THE STRANGER IN THE MIRROR:

REFLECTIONS ON RESEARCH PRACTICES

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ABSTRACT

To what extent can researchers engaged in reflective research practices be honest in their own reflections, and to what extent are their reflections affected by emotions and defences against emotion?

This paper aims to explore the issue of researcher reflection on the experiences of research and the emotions that affect reflection and reflective practice within research. In this way the paper is seeking to make a contribution to our understanding of the practice of research and the limitations that the researcher might place on knowledge generation.

By examining a past research project which utilized a reflection based epistemology and re-reading my work through a psychotherapeutic lens, this paper questions how emotional defence and our own "life scripts" may conspire to situate our research efforts within the safety of our own familiar ontology.

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1. INTRODUCTION

This paper aims to make a contribution to our understanding of the practice of research and the limitations that the researcher may place on knowledge generation. It will achieve this by exploring the way in which researchers engaged in reflective research practices may be affected by subconscious emotional defences as they attempt to provide candid interpretations of their research experience.

The paper is divided into four main sections. The first section deals with the authors first research project using a non-traditional research method. It explains the nature of the research project, the research methodology, its philosophical basis and the safeguards the author put in place as an attempt to make its conclusions as "honest" as possible. The second section summarises the main research findings and how the project enabled the author to question his personal motivations for carrying out the research.

The next section describes the post-research activities the author carried out which enabled him to re-examine his ontological and epistemological attitudes by applying a practical psychoanalytical approach to his behaviour and emotional defences. The final section re-visits the original project and examines the research findings through the lens of the psychoanalytical framework.

The paper concludes by questioning a range of taken-for-granted issues that the author has identified as being important to consider if one intends to provide honest interpretations of qualitative research data. This section also questions how much knowledge we may actually be able to generate if we have not explored our own emotional defences. The conclusion goes on to ask to what extent does the subconscious affect our research if we have not had the opportunity to examine and explore our own defensive routines and "life scripts".

2. PRELIMINARY RESEARCH

2.1 Background

In the summer of 2006 I carried out an empirical research project as part of a Master of Research (MRes) dissertation at the University of Hull Business School (Shepherd, 2006). This project aimed to surface the attitudes and emotions of a small research group in relation to three themes, leadership, entrepreneurism and spirituality (*ibid*: 3). The themes interested me because at the time, I had a number of friends who were exploring their spirituality and the way in which this impacted upon their work roles.

The data gathering methodology I chose to adopt for this project was a non-traditional approach known as projective drawing. I was interested in using the projective drawing technique as it offered the opportunity to capture richer, more detailed levels of information from both the conscious and subconscious realm (Meyer, 1991, Stiles, 2004, Vince and Broussine, 1996). My overall aim in the project was to explore if this particular technique could give me access to new ontological and epistemological understandings of leadership, entrepreneurism and spirituality in terms of myself and my research participants (Shepherd, 2006) .

To gather data using this methodology the research participants were asked to think of a theme, their interpretation of which they would then draw onto a large sheet of paper. Throughout the drawing process the participants were given free reign as to the type of images created and the drawing style (Furth, 1988). This methodology, used widely in art therapy is useful for uncovering a range of conscious and subconscious attitudes and emotions which may become evident when examining the work or as the artist begins to explain their images and answer questions about their meaning (Burns and Kaufman, 1972, Druckenmiller, 2002).

After I had gathered the projective drawing data from my research participants I began the task of analysis. As this was a non-traditional project I attempted to understand and make sense of the images by creating a set of my own projective drawings, based on the themes the participants had drawn. I created my own images in order to respond in a similar fashion to my gathered data and to surface my own conscious and subconscious attitudes and emotions.

I created a total of four drawings as part of this research, a response to each of my research participants themes of leadership, entrepeneurism and spirituality, and a final "meta image" which became the response to all of the images which had been generated throughout the project (see Appendix). After I had finished data analysis my intention was to describe the results of my work in terms of the new knowledge and new learning which I had surfaced (Shepherd 2006: 74).

