
by

David Peter Lines

Submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Education
School of Arts
University of Surrey

June 2004

© David Peter Lines 2004
Abstract

This research was instigated primarily because the author became aware of the lack of research into the executive company director domain. Executive company directors’ occupy the most senior positions within U.K. corporations and yet appear to remain one of the most under researched groups within this setting.

This research used grounded theory as a methodology of choice to ask the question.

- How do individuals work their way towards the executive company director position?

This main question guided the research towards the development of a model that offers a tentative explanation about the processes that affect the career trajectory of individuals making their way towards a company director post. Twenty-eight executive directors were interviewed for the research, five women and twenty-three men. Symbolic interactionism formed the sensitising framework with which the interview data were analysed in line with the constant comparative processes in grounded theory.

The research findings indicated that the main psychosocial process that affects the career trajectory of potential executive directors appears to be the activities that are focused on ‘balancing visibility and exposure’. The paradox that appears to be evident is that the closer a person is to the executive director position the greater the degree of exposure to risk for the individual concerned.

The model described in this thesis is a three-phase model that encompasses,

- ‘Forming a foundation’,
- ‘Developing and negotiating a route through the organisation’, and
- ‘Surfacing as a potential executive company director’.

A number of categories that form an interactive processual representation of the career trajectory of individuals as they make their way towards the executive director role support these three phases. The findings indicate that the conditions under which individuals become executive directors may preclude a wider range of women and men than identified in the current ‘glass ceiling’ debate. This may result in a form of socialised discrimination that maintains the status quo of executive directors’ career trajectories. This socialised discrimination may be based in the language structure of corporate work creating an organisational perspective of work that appraises the value of individuals’ contribution to the corporation.

The model and the discussion chapters will be of interest to professionals who are working in the following fields of practice, executive mentoring, human resource management, executive recruitment and retention, social scientists who are considering research in this arena, and potential executive directors who are considering an executive career and are currently working as executive directors. The model may be useful as an evaluation tool to reflect on an individual’s career and consider options for further professional and personal development.
## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contents</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Tables</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of figures</td>
<td>11-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of appendices</td>
<td>262-70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>298</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Chapter 1

**The history and beginning of this research**

1:1. Introduction  
1:2. The professional and research background of the researcher  
1:3. The beginning of the research  
1:4. The main research questions  
1:5. The main aims and purposes of the research  
1:6. The structure and content of this grounded theory thesis  
1:7. Chapter summary  

### Chapter 2

**Executive company directors in context**

2:1. Introduction  
2:2. The research field  
2:3. Discussion of the possible reasons for lack of research in this field  
2:4. Overview and themes in the research literature  
2:5. Main themes of the extant research literature  
2:6. Differences between management and direction setting.  
2:7. Methods used by researchers in this field  
2:8. Rationale for conducting research in this area  
2:9. Chapter summary
Chapter 3
Research methodology and approach

3:1. Introduction
3:2. Scope of the study
3:3.1. The range of research alternatives
3:3.2. Action research approaches
3:3.3. Participatory and collaborative approaches
3:4.1. Selecting grounded theory as the research methodology
3:4.2. The constructivist paradigm and grounded theory
3:5.1. The purpose of grounded theory research
3:6. The phases and processes of grounded theory
3:7. The process of generating a grounded theory
3:8. The use of the literature in grounded theory
3:9.1. The limitations of grounded theory research
3:9.2. Reliability and validity
3:10.1. Research design: Phases and activities
3:10.2. Initial research phase
3:10.3. In-depth interview process
3:10.4. Phase 2: Recruitment of the research participants
3:10.5. Profile of the research participants
3:10.6. Phase 3: Balancing the gender distribution in the research
3:11. Summary

Chapter 4
Application of grounded theory to the research field

4:1. Introduction
4:2. The process of grounded theory overview
4:3. Research context
Chapter 5
Overview of the research theoretical scheme: How individuals surfaced as potential executive directors.

5:1. Introduction

5:2. Overview of the research theoretical scheme
5:2.1. Forming a foundation for an executive career
5:2.2. Forming a sense of personal ambition.
5:2.3. Learning from significant others.
5:2.4. Growing proficient skills
5:2.5. Aligning self to significant others
5:2.6. Sustaining personal preferences and ambitions
5:2.7. Developing a sense of a capable self
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5:3.8. Developing formal and informal relationships</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:3.9. Forming an understanding of how organisations work</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:4.1. Developing and negotiating a path through the corporation</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:4.2. Taking opportunities and responsibility</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:4.3. Making things happen</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:4.4. Negotiating a path through the organisation</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:5.1. Surfacing towards the executive position</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:5.2. Meeting expectations</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:5.3. Presenting an acceptable self</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:5.4. Demonstrating good judgement, sensemaking, business and political</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:5.5. Visible as a potential executive</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:6. Chapter summary</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 6</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The emergence and social career of a potential executive company director. Discussion of the core basic psychosocial process: Balancing visibility and exposure.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:1. Introduction</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:2. Defining terms: Balancing, Visibility, and Exposure</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:3. The social world of corporations</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:4. The social construction of visibility within the corporate environment</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:5. Conditions under which visibility occurred</td>
<td>218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:6. Contingencies</td>
<td>224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:7. Consequences of visibility</td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:8. Summary</td>
<td>232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 7</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary and contribution</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:1. Introduction</td>
<td>234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:2.1. General conclusions and research summary</td>
<td>234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:2.2. Adopting a personal career</td>
<td>235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7:2.3. Contributing value to the organisation
7:2.4. Visibility a construction of organisational language
7:3. Principle areas of contribution
7:3.1. Methodology – application of Grounded Theory to the research of the social processes affecting people as they progress in their corporate lives
7:3.2. Literature
7:3.2. Implications of this research for policy makers
7:4.1 Limitations of using Grounded Theory methodology in this field
7:4.2. The position of the researcher in grounded theory research
7:4.3. Representation of the researcher's voice in the thesis
7:5. Evaluation of the research
7:6. Suggestions for further research in this area
7:7. Outcomes of the research
7:7.1. Research outcomes
7:7.2. Personal outcomes
7:8. Epilogue

Appendices
Appendix 1.
Appendix 2. Research questions
Appendix 3. Cluster Diagrams
Education and Learning
Interpersonal Perspective
Relationship with the Organisation
Intra-psychic Perspective
Practice Work Elements
Appendix 4. Interview No 2 Coding

References
List of Tables and Figures

Tables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Table 2:1.</td>
<td>Ages of attaining first executive director position: Adapted from Tait (1995)</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 2:2.</td>
<td>The main differences in the work of managers and executive directors.</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 3:1.</td>
<td>Range of disciplinary perspectives that inform qualitative research.</td>
<td>62 &amp; 63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 3:2.</td>
<td>Definitions of the literature used within grounded theory.</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4:1.</td>
<td>Profile of the men and women who participated in the research in pilot study.</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4:2.</td>
<td>Profile of the participants following the pilot study.</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4:3.</td>
<td>Preliminary questions used in the primary interviews.</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4:4.</td>
<td>The processes and products of data analysis in grounded theory. (Taken and adapted from Gregory &amp; Lee 1999: p15)</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4:5.</td>
<td>Examples of the provisional categories that were developed early on in the research.</td>
<td>135-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4:6.</td>
<td>Examples of questions that were asked during the process of Open Coding.</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4:7.</td>
<td>Example of theoretical notes.</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4:8.</td>
<td>Example of an early Memo</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4:9.</td>
<td>Example of a later Memo</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4:10.</td>
<td>The 6C's of grounded theory.</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figures</td>
<td>Page</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Figure 4:1</strong></td>
<td>Diagram of how the researcher made contact with the research participants.</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Figure 4:2</strong></td>
<td>Sequence of research sampling activities.</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Figure 4:3</strong></td>
<td>Extract from Interview 1 to illustrate initial coding of interview data.</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Figure 4:4</strong></td>
<td>Practice work elements cluster of descriptive codes.</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Figure 4:5</strong></td>
<td>Process of analysis in grounded theory: From interview to category formation.</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Figure 4:6</strong></td>
<td>Pyramid diagram of research concepts identified during the analytical process.</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Figure 4:7</strong></td>
<td>Process of analysis in grounded theory: From categories to tentative theory.</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Figure 4:8</strong></td>
<td>The three phases of the individuals' development towards the executive position.</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Figure 5:1</strong></td>
<td>Relationships between the research categories, the three phases of career development, and the core category 'becoming visible as a potential executive director'.</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Figure 5:2</strong></td>
<td>Basic categories of 'Forming a foundation for an executive position'.</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Figure 5:3</strong></td>
<td>Categories that interact with 'forming a sense of personal ambition' for the men in the research.</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Figure 5:4</strong></td>
<td>Forming a foundation: category development. (Part of Figure 5:1.)</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Figure 5:5</strong></td>
<td>Developing and negotiating phase supporting categories. (Part of Figure 5:1.)</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Figure 5:6</strong></td>
<td>Surfacing towards the executive position: Supporting categories. (Part of Figure 5:1.)</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 6:1.</td>
<td>Relationship between the concepts, concealed, visibility, and exposure.</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 6:2.</td>
<td>Conditions under which visibility may turn into exposure.</td>
<td>223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 6:3.</td>
<td>A Cairn diagram of the flatter organisation with possible entry points for an organisational career.</td>
<td>227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 6:4.</td>
<td>Mapping the research participants against organisational entry level.</td>
<td>228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 6:5.</td>
<td>Relationship between visibility and exposure supporting and conflicting categories.</td>
<td>229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 7:1.</td>
<td>Reproduction of Figure 6:1. Relationship between Visibility and Exposure</td>
<td>237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 7:2.</td>
<td>A model of Executive Mentoring Processes. (Taken from Clutterbuck &amp; Megginson (1999: p22)</td>
<td>257</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Acknowledgements

This research was the result of a chance meeting in a corridor between sessions in my work; I would like to thank Andrew Constable for his stimulating and thought provoking questions. In addition, I would like to thank everyone who contributed towards this research study over the past seven years, in particular the following people.

Dr. Paul Barber for supervising me during the time it took me to complete and write it up this research; for his patience and perseverance throughout a difficult and challenging time.

Dr. Josephine Gregory for her supervision about Grounded Theory, her challenges and support regarding my early analysis, and the subsequent derivations of the final core category.

My research support group, Joanna Howard, Paul Ballman and Eden Charles, who challenged me during the first two years of the study.

Dr. Christina Evans who met to discuss my ideas and graciously offered her opinions and views regarding this study over the entire period of the lengthy research process, and without whose constant support I would not have persevered.

Graham Robinson who kept a background presence that persuaded me to continue walking along this path.

To Janet Scovell who listened while I talked about the development journey with which I was involved, and Sheila Wagstaff who gave her support.

To the Learning Resource Centre at Roffey Park Institute who searched out my requests and found the elusive articles and books for me, and my colleagues at Roffey Park who asked encouraging questions and were interested in the results.

Thank you to Nikki, my partner for the past 21 years, who in spite of the obvious hardships and trials of living with someone who is engrossed in Doctoral work, supported me during this phase of our life journey together.

To Jonathan my eldest son who grew up along the way and demonstrated through his own studies how to apply oneself to the business of being a researcher.

To Benjamin who through his singing, fun and laughter and latterly his poems, showed me how life can be fun as well as serious.

To the participants who allowed me to interview them and trusted me with their stories. If you ever read this thesis I trust that you recognise the themes I have developed and that they are useful to you in your work as executive directors.
Chapter 1
The history and beginning of this research.

1:1. Introduction

This chapter will introduce how this researcher began to research the field of executive company directors. The main aims and purposes of the research will be discussed and potential outcomes will be identified. The research question that guided the emergence and further development of the research will be discussed. There will also be a short biography of the researcher and his professional experiences of research prior to beginning this inquiry to connect the reader with the perspectives that the researcher’s career brings to this research. The research is positioned within the field of executive company directors so that potential applications of the research findings and outcomes can be identified. In the final section of this chapter, the thesis will be outlined to orientate the reader to the form and content of research reporting that has used grounded theory as the methodology.

1:2. The professional and research background of the researcher.

This section will describe the professional preparation that this researcher experienced prior to beginning this inquiry. It will include a brief discussion about the researcher’s previous research experience and the biases that were brought to the development of this research with executive company directors.

This researcher developed his professional skills within the nursing profession, making his way from a clinically based practice to a teaching practice inside the National Health Service within the U.K. It was during his preparation as a Nurse Tutor at the University of Surrey, where he was studying for his Post Graduate Certificate in Education of Adults (PGCEA), that this researcher encountered the Human Potential Research Group. This contact with the HPRG significantly altered this researchers ‘teaching’ practice and began a route that he continues to follow. The HPRG introduced him to an approach to working with other people, whether they were student nurses or qualified practitioners within Nursing or other professional disciplines, based on humanistic principles and a facilitative style and
founded on the work of John Heron (1989) and other facilitators within the HPRG. This contrasted and conflicted with this researcher’s teaching style that at that time positioned the teacher and learner in a didactic relationship based on the teacher as the knowledge expert and the learner as recipient of that expert knowledge.

In addition to the process of the PGCEA programme, this researcher participated in experiential workshops that introduced him to facilitative practice, and began to immerse him in a participative culture of learning where everyone took part in the organisation and development of the learning experience. There were other influences around this time; Paulo Freire’s (1972) work with illiterate people in Brazil, where he used people’s stories to facilitate their ability read and write; the work of Postman & Weingartner (1969) who approached learning in the classroom as an inquiry where the ‘teacher’ and the ‘pupils’ developed a dialogical relationship with learning and the development of the curriculum; Brookfield’s (1986) writing about adult learning and how this could be facilitated and the work of Schon (1983) which focused on shifting professional practice from a base of ‘technical rationality’ (Op Cit p21) towards a process of ‘reflection in action’. This was a challenge at the time since the preparation of nurses was embedded in a traditional and hierarchical model of teaching and learning and ideas that altered this form were unwelcome within some Schools of Nursing and Health Districts. During this period this researcher gained a sense of undertaking a piece of ‘research’ that utilised an action research approach to developing the content for students nurses learning to provide the care for people who had experienced a ‘stroke’ episode. It was from this beginning that eventually a District Hospital in the South of England opened a specialised unit for the nursing care of people following ‘strokes’. However, even though this introduction to research whetted the appetite for further inquires, it relied on conversation and content analysis as the main method for producing the ideas that led to the specialised unit opening and, as a result, it can be seen as the work of a naïve researcher.

On his return from this preparation, this researcher obtained a nurse tutor’s position that focused on working with qualified nurses to determine and work together on their professional development. At this time, he worked to alter, by redesign, the
approach that was being taken to the professional development of registered nurses within a particular Health District. The introduction of development programmes where the participants collaborated in the design and delivery of their own courses provided the researcher with a wealth of experience of experiential ways of working and formed the foundation for further learning and development within the HPRG department. As a result of a career change, when this researcher left nurse education and began to practice as an independent facilitator and mentor, the learning process within the Facilitators Style programme became an important connection between the researcher’s mentoring practice and his continuing professional education and development.

Consequently, this researcher began to gain further experience of working with managers within the commercial sector and senior people outside of the health service. As his experience grew, and independent practice introduced more variety and diversity, he embraced a more holistic approach to development within his work that included the interrelationships between management practice and their personal life. In association with this development, he experienced a growing awareness of the impact of humanistic ideas upon his practice. In particular, that the humanistic concern appears to be with what individuals’ make of their lives, how they develop meaning (Fox 1990: p30) within those lives and, by implication, how they manage themselves. The focus of the facilitator and the participant being in a dialogical relationship that is similar to the relationship advocated by Freiré (1972), Postman & Weingartner (1969), and Heron (1989) permeated this researcher’s professional practice.

This section has provided a brief description of an ongoing process that continues to alter and change as this researcher experiences his work and personal life. This position at the beginning of the research does not imply a stable and fixed point of learning that remained constant throughout the researcher’s inquiry into the world of executive company directors, rather it is part of the background against which this research commenced and developed.
1:3. The beginning of the research

The exact beginning of this research is hard to describe, as it is the combination of a number of interrelating events and situations. As described above this researcher had made a significant shift in his professional practice from a nurse educator within the health service to an independent practitioner as a facilitator working with managers from a variety of commercial and charitable organisations. In parallel with this shift, he was working in partnership with his wife to bring up his two children. In addition, he was also engaged with ongoing personal and professional development within an action learning set of peer facilitators that continued to challenge and support his practice. However, the inquiry and research that seemed to be part of the nurse education scene within the health service appeared to be taking a lower profile within his work. During a casual conversation in a corridor within a management development institute, this researcher began to listen to the theme of executive development. Questions were being asked regarding the development of executive company directors. This sparked off a sense of curiosity regarding executive directors. However, this researcher had little experience of working with people who were, as senior as executive directors' and any further inquiry would present a number of challenges in terms of research competence and experience.

1:4. The main research questions.

The early part of this research generated a number of questions concerning the development and education of the executive director. A variety of opinions were uncovered, ranging from the perspective that executive directors probably did not require development because they had already ‘made it to the top’ of the organisation to the perception that they were beyond requiring the type of ‘development’ that may support manager development. The notion that executive company directors were ‘beyond development’ raises interesting questions concerning the nature and process of ‘development’. As identified in the previous section, this researcher’s position reflected the idea that ‘development’ was, and is, a life-long process (Jarvis 1983a: p11. Jarvis 1983b: 15-16) that aligns with Schon’s (1983) ideas regarding the reflective practitioner. As a result of this apparent
difference in perspectives, this researcher decided to continue to inquire into the field of the executive director. However, as this process continued it became clear (2:3.) that there appeared to be little in the way of research into this field. Informal conversations held with other executive developers and writers in the field (Garratt: Robinson: Boydell) during 1995 appeared to support this assumption. At an anecdotal level there were assumptions related to how individuals become executives and the impression appeared to be that for some of the individuals, the route towards the executive position was a mixture of ‘playing golf with the boss’, and ‘playing sufficient politics to get to the top of the organisation’.

However, this did not seem to explain how people became executive directors and raised the question of the possible processes that may underpin their trajectory towards the executive position. At the beginning of this research, it appeared to be a suitable question with which to begin this inquiry. In addition, Richter (1998: p300) argues that “…executive directors are considered to be key players in terms of influencing organisational action.” Garratt (1997) points out that the executive director is one of the few people who are responsible for the entire organisation, ranging from deciding on the vision and mission of the company, across the gambit of the strategic aspects and including the manner in which the organisation manages the process of conducting its business. The main research question became one that focused on a broad area of inquiry into how individuals work their way towards the executive director position.

The main question was phrased in the following way,

• “How do individuals work their way towards the executive director’s position?

1:5. The main aims and purpose of the research.

The aims of this study reflect personal aspirations and professional development interests of the researcher that connect with the focus of the inquiry and that arise out of the rationale presented in the previous section. Therefore, there are three main
elements to the aims and outcomes expected and planned for from this study, both personal and professional elements for the researcher. Those that reflect a need for executive directors to review their professional status within the business community and those that focus on making an academic contribution to the community of researchers involved in adult and professional education. The overarching focus of this study is the production of a thesis for submission in partial fulfilment of the requirements of a Doctorate of Philosophy within the Department of Education at the University of Surrey.

The following aims are outlined from these three perspectives. At a personal and professional level, the researcher’s aims were to develop:

- The ability to undertake a systematic inquiry and use this ability to enhance his professional practice within the field of executive development.
- Knowledge and understanding regarding the breadth, depth and complexity of the executive development field so that a contribution will be made to the literature that supports the debates surrounding the selection, retention and development of executive directors within the business community.
- Links between executive development and the promotion of good practice in the boardroom, by creating an active dialogue with Human Resource professionals, executive directors' and researchers'.

The Institute of Directors is currently working towards increasing the professional status of the executive director, which is in line with the government legislation that governs the practice and conduct of executives, (1997). Additionally pressure from business groups such as the London Stock Exchange, who are lobbying for directors to receive an integrated and structured approach to their preparation so that companies are directed more effectively, is being focused on listed companies that trade their stocks and shares within the stock exchange system.
Other aims of the research focus on adding to the research literature in this field so that an active research agenda can be promoted and developed, (Richter 1998). This study was primarily conceived as being an exploratory one that could surface from the field those issues that executive directors deem as important and vital to their work as executives. Other areas that may benefit from research of this type are career centres providing advice and guidance for the 16+ age group within schools, colleges and universities. The design and development of management development programmes for people leaving full time education, the recruitment of ‘high flyers’ within corporations and other executive development initiatives may also benefit from the results of this inquiry. This study was seen as demarcating a platform from which further research could be undertaken in this arena, by providing a foundation for generating further research papers, conference seminars and articles.

1:6. The structure and content of this grounded theory thesis.

Even though this chapter is an introduction to the thesis and a description of the origins of this research, this section has been added into the chapter to provide an explanation of the differences that undertaking grounded theory research made to the subsequent inquiry. The structure of a grounded theory thesis differs from reports of 'hypothetico-deductive' research in that the purpose of a grounded theory study is to develop ideas, hypothesis and theoretical schemes from data that is systematically obtained from the field under study, (Glaser & Strauss 1967: p2ff). This is different from those research approaches that begin with a conceptual and theoretical framework regarding the subject of the research and which subsequently shape and direct the focus of the inquiry. Briefly, the hypothetico-deductive approach begins with theory and moves out into the world where the theory is tested against empirical observations. Grounded theory however, begins with the collection of data from the field and then, through a process of constant comparative analysis, generates the conceptual density and theoretical frameworks that underpin the emergent and tentative theory, (Lock 2001: p36 ff.). This type of research affects the form and structure of papers, reports and thesis written from research using a grounded theory approach, in the following ways. The relationship between the initial question and the final report in hypothetical deductive approaches seems
linear in its logical presentation and proceeds in form from the primary hypothesis through to the final report. Whereas in a grounded theory approach the original research question is often broad and often changes during the spirals of data gathering and analysis that produce the final theoretical framework. The literature chapter in grounded theory provides a background and context for the inquiry, thereby positioning the research within the field of study. Further literature interacts with the data during the inquiry to develop the conceptual density and rigor of the emerging theoretical frameworks that are developed from the constant comparative analysis process.

The following arrangement of chapters in this thesis uses May’s (1986: 146 ff.) ideas as a framework for presenting a thesis developed from a grounded theory methodology.

Chapter 1 has been an introduction to this research thesis, containing a discussion of the beginning and the original questions that led to the research being undertaken.

Chapter 2, in line with Glaser & Strauss (1967), May (1986), Glaser (1992) and Gregory (1994), forms a contextual background to the research and is not intended to be a full literature review of the field. However, as will be discussed further in Chapter 2 the most pertinent literature will be drawn upon so that main themes can be identified without jeopardising the integrity and purpose of grounded theory. (3:5.1. & 3:8.1.)

Chapter 3 outlines the main discussion regarding the choice of an appropriate methodology and the decisions that were made by this researcher during the research process. The rationale for conducting research in this field is discussed and the reasons why grounded theory was used in this research will be debated. Grounded theory as a methodology will be critiqued in order to position grounded theory from a constructivist perspective within the qualitative research paradigm.

Chapter 4 demonstrates how this researcher utilized grounded theory in the field of executive company directors using interview data taken from the research to support
and substantiate the applications. This chapter also illustrates how the model (Ch 5) and the theory (Ch 6) were derived from the data through the subsequent analytical processes and methods of grounded theory.

Chapter 5 is a discussion of the findings and presents a tentative model with supporting theory that was constructed and developed from the interview data collected during the life of this research.

Chapter 6 continues with a discussion of the basic social process 'balancing visibility and exposure' that appeared to underpin the model and process of working towards the executive director position. This chapter forms the main discussion of the tentative arguments that support the notion that as individuals work their way towards the executive role they are preoccupied with their visibility and exposure. The tension that exists between these two aspects of working within organisations may lead towards an explanation of the decisions and actions that are taken by potential executives during their career trajectory.

Chapter 7 forms this researcher's contribution to the research community, and the executive director practice communities. It summarises the results of the research, developing main themes that can shape further research in this area. Several ideas for further research are outlined and suggestions are made for carrying these forward into the executive director community. The implications for practice in associated disciplines such as Human Resource Management, Executive Recruitment and Mentoring and Coaching are outlined and suggestions are made for how these disciplines can begin to address the concerns that arise from this research. This researcher has also identified areas of policy that may require revisiting and reviewing following this research, such as succession planning, executive development and organisational recruitment strategies. This researcher suggests that further research into the psychosocial phenomenon of ‘visibility’ is also required as the implications of personal and professional visibility and how visibility is socially constructed may produce significant consequences for individuals and groups within our society.
1:7. Chapter summary.

