,' and they went on to disclose the shocking news of the decision to close Bromyard, and realign staff with the other two sister projects. To date no decision had been taken about what would happen to Judith in terms of her future tenure. Judith and Verna had also been asked by their line manager not to make this information public for the next couple of weeks, so the rest of the team knew nothing of the project's impending closure at that stage. The managers also asked that I did not disclose the information to team members. As a consequence our discussions naturally changed direction from that point on and the following section is a summary of what emerged and the subsequent analysis.

Summary of Interview Data

Several themes surface during the MCI when the tape recorder was switched off. The managers candidly expressed how they felt about the decision to close the project and their comments are worthy of discussion as they revealed the depth of the managers' reactions.

- Judith was critical of the organisation and felt that senior managers lacked strategic planning skills. Their responses to potential business opportunities were often quite reactive. She felt that there was a lack of clarity about the organisation's direction with the senior managers having no real sense of where it was going in the long term

- The managers viewed the wider organisation's relationship with the local authority commissioners not as partners but one whereby the organisation was at the mercy of the local authority, 'dancing to their tune'

- Verna highlighted the tensions around the true cost of services and pointed out that the organisation, like so many other charities, would subsidise the shortfall in local authority funding. But more recently charities were finding they could no longer afford to operate in this way and were now seeking to recover the 'full costs' of service delivery, which had

resulted in more commissioned services from the voluntary sector at true cost. This meant however that the costs of services provided by the voluntary sector were less attractive as costs to local authority had increased. Verna also commented that a number of the organisation's local projects had faced closure under these circumstances

- The managers were suspicious that the decision to close Bromyard must have been made some time ago, and their project was probably sacrificed to hold onto the larger contract with the local authority

- They were suspicious that 'cosy' discussions may have taken place between Senior Management and the Local Authority 'behind closed doors', particularly as the team had always been given the impression that they were going to be moved to a new space so as they could expand their work they felt betrayed and couldn't understand why the former strategy had been changed and why they were now facing closure

- Judith felt the need to restate all of Bromyard's achievements since her arrival. She had assisted the locum project manager in rebuilding a failing project, and subsequently taken over the running of the project. But she felt that the local authority were using Bromyard as scapegoats, and felt that the team's work had a sound grounding in evidence-based practice, high standards in their court reports (evidenced by the fact that staff were very rarely required to attend court hearings as their reports were rarely challenged). She also pointed out that they accepted all new work without question, unlike their two sister projects who frequently seemed reluctant to take on new cases and would challenge new referrals

- Judith was particularly aggrieved about the injustice of Bromyard being selected for closure and questioned why she, a more experienced manager, was being 'got rid of', interestingly, a feeling she may have projected into the team when she went into hospital.

- Verna stated that she wanted clarity, (something she had wanted following Judith's hospital admission) so she could communicate to the team effectively when news of the closure was made public. Verna spoke about experiencing something similar in her last post where she was part of another project closing down and had felt that clarity about how decisions were made was really helpful.

- Verna was also concerned that other project managers had been told about the closure as one of them had approached her directly about joining her team following the closure.

Analysis

Level I – emergent themes

- Secrecy around the closure

- Shock and confusion about the reasons for the closure – 'why us?'

- Deputy is calm

- Emotional responses, ranging from anger, frustration, disappointment and betrayal

Level II

Judith's response to the closure was particularly explosive. She was critical of her senior managers and in a belligerent mood. Verna seemed calmer and more accepting, stating that all she wanted was clarity and structure around so that she could be clear with staff when the time came. Verna had come to Bromyard from another centre which had also been closed so this experience was fresh in her mind.

The reason given for the closure was not entirely transparent. Not that long ago the project had been through a team consultation process with an external consultant. During this consultation the whole service was reviewed and exciting plans were formulated around improving the team's future service delivery and internal operating systems. The team were also expected to move into new accommodation. Judith's criticism of the senior management team related to these recent events. She was confused as to why the organisation had paid external consultants for this review only later to decide to close the centre. An added major concern for Judith related to her own future and what would happen following the closure. She was understandably angry about having no new job offer of a decision made about her future, when there was another less experienced project manager running one of the sister projects. Judith suggested that 'she' should have been slotted into the management role of that centre as she was the longer serving manager.

__Level III__

Smith (1997) suggests that the need for change is essential for growth and the creation of new life, but argues that too much change in a short space of time – if it threatens jobs, established roles and working practices – with requirements imposed from above rather than developed organically inevitably leads to insecurity, overwork and stress. This was particularly pertinent in terms of Bromyard's closure. Coupled with these stressful events, the absence of a containing structure from the organisation did not allow for supportive staff engagement.

When Judith and Verna made some emotional investment in the MCI's my role provided some degree of containment for the managers; the regularity and safety of consultation sessions provided a safe space in which they felt able to express their emotional responses. Judith felt able to be candid about her feelings toward her senior managers, telling me they were knowingly misled in terms of the future of the project, as they were fully encouraged to work towards focused project goals. She thought her managers colluded with the local authority about the project's closure, then weakly submitted to commissioners under pressure.

Summary and Reflections

The absence of 'containment' is the common theme in both of these data extracts. Smith (1997) argues that provision of such support structures in the new 'market culture' is seen as old-fashioned and does not sit well within the discourse of cost effectiveness and efficiency. In the case of Bromyard, whilst there was some engagement with the team in terms of an external consultant being provided, once the decision had been made to close, there was little room for consensus building, consultation or dialogue, in fact there was a marked absence of such activity, perhaps because it was viewed as an inefficient use of resources.

However, lack of support under these circumstances results in what Klein (1946) describes as the paranoid schizoid position. Neglecting a team's emotional responses fragments and splits up systems instead of promoting collaboration. There are further consequences in that there is a steady erosion of commitment from front line managers who end up feeling cynical and despairing. There was no doubt of the impacting external forces which senior management had no control over. Clearly Judith had high

expectations of her managers and felt disappointed at their apparent strategic inabilities to anticipate future events and protect their front line teams.

However, more openness and the ability to work through the pain of the events would have served staff better. Two additional themes in these extracts are how secrecy hides shame, both on the part of Judith for being admitted to hospital and the senior management for having to close the service. For some reason it was impossible for either party to admit to what they were ashamed of. The service seemed unable to tolerate an admission of physical weakness, or inability to perform its task. If this was possible some healing and reparation might have taken place.

In the following chapter I look more closely at how these events impact on the manager's relationship as a management couple.

Introduction

The prospect of Bromyard's closure put an enormous strain on relationships within and outside the team. This included but was not exclusive to the relationship between Judith and Verna. This section seeks to look in some detail at the content of the final individual consultation interviews with Judith and Verna following the project's closure. Again I have selected material where I felt emotionally stirred and experienced countertransference responses. My prime focus will be to discuss what took place between Judith and Verna. I will also highlight the part played by others during this period. In Judith's final interview she was very angry about how she had been dealt with by the organisation the consultation interview provided a space for her to express the personal and professional impact of the closure. On reflection I think she felt freer, because she felt she had 'nothing to lose' at this point.

The Context

As project and deputy managers, Judith and Verna were expected to lead a team of practitioners who undertook complex parenting assessments on behalf of the local authority. These assessments were used as evidence in care proceedings, or to inform child protection plans in safeguarding cases. The centre also provided a contact service where parents would be supervised whilst having contact with their children in cases where the child(ren) were not living at home with birth parents and were looked after by the local authority. The team was fairly large and made up of qualified and unqualified social work practitioners and a project administrator. The team was also ethnically diverse and included practitioners from Africa, the Caribbean, the Middle East and the United Kingdom. There were only two men working at the project. The team experienced a series of changes in terms of personnel and their profile in the borough. There had been staff departures and new arrivals: Verna was the new DM, but there was also a new senior social worker, a family support worker and a temporary project administrator.

In the course of the research it emerged that Bromyard had been through some difficult periods and its reputation had suffered. The local authority had expressed concerns and were dissatisfied with the content, standard and recommendations of assessment reports

for the court. However, this situation had greatly improved as far as Judith was concerned. She felt that the team had produced good evidenced-based family assessments with high sensitivity and attention to the needs of black and minority ethnic children and families. There were also two other sister projects in the borough, and whilst relationships between the projects were relatively good overall there were clearly underlying tensions. Judith often felt that those teams received better support from senior management and greater opportunities locally to undertake more creative and interesting work, whilst at Bromyard they were left with more difficult and challenging work.

What were they managing?

Shortly before I started the research, Bromyard received external consultancy which resulted in a 'plan of action' for the future. The plan included: strategic considerations which took account of the likely changes to the physical location of the project, the team and how those changes would be managed. The plans were graphically symbolised by a fast vehicle moving forward, and this impressive diagram was placed on the wall of the first floor corridor where the staff offices were located. This was a graphic reminder to the team of where they were headed. The managers of the team were also responsible for providing containment as the 'changes' ahead would give rise to anxieties and uncertainties, which related to broader social and economic contexts.

The Broader Context

Eric Miller's work looks closely at our identities in terms of our work roles, and how much change in post-modern organisations has impacted on our sense of self and identity in role. He suggests that in Western societies the work role has become a dominant identity, and this enhances one's pride, satisfaction and self-esteem (Miller, 2002). Miller explores the meaning of our sense of identity in relation to employment, and traces this back to events at the beginning of the 1980s, when the UK and much of Europe went through a serious recession. The recession shattered the myth of full employment and job security. Employing institutions were no longer reliable and dependable. OPUS (Organisation for Promoting Understanding of Society) diagnosed what they called 'failed dependency,' which also produced a widespread psychological withdrawal and retreat from institutions.

During the final consultation interview with Judith she spoke at length about how the project's closure had impacted upon her and expressed feelings which illustrated this idea of failed dependency. Miller described feelings of 'rejection' by the organisation and 'persecution' particularly from peers. Judith experienced this from the project managers of the other two projects – who were clearly unhappy with how the closure was being managed by Judith and her team. The sister project managers challenged Judith about unwanted items from Bromyard being 'dumped' on their projects, such as staff. Judith's sense of abandonment derived particularly from Maggie, her line manager, who she felt had not supported her sufficiently, and also the organisation, which she felt had not taken care of her interests or made provisions for her. She felt betrayed, 'undervalued' and 'unappreciated.'

By the mid-1980s there was a temporary boom and unemployment figures went down (Miller, 2002). This instilled hope in some but others remained cautious and a further recession began again in 1989 which extended throughout Europe. Long-term unemployment reached its highest levels and as a consequence the nation experienced the 'widespread phenomenon of psychological withdrawal of employees from their employing organisation and the substitution of a much more instrumental relationship.' (Miller, 2002: 84). The 'instrumental relationship' between employer and employee became less dependent. He suggested that the relationship turned more into a 'conscious compliance,' as the power of trade unions diminished. For those who were traumatised by losing their jobs, life seemed to lose its meaning. Employment identities were fused with the self. On the other hand those who developed more instrumental relationships were less 'locked' in dependency and more able to make more use of their own authority.

In terms of the social work profession the movement towards a more instrumental relationship led to an exponential increase in the numbers of independent social workers as they sought more control over their lives. Social work agencies offered further growth, more control and freedom to move around at will. The notion of freedom and control protected workers from being rejected by their employers. Now workers had the power to reject employers if dissatisfied. This state of affairs contributed to an overall environment of uncertainty in terms of managing and providing front line services and impacted greatly on the challenges of leadership. Cooper and Lousada (2005) suggest that managers

operating in circumstances of remorseless uncertainty struggle to feel secure and think about their relationships with others.

The following quote gives an apt description of what we face in post-modern organisations today:

'the post-modern organisation is thus like walking across a trapeze. Facing greater market risks, the enterprise asks its employees to be more open and vulnerable to one another. But in becoming more vulnerable, people compound their sense of risk. They are threatened from without and within … thus the stage is set for a more primitive psychology. Individuals question their own competence and their ability to act autonomously. In consequence just when they need to build a more sophisticated psychological culture, they inadvertently create a more primitive one.' (Hirshchorn, 1997: 27)

The 'primitive psychology' referred to in this quote has particular significance in terms of the responses I observed at Bromyard. As they moved toward the closure of the project, staff felt more vulnerable and out of control, which resulted in basic assumption behaviour. The following data extracts describe something of the emergent primitive behaviour in the relationship between Judith and Verna, particularly in Judith's case. Whilst these responses were quite ordinary and in fact quite understandable, I experienced several countertransference responses which are worthy of further exploration.

The Data

There were three distinct phases in the relationship between the two managers:

- Phase I was characterised by a portrayed unity as a 'management pair' –their stated mission was to get the team and the service 'back on track'

- In phase II Verna began to make increasing sense of her new role and management style, how this differed from Judith's was allowed to blossom in Judith's absence

- In phase III both managers were able to think about what they had been through in terms of the project's closure and where it left them professionally and personally. Judith was particularly critical of the organisation and her line manager, but she was also critical of Verna and shared how unsupported she felt

Whilst Verna was equally critical of the organisation, she was more careful and guarded about her relationship with Judith. This was almost 'coded' in her communication during the final interview, which focused on what she was 'left' with from her experiences at Bromyard. At the time of the final interview Verna had moved on and turned her attention to what she was currently experiencing. She was more hopeful, and highlighted her relative optimism about what lay ahead in terms of her future in the organisation.