As I designed the research I became increasingly aware of how subjective the interpretation of the projective drawing technique could be. With this in mind, I decided to build into the analysis phase of the research certain methodological tenets which I hoped would enable me to generate an "honest" interpretation of the data which would be relatively free from my own attitudes and value judgements. The following sections describe the main philosophical and methodological approaches I adopted for this research and the techniques I utilised in an attempt to alleviate such bias from my findings.

2.2 The Projective Drawing Technique
The use of projective drawing as a data gathering and analysis tool within management research is at an "embryonic" state of development according to Stiles (2004:183). The technique has its origins and development within the field of clinical psychology as an aid to the diagnosis of a number of psychological ailments. In order to understand the thoughts, feelings and emotional state of a patient, the psychologist could draw upon one of a number visual tests which would require the patient to access fantasy as a way of interpreting the visual images (Bell, 1948: xi). An early predecessor of the projective drawing technique was the Thematic Appreciation Test (TAT) which was first defined by Morgan and Murray (1935). This particular technique utilised a number of images which the participant would arrange in order to create a story. The images were rather innocuous, a bicycle, a family scene, individual people or buildings for example. As the participant explained to the psychologist the arrangement and meaning of the images, he

would subconsciously access his own fantasy, attitudes and emotions, which could then be used as the basis for further clinical assessment of his condition.

The study of Visual Dynamics played a part in the development of projective drawing as a tool for the non-traditional organizational researcher. This technique allowed the researcher to analyse the smallest detail of an image for its subconscious significance. Dondis (1973) provided a range of interpretations as to what different expressions of a drawing or painting element may mean to the researcher, concentrating on the smallest level of detail, for example "the dot, line, shape, direction, tone, color, texture, dimension, scale, movement." were seen to be important indicators as to the nature of subconscious thought being communicated from artist to the working surface (*ibid*: 40).

For many years scholars were not keen to allow "imagery into the realms of scientific scrutiny"(Agell and Rhyne, 1998: 116) as their messages seemed cryptic or subjective. In recent years, however, this view has changed with psychologists now conceding that images could be considered "tracings of visible thought" (*ibid*: 117).

2.3 Using the Philosophy of Psychoanalysis
Researchers who utilise projective techniques to gather and analyse data, adopt philosophies based on the work of the psychoanalytical school and Sigmund Freud (1856-1939). Freud developed notions concerning the workings of the unconscious mind and how it may be responsible for repressing and defending emotions which it considered psychologically threatening. Freud was one of the first researchers to propose that the human mind was not solely a biological machine, driven by rational impulses but a complicated multi-faceted entity which both repressed and enacted emotional drives without the authorization or knowledge of the individual (Diamond, 1993).

Management researchers who use psychoanalytical approaches seek to uncover unconscious processes within the organization in order to provide a new way of understanding emotions, behaviours, motivations and defence mechanisms (Gabriel, 1999, Vince, 2006, Vince and Broussine, 1996). Some researchers, for example view the organization as theatre, in which a range of emotions are generated, observed and displayed. Throughout organizations epic tales of power, control, passion, envy, fear, love and anxiety are played out on a daily basis (Fineman, 1993).

Some research links the generation of emotion, the acknowledgement of an individuals feelings and the acceptance of the reaction to such stimuli as key processes which could help facilitate group reflection and organizational learning (Raelin, 2001, Vince, 2001, Vince, 2006). This approach to the study of emotion interested me as I began planning my research and I considered the type of research group to choose. As the research went on I became more curious as to the type of emotion that my research would generate and how the study of these emotions could lead to new epistemologies.

In order to understand my research within a psychoanalytical context I began to learn about the main tenets of psychoanalysis and attempted to incorporate these within my research. As I was a researcher new to the field of psychoanalysis, I chose to concentrate

my study to a small number of theories which I considered to be more relevant to me than others. I concentrated on the ego and id, repression, regression and projection.

The id holds the most basic components of an individuals personality such as sexual drive, aggression and the life or death survival instinct. The id knows no time or boundary and is driven by base gratifications. The ego on the other hand is tasked with managing the reality of the physical world and presenting this to the id. In doing so, the ego represses the id which causes certain conflicts within the mind (Diamond, 1993).