This chapter has provided a map of the thesis and an outline of subsequent chapters. The origins of the research were identified and the development of the original research questions outlined. This researcher has provided a personal biography to position him within the research and provide a context of the researcher's worldview at the commencement of this inquiry.

The next chapter will, as outlined above, provide a context for the research against which the researcher made decisions regarding the choice of an appropriate methodology.
Chapter 2.

Executive company directors in context.

2:1. Introduction

This chapter will provide a contextual background against which this research can be analysed and discussed. However, in accordance with the principles of conducting grounded theory research (Glaser & Strauss 1967; Strauss & Corbin 1990; Chenitz & Swanson 1986) this chapter will not provide a theoretical hypothesis that can be tested within the research. It is not the purpose of grounded theory to test or verify theories. Rather it is used to assemble evidence, collected in terms of observation and interviews, to uncover ideas and fresh hypotheses from the research subjects and field, to develop substantive theory about social events and processes, (Gumnesson 1991 p83: Glaser & Strauss 1967 p28-31). The relationship between the literature and the construction of grounded theory is a matter of debate. The discussion focuses on when to use the literature within grounded theory research and the relationship between field data and literature data, (Glaser & Strauss 1967; Strauss & Corbin 1990: Locke 2001: Chapter 3:8.1.). Glaser & Strauss’ (1967: p21ff) work with grounded theory was in part due to their reaction to the way in which theory was being derived by academics and particularly sociologists. The main practice at the time Glaser & Strauss (Op Cit ) were writing was to exemplify and develop theory from existing theory and venture into the field to verify or confirm a priori (Op Cit p29) assumptions regarding the nature and form of the phenomenon or social process that is being researched. In methodologies (See section 3:3.1.) that develop the research question from existing research and extant theories and hypothesis, the literature forms the basis of the project providing the researcher with a place to start, (Chenitz & Swanson 1985). As a result, the literature was the starting point of social research and therefore was positioned to influence and direct research possibly along similar avenues of inquiry. Glaser & Strauss’ (Op Cit) reaction to this was to develop a methodology that would leave the literature to one side until
substantial fieldwork had been carried out and therefore the claim of basing the theory in the ground of the field data could be made. However, the grounded theorist begins with the research situation and selects the participants that can provide the information required for the inquiry. The research then uses the data collected to generate and develop ideas, compare these with the literature to develop theoretical sensitivity and widen the scope using the constant comparative method, (Glaser & Strauss 1967: Strauss & Corbin 1990: Locke 2001). This relationship between the literature and the data is explained by Glaser (1992: p32-3) in the following manner.

“A modicum of literature – this is the most likely condition. The researcher should not worry about covering the literature in the same field before his research begins, [except to write up a context for other readers in the early stages] since it will always be there. It does not go away! Moreover, there will be plenty of time during the grounded theory process to integrate this literature with the emergent theory during saturation, densifying and sorting. Especially during sorting and then writing, the researcher-analyst by constant comparison reconciles differences, shows similarities in concepts and patterns, and imbuces his work with the data and concepts in the literature.”

However, this presents a number of issues for the researcher regarding when and how the researcher introduces the literature into the research. These points will be addressed further in the next chapter. Therefore, this chapter will provide a “modicum of literature” (Op Cit) to contextualise the research. The reader can use this chapter to position the research question and view the process of this grounded theory research. The literature, drawn mainly from a sociological perspective, including relevant research from social psychology will be introduced throughout the research as relevant to the analytical process and will be used to support and challenge the research findings. Consequently, the literature will become a fundamental part of the discussion of the core category in Chapter 6. This chapter will outline and discuss the pertinent
literature concerning the main question of this research. To remind the reader the research question is:

- How do individuals work their way towards the executive company director position?

In view of the dearth of research in this area, the literature is drawn from relevant sources concerning executive company directors and the academic disciplines of sociology and social psychology. In addition to this, the early interviews will be used to provide contextual information taken directly from the participants’ experience and appreciation of working within the field. To help bring a sense of life to the research early data will be brought forward to show the relevancy of some of the literature. This will mainly take the form of quotes and extracts from the first seven interviews prior to developing theoretical sensitivity (C.f. 3:6.1.), after which the researcher will have become attuned to the submerged issues surfacing from the constant comparison of interview data and the development of the research categories. The relationship between grounded theory, the literature and how this shapes and affects a grounded theorists approach will be discussed more fully in Chapter 3. Glaser & Strauss (1967) offered a proviso regarding the literature. Even though they were adamant that grounded theorists should not begin with the literature in case they bias the research and turn away from the field experiences of the people they interviewed or observed, they did expect the researcher to read as widely as possible, (Glaser & Strauss 1967). Therefore, as part of this contextual chapter, the historical emergence of executive company directors will be discussed as part of a general overview of the research field. This will provide the background for a synopsis of the main themes and assumptions that exist in the literature within the field. In addition to this, relevant and pertinent literature will be drawn from sociology and social psychology to highlight the breadth and scope of the issues that exist within the executive director arena. There will be a discussion regarding the possible reasons for lack of research in this field, following which; this researcher will put forward a rationale for conducting research in this area.
Chenitz & Swanson (1986) point out that within grounded theory methodology the literature is revisited and used as part of a process of constant comparison, with the research findings (Glaser & Strauss 1967), as the categories are formed and the core category is developed. The literature will therefore resurface, within discussion Chapters 6 & 7, following the outline description of the research findings, in Chapter 5, so that the research can be connected into a fuller theoretical discussion of the findings.

2:2. The research field.

At the time of writing, there were 450,000 registered and active companies within the U.K. (Lindon-Travers 1990). These companies are organised and managed through an executive board that is responsible for the company’s growth and business development. The executive board is composed of a number of Executive Directors, a Chief Executive, and Chairman and in many cases a small number of non-executive directors, (Garratt 1996 p40-2: Coulson-Thomas 1993 p204ff). Executive directors are among the most senior people within the corporate structure and are legally responsible for the governance and management of the company in which they work (Pennington 1990: Gower 1992). Therefore, executive directors are in a position of significant influence and authority within the organisation. This position has been consolidated through various developments of the legal frameworks supporting company law and corporate governance, (Gower 1992). In addition to this, there is considerable historical precedence (Berle & Means 1967) to support the composition of corporations with executive directors at the pinnacle of the corporate hierarchy.

Executive directors represent the mega or macro actors (Stones 1998: p304) within the corporate system and as such, their actions and the decisions they make, because of their situation at the top of the corporate hierarchy, will affect a larger number of people than the meso or micro actors within the corporate system. The combination of legal authority and social hierarchical power places
executive directors’ in a significant position within the business community. As Drucker (Cited in Sampson 1995: p26) asserts, the station that executive directors occupy within the social and business community provides them with enormous social power over the people employed by the organisation. Hence, by implication, the process/es by which individuals become an executive directors turn out to be important because of the wide-ranging implications of their decisions and the impact of these on the business they are directing (Cadbury 1993b: p 8-10), the people who work within the corporation (Kennedy 1994: p64ff) and the social consequences of those decisions, (Galbraith 1990). Being at the ‘top’ of a corporation appears to offer a number of advantages, one being ‘power and authority’, another being the subsequent financial rewards and possible personal freedom of action. However, the connection of executives as the creators of wealth (Kakabadse 1991) within the corporation, and therefore through association as propagators of capitalism, by implication executive directors may be seen as guardians of the economy. In addition to this, executive directors are predominately male, (Marshall1995: Barry 1998: Rigby 1993 & 1998) and therefore may be seen to represent what Lengermann & Niebrugge-Brantley (2000: p484) describe as a ‘male-dominated community’ and all that it symbolises within society.

However, the routes to the executive position remain relatively open in contrast to other professional groups such as accountancy, medicine and the law, where there are examined entrance requirements and a process of accredited preparation for the eventual role. (Storey, Edwards & Sisson 1997: p67) As a result, the means by which people working within a corporation progress towards the executive position is not necessarily as organised as the regulated pathways of other professional groups. Alban-Metcalf & Nicholson (1984) identify that for the majority of U.K. managers there are four main pathways through the organisation,

“...they have the option of going elsewhere or staying; they also have the option of pursuing a career path within a discipline or function, or becoming general managers.” (Op Cit)
Storey, Edwards and Sisson (1997 p66ff) point out that the experience of people within the corporation is complex and may differ substantially from company to company. Therefore, the progression of an individual towards the executive position may be contingent on a multiplicity of conditions that differ across different organisations. Even though in Storey et al’s (Op Cit) work on management careers there were some commonalities across the companies they studied, in the main the progression of the individual depended on the manner in which the corporation organised the opportunity structures and career trajectory within the organisation. However, Storey, Edwards & Sisson (1997 p64) identify a significant perspective with regard to how managers ‘get on’ or progress within the company in which they work- the labour market. They argue that within the U.K. companies are more inclined to use an external labour market approach to recruiting senior managers and possibly executive directors than, for example, Japan where managers are mainly developed within the company and progress through the same organisation for the majority of their career. This implies that for individuals specifically working towards an executive director position, it could be expected that they would move from company to company until they attained an executive role. This appeared to be supported in the findings of this research, where the participants’ described how ‘moving on’ became important at different times in their working lives. The participants described their reasons for ‘moving on’ in the following way.

“I get bored easily, I like changes. I like throwing myself into the deep end and learning to swim and swimming out the other end and then going onto doing something else entirely, I have done that most of my career. I have done a wide variety of projects like that.” (Interview 1 page 1)

“G. Wanting to become [an executive director] was one of the reasons I left AXD. I was 34 years old. I had always hoped that I could get to that point in AXD. The bigger the company, the harder it sometimes is and I suspect that some aspects of me, two issues, one is that sometimes you
need to go and start with a clean slate so you lose some old baggage having been there man and boy. You then need to test yourself; [ask the question] can I do this again? Once you grow up with something, sometimes it is easier to say well, I can only do it in one environment.”

(Interview 2 page 4)

These two extracts reveal a number of purposes for moving on during a persons’ career, from personal motivation to keep the work interesting, to taking a position so that the individual could test themselves and self-determine their suitability for an executive role. The main intention of the participants for ‘moving on’ from company to company, or from job to job within the same organisation, was to increase the range and scope of their responsibilities and to develop their experience. In addition to this, some of the participants ‘moved on’ when they considered that the work they were involved with was not progressing as fast as they wished. However, the majority of the participants' in this research supported the idea that individuals who are working towards an executive role may expect, and are indeed willing, to move employers on a regular basis so that they can continue to progress within their career. The women in this research had a slightly different pattern, appearing to form a base in a large city, e.g. London, and then use this as an anchor point from which they could move around in their career. However, the women who were interviewed all had ‘husbands'/partners, who appeared to be secure in their own career, providing a possible foundation from which to work and return to even when they were working away from home. In addition to this, two of the women in the research talked about having either an au pair or a nanny to look after their children during the week so that the demands of their children did not preclude them from taking a full part in their work.

There are two main assumptions in the discussion regarding the progression of individuals towards the executive position. The first assumption is that executive directors are a professional group in their own right. The second assumption is that individuals progress from a professional, technical route
through a managerial structure into general management and then into the executive role.

The first assumption of executive directors being a professional group in their own right is an important aspect to clarify. Giddens (2001: p293) identifies the following aspects and dimensions that can act as criteria for determining whether a group of people or a person is a professional. The first aspect is the "possession of credentials, [in the form of] degrees, diplomas and other qualifications." Other aspects include the restriction of entry into the profession using a qualifications gateway, which is monitored by a self-governing professional association and a general acceptance that only members of the professional group can practice (Giddens 2001: p294). Millerson (1964) identifies a slightly different set of criteria for determining whether a group is a profession using six measures for evaluating the degree to which a group can claim professional status:

1. The use of skills based on theoretical knowledge
2. Education and training in these skills
3. The competence of professionals ensured by examinations
4. A code of conduct to ensure professional integrity
5. Performance of a service that is for the public good
6. A professional association that organises [its] members

A high percentage of executive directors have first degrees and/or Masters in Business Administration and are professionally qualified in disciplines such as engineering, accountancy, the Law, pharmacy and other fields. However, at the time this research commenced there were no professional qualifications available for individuals to attain the status or the position of a professional executive director. This situation altered around the late 1990’s when the Institute of Directors, in conjunction with the Metropolitan University of Leeds, launched a Chartered Director programme for experienced managers and current executive directors to gain a qualification in directing companies.
In addition, the Institute of Directors (IoD) has restricted entry to the programme to those people who are either serving on a Board with a minimum of four executive directors, or those individuals who are being promoted to a Boardroom position with a similar board composition. (Institute of Directors 1997) As a consequence of restricting the entrance requirements, the IoD is making progress towards a time when the Chartered Director qualification may be considered the necessary qualification for an individual to become an executive director and the professionalisation of executive directors.

However, even though there has been considerable progress toward the professionalisation of directors, the regulation of executive directors remains with the Department of Trade and Industry, which is responsible for the prosecution and eventual disqualification of executive directors who have been considered to be negligent of their executive directorial duties or contravened the legislation and articles of Company Law. It is worth pointing out however, that even though there is no self-regulated body organised by executive directors as a professional group, they are subject to the normal proceedings of civil and criminal law, with increasing legislation relating specifically to the conduct of corporations. (Pennington 1990) Therefore, executive directors can be disqualified from ‘practicing’ as directors. This indicates that the time when individuals are required to be qualified as part of a professional group of executive directors may be increasingly closer. As Giddens (2001: p294) points out, this move may also create the situation whereby individuals that may be considered unsuitable to be directors may be excluded from qualifying and practicing as executive directors. Parkin (1979) suggests that strategies of occupational closure are used to restrict access to professions, by means of educational requirements that bear little relationship to the difficulty of the professional work. Whether or not the work of an executive director falls into that assessment is difficult to ascertain, however, Garratt (1997) asserts that the executive director is the ‘business brain’ of the corporation and is therefore primarily concerned with the thinking processes of the organisation. This line of discussion appears to support the idea that the work of executive directors’ has
a level of difficulty that would support the development of a profession in its own right.

Witz (1992) argues that “occupational closure” is used in association with gender biases, in that men and women have unequal access to the resources that are needed for professional status. Therefore, it is more difficult for women to enter a professional group and possibly qualify as a professional. This may be another reason for the lower numbers of female executive directors when compared with the numbers of male directors.

This discussion so far has identified a number of criteria (Millerson 1964: Parkin 1979: Giddens 2001) that can be used to evaluate whether a group can be classified as a professional group. The situation for executive directors’ is however slightly different to other professional groups within society, such as the medical profession (Parry & Parry 1976), in that for most other professional groups the route to professional qualification is one that includes entering the profession in an unqualified position. Then during an educational process, which trains the person into the profession, the person becomes qualified in that particular field. However, the case for executive directors’ is different (Barry 1998: Rigby 1993 & 1998: Sampson 1995) because the majority of executive directors’ are qualified either in a professional field, e.g. accountancy, engineering, pharmacy and the Law, prior to attaining an executive position. This seems to produce a situation where executive directors’ are professionals in their individual right and therefore comprise a group of disparate professionals rather than a group of ‘professional’ executive directors’. This discussion has highlighted the move towards the creation of a group of ‘professional’ executive directors; however, as identified above, this move may produce a professional group that is even more difficult for women or people from minority groups to enter. (Witz 1992: Parkin 1979) The opportunities for people to become executive directors’ appear to be weighted in favour of white middle class men (Lee 1981) and Sampson (1995) points out, there is a historical legacy that supports the recruitment of potential executives from a mainly graduate population, with some companies favouring particular universities. (Sampson 1995: p76 & 154) This domination of executive directorships by graduates has been in progress for many years. Companies such as Shell have tended, since the early 1900’s, to recruit their fast-track managers, destined for the ‘top’, from Cambridge
University. This pattern is reflected in Japan with some Japanese companies aligning themselves with particular universities, e.g. Mitsubishi Corporation aligned itself with Tokyo University, Sumitomo with Kyoto and Mitsui established a partnership with Keio University. (Sampson 1995:p154) This could be part of the social process that maintains the apparent homogeneity of executive directors’ as a group within society.

The contribution of an individual’s school and university experiences, to continuing the ‘cultural reproduction’ (Bourdieu 1973) of executive directors as a dominant social group, seems to have been under researched. However, it could be construed that companies that recruit potential executives from specific universities (Sampson 1995) may be seen to be a factor in the reproduction of the idea that executive work requires people to have been educated in a particular manner. According to Jary & Jary (1995: p137) this could continue to bolster the beliefs and social mythology that form what Bourdieu (1973) refers to as the ‘cultural capital’, regarding executive directors as being a highly selected and possibly elite group. (Bottomore 1964) The perpetuation of these beliefs via language, possibly through the ‘hidden curriculum’ of education (Bowles & Gintis 1976) and the corporate approach to executive selection where models of success and failure may be perpetuated and reinforced, could lead to a situation whereby individuals within the organisation make personal decisions that affect/influence their capability of achieving a directorship. The apparent ‘normality’ of the executive population as a group therefore contributes to the reproduction of similar people being recruited and developed into the executive position. Moreland & Levine (2003) suggest three reasons why the members of ‘natural’ groups tend to be homogeneous.

"First, people seldom enter a group whose members differ from themselves, because neither they nor the group is committed enough for entry to occur. Second, if serious differences among group members arise, efforts are made by the group to restore attitudinal or behavioural conformity. New members are socialised, and marginal members are resocialised to think and act more like full members of the group. Finally, people who persist in differing from other group members seldom remain in a group long, because neither they nor the group is committed enough to prevent exit.” (Moreland & Levine 2003: p370)
In light of the above suggestions by Moreland & Levine (Op Cit), individuals who aspire to membership of an executive director group, or Boardroom position, may be subject to a number of different group processes that can affect their ambition. Therefore, in addition to the apparent class and gender biases (Lee 1981) that seem to affect this field and the more subtle influences such as school and university experiences (Bowles & Gintis 1976), which appear to be contributory factors affecting an individuals’ trajectory to the executive position, social processes affecting group entry and membership may also be in operation. (Moreland & Levine 2003)

Other factors, such as the length of time it takes to attain an executive position, may also affect the individuals’ career trajectory. Tait's survey work with eighteen chief executives (1995: p339) reveals that the age profile in the boardroom may be wider than the impression given by some of the writers in this field (Rigby 1998: Lammiman & Syrett 1998), where the executive director population is perceived as being mainly men who are over 45 years old. A profile of the participants in Tait’s (Op Cit) work reveals a different picture of the age range of people when they attain their first executive role. (Table 2: below)

Table 2:1. Ages of attaining first executive director position. (Adapted from Tait 1995)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age calculated from dates of birth in Tait (1995)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>39, 44, 46, 50, 51, 53, 54, 58, 58, 59, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 68, 74,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approximate age when people first arrived on the boardroom scene:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 32, 32, 33, 35, 35, 36, 36, 36, 37, 38, 40, 40, 43.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It would appear that it is the ‘elder statesmen’ who are interviewed for most of the research literature. In any further research, it appears to be important that the age range of the participants is as wide as possible. This raises another point regarding the literature covered in this chapter, in that it seems to focus on people who have been executives for a number of years. There appears to an absence of the ‘younger’ voice, those individuals who are new to

35
the Boardroom, and an absence of the ‘female’ voice. This raises the question of how the respondents that take part in the surveys and research into executive directors’ are contacted. In this researcher’s experience of making contact with the participants in this research (C.f. 3:10.4) the effect of the researcher’s established networks within the executive director sphere has been understated and ignored when reporting research in this arena. Therefore, it may be possible that the age profile of executive directors’ within the literature reported on in this chapter may be an effect of researcher networks and, in part, a reflection of which participants have the time to take part in research, rather than an accurate representation of the current age profile within this field. Tait’s (1995) experience of contacting female directors for her survey of Chief Executives revealed the following themes,

“...there are few women chief executives of major public companies in the UK...” (Tait 1995: p3-4)

...and that many of those she approached in her study,

“...showed a marked reluctance to speak about their careers and their views. A far higher proportion of the men I approached agreed to be interviewed (80 per cent) than women (less than 40 per cent).” (Tait Op Cit)

The explanation offered by the women in Tait’s book focused on...

“...lack of time and [reluctance to be interviewed] because of frequent requests for such interviews.”

It appears that because there are few women in senior positions and at director level in business, they can be the focus of attention from business writers. Tait identified “Private reasons” (Op Cit: p4) why the women were reluctant to speak she mentions that,

“...two confided that they would be happy to speak to me about their business, but not about themselves as they could not be both truthful
and positive. Discrimination had featured prominently in their careers and they were unwilling, at least at this stage, to be critical and revealing.” Tait (Op Cit: p4)

There is a hint in the above extract from Tait’s (Op Cit) work that had some of the women spoken more freely, then there may have been repercussions for them and possibly for their career. Marshall (1995: p330) raises an important point in her research with women managers, she recounts a question asked of her at a conference, “Do you think reporting this research is wise?” The questioner was inquiring into whether after so much ‘progress’ has been made regarding women in management that

“...expressing doubts or reporting negative experiences... might unnecessarily complicate the situation or lose hard won support and acceptance.” (Marshall Op Cit)

The questioner in Marshall’s research appeared to raising an important issue regarding how minority members of a group within the executive sphere, maintain their membership of the group. Is it possible, that like the women who did not want to be interviewed in Tait’s survey of Chief Executives, there are issues of maintaining group membership for those people who represent ‘difference and diversity’ within the executive director population? This also raises questions regarding the effects on the participants that would be reported openly, in a book that was published within their own community, of their contribution given to research respondents and the consequences of taking part in research. Do people tell a different story about their experiences if they are going to be provided with a cloak of anonymity? This question is important for researchers as they interview or observe people who through access to information networks can find out what has been written about them. This places researchers with a burden of responsibility, to maintain their confidences so that their careers and future potential is not negatively affected. Rubin & Rubin (1995: p93ff) argue that,

“When [we] encourage people to talk to [us] openly and frankly, [researchers] incur serious ethical obligations to them. These ethical
obligations require avoiding deception, asking permission to record, and being honest about the intended use of the research. [The researcher’s] obligations also include ensuring that the interviewees are not hurt emotionally, physically, or financially because they agree to talk with [the researcher].” (Rubin & Rubin Op Cit)

These questions are revisited in (3:10.4.) where their effects on the research design will be discussed more fully.

2:3. Discussion of the possible reasons for lack of research in this field.

Tricker (1978 p1) claimed that,

“The work of the director, in and out of the boardroom, must be one of the most under researched areas in the study of management.”

Since then a small number of studies have been carried out (Lee 1981: Spencer 1983: Mumford, Robinson & Stradling 1987: Kakabadse 1991) within Britain and a number of writers such as Garratt (1996), Coulson-Thomas (1993), Tait (1995) and Barry (1998) have made significant contributions to this field. However, Hertz & Imber (1995: pvii-x) argued, in 1995, that from a U.S. perspective that there was little research into the world of executive directors considering the amount of information that is available. Useem (1995: p18ff) points out that,

“Corporations make it easy for their leaders to be in the public eye. Most companies voluntarily disclose the identities, positions and directorships of their officers... Many executives themselves also voluntarily reveal their educational credentials, career milestones and directorships... Upon the request of journalists or researchers, most corporate public-affairs offices also furnish biographical sketches of their top managers.”

38
Despite the disclosure required by law, the extensive news coverage of top management and the well documented record of company performance Useem (1995: p19) argues that,

“As rich as these sources are, they are insufficient. Beyond a company’s executive roster and financial performance, few systematic data are to be routinely found on the [U.S.] nation’s major businesses. A company’s culture is almost nowhere so recorded. A firm’s adoption of self-managed work teams, strategic business units, and technology training programmes are rarely reported... Compared to research on many organizations, the study of business is privileged by a rich array of readily accessible information...But compared to what is needed to answer some of the most vexing questions about the world of business; we have little choice but to enter that world directly.”

Hertz and Imber’s (Op Cit) argument is based on the assumption that executive directors, as a group, attract less attention from social researchers than do the poor and marginalised people within society. In their view, one of the reasons for this is the identification of executive directors as an elite group,

“Few social researchers study elites because elites are by their very nature difficult to penetrate. Elites, establish barriers that set their members apart from the rest of society.” (Hertz & Imber 1995: pvii-x)

...and as a result, this excludes members of the research community from gaining access to the business corporation.