Phase I – Management Unity

At the beginning of the research Judith and Verna portrayed a definite sense of unity. I was not sure at this stage whether the 'management team' included the senior practitioners, of which there were two, but it was clear to me that both Judith and Verna were in agreement about the challenges in the team. They were particularly keen to strengthen the 'systems and processes' and Judith was concerned about the apparent breakdown of various internal administrative systems. This phase in the managers' relationship appeared similar to what Bion (1948b) called basic assumption pairing, and is based on the collective unconscious belief that whatever the actual problems and needs of the group future event will solve them. In the case of Bromyard, the managers felt that there were some issues within the team, but now there were two competent managers in place i.e. they would 'turn the situation around'.

The team's away day (which is discussed more extensively in 5.1) took place in this initial phase of the managers' relationship and was seen as an event which would bring about a new commitment by the team to its core task. In the case of the Bromyard managers, there seemed to be an underlying anxiety about how they were going to manage their team together. Bion (1948b) suggested that a group's focus on the future is sometimes a defence against the difficulties of the present.

The managers were concerned about practice, and in an earlier consultation interview (Feb – Extract 12) Verna shared that she hoped my observations would put them more in touch with how service users experienced parenting assessments. Judith felt that the staff were often very 'critical' of families being assessed, but themselves struggled to complete even primary tasks in relation to the work, as described in the previous section where Judith was frustrated with the breakdown of internal administrative systems and the misuse of office equipment.

During another site visit in March (Extract 39), as the managers prepared their lunches in the kitchen, I observed Verna caringly replace Judith's fallen hair band. I noted this in my research journal, 'that it was like watching a married couple.' I also thought about how 'caring' these two were towards each other and wondered how the other team members (four of whom were present at the time) viewed this.

On reflection however, this relationship may have been somewhat idealised. In early interviews Judith was openly critical of the previous deputy, who she felt had sabotaged management decisions. In Judith's view, she was clearly overwhelmed by the management role and associated tasks. In contrast Verna was described as 'brilliant.' Judith seemed to identify strongly with Verna, and conveyed a more optimistic sense that all of the team's future service development plans would now be achieved. This strong identification could also be linked to gender and ethnicity, in that Verna was also a black woman, who seemed to hold similar aspirations and values to Judith. The union seemed to offer the opportunity for a 'fresh start.'

In the consultation interview in May 05, when the managers disclosed the project's closure, they also presented as united. Their alliance centred on coping with what was going to happen and their 'intention' to face this event as 'sisters together.' In the same interview they spoke with much agreement and passion about the good work the project was doing, where they felt they had taken on more complex cases than their sister projects, and had received no complaints from the courts about their assessment reports. They thought this was a great improvement on what had existed previously. There were strong parallels in this phase of their relationship, which had gone through its initial honeymoon period of hope and excitement. However their relationship was greatly tested with Judith's illness and the announced project closure. The initial unity and determination was eroded and the relationship entered a new phase.

Phase II – 'Fault Lines'

In the early stages of the research Verna seemed to use her interviews to think about a range of issues in relation to the team's core task. During the second phase she began to show signs of 'independent thinking' about the team's functioning. In the March interview session Verna spoke about the core task in terms of making use of feelings and emotions as a learning tool to be explored in supervision, and in the same interview she

moved on to discuss how family dynamics were played out in the Bromyard team. She spoke about how in her current role she would often reflect on her own parenting capacity and how one's own family issues greatly impacted on the core task of assessing parents' capacities.

Verna's degree of insight and learning from her experiences seemed to concur with how practitioners attempted to form a greater understanding of their work and its impact on service users. During that same interview we also discussed my researcher role, as I sought to negotiate future research activities and tasks. More specifically Verna began to share something of her new role and it is this aspect I wish to explore. Verna began to discuss more openly and freely what she felt were the differences in management styles between Judith and herself. Whilst these differences might be considered natural in terms of the dynamics between the two individual managers, I think Verna's comments were early indicators of her covert critique of Judith's management style, namely that she felt Judith's approach was too maternal, and in her view encouraged dependency:

'I think that is when it starts to come out … before I started in October I couldn't see that, I suppose that was part of me inducting myself in the job … what I very quickly picked up on is that there is a kind of maternal kind of managing going on … and I wasn't sure about that at the start. I think they (the team) were taking something but there is another side to us as well which I think we talked about before, this whole mothering kind of role where they take but they don't give back, well I suppose it's like children really … I started to think to myself what is it, have I totally (understood) got the paternal role, because people were having different experiences? Well I suppose at the beginning when I came here, I was very much standing back checking it out not. Staff were not really having very much to do with me because I was the new person in, then I just thought 'ok' and then I don't think that has changed much because I think there is a nurturing. I think we have different characteristics. We all have different ways of doing this and there is a nurturing aspect in the character of our manager as well … and I suppose in me I have a balance of offering nurture but I also have … very much a kind of empowerment approach … where I want them to go seek, try out, come back and tell me how it felt …' (Verna's MCI, March)

This extract indicates something of how in Verna view Judith's management approach to the team and hers differed. The content also shows how Verna felt the team were making use of Judith's management style. These were early indications of the 'fault lines' in the managers' relationship. There was naturally an effort at the beginning of the relationship to appear unified, and this unity was not confined to their professional roles but also through racial identification. As a black manager myself, I strongly identified with this dyad and to some extent 'joined' the management team. This position felt comfortable and familiar, as implicit in our unity was the notion that as black managers leading teams, made up of predominantly white staff, it was 'inevitable' that we would encounter challenges to our positions, questions about our competency and our ability to do the job. Also underpinning our apparent unity were self-doubts and anxiety.

Our apparent alliances (in terms of gender, ethnicity and culture) overlooked the inherent 'differences' we shared as people. Relationships generally develop steadily and grow to the satisfaction of the persons involved, until of course they are subjected to pressures and/or encounter difficult challenges. This is when pre-existing fault lines in relationships and differences begin to emerge. Dalal (2002) tracks how multiculturalism, anti-racism and 'diversity' have emerged from the philosophy of liberalism. Whilst the paper is essentially a discussion about how the various schools of psychotherapy and psychoanalysis tend to be intolerant of each other's world views and practices, I found some resonance with what he says about the illusionary nature of unity and culture, and how upon deeper probing this unity' disintegrates. Dalal goes on to say that: 'It is not the case that cultures are homogeneous entities, but organisations of power relationships which are constantly being contested from within and without.' I believe this was what I observed in the managers' relationship, where at first there was a perceived unity based on shared identities, but as pressures increased, diversity and differences emerged.

One such difference arose in a discussion about the treatment of Henry, the black African male senior practitioner. In her final interview Judith shared some thoughts about the relationship between Verna and Henry. Judith felt that Verna's dual heritage background of black African and white British may have affected her treatment of him, which she felt was harsh. The issue of Verna's ethnicity had not previously been discussed by Judith, Verna nor I. Judith felt that Verna was often 'too hard' on Henry, and would harshly respond to him in professional meetings. Judith felt that Verna was quite impatient with

him as she felt he was not assertive enough. Judith concluded that Verna's attitude toward Henry maybe related to some unresolved personal issues, and implied that Verna's irritation and agitation with Henry's somewhat passive attitude was linked to Verna's own expectations of African males. Phase II of managers' relationship seemed to be characterised by these fault lines.

Phase III

The Context

In looking at phase III of the managers' relationship, I return to the primary data. The following material comes from the final individual consultation interviews with both managers. The managers were asked: 'Now that Bromyard has closed, in your professional role as a manager, could you speak about your experience of the news of the closure, where this has left you and where it is taking you.' The interview sessions took place at their respective new locations. Verna the deputy was based in one of the sister projects, and Judith had been asked to undertake some 'tying up of loose ends' for the organisation at Head Office related to the project's closure. She had no clear idea where she would be going next or indeed if there was another position available for her.

Verna's final MCI (August)

Verna's interview was not recorded at her request so the following has been taken from my research journal. Verna had only been in her new position for a short time and started the interview by telling me how positive she felt about her new role. She saw it as an opportunity to learn more about management. She was also encouraged by her managers to continue her training and was told that there would be potential management opportunities for her in the future. Verna also talked about how the Bromyard staff had been shared between the sister projects. Some staff had moved on, and some had been placed in this project with her, where she continued to supervise them. In terms of Bromyard's work this too had been shared between the sister projects. The following account clearly had an impact on Verna and seemed to symbolise the emotional consequences of the change.

'For the first two weeks, this 10 month old baby cried throughout her contact sessions at the new centre – she had clearly been affected by the changes – she'd been having contact at Bromyard since she was born, her level of distress was so disturbing, staff (at the new

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centre) wanted me to intervene, as they wondered whether her distress was to do with the carer. I had to tell them that the baby knew her carer very well.'

For Verna the baby's distress seemed to communicate the inadequacy of the organisation's response to the emotional impact of the closure. In the same interview Verna was quite careful about not being openly critical of Judith. She shared her observations that there had been some 'withdrawal' on Judith's part during the closure process. Verna did not specifically mention Judith. Her comments were more considered in relation to Judith, and on reflection perhaps issues of loyalty to Judith assumed prominence which was less the case for the SM Maggie whom she was more openly critical o, and the senior management team (SMT). She felt that as project managers they received very little direction and guidance from Maggie, and she found senior management 'lacking,' in terms of their support. Verna suspected that the SMT had not been assertive enough with the commissioners about how the project closure process should be conducted. Consequently they were given eight weeks for the closure, which was wholly inadequate in her view. Verna stated that the organisation's policy around the closure of projects – a six month planned closure – was advised. Eight weeks was just not been feasible and had placed enormous pressures on 'staff.' She went on to comment that 'various people' withdrew from the process, leaving her alone to manage what felt quite unmanageable, practically and emotionally.

In this final interview Verna also expressed disappointment, sadness and regret about not being able to pursue the goals she and Judith were so keen to achieve. She had come to Bromyard having previously experienced another project closure and had hoped for a 'new start' in what was her first management position. Instead she had to deal with yet another closure.

Judith's final MCI (August)

Judith's interview was audio recorded. I listened to and summarized the content. The question to Judith was: 'Now that the project has closed, in your professional role as a manager, could you speak about your experience of the news of the closure, where this has left you and where it is taking you.'

Judith began the interview by seeking to clarify several issues about this research project. She stated that Verna and Maggie had expressed concerns about who was going to see this research and where it would be located. She said there were some concerns (unclear from whom exactly) about the 'frank' discussions which had taken place between the managers and I, and who would be likely to have access to the research findings. There were fears and anxieties about the organisation's brand. This was a very real issue in the current climate, particularly as the organisation competed alongside others for local government tenders and contracts. There was understandably some concern about the potential 'damages' to reputation if public relations were not tightly managed. As a researcher the issue of the organisation's brand and the potential for controversy troubled me, which was discussed in chapter three. Judith also asked if she could have access to the research once it was completed, even though she no longer worked for the organisation. She asked whether she would have 'rights' of access and veto, although she did not state this openly. I explained to Judith that she could have access to the thesis as it was a piece of work for the course. I also assured her that the research would be completely anonymised, and upon completion would be stored and available in the college library only. Judith seemed satisfied with my assurances and we were able to progress with the interview.

She continued by focusing on the process of the closure during the final two weeks. She seemed to be holding onto anger, hostility, resentment and great disappointment about how the closure had been managed. Judith was critical of everyone around her professionally: her staff, Verna her deputy, Maggie her line manager, her peers (the other two project managers from the sister projects) and the organisation.

Her Staff - Judith seemed annoyed that her team had not been through enough in their departure from the Bromyard building and had left several things undone. She started by being critical of Henry the senior social worker, who had not even cleared his office upon his departure. Judith stated that he had been with the team for three years but in all that time had not even cleared away his predecessor's things. Judith had found personal feminine items in Henry's office which could not have been his. She also added that as she went around the building she found other items that staff could have taken to their new projects, which had been left behind because they couldn't be bothered. Judith seemed to take these actions very personally and interpreted them as neglectful and

uncaring of the project and her leadership. Judith also stated that no one had helped her to pack apart from the cleaner.

Her Deputy – Judith turned her attention to Verna and began by sharing how difficult their relationship had become over the weeks leading up to the closure. She accused Verna of having a 'couldn't care less' attitude towards the Bromyard and the items for disposal (furniture and equipment etc.). Judith was also annoyed because Verna had disposed of items which belonged to her without any prior consultation. She felt aggrieved that whilst she was off sick, Verna had telephoned her far too often in a 'highly strung' state, concerning closure issues. Judith also went onto share how she had used Verna's final appraisal to feed back to her issues of concern in relation to her role in the team. Judith shared that she had had a frank exchange with Verna about her lack of support as her deputy during this difficult time. She told Verna she had hoped that she would have acted as her link to the team in terms of alerting her to what was going on (almost her eyes and ears). She had also communicated to Verna that her actions had been divisive in terms of her collusion with some of the team members. She referred specifically to Nicola – one of the project workers – who had issues in the past accepting Judith's management decisions, and who had not always been 'transparent and open' in her work. On occasion Nicola had not completed actions as agreed in supervision which had led to Judith not trusting her. Verna had responded to this feedback by saying that Judith had not been able to see what was happening in the team. Judith's response was that she had been preoccupied with the closure issues, and she had expected Verna to have alerted her to what was 'going on.'