Repression is an emotional defence mechanism which the mind employs to distance itself from anything which it seeks gratification, but which upon acting on such a thing, would cause anxiety. Such things include sexual drives, taboos, fantasies and unacceptable social actions. Anxiety of acting on such things may be diminished if the individual can block out or repress such wants (Kets de Vries and Miller, 1984).

Regression is another defensive response in which the individuals behaviour reverts back to the behaviours of earlier life. Within the organizational setting, anxieties connected with change, changes in control, supervision or leadership may all lead to behaviours of regression. This may be due to the fantasy of family structure within the work group and the loss of safety and security in times of change (Winnicott, 1971).

Projection was the final emotional defence I became interested in. The process of projection seeks to expel anything which the individual cannot recognize or accept as existing within itself and then to allocate this trait to something in the external environment. By denying the part of oneself which is unsavoury and holding onto the parts which are deemed good, the individual can reduce their own anxiety (Diamond, 1993).

2.4 The Self Psychological Approach to Interpretation

As the project would utilize self-generated pictorial data, I was interested in adopting an approach to the analysis which could help me understand the images at a deeper level. I chose the "self psychological approach" for this task as a small number of researchers had already attempted to analyse their own drawings using this method (Leibowitz, 1999). The approach promised "the interpreter . . . can begin to penetrate the differential experience of the drawer during the process of drawing, and thus gain insight into his subjective state in relation to what is included, omitted, emphasized, etc"(*ibid*: 26).

The way in which I used this particular methodology was to explore both the overt and covert meanings of the images I had created from a psychoanalytical standpoint. I attempted to refer back to the literature as I found interesting narratives or vignettes which could hold keys to deeper meanings (Shepherd 2006: 46). I also attempted to use different ways of describing the image data that had been gathered in terms of dream theory, for example (*ibid*; 32). Using psychoanalysis as the basis for my interpretations, I took a great deal of time on this process and incorporated a number of reflective and critical reflective turns which enabled me to distance myself from the data and explore it from different points of view (*ibid*: 44).

2.5 Attempting to Make Balanced Interpretations

As a further attempt to make my interpretations balanced and as un-biased as possible I used a number of approaches at the data analysis stage of the research. I attempted to keep the interpretation of the data as value free as possible, by examining all of the images without referring to their perceived positive or negative aspects. I attempted to reflect on the data using simple descriptions of it and let the data "talk to me". Finally I resisted the urge to put the images into levels of importance or significance as I reflected upon them (*ibid*. 17).

2.6 Reflection and Critical Reflection

Within the analysis stage of the research I relied heavily upon my ability to adopt reflective and critical reflective turns to uncover new ways of understanding the data and generating new learning. I decided to adopt these methodologies as I was interested in stepping away from my thoughts and assumptions whilst questioning my own situated view of reality. I was aware that new learning could only be possible when I began to question my own knowledge claims and the power relations which held them together (Argyris, 2004, Cunliffe, 2003, Elkjaer, 2004, Vince, 1998).

It is very difficult for individuals to reflect on their behaviour in the here-and-now as recommended by some researchers (Kolb, 1984, Schon, 1983). If one attempts to study oneself as they are having an experience, it becomes almost impossible for feelings and thoughts to become separated within such an event. The act of reflection takes account of this and utilizes our ability to think about our actions after the event has occurred. Using a mixture of analysis and critique, the reflective practitioner generates facts which either uphold or challenge current understandings of the world (Boud et al., 1985, Cunliffe, 2007, Vince, 2001). To reflect critically involves attempting to question the very nature of ourselves as researchers within a number of social and cultural contexts (Reynolds, 1998: 184-189, Reynolds, 1999). I used critical reflection quite widely within the research as it enabled me to question my own psychological motivations as well as the taken-for-granted roles which I held as a researcher over my research participants (Shepherd 2006: 48). In practical terms I reflected on the data by referring to the work of other authors, by discussing my work with colleagues and my supervisor and by asking other people to give their own interpretation of the data in order to understand it from different points of view.