“Business elites have traditionally been the most difficult settings to gain access to by social scientists. The hierarchies of business organisations are designed to protect those who work there and to deter outsiders from learning more about how they operate.” (Op Cit)
This concern with access (4:4.3.) for members of the research community may cloud and obscure social research in this arena. A more pertinent explanation may be that social scientists and researchers have not taken up the challenge of investigating the business community in more depth, particularly the director because they have traditionally been occupied with empowering the disenfranchised members of their society and have seen no real purpose in researching elites, particularly business elites. When, "After all, whose purpose does it serve to ‘empower’ the rich and powerful?” Hertz and Imber (1995: pviii), whereas it has been acceptable for researchers to utilise their skills in developing people whom they perceive as requiring more social power. (Freire 1972) The arguments concerning access and research focus require further investigation to determine whether access is or is not denied to the researcher by business corporations and the extent to which this influences researchers’ decisions concerning research projects with executive directors. (Punch 1998: p159)

However, one of the reasons why there seems to be so little research may be due to the politics of social research. Lee (1985) suggested that researchers in the U.K. were more interested in, and concentrated on, the relationships between ‘management’ and the Trade Union movement. This may have resulted in a closer association between researchers and the ‘workers’ that inadvertently left the most senior people in business organisations off the research map. There has been research into professional groups, such as accountants, and doctors (Parry & Parry 1976). In addition to this, executive directors may have been left off the research map because they are not necessarily perceived as a professional group in their own right. The Institute of Directors has been increasingly concerned with this perception of the executive role and has instigated collaboration with Leeds Metropolitan University, launching a Chartered Director programme. The programme is beginning the process of professionalising the preparation of executive directors. (Institute of Directors 1997) This type of initiative may provide the context in which researchers’ can work and increase the number of projects in this arena.
2:4. Overview and themes in the research literature.

This section will focus on reviewing the literature that appeared to be pertinent at the time this research was begun, to provide a context and background for it. The literature in this field can be divided, according to Tricker (1978), into the following categories; legal aspects - covering executive duties and role expectations, the procedural and descriptive literature focusing on ‘how to do’ approaches to working at the executive level and the ‘advisory and exhortatory’. Tricker (Op Cit) describes this last category as,

“...usually written by the chief executive based on his experiences and personal recommendations; limited experience parading as a panacea.”

(Op Cit)

The intention of ‘exhortatory’ literature appears to be to be “...to inspire, encourage, or persuade” (Collins English Dictionary 1985: p512) the reader to undertake a certain set of actions, adopt a way of thinking or continue with what they are doing. There appeared to be a lack of critical challenge or questioning of the assumptions that are embedded within the literature. At the time of conducting this research, the literature seemed to remain within these three categories, even though the content varies the style and approaches taken by the writers appear to fit into Tricker’s (1978) classifications. Consequently, the literature contains little in the way of criticism or inquiry into the executive field. In addition to this, the literature appears to focus predominately on those individuals who occupy executive positions in the top 2-3% of companies within the U.K. The effect of this focus is difficult to ascertain, however it could be construed that the literature contains a selective view of executive directors and the path towards the executive position. Lindon-Travers (1990: p12-13) acknowledges that the attention paid may be a reflection of the amount of influence the company, or executive, appears to exert on economic prosperity.
Even though there are three main areas into which the literature can be classified, it is not the intention of this researcher to review all three areas but to focus on the literature that is most pertinent to the research question, which is how individuals attain an executive position.

2:5. Main themes of the extant research literature

The social background of executive directors (Lee 1981: Mumford et al 1985: Tait 1995: Rigby 1995: Rigby 1998) appears to be consistent across the research studies that have been carried out in this field. The findings support the perspective that executives are predominately white-males, from middle class backgrounds with access to opportunities for gaining a Higher Education. (Mumford 1988: Rigby 1995 & 1998: Barry 1998) This is a similar position to that described by Bottomore (1964) when he identified that the social origins of the ‘top’ executives in the U.K. were strongly linked to professional, business and land-owning families. The absence of people from ‘working class’ backgrounds (Sampson 1995) and minority groups appears to support the assertions made regarding social background. However, this does not explain the low numbers of women in the Boardroom; an issue that Barry (1998) maintains did not change significantly during the 1990’s.

The low numbers of women in executive positions, (Barry 1998) cited as evidence for the existence of a ‘glass ceiling’ (Conyon & Mallin 1997) within corporations preventing women from attaining executive positions, may also be an indicator of the type of route that individuals are required to follow in order to attain an executive position. The trajectory towards the executive role seems to demand that the individual is geographically mobile and able to move around the country, or increasingly the world, in order to satisfy the expectations of their employing company. (Lee 1981: Marshall 1995: Tait 1995) This activity has been identified as being an essential aspect of preparing the individual for promotion in the organisation and for executive work. (Garratt 1996: p73-80: Tait 1995) However, it may also prevent those individuals who are
geographically bound to one area because they have children to look after, an elderly relative to consider or a disabled spouse or family member. This seems to support a situation where a male executive who has the support of his wife (Lee 1981) can be seen as being more available for undertaking the demands that are placed on the potential executive as they traverse the contours of the organisation. However, according to Vinnicombe & Singh (2003) the numbers of women represented in the FTSE 100 companies in the U.K. rose during 2003 by 20%. Even though this seems to signify changes within U.K. companies, the FTSE 100 group of companies is not necessarily representative of all of the companies within the U.K. As the 'FTSE 100' changes according to the value of the companies share price, the list may alter from year to year, and therefore affect the comparative nature of the statistical evidence put forward in the surveys cited above. Vinnicombe & Singh (2003) identify that in their opinion there is more work required to,

“...identify and deal with the barriers for women in middle management, the next generation of women business leaders.”
(Vinnicombe & Singh 2003)

Vinnicombe & Singh (Op Cit) highlight an important aspect of the debate regarding the gender specificity of the executive director population, in that they refer to the belief that there are barriers that prevent women rising towards the executive position. These barriers are not described; however, the assumption being made is that it is because of their ‘gender’ that some women are being prevented from becoming executives. The women interviewed by this researcher were divided on this issue, with one woman describing how in her opinion she had been discriminated against because she is a woman.

“I have to say I think there’s a certain amount of maleness... certainly in the recent two or three years ... it has tended to be the men that get on, you can see the shapers and movers who are developing relationships with the key managing director, going out to lunch with them, those sorts of things. I don’t do that I don’t find that a very easy thing to do ... my position has
changed and I do believe that as a woman I think I have been given a
tougher time in recent months.”

DL In what way?

“Well I think that the announcement when I was given my promotion
that I did intend to start a family whilst the words that were used were
‘that’s not a problem we should encourage senior people to have
families and senior women to have families.’ I think there has been an
element of that that has caused the shake-up and restructuring and what
I consider to be a demotion in the last six months since August of 1996,
so I think that has come up against me.” (Interview 5)

However, the above extract illustrates a number of factors that may be at play in
the career of women as they move towards the executive position. It appears
that men may find it easier to ‘shape and move’ the organisation and women
may take a more passive role within the organisation. Whether this is a
reflection of men and women in general terms or is an expression of the
personal style of the female respondent is not demonstrated. Oleson (1998:
p303-4) identifies that the vertical rise to the top of the organisation is in her
opinion a male derived image of success. However, alongside the idea of
‘shaping and moving’ the organisation is that, in order to ’shape and move’, the
individual would also need to build and develop relationships with other people.
One of the ways that men may do this is to invite the ‘boss’ out to lunch,
whereas a woman who carries out this strategy may not be comfortable with
this strategy and consider that it may hinder the type of relationship that she
wants to develop. Children may affect a woman’s career mobility and her
willingness to travel. Women may need to balance work and home from an
earlier stage of their career than men, who may find that work life balance
becomes an issue in the later phases of their working lives. (Evans 2003) One of
the other female participants identified the tendency for assumptions to be made
regarding the promotion of women into executive roles.

“I remember one occasion when I first moved to NTL I was working in S
but part of the job was based in S-on-T, so I had to travel between the
two locations and whilst I was in S-on-T I was using my boss’s office, because he was out for the day, and I picked up the phone and it was our MD and he said how am I going to fill this HR vacancy. It appeared in S-on-T someone had just moved out. I said I’ll do it. He said ‘You know why we haven’t contacted you [it’s] because you are with this guy who is a dealer in the city and we thought you couldn’t come and live here. So I’d been ruled out based on the fact I lived with someone who worked in the city and the chance of picking up the phone that day and having that conversation, I would have never had known that otherwise.” (Interview 9)

The assumptions had been made using a number of factors in this case, in that the woman was not mobile because she was married to someone who was not mobile, due to his work being directly linked into the financial city trading environment in the capital. The decision to rule her out was not based on her ability to undertake the role, indeed she subsequently applied and obtained the position. It was based on their opinion of her male partner’s mobility. Other aspects that were mentioned included the style of managing that some women may bring to their role, in that,

“... woman do have a certain style and that style is a cooperative one as opposed to a confrontational style and I think the current senior management are much more about the confrontational style and don’t really think that the cooperative approach that many women exhibit together with treating people as the most important parts of the business.” (Interview 5)

The other four women in the research did not mention their gender when they were talking about their career trajectory or reflected different attitudes towards this issue.

Another theme that permeates the research in this area is the apparent dominance of executive positions by accountants and engineers. (Mumford
However, Barry's research focused on 'FTSE 100' companies and may not fully represent the entire spectrum of U.K. companies. The research provides an image of executive directors that, compared with research conducted in this area over the past twenty years (Lee 1981: Mumford 1988), seems to be relatively consistent. Other findings of Barry's research (Op Cit) create an impression of executive directors being men who are in their early 50's, who appear to be well educated, 68% of whom have degrees and 25% with higher degrees, compared with 14% of the adult male population in the U.K. with a degree and 3% with a higher degree. The gender distribution, age range and educational qualifications exhibited by executive directors who were included in the research studies cited so far in this chapter creates an impression of a middle aged male executive population. (C.f. Table 2:1. page 35) However, as identified above this may be a reflection of those that are interviewed by researchers working with executive directors or an indication of those executives that have the time to talk to researchers, rather than an indication of the executive population. It may also indicate that it may take an individual several years of working in corporations and a significant amount of professional preparation before attaining an executive position. As one participant put it.

"You have got to be able to do the preparation work I became Managing Director two to three years ago that took me 30 odd years [including schooling and University] to get to that stage where I'd become an M.D. I had done a lot of background work in the meantime."

(Interview 3 p27)

The preparation work and the length of time that it may take for someone to work their way through an organisation may militate against younger people becoming directors. This may also interfere with the women's career trajectories as they may take career breaks from the organisation.

The discussion so far has focused on producing a profile of executive directors taken from the research in this field. However, the dominant theme that
occupies a number of the writers cited so far is the assumption that executive directors differ from the rest of the management population within the organisation. There are two strands to this argument; the first strand is premised on the point that managing and directing are separate and essentially different activities within corporations. The second strand rests on the validity of the first one, in that as directing can be seen to be different from management then executive directors need to be different from managers. This argument forms one of the central pillars of the literature devoted to executives. The roles and duties of the executive (Garratt 1996: Coulson-Thomas 1993) are elaborated so that potential executives can evaluate themselves against the blueprint of what is expected from them, and develop accordingly. It would appear to be a small and logical step from these two premises to develop a perception of who in society would be most suited for the different and interlinked activities of ‘directing’ and ‘managing’. An insight into how the image of who may seem suitable to be an executive director is described by one of Marshall’s (1995: p215) co-researchers. The co-researcher’s situation was affected in the following ways; at some stage in her career, she had challenged a senior manager. This led to her being marked down from a “HiPo (High Potential)” manager to someone with reduced promotion prospects. However as the co-researcher goes on to explain she felt that the “dominant cultural image of success” had affected her career;

“People have an image of what a successful [company] manager is, how they behave, how they look and are, how they communicate and manage. And that is a [company] clone. Typically it’s a man who has a wife who doesn’t work, so he’s geographically flexible, he probably has kids, if he hasn’t he is a good sportsman and has a wonderful social life. He’s one of the boys, he doesn’t do anything excessively, he doesn’t challenge or make waves. Pretty smart. A good guy. So when women come along they don’t fit into any of those things.” (Marshall 1995: p215)
As a result of these assumptions, ideas regarding preparation for the executive position, selection of potential executives and the development of executives may be defined in terms of differences that separate out the people within the organisation rather than in terms of similarities and how they can work together.

One of the main assumptions supporting the literature in this field is that the executive position is different from other roles within the corporation. (Garratt 1996: Coulson-Thomas 1993) This assumption seems to remain unchallenged by the writers in this field and is part of a structure that supports most of the literature and maintains the rationale for its continuing production. Therefore, the literature focuses on the differences between management and direction setting, and continues to ‘prove’ the differences through reiteration of that largely uncontested argument.

There is a distinction between managing and directing within the U.K. legal system with the directors’ liabilities and duties bound in Company Law. These liabilities and duties form a framework against which executives can be measured and can be held accountable for any subsequent dereliction, leading to disqualification from holding executive office. (Pennington 1990: Gower 1992) The historical legacy that led to the development of the laws (C.f. appendices for examples of Laws that apply to executive directors) related to companies and executives have been well documented elsewhere. (Hunt 1936: Mills 1956: Plumb 1964: Berle & Means 1967: Sampson 1995) However, the historical legacy that provided the rationale that supports the framework of company law within the U.K. has also perpetuated the hierarchical separation between managers and executives, in that executive directors are culpable for their actions. The extent of their culpability is a continuing matter of debate and discussion. (Gower 1992: Pennington 1990)

Garratt (1996:p4-20. 1997) appears to support the separation between direction and management stating that,

“Managing is literally, given its Latin root, a hands-on activity thriving on crises and action...Directing is different. Directing is essentially an intellectual activity. It is about showing the way ahead, giving
leadership. It is thoughtful and reflective and requires the acquisition by each director of a portfolio of completely different thinking skills.”

Garratt (1996:p4)

The argument concerning the separation between managers and executives continues with Garratt (1996: p9) maintaining that directors need to

“...see themselves as the centre of the enterprise – the business brain or central processor monitoring and coping with the results of the external and internal learning processes of the whole enterprise.” (Garratt Op cit)

The executive as ‘the centre of the enterprise’ and as the ‘business brain’, conveys a sense of practical managers who are dependent upon the executives for their thinking when setting direction and outlining the strategy of the company. Morton (1998) supports Garratt’s position using a vivid metaphor to illustrate the separation between the manager and the executive director.

“The stokers [managers] below decks are unaware of approaching icebergs. The horizons need to be widened [by the executives] to take in other stakeholders needs…” (Morton 1998: p167)

It would appear from the above arguments that executive work differs from that of management work, in that executives are supposed to do the ‘thinking’ and managers are supposed to undertake the ‘doing’ work of the organisation. However, this division may not be necessary and may reflect the career progression of graduates and non-graduates. Lee (1981) points out that according to her research; people who have higher educational qualifications are more likely to achieve executive level positions. Lee (Op Cit) attributes this to the level of the person’s first entry point into the corporation. Graduates seem to more likely to be selected for work that is positioned at an ‘advanced’ level in the organisation providing the individual with the equivalent of an athletes ‘head start’. While this may offer, an explanation of why executive positions seem to be dominated by graduates it does not reconcile the ratio of men to women in the corporation. Therefore, if graduates are more likely to attain an
executive position it may be that they are also predisposed towards certain types of work, favouring work that requires a higher percentage of cognition as opposed to work that is of a more practical nature. The separation between managers and executives may be one that reflects the type of academic preparation a person has had prior to entering the workplace, rather than a necessary separation demanded by the corporation’s business needs. In addition to this, Lee (1981) argues that having a family background where professionally based occupations are valued may produce a personal attitude within some individuals that supports the person’s progression towards the executive role. The situation described by Lee (1981) may be a reflection of the educational mores that were present in the formative and tertiary educational preparation of the people she interviewed. Assuming a median age of 50 her interviewees would have been educated between 1945 and 1960; this may explain attitudes towards the separation of the practical aspects of organisational work from the cognitive elements of corporate work. However, over the next ten years it will be interesting to observe whether any significant changes occur in this formation, especially in the moves towards ‘flatter’ organisations (Holbeche 1997) and the shift towards ‘knowledge’ based organisations. (Evans 2003)

The executive population described above would therefore seem to support the idea that managers could come from a combination of different occupations, age groups and genders. While executive directors would need to be male, from an engineering or accountancy background and middle-aged. However, the research referred to above does not provide any insight into the underlying processes that support the shape and composition of the executive population. In addition to this, it would seem misleading to conclude that the characteristics of executives constitute causal links that explain and answer the main question of this researcher’s focus. Christensen and Raynor (2003: p70) argue that to infer causality between the existing executive population’s characteristics and the attainment of an executive position may be to mistake correlation for causality. Therefore, research from a social perspective might uncover psychosocial processes operating within corporations that offer more
explanatory power than the correlation of the characteristics of the research population.

2:6. Differences between management and direction setting.

It appears from the discussion regarding the literature that there are differences in the expectations between an individual who is a manager as opposed to the expectations of someone who is an executive director. The main difference seems to focus around the separation of the operational aspects of the business from the direction setting and strategic elements of the business. (Garratt 1996: Coulson-Thomas 1993) However, this is an oversimplification, in that executives are held accountable for the governance and management of the business that they are directing and managers are not. (Gower 1992: Cadbury 1993) Partly as a consequence of the legal obligations that have been placed on executives, and how corporations have historically been structured, executives are hierarchically positioned as the people who are in control of the organisation. Even though, as Handy (1985: p392) points out, the historical hierarchy of the organisation may be founded on the faulty assumption that hierarchy is natural.

“Organisations have long assumed that one [person] had to placed above another to make things happen. It is possible, however, that they were confusing the logic of organisational design with the messages of history. It is true that any organisational work has to be arranged in a logical sequence, which roughly corresponds with the order of decisions... But there is no logic which says that this horizontal decision sequence needs to be turned into a vertical ladder so that those who take the necessary earlier decisions are higher in the hierarchy than those who implement them.” Handy (1985: p392)

However, Handy’s (Op Cit) challenge of the hierarchical nature of organisational structures has been largely ignored and over the past eighteen years corporations have remained hierarchically structured, even though they
may have become flatter (Holbeche 1997) having fewer levels of management within them. Jaques (1996) posits the argument that hierarchies exist within corporations because of the variety of accountabilities that people have within the organisation; hence corporations are hierarchically structured as an employment device to organise the work of the corporation. In Jaques’ (Op Cit p4ff) model of ‘managerial accountability hierarchies (MAH’s)’ he puts forward the argument that hierarchy is necessary for the organisation. Whether or not hierarchies are necessary, most corporations are organised in a hierarchical form and at the ‘top’ of this form is the executive director. It would seem therefore that the nature of and executive’s work would reflect their organisational position and may be different from other people’s work within the organisation.

This raises the issue of the director as the company leader (Rajan et al 1996) and the assumption that power should be situated at the ‘top’ of the company. (Hatch 1997: p46) The historical emergence of the director lends itself towards that view, in the light of the development of Company Law and legislation that supports and legitimates the executive director’s position of authority and power. (Gower 1992: Pennington 1990) This is according to a post-modernistic view, enabling and verifying the status quo. The argument for the director as the leader, instead of perhaps a mediating and facilitative role, also consolidates the idea that there are people who are leaders and those who are followers. This may also unwittingly perpetuate the continued segregation between the manager and the director, which may be a social construction that sustains the separation between the class groups and is rationalised as important for the business rather than a necessity of the organisation. The executive director as leader of the organisation is taken up as a theme within the last chapter. (7:2.3.) Rajan (cited in Morton C 1998:p181)

“...draws the distinction [that] ‘Management is now about, leadership [direction] about the future; one implements goals, the other sets them; one relies on control, the other inspires trust; one deals in rational processes, the other in emotional horizons.’"
The main differences, as outlined by Coulson-Thomas (1993: p136), are summarised in Table 2:2. below.

**Table 2:2. The main differences in the work of managers and executive directors.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Managers</th>
<th>Executive directors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Doers – paid to take decisions and manage, within a framework established by the board.</td>
<td>Thinkers – paid to watch, assess and establish framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short term – the horizon is the next task deadline.</td>
<td>Long-term – need to plan ahead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjective – life entwined with the corporate organisation.</td>
<td>Objective – should keep an independent perspective, view the organisation as would an outsider</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involved – expected to be committed to the organisation and its products</td>
<td>Detached – expected to arbitrate between stakeholders, rather than overtly identify with particular interests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rational – trained to think about management problems in a logical way</td>
<td>Intuitive – need empathy and awareness to build relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focused – tend to concentrate on departmental tasks and outputs</td>
<td>Diffused – have many and varied tasks, involving different dimensions and elements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialist – operate within a particular business unit or management discipline</td>
<td>Generalist – need to have a perspective of the company as a whole</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depth – know about the companies products and industry in detail</td>
<td>Breadth – concerned with many situations and relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsible – may work within a hierarchy, constrained by policies and procedures</td>
<td>Accountable – set their own constraints, but are also subject to legal requirements and possibly conflicting stakeholder objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Means – activity, role or process may become an end in itself</td>
<td>End – relevance derives from corporate vision, goals, values or objectives</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table consists of ten bipolar constructs that illustrate the differences between managers and executives. However, whether the categories are
representative of the individual’s progression from manager to executive and the extent to which potential executives will be required to alter and adjust themselves from the expectations of the manager to the executive expectations remain unclear, outlined in Table 2:1. above, remains unanswered. The implication is that individuals who are progressing towards an executive position may undergo a series of changes in their skill set and shifts in their perception of the work they are required to perform for the organisation. The social processes by which individuals work their way towards the executive role are outlined in 5:2.2.

From the discussion, so far it can be deduced that in order for a person to obtain a corporate executive director role they will need to be selected for an executive position at the ‘top’ of the corporate hierarchy. Therefore, it can be argued that an individual would either require a means of progressing through the organisational hierarchy, or a method of directly joining the executive group. This is discussed further in 5:2.1. where the theoretical model that was developed from this research is outlined. The writers cited in this chapter all seem to be working from the premise that the individual will work their way up the organisational structure from a managerial position towards an executive role. In addition to this, the trajectory of the potential executive seems to involve a number of changes, both at a technical level and in terms of their perception of the work involved. (Table 2:1.) Another underpinning assumption made in the literature is that executives were managers at some stage in their career, thus precluding the possibility that other professional groups may provide the formative, foundation and experience for the executive position.

2:7. Methods used by researchers in this field.

The writers and researchers in this area have relied mainly on the use of surveys and personal interviews to gather information about executive directors. Lee’s (1981) sociologically based research focused on the careers of executive directors’ working in Coventry’s manufacturing industries in the late 1970’s. Lee (Op Cit), in face-to-face interviews with managers and executive directors
used a set of questions that related to the individuals' social and educational background, work life balance, personal ambition and leisure pursuits. (Lee 1981) Mumford, Robinson & Stradling (1985: p1 & 38) interviewed 144 executive directors in forty-one organisations in manufacturing and commerce, representing a wide range of companies within the U.K. The interviews were conducted face-to-face and were not the result of a postal questionnaire. Mumford et al (Op Cit) were interested in the preparation of individuals for the executive director position. They took, as their starting point, the assertion that the executive director holds, what they argued was, the most important role in British industry and they asked questions regarding the effectiveness of any preparation their respondents had received or organised for themselves for the executive role. Tait (1995), an executive recruiter with a leading international search firm, took a biographical approach to her work with Chief Executives. Tait’s focus was on discovering how the Chief Executives in her study managed their careers and the influences on them as they progressed towards the CEO role. Her approach included personal interviews with people that she invited to take part. However, one of the main differences between Tait’s work and many of the other researchers in this field was her intention and purpose to publish a synopsis of the interviews and attribute her findings to the respondents by name. Rigby (1995: 1998) used postal and telephone survey method to uncover information about the career background of executive directors, gathering evidence of advanced business learning e.g. Masters in Business Administration (MBA), and career routes within the companies in which they had worked, personal hobbies, and the participants personal recollections of their careers. Garratt (1996), who has pioneered along with Tricker (1979) the work in this field of research, takes a different approach to his work. He appears to base his work on his experiences of working with executive directors and the issues of executive practice rather than overt research that uses established methodologies to develop theory. (Garratt 1996: xiii) His work is therefore practice-based, focusing on issues of developing competent and effective executive practice in the Boardroom. Garratt (Op Cit) claims to have brought together examples of ‘Best Practice’ from around the world to assist executive directors’ with the process of developing effective Boards. These approaches,
even though yielding valuable statistical information that can be used to develop the background for research in this arena, have neglected the social and psychological processes involved in the individual’s trajectory towards the executive position. Mumford et al (1987) and Tait (1995) appear to have taken an approach that could potentially reveal information regarding the social and psychological aspects of becoming an executive director, however, for Mumford et al (1987), the focus was on uncovering how directors were prepared for their role and therefore did not focus on the deeper social issues that could be affecting the progression of individuals towards the executive role. While Tait’s (Op Cit) work uncovered important comparative information, the possible bias of her intention, to have the work published, may have affected the content of her conversations with the CEO’s she interviewed. Sedikides & Gregg (2003: p112) point out that individuals manifest a

"...self-serving bias when they explain the origin of events in which they personally had a hand or a stake.” (Sedikides & Gregg Op Cit)

The thumbnail sketches above are intended to illustrate the range of methods that have been undertaken in this arena and, in accordance with grounded theory methodology (Glaser & Strauss 1967), do not constitute a full overview of the literature in this field. However, the issues raised in this chapter so far offer a perspective of the work that has been carried out so far and raise questions regarding further research work that may be conducted in this field.