Her Line Manager – Judith said that a party for service users was held to mark the project's closure. This event was also attended by staff and Maggie, their line manager. Judith was not impressed that Maggie could not bring herself to make an 'appreciation speech' about the closure. Judith stated that she hadn't expected Maggie to go into detail about why Bromyard was being closed, but she had thought Maggie would have shared with those attending the party some of the circumstances. Apparently Maggie had left the party, leaving Judith to deliver the farewell speech. Again Judith viewed her behaviour as 'opting out' and unsupportive.

Her Peers – Judith was angered by the speed with which her team members were transferred from Bromyard to other sister projects. She felt the transition had been far too swift, not a smooth process, leaving her 'alone' to clear up lots of 'loose ends.' This led Judith to speaking about the two managers of the other sister projects. She found these managers extremely insensitive about the closure, and blamed her for the resulting difficulties. Judith had interactions with both managers (her peers) whom she described as irritable and almost hostile in their responses to her. She felt her peers lacked an appreciation of the difficulties she was experiencing, and instead sought to 'pile on' the pressure. There were two issues in particular which caused conflict: firstly one of the sister projects had allocated new cases to Judith's old staff, and Judith felt aggrieved that the manager in question had sought to hold her accountable for the lack of progress being made. Judith then shared that the second project manager had been quite hostile towards her about boxes and desks which had been 'left' at 'her project,' which had not been cleared out properly. To add insult to injury, this particular manager began to bring up historical issues from Bromyard's past, and went on to state that this was 'typical' of how Bromyard operated. Judith protested that a two week closure period was quite unrealistic and she received very little understanding and sympathy from her peers.

The Organisation – Judith commented on the 'pathetic' and 'meaningless' farewell card and party she had received from the organisation and her peers, and the uncaring way her departure had been handled. She went as far as to say that she had been treated 'appallingly.' She was particularly aggrieved about her final appraisal and the fact that Maggie could only muster up 'twenty-eight words' of commentary about her progress and performance – most of which had been paraphrased from Judith's own reflective comments in the same document. She felt they had been 'really mismanaged' and that 'she singularly' had been the only 'casualty' of the whole closure process. Had it not been for the intervention of two senior managers, who invited her to undertake some freelance work for another project, she would not consider doing further work for the organisation in the future.

I suggested to Judith that perhaps she and Verna had not known each other for long enough to have established the kind of 'partnership' she envisioned. Judith partly accepted my comments but not entirely. She felt Verna had become increasingly more 'guarded' and evasive in her attitude toward the end of Bromyard's life. Judith stated that

when she discussed this behaviour with Verna, her response was that she needed to 'process' all that had been happening in terms of the closure and the team dynamics, which may have impacted on her ability to share with Judith what was going on. Judith however did not entirely accept Verna's need to 'process' and stated that she had asked Verna to put herself in the role of manager and ask herself how might she feel if she were in the dark. Judith felt that it was important for Verna to hear this feedback as it would assist in her future development.

Analysis

- *Level I* – There was an overall sense of deterioration in the relationship between the managers towards the end of the project's life. What comes across vividly are Judith's feelings of being let down by: Verna, her peers, Maggie and the organisation at large. She thought Verna should have been her 'eyes and ears.' Judith used Verna's appraisal to communicate her disappointment. She did not seem to accept Verna's need to 'process' all that had been going on, and expected her line manager to show more demonstrably how her contribution had 'made a difference' and how much she was appreciated by the wider organisation. Judith felt this feedback was sorely lacking during her own appraisal, and this was coupled with Maggie's inability to thank her at their closing party. She also expressed disappointment with the response from her peers who had sent her a 'pathetic' leaving card, and she thought had been quite hostile and critical of her in casework and staffing issues.

- *Level II* – The emergent data leads to the question of how supported Verna felt by Judith towards the end of Bromyard's life. How much had Judith been able to take on board that her team needed her to 'lead'? Judith seemed withdrawn from the project and the team, and apparently had little appreciation of Verna's plight in having to manage the closure almost single-handedly. But Judith had expectations of loyalty from Verna. I found my countertransference responses toward Verna and Judith to be quite different. I felt sympathetic toward Verna's efforts to remain composed and objective, yet quite irritated by Judith's anger.

It seemed to me that during our interview Verna had tried quite hard to remain loyal toward Judith and spoke in almost coded terms about what had been happening in the

final days of the project, masking what may have been her anger, whereas Judith used her reflection space to express all that she felt about the situation and colleagues. Maggie was not interviewed as part of this study, but the material suggests that that she felt overwhelmed by Judith's powerful projections, which may have led her to withdraw from any meaningful engagement with the process of closure.

- *Level III* – Maggie's absence left both managers with no real opportunities to 'off load' feelings of anxiety directly to the senior management team, during this period leaving the MCI's as the only available space for the managers of the project. My role again served a dual purpose: firstly, one of enquiry in terms of the research task in seeking to understand and learn more about the unconscious processes at play; and secondly, as a receptacle and container of the anxieties felt by the managers about the project's closure.

Summary & Reflections

This section sought to track and examine the process by which the management team's relationships changed. The managers started their relationship with such hopes and aspirations in terms of turning the project around, and they set about the task collaboratively and in unity. When their unity was tested, with the imminent closure of the project, they had parallel experiences in that Maggie the senior manager did not provide support for Judith and in turn Judith did not support Verna. Hutton (1997: 77) uses several short case studies to illustrate the importance of leaders/managers working at the boundary so as to see more clearly what is going on. She states that 'unless management is functioning effectively on the boundary, the pressures from the outside flood uncontrollably and disrupt the transformation processes within the system.' The centrality of reflective thinking is also stressed as a management function not only in obvious tasks such as: planning, forecasting, decision making etc. but also where the manager becomes fully in touch with the forces and pressures both from within themselves and without, which are affecting them. Hutton describes this as the 'organisation-in-the-mind'. In supervision my research supervisors sought to apply some of these psychoanalytic ideas to the sense making of the managers and the significance of the project's closure. In doing so useful metaphors have emerged which allow further insights into what has taken place in the management couple.

A powerful metaphor emerged around 'loss and grief'. The project manager's situation seem to mirror that of a couple who had lost their baby, and were left with feelings of anger, blame and guilt. This would inevitably have a negative impact on a relationship, and the relationship of the Bromyard's management couple suffered a similar fate.

Another bitter disappointment for the management couple was the great personal investment they both made in the project. Upon initially meeting Judith and later Verna I had a real sense that they had great hopes for Bromyard. There was an almost Obama-like sense of hope as two black female managers had high aspirations of what could be achieved, and they were encouraged by the work they had done with a consultant. They had hopes of turning Bromyard into a centre of excellence. There was a real sense that my being black, female and an experienced manager meant that there would be a greater understanding of the issues and little need to explain some of the challenges they faced. I too felt relieved that Judith was positive about my research and comforted that both managers viewed me as an ally and not with hostility, as this would have benefits for the research process. The positive engagement with these managers also brought about an early alliance with them as research participants and a sense of loyalty on my part continued beyond the research process. This impacted on my ability to take a meta-position in seeking to make sense of the research data.

A further reflection concerns Bromyard's primary task in relation to assessing parental capacity. As described earlier, the role of the Bromyard team was to undertake complex parenting assessments where there were concerns about parents' capacity to care for their children. The team were responsible for making recommendations in safeguarding conferences or care proceedings after a period of assessment and would recommend that the children should remain/return to or be removed from their parents' care. Judith took great pride in sharing how much progress had been made since she took over the leadership of the project, and how service users who came from diverse backgrounds were getting a much improved service because of the expertise now present. *How could they close Bromyard and not one of the other projects?* Was Judith's question. Her anger was quite palpable, not unlike the bereaved parent who asks 'why me/us?' Judith had made a great personal investment. She had cared for her staff, rebuilt a failing project, developed expertise around working with diverse families, and this was how she had been repaid for her loyalty and commitment. Judith was understandably bitter and harboured a

sense of injustice which was deeply affected by her treatment before, during and following the closure of Bromyard. Her hopes for the future were now dashed and she was left with only eight weeks to dispose of a project within which she had invested so much. In terms of the Bromyard centre's closure, the management couple's experience somewhat mirrored that of her parents who had been assessed, and despite their best efforts they failed to deliver adequate care for their children. As a consequence they lost their parental rights. This whole experience was really traumatic for parents who felt they had done all that was asked of them but were still deemed not good enough to care for their children. Judith in particular clearly experienced feelings of trauma and quite possibly shame about the project's closure. There were also mutual recriminations between the managers – expressed in the consultation sessions and towards the end of the projects life. This became more evident in the managers' relationship during that difficult period. Judith blamed her deputy for not being her 'eyes and ears' during the closure process, and accused Verna of not supporting her sufficiently. Verna on the other hand conveyed a sense of being left to manage the closure alone with little support from either Judith or their service manager.

It seems not unreasonable to suggest that the Bromyard's closure left Judith in with a powerful sense of personal failure. She may have had many internal questions about what she might have done differently. *Had she not managed resources effectively? Was the quality of the team's work in question? Had she not managed her team effectively?* No matter how rational the reasons for the decision to close the project, these nagging internal questions would have been a source of tremendous anxiety for Judith. The local authority had to make cost savings and the organisation needed to maintain a presence within with at least two if not all three of their projects. These were the facts. However the ensuing anxieties relating to the closure of the project were displaced within the management system primarily via the management couple relationship.

Judith in particular found it difficult to process her experiences and made use of the management consultation sessions to express her feelings. There seemed to be little space within the system to support and contain these managers through this process. They were given an eight week timeframe within which to close the project when the organisation's policy procedures clearly prescribed a six month period as minimum period. This left the managers with little time to make all the new arrangements and even less time to come to

terms with the closure at a psychological and emotional level. The consultation sessions offered the managers a containing space to express their feelings about the closure, but also how they felt about each other. Lucey (2010) discusses whether containment is possible in contemporary organisations. She discusses Bion's (1970) definition of containment – the conversion of raw emotion or experience into meaning through a process of engagement between people – to argue that in contemporary organisations without a space to make sense of one's experiences it is an increasingly unsustainable position. In reviewing this data it was apparent that the researcher played the role of container for these managers, perhaps because there was an absence of this function within the organisation.

Finally, I would like to spend a little time discussing an additional emergent aspect of the data, that of my own internal struggle with writing this thesis. The managers placed their mutual trust in me as I took on an almost supervisor/therapist role and struggled to maintain their relationships toward the end of the project's life. Whilst I have gone to appropriate lengths to change various details about the participants I am acutely aware of being critical of them and feel very concerned about betraying their trust. Both managers used the consultation sessions to express thoughts about what was taking place between them the wider organisation. There were moments when I was certain that neither had shared all their thoughts and feelings with each other, but shared more with me as the outsider, and therefore I had to 'hold' this material. I hope that with the passage of time, should either of these colleagues read my analysis, they will not feel unduly criticised but may value my attempts to make sense of what was taking place and will feel that I have been fair in my analysis of the circumstances.

Chapter Six

Discussion & Findings

Introduction

Introduction

In Part One I discuss generally what was uncovered in this research project, I discuss the challenges faced as a researcher, my regrets and what I might have done differently. Section two I present more specifically my research and what I have learnt in relation to the data. Finally, I make recommendations for management practice and further research in this area.

Part One
What was achieved in this research?
Overview

In Chapter 1 I described my professional journey and what drove me to pursue this research study. Chapter 2 describes the research site, the process of gaining access to the research participants and the ethical considerations. In Chapter 3 I reviewed the relevant literature and the theories that have underpinned this research. Chapter 4 discusses my methodology and the research design, and in Chapter 5 four vignettes were presented and analyzed: the 'Away Day', 'The Black Male Service User', 'Secrets, Secrets' and lastly, 'The Management Couple'.

The data involving the black male service user had a particularly transformative impact on my learning, as insights surfaced from memories of my previous experiences and they remain extremely powerful.

Getting through my research journey

This thesis has been a personal journey in terms of my seeking to develop a deeper understanding of my experiences as a front line manager through observation and engagement with the experiences of my research participants. In addition to the academic

material I have also referred to my many years of professional experience and intuition.

However, the psychoanalytic concepts and ideas which I used to make sense of the data presented some very real intellectual challenges, particularly as I continued to practice in a predominantly performance and evidence-based environment in my day job

underpinned by the illusion of objectivity and certainty, and little account of unconscious processes is taken and the predominance of outcomes based on evidence are seen to represent truth.

This approach had also been a source of worry to me as a researcher; I often wondered whether use of psychoanalytic concepts would not have been better suited to patient/therapist research. These concerns undoubtedly accounted for a more painstaking process of sense making from the data. Additionally whilst this approach did not provide neat and tidy responses, it did however engage my supervisors, my research group and I in collaborative, thoughtful and creative dialogue, rich in description and depth about the data and I am now confident of the tremendous value in using this approach as we sought to look beneath the surface of the emergent data material.