3. RESEARCH FINDINGS

3.1 Main Findings

My data analysis and reflections culminated with a chapter of candid observations on how the project which explored leadership, entrepreneurism and spirituality had been transformed into a psychoanalytical study of my own research practice and subconscious emotion (Shepherd 2006: 42-53). By combining the projective drawing tool with a psychoanalytical philosophy and critically reflective epistemology I was able to generate new, personal levels of learning and knowing. I was very excited by the insight which I had generated, by the reflective methodology I had employed and the projective drawing methodology which seemed to surface so much rich data.

My research results fell into two distinct epistemological categories. The first category explored my attitudinal and emotional reaction to the images that I had created. Within this wide category I surfaced a number of unconscious beliefs about myself and the research participants. I disclosed the feeling of adventure and excitement, attitudes of conquering new challenges and the emotions of happiness, frustration and fearfulness (*ibid*: 42-44). This particular category seemed to be concerned with issues which were important to me in the here-and-now or the very near future. I disclosed this within the first few paragraphs of the analysis ".....I think this is about me... yep I think this is about me... and and, and where I'm going in my.,...and where I'm going I think, where I'm going ...yeah..." (*ibid*: 42). I also noted the way in which I had projected my own attitudes and emotions onto members of the research group for example. This observation led me to question my emotional defence and the reason for such projections (*ibid*: 45).

The second category of results involved a more critically reflective critique of the research in general. I began to question why I had created such a research group in the first place and what common attitudes this group shared with me. I wondered about the way in which I had created the research project itself and the advantage that it gave me over my research participants. I wondered if the research group was actually a representation of my self and the results merely corresponded to my own ontology. I also began to question my own ontological stance and the situated nature of any truth claim which I would develop at the conclusion of the project (*ibid*: 45-49).

4. POST-RESEARCH ACTIVITIES AND LEARNING
4.1 Important Post-Research Decisions
The completion of the MRes. Degree in 2006 led to my enrolment onto the PhD. programme at the University of Hull in the Centre for Management and Organizational Learning. My interest in reflection, emotion and psychoanalysis had begun to intensify after my research project, along with my methodological interest in projective drawings.
The research which I had carried out for the MRes qualification had been personally transformative. As a direct result of the research, I began to make changes in my own life and in some of my relationships which helped me re-define how I experienced the world. The research also helped me question and explore new epistemological and ontological worldviews. Through participation in the research I discovered that many of my own attitudes were restrictive as they were subjective and situational (*ibid*:48).

As I considered the PhD project about to be undertaken I began to explore different approaches to the study of psychoanalysis. I intended to use a psychoanalytical philosophy for my PhD research, however, I was eager to find an approach which would be more representative of the new way in which I was beginning to know and understand myself. The approach which I finally decided to adopt for my PhD is known as Transactional Analysis (TA) (Berne, 1961). TA is based on the psychotherapeutic model of the subconscious and explains our attitudes, behaviours and emotions in terms of how we experienced and made sense of the world in childhood, and how we still tend to use this epistemology in here-and-now situations and throughout our life (*ibid*: 191).

In preparation for the PhD I decided to enrol on a TA course and to participate in a TA group. In May 2007 I joined a local TA group with four other participants and a TA trained facilitator. The aim of the group was to explore our attitudes, emotions and behaviours in the here-and-now and attempt to relate them to TA theory and our earlier childhood experiences. By doing this we would bring our actions and emotions into consciousness, where we could decide, through reflection if they were still valid and useful to us (*ibid*:165-187). The reason I joined the group was to give me concrete experience of psychoanalysis "in the field" and to equip me with a number of methodological tools which I could adopt within the research and at the data analysis stage.

By personally experiencing TA group work, I began to re-contextualise my experiences, my behaviours and attitudes. There were two theories within the TA model which were particularly useful and which helped facilitate a number of personal changes; "ego state" theory and "script" analysis. In the following section I will briefly outline these models and explain their use.