The scope of the issues in this field of research range from questions regarding gender distribution, and by implication the representation of people who do not fit the traditional stereotype of an executive director, the effects of different educational preparations, ‘class’ background, and the role of companies in the perpetuation of a dominant discourse promoting and endorsing the separation of people in organisations into hierarchically organised groups. Therefore, there appears to be scope for research into the differences between managers and directors, to determine whether the differences are socially constructed (Berger & Luckman 1966: Heiss 1981) or are a result of corporate necessity. In addition
addition to the areas identified above research into the transition, processes of
individuals who make the shift from manager to director may be important. As
Bush & Simmons (1981: p145-150) point out, there may be a number of roles
and tacit boundaries that the manager may need to negotiate as he/she makes
the transfer from manager to director. However, this presumes that individuals
who become appointed to directorships have been managers. In the primary
interviews for this research (3:10.2.) the research participants had all been
managers within either the organisation in which they currently held
directorships or within a previous company. This profile however did not hold
for the remainder of the research and as the research continued the range of
work experiences of the participants widened to include management
consultancy, policy work within the European Parliament, postgraduate
research work at PhD level, and military service.

The above discussion has highlighted the methods used by researchers within
this area of research. It is important to identify that even though grounded
theory has been used within organisational settings to research various problem
areas at an individual and group level, (Locke 2001: p107-111) there does not
appear to be any evidence for grounded theorists working with executive
directors to explore their world, or how they made it to the executive position. It
would appear at the time of writing this thesis that this research is possibly the
only piece of research using grounded theory into the social processes of
working towards the executive role. Internet searching of the journal
‘Organisational Studies’, between the dates of mid-winter 1997 and July 2003,
revealed that no research had been published in this particular journal using
Grounded Theory. It would appear that no one else has used grounded theory as
a methodology in this area of research. (3:3.1.)

2:8. Rationale for conducting research in this area.

This chapter has provided a context and background for research into the executive
field. The discussion has highlighted that many of the writers in this field seem to
agree that potential executives will require specific, discrete skills and a change of
approach when moving into executive work. However, the question remains as to the necessity to research the processes by which people attain an executive role. On the surface, it would appear that a potential executive could develop and learn how to make the changes required when making the shift from manager to executive. (Mumford et al 1987) This would imply that the move from manager to executive was a developmental one, however, this neglects the social aspects of group membership (Moreland & Levine 2003: p370) and the impact of making the shift (Bush & Simmons1981: p145-150) from manager, consultant, or other role to the executive position. Moving into an executive role may involve the assimilation of socially acceptable cultural mores, (Lee 1981) as well as shifting from a technical and pragmatic role (Kakabadse et al 1987) to a conceptual abstract position. (Garratt 1996) According to Newman, Summer and Warren (1972: Cited in Garvin 1998)

“Managing is a social process. It is a process because it comprises a series of actions that lead to the accomplishment of objectives. It is a social process because these actions are principally concerned with relations between people.”

As managing is a social process, it could therefore be construed that the executive position is also a social process and research into this area requires a social approach. What appears to be missing within the field is any research that captures the experience and understanding of what it is like to become an executive director from the perspective of the individuals that have undertaken that career trajectory. This seems to represent a situation whereby director practitioners within the field do not have a voice in the literature with which they can articulate the experiential aspects of the executive director position.

This research will add to the field by contributing ideas about the social processes by which individuals work their way towards the executive position, using a methodology that can also represent the experiential world of the executive director. The contribution that this research makes to the field of executive directors will be discussed further in the final chapter. (7:3.2.)
Chapter summary

This chapter has outlined some of the pertinent literature in this field. The intention was to provide a background against which this research could be viewed and to illustrate the issues that are within this arena. The process of becoming an executive director is poorly described in the literature. This seems to support the situation whereby research carried out in this field into the social processes of becoming an executive director would provide insight into a gap that is under researched. In the next chapter, this researcher will discuss the range of research options that are available for research in this arena and make a case for using grounded theory as a methodology of choice for researching the social processes that may be affecting the progression of individuals to the executive position.
Chapter 3

Research Methodology and Approach

3:1. Introduction

This chapter outlines and reviews the reasons for choosing Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss 1967) as a methodology for this doctoral research. It sets out an argument to substantiate the use of a constructivist grounded theory, within a symbolic interactionist perspective, (Charmaz 2000: Locke 2001) to research how individuals develop into the executive company directors’ role. The research will draw on the discipline of sociological social psychology, (Charon 2001: p.13-26). Grounded theory is an emergent methodology (Glaser 1992: Dick 2000) that “assumes the relativism of multiple social realities…and aims towards [an] interpretive understanding of subjects’ meanings.” Charmaz (2000: p510). Grounded theory generates substantive theory using,

“…systematic inductive [methods] for collecting and analysing data to build… theoretical frameworks that explain the collected data. Throughout the research process, grounded theorists develop analytical interpretations of their data to focus further data collection, which they use in turn to inform and refine their developing theoretical analysis.” Charmaz (2000: p509)

Bearing in mind the perspective that executive directors are members of an elite group within the business community (Bottomore 1964: Hertz & Imber: 1995) and the context of the research questions, the methodological possibilities that exist for a researcher when approaching research with executive company directors will be discussed.
3:2. Scope of the study

This research focuses on the exploration of the experiential aspects of how individuals develop into the executive director role. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the research in this area has been mainly based on surveys or questionnaires that purport to provide objective data regarding executive directors, as opposed to the subjective data that research into the experiential world of the executive director would convey. As argued then, research has neglected the experiences of executive directors, which could potentially reveal the underlying psycho-social processes that executives are grappling with in their daily praxis. As Tricker (1978) argues, one of the gaps in the literature, within the executive field, is the absence of accounts that concentrate on and develop the experiential aspects of the process of developing into the executive director role. This seems to represent a position whereby the practitioners within the field do not have a voice within the literature. One of the purposes of this research is to provide a link between the literature in this field and the practice community of the executive company director, by using a research methodology that takes into account the experiences of the practitioners within the field, creating a firm theory practice linkage. (Locke 2001)

The original questions were discussed in section 1:4., however as a reminder to the reader the main question that guided the research is restated below,

- How do individuals develop towards the role of the executive director?

In answering the main question, cited above, several sub-questions arose as a part of the reflexive research process during field engagement and the analytical process of grounded theory.

- "What behaviours did they use?"
- "What strategies did they employ?"
- What preparation did they receive?
- What skills do they report as using or developing?
• What kind of knowledge did they describe as important?
• Why did they gravitate/move towards the executive position?
• Can they explain or account for what motivated them?
• What was in it for them?
• Over what period of time did this happen?
• When in their career did they first become aware of their potential?
• When did they make the change into the executive role?
• Where were they in terms of job role?
• Where were they in terms of life position?
• Where were they in terms of where they were going?

However, as important as these questions were, the research was guided by the process of ‘comparative analysis’ of the data from within a grounded theory methodology. (Glaser & Strauss 1967: p101ff)

In the following sections the alternative methodologies that were taken into account for this particular research will be outlined. This research was approached from the perspective that knowledge is socially constructed (Berger & Luckman 1966: Blumer 1969) and it was considered important to explore other methodologies that were similar in approach and philosophy to the symbolic interactionist, constructivist perspective. This would enable the researcher make decisions from a range of methodologies and consider which one would be the most appropriate approach, in light of the field participants and the purpose of the research.

3:3.1. The range of research alternatives.

There are a range of methodologies within the qualitative research paradigm, from which the researcher could choose the most appropriate for their particular research project. These are comprehensively described in the research literature (Patton 1990: Cohen & Manion 1984: Robson 1993: Lincoln & Guba 1985: Marshall & Rossman 1990). The following table illustrates the range of disciplinary perspectives that underpin qualitative research.
Table 3.1. Range of disciplinary perspectives that inform qualitative research.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perspective</th>
<th>Disciplinary Roots</th>
<th>Central Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethnography</td>
<td>Anthropology</td>
<td>What is the culture of this group of people?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phenomenology</td>
<td>Philosophy</td>
<td>What is the structure and essence of the experience of this phenomenon for these people?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heuristic Inquiry</td>
<td>Humanistic Psychology</td>
<td>What is my experience of this phenomenon and the essential experience of others who also experience this phenomenon intensely?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnomethodology</td>
<td>Sociology</td>
<td>How do people make sense of everyday activities so as to behave in socially acceptable ways?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symbolic Interactionism</td>
<td>Social Psychology</td>
<td>What common set of symbols and understandings have emerged to give meaning to people’s interactions?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecological Psychology</td>
<td>Ecology &amp; Psychology</td>
<td>How individuals attempt to achieve their goals through specific behaviours in specific environments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Systems perspective &amp; Systems Theory</td>
<td>Interdisciplinary</td>
<td>How and why does this system function as a whole?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chaos theory: non-linear dynamics</td>
<td>Theoretical physics &amp; Natural Sciences</td>
<td>What is the underlying order, if any, of disorderly phenomenon?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hermeneutics</td>
<td>Theology, Philosophy, Literary criticism</td>
<td>What are the conditions under which a human act took place or a product was produced that makes it possible to interpret its meanings?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orientational</td>
<td>Ideologies, Political Economy</td>
<td>How is X ideological perspective manifest in this phenomenon?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Taken from Patton (1990: p88)
As can be seen from the above table, grounded theory fits into the symbolic interactionist perspective with academic disciplinary roots in social psychology. The other methodologies that were considered were ontologically and epistemologically similar to grounded theory and were; Action research, Participative inquiry, Collaborative enquiry and co-operative inquiry. In the following section there will be a discussion of the reasons underpinning this researcher's decision not to use action research, participative inquiry and co-operative inquiry.

3:3.2. Action Research approaches

The main process of action research is to use small-scale interventions in a particular situation or specific problem area and, through a collaborative and participatory method, resolve the issues that have been identified. (Cohen & Manion 1995: pp186ff) The inherent purpose is to instigate action or change that will alter the field and address the underlying problem and emphasises “...precise knowledge for a particular situation and purpose.” Cohen & Manion (1995: p187) and Robson (1993: p439) argues that “Improvement and involvement seem central to all [of] the uses of the term [action research].” Car and Kemmis (1986: p165) consider the phases of an action research process would include,

“Firstly, the improvement of a practice of some kind; secondly, the improvement of the understanding of a practice by its practitioners; and thirdly, the improvement of the situation in which the practice takes place...Those involved in the practice being considered are to be involved in the action research process in all its aspects of planning, acting, observing and reflecting.”

Therefore action research can be seen to be a methodology that is relevant to specific situations and did not appear to have sufficient generalisability for the purposes of generating a substantive theory for the wider field of executive practice. One other important aspect to identify is that action research is a methodology whereby the participants invite the researcher in for the resolution of a specific
organisational or social problem, which the researcher and participants then work on together. This researcher had a broad and specific question to ask of the field and, having chosen to undertake the research personally and not been invited into the organisations to resolve an identified problem, did not want a process that may distract from researching the main question. Action research therefore did not fit the process of answering the question that was the focus of this research.

3:3.3. Participatory and collaborative approaches.

In participatory and collaborative approaches the researcher and the researched become ‘co-researchers’ (Patton 1990: p.129) in order to solve ‘organisational problems’. One of the pre-requisites of this type of research is that the co-researchers meet regularly over a period of time to discuss and share the process of data-analysis and research development. (Reason & Rowan 1990) There were two main reasons why this approach was not adopted for this research. The first being that setting up co-research groups within this area was logistically difficult. The second reason was the intention that individuals would reveal their versions of their development to the executive position rather than gather a group concept of this process. An additional aspect is that in participatory and collaborative approaches the power between researcher and the participants is shared in all of the stages of the research cycle. It was considered that this may lead to a reconstruction of the original research question being asked, in that all of the participants would have a say in what was being researched. The idea of power sharing the research question and losing the focus of the research was something that did not fit in with the researcher’s personal and professional objectives.

3:4.1. Selecting grounded theory as the research methodology.

Even though Grounded Theory has previously been used to research management and organisational issues, (Locke 2001: p94ff) there appears to have been no research undertaken with executive directors using this methodology. (7:3.1.) In this
section there will be a discussion of the position of grounded theory, within the constructivist paradigm, to identify the links between the constructivist paradigm, the research question and the subsequent use of grounded theory as the methodology of choice in this research.

Grounded theory is an emergent methodology (Glaser 1992: Dick 2000) that “assumes the relativism of multiple social realities...and aims towards [an] interpretive understanding of subjects’ meanings.” Charmaz (2000: p510) Grounded theory is concerned with subjective experience and is located, according to Charmaz, (2001: p12) “…within the interpretive paradigm.” Strauss and Corbin (1994: p280) state that,

“…grounded theory requires that the interpretations and perspectives of actors on their own and others’ actions become incorporated into our [researcher’s] interpretations.”

During the analysis of the data, (C.f. Chapter 4) openness on the part of the researcher is required in order to accept the worldview of the participants, rather than superseding them with the researcher’s own assumptions and a priori conclusions.

3:4.2. The constructivist paradigm and grounded theory.

Charmaz (2000: p509ff) argues that the paradigmatic position of grounded theory has altered since Glaser and Strauss (1967) first outlined grounded theory as a research methodology. The first point is that “grounded theory is imbued with positivism, with its objectivist underpinnings.” (Guba & Lincoln 1994) and that Glaser’s (1978: 1992) position is,

“…close to traditional positivism, with its assumptions of an objective, external reality, neutral observer who discovers data, reductionist inquiry of manageable research problems, and objectivist rendering of data.” Charmaz (2000: p510)
Charmaz (2000) continues to argue that Strauss and Corbin’s (1990: 1998) stance,

“...assumes an objective external reality, aims towards unbiased data collection, proposes a set of technical procedures and espouses verification.” Charmaz (2000: p510)

Since the inception and development of grounded theory by Glaser and Strauss (1967) in the late 1960’s, researchers from a number of disciplinary perspectives have taken and adapted grounded theory so that it can be used in a variety of research situations. Locke (2001: p63-91) argues that,

“The direction of subsequent methodological treatises on grounded theory has been towards further elaboration and codification in order to fill the cracks in the original monograph’s articulation of the process and to capture further procedural developments in its research practices.” Locke (2001: p63)

Divergent approaches were taken, by Glaser and Strauss, towards the development of grounded theory. According to Locke (2001: p64ff) Glaser’s (1978, 1992, 1998) interpretation of grounded theory, “... tended towards more openness, flexibility, and more parsimony in the elaboration of necessary analytical steps.”, whereas Strauss took a more prescriptive approach to the operational procedures and formalised the process of generating substantive theory into a more linear style of analysis. Locke points out that,

“This is particularly evident in Strauss and Corbin’s Basics of Qualitative Research (1990, 1998); these methodological texts significantly increase the technical vocabulary and prescribed operations associated with grounded theory talk and practice.” (2001: p64. Italics in original)

The use of grounded theory, by an increasing number of researchers, affected the initial ontology associated with the originator’s philosophical positions; in that
grounded theory became disengaged from the positivistic ontological position it occupied during its early use towards a constructivist research paradigm. (Charmaz 2000) The use of grounded theory by researchers from a variety of research disciplines, therefore, moved the position of grounded theory from the original standpoint of a positivistic paradigm through to the postpositivist position.

Charmaz (2000: p510) claims that this move is supported by the inclusion of the respondent voices and an intention to represent the respondents in an accurate way. The acknowledgment of the differences between the realities of the researcher and the respondents takes grounded theory further away from the original positivist paradigm in which it was located. Charmaz (2000) continues to argue that grounded theory is essentially constructivist in nature and can therefore be used from within that paradigm.

"Constructivist grounded theory ...assumes the relativism of multiple social realities, recognises the mutual creation of knowledge by the viewer and the viewed, and aims towards interpretive understanding of subjects meanings." Charmaz (2000: p510)

The constructivist perspective is essentially a world view that can be summarised according to its ontological and epistemological elements and which influence how the methodology is used.

Guba (1990: p27ff) summarises the constructivist belief system in the following manner.

"Ontology: (assumptions about the nature of existence) Relativist – realities exist in the form of multiple mental constructions, socially and experientially based, local and specific, dependent for their form and content on the persons who hold them."
Epistemology: (ideas and assumptions about the nature of knowledge)
Subjectivist – inquirer and inquired into are fused into a single
(monistic) entity. Findings are literally the creation of the
process of the interaction between the two.

Methodology: Hermeneutic, dialectic – individual constructions are elicited
and refined hermeneutically, and compared and contrasted
dialectically, with the aim of generating one (or a few)
constructions on which there is substantial consensus.”

One of the reasons for adopting a constructivist approach to this research was the
explicit aim of accessing the experiential world of individuals who have developed
into the executive role. Schwandt argues that

“...constructivism means that human beings do not find or discover
knowledge so much as... construct or make it. We invent concepts, models,
and schemes to make sense of experience, and we continually test and
modify these constructions in the light of new experience.” (2000: p197)

It was this commitment by constructivists to “study the world from the point of view
of the interacting individual” Denzin and Lincoln (2000: p158) that supported the
use of a subjectivist epistemological position, from which the views and
perspectives of the participants should be valued and used to develop the substantive
theory that ensued from the research process. Guba (1990: p26) argues that,

“Epistemologically, the constructivist chooses to take a subjectivist position.
Subjectivity is not only forced on us by the human condition (as the
postpositivist might admit) but because it is the only means of unlocking the
constructions held by individuals. If realities exist only in respondents minds,
subjective interaction seems to be the only way to access them.”

The hermeneutic approach to analysis is problematic in that grounded theory is an
interpretive methodology (Locke 2001: p12) that imposes a sociological social-
psychological frame of reference on the data. (Charon 2001) Refining hermeneutically presupposes a reality that is embedded within the data; not necessarily one that is interpreted and constructed by the researcher during the analytical process. Hermeneutics is from the verstehen tradition of the human sciences and is about developing an understanding of what is being researched. (Schwandt 2000: p191) Hermeneutics can also be considered to be an interpretive approach to research and it is this aspect of developing an understanding, through an interpretation of what was happening, which was considered to be an important element when researching the executive director population. This took into account the view of some of the writers (Bottomore 1964: Hertz & Imber 1995) in the field that executive directors belong to an elite group within the business community. One of the primary purposes of the research was to develop an understanding of the processes that individuals go through as they develop into the executive role. Developing an understanding, rather than seeking to initiate change seemed to be more productive with this group.

It was considered important to access the experiential worlds of the individuals who participated in the research because, as was argued in (3:2.) and Chapter 2, the literature tends to focus on surveys and quantified descriptions of the progression of the individual into the executive position. This appears to leave out the individual's perspective, possibly perpetuating a gap between the literature and the practice of executive company directors. Robson (1993: p49) points out that even though surveys can be used in a variety of ways,

"The interest is not normally on individuals per se, but on profiles and generalised statistics drawn from the total sample and generalised to the population."

However, surveys do not pay enough attention to the individual and, as a consequence, may lose the themes and social processes that influence and affect the person's development journey. Another reason, underpinning the use of a methodology that would enable the researcher to access the experiential world of the participants, was a concern to establish the trustworthiness and credibility of the
research findings. Robson (1993: p49-50) asserts that when using surveys confidence in the results can be lowered,

"...in a psychological rather than statistical sense, confidence in the overall picture is dependent on the quality of the individual responses and there is legitimate scepticism about whether or not the perfunctory survey responses carry real meaning."

As was discussed at the beginning of this doctoral research, the literature revealed a lack of research into the subjective experience of the executive director. The individual accounts also favour the self-interests of retired Chief Executives. (Tricker 1978) Useem (1995: p18ff) points out that

"Corporations make it easy for their leaders to be in the public eye. Most companies voluntarily disclose the identities, positions, and directorships of their officers... Many executives themselves also voluntarily reveal their educational credentials, career milestones and directorships... Upon the request of journalists or researchers, most corporate public-affairs offices also furnish biographical sketches of their top managers."

Despite the disclosure required by law, the extensive news coverage of top management and the well documented record of company performance Useem (1995: p19) argues that

"As rich as these sources are, they are insufficient. Beyond a company’s executive roster and financial performance, few systematic data are to be routinely found on the [U.S.] nation’s major businesses. A company’s culture is almost nowhere so recorded. A firm’s adoption of self-managed work teams, strategic business units, and technology training programmes are rarely reported... Compared to research on many organizations, the study of business is privileged by a rich array of readily accessible information...But compared to what is needed to answer some of the most
vexing questions about the world of business; we have little choice but to enter that world directly.”

Therefore, part of the purpose of this research was to adopt a methodology that could access the experiential worlds of executive directors and, thereby, address the apparent gap between the literature and the practice of executive directors. Grounded theory methodology provides a bridge into the world of the executive director, as the explicit purpose of grounded theory is to talk to individuals and groups in order to find out about the implicit knowledge of individuals in the research field, (Gregory 1994). Since grounded theorists are interested in developing understanding of the worlds of the research participants, rather than initiating change, they are less likely to stimulate the hostility and suspicion that Coulson-Thomas (1993) claims executive directors may have towards researchers and management developers.

In order to address this issue, this researcher decided to use a methodology that would generate theoretical ideas and frameworks for further research. Locke (2001: p95ff) contends that grounded theory supports “theorising of ‘new’ substantive areas” and as Chenitz and Swanson (1986: p7) point out:

“Grounded theory makes its greatest contribution in areas in which little research has been done.”

As this appeared to be the situation in the field of the executive director, when this researcher was designing the research, it was considered appropriate to utilise Grounded Theory methodology. The naturalistically oriented data collection methods and the theory development focus of grounded theory enables it to make a contribution in areas where little research has been undertaken, (Locke 2001 p96). As new substantive social and organisational concerns become relevant and come into focus for psycho-social research; e.g. “The nature of decision-making in fast paced [organisational] environments.” Locke (2001 p96) grounded theory can be applied to new areas of interest. According to the original authors Glaser and Strauss (1967: p45), the grounded theorist enters the field with a general idea or broad
question concerning what they are to research. This way of beginning research provides the grounded theorist with the opportunity to develop categories from the raw data of a variety of sources, such as interviews and/or observation (Strauss and Corbin 1990) and these can then form the basis of developing a theoretical schema and the development of a substantive theory. Since grounded theory was developed for the process of generating substantive theory, as a means of moving forward the knowledge and understanding of a research area, (Glaser & Strauss 1967: Charmaz 2000: Locke 2001) it was considered an appropriate methodology to use in this research, considering the lack of research in this arena. Locke argues that

"The theorising process begins with the creation of theories that are substantive in nature." (Locke 2001: p35)

Substantive theory forms the basis for the subsequent development of the formal theories, such as Glaser & Strauss’s ‘status passage’ (Glaser & Strauss 1964: p32) and Becker’s formal theory about the social control and creation of deviance Glaser & Strauss (1964: p94), in that research is generated in order to advance understanding of the social world. In areas where little research has been undertaken it is therefore important to generate sufficient substantive theories in order for the area to progress and develop formal theory that can be used by practitioners in the future. As Locke argues,

"... substantive theory is prior to formal theory, and it is closely linked to the practice domain... In management and organisation studies, many of our theories are substantive in nature: decision making and leadership, are two instances of such theories." (Locke 2001: p35)

This research was also based in the practice domain of the executive, and as, such required a methodology that was purposefully developing substantive theory as opposed to formal theory. Whereas, substantive theory is developed from researching a phenomenon in one type of situation, for example, the status of executives in an organisation. Strauss and Corbin (1990: p174) point out that even broad sampling using more than one organisation would still provide a substantive
theory not a formal theory, because the situation would have remained the same even though the organisations varied. The development of formal theory from a substantive one occurs when the researcher considers different types of situation.