The unexpected closure of Bromyard and the opportunities for further exploration of the first line manager's emotional experiences was extremely valuable. The wider organisation seemed unable to think about the significant personal impact of these difficult changes upon staff members. Out of necessity, senior managers focused on how the wider organisation would survive these changes and what they could salvage from their existing service contracts with the local authority.

The research also required me to question and work through my uncertainties around the universal application, value and usefulness of what I discovered. Despite my initial uncertainties, I believe there is a place for these concepts in contemporary front line management practice, particularly as the role often involves complex human interactions and is not as Morrison (2007) describes, a set of technical competencies.

Contemporary front line management requires outcomes to be quantified. The dominance of this model struggles to appreciate the value of emotional experiences and unconscious processes, which are clearly a core aspect of all human functioning. This research enabled me to make use of psychoanalytic approaches, a rich source of theory on the unconscious, with it's emphasis on reflexivity, relationships and emotional content. This approach seemed incongruent with evidence and performance-based management practice models, but their use provided a complementary lens through which more thoughtful and rounded analysis of the emergent data could take place.

This approach also offered additional insight into the policy and political context impacting on the practice environment.

There has been an increasing emergence of texts published on emotional intelligence and leadership (Goleman, 2004; Boyatzis & McKee, 2005 and Morrison, 2007). Morrison discusses emotional intelligence in relation to social work and seeks to provide a commentary on the need to increase awareness and sensitivity to these issues within teams and organisations. One of my aims in this study was to discover whether further understanding of unconscious processes might provide for less toxic, more peaceful and less turbulent front line environments, where staff might be able to engage in more thoughtful and reflexive interactions.

The creation of 'thinking space'

Initially I was interested in looking at the dynamics between managers and their staff. I assumed that not unlike my own experiences I would observe projective processes and conflicts within the team because of the pressures of the work environment. My interests and curiosity emerged out of the sense of isolation I experienced as a front line manager, where I had little opportunity to think safely about and learn from my experiences. This research project enabled me to learn more about the management role from that boundary position.

Once the research began however, it became apparent that a space to think would be required by the project managers. Following discussion with my supervisor the management consultation interviews (MCIs) were included in the research design. The MCI's enabled me to get much closer to the managers in role and offered them a semi-structured space to reflect on their professional experiences.

Aspects of the data collection process posed challenges in the early stages of the research in terms of getting the consultation sessions established. Initially the managers appeared to be avoidant as they had forgotten about the sessions or had other competing priorities, their flight behaviour was not unlike that described in Bion's (1959b) basic assumption functioning. I managed to recover the situation following discussions with my supervisor, who advised that I seek a commitment from the managers and agree a focus for future MCI sessions. This was quickly achieved and we were able to agree times for future sessions, what the time would be used for, and reflect upon issues they were preoccupied with in their management roles.

The MCI sessions provided opportunities to share with the manager's insights gained

from my site observations. This was a space in which the managers could reflect upon and share their thoughts and preoccupations relating to their roles. The value of a space to think cannot be emphasised enough, which begs the question: do staff, managers and leaders need space to think so as to reduce the sense of isolation and enable the provision of effective and thoughtful leadership? Front line service environments continue to be very challenging places where workers and their managers seek to cover their backs for fear of making mistakes, being criticised and derided. Consequently workers are in an environment where suspicion, mistrust and quite possibly hatred of management (be it operational or senior) reigns. It is therefore essential that frontline managers be supported in untangling these work related anxieties. Cooper & Lees (2014) refer to the lack of a 'proper organisational outlet' in most contemporary human service organisations, where an open-ended narrative disclosure of thoughts and feelings may be expressed. Being psychoanalytically attuned as a researcher enabled me to think with the participants, about the subtleties of their experiences in role.

What were the challenges?

Site visits and research design

The purpose of the site observations was to get staff used to my presence in and around the project. Often I found myself questioning why I had position myself in the front office. There were several site visits when very little happened. My role felt awkward and not dissimilar to a baby observer who finds the baby asleep for an entire session.

During uneventful observations I found myself wondering and checking office systems such as: the staff movement board, to see who was in or out of the building; watching the CCTV monitor at the front entrance to the building; responding to questions from the curious project administrator who wanted to know what I was doing and what I was making of it all. From time to time I watched the duty worker make phone calls or type up a report. At these quieter moments I would worry about my research design and whether it was the most appropriate method. But as I persevered I was able to observe aspects of the team's life and maintain that the ethnographic observation method, whilst at times passive, is a useful means of getting a sense of the less tangible aspects of day-to-day functioning.

Absence of the service users' voices

It was my intention to observe some direct work with service users and I feel greatly

saddened that this research lacks the direct voice of service users,

however the advantage of this was that it enabled a clearer focus to the research in that the time remaining was focused on the project managers and their issues of concern.

Projections and containment

In embarking on this research journey I wanted to look more closely at projective processes, as these greatly impacted on me in my role as manager and were sources of great stress in my work. My aim was to achieve a deeper understanding of projective processes by observing the experiences of others in leadership roles. However it seemed difficult to take a passive role in this kind of research. I had to be prepared to be involved and very close to the research subjects/participants.

In the past organisations and institutions often felt restrictive, limiting and constraining, but they did nevertheless provide a sense of psychological and emotional containment for those within them (Obholzer, 1994). In today's environment, however, where service provision is driven by performance targets, outcomes and the marketisation of service delivery, containment has become increasingly devalued and relegated to the soft side   of

the management role. This has occurred in parallel with a shift away from relationship-based practice to more managerial approaches which have resulted in the further erosion of the container function of leadership.

The containment of powerful projections is extremely difficult. In the past my responses to projections felt wholly unsatisfactory. I wished to be more thoughtful, less personal and less persecutory. But I had not anticipated being such an active participant in the research process, where for instance I found myself harbouring feelings of irritation towards the staff member who sought to sabotage the away day; where I found myself colluding with the managers in relation to the black male service user; and where I was asked to keep secrets. Had the senior manager herself been in receipt of appropriate emotional support, I believe my role would not have changed from that of being purely a researcher to a container, and Judith might have been more able to provide the same for her staff and Verna.

As the front line of service provision seeks to survive professionally in today's challenging climate, brought about partly due to external pressures around funding, competing services, higher levels of need, deprivation, poverty and greater responsibilities, it is essential that we develop high quality supervisory support with containment at its core. This requires a shift in the prevailing view that emotional support for managers is a waste of valuable time. This task requires real emotional engagement and acknowledgement of what is involved in the leadership role and the heavy load it carries as a consequence. An absence of such engagement will see a continued emergence of a care-less environment where those responsible for providing and leading services feel overwhelmed, and resort to survival mode in which defences against anxiety continues to prevail.

Boundaries.

At the beginning of the fieldwork process I strongly identified with the project managers, due to our similarity in age, gender and race. These similarities were initially useful in terms of gaining trust, but as the research progressed I struggled to maintain my boundary as a researcher. During the fieldwork process my identification with the managers felt particularly prominent, as discussed in Chapter 5. In the section relating to the black male service user I described my identification with the managers, which led to our mutual

agreement regarding the Black male service user's unjust treatment.

I go onto describe that it was only after taking a step back from the material, and reflecting on it during the data review, that I recalled an experience from my own practice

and was able to arrive at an alternative understanding of the situation, which allowed me to see the child's needs more clearly.

This experience was particularly poignant and remains uncomfortable to think about, as it illustrates how preoccupations about race and ethnicity can sometimes polarise and obscure other important issues, such as a child being at risk of harm. The chapter also reflects upon my discomfort with feelings of having 'betrayed' my race. This experience provided further clarity on how issues of race and ethnicity impact on practice, which suggests we must find ways of speaking about these frightening and challenging issues, as to fear them puts vulnerable service users at risk and impairs our practice and judgments.

Project closure

The closure of Bromyard was a significant and unexpected event in the course of this research. I intended spending at least a year observing various aspects of the life of the team, but actually spent six months, as illustrated in the timeline. But the closure threatened to derail the research and whilst it reduced the time I was able to spend in the fieldwork phase, I was still able to work very closely alongside the managers during this devastating period. This experience was invaluable to the study as it enabled an in-depth exploration and analysis of the emotional strain this placed on the managers as individuals and their relationships. Judith was able to fully express her feelings with Verna being more reluctant to do so, as Judith perhaps feeling by this stage that she had less to loose.

The closure of the service was symptomatic in these times of austerity and uncertainty. The uncertainties contributed to an environment fraught with anxiety and turbulence for the managers and I was able to respond to this very real situation, which became the focus of the remaining period of my research. It would have been ludicrous for me to remain 'fixed' in the research process and not respond to these developing events. In research of this nature, one has to be prepared to change course in view of what one is confronted with so as to remain flexible to changes.

I started the research project interested in team dynamics, and specifically the content and quality of projective processes in response to pressure and stress on the front line. The original plans for achieving my research goals had to be adjusted whereby my researcher role had to include the provision of emotional support for the Bromyard managers. This

supportive function was a necessary one as the closure was a real event in the life of the team, which had to be responded to within the context of the research. From the point of the announcement of the closure, the project managers were understandably absorbed by the reality of this event and the emergent issues that ensued.

Our initial identification as black female managers seemed less important as the closure of the project started to preoccupy the group. In my role as researcher, I found I absorbed some of the projections that particularly inhabited Judith. She expressed her feelings of anger and betrayal by the organisation. The consultation interviews that took place following the announcement of Bromyard's closure also enabled Verna to share her views and thoughts about her transition to a sister project. Verna stated that she needed to process her experiences and was guarded about how she felt. Seemingly, my efforts to study projective processes from a distance brought me closer to projected anxieties.

Data selection

The data was drawn primarily from interviews with Judith and Verna, site observations and journal entry extracts. The choice of material emerged from countertransference responses I experienced (Heimann, 1950) as I undertook research interviews and when I later reviewed the data. Throughout the data review process my prevailing concern was whether to use my countertransference responses as a valid data selection method tool. I had concerns about the subjective nature of the material, and often wondered as I selected data whether the themes emerging were not just my own issues, as opposed to significant themes arising from the data. Regular research supervision sessions provided a space for my own thinking and reflections in this regard. It is therefore essential that psychoanalytically driven research methods where unconscious processes are being explored and examined also retain a reflective space to untangle the emergent material. There is an established body of work in the area of organisational research and consultation where the use of countertransference responses are relied upon to assist the consultant to make sense of group and organisational dynamics.

Sullivan (2002) discusses countertransference and parallel processes as a new 'facet of organisational research and consultation,' and provides a historical review of its theoretical and methodological evolution and application. Sullivan cites Klein (1946) as

suggesting that projective identification was the primary mechanism of countertransference. Kleinians thought that countertransference was not only inevitable in the analytic situation but also inherent to all human interaction (Heimann, 1950, Money-Kyrle, 1956).

The paper goes onto suggest that rather than removing themselves from the research relationship, organisational researchers and consultants have begun to develop methods that both take account of their subjective experiences and use them to their advantage. In terms of this research, and the approach to analysing data, it was appropriate to make u s e

of my professional experiences throughout. Sullivan (2002) suggested that dynamics exist within the systems under study and often penetrate the boundaries of the relationship with the client, in my case as researcher and the management team.

As indicated in the methodology chapter, I engaged in reflection upon my role and practice as a frontline manager and my professional experiences have informed the analysis of data presented, by investigating the nuances of my reactions and their interplay with the transference and projections of the research participants. Sullivan (2002) suggests the need for 'self-scrutiny', this of course is challenging, and cannot be achieved as a lone researcher. Jung (1933) suggested, avoiding anxiety and strong emotion deprives the observer of an important of data and is influenced by the object of study nonetheless. I needed the collaborative input and support of my supervisors and the research group to assist with unravelling the subtleties contained in the data.

It was essential to remain in close connection with the research participants so as to gain a deeper understanding of the emotional challenges they faced in their professional lives, as the goal of qualitative research is to produce detailed accounts of lived experience. The emergent data in this research could not have been obtained from a survey or controlled group study.

I have sought not only to describe what took place in the data analysis phase of this research but to also include my responses to the material. Not to do so runs the risk of failing to notice ways in which one can collude with or avoid dynamics emanating from various interactions. In the analysis I have also tried to strike a balance between taking in projections from the research participants and guarding against enacting their influences in the analysis process.

I set out wanting to learn more about projections and how they manifested in relation to the management task. In my professional life toxic projections were painful experiences, to which my responses were frequently defensive and retaliatory. My objective in this research was therefore to make sense of my own experience by studying the experiences of others, and increase my capacity to respond thoughtfully and strengthen my resilience and my understanding of the difficult dynamics I would continue to experience.

Researching your own organisation.

At the time of undertaking this study I worked within the organisation in question, initially as a senior practitioner then as a front line manager. My progress within the organisation coincided with a struggle to think about how I would approach writing up the research findings. I was concerned about how I would maintain confidentiality around some of the personal material that emerged during data collection; I was concerned about the integrity of the study and worried about the potential response to my findings and I was also acutely aware of the impact of my professional role changes within the organisation.