## 4.2 Transactional Analysis-Ego state and Scripts

TA theory describes the "self" as being comprised of three distinct components which regulate all of our conscious and subconscious actions. These components, known as "ego states" and are accessed at different times as reactions to different emotional stimulus. Ego state theory helps to explain why we repeat certain damaging behaviours, why in some situations we may act rationally or irrationally and how past childhood influences either impede or facilitate our adult learning capabilities (*ibid*: 29-43).

TA ego theory states the following:

- Each person thinks, feels and behaves in one of three distinct ways known as ego states. These *ego states* are described as Parent, Adult or Child.

- If a person is thinking feeling and behaving in ways which their parents or main parental influence from childhood thought, felt or behaved they are said to have accesses and to be in the Parent ego state

- If a person is thinking feeling and behaving in ways which is a reaction to the world around them in the here-and-now and using the resources available to them as an adult, they are said to be in the Adult ego state.

- If a person is thinking feeling and behaving in ways which they used to do when they were a child, then they are said to have accesses and to be in the Child ego state (Stewart and Joines, 1987: 11).

We can represent ego states pictorially by using the PAC Model (Figure 1). This model can be used to describe the ego state which we are adopting as we experience different types of feelings, thoughts and behaviours and when we interact with other people (Berne, 1975).

Figure 1: The PAC Model -First Order Structural Diagram

P   Parent Ego State

A   Adult Ego State

C   Child Ego State
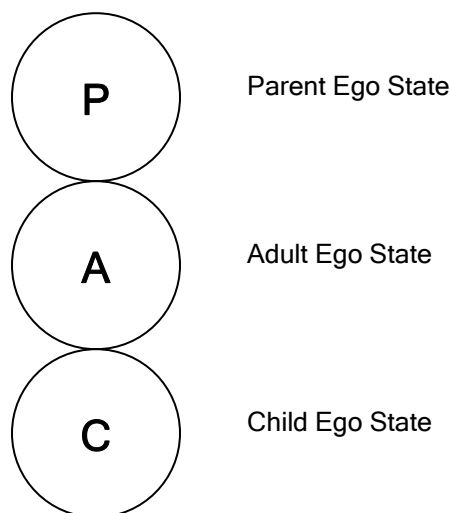
From Berne, E. (1975) What do you Say After you Say Hello? Reading, Corgi Books.

TA utilizes ego state theory to help explain our behaviours, our attitudes and our emotional responses (*ibid*). An individual utilizing the TA framework in order to surface subconscious attitudes and emotions will be assisted by a trained facilitator to become more aware of the ego state they use in the here-and-now. It takes quite some practice to be competent at recognizing when we are accessing different ego states and how this affects our behaviours and thinking.

By utilizing this methodology and becoming more self-aware, I was able to critically examine a number of my own attitudes and behaviours. As I gained more awareness, I discovered that the ego state which I preferred to use more than most was the one which was defending me against emotional and ontological harm. This state also helped me meet some of my basic psychological needs, such as attention and acceptance within a group (Stewart, 1992).

As ego state theory helps explain our individual attitudes and behaviours in terms of emotional defence and psychological needs, so script theory helps explain the way in which we subconsciously plan our lives in order to encounter situations which reinforce our view of the world (Stewart and Joines, 1987: 99-106).

According to script theory, experiences in our early childhood will help shape the rest of our lives and form the main narrative for the drama of our existence. "You have written your own life's story. You began writing it at birth, by the time you are four years old, you have decided on the essentials of the plot. At seven you had completed the story in all of its details…." (*ibid*: 99).

Script theory (which has similarities with other psychoanalytical views of the "life plan") contends that the life script is developed in childhood and represents an infants best way of surviving in an environment which it experiences as hostile. The script also represents the infants attempt at making sense of the experiences of the world, which brings with it a measure of emotional and psychological comfort (Berne, 1961: 116).

Our life script helps to shape who we define ourselves to be, it casts our life as if it were a play and decides on the range of characters we will encounter, the situations that we will put ourselves into and the outcome of our life, which is known as the "payoff" (Stewart and Joines, 1987: 100-103).