“Formal theory emerges from a study of a phenomenon examined under many different types of situations. For example... the status of politicians at the national level, the status of persons within families, the status of socialites, the status of various professional ranks within academic institutions.” (Strauss & Corbin: 1990 p174. Bold in the original.)

Glaser & Strauss (1967: p46-47) identify that during the process of generating a grounded theory there is a requirement for the researcher to theoretically sensitise themselves to suitable concepts and ideas that can inform the research and enable the emerging categories to be connected into a theoretical perspective. (Strauss & Corbin 1990: p.41-47, 50-51) Grounded theory, therefore, seemed to provide a methodology that could be used to explore the process of how individuals develop into the role of the executive director.

Symbolic Interactionism was one of the main perspectives that influenced the sociology of Anselm Strauss (Charmaz 2000: p.512), at the time when he and Barney Glaser were developing grounded theory as a research methodology. Symbolic interactionism rest on three main tenents,

• “Human beings act towards things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them. Such things include everything that the human being may have in his world, physical objects... other human beings... institutions... guiding ideals... activities of others... and such situations that the individual encounters in his daily life.

• The meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one’s fellows.
Meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with the things he encounters.” Blumer (1969: p2)

Charmaz (2000: p.513) contends that grounded theory

“Emphases on action and process and, from my constructivist view, meaning and emergence within symbolic interactionism complement grounded theory. Symbolic interactionism also offers a rich array of sensitising concepts.”

These concepts place value on subjective meaning and process rather than structure, taking great pains to capture the ‘world of the other’ as seen by the ‘other’ person (Wallace & Wolf 1986: p231) emphasising the

“dynamic nature of society and the kinds of actions [that occur] between individuals [that are] necessary for [societies] continuation.” Charon (2001: p228)

and providing the background perspective necessary for the grounded theorist to remain theoretically sensitive. (C.f. 4:5.1.) The tension between the emergence of categories and the array of sensitising concepts from the literature is a theme that will be discussed in (3:8.1)

The main question that scoped the research was a process one, in that it is concerned with the ‘how’ of individuals developing towards the executive role. Charon (2001: p.208-9) identifies that

“The symbolic interactionist … believes it is important to move from mechanical models of causation (characteristic of natural science) to processual models… Processual models emphasise processes—a string of developing factors whose initial stages do not automatically determine their later ones… stages which are necessary for a given phenomenon to come into existence and one in existence to sustain itself.”
As Charon (2001: p209) continues to argue that

"Cause is complex, multifaceted, developed over time rather than simple, singular and isolated."

Symbolic Interactionism and a constructivist perspective that embraces a multifaceted view of causality within the social world facilitated the researcher to enter and find out about the executive directors' 'world'. (Blumer 1969: p11) The research sought to explore the experiential world, or verstehen, of the individuals who were interviewed for the research in a rigorous and systematic manner, within the context of their lived social world, uncovering the basic social processes that individuals manage when they are developing towards the executive role. As Charon states, Blumer (1969) argues that,

"[The symbolic interactionist] believes that determination of problems, concepts, research techniques and theoretical schemes should be done by the direct examination of the actual social world rather than by working with a simulation of that world, or a preset model of that world... For symbolic interactionism the nature of the social world is to be discovered, to be dug out by a direct, careful probing examination of that world." (Blumer 1969: p48)

The verstehen, or lived reality, of the individuals in the study is an important aspect to consider. The main research question focused on the process/es by which the individuals developed towards the executive position and therefore it was essential to the emic nature of the study that the methodology supported this. Schwandt (1998: p.221, 223ff) asserts that,

"Proponents of [constructivism] share the goal of understanding the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live in it. This goal is variously spoken of as an abiding concern for the life world, for the
emic point of view, for understanding meaning, for grasping the actor's definition of a situation, for verstehen.” Schwandt (1998: p221)

The rationale discussed above encompasses the reasons why grounded theory was used in this research. The impact of Symbolic Interactionism is felt within the analytical process (C.f. Chapter 4) and within the sensemaking chapters in the latter part of this thesis. (C.f. Chapter 5, 6 & 7)

3:5. The purpose of grounded theory research.

Grounded theory was described and refined by Glaser and Strauss (1967) in the early 1960’s. The underlying purpose, according to Glaser & Strauss (1967: p21ff), of using grounded theory as a research methodology is to generate substantive theory. The theory is considered to be ‘work in progress’ or ‘emergent’ in nature (Dick 2000: p3) and, as such, can be used as a foundation for further research in the chosen field. (Glaser & Strauss 1967) It is not the purpose of grounded theory to test or verify theories rather it is used to assemble evidence, collected in terms of observation and interviews, to uncover ideas and fresh hypotheses from the research subjects and field. (Gummesson 1991 p83: Glaser & Strauss 1967 p28-31)

“The grounded theory approach is a qualitative research method that uses a systematic set of procedures to develop an inductively derived grounded theory about a phenomenon.” Strauss & Corbin (1990 p24)

The main idea underpinning grounded theory is the constant comparative method by which the theory is developed. Glaser & Strauss (1967) and Strauss & Corbin (1990) were committed to the formation of hypotheses that reflected the field rather than taking existing theories and then looking for examples in the field to support the theory. Grounded theorists continue to debate how hypotheses and theories about the world are created and generated. The argument is about whether or not theory should be or is deductively or inductively generated. It is important to notice that both types occur and also to distinguish between the theory that evolves from a set of first principles, requiring testing and verification by applying it to the field and
the theory that is inductively arrived at, as in grounded theory, which requires further testing and verification by the application of the emergent theoretical framework to additional field research. As Lincoln & Guba state,

“Grounded theory...is theory that follows from data rather than preceding them (as in conventional inquiry)...” (1985:p204)

Therefore to bring an established theoretical framework, from the discipline of social psychology to grounded theory, research may bias the researcher and prevent him from noticing what was happening in the interviews and setting in which he was researching. For example, to assume that the process of becoming an executive director is about the transition process, from management to directing, at the beginning of the study may have closed the researcher’s mind to the other possibilities that existed within the field. However, as Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Strauss and Corbin (1990) identify, it was useful during the study to use the existing literature as another data source to compare and contrast the categories that were emerging from the data. This was then used to develop and enhance the line of research, with the proviso that the data gathering process chosen is the directional driver within the inquiry and that the literature remained as a supporter and challenger to the study.

The theory generated during grounded theory research offers perspectives and ideas for understanding the underlying problems or issues in a particular field of research, or general problem area. (Glaser & Strauss 1967) As Chenitz & Swanson (1986: p3) elaborate, the objectives of grounded theory research include the explanation of “basic patterns common in social life” and are to uncover the

“...basic social-psychological processes which account for variation in interaction around a phenomenon or problem.” (Op Cit p3)

The discovery of the core category, or the basic social-psychological problem, is at the centre of the grounded theory methodology. (Glaser & Strauss 1967: Chenitz & Swanson 1986: Gregory 1994: Charmaz 2000: Locke 2001) Basic social-psychological processes are the challenges that they, as actors, are puzzling with,
and managing, in their daily lives. Glaser (1978: p93) identifies the basic social-psychological process as, "...a theory that accounts for a pattern of behaviour, which is relevant and problematic for those involved." Fagerhaugh (1986: p135) contends that, "...it is helpful to first view [the basic social-psychological process] as a core category." (Glaser & Strauss 1967: p45)

The basic social-psychological process can account for change over time and Fagerhaugh (1995: p175) suggests that the basic social-psychological process introduces the impact of, "...movement and change, or process over time." to the analytical process. The outcomes of grounded theory research are a rendering of the individual's story into a collective storyline that represents the experiential reality of the participants, like that of a painting rather than a photograph (Charmaz 1995), grounded theorists do not attempt to describe the world as a positivist reality that is 'out there', rather they construct or render a version of reality that is developed from the experiences of the research participants.

"The grounded theorist's analysis tells a story about people, social processes, and situations. The researcher composes the story; it does not unfold before the eyes of an objective viewer. This story reflects the viewer as well as the viewed." (Charmaz 2000: p522)

This research inquiry set out to explore and inquire into the experiences of executive directors and uncover their story about what it is like to become an executive and then compare this with the existing literature. Grounded theory fitted this part of the original research criteria. The full criteria and anticipated outcomes of this research inquiry were discussed more fully in Chapter 1.


The phases and processes of grounded theory as a methodology have been the subject of considerable discussion (Strauss & Corbin 1990; Glaser 1992; Charmaz 2000; Dick 2000; Locke 2001) since Glaser & Strauss (1967) first described the broad outlines of using a methodology that generates theory from raw data. The original monograph focuses on developing a substantive argument for adopting
what, at the time would have been seen as, a radical approach to social research; an approach in which the researcher begins their study within the field, rather than the literature. Glaser & Strauss (1967), in their original work, discussed the methodology in depth, whereas the methods supporting the process of grounded theory are described in broad terms, producing an outline of the main components.

Glaser & Strauss (1967) identified the following main phases of grounded theory research:

- Precursors, requirements and expectations of the researcher prior to entering the field.
- The process of entering the field.
- Theoretical sampling: Collecting data.
- Analysing data using the process of constant comparative method.
- Identifying the core category or basic social-psychological process, which the participants are managing.
- Describing and developing, over the course of the research, tentative hypotheses or theories that illuminate the basic social-psychological process and render it for further research.

Many of the writers, when describing grounded theory as a research methodology, focus on the development of the research proposal, the collection and analysis of data that provides the source of the subsequent analysis and the methods by which a grounded theory can be developed (Chenitz 1986: Strauss & Corbin 1990: Locke 2000). Glaser (1992: p22), however, maintains that the researcher must enter the field in a manner that supports Grounded Theory as a methodology. He states that

“\text{A researcher can have a sociological interest which yields a research problem and then look for a substantive area or population with which to study it. But this is not Grounded Theory. It is a preconceived, forcing of the data. It is okay and can produce good sociological description, but it usually misses what subjects in the substantive area under study face.}”
The expectations and demands placed upon a grounded theorist, prior to entering the field, are therefore different from the expectations of researchers using other qualitative methodologies. The expectations differ in a number of aspects, beginning with the researcher's approach to the field of inquiry. This primary expectation, argued by Glaser & Strauss (1967) in their original monograph and later defended by Glaser (1992), is that the researcher enters the field with a broad research question that is not based upon a priori theories or hypotheses. Where the question originates, and how the researcher decides which broad idea to follow up in their field research is debated in (3:9.1.). Limitations of Grounded Theory. What is important to note here is that subsequent writers (Chenitz 1986; Strauss & Corbin 1990; Locke 2000) have paid less attention to this expectation of the researcher's position within grounded theory research. As will be discussed in (3:10.1.) regarding the research design, this researcher decided to pursue Glaser & Strauss' (1967) original ideas, concerning the researchers position, at the start of a grounded theory inquiry.

Locke (2000: p34) identifies that given Glaser & Strauss’ (1967) description of grounded theory as a qualitative methodology, their depiction of the operational aspects of the research process were not always as fully developed as a less experienced researcher would like. Other researchers (Turner 1981: Chenitz & Swanson 1986; Strauss & Corbin 1990: Locke 2001) have developed the operational aspects of grounded theory in more detail than the originators. The following discussion will identify the variety of stages that have been developed by different writers and therefore provide a foundation from which to discuss the plan and design of this research inquiry.

Strauss & Corbin's (1990) work differs from that of the original monograph by Glaser & Strauss (1967) in subtle ways. Strauss & Corbin's (1990) arrangement of grounded theory is aimed at researchers from a variety of disciplines (social science & professional groups) (Strauss & Corbin 1990) as well as the academically prepared sociologists who were the originators' audience. Glaser & Strauss (1967) were presenting an argument for the adoption of a radical approach to research. Strauss & Corbin (1990) argue that their work is,
"...intended primarily to provide the basic knowledge and procedures needed by persons who are about to embark upon their first qualitative analysis research project and who want to build theory at the substantive level."

(Strauss & Corbin 1990: p8)

Strauss & Corbin’s (1990) approach to grounded theory is to provide a ‘step by step’ approach, for people learning qualitative research. The work of Strauss & Corbin (1990) will need to be viewed from the position that they are using grounded theory as a guiding approach, however they make no claim that it is a ‘pure’ approach to grounded theory, as espoused by Glaser & Strauss (1967) in their original work. As far as this research inquiry is concerned, the techniques and procedures, described by Strauss & Corbin (1990), were used as tools to make sense of qualitative data. This aspect will be pursued further in Chapter 4 which will focus on the actual analytical processes adopted during this research study and illustrate the processes, with reference to the first two interviews undertaken for this doctoral research.

As a comparison with the approaches taken in the main by Glaser & Strauss (1967) and Strauss & Corbin (1990), which were discussed above, the work of Turner (1981), after Glaser & Strauss (1967), in which he identified nine stages of using grounded theory as a qualitative methodology, will be briefly outlined. Turner (1981) uses nine broad headings to encompass a variety of activities within grounded theory (Cited in Gregory 1994) and these are listed below with the corresponding thesis sections where they were addressed in this research.

Stage 1. Develop Categories. (4:6.5.)
Stage 2. Saturate categories. (4:6.5.)
Stage 3. Abstract definitions. (4:6.6.)
Stage 4. Use the definitions. (4:6.7.)
Stage 5. Exploit categories. (4:6.7.)
Stage 6. Develop and follow up links between the categories. (4:9.)
Stage 7. Consider the conditions under which the links hold. (4:6.7.)
Stage 8. Make connections to relevant existing theory. (4:6.4)
Stage 9. Use extreme comparisons to the maximum to test emerging relations. (4:9.)

The linear representation of the above stages creates the impression that grounded theory progresses through a number of clearly demarcated phases from the initial questions towards the eventual surfacing and delimitation of tentative theories. This leaves out the spiral nature of developing a grounded theory, using the constant comparative method of analysis. (Gregory 1994) The process of constant comparative method will be described in more detail in Chapter 4, when the initial interviews are used to demonstrate the process of analysis within grounded theory.

Dick (2000) provides another outline, which has been included because it supports the more emergent version of grounded theory that Glaser (1978: 1992) argued for, whereas the form proposed by Strauss & Corbin (1990) tended to be less emergent in their interpretation of grounded theory. (Dick 2000: p3)

I present here another overview of the process of grounded theory research, based on the work of Dick (2000).

- Entry to the research situation or phenomenon. (3:10.1. & 4:4.3.)
- Data collection through interviews, observation, and conversation. (3:10.3.)
- Recording of the information, (4:4.5.)
- After each period of data collection notes are made of the key issues that seem to be present within the phenomenon or situation that is being researched. (4:6.7.)

The researcher then compares the notes about key themes and issues, made after each period of data collection with the previous interviews or observation, in a process of constant comparison. These themes and issues are then conceptualised, during the continuing process of analysis, into categories that form the basis of the emerging theoretical scheme. (Glaser & Strauss 1967: Strauss & Corbin 1990: Chenitz & Swanson 1985) The process of constant comparison is at the heart of
grounded theory methodology (Locke 2001) and it is from this process that tentative ideas combine into a core category (Gregory 1994), which can form the basis of the theoretical scheme that emerges from the research inquiry. (Glaser & Strauss 1967: Glaser 1992) The remaining process, of coding to develop categories and their properties, is integrated with memos that develop the emergent ideas further, until the main core category emerges and forms the central storyline of the inquiry. As each category is formed, the researcher inquires into the category until no new information is available or saturation has been achieved.

The initial data collection process is a constant process of collection and comparison and, as this process continues, then the researcher develops the participant group in line with the emergent ideas in a purposive manner through what Glaser & Strauss (1967) refer to as theoretical sampling. This then allows the researcher to follow up leads from the emerging ideas, to progress them to saturation and also to identify differences and similarities between the various accounts. The stages of grounded theory are used to support and structure Chapter 4, as this researcher demonstrates and illustrates how Grounded Theory was applied to this research. In the next section, the process of generating a grounded theory will be developed and expanded.

3:7. The process of generating a grounded theory.


“By substantive theory we mean that developed for a substantive, or empirical area of sociological inquiry, such as patient care, race relations, professional education, delinquency, or research organisations. By formal theory, we mean that developed for a formal, or conceptual area of sociological inquiry, such as stigma, deviant behaviour, formal organisation, socialization…” (Glaser & Strauss 1967: p32)
The originators of grounded theory intended the methodology to be used in areas that were concerned with practice development rather than Formal or Grand Theory. This linked in with one of the original intentions of this researcher to provide a basis for further research into the executive field and provide a point from which academic discussion and debate about practice issues within this area can be encouraged.

The main strategic process that develops a grounded theory is that of the constant comparative method, where comparison of data elements, concepts and categories, occurs throughout the research. (Glaser & Strauss 1967: p21)

The data for a grounded theory study is usually derived from a number of sources, beginning primarily with information gathered from the group or individuals that are the focus of the study. A Grounded Theory is formed by using the data, which may be amassed from a variety of sources, such as; observational study, interview (structured/unstructured), technical literature and non-technical literature. (Glaser & Strauss 1967; Moustakas 1994: Cohen & Manion 1994: Strauss & Corbin 1990)

According to Strauss & Corbin, (1990) the researcher codes the data in three ways:

- Open coding – this generates categories and concepts:
- Axial coding - produces the links between the causal elements, the action, and the strategy adopted by the person or group involved in the study:
- Selective coding - allows the researcher to generate tentative hypotheses, which can build up into a theory for further testing and refining.

Grounded theory is not a linear process from data gathering to coding to generating theory; It is a cyclical process of coding. The research cycle continues until the categories become conceptualised and the processes being studied can support and confirm the theory embedded in it. (Glaser & Strauss 1967: Turner 1981: Gregory 1994: Locke 2001)
[The] "...joint collection, coding, and constant comparative analysis of data is the underlying operation. The generation of theory, coupled with the notion of theory as process, requires that all of these operations be done together as much as possible." Glaser and Strauss (1967)

This allows fresh ideas, which add to the emerging concepts entwined with the research. This process, of theoretical sampling, allows the researcher to decide what aspect of the interview to concentrate on and collect data from in subsequent interviews.

The researcher flows between the data and the literature in such a way as to verify and support the emerging categories and conceptual analysis. This process must remain faithful to the original data, not attempting to impose the results on the data, but allowing the data itself to direct the developing hypotheses. (Glaser & Strauss 1967: Glaser 1992)

3:8. The use of the literature in grounded theory

The relationship between the literature and the construction of grounded theory is a matter of debate. (Glaser & Strauss 1967: Strauss & Corbin 1990: Locke 2001) In most methodologies the literature forms the basis of the project, providing the researcher with a place to start. (Chenitz & Swanson 1985) However the grounded theorist begins with the research situation and selects the participants that are able to provide the information required for the inquiry. Ideas are generated from the collected data, which can then be compared with the literature to develop theoretical sensitivity and widen the scope of the constant comparative method. This relationship between the literature and the data is explained by Glaser (1992: p32-3) in the following manner.

"A modicum of literature – this is the most likely condition. The researcher should not worry about covering the literature in the same field before his research begins, [except to write up a context for other
readers in the early stages] since it will always be there. It does not go away! And there will be plenty of time during the grounded theory process to integrate this literature with the emergent theory during saturation, densifying and sorting. Especially during sorting and then writing, the researcher-analyst by constant comparison reconciles differences, shows similarities in concepts and patterns, and imbues his work with the data and concepts in the literature."

Glaser’s assertion (1992) seems to require a method of separating out what the researcher currently knows from what they will find out during the research process. In the case of this research Chapter 2 was constructed as a way of mapping out the field, so that the themes that arise in the literature could be illustrated and yet keep them separate from the data analysis stream that has flowed through the research process.

Strauss & Corbin (1990: p48-55.) classifies the literature into two types, technical and non-technical, for use within grounded theory. (Cooper 1989: pp51-52)

Table 3:2. Definitions of the literature used within Grounded Theory methodology

**Technical literature:**

E.g. reports of research studies and theoretical or philosophical papers characteristic of professional and disciplinary writing. These can serve as background materials against which one compares findings from actual data gathered in grounded theory studies.

**Non-technical literature:**

E.g. biographies, diaries, documents, manuscripts, records, reports, catalogues, and other material that can be used as primary data or to supplement interviews and field observations in grounded theory studies.

(Taken and adapted from Strauss & Corbin 1990:p48)

The difficulty regarding when to use the literature within grounded theory is one faced during the pilot study. At what stage should the researcher turn to the literature and use it to reflect on the interviews with the executive directors in the study? This
created an ongoing tension between faithfulness to the interview data, as indicated
by Glaser & Strauss (1967) in their original work, and an increasing requirement of
the research process to develop theoretical sensitivity and contrasting perspectives
from the wider academic field. Dick (2000) argues that “...it makes sense to access
relevant literature as it becomes relevant.” maintaining that it is possible to “…refine
[the] findings in the light of the literature in slightly different but related fields.”
However, Glaser (1992) argues it is important to avoid the process of ‘forcing’ the
findings into what appears to be a relevant theory or existing model in order to avoid
the often confusing array of data that can be collected during a grounded theory
inquiry. (Gregory 1994) The ensuing categories and emergent core category must,
according to Glaser & Strauss (1967) and Glaser (1992), ‘fit’ the data, in that the
results of the inquiry can be tracked back to the original data and be seen to be a
representation of the field and what the participants were talking about. This is so
that the ethical contract, shared between researcher and the participants, can be
maintained and researcher credibility and authenticity can be firmly founded on a set
or principles regarding research with other people. (Rubin & Rubin 1995: p93)

The application of grounded theory and the process of generating theory from data
using the process of constant comparison will be developed further in Chapter 4,
where the first two primary interviews will be used to illustrate and describe the
process used during this PhD research, into the executive company director. In the
next section the limitations of using grounded theory as a methodology will be
outlined so that the research design used can be justified and supported.


Reason & Rowan (1981: pxx) argue that grounded theory rests firmly in the ‘old’
paradigm of research. The ‘old’ paradigm is exemplified by research that is rooted in
the Hegelian ontology of a reality that is ‘out there’ and can be objectified through
rational research. Another aspect is according to Rowan (1981: p103ff) research that
asks efficiency questions, thus ignoring the objectification of both the researcher and
the research participant. Other words that have been used to describe the ‘old’
paradigm are ‘hard’, ‘objective’, ‘tight’ and ‘quantitative’. (Reason & Rowan 1981:
The criticisms offered so far are important for a researcher to identify, as the relationship between the methodology and its paradigm are important biases and assumptions to explore at the beginning of a research inquiry. Reason & Rowan's (1981) criticisms neglect the point of how a researcher's interpretation and utilisation of a methodology, in practice, affect the research encounter between researcher and the research participants. The praxis of research is affected by the researcher's personal paradigm, philosophy and perspectives of the world. Rubin & Rubin (1995: p18) point out that "Researchers biases, angers, fears, and enthusiasms influence... how they interpret..." This relationship between methodology and researcher is important if the researcher is using a methodology that was developed prior to the development of feminist thinking and the impact of the 'Fifth moment' in qualitative research practice. (Denzin & Lincoln 1998: p22) The position of theory has altered in many ways, from that of searching for the 'truth' to a situation whereby theory is being read in narrative terms (Van Maanen 1998) and

"The search for grand narratives will be replaced by more local, small-scale theories fitted to specific problems and specific situations." (Lincoln 1993)

This researcher does not take the view that because grounded theory is rooted in an 'old' paradigm it is to be excluded from research with people and their experiences, arguing instead, that grounded theory as a methodology is affected by the researcher that brings their own conception of reality to research methodologies and uses the methodology from within their personal research practice. In order to counteract the 'positivistic' influence on grounded theory, the focus was maintained on analysing the interview data from an interpretive perspective, which developed the codes into the theoretical concepts that were used to form the basis of the emerging theory (Glaser & Strauss 1967). Developing an analytical system that coded for frequency of occurrence of a particular category that developed a set of results that were apparently quantitative, (Locke 2001: p8-10) was considered to reinforce a positivistic use of grounded theory, placing the emphasis upon developing the qualitative constructivist approach that utilised the principles of symbolic interactionism and built on the foundations of a person centred approach, which the researcher used in his consulting and mentoring work. The way in which grounded
theory was worked with, in this constructivist manner, is developed more fully in Chapter 4.