In becoming the first line manager for a new project I developed a much deeper understanding of the wider organisation, what it sought to achieve and gained a much greater appreciation of the context within which the organisation operated: namely its reliance on winning tenders from the statutory sector for its core income with its task being, to survive. My outlook as a first line manager changed somewhat as I had more invested in the organisation and what it was trying to achieve.

The organisation faced tremendous challenges during this period and like many organisations in the third sector was very sensitive about its brand, in which there had been a lot of investment both financially and emotionally. The organisation wanted to control how it was perceived, and protect its name and reputation. These concerns hampered the completion of this work, and demonstrate the dilemmas inherent in undertaking research within one's own organisation. The researcher role in this context is pluralist. Despite these challenges, I have sought to be balanced, honest and fair in my account of the inherent challenges faced by these managers in role, and the organisation.

Regrets and New Opportunities

I have some regrets, firstly on a more practical level; the efficiency of my recording equipment was an issue, which presented difficulties. I used an ordinary cassette recorder, which was helpful but not always reliable when it came to playing back recordings. A digital recorder would have made transcribing verbatim a much simpler process. As it was, the persons I contracted to do the transcribing for me were able to retrieve most of the dialogue, to which I added any missed words, which I picked up on subsequently on my listening.

I also regret the fieldwork not continuing over a longer period and feel confident that had it done so, I would have gained greater insight into the teams functioning. Had the fieldwork continued I would like to have looked more closely at other aspects of the team's functioning, namely: staff relationships with the management team and the manager's quest to improve their internal systems. I suspected these themes might have produced further data around role tensions, resistance and change.

Nevertheless the changed focus provided new opportunities to observe unconscious defensive and projective processes as they emerged around the project's closure and I also gained rich data which and enabled thick description and deep analysis. Additionally, the research project itself was a source of containment and holding for the managers during this difficult period and afforded them with a safe space to share their thoughts and feelings about the circumstances within which they found themselves.

Part Two

Findings from the Data

The following will discuss what has been learnt specifically from the emergent data and finally recommendations for management practice and areas for further research.

Away Day

(1) Judith experienced anxiety in her role as Project Manager and actively sought support.

The away day was my earliest and only encounter with members of the entire team. Initially I

felt quite fortunate to have been invited by the managers to the event. I was later asked to lead the event and intuitively this felt inappropriate. On reflection this was probably an early indication of Judith's anxieties about the management of her team, and an early attempt to recruit me into the management system to support the managers in role. Judith had a sense of her team's anxieties and resistance. I sensed that she hoped my leading the event would lead to less resistance from the team. The troubled and troublesome staff member who spent her time acting out at the event was extraordinary to observe, and I concluded that she was possibly carrying resistance to the event on behalf of the team. There were clues about the team's ambivalence in some of the discussions I'd overheard earlier in the morning. The team's anxieties about the day were projected into the troubled staff member who in turn attempted to project her unwanted feelings into the manager, who was clearly stating she was not going to give the staff member permission to opt out.

Black Male Service User

(2) Tensions and difficulties around openly discussing and speaking about issues of race and discrimination can potentially cause a child to be at risk.

As the managers shared their account of the circumstances, the three of us powerfully identified with the service user. This identification obscured our understanding of the child's situation. Our identification with the service user seemed to stem from our own personal and professional experiences of feeling misunderstood and discriminated against by white society. The breakthrough for me as researcher was how I arrived at an alternative perspective. As I reviewed the data and began writing about it, an old memory from my own practice hit me. It was a memory of a verbal assault I received from a black male service user in the past, and how unaware of the subsequent risk to my own safety I had been. My unconscious denial of the danger on that occasion had a similar feel and quality to our collective denial of the potential danger and early warning signs in the current situation. The overriding message I gained from this data was the need for more confident open and honest dialogue regarding race issues in practice. We have to move to a less defensive position where we can openly express fear and concern and deconstruct what might lie beneath the surface of these feelings in our work. I am certainly encouraged by what I have observed amongst practitioners in recent years in terms of confidence to speak about race and diversity case issues. However, this needs to be an ongoing development, which seeks to speak about and become aware of unconscious defensive and projective processes in the midst of race and discriminatory issues in frontline management and practice.

Secrets, Secrets

(3) The absence of effective support for these frontline managers, led to deterioration in the internal and external communication channels.

In 'Secrets, secrets' I discuss the lack of containment for the managers and how this led to the use of secrets as a form of communicating anxiety and distress. This was evident when I was asked to keep secret Judith's hospital admission and subsequent sick leave, which left me confused as to why she would not share something of her planned hospital

admission with her deputy and the team. The managers were asked to withhold information about the project's closure from the wider team despite the uncertainties and anxieties about their future's, these anxieties in turn put tremendous strain on their relationship as managers and communication between them suffered greatly. I too was asked by the managers to withhold information about the closure, which meant I could only discuss the issue with the managers at the initial stages. Judith, the project manager was particularly affected by these events as she also bore the burden of not knowing her fate and this took a toll on her emotional wellbeing. The work of Smith (1997) and Obholzer (1974) suggests the absence of such support can lead to fragmentation, splitting and despair. Under these circumstances senior management seemed unable to provide the support needed at the time.

(4) The inextricable link between role performance and organisational survival caused strain upon and erosion of the management teams relationship.

The relationship between the management couple seemed to deteriorate under the strain caused by the immanent closure of Bromyard. Judith and Verna went through three phases; initially they presented as a dynamic duo intent on building a strong and effective team, then Verna began to gain a sense of her own management style and how it differed from Judith's approach, and finally their relationship became more strained as they were told of the project's closure. During this final phase I saw the management couple fragment and split, with Judith becoming increasingly cynical and disappointed.

The consultation sessions offered both managers the space to process their emotional responses to the closure and ensuing relationship dynamics. Judith, who had been offered no new position, was critical of and angry with her senior manager(s), her deputy and her team.

Verna, whilst critical of the organisation, was more cautious about being critical of her line manager and told me that she needed to process her experiences. She spoke in almost coded terms during our final MCI sessions. Judith's criticisms of Verna were that she had not been open about what was going on in the team during her absence. Verna felt abandoned and left to get on with the bulk of the arrangements for the closure. Judith felt that Verna should have been her eyes and ears, but Verna thought she needed to be thinking about her own future and what was going to be her next step.

This data emerged in the context of an organisation seeking to survive, where anxieties about an organisation's longevity were constant. In today's marketised and managerialist environment survival is highly dependent on performance i.e. achieving targets and outcomes by which teams are measured. There is an ever-present threat of consequences for teams who do not achieve goals. For the Bromyard team the greatest fear materialised when the project's closure was announced. This overshadowed all that had been planned and left the management team struggling with the emotional strain of the closure. Judith being the only one left with no new position

in the organisation's reconfiguration further compounded this.

Conclusions & Reflections

In answer to the initial question of this study, to what extent does the recognition and understanding of unconscious processes play a useful part in the Management of frontline Social Work Practice?   This study has clearly shown the necessity of paying equal attention to the human aspect of the frontline management task.   It is clear that contemporary human service organisations are gripped by anxieties stemming from performance culture, where there are real consequences for failure. Within this context the front line manager is assailed from all sides, by task-related anxieties that filter through from: the front line workers, organisational anxieties and projections that filter down from above, wider environmental anxieties that rock the stability of services, personal anxieties and projections that invade the professional space and then organisational/systemic anxieties arising from inter-group, cross-boundary role tensions. Whilst other roles experience different characteristics, there is probably no one else in the organisational system that is at quite such a complex crossroads of projections as the front line manager. These are sources of pressure and anxiety experienced by the front line manager, with the central overlapping space between the professional and personal self where unconscious processes are experienced and enacted. This could be likened to a sort of projective spaghetti junction, as illustrated in Fig.6.1-Fig.6.4 below.

This research belongs in the tradition of powerful-grounded story telling alongside such texts as Mate and Stalemate (1979) and The Robertson Studies (1989) using qualitative empirically based research methods to convey a deeper understanding of the frontline management role.   The strength of this approach is it's ability to transform ones thinking and in turn ones practice.   I certainly experienced a degree of transformation in terms of my analytical capacity, most powerfully in relation to the issue of race, discrimination and practice. My transformed approach will be generalisable to other areas of management practice, which go beyond the technical aspects of the role.   This research study has greatly contributed to my learning and professional development.

In the following section I end this thesis with recommendations and suggest areas for further research.

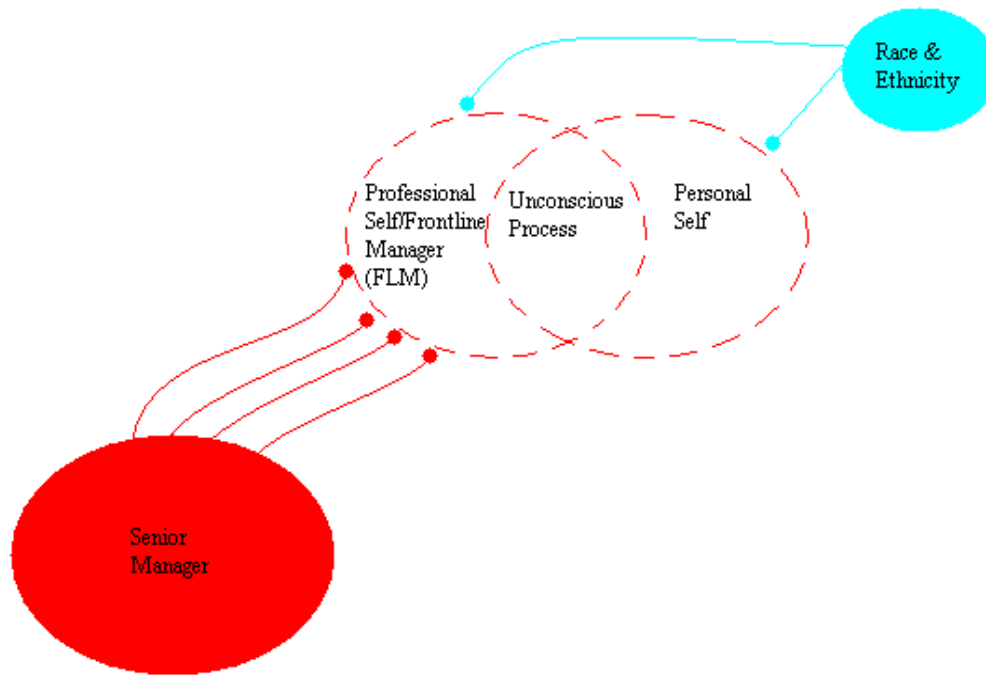**Fig.6.1 Projective 'spaghetti junction' - Sources of anxiety and pressures**