My experience in the TA group also helped me to understand the life script that I may hold and the way in which my life corresponded to its script. I found this piece of theory very interesting because after some practice within the group, I began to appreciate how my script was defining some of the decisions I made and how these decisions had quite profound repercussions on other areas of my life.

The culmination of my experiences within the TA group was a new-found sense of self. Through the application of theory and the ability to utilize reflective practices I felt that I was now able to discover new things about myself and how my life script had shaped my past. The TA group had given me a unique opportunity to step away from my emotional reaction to life and begin to make real changes in my ontological and epistemological positions as a reflective practitioner.

5. REVISITING THE RESEARCH-THE STRANGER IN THE MIRROR
5.1 Revisiting and Reflecting
In 2008, in preparation for carrying out my PhD fieldwork, I decided to revisit my MRes. projective drawing research by re-reading my MRes dissertation. The reason for reviewing the MRes project was to enable me to reflect on the research practices I had adopted for that project and to establish if I could incorporate any of those techniques into my PhD work. I was also very interested in reviewing my research conclusions and establishing if there was anything within my conclusions which I should bear in mind as to avoid or incorporate, in order to make my fieldwork more effective (Cunliffe and Easterby-Smith, 2004, Kolb, 1984).

As I re-read my work a feeling of strangeness began to overcome me. I became struck by a sense that the attitudes, emotions and thought processes which I had detailed in the analysis section of my work seemed to no longer represent my here-and-now self. I began to feel that the author of my dissertation was somehow a stranger to me and although I remembered fully writing the work, I felt little connection with it. The section which most interested me and which I felt most dissonance with was my own personal analysis of the four images that I had created in response to my participants drawings (See Appendix) (Shepherd 2006: 36-44).

The way in which this section had been crafted helped me to understand my thoughts and feelings of 2006 and generated the feeling of strangeness which I now felt. I had created the section as a conversation piece, using most of my own verbatim transcripts of my thoughts and feelings as I both created the images and reflected upon them. As I had been so meticulous in writing my own transcripts into the work, I was able to gain a unique insight of my thoughts from within the research project of 2006 (*ibid*). I had come face to face with "the stranger in the mirror".

My reflective practice seemed to show me through the analysis of my past research work, a former self which seemed to be a stranger to my here-and-now self. I no longer felt much of the authors' attitudes to the research, to the participants or to the conclusions which had been generated. As I re-read the work I began to notice that the methodological safeguards I had carefully put into place to ensure my "honest" interpretations were quite ineffective as it seemed that my subconscious had masked my objectivity.

 I also felt an uneasy sense that the author of the MRes dissertation was much more emotionally defended than I had appreciated when I created the work. It seemed to me now that much of my original research observations were based on "scripty" attitudes which used the conditioned ego state I had identified in my TA work. As I reflected on the stranger in the mirror I began to appreciate the implications of such a discovery on my ongoing research practice.

I first wondered how different I was now both emotionally and behaviourally, as a result of participating in TA group work. This work had helped me to connect with my own emotion and behaviour which was itself operating at a subconscious level and regulating my thoughts and feelings (Stewart and Joines, 1987: 100). In 2006 when I carried out my research I was aware of the theoretical impact of our emotions on behaviour, however, I had no practical insight as to how my own deeply ingrained emotional processes were affecting my cognition and ability to learn. As I re-read my dissertation I began to recognize familiar patterns within the narratives which I had surfaced in the TA group and which I discovered were emotional defences to other psychologically threatening worldviews.

As I read through the section again I began to notice how much of the transcript held information as to the ego state I was operating in as I drew and reflected on my drawings. According to TA theory we all operate in a preferred ego state much of the time. This ego state allows us to meet a number of psychological needs and to protect us from perceived emotional harm (*ibid*:11-29). I noticed that I was reflecting in a certain frame of mind, which corresponded to my preferred ego state. My preferred ego state is not the same now as it was in 2006. When I carried out my MRes research my ego state operated at a subconscious level which was out of my awareness. Now I am more able to recognise my own ego state, identify it as an emotional response to my surroundings and attempt to change the ego state to one which best serves the situation. It is clearer to me now that the way in which I carried out the analysis of my MRes was based on an ego state which was

an automatic subconscious reaction to an emotional stimulus and not an authentic reaction as I understand it now.