Grounded theory has been criticised for not feeling the direct influence of the postmodern arguments and feminist ideas. (Denzin & Lincoln 1994: p205) The constant comparative method embedded within grounded theory can also be interpreted as being a linear, cause and effect, way of viewing phenomena that could possibly deny the multiple realities that the authors claim is possible in grounded theory. Certainly the presentation of grounded theory by Strauss & Corbin (1990) offers, what appears to be, a semi-prescriptive method and a highly regulated grounded theory approach.

The manner in which decisions are taken, within the format of the gradual emergence of the theory, is criticised by Archer (1988) as being affected by the researchers own “...putative insight...” and therefore not as free from the bias of the literature or previous educational processes as Glaser & Strauss (1967) would encourage us to believe. The freedom from preconceived ideas is also suspect, in that both of the original authors were highly trained sociologists, and therefore, imbued with the products of their research development. There does not seem to be a means by which grounded theory researchers can put to one side all they had previously learned and reduce their preconceptions of the field, as there is in the naturalistic method of ‘bracketing’ the researchers personal biases in notes that can then act as a reminder to the researcher of their preconceptions. The example of the ‘Lady in the red dress’ quoted in Strauss & Corbin (1990: p63) is a story about coding observations. The coding used in the story line came out of the writers own experience and is not the result of new codes emerging out of the data. Therefore it is difficult to see how any categories that emerge within grounded theory are not somehow affected by the researchers own internal metaphors and personal language structures. (Lakoff & Johnson 1980) The interplay of researcher and the field is made more explicit within other paradigms such as the constructivist approach and the participative methods of inquiry. (Denzin & Lincoln 1994) In order to counteract the effects this mechanism may have had on this research, the following methods were used to support the development of the theoretical concepts from the data and continue to build a ‘solid data theory coupling’ Golden-Biddle & Locke (1997).
These included PhD supervisors who could offer challenges and academic discussion, a personal journal to bracket biases, regular conversations with peer researchers who were prepared to share their thinking and question where this researcher developed his ideas from and the presentation of ideas and models in seminars within the University where this researcher was based.

One of the differences between the original formulation of grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss 1967) and the description by Strauss and Corbin (1990) is in the way the literature is treated. In the original the literature was left to one side and the constant comparative method used within the data derived from the field. Whereas in the latter form of grounded theory the literature is used as a means of stimulating questions and developing theoretical sensitivity, to develop the emerging hypotheses. (Strauss & Corbin 1990 p50ff) Strauss & Corbin (1994: p273-274) take this aspect a stage further introducing the idea of refining existing ‘grounded theories’ as long as they are not forced into the data. It may be that the main differences between the original work by Glaser & Strauss (1967) and the further development of grounded theory as a methodology by Strauss & Corbin (1990) is situated inside the nature of their respective target audiences. In the original monograph the readers were experienced and trained sociologists, familiar with research and therefore the focus of the primary work on grounded theory lay in convincing an academic audience of the validity and utility of embarking on research using an emergent methodology. However, Strauss & Corbin’s (1990) intention seems to have been to make explicit the underpinning activities and processes that inexperienced researchers may not know about when initiating a grounded theory inquiry.

The position of the person, as subject within grounded theory, does not seem to have been affected by the introduction of the more collaborative styles of research, Reason & Rowan (1981), in that the subject seems to remain as the person who is being researched and the power of interpretation and decisions about what to research next are left to the researcher. This seemingly unequal distribution of power and decision-making reflects a post-positivistic approach to research and maintains
the position of the researcher as the arbiter of theory generation and knowledge creation. This criticism is endorsed by Charmaz & Mitchell (1996) who argue that,

“Because both Glaser and Strauss and Corbin follow the canons of objective reportage, both engage in silent authorship and usually write about their data as distanced experts, thereby contributing to an objectivist stance, ...furthermore a positivist, objectivist cast.”

This criticism would appear to prevent a researcher who is influenced by the impact of post-modernism, feminist research, the collaborative cooperative position championed by Reason & Rowan (1981) and the arguments put forward by the proponents of naturalistic inquiry (Lincoln & Guba 1985) from using grounded theory as a research methodology. However if the epistemological roots of grounded theory are surfaced, the use of grounded theory can be justified on a number of counts. Grounded theory is embedded within symbolic Interactionism, (Chenitz & Swanson 1986: Gregory 1994: Locke 2001). The intention of symbolic interactionism is to,

“...develop a way of thinking about and conceptualising human behaviour that focus[es] attention on people’s practices and their lived realities.” Locke (2001: p20)

Nelson (1998) states that symbolic interactionism emancipates people in that, “...individuals are free to find their own meaning.” She continues with the assertion that symbolic interactionism also meets the five humanistic standards for theory.

- “There is a new understanding of the people where we get the meaning.
- There is a clarification of values.
- Meaning comes from interaction so interaction is important to human society.
- There is a community of agreement, in that Blumer’s ideas are adopted by people in the academic community.
- There is a reform of society – because meaning comes from interaction, interaction must not be taken for granted.” Nelson (1998: p3)
Therefore, according to the above discussion, grounded theory would fit a postmodernist, Fifth Moment perspective of research, if used as a rigorous methodology that is being employed to discover the meanings that executive directors make of their careers and their lives. Charmaz (2001: p5) posits that “...research is fundamentally interpretive rather than objective.”, therefore any accounts of the executive directors passage to the top of their organisations is one of many possible stories that could be developed out of their conversations, provided, as Barber (2000: p51) asserts, “...that the person of the researcher [is not] separated from their research practice.”

3:9.2. Reliability and validity

The issues of the validity and reliability of a grounded theory and by what criteria a grounded theory study is to be evaluated, becomes relevant at this point in the discussion. Rubin & Rubin (1995: p85) make the point that,

“Most indicators of validity and reliability do not fit qualitative research and may distract from the work more than it clarifies.”

Other criteria, such as ‘trustworthiness’ (Guba 1985: p218,) can be used within a grounded theory study, to determine the validity and reliability of the study. It is the operational processes within grounded theory that make it possible for the researcher to develop the emerging hypotheses, based on the spiral of ‘interviewing-constant comparative analysis-interviewing- constant comparative analysis’ in a recurring manner throughout the research study. Much like the spiral development of ideas, the emergence of the theory continues until the hypotheses are demonstrated to have trustworthiness (Guba 1985: p218), by being repeated and confirmed by subsequent interviews. (Strauss & Corbin 1994) This audit trail, from data to categories and processes that support the hypotheses, can be demonstrated within the reports and summaries, which are written up during and after the research study. The generation of a grounded theory must be done in relation to something, (Gregory 1994); the
units of analysis or the phenomena being studied need to be identified during the early part of the study. (Glaser & Strauss 1967) This allows the subsequent analysis to be connected to the units of analysis and enables the development and consolidation of the subsequent hypotheses.

In order for the researcher to create a grounded theory study that appears credible to both the research community and to the subsequent readers of any publications that may ensue, Glaser and Strauss (1967: p230) and Strauss and Corbin (1990: p108-109) advocate looking for the ‘negative’ case where the opposite of what is being declared in the hypotheses is sought. When Glaser and Strauss (1967) were researching the concept of ‘Closed awareness’ in their study on dying, they looked for societies where ‘open awareness’ may exist and discovered that ‘closed awareness’ was culturally based within western societies. It was considered important in this study to seek out people who will add a different voice to the data, e.g. female directors, who may have perspectives that can be contrasted with the perspectives of male executive directors.

The use of multiple comparison groups can substantiate the study, combining multiple perspectives, which can then be compared and contrasted to add depth and variety to the emerging theory. (Glaser & Strauss 1967: p230-231)

3:10.1. Research design: Phases and activities.

What is a researcher to do when faced with the variety of approaches to using grounded theory as a methodology? Taking the criticisms of grounded theory and the discussion concerning ontology, epistemology, the nature of being human and the methodological aspects of conducting qualitative research into account, how is the researcher going to use grounded theory as a methodology? This section will outline the cycle and phases that were planned into this research inquiry.

Glaser & Strauss (1967) advocate that the researcher begins grounded theory research with broad questions (C.f. Appendix 2), constructed to cast as wide a net as possible, at the start and which allow the researcher to be open to what the field may
contain and what emerges from the iterative process, of data gathering and analysis. Dick (2000: p3) supports this research strategy

“Grounded theory begins with a research situation. Within that situation, [the] task [of the] researcher is to understand what is happening there, and how the players manage their roles.”

In their original monograph concerning the discovery of grounded theory, Glaser & Strauss (1967: p9) argue that their work is ‘work in progress’ and that the theory is ‘theory as process’. This provides an impression of grounded theory as an emergent research methodology and presupposes an emergent design. In order to develop this doctoral research in line with the presuppositions of Glaser and Strauss’s (1967) original methodology and to meet the purposes and the requirements of the academic process that has been engaged with during the life of this doctoral study, this research was developed in three main interconnected and emergent phases.

3:10.2. Initial research phase

Phase 1 was an important part of the research process, as it was during this period that this researcher could begin to develop the theoretical sensitivity that is so important during the life of grounded theory research (Glaser & Strauss 1967: Chenitz & Swanson 1986: Strauss & Corbin 1990, p42ff: Locke 2001, p89ff). However, the tension between developing theoretical sensitivity and the presumptions and assumptions that were brought to the inquiry by this researcher required managing, at the same time as developing the analytical process of the research. Glaser & Strauss (1967), who do not describe a process for this yet, assert that the researcher must pay attention to the biases and a priori theories that they hold regarding the field, so that when the researcher enters the field these can be held to one side. This raises the issue of what a researcher will need to do to maintain theoretical sensitivity and also to develop the clarity required of developing the codes and theoretical ideas from the interview data. Gregory (1994) used a method of bracketing, which she borrowed from naturalistic inquiry, (Lincoln & Guba 1985) as a means of holding her biases and preconceived ideas to one side.

95
This researcher adopted a similar process to this using memos, a personal journal and conversations with peer researchers to highlight and bring to awareness the hidden assumptions and notions that he brought to this inquiry. Glaser & Strauss (1967) argue that the researcher is to read as widely as possible during this phase of grounded theory research and this researcher decided to read about the historical emergence of the executive director, so that he could develop his understanding of the social and historical factors that have constructed the phenomenon of the executive director. He used this learning to develop a context paper (C.f. Chapter 2.), in which personal biases could be raised and early perceptions of the field could be mapped out and important themes and issues arising from the literature surfaced. Another aspect of this phase of the inquiry was to generate a set of questions, which were used to semi-structure the primary interviews. The questions were generated from discussions and conversations with peer researchers.

3:10.3. In-depth interview process

The following aspects shaped the adoption of an in-depth interview process: During the development of the context chapter, this researcher had formed the impression that executives were conservative and cautious with people, who appeared to be probing into their working practices. (Coulson-Thomas 1993) This suggested that a conservative approach to data gathering would be more in line with the expectations of the executives being interviewed during the life of this research project. A semi-structured, in-depth interview method was considered to be the most suitable method of interviewing as this addressed the power-dynamic between the researcher and the executive director and presented the researcher in a manner that the executive directors would recognise and identify with. (Rubin & Rubin 1995) The in-depth aspects of the interview would also provide the freedom, required for the researcher, to develop any areas that required further elaboration during the interview.
3:10.4. Phase 2: Recruitment of the research participants

Phase 2 was developed so that theoretical sampling (Glaser & Strauss 1967; Chenitz & Swanson 1985; Locke 2001) could be continued in a purposive manner. It was during this phase that issues of access to the executives began to surface. The procedure that was followed consisted of writing to the researcher's contacts and asking, in the case of Human Resource professionals who appeared to be acting as gatekeepers to the executive arena, either for permission to gain access to interview executives within their respective organisations, or in the case of the executives that the researcher had met through the Institute of Directors, writing a personal letter directly to them. The first question asked by contacts within the field consisted of a desire to know what was being researched, the focus of the inquiry and the kind of questions that would be asked during the interviews. Rubin & Rubin (1995: p101ff) identify the importance of this phase of an inquiry, when the researcher is encouraging people to participate in the research process; they argue that the researcher will need to work at overcoming any potential and actual initial barriers a person may have to being interviewed and also address any anxieties that may arise when a third party is introducing the researcher into their organisation. The means used to engage with these concerns were a letter of introduction and consent, including a provisional set of questions that were used to semi-structure the initial interviews, followed by a personal telephone call to the contact within the organisation, to discuss any concerns or protocol the researcher would be required to observe when visiting the organisation. At this stage, the prime concern of the contacts centred on the degree of confidentiality that would be observed during the lifetime of the research. The people whom this researcher negotiated access to and the executives, who were interviewed, wanted complete confidentiality of what they said during the interview, not just for the life of the research project but also to extend beyond the life of this research, in perpetuity. Rubin & Rubin (1995: p93ff) argue that

"When [we] encourage people to talk to [us] openly and frankly, [researchers] incur serious ethical obligations to them. These ethical obligations require avoiding deception, asking permission to record, and
being honest about the intended use of the research. [The researcher’s] obligations also include ensuring that the interviewees are not hurt emotionally, physically, or financially because they agree to talk with [the researcher]."

The contract between researcher and research participant contained reassurances to the effect of militating against the above possibilities. The cascade effect of this was to preclude observation of the executives within their working environment, as it was considered by my contacts at the time to be too politically sensitive. The contacts agreed to organise opportunities to interview their ‘busy executives’ but were reticent to organise observational opportunities. This would require them to gain permission within the organisation of the entire executive group, whereas access to individuals was organised on a more personal basis and did not ‘take up’ too much time. It was decided to make in-depth interviews the main avenue of data collection during the life of this research, so that any potential harm as described by Rubin & Rubin (1995: p93ff) could be avoided.

3:10.5. Profile of the research participants.

Seven interviews were conducted, with participants who had been gathered from a variety of sources and which provided the data from which the primary codes and provisional categories were developed. All were executive directors, six were men and in the primary interview phase there was one woman. (Table 4:1.)

3:10.6. Phase 3: Balancing the gender distribution in the research.

Throughout Phase 3 a further sixteen purposeful interviews, spread over the life of the research inquiry, were carried out during the continuing analysis, to saturate the emerging categories and provide a basis for the development of the core category (C.f. Chapter 5 & 6) and the subsequent elaboration of the theoretical scheme. This phase is a continuing activity during the research process and will be ongoing so that
the core category can be developed further. These are described and argued more fully in Chapters 5 through to 8.

An important aspect of the purposeful interviewing conducted during phase 3 was to counteract the potential biases that may occur when interviewing a mainly male research arena. This raised a further issue of researching within the executive arena, that of access to women for interviews. The executive area remains associated with the world of ‘men’ and tracking the studies in this arena in a chronological order, in Lee’s (1981) work done during the 1970s, not one woman was represented. This may have also been an indicator of the position of Coventry’s companies and industrial sectors at the time. In the 1980s, when work was undertaken by Mumford et al (1988), the ratio of men to women appeared as 14.4:1, a distribution of roughly 2 women in a group of 30 executives. By the time of Barry’s study during the early 1990s, the number of women represented in the study remains small, only 55 of the 1,011 directors in Barry’s research, being women. This represented a ratio of 1 female director to every 18 male directors. Barry (1998: p4) also comments that

“...we think it is probable that the number of female directors is much greater than it was even ten years ago.”

In the light of the studies carried out in this area, it became important to represent women’s voices and perspectives of becoming executive directors. I therefore sought out female executive directors, in order to balance the gender profile and work towards the establishment of the ‘negative case’. (Glaser & Strauss 1967) However, due to the low numbers of women working at the executive level, discovering where the women were working relied heavily on my personal networks and, in total, five women were interviewed for the study. Others were approached through personal networks, by letter or followed up by telephone inquiries, however several declined, saying that “they were very busy” or that they had been, “giving too many interviews recently”.

99
3:11. Summary

This chapter has outlined and reviewed the reasons for choosing Grounded Theory as a methodology for this doctoral research. It has set out an argument to substantiate the use of a constructivist grounded theory, within a symbolic interactionist perspective. It has been argued that a constructivist grounded theory is a relevant methodology when researching the experiential world of executive company directors. Criticism of grounded theory has been discussed, to illustrate how an understanding of the limitations of grounded theory, as a methodology, affected the emergent research design.

In the next chapter there will be a discussion of how grounded theory was applied to the research field, illustrating the application using the first two primary interviews as a basis for the analytical processes used in grounded theory.

This chapter has argued that the current research neglects the experiential world of executive directors, (C.f. 3:2.). Therefore, research that provides executives with a voice and focuses on the experiential world of executive directors’ is required to address this space within the executive field. The following chapters will develop themes and the core category that this research uncovered, inside the space between the literature and the experiential world of executive directors’.

In accordance with Blumer’s contention that ‘people are active agents in an active social world’ (Plummer 1998), the following chapter will demonstrate how grounded theory was employed to uncover the constituents of the core social processes that executives manage and deal with in their working lives. In line with this premise, the next chapter will illustrate how this is used as an interpretive approach to data analysis, developing an understanding of what was happening in the executive directors’ world. Using this emergent understanding, it will demonstrate how grounded theory enabled this researcher to develop a tentative theory about the psychosocial process of how individuals develop towards the executive position.
Chapter 4

Application of grounded theory to the research field

4:1. Introduction

As argued in the previous chapter, this research is set within the constructivist paradigm, using grounded theory as the methodology of choice. This chapter details and demonstrates the application of grounded theory to the research field, using extracts taken from interviews conducted throughout the research. The purpose of this chapter is to clarify how grounded theory research methodology was applied in practice. The decisions and personal choices that affected the research process are also discussed, to establish the differences between the theoretical perspectives of grounded theory and its application to this research.

The chapter will follow the logic of the phases of grounded theory after May (1986: p149), the list below illustrates the links between May’s (Op Cit) format and the sections where they are addressed.

- The development of the research question. (4:4.1.)
- Gaining access to the research participants. (4:4.2.)
- Entering the field. (4:4.3.)
- Gathering the interview data. (4:4.5.)
- Analysis of the data from primary coding, through creating categories and developing the categories into theoretical codes. (4:5.1.)
- The development of the theoretical codes using the process of diagramming into theoretical frameworks and schemes using the 6 C’s of context, conditions, co-variances, consequences, contingencies and cause. (4:9. Chapter 5 & 6)

The above phases may appear to be a series of steps taken by the grounded theorist, however in practice, the phases are a spiral of activities that move back and forth

4:2. The process of grounded theory overview.

There are several processes happening simultaneously in grounded theory research (Chenitz & Swanson 1986), all of which are focused on the generation of a tentative inductively arrived theory, (Glaser & Strauss 1967: p21ff). The processes can be summarised as,

- Gathering data regarding the initial research question.
- Coding the data to form descriptive codes that identify what is being talked about in the field.
- Developing the descriptive codes into categories.
- Gathering more data to substantiate and develop the categories.
- Developing the categories into theoretical concepts.
- Identification of the core basic category that holds together the theoretical concepts.
- Development of a theoretical scheme that explains the core category and the relevance and fit of the category to the field.

Glaser & Strauss (1967: p237ff) describe the properties of a grounded theory as being, able to

"...closely fit the substantive area. ...be readily understandable by 'laymen' concerned with this area. ...be sufficiently general to be applicable to a multitude of diverse daily situations within the substantive area. ...allow the user partial control over the structure and process of daily situations as they change through time."

The above statement can also be used to evaluate the theory arrived at in grounded theory research. This research will be critiqued in the final chapter of this thesis.
The theory, generated during grounded theory research, offers perspectives and ideas for understanding the underlying problems or issues in a particular field of research, or general problem area, (Glaser & Strauss 1967). As Chenitz & Swanson (1986: p3) elaborate, the objectives of grounded theory research include the explanation of “basic patterns common in social life” and are to uncover the

“...basic social-psychological processes which account for variation in interaction around a phenomenon or problem.” (Op Cit p3)

The discovery of the core category, or the basic social-psychological problem, is at the centre of the grounded theory methodology. (Glaser & Strauss 1967: Chenitz & Swanson 1986: Gregory 1994: Charmaz 2000: Locke 2001) Basic social-psychological processes are the challenges that they, as actors, are puzzling with and managing in their daily lives. Glaser (1978: p93) identifies the basic social-psychological process as, “...a theory that accounts for a pattern of behaviour, which is relevant and problematic for those involved.”

4:3. Research context

The role and the world of the executive director have been discussed in Chapter 2. The purpose of this section is to describe the range of organisations that the participants were working in at the time of the research and to provide a profile of the participants who took part in the research.

The profiles of the participants, from Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the research, are provided in the tables below.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant code</th>
<th>Company sector</th>
<th>Technical and functional background</th>
<th>Age at the time of the study</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Academic and professional qualifications.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Insurance</td>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>BSc Economics MBA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Insurance</td>
<td>Customer Compliance</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Various in company management courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Pharmaceutical</td>
<td>Chemist</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>BSc &amp; PhD Chemist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Manufacturing &amp; Retail</td>
<td>Sales and Marketing</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Investment markets</td>
<td>Information Technology Development</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>BSc Computing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>Business Development</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Institute of Directors Diploma in Company Direction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Telecommunications</td>
<td>Electronic Engineering</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In total there were twenty-six participants interviewed for the research. The table above illustrates the range and profiles of the participants interviewed during the emergence of the theoretical model. The profiles of the participants interviewed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Code</th>
<th>Company sector</th>
<th>Technical and functional background</th>
<th>Age at the time of the study</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Academic and professional qualifications.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Public Membership Association</td>
<td>Business &amp; Information Technology</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>BSc Business studies and Economics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Public Service company</td>
<td>Policy &amp; Strategic Planning</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>BSc &amp; PhD Economics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>Employee Relations &amp; Policy.</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>BA History &amp; Social Politics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Business Consultancy</td>
<td>Human Resources and Management development.</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>BA English MA management development MSc management of change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Telecommunications</td>
<td>Finance and Strategy</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>BSc Industrial economics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Public Utility</td>
<td>Business development</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>PhD Industrial Relations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
during the development of theoretical sensitivity did not substantially differ from the profiles illustrated above.

4:4.1. Developing the research questions.

This section is concerned with the development of the research questions and the process that the researcher used to generate these questions. The main research question that guided the process of question development is restated below, to provide a focus for the application of constructivist grounded theory to this field of research.

- *How do individuals develop towards the role of the executive director?*

Chenitz, (1986: p40) identifies that research questions come from a number of sources

- The researchers field of professional practice.
- Clarification of a particular problem situated in the research field.
- Events from the researcher's professional, or research experiences and or the literature.

In the case of this research, the question had come out of general discussion between this researcher and his peer, learning and support group and preliminary discussion with executive developers working in the field. These discussions produced ideas regarding questions that may be asked, as a way of entering the field and gaining access to potential participants, however, they did not produce the list of questions
used by this researcher, who devised the preliminary questions because of the
discussion not during the discussions. As the research progressed, the questions
became more focused on the emerging categories. Issues regarding this are
discussed in a later section in this chapter. (C.f. 4:4.1. & 4:4.3.), however, Glaser
(1998: p115) points out that

"...the professional, preconceived problem, while of interest to the
profession or some professional, is often not there and if there, not of great
concern to the participants in the substantive area."

One of the main tenets of grounded theory is that the researcher enters the field
with no a priori theory or preconceptions about the outcome and findings of the
research. Along side this tenent is the guiding notion that the researcher has only a
broad idea about what the research is going to explore, (Glaser & Strauss 1967). This produces a number of different tensions (C.f. 3:5.1.) between...

- Theories that the researcher knows, from their previous experience and
  educational background, and continuing to track - from the data using the
grounded theory methods – the emerging theory.

- Bracketing and surfacing the researcher's biases on a continuous basis so
  that awareness of assumptions and ways of thinking the affect the research
can be reflected on.
• Tension between the strategies of putting the existing research literature to one side until the theoretical sensitivity phase of the research.

• The uncertainty and the unknown of an emergent research process.