Fig. 6.2 Projective 'spaghetti junction' - Sources of anxiety and pressures
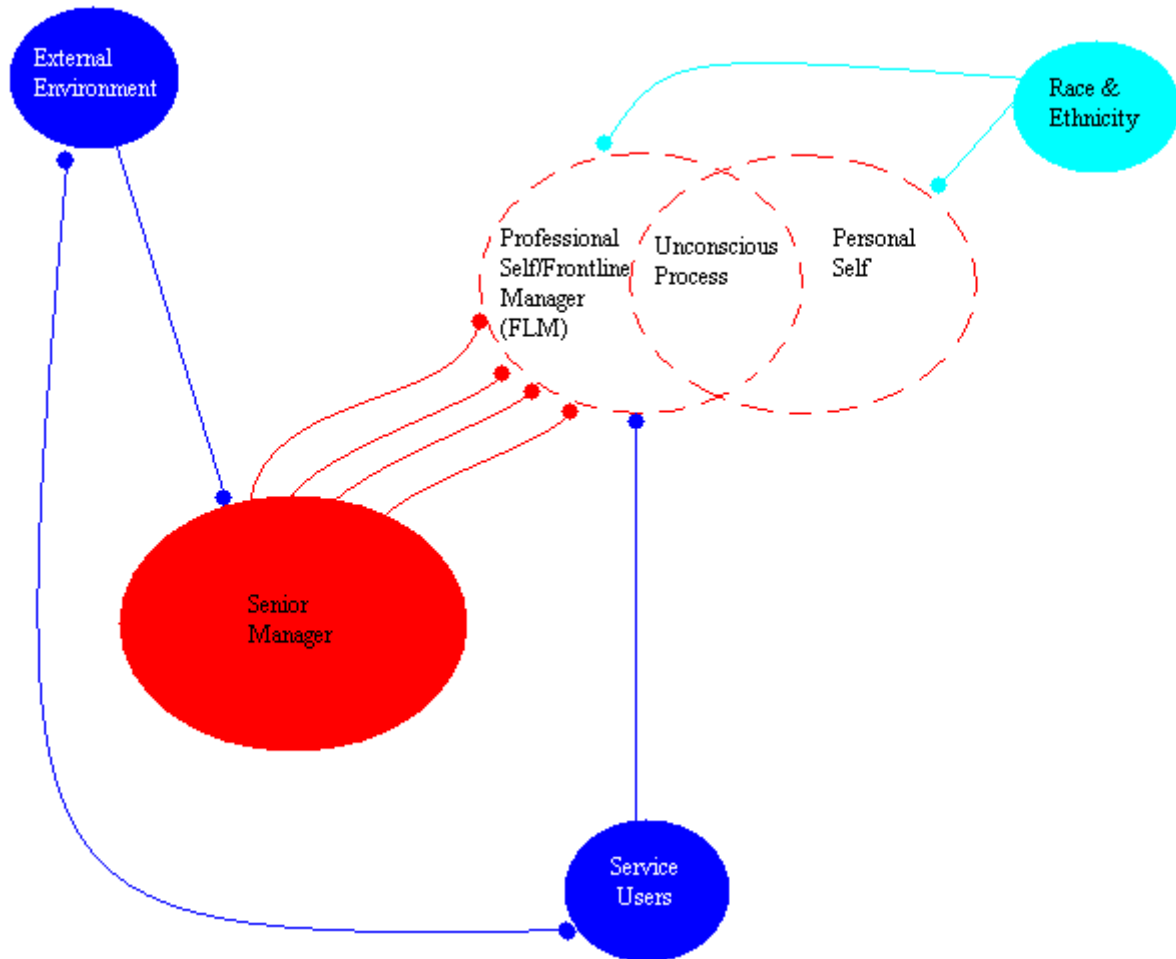
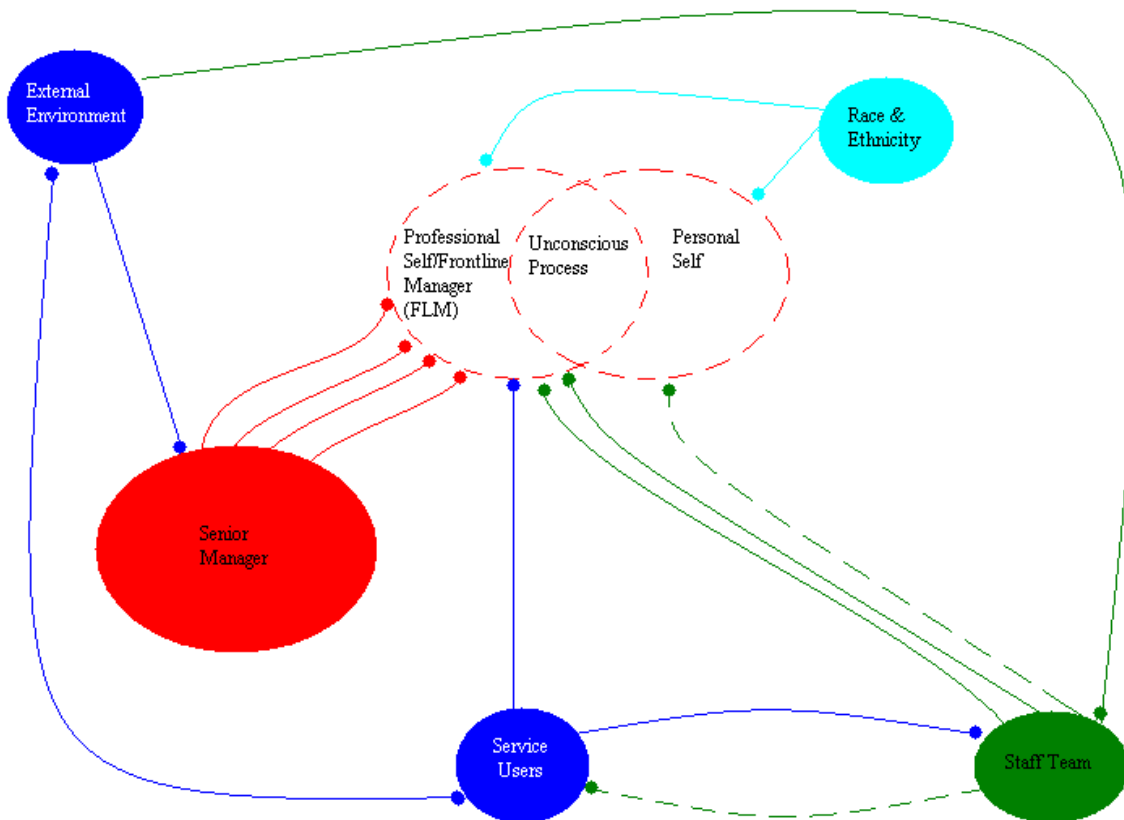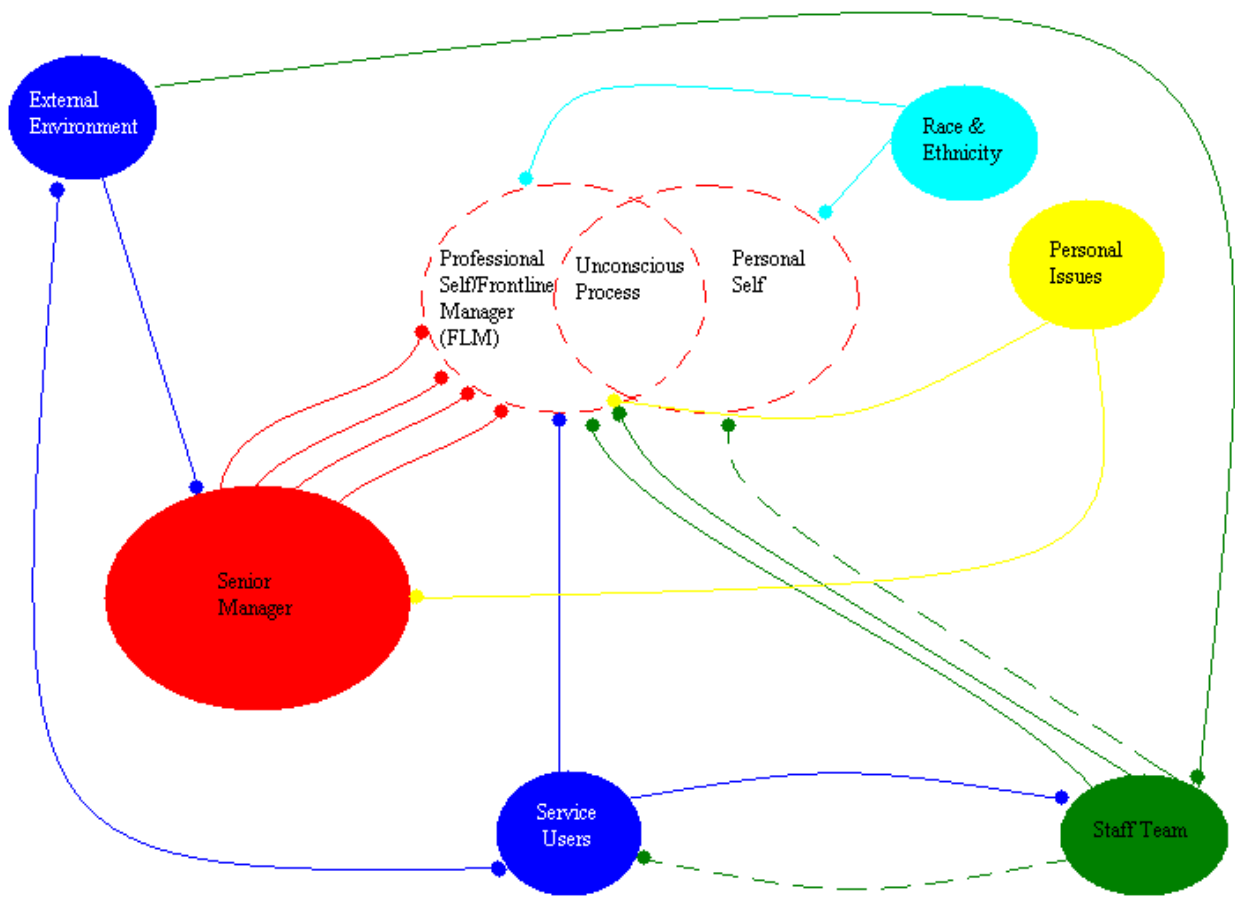**Fig. 6.3 Projective 'spaghetti junction' - Sources of anxiety and pressures**

Fig. 6.4   Projective 'spaghetti junction' - Sources of anxiety and pressures

External
Environment

Race &
Ethnicity

Personal
Issues

Professional
Self/Frontline
Manager
(FLM)

Unconscious
Process

Personal
Self

Senior
Manager

Service
Users

Staff Team

Recommendations and Further research

1. <u>Management Consultation Sessions</u>

Cooper & Lees (2014) suggest that British human services organisations are characterised by feelings of 'fear and dread,' and the role of the frontline manager is at the boundary of practice and administrative responsibility. Whilst the role requires accessibility to front line workers, it also holds a degree of responsibility for the management of local resources. This is the very nature of managing front line work, with its complexities and emotional demands. The impact of unconscious processes at work in these environments is often lost, therefore the support provided to front line managers must include space for these processes and dynamics to be thought about and worked through. I suggest the management consultation model as a useful starting point.

2. <u>**Further case study research**</u>

Targets and statistics have their place in the professional environment, but only provide part of the total picture, therefore I suggest further case study research is undertaken by those working in these environments. This would give them the opportunity to develop analytical skills which are more psychosocial in nature, and this would lead to aspects of managerial experience becoming less marginalised and provide a more accurate reflection of what may be achieved.

3. <u>**Management Training**</u>

My own management training included learning about; the achievement of strategic financial management competencies to ensure resources were used efficiently, the implementation and maintenance of workflow management systems designed to ensure staff compliance and adherence to targets and performance indicators, supervision skills which focused on task completion and supervision contracts and learning about effective leadership styles. There was very little attention given to the emotional impact of the role, nor about organisational and group behaviour with its more subtle dynamics in action. Frontline managers need to have a greater understanding of the emotional impact of the task

Finally

This research describes a slice of time in the life of a team and its managers in the midst of tremendous and painful change. My purpose has been to look beneath the surface to share an account of the unconscious phantasies and dynamics at work. I am indebted to those participants who agreed to take part in this research and have allowed me to use their experiences to further my understanding, development and learning.

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Acknowledgements

Appendix 1 - Research Proposal

Professional Doctorate in Social Work

Research Proposal: To what extent does the recognition and understanding of 'projective processes', play a useful part in the Management of frontline Social Work Practice – An in-depth study of a Children and Families Resource Centre.

1. **Summary**

This Project seeks to research projective processes between 1st line Managers and their teams, in relation to the Management of Social Work Practice on the frontline. In her chapter 'First Line Managers: The Mediators of Standards and Quality of Practice' (2004), Kearney identifies the range of activities undertaken by the first line manager, and states that an effective Team Manager should be able to;

1. Manage practice, including supervision of individual and collective team practice, management of workloads, workflow, service development and the administrative and finance systems to support these.

2. Offer supervision that takes into account the emotional impact of the work and its effect on individual and organisational working.

3. Know about, understand and integrate required standards for practice within the team's work.

4. Contribute to the professional development of team members, collectively and individually.

5.   Model and describe a professional approach to the work including appropriate use of authority, autonomy, responsibility and accountability, and expect and enable staff to understand and demonstrate this in their own work.

In my experience as a Manager I struggled with points 2 & 3, I found that I spent much of my time trying to manage various casework and human resource 'issues'. These were usually related to the fallout from practitioner's discontentment with work conditions, ever increasing caseloads and the overwhelming nature of casework. There seemed to be a tension between addressing the emotional impact of the work and the need to integrate the required standards for practice within the teams. The former being about supporting staff, and the latter being about governance and authority.

This 'tension' forms the basis of my curiosity, about whether further understanding of interactions between the team and the manager might be useful in terms of managing social work practice.

2.   **Background to the proposal**

I have often wondered how useful the application of psychodynamic ideas might be to me in my role as a Team Manager. My most painful experiences as a Locum Manager of Social Work Teams have been around the emotional intensity of managing staff in the team. I was often left feeling hostility, anger and at times a very powerful urge to 'react' aggressively or defensively to what felt like verbal assaults from team members, and massive resistance to the changes brought about by the new Policies and Practices. I have no doubt that the transitional nature of my position contributed significantly to this highly charged situation as my agreed brief for the management task often included the task of 'holding' the team together during a process of massive change. On reflection I began to feel that perhaps the resistance and hostility I experienced from the teams I worked with may well have been a consequence of my temporary status as Team Manager and perhaps

had I been a permanent Manager staff members may well have responded more positively to the changes being imposed upon them. However, whilst I provided what I considered to be committed and consistent support to the teams I worked with, there remained mistrust, anger and hostility and generalized turbulence.

Good external supervision from my supervisors at the Tavistock provided a space where I was able to reflect upon and make sense of these emotionally 'draining' experiences in a meaningful way, leading me to think whether the provision of such space for frontline managers would be of benefit to Managers themselves, their staff and ultimately service users.

Contemporary Social Work Practice overall faces many challenges and demands, much of these driven by central government who regularly state their commitment to improving outcomes for service users. More specifically in Children & Families - Child Protection work, the detailed analysis of high profile cases, which have resulted in the deaths of children, have also had a significant impact on many of the changes taking place. I have worked with several Teams in Transition. I have experienced very 'turbulent' environments in the statutory sector, where I have found the nature of my interactions with staff often antagonistic and hostile, as we all struggled to cope with the work, the required changes and difficult human resource issues - such as poor staff performance, high levels of staff absenteeism due to illness, high staff turnover, and difficulties filling vacancies.