On examining the four images that I had created as a response to my research participants, I began to notice how alike some of the themes were to images which I had created on my TA course (see Appendix). Figure three for example shows a split image of a man in two different situations, that of a businessman and a bookish musician. I have drawn variations of this split theme over the last year with my TA group. I have also drawn similar themes of evolution (figure 4) and the child on a quest (figure six). The images which I created for the research and the images which have recurred in various ways through my TA work suggest that I am recounting or replaying elements of my life script through these pictures. I found this to be an interesting point as far as my future research is concerned and one which I intend to consider as I analyse the images on my PhD project.

I then began to consider how much of the main research conclusions were based upon the "personal analysis" section of my work. I had crafted the dissertation in a way which attempted to surface my research participants' subconscious feelings, attitudes and behaviours. I had also created a novel way to analyse the images by surfacing my own subconscious processes. The images I created formed the final data which I based much of my research conclusions upon. The personal analysis section was therefore very important, as it tended to contextualize all of the image data and its meaning into four of my own pictures. If the conclusions of my research were based upon my own emotional reaction to the data, and if I had discovered that my own reactions were simply ingrained emotional defences, then how could I be sure that my results were not merely more defensive routines protecting me from the harshness of psychological harm?

Finally, I began to question how much emphasis I had placed at the onset of the research on attempting to provide an honest and candid interpretation of the data. As I created the research project I became very concerned that the interpretations I made should be grounded in theory as a way to provide some justification for my work. As I have already shown in this paper, it was important to me to have a philosophy in which to set my work, a methodology which was based around the philosophy I was adopting and a means of interpretation which used methods which attempted to surface and eliminate bias.

It seemed to me as I reflected on the way in which the research was set up that my research methodology was adequate for the data I intended to capture. This fact in itself I now appreciate is not enough to ensure honesty. I now realized that if the research design was fit for its purpose, then the appearance of the stranger in the mirror was due to the ontological and epistemological changes within my self which helped me to create a different set of truth claims. Honesty, it seems may not be the goal of qualitative research, as honesty implies truth claims which are rigid and dogmatic.

6. CONCLUSION

6.1 Implications for Research

It is clear that the post-research activity of undergoing group TA work had substantial implications for the discovery of my own stranger in the mirror. Through experiencing TA from a practical point of view I was able to examine my own situatedness, my attitudes, behaviours, cognition and emotional defensiveness in ways which altered my perception of my self. The TA work also helped me to question my own ontological and epistemological worldviews, a process which had begun at the data analysis stage of my MRes dissertation.

As I reflected on the research I discovered that some of my observations which I considered to be candid and free from emotional defence, were in fact based on childhood scripts which helped me to meet my own psychological needs. Furthermore I noticed that the language I used throughout the transcription came from my own preferred, conditioned ego state which held only one specific version of reality, the one that protected my ego from alternative, but more psychologically harsh ontologies.

My conclusions after carrying out the reflective work and meeting the reflection of my stranger in the mirror must question the following of my own taken-for-granted issues:

- A well thought out research design, philosophy and methodology is not an adequate safeguard to ensure that qualitative research results are honest and emotionally un-biased.
- It is questionable if any researcher can actually claim to provide honest or candid interpretations of their work as any truth claim seems to be situational and prone to change in the light of new epistemologies.
- A researchers own emotional defence, ego state and life script operate out of awareness and may not be disregarded or "taken into account" by the researcher.
- In order to identify their own psychological defence and scripts, researchers may be prudent to partake in some sort of practical psychoanalytical process which will assist them in their own defence identification.
- Carrying out practical psychoanalytical work may be emotionally and epistemologically unsettling for the researcher, as this process is aimed at re-categorizing experience and questioning the taken-for-granted world.
- Research conclusions which surface participants' emotion in order to generate new knowledge may be compromised unless the researcher is aware of the effect of their own emotional defences and scripts on such data.