The tensions associated with this research strategy are discussed in more detail in the following sections. This researcher was concerned to follow grounded theory methods, however, upon entering the research field the researcher discovered that there was an expectation that research questions should be produced and identified so that the people who were introducing the researcher to the participants could verify the intentions and purposes of the researcher and set up the appointments required. Rubin & Rubin (1995: p 106-110) identify the stages of setting up interviews with participants within organisations, writing a letter, which is then followed up with telephone contact. All of the stages of making contact with people within organisations leave out the role played by the people who act as the introducer or intermediary between the researcher and the participant, and how this may shape the research process. In this research it seemed that the people who introduced me to the participants were acting as organisational gatekeepers. This aligns with Lang & Lang's (1981: p672) ideas concerning the admission of news items across the organisational frontier into broadcast. This notion, of people acting in the organisation as 'gatekeepers' to the organisation, reinforcing its policies, evaluating the relevance of activities for the organisation and considering whether or not an issue is timely or not (Lang & Lang 1981: p672-3), affects a researcher's access into the organisation and whom they subsequently interview for their
research. Smith (2001: p225ff), in her discussion concerning the restraints on ethnographic researchers who study organisations, comments that there are a

“...set of inextricably connected obstacle that researchers face [when] getting into work sites.”

Smith’s (2001) mapping, of the difficulties that ethnographers face when gaining access to an organisation, is also relevant for the grounded theorist who, by using grounded theory, may be presenting a different approach to research outside of the experience of rational logical organisational people. Smith (2001: p226) identifies that one of the hurdles that researchers have to negotiate are the people who act as the organisational gatekeepers. Smith (2001: p226) identifies some of the reasons why people act as gatekeepers to the organisation.

“...because they are concerned – not unreasonably from their point of view – about the uses to which the research data may be put. They may worry, for example, that research reports will be used to expose company practices to the public, or be used in lawsuits against the firm. They cite the need for confidentiality, both for individuals and for firms. They worry about their liability for company practices that might be revealed in the course of the research.” Smith (2001: p226)

In this research, the intermediaries seemed to be ensuring that the researcher could ‘fit into the organisation’ and be ‘acceptable’ to the executives perception of
researchers. At another level, the organisational intermediaries were also being helpful to someone who was engaged in professional and personal development.

This researcher considered that his taking the position of a research student, pursuing professional development, provided him with an appropriate role that satisfied the requirements of the organisational gatekeepers who had introduced him to the participants. However, with one contact, the process of gaining access to the corporate directors took five years. During this time, the researcher worked with the organisation as an external mentor. This may be more representative of the organisational realities (Smith 2001: p226) that people are working within and how they have to sandwich the researchers requests for access in between the myriad activities that form their work, rather than any antipathy towards research and researchers.

Any tensions that may have been present in this process, of satisfying the requirements of the organisational gatekeepers, was reduced in the first few interviews, in Phase 1, by making contact with people whom he knew through his work and with whom this researcher had already developed a trusting relationship. Although this was useful in establishing the beginning of the research, he became concerned that his contacts may have been introducing unseen biases of their own into the selection and recruitment of the participants (Smith 2001: p 227). Therefore, as the research unfolded, he began to meet more executives through widening his personal networks, through attending study days and seminars where he could introduce himself to potential participants. However, he noticed a shift in the responses of the participants, in that they were more reluctant to be interviewed
within their company premises. The reasons for this varied and the following examples illustrate the reasons provided:

"The telephone is constantly ringing." (13P)

"There isn't anywhere for us to have a private conversation." (16P)

"I could meet you but I am not in the office this week so it would be better if we met somewhere in Town." (25P)

This may have been a way of ensuring that the contract with them would be research based and prevent the researcher gaining access to their organisation using the research as a cover for a potential consultancy relationship. As theoretical sampling continued and the core category emerged, recruiting participants became easier as he had more to talk about concerning the research and potential participants had more information with which they could relate. Subsequent interviews, conversations and focus groups were then organised, with particular reference to the research results, thus reducing the need to organise a set of questions that were used to verify the researcher's intentions.

Balancing the expectations of the corporate contacts (Smith 2001: Rubin & Rubin 1995) necessary to gain entry to the field and the emphasis of grounded theory on entering the field with broad questions, (Glaser & Strauss 1967: Locke 2001) surfaced the need arose for the researcher to use a method that could encompass these. This led to the preliminary stage of the research, where the researcher held informal conversations with executive developers, executive directors and peer researchers, to generate suitable questions. This initial dialogical process of question
generation was extended to include peers from the Research Methods Course at the
University of Surrey, attended by the researcher during the first year of this research,
and peers outside of the University who were involved with their own distinct
Doctoral research.

The process of talking to other people about the preliminary questions was
augmented with periods of self-reflection on the conversations (Swatton &
O’Callaghan : 1999 p414) during the first three to four months of the research, in
order to generate the list of preliminary questions used in the six primary semi-
structured interviews (C.f. 3.10.3.) conducted during Phase 1 of the research.

Table 4:3. Preliminary questions used in the primary interviews.

1) Did you have a career plan?

2) If so, was part of the plan to become an executive director?

3) I would like to hear about your working life; the influences on you
during that time; the elements you perceive that have assisted you and
hindered you in your progress towards executive director level.

4) What do you think is important for an executive director to know?

5) What do you think are the important skills for an executive director to
have?
6) How did you acquire the knowledge you required?

7) How did you acquire the necessary skills?

8) In what ways do you currently maintain/update your knowledge base?

9) In what ways do you currently maintain/update your skill levels?

10) How do you notice when it is necessary for you to learn something?

11) Is there anything else about your move towards becoming an executive director that you think is important for other people to know?

12) Is there anything else about being an executive director that you think is important for other people to know?

The questions outlined above addressed two main strands of the research. Question 3, 6, 7 and 11, were concerned with the processual 'how' individuals developed towards the executive position and the questions 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, and 12, focused on the experiential aspects of 'being' an executive director. The interleaving of the questions was designed to warm up the participants to being interviewed and create a pattern of focusing on the past, then the present, and the future and then track back into their experiences to add more depth to their answers. The pattern emerged during reflections with peer researchers, to assist the researcher with problems.
associated with possible interruptions during the interview or having the interview terminated due to a 'sudden crisis' that required their urgent attention, then at least the researcher would have some information regarding both of the research themes. However, in practice the interviews were relatively undisturbed, except when one of the participants was interrupted, while in full flow, by a colleague entering the room and proceeding to discuss, in front of the researcher, a confidential item. The issues of how the interview process affected the researcher will be discussed in section (4:10.1.)

As will be discussed in the next chapter, it was during the analysis of the interviews that the researcher uncovered a core category, 'developing visibility', and decided to concentrate on the questions relating to the psychosocial aspects of 'developing towards the executive role', leaving the experiential aspects of 'being' for further research.

The preliminary questions, cited above, formed a template or protocol (Rubin & Rubin 1995: p161) for the researcher to use during the interviews. The number of questions asked depended on the length and depth of the answers that the participants gave during the interview and the time that this allowed for the entire question set to be asked. While some participants seemed to find it easy to elaborate on the questions, others required more encouragement and prompting by asking sub-questions during the interview, in order to provide answers in sufficient depth.
4:4.2. Formal and informal methods of gaining access to the research participants.

Gregory (1994: p94) points out the importance of differentiating between the more formal access that is required by the researcher, prior to entering the organisation, and access to the individuals whom the researcher wants to interview. This section contains a discussion about how this researcher gained access to the participants.

4:4.3. Formal access to the participants

Formal access to research participants was initially gained through a contact from the researchers business network (Figure 4:1.), followed up by a letter explaining the background to the research, the broad questions that would be asked and the general line of the research.

Prior to arranging the interview meetings, the people who were introducing the researcher into the companies wanted to know what type of questions were going to be asked. The process began with a telephone call to establish contact, which was then followed up with a formal letter. The person who was contacted usually telephoned to establish the ‘real’ nature of the research and to arrange a suitable appointment time and date. This was all part of the ongoing ‘multiple negotiations’, (Punch 1998: p 159), which formed the necessary work required to gain access to an organisation. The telephone calls, the letter of introduction and the negotiations about date and time could be seen as way of interviewing the researcher in order to verify their suitability for the ‘job’ of researching in the organisation. All of the
executives contacted this way wanted some indication of the type of questions they were going to be asked. There are several possibilities as to why the researcher was asked for a set of questions. The first being that the intermediaries may have been managing the political and personal risks (Punch 1998: 156ff) associated with arranging for a researcher to interview executives within their organisation and are taking responsibility for the process that Ostrander (1995: 135) identifies as ‘checking out’ on a continuous basis the researchers intentions. The second reason that offers an explanation is that the intermediaries were managing what Rubin & Rubin (1995: 107) identify as ‘legitimacy’ of the researcher and the reasons for the researcher to gain access to a particular executive. Certainly, in this case, people inside the companies that this researcher gained access to seemed interested in what the research was about, why it was being conducted, what the outcomes may be and what the researcher expected to gain from the research.

However, as the research in this arena continues, it is important to consider what might happen if the questions being asked did not fit or make sense to the intermediaries? Would they act in a censorial manner and prevent the researcher entering the organisation? On reflection, the researcher did not always gain access to the organisation he approached. On one occasion the researcher’s calls and letters were unanswered and, in spite of making several attempts to make an appointment, the contact within the organisation was always unavailable. On other occasions, synchronising the diaries of the researcher and the executive became problematic, with the executive seemingly unable to ‘fit in’ an hour of their time, saying that
‘He was extremely busy right now could I call back in three months time when the business had calmed down a bit?’

Making time to talk and reflect, even for one hour, seemed to be low priority for a few of the executives with whom the researcher made contact. The ‘busy-ness’ of their day seemed to preclude an hour out. The issues that researchers face when interviewing executive directors include the nature of the organisation’s expectations from the executive in that the expectations do not include taking time to reflect. Instead, the work place is organised in such a way that the rewards are obtained through ‘being busy’ and ‘taking on more activities’ that award and recognise the ‘doing’ aspects of organisational life, as opposed to the more reflective thinking aspects of ‘being’ an executive director, (Garratt 1997).

The researcher managed the tensions associated with a broad research question and the request for a list of the questions prior to interviewing the executives, by developing a proforma of questions that was submitted to the intermediaries prior to the interview being held. This led to the emergence of a semi-structured interview schedule for the participants in the pilot phase.


- Posting letters using the country’s postal system.
- Sending executives surveys and asking for them to be completed.
- Telephoning individuals.
• Setting up and conducting personal face-to-face interviews.

As argued in (3:10.3.), the focus of the research was to gain an in-depth understanding of the psychosocial processes that may be operating as an individual develops towards the executive position. Therefore, face to face interviews were chosen as the most appropriate method. There will be a discussion of the interview process in a later section. (C.f. 4:4.7.) and in order to achieve this the following methods were used to make contact with the participants.

• Formal and indirect, through a company intermediary.
• Direct and more informal, using a) personal social network, b) connection made through professional development programmes, c) contact during my work as a facilitator and executive mentor.

The informal method of gaining access to participants developed through conversation, whereby the researcher invited individuals to take part in the research process. This approach developed out of the researcher's growing realisation that the intermediaries may have been selecting the participants for their own reasons and was based on Rubin & Rubin’s (1995: p93ff) strategy of developing conversational partners in research. However, there were two types of intermediaries that assisted in developing research contacts. The first being company contacts who introduced the researcher to participants whom they knew within their company And the second could accurately be described as referrers, peers whom the researcher knew who referred the researcher to further participants but who did not set up or affect the
structure or process of the meeting. The diagram below illustrates the various means by which the researcher gained access to the participants in the research.
Figure 4:1 Diagram of how the researcher made contact with the research participants.

Figure 4:1. above is a composite of all of the methods used for making contact with participants during the entire research process. Phase 1 of the research relied mainly on contacts that had made during the researchers professional work and who could
act as intermediaries, so that access could be made to the organisation and facilitate introductions to potential participants. Phase 2 used a combination of intermediaries and personal contacts that were made on a professional development program, 'The Role of the Executive Director', which the researcher attended at the Institute of Directors. In Phase three of the process, the researcher relied mainly on direct contact with executives that were sought out to provide sufficient theoretical sensitivity. In the early stages of the research the person whom the researcher was in contact with in the organisation chose the participants. Whereas towards the end of phase three selecting the participants became part of an ongoing process of making contact with more executives through the professional work of the researcher.

4:4.4. Sampling strategy

There were two main concerns that the researcher had during this research. The first being 'where' and 'how' this researcher could make contact with appropriate individuals who would be representative of the executive population, (Chenitz & Swanson 1986: p9); the second concern was with developing the codes and categories that were emerging from the data. These two concerns led to purposive contact strategies (C.f. 4:4.5.) that could encounter appropriate participants and the use of theoretical sampling to develop the categories and form the foundation of the tentative theory that emerged from the research, (Chenitz & Swanson 1986: p9ff: Glaser & Strauss 1967: p61ff: Gregory 1994: p95).

Glaser & Strauss (1967: p62) argue that the researcher in grounded theory research will not know what numbers of people to interview or observe until the categories have been saturated and defined fully during the process of gathering and analysing the data. However, this researcher was interviewing individuals who, although belonging to a social group, were in the main not members of the same organisational group. Even though it could be argued that they belong to a social group. Therefore, in order to provide as wide a range of individuals, who could represent the director population as fairly as possible, this researcher interviewed people from a wide range of companies, endeavouring to ensure that the individuals had had little or no contact with each other. As part of this the confidentiality of the
interview process was maintained by providing no details of other interviews, or other interviewees, to any of the participants prior to or after their personal interview.

The figure below illustrates the sequence of research activities used to provide sufficient participants and scope for theoretical sampling to saturate the categories that came out of the research.
The process of theoretical sampling continued throughout the life of the research. The researcher used any opportunity that arose to ask people he met during his professional work as an executive mentor, to refine the categories during the writing up of the analysis.
The research data was obtained through in-depth one-to-one interviews. In the course of this research it was agreed that the identity of any of the participants, or details regarding the company, would not be revealed to any third parties. This is in line with the ethical expectations of qualitative researchers, (Rubin & Rubin 1995: p93ff). In one case, the researcher was asked not to reveal the industry sector and country location of the company, as anyone reading the thesis with knowledge of the sector could have made an assumption concerning who had been interviewed and which companies had been part of the study. The participant would not proceed with the interview until assurances had been given regarding this request. Part of this concerned his assumption about how the Board would react to the idea that the company may be named in an article and how this would reflect upon the company and its business reputation. To provide a higher degree of confidentiality for the research participants their real names have not been used throughout the thesis and instead the participants have been referred to using a continuous numbering scheme.

In Phase 1 of the research the interviews were supported with a semi-structured set of questions (C.f. Table 4:1), creating a formalised interview approach, (Swanson 1986: p66ff). During Phases 2 and 3, where theoretical sensitivity was being developed, the interviews were emergent and informal in nature, (Chenitz 1986: p79) developing the themes and categories that were emerging from the research.

Each interview was tape-recorded and a professional audio typist then transcribed the tapes verbatim. The first eighteen interviews were treated in this manner, however, further, more informal, interviews and seminars were noted during the sessions and the researcher then wrote up the interview, or seminar, retrospectively. The latter interviews and subsequent seminars followed what Rubin & Rubin (1995: p7-8) describe as 'interviews as conversations', with the participants becoming 'conversational partners' in the research. This approach also employed a facilitative style, based on Heron's (1989) 'Six Category Intervention Analysis' model of
working with people on a one-to-one basis; Gregory (1994: p100) made use of this approach in her grounded theory research. The use of a facilitative style (Heron 1989: Gregory 1994) and engaging with participants as conversational partners (Rubin & Rubin 1995) meant the ‘interview’ could be developed towards a form whereby the participants could reveal more of how they reacted towards the research question, differentiating between the personal and the corporate perspectives concerning the issues being researched.

Data gathering, in grounded theory, includes interviewing and observational methods, (Glaser & Strauss 1967: Gregory 1994: p99, 104). The researcher decided to concentrate on the use of in-depth interviews as the method of data gathering. The reasons for this were two fold the first being that the primary research question focused on ‘how people had developed towards the executive position’ and therefore required information from the participants concerning their perspectives and views. The research was not concerned about the actual work of the executive director and therefore did not require periods of observation.

The second reason, which supported the first, was that gaining access to organisations, for the purposes of interviewing, was more problematic than the researcher anticipated, with his contacts asking for details of questions that were going to be asked. In conversations with his contacts, during the initial phase of the research, they hinted that he could get in to interview the executives, but in their opinion the executives would be very reluctant to allow the researcher to come and observe them during their working day. The level of suspicion seemed higher when the idea of observing the directors while they were carrying out their day-to-day activities was raised. One contact said somewhat cynically,

“All you’ll see is them sat at a desk all day writing papers and conducting meetings so there’s no point really.”

The main purpose of deciding to interview the participants, was that it gave the researcher the opportunity to conduct a purposeful conversation (Lincoln & Guba 1985: p268) with the participants, which allowed them to become involved with the
research. Thus developing a ‘rapport interview’, where both the researcher and the participant are ‘human-beings...’ (Lincoln & Guba 1985 p269) rather than being the subject of researcher observation. The major advantage of using an in-depth interview approach to data gathering was to provide the opportunity for the researcher and the participant to “move back and forth through time – to reconstruct the past, interpret the present and predict the future.”, (Lincoln & Guba 1985 p273).

The researcher became aware that during some of the interviews the participants were sharing their meaning of events, which in their opinion had developed them towards the executive role. Whereas in other interviews the participants seemed to be using the interview process to create meaning for themselves as they talked about their personal and professional experiences, (Rubin & Rubin 1995).

Writing about people who have agreed to participate in a study surfaces a variety of issues regarding the manner in which they are discussed, described and given voice. (Wolcott 1990:p19) Marshall (1995), in her study of women managers, identifies the problem of how to describe people without reducing their humanity to a set of lists and tables that deprives them of their individuality. In line with Marshall’s (Op Cit) solution to this problem, it was decided to adopt the form of using a series of aliases that protect the identity of the research participants and yet provide a sense of the ideographic nature of the study. However, this became problematic as the study evolved and, instead, the researcher adopted a logical numbering system.

During the initial interview phase, the ratio of men to women was 6:1. (Table 4:1.) This gender mix was inadvertently biased in favour of the views and opinions of men and therefore may have produced a set of categories and core constructs were representative of the male perspective. The primary group of participants seemed to mirror the percentage mix of men and women in company boardrooms, as identified by writers such as Lee (1981) Mumford et al (1988) and Barry (1998:p4). However to maintain the inequality of gender within this study may have perpetuated the emphasis of the male voice and reduced the opportunity to compare and contrast, within one study, the differences and similarities between the voices of the men and women in the boardroom. It was therefore decided to make contact with people who could widen my contact network and facilitate the introduction of a higher percentage of women to the study.
The position of a male researcher interviewing women is something that is not discussed in the literature. However, from the researcher’s experience of working in a predominately female environment, it was considered important to pay attention to the process by which the researcher was introduced to female participants. The process consisted of ensuring that all contacts with female participants were made through a female peer intermediary, who could vouch for the researcher’s intentions. The place of interview was considered so that issues of personal safety and confidentiality could be balanced.

4:5.1. Theoretical approach to the data.

This section is an outline of the theoretical underpinning that was used to make sense of the data. The data was approached from a symbolic interactionist perspective within the discipline of social psychology, thus supporting this researcher’s intention of accessing the experiential worlds of the executive directors who were interviewed during the research, (3:3.2.). Symbolic Interactionism is a perspective from the sociologically oriented school of social psychology (Charon 2001) and, according to Blumer (1969: p.3), rests on three principle premises:

- That human beings act towards things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them.

- The meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one’s fellows.

- These meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with the things he [she] encounters.

The nature of the things that Blumer is referring to include objects in the physical world, other human beings and the categories that the person assigns to people and themselves, institutions, guiding ideals and the situations and events that they encounter in their daily life. (Blumer 1969: p.3ff). Ascertaining the way in which
individuals acted towards the ‘things’ in their career trajectory was important so that a theory could be developed that was based on the practice domain, decreasing any potential theory practice gap that may develop during the analysis of the research data. If the researcher had made assumptions, regarding the significance or insignificance of the social objects that affected the trajectory of potential executives, then the research would have produced ideas and models that reflected this researcher’s perspectives, rather than the experiential world of the research participants. Therefore, the research may have been ‘grounded in the data’ without being grounded theory research. The effect of the symbolic interactionist constructivist approach to grounded theory research is its essential emergent nature. (Heyl 2001: p372) As the research developed, so the emergent nature of the development of the grounded theory became more pronounced. As it was the meaning that the participants were describing in the interviews, then this meaning could be delineated into the categories that eventually made up the model described in Chapter 5, from which the theory discussed in Chapter 6 was elaborated.

4:5.2. Overview of the analytical process in grounded theory research.

The previous chapter argued the case for using grounded theory as a methodology for this research and the following sections will focus on the analytical processes used in this research. In order to aid the discussion, more than one approach will be identified to illustrate the diversity and differences that are available for the grounded theorist to consider when working with this methodology.

There are several stages in the process of data analysis in grounded theory (3:6.1: Turner 1981: Dick 2000), which, as Gregory & Lee (1999: p15) assert, are designed to develop the analysis into “richer and more complex levels” of meaning and conceptual density. The processes, by which this occurred during this research, is illustrated in Table 4:4. below
Table 4:4. The processes and products of data analysis in grounded theory.
(Taken and adapted from Gregory & Lee 1999: p15)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process</th>
<th>Product</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant comparative method</td>
<td>Level I Codes – in vivo or substantive codes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant comparative method</td>
<td>Level II codes – categories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant comparative method</td>
<td>Level III Codes – theoretical constructs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memoing</td>
<td>The written development of the theoretical ideas that emerge from the data analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical sampling</td>
<td>Dense data that lead to the illumination and expansion of theoretical constructs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sorting</td>
<td>Identification of the basic social psychological process, or BSP.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selective coding based on BSP</td>
<td>Theory delimited to a few theoretical constructs, their categories and properties.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturation of codes, categories and</td>
<td>A dense parsimonious theory, covering variation, developing a sense of closure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>constructs.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparison with the literature.</td>
<td>Searching for literature that challenges, supports, illuminates, or extends the proposed theory.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Writing up the theory and the implications for the participants in the research field.


Table 4:4 illustrates the complexity of grounded theory research, in that the process by which the data is analysed and the product of that process determines the stage that the research has reached. This researcher followed, as closely as possible, the flow of the above table. The constant recycling of the process and the product aspects of grounded theory research can result in a circularity that reduces the data down to mechanical codes and categories, rather than a living piece of research that develops and grows. Glaser & Strauss' (1967) work embeds the idea of growth and development of the research ideas, whereas the work of Strauss & Corbin (1990) seems to impose a more mechanistic approach to the analysis that reduces the process of category development to a series of steps and procedures. The works of Gregory (1994) and that of Gregory & Lee (1999), highlight the dilemma that grounded theorists encounter, when engaging with the analytical aspects of developing a grounded theory. The sequencing of events seems to be like following a serial process, yet the spiralling around from one part to another, while encountering similar codes and categories, is as Gregory (2002) points out, a process of deepening conceptual density. The aspects, outlined in Table 4:2 are intended to lead from particular concepts to more embracing overarching concepts that can encapsulate and hold the supporting ideas provided, by the continuing data gathering that occurs throughout the research. The constant comparative process underpins and provides the researcher with a method to develop the conceptual density of a grounded theory from the data, this is detailed in the section below.

4:5.3. The constant comparative method.

The constant comparative method (C.f. Table 4:2) is an essential and integral part of data analysis in grounded theory and could be described as the energy system within the methodology. In the next section the constant comparative method will be
outlined to illustrate how this worked, by using extracts from the interviews conducted during the research.

The constant comparative method is a process whereby after each period of data collection the researcher compares, their notes about the key themes and issues that are emerging with the previous interviews, in a process of constant comparison. (Dick 2000) These themes and issues are then conceptualised, during the continuing process of analysis, into categories that form the basis of the emerging theoretical scheme. (Glaser & Strauss 1967: Strauss & Corbin 1990: Chenitz & Swanson 1985) The process of constant comparison is at the heart of grounded theory methodology (Locke 2001) and it is from this process that tentative ideas combine into a core category (Gregory 1994), which can form the basis of the theoretical scheme that emerges from the research inquiry. (Glaser & Strauss 1967: Glaser 1992) The remaining process of coding, to develop categories and their properties, is integrated with memos that develop the emergent ideas further until the main core category emerges and forms the central storyline of the inquiry. As each category is formed, the researcher inquires into the category until no new information is available or saturation has been achieved.