In his conference paper 'Keeping our heads: preserving therapeutic values in a time of change', (2001) Cooper's reference to;

'….the dominance of the managerialist regimes through which government now seems to discipline and order the nature of welfare state activity'……..

He describes an environment where social work managers are expected to impose discipline and order in relation to front line staff. Where service delivery has taken on a

'commoditization' approach, so that we speak in terms of; packages, outcomes, contracts, Service Level agreements, performance indicators etc. My main source of support as a 1st line Manager during this period was received from supervision at the Tavistock Centre. The support was helpful because it focused on 'processes'. My own in house supervision provided little space to think about day to day processes, and was understandably focused on outcomes from the range of tasks undertaken in this role. What was very noticeable however was the 'Turbulence' Hughes and Pengelly (1997) refer to in their text 'Staff Supervision in a Turbulent Environment'.

They suggest that this 'Turbulent Environment' is fraught with projections, introjections and projective identifications. They go onto say that just as the Social Worker is the container for the feelings clients cannot hold for themselves, the Manager serves the same purpose for the worker(s). I have struggled to make sense of my own experience but my close involvement with the situation seemed to result in being less able to 'stand back' and reflect upon -meaning-

This project will provide me with a valuable opportunity to look very closely at how other Manager/supervisors and the team coped with and made sense of the intensity of their experiences on the 'front line'. In the publication 'Managing Front Line Practice in Social Work' (2004) the contributors indicate that there is a need for further research into the Management of Practice.

I have looked at some helpful material, which looks closely at the day to day interactions in front line services. The classic text 'Mate and Stalemate' (1979) grapples with three perspectives; an analysis of what social workers do with their clients, what clients do to their social workers and an examination of the structure and functions of social work organisations.

In her paper; 'Collaboration in Social Work: A major practice issue' (1983) Sally Hornby discusses the misuse of the professional and agency boundary for social defence purposes in social work practice. She also discusses ways in which an understanding of social defences can be used to reduce, modify or contain inevitable anxiety, experienced in practice.

Barbara Dearnley's paper 'A Plain Man's Guide to supervision – or new clothes for the emperor?' (1985) looks at the supervisor role; the transference, reflection process and the triangular relationship of client, worker supervisor and goes onto suggest that building an internal supervisor model is essential to the training of supervisors.

Additionally studies such as Menzies paper 'The functioning of Social Defence Mechanisms as a Defence against Anxiety' (1988) within a Health Care context have proved to be invaluable in terms of understanding how nurses – in this case - cope with the levels of anxiety they experience in their work, and the impact of their practice on patients.

Woodhouse and Pengelly's 'Anxiety and the Dynamics of collaboration' (1991) looks at how the anxieties and defences of clients and patients affects the responses of practitioners from five settings. The text also looks at how these practitioners are affected by institutionalized defences against task related anxiety specific to their agency and profession.

These texts have been useful in terms of understanding the nature of the anxieties experienced by practitioners and their supervisors. In further reviewing the literature I also intend to familiarize myself with Klein's concepts around paranoid schizoid defences i.e. projection, introjections, projective identification, splitting, denial and idealization 'splitting, projection. This will provide me with conceptual underpinning knowledge, and help shape my thinking in terms later organizing and analysis of the data gathered.

Hinshelwood's (1994) work in Clinical Klein will prove useful in terms of its explanation of the aforementioned concepts as will Sandler's (1988) work. Preston-Shoot and Agass's (1990) 'Making sense of Social Work', also has much to say about projection and projective identification, this too will be consulted. I want to also give some attention to Bion's work on group dynamics and his framework for analysing irrational features of group life as part of the literature review. Another crucial text for inclusion will be 'The unconscious at work' (1994) which includes a number of pertinent accounts of stress in a range of settings. In addition to the hard text, I also hope to discover further materials from the soft literature i.e. professional journals, e-journals and internet sources.

The setting

I have managed to successfully identify a Children & Families Resource Centre within the voluntary sector who has agreed to be participants in this study. The Team undertakes complex child care assessments on behalf of the local authority. They present expert witness evidence in Child Care proceedings.

Aims

3.1 To closely observe and seek to further understand the nature of the interactions between 1st line Management and the team.

3.2 Through a consultative process, with the Manager and Deputies provide a space in which observations and feedback might be shared and to think about how this knowledge might be useful in the effective Management of Practice.

3.3 To apply the range of Klein's concepts around paranoid schizoid defences i.e. projection, introjections, projective identification, splitting, denial and idealization - in

order to further understand the nature of interactions between the Manager/supervisors and the team.

3.4 To make an impact; on effective team functioning, the managers learning, professional development, and behaviour.

3. Research Question

Essentially my Research Question is; "To what extent can it be shown that, the recognition and understanding of 'projective processes' can play a useful part in the Management of frontline social work practice, by reference to one intensively studied case example?'

In his paper 'Supervision Role Strain & Social Services Departments' (1988) Clare quotes the DHSS Practice Guidance (1985), which said that; 'Managers deal with the problems, but social workers cope with the pain and are left to cope after the managers have moved to the next problem'. I wonder if we look closely at the experience of 1st line Managers today whether these comments are a fair reflection of their experience. My own experience as a Manager wanting to pursue a more relationship based approach to the task of managing practice, was an acute awareness of the 'pain' associated with the work. I found myself struggling to translate this painful material into something useful for team members, and in my view this struggle was due in part to the limitations posed by the numerous tasks I had to perform, and the pressure to achieve tangible 'outcomes'. My difficulties also related to a reluctance in my own supervision to address such issues.

My Hypothesis is therefore; If 1st Line Managers had a greater understanding of the unconscious processes, which occur between team members and themselves, could this lead to more effective management of practice?

My vision of 'effectiveness' would be one where there was less 'turbulence' and more understanding and containment. Effective practice management in my view should include seeking to address the emotional impact of the work upon practitioners. This material could then be used to enhance the work with service users and importantly give practitioners the support they need to sustain difficult work with their clients. As a Manager I experienced tremendous difficulties recruiting and retaining staff. Whilst there were many reasons for these difficulties one of them was most certainly that much time and effort was spent ensuring that frontline staff completed various casework 'tasks'. As the pressure increased it became increasingly more difficult to hear about the emotional impact of the work, it was also difficult to recognise and address some of the unconscious processes, which emerged between the team and myself. It is my hope that in undertaking this piece of research there will be an opportunity for professional growth and development.

5. Methodology

I intend using a qualitative rather than quantitative approach to the study. Rubin and Babbie (1997) suggest that qualitative research studies produce phenomena in such detail and from multiple perspectives and meanings; the subsequent data is extremely rich and descriptive. I am seeking to understand the depth as opposed to the quantities of the team's experiences.

Silverman (2000:8) suggests that qualitative data 'exemplifies a common belief, which can provide a deeper understanding of social phenomena'. Qualitative data is also able to depict true accounts of people's life experience, attitudes feelings and beliefs (Patton, 1990); it is an approach, which seeks meaning behind social interaction. In her

paper

'Working with managers to improve services: changes in the role of research in social care' (2004), Ward refers to the importance of qualitative data as she discusses the benefits of research to social care managers. Her comments about the qualitative approach were extremely useful in terms of my own interests, in that collecting qualitative information is necessary to gain a true picture of what is happening. She states that quantifiable data may only provide a surface picture of individual experiences, but as McLeod (1997) states 'the goal of qualitative research is to produce intensive, authentic descriptive accounts of experience and action…'

There are some disadvantages to this approach however; these include the subjectivity and presence of the researcher; this is thought to potentially affect the response and behaviour of the respondent(s). Bryman suggests that; 'There is a tendency towards an anecdotal approach to the use of data in relation to conclusions or explanations in qualitative research'. The researcher's own assumptions might also contaminate the data, for example, based on my own experiences I assumed that Team Manager's experienced most challenges from their teams. However, I recently learnt from a colleague that some if not most of her struggles and difficulties as a first line manager came from her Senior Managers. It then occurred to me that would need to be open to hearing unexpected information, and be flexible enough to make necessary adjustments to my thinking during the process of gathering data.

There has been a long standing philosophical debate between quantitative and qualitative approaches to research. Much has been written about the ways in which philosophical positions have influenced research approaches. In thinking about my own research it has been important for me to further understand something of the competing paradigms underpinning research approaches. Lincoln and Guba's approach is briefly summarized as it helped me to think about the value base from which I would operate, as its approach is very much in line with social work values. I also include aspects of Hammersley's very helpful commentary on the need for flexibility in choosing research methodology.

Lincoln and Guba are perhaps the best known advocates of constructivism, which includes a wide span of positions from the post-positivist approaches to relativist positions. They are well toward the relativist end of the continuum; they rejected conventional inquiry on the grounds of; 'its posture on reality; its stance on the knower-known relationship, and its stance on the possibility of generalization'. (Lincoln, 1990, p.68). In terms of their position on 'reality', they favour multiple, socially constructed realities "which when known more fully, tend to produce diverging inquiry" (Lincoln & Guba, 1986, p.75) They state that realities need to be studied holistically and in context, not in pieces – as variables – They rejected the traditional image of the knower and known, researcher and subject. They feel that the knower and known could and perhaps should not remain distanced and separated in the process of evaluation, and the relationship which becomes established during the course of the research is one of respectful negotiation, joint control and reciprocal learning. Finally Lincoln & Guba also state that as there are no enduring context-free truth statements, and all human behaviour is time and context bound, it was also doubtful that generalization from one site to the next was possible. This paradigm seemed to capture what I am seeking to achieve, in that I will be looking very closely at the team and it daily activities; provide some feedback on what I observe, take on board any feedback I receive from the team and provide supportive Management consultation sessions. I foresee this being a reciprocal process. Whilst this study, given its focus on one Resource Centre and its exploratory nature will not claim generalisability to all children and family frontline services, I believe it might depict the experience of many contemporary social work teams today and may resonate elsewhere. I also believe that the opportunity to think deeply and analytically about one case beyond the surface presentation is extremely valuable in itself.

In Bryman (1988), Hammersley presents a less divisive view of qualitative and quantitative research approaches; he argues that the selection of an approach should be based on its suitability for the research purposes and circumstances of the research, rather than being derived from methodological or philosophical commitments. Hammersley's argument in my view presents a more realistic view of the world in which we inhabit, with its many uncertainties and less guaranteed 'absolutes'. He goes onto say that to make clear distinctions between qualitative and quantitative approaches does not capture

the full range of options we face and therefore misrepresents the basis on which decisions should be made. I quote Hammersley's useful analogy about the challenge before us as researchers, he describes the task as 'a complex maze where we are repeatedly faced with decisions, and where paths wind back on one another'. (1988) I particularly value this statement as it seeks to demonstrate the equal value of qualitative and quantitative approaches depending upon what we are seeking to achieve.

6. **Research Methods**

6.1 **Entry issues** I considered undertaking the study in a statutory Children   and Families Team, but began to have some serious doubts about this when I considered what I knew of the current climate in these settings, and the likelihood of agreement from Managers who were already under immense scrutiny from within and outside of the organisation. I decided that from a practical point of view I would make use of existing contacts within the voluntary sector. I decided to approach a Senior Manager in the organisation I was doing some contract work for about my research interests. He was very keen for the study to go ahead and undertook to circulate a standard letter to all the projects in the region. I recall him saying that this piece of work might go some way to strengthening and supporting existing projects.

6.2   Fortunately I received a one positive response from the Manager of a Children and Families Resource Centre.

6.3 I prepared a written summary of the research project (please see appendix I), which would be discussed at their Team Meeting, and then I would then offer to attend a Team Meeting to present the proposal in person and answer any questions about which the Team were unclear.

6.4 Systematic journaling of all events to date has commenced will be discussed in greater detail in the final report.

6.5 I have met with the Manager on two occasions, to discuss the research proposal and will later meet the team.

6.6   I have established that the centre's team structure is quite complex, in that there is a Manager, Two Deputies, qualified Social Workers, unqualified social workers, and an administrator.

6.7 **Data Gathering** Project Observations – I shall initially undertake familiarization visits – which will give team members become use to my presence. It may be useful to observe from various places; however the staff kitchen (where staff congregate following team meetings), and the administrators office (where all incoming work arrives) appear to be quite central to building. I also hope to observe Supervision sessions (the Manager and Deputies have agreed that I may observe staff supervision sessions) and Team Meetings. In my initial discussions with the Manager I have been informed that there are some significant changes about to occur, in that the Team is scheduled to move to new premises and this will mean some changes in terms of how they are accommodated. Workers currently share one room between two, in the future accommodation maybe open plan.

6.8 The model of observation I shall be using is based on Esther Bick's practice of psychoanalytic infant observation 1948. It involves the observer 'taking and holding in mind' physical experiences to then later construct some meaning to those experiences. The observer is not participating as to do so might preclude the opportunity to be reflective. The model recognizes however, that the observer is not a fly on the wall and must find a place within what is being observed, to remain emotionally engaged but at the same time sufficiently distant to hold onto and reflect upon the emotional transactions being observed. In terms of this study, whilst I would not be actively involved in the day to day work of the teams, I hope to give and take feedback within the management consultations.