APPENDIX

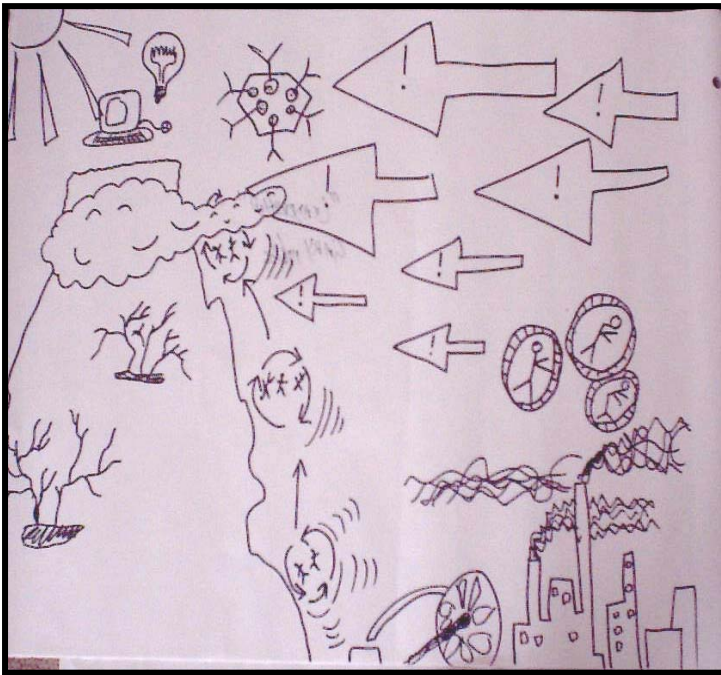## Images created in response to the research themes

Figure 2: Leadership

Figure 3: Entrepreneurism
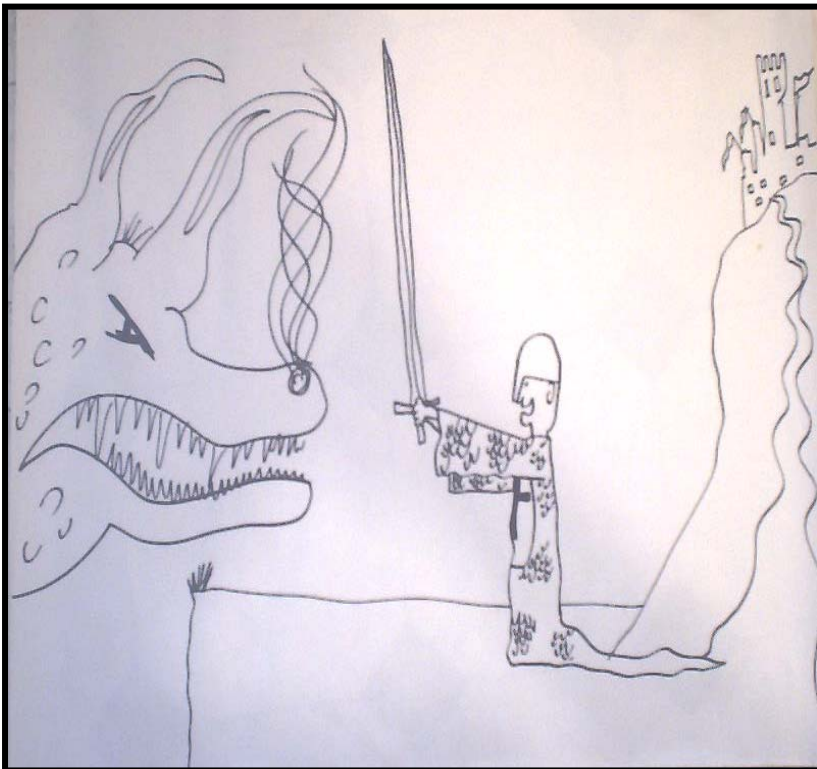
Figure 4: Spirituality

Figure 5: Meta analysis

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