6.9 My approach to the gathering of data also contains some aspects of the ethno methodological approach, Punch (1998) states that it seeks to look at processes below the surface of conscious awareness, at the taken-for-granted level. It involves listening as well as looking. I deviate from Punch in terms of its structural objective stance, as I anticipate making constant use of my subjective professional experience to make sense of the data.

6.10 Journaling   During the observations I hope to inconspicuously take brief notes of all I see and hear, and then following the observations I shall systematically write up an account of events. I have designed a landscape log sheet divided into columns, each column has a heading; column one is headed with the date & time of day, the second column is headed running record of observations & interactions, the third column is headed transference issues and thoughts, and the fourth column is headed counter transference and reflections

Management Consultation and feedback   Offering Consultation Sessions stemmed from some of my recent experiences as a Manager where I would often find other Managers visiting my office to share concerns they were unable to share with their teams or their managers. It seemed clear to me that these 1st line Managers needed a space where they could express some of their anxieties, frustrations and anger. I will offer managers individual sessions, and will be 'less caught up in the anxieties inherent in the (teams) work' (Obholzer, 1994). As an outsider of the team I would hope to be in a better position to see various projective processes. I hope that the material from these consultations will be a rich source of data, where the prevalence of projective processes may emerge. I would want to have at least three sessions with each Supervisor and possibly 1-2 more if necessary.

6.10 It will be a space where some thinking about management and organisational preoccupations can occur and these might include; the emotional impact of the work; its effects on them as supervisors, individual members of the team and on the overall performance of the team – in their pivotal role as 'arbiters of practice standards'. I hope to audio record these sessions, so as a more free flowing discussion may take place, with a view to later transcribing the material and subjecting it to more detailed analysis.

6.11 I hope to closely study interactions between the Manager, the Deputies and Team members, and more specifically seek out evidence of projective processes – their significance and meaning -

6.12 I have discussed above, the method of data gathering relying on various strands of psychoanalytic observational and clinical methodologies. The process of reflection in

supervision is crucial to the process of making sense of this data, which is largely emotional and at times nonverbal. I will seek to do this in sessions with centre supervisors, but I too will receive regular research supervision to assist me in the process of untangling the material.

7.   **Data Analysis**

7.1 I hope to engage in a detailed thematic analysis of the journal entries. This would involve systematically trawling through the data collected, so as to identify themes and patterns of interactions. I may have to read the entries several times in order to get a sense of the patterns of feelings and interactions.

7.2 I would seek in the early readings to identify some preliminary themes and begin to generate some categories i.e. a starting point would be to identify early indications of the defence mechanisms at play. I would plot these in the first instance, which would indicate patterns interactions.

7.3 I will engage in ongoing memo writing - where I will be systematically assessing how the consultation sessions are helping and how these assists or furthers the Managers/supervisors understanding of what has been taking place -

7.4 I will also be seeking to assess to what extent these processes impact upon the Management of Practice in the Team. The effectiveness will be measured by the manager/supervisors feedback in the first instance and by my own impressions of progress or indeed not.

Marshall & Rossman (1989) suggest a balance be struck between efficiency and research design flexibility. This approach to Data analysis could run the risk of analysing the material too early, and possibly becoming 'locked; in a way of seeing the material. I hope regular research supervision sessions will assist me in being clearer about the process. I also acknowledge that I may need to adjust my observation strategies and be prepared to shift emphasis if necessary.

8.   **<u>Ethical issues</u>**

Rubin and Babbie (1997) suggest there are 4 main ethical issues, which must be addressed by Social Work Researchers;

-       the voluntary participation and informed consent of participants

-       the potential harm to participants

-       anonymity and confidentiality

-       and the analysis and reporting of findings

They go onto to suggest that 'all participants must be aware that they are participating in a study, must be informed of all the consequences and must consent to participate in it' (Rubin & Babbie 1997:60) These issues might appear to relate more directly to clients and service users, but can in my view be applied equally as rigorously to the study of staff teams.

At this initial stage, I have managed to gain consent from the Team, to participate in the study. I had to firstly discuss the project with the Team Manager, and then secondly, by presenting a summary of the project to the team which included the option to not participate in the process.   I anticipate that consent may need to renegotiate at various

stages of the research process. The nature of the study is bound to cause some anxiety to participants, as aspects of the data gathering process is somewhat intrusive. It will be important therefore to repeatedly confirm informed consent Bartunek and Louis (1996).

Very few people would willingly express their most private opinions and emotions in public documents and in a climate fraught with turbulence, daily challenges and frustrations, anonymity and confidentiality will be of utmost importance throughout this study. Confidentiality is therefore a major issue in this research, as I will need the permission of the team members, the Manager and the team as a whole to reveal appropriate material. I intend to pay particular attention to the anonymity aspect of the study, and will as far as possible maintain the confidentiality of individual participants the Managers and the team. In the journals entries and in the final report I will be changing some of the facts and details whilst seeking not to distort the essential elements of the study.

I have no doubt that the team will have a keen interest in the analysis and reporting of my findings. I would seek to have no surprises at the end of the process, which would be in keeping with Social Work principles, values and practice.

9.   **Schedule of Tasks**

1.   •   Seek permission from Senior Manager in the organisation to circulate a standard introduction letter to Family Centre Teams.

•   Get agreement from one Manager to be the subject of this study.

•   Provide a written summary of the project so that Manager may discuss with the Team.

•   Offer to meet with the whole Team to discuss the project further and answer any questions they may have at this stage.

• Arrange to complete some project familiarization visits, to meet with the manager so as to ascertain background, current live issues and make arrangements for observations sessions in the New Year.

• Content of these sessions to be recorded in a 'Data Journal'.

• Continue seeking out and reading relevant literature around the theoretical aspects of the study, which will serve to strengthen my underpinning knowledge around aspects of projective processes.

2. • Commence weekly Observation Sessions – to include; staff supervision sessions, Team Meetings and the Duty Desk. These to be systematically logged in research journal.

• Alongside the observations – undertake Manager Consultation Sessions, which would be audio recorded and then transcribed in the research journal, with accompanying reflections. To be later transcribed and entered into journal.

• Commence writing the underpinning theoretical aspect of the thesis - this will be an ongoing work in progress throughout the life of the project -

3. • Data Analysis & Writing up findings

Sylvia Smith

D60

Appendix 2 – Introduction Letter

020 8845 1575 or 07930 193845

Email: ADOSYLVIA@aol.com

15th September

Dear Colleague,

<u>Re: Social Work Doctorate Research Project</u>

I am a Social Work Doctorate Student studying at the Tavistock Clinic and East London University.

I am undertaking a Research Project, which will look closely at the role of 1st Line Management and the context within which Social Work Practice is managed. I am particularly keen to learn more about the interactive relationships between Team Managers and members of their Teams.

I would value the opportunity to observe the team over a period of 6 weeks. I would like to observe at least 2 team meetings, 2 supervision sessions and 2 duty sessions. Following on from these observation sessions, I would offer you – the Team Manager 1 introductory session and 3 consultation sessions, where we would discuss the observations more fully and mutually share any managerial and organisational preoccupations. These sessions would be audio recorded, to facilitate a comfortable flow of interaction, these would be transcribed and analysed at a later stage.

The findings from the study would form the basis of my Research Dissertation, and would be held in the college library upon completion. Should you wish to take part in this study, but would like to discuss the matter further, please don't hesitate to call me on the number given or contact my email address.

Sincerely,

Sylvia Smith

Social Work Doctorate Student

Appendix 3- Research Project Summary

<u>Research Project Summary</u>

This is a piece of qualitative research; it aims to look closely at the following;

'To what extent does the recognition and understanding of projective processes, play a useful part in the Management of frontline Social Work Practice – A study of a children and families team.'

Hypothesis – if 1st line Managers had a greater understanding of the unconscious processes, which occur between team members and themselves, might these insights assist with more effective management of practice?

Aims

• To closely observe and seek to further understand the nature of interactions between 1st line Managers / supervisors and team members.

• Through a consultative process, provide a space in which observations and insights might be shared with participants to think about how this knowledge might be useful in the effective Management of Practice.

• To apply Klein's concepts of projection, introjections and projective identification in further understanding the nature of the interactions.

• To positively influence effective team functioning, to assist in Managements learning, professional development and behaviour.

Ethical issues

• During this initial stage, it is important that the team discusses this proposal and then feels able to give informed consent to be participants in this project.

•   Terms of confidentiality will need to be agreed e.g. anonymising;   participants names, the Team identity, the projects location etc.

Methodology (Data gathering)

•   Direct observations of the following processes; supervision, daily team functioning and team meetings.

•   Notes would be taken during direct observations for analysis at a later stage.

•   The provision of a space for manager(s) to think about organisational and team preoccupations. Subject to consent, these sessions would be audio recorded for later transcribing and analysis.

Finally, I would be more than happy to attend your next Team Meeting to answer questions you may have at this stage and share further information about my background and the project overall.

Sylvia Smith

Social Work Doctorate Student

Appendix 4 - Management Consultation Interview Script

<u>Management Consultation Interviews</u>

<u>Script</u>

In these sessions I will be providing a space for you to discuss and reflect upon any recent or current issues that have caused strain, conflict or anxiety in your work, in a manner that I hope will be of help to you but which will also offer me insight into the range of factors impacting on the role of front line managers in this service.

I will invite you to engage in discussion of the above, and may comment from time to time where this seems helpful, but the session is designed for you to be able to have the time to reflect more deeply on your experience of your roles both individually and with one another.

Appendix 5 – Research Journal Template

<u>Research Journal template</u>

Date	What took place	Reflections / notes

Appendix 6 – Confirmation of research approval.

From: ████████████████████████████████████ >

Date: October 16, 2013 at 1:24:26 PM GMT+1

To: "'Sylvia Smith'" <adosylv@gmail.com>

Subject: RE: Research Project

Dear Sylvia,

I write to confirm that I was happy to assist you with the furtherance of this research. I circulated details to our projects seeking volunteers willing to be participants. The Management Team of one of our Family Centres agreed to be participants and details were passed to them and you were left to complete meeting arrangements with them directly.   I was happy with the confidentiality assurances you gave at the time.

This is a splendid project, which you will no doubt learn a great deal from but which also provided support to our management team at a very difficult time.

I wish you every success in your future endeavours.

Kind Regards,

████████████

Operational Director - Fostering, Adoption & Permanency UK

████████████ | Operational Director - Fostering, Adoption & Permanency UK | ████████
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Appendix 7 – University Ethics Approval

Ms Sylvia Smith
9 Alba Close
Hayes
Middx
UB4 9PU
(07932 703072)

10 October 2014

Dear Ms Smith,

University of East London/The Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust: research ethics

Study Title: "'*So you want to be a Manager?*' To what extent does the recognition and understanding of 'unconscious processes' play a useful part in the management of frontline social work practice: An in-depth study of a Children and Families Resource Centre."

I am writing to inform you that the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC) has received and reviewed the following:

- your research proposal that you submitted to UREC in June 2005, instead of a correctly completed application form;
- a list of responses requested by UREC from you, that arose from that application, including a request that you resubmit on the correct forms;
- a letter of support from one of the managers involved, who had given you permission to carry out your research at one of the sites, describing how consent had been gained in meetings;
- a copy of the information sheet used;
- a recently completed UREC application form.

I note that the response you received from UREC did not indicate approval at that time and that you have provided no evidence that you resubmitted your application to UREC, addressing the concerns raised, before starting your research. I note that you have also not provided any evidence of consent obtained at the time either, i.e. no written consent forms having been submitted to UREC for approval or evidence of them being used.

UREC cannot now grant retrospective approval. However, please take this letter as written confirmation that, had you reapplied for ethical clearance from UREC at the appropriate time and used correct consent forms, it is likely that it would have been granted.

This decision does not now place you in exactly the same position as you would have been in, had UREC approval been obtained in advance. Therefore, when responding to any questioning regarding the ethical aspects of your research, you must of course make reference to and explain these developments in an open and transparent way. For example, I note that in the recently completed UREC application form (section 25), you indicate that the results will form the basis of peer-reviewed publications. You will not be able to claim that you had research ethics approval, should a journal require this.

For the avoidance of any doubt, or misunderstanding, please note that the content of this letter extends only to those matters relating to the granting of ethical clearance. If there are any other outstanding procedural matters, which need to be attended to, they will be dealt with entirely separately, as they fall entirely outside the remit of our University Research Ethics Committee.

If you are in any doubt about whether, or not, there are any other outstanding matters you should contact Mr William Bannister at the Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust (e-mail WBannister@tavi-port.nhs.uk).

Yours sincerely,

Professor Neville Punchard
Chair of the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC)

c.c.
Mr Andrew Cooper, Professor of Social Work, Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust
Mr Malcolm Allen, Dean of Postgraduate Studies, Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust
Mr Will Bannister, Associate Director, Education and Training, Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust
Professor John J Joughin, Vice-Chancellor, University of East London
Professor Neville Punchard, Chair of the University of East London Research Ethics Committee
Mr David G Woodhouse, Associate Head of Governance and Legal Services