Outside of grounded theory research, the researcher would compare the data with the research literature and their personal knowledge base. However in grounded theory, the idea is to develop and ground all emerging codes and concepts within the data derived from the research participants, (Glaser & Strauss: 1967). As Locke states,

“In the interest of staying close to the social situation we are studying and of allowing examination of the data to fully inform our conceptualizations, researchers are urged to temporarily suspend from our thinking all preconceived notions, expectations and any previous theorizing related to the substantive area.” (2001: p46)
4:6.1. Open/descriptive Coding

Constant comparative method is a process of comparing a data extract, code or category with another data extract, code or category. However, the process of analysis begins with the researcher developing open or descriptive codes that describe what is happening in the interview data (Glaser & Strauss 1967: Gregory 1994: Locke 2001: Dick 2000). Identification of the descriptive codes provides the grounded theorist with a starting point, from which the analytical process is continued.

The process of coding and forming categories corresponds with Stage 1 of Turner’s 9 Stages of analysis, (3:6.1.) where the initial research codes and categories are developed. (Turner 1981) There are several levels of initial coding of the data. At one level the data can be deconstructed, word-by-word or line-by-line, to develop concepts that are then used to form categories and the building blocks of the emergent theoretical scheme. Asking such questions as,

- What is this?
- What does it represent? (Strauss & Corbin 1990: p63)

The discrete incidents, ideas or events are therefore roughly named and identified, (Locke 2001: p46ff), even though the code may alter as the research progresses. These initial codes form the foundation from which the grounded theorist begins to analyse the data, however, at this stage it is important to continuously relate the coding to the original question and unit of analysis (Gregory 1994: p109), so that relevancy of the codes can be established early on in the research. The following extract from Interview 1 illustrates the process of developing initial descriptive codes from the interview data.
Researcher...
“...did you actually have a career plan when you were on your way to becoming a director?”

Reply...
“Absolutely not, I have never had the slightest idea of what I really want to do in terms of job function or in terms of industry or anything at all. All I’ve ever done is to find another interesting task irrespective of level. So I’ve worked in a lot of different industries probably more than most and within those companies I’ve taken horizontal changes and diagonal changes and functional changes at the expense of staying in one vertical stream of aiming upwards.

I didn’t set out saying I want to join this function and I’m going to rise to the top of XYZ.

I just said that, I get bored easily, I like changes, I like throwing myself in at the deep end and learning to swim and swimming out the other end and then going onto doing something else entirely. I have done that most of my career. I have done a variety of internal projects but unfortunately one of them stopped – one of my

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Interview verbatim account</th>
<th>Initial descriptive codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“…did you actually have a career plan when you were on your way to becoming a director?”</td>
<td>“Absolutely not, I have never had the slightest idea of what I really want to do in terms of job function or in terms of industry or anything at all. All I’ve ever done is to find another interesting task irrespective of level. So I’ve worked in a lot of different industries probably more than most and within those companies I’ve taken horizontal changes and diagonal changes and functional changes at the expense of staying in one vertical stream of aiming upwards. I didn’t set out saying I want to join this function and I’m going to rise to the top of XYZ. I just said that, I get bored easily, I like changes, I like throwing myself in at the deep end and learning to swim and swimming out the other end and then going onto doing something else entirely. I have done that most of my career. I have done a variety of internal projects but unfortunately one of them stopped – one of my</td>
<td>1 unplanned career</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 - Finding interesting tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3 - Variety of work experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4. Undetermined career plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5. Personal preference for change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6. learning by getting in the deep end</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7. moving on</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
projects was doing work on the sales force and I never got another project after that so that discontinued really and I ended up here.

It was totally unplanned really I would describe my career as haphazard.

When I've left a job I haven't said well I really want to be in that industry in that position, it just evolved."  

| 8. Unplanned and haphazard career. |
| 9. Evolving career |

**Figure 4:3. Extract from Interview 1 to illustrate initial coding of interview data**

The use of a convergent question produced more information than was initially expected. This pattern continued throughout the interviews, where an open question was used often a brief response was obtained, however whenever a more closed inquiry was put forward then a vast amount of information was forthcoming. Maybe, despite being concerned about the questions that the researcher was asking, the participants talked about what they wanted or needed to say. This raises the questions...

'What do executives need to say to other people about how they obtained their position?'

and...

'What do executives need to tell us about their role and position?'

These two questions were not addressed during this research, however, they are a form of question that could be used as a basis for further research. This researcher will address these questions in the final chapter of the thesis, exploring some of the
assumptions that may have underpinned this research, and in so doing raise broad questions for further work in this arena.

Descriptive coding continued throughout each interview, developing codes and allowing the original code to be refined and re-formed as the process of constant comparison flowed through. The first seven interviews were transcribed by an audio typist and saved onto computer disk. Subsequent interviews were listened to and transcribed by the researcher, as the degree of inaccuracies in the first seven interviews was extremely high and necessitated more hours than had been expected in making corrections to the transcripts. It was considered important to get as accurate a transcript as possible to work with, so that the codes and category formation were based on what the participants had said rather than on an approximation of what might have been heard. The transcripts were then checked by the researcher for accuracy by listening to the tapes and any inaccuracies or words that had been left out by the typist, were corrected. The transcripts and the tapes were then used in conjunction and the paper transcripts were analysed to develop the descriptive codes that were then clustered to form the early categories. (Table 4:5.)

**Table 4:5. Examples of the provisional categories that were developed early on in the research**

1. Hungry for stimulus.
2. Learning style/Work strategy
3. Working pattern.
4. Evolving Career pattern
5. Transportable skill set.
6. Developing knowledge
7. Role modelling
8. Tension between task and relationships
9. Working alone
11. Identifying a mentor.
12. Moving on
13. Looking for interesting work.
15. Re-shaping the organisation
16. Gaining acceptance for ideas
17. Ideas into action
18. Interesting work.
20. Parading talents
21. Parameters of knowledge
22. Excitement and risk
23. Being selected

These categories were then formed into clusters around five main themes that were present in the early analysis.

- Educational
- Work/practice
- Interpersonal
- Intra-psychic
- Relationship with the organisation

The themes held the clusters of related descriptive codes together long enough for sufficient sense to be made of the emerging categories. The following diagram shows one such cluster set focusing on work/practice.
Figure 4:4. Practice work elements cluster of descriptive codes.
The five main themes are listed below, with examples of the numbered descriptive codes that were clustered under each of the themes. (The clusters relating to all five aspects can be found in the appendices)

- Educational aspects:
  - Role modelling. (7)
  - Professional development, MBA. (10)
  - Mentoring from within the organisation. (11)

- Work/Practice Aspects:
  - Work patterns (3)
  - Career plan (4)
  - Transferable skill (5)

- Interpersonal aspects.
  - Working alone (9)
  - Working with others (147)
  - Being accepted by the executive group (25)

- Intra-psychic Aspects
  - Stimulus hunger (1)
  - Needing interesting work (13)
  - Enchantment (118)
  - Personal principles and ethics (114)

- Relationship with the organisation
  - Holding position (19)
  - Moving on (12)
  - Corporate values and beliefs (51)
  - Positioning self in the organisation (134)
At this point in the research an enormous number of codes and categories had been developed that were related to the original question of "How people develop towards the executive position?". However, the wealth of information was also daunting as it made the process of sense making difficult and complicated. It was at this point that the researcher realised that there

"...are no absolute starting points, no self-evident, self-contained certainties on which we can build, because we always find ourselves in the middle of complex situations which we try to disentangle by making, then revising, provisional assumptions." Weick (1995: p43)

4:6.2. Axial Coding

One of the methods by which the grounded theorist can ‘disentangle’ the plethora of information that develops in grounded theory research is to ask questions about the nature of the relationship between what is being coded and named to the main research question. Table 4:6. below outlines some of the questions that were asked at this stage of the analysis.

Table 4:6. Examples of questions that were asked during the process of Axial Coding.

- Where does this fit in with the main picture of how people develop towards the executive position?
- What chapter or section would these codes fit into?
- What is this code telling me about the overall research?
- What is this code telling me?
- How does this link in with my original questions?
The interviews were then coded using such questions as: ‘What is happening here?, What is the situation?, How is the person dealing with the situation?, What codes or categories are suggested by that? (Dick 2000: p7). What is the meaning of this incident or situation for the participant?

4:6.3. Bracketing

The process of developing descriptive codes is continued throughout the research however the first interview is problematic, as the researcher has no data, other than their own preconceptions and previous experiences with which to compare their emerging ideas, (Dick 2000: p7). Glaser & Strauss (1967) hold the ideal of keeping the researcher’s previous experience and theory separate from the emerging research, however in their early work they do not suggest ways that the researcher can use to achieve this separation. Bracketing (4:7.2.), a method that has been used in naturalistic inquiry, (Lincoln & Guba 1985: Guba 2000: Gregory 1994) and phenomenology (Locke 2001), is one such means by which the researcher can surface their personal biases continually throughout the research. Bracketing was used in this research, to provide a process whereby the researcher could remain aware of the biases that were brought to this research. Locke maintains that,

“This self-conscious suspension of biases that may prematurely shape the conceptual categories helps analysts to focus attention on [the] data incidents and to think creatively about what they might mean.” (2001: p46)

This creates a tension between the researcher’s personal history and knowledge and their ability to perceive and make sense of what is happening during the research process. The ways in which this tension was managed included,

- Writing a personal diary where this researcher could engage in an intra-personal dialogue about their reactions to the research and the emerging sense making;
• Meeting with supervisors and peer researchers on a regular basis so that this researcher could remain open to the opinions and views of other people regarding the analysis as it unfolded;
• Conducting seminars and workshops where ideas and writing could be challenged and questioned about the categories and themes of the research.
• Reflection using the Memoing process within grounded theory to uncover, through the process of writing about the codes and categories, the underlying social processes that may be operating.
• Discussion of the emerging theoretical scheme in 1:1 meetings with individual managers and executives.

The degree to which the researcher's voice is represented in the research and the type of representation that is embedded within the overall thesis is a rhetorical one (Creswell 1998: pl71ff). There will be a discussion of how this was integrated into a constructivist grounded theory methodology more fully in 4:8.1.


The process of constant comparative analysis, is therefore an integral part of developing a theory that is grounded in the data and continues throughout the life of the research. It is also the method by which the tentative substantive theory was developed further, through a process of comparison with a wider variety of situations, (Glaser & Strauss 1967: p21).

Locke, (2001: p47), points out that the process of constant comparative analysis begins with the initial coding or naming of the themes, incidents, situations and ideas embedded within the interviews, or observations, conducted throughout the research. The coding (Strauss & Corbin 1990: p61), or naming, (Locke 2001: p470 that occurs throughout the research is a vital part of the analytical process in grounded theory.

There are two levels at which the process of constant comparison operates. At the first level, the developing category can be compared, from within the interview in
which it emerged, to other incidents or examples of the category. If we take the category of ‘Early career decisions’ as an example and compare this across several interviews.

“I don’t know whether it was by luck, or sub-conscious design, but several times in my life I have benefited from having a strong mentor or someone I wished to emulate, whether they saw it that way or not. I had a maths teacher at school, who was brilliant and I worshipped the mathematical ground he walked on. He was fundamental in my first choice, [of career], which was to become an actuary because it was all maths. I wanted more of that because I wanted to follow him, so I got into that [actuarial work].”

(P1. L36-41)

As the participant (P1) describes, he found someone to ‘emulate’ and used this, sometimes one-way, relationship to guide and direct his career. He uses terms such as ‘worshipped the mathematical ground he walked on...’ ‘...It was all maths. I wanted more of that because I wanted to follow him, so I got into that [actuarial work].’ (Op Cit)

One of the women in the research described a different aspect of how significant others influence the decision making process in these early years. In her account she identifies her relationship with her father as having an early influence, when she was a child and in her early teens.

P10. “I think an earlier influence was my father and he was in industry when I was a child and then he moved into teaching after he was made redundant.”

R.Q. “What did he do in industry?”

P10 “He was the general manager of a small light engineering company, probably only employing a few hundred people. But I was really interested in some of the things he talked about when he came home. And it was the relationships with the trade unions, with the staff. He is a very sociable guy so he developed quiet good shop floor relationships. I think it was that side
of things he used to talk about I found very interesting and it was at a time when there was a lot more labour unrest. And therefore it would be on the news and in the newspapers quiet a lot of the time and of course my teens were when we had the miners strike.”

R.Q. “That was about the 1970’s?”

P10. “Yea 1970’s...coupled with stories my father would tell me I found interesting and he was from a mining background anyway so there was always an added interest in the whole thing. I think that’s why I chose to do political history at university because I could study things like the [missing word] party and some of the [missing word] 1930’s. So that was one influence about why I probably came into HR and the earlier part of my career concentrated on industrial relations rather than employee relations.”

(P10 Int. / L18-38)

It can be seen that the participants described the factors that influenced their early career decisions and the codes that were assigned to these factors are then compared with each other to determine what the category of ‘Early career decisions’ was about.

Another example is the ‘Altering career direction’ category. An example of the category ‘altering career direction’ is found in the interview extract below.

“I have never had the slightest idea of what I really want to do in terms of job function or in terms of industry or anything at all. All I’ve ever done is to find another interesting task irrespective of level. So I’ve worked in a lot of different industries probably more than most, and within those companies I’ve taken horizontal changes and diagonal changes and functional changes at the expense of staying in one vertical stream of aiming upwards. I didn’t set out saying I want to join this function and I’m going to rise to the top of XYZ. I just said that, I get bored easily, I like changes, I like throwing myself in at the deep end and learning to swim and swimming out the other end and then going onto doing something else entirely. I have done that most of my career. I have done a variety of internal projects but unfortunately one of
them stopped – one of my projects was doing work on the sales force and I never got another project after that so that discontinued really and I ended up here. It was totally unplanned really I would describe my career as haphazard. When I've left a job I haven’t said well I really want to be in that industry in that position, it just evolved.” (P1)

The interview above illustrates how the researcher can, by comparing an idea across the same interview, develop further codes that affect the properties of a particular category, in this case ‘Altering career direction’. These codes can then be used to develop and shape the category further, as further incidents of the categories are found in subsequent interviews, (Dick 2000: p7ff).

Gaps in the data demand further questions and research. This is one of the reasons why a variety of participants sources are important, (Glaser & Strauss 1967). As ‘holes’ or ‘gaps’ were discovered in the data, this led to further questions and probing for information. Further gaps also became the basis for future development requiring further research, outside of the scope of this research. The gaps also stimulated questions from more participants, about the significance and meaning of the emerging categories. Moustakas (1994: p5) maintains that

“Grounded theory researchers continually question gaps in the data [for] omissions and inconsistencies, and incomplete understandings. They continually recognise the need for obtaining information on what influences and directs the situations and the people being studied.”

4:6.5. Category development.

Analysing data in emergent research is, as Gregory (1994: p109) points out, a ‘...complicated process.’ The complexity may initially be generated by the researcher’s expectations, that analysis in grounded theory is difficult and complex, however, the emergent process is also an uncertain one where the researcher is
“Transcribing every word, underlining every sentence which might be significant (yet not knowing what was significant in the early stages).”

(Gregory 1994: p109)

As the researcher approached the first interview and began to underline and mark ‘important phrases’ in the transcript, numerous descriptive codes (Strauss & Corbin 1990: p61ff) seemed to swarm out of the interview, during the process of initial coding. In the first two interviews the researcher identified 354 descriptive codes that were present in the transcript. This early phase of the analysis was an uncertain one, where the researcher was unclear as to what to do with all of the codes and ‘important phrases’. This stage was one where the researcher had become immersed in generating codes, without using the process of constant comparison to develop an understanding of the field. Even though Turner (1981) and other writers, Strauss & Corbin (1990), Chenitz & Swanson 1986) and Dick (2000), outline the process of analysis, they do so in a linear way, providing the impression that the analysis follows in an orderly and logical manner, from descriptive codes through the stages of category development to the emerging theoretical scheme. This is not an accurate representation of the process of analysis in emergent research. As May (1986: p149) points out the process can be,

“…troublesome [to describe] because the processes of grounded theory research occur simultaneously rather than in a linear fashion. For this reason, it may be difficult to describe the analytical processes succinctly.”

The simultaneous nature and constancy of the analytical process in grounded theory resembles a spiralling between the stages of the process, rather than a line of ascendancy towards clarity and certainty. The aspects that contribute towards the spiralling activities of grounded theory analysis are described by May (1986: p147)

“Data must be continuously coded, sorted, and written up in field notes or memos. Later memos must be combined and reintegrated into major memos which must then be organised into a framework or integrative outline
explaining the theoretical connections between concepts. Finally, the theory itself must be written so that others... can understand it.” (Op Cit)

The figures 4:5. below and 4:7. (C.f. page 149) represent the process that May (Op Cit) describes.

**Figure 4:5. Process of analysis in grounded theory: From interview to category formation.**

Figure 4:5. illustrates the process of developing analytical understanding and the development of meaning within grounded theory. The process of developing the core psychosocial process (BSP) is illustrated in Figure 4:7. therefore figure 4:5. above and figure 4:7 below illustrate the continuing nature of the analytical process in grounded theory. The generation of ‘open codes’ (C.f. 4:6.1. and Strauss & Corbin 1990: pp 61ff) forms the basic skeleton, from which the researcher can begin to develop categories and ideas regarding meaning and the basic social processes with which the participants are engaging (Glaser & Strauss 1967: p239). This process demands that the researcher attends to the detail of the process of open coding and, in addition, begins to hear beyond the words of the codes (Rubin & Rubin 1995: pp 226-238), so that theoretical categories can be developed. The theoretical categories can act as overarching concepts, beneath which the open codes
can be collected and organised into logical groups and provisional cluster diagrams.
(C.f. Figure 4:4.)

As this researcher developed the theoretical categories from the interviews using a process of 'constant comparison' (C.f. 4:5.3.), he clustered the open codes from each interview beneath these. In order to assist him with this process, examples of each open code from each of the interviews were filed beneath the higher level theoretical concept. The researcher developed a 'live' file for open codes, clustered beneath theoretical concepts, that could then be analysed further and higher level concepts could be developed until a theoretical conceptual pyramid had been developed. (C.f. Figure 4:6.)
Becoming visible as a potential executive

Signalling personal intention to become an executive

Meeting expectations

Negotiating a path through the organisation by closing the gap between self and the executives

Demonstrating good judgement, sensemaking, both political and business

Presenting an acceptable self

Developing a sense of a capable self

Taking opportunities and responsibility

Developing formal and informal working relationships

Making things happen in the organisation

Aligning self to significant others.

Growing proficient skills

Fulfilling personal preferences and ambitions

Learning from significant others

Forming an understanding of how organisations work

Figure 4:6. Pyramid diagram of theoretical concepts identified during the analytical process.

As the open codes were being developed into theoretical categories these categories were ‘tried out’ in discussion with ongoing focus groups (C.f. Figure 4:2.) that consisted of executive directors and senior managers. This process is described by Glaser and Strauss (1967: 45-7) as theoretical sampling. This ascertains and develops the validity and representational accuracy of the provisional theoretical categories. In addition to this process, this researcher maintained an active dialogue with his supervisors and peer-learning group as a way of challenging and identifying
his personal biases that may be affecting the analytical process. Figure 4:6 below illustrates the process of developing tentative theoretical ideas from the categories that were developed using the process described above. This analytical process is illustrated in Figure 4:7. As mentioned earlier in this section the figure below should be read in conjunction with Figure 4:5. (C.f. page 146)

Figure 4:7. (Continuation of Figure 4:5.) Process of analysis in grounded theory: from categories to tentative theory.

Creswell (1998: p57) likens the analytical process in grounded theory to

"...a zigzag process – out to the field to gather information, analyze the data, back to the field to gather more information, analyze the data, and so forth."

This ‘zigzagging’, back and forth between the field and the analysis, demands that the researcher remains focused on the research question they are pursuing and the unit of analysis they are working with (Gregory 1994) to maintain the continuity and purpose of the research. In the next section there will be a discussion of the beginning of the analytical process in grounded theory, starting with what Strauss & Corbin (1999: p61ff) describe as ‘open coding’, or, as Locke (2001: p47) prefers to call it, ‘naming’. This part of the process is fundamental to grounded theory, as the resultant codes are going to be used to form the conceptual categories from which the emerging theory will be developed (Locke 2001: p47ff). This process of immersion into the data and the emerging concepts was augmented with periods of ‘rest and reflection’ (Moustakas 1990: p51), during which this researcher could incubate the provisional conceptual pyramid and synthesise further ideas, which could then be tested out against completed and ongoing interviews to determine the validity and ‘fit’ (Glaser & Strauss 1967: 238-239) of the theoretical concepts. This
process also allowed sufficient distance between the phases of analyses so that the researcher could then return to the analysis refreshed. If the codes and the theoretical concepts continued to make sense, then this researcher continued to develop them. If, however, the concepts did not seem to make sense after this period of reflection then further questions and reading of the interview data could be undertaken until the theoretical concept was sufficiently clarified to be as representational and faithful to the original data as possible. Following Glaser & Strauss (1967) and Locke (2001), the analytical process continued through a series of iterations using memos (C.f. 4:6.7.) and theoretical coding (C.f. 4:6.6.) to develop the ideas that emerged from the interviews towards the identification of the basic social process 'balancing visibility and exposure' (C.f. Figure 6:5.)


It is important to make notes about any theoretical ideas that are evident as the process of comparison is being carried out, as these will form the basis of theoretical memos, further research questions and comparisons across the entire data set being gathered, (Glaser & Strauss 1967: Gregory 1994: Strauss & Corbin 1999). The data extract below demonstrates this part of the process.
Verbatim interview transcript.
(Interview 1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptive code</th>
<th>Researchers comments and questions in response to the interview transcript</th>
<th>Theoretical memos</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 - Finding interesting tasks</td>
<td>Finding interesting tasks implies a degree of awareness regarding job moves. Notice one of the consequences of C’s strategy is that he assumes that he has worked in more industries than most of his peers. What might the consequences have been for him? Words used to describe direction.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 - Variety of work experience</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Charles.
Absolutely not, I have never had the slightest idea of what I really want to do in terms of job function or in terms of industry or anything at all. All I’ve ever done is to find another interesting task irrespective of level. So I’ve worked in a lot of different industries probably more than most and within those companies I’ve taken horizontal changes and diagonal changes and functional changes at the expense of staying in one vertical stream of aiming upwards.

If the research was to be congruent with the underpinning principles of symbolic interactionism (Blumer 1969) and constructivism (Charmaz 2000), it was important to focus on the underlying meaning of what the participants were talking about. Eliciting meaning in grounded theory research necessitates asking the data questions such as: What is this person talking about? or What is meant by this? Corbin (1986: p102ff) discusses this aspect of grounded theory analysis and argues that there is a relationship between the operations of coding, writing memos and diagramming. Writing memos based on the interviews, whereby the researcher asks questions about the meaning and answers the questions using the interviews, can uncover understanding and support the development of subsidiary questions. Locke (2001: p47) advocates brainstorming names for the different ideas that are emerging, so that
the researcher is, "...push[ed] to think broadly about the possible meaning of the incident or idea." Developing a sense of the meaning of the data, through a more hermeneutic approach, develops another level of analysis in grounded theory beyond the mere fragmentation of the data into a myriad of codes, into an approach to analysis that is more consistent with a symbolic interactionist approach to the data.

Another corresponding process, undertaken with the interview data, was the development of theoretical notes made by the researcher alongside the initial data codes. (Corbin 1986: p104; Swanson 1986: p125) This process develops the researcher’s thinking and facilitates the detection of the researcher’s personal biases, which may be affecting the analysis. The extract in table 4:7, below, demonstrates part of the process, in which the researcher dialogues with the data and identifies their opinions and attitudes towards what the participant is talking about.

Table 4:7. Example of theoretical notes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verbatim interview transcript (Interview 2)</th>
<th>Descriptive code</th>
<th>Researchers comments and questions in response to the interview transcript</th>
<th>Theoretical memos</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>D.L. How old were you when you had that earliest recollection?</td>
<td>202. Directors seemed so remote [at age 17]</td>
<td>How does remoteness from a group, such as executive directors, affect a person’s expectations or career?</td>
<td>Career distance from executive director position.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. About 17-18.</td>
<td>203. Observing who was responsible for organising people and managing the resources of the organisation.</td>
<td>G notices that managers and supervisors are the people who are responsible for organising people. What does this tell me about who has the power to influence and the process of shaping that goes on</td>
<td>Organising other people.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
that seemed quite enchanting at the time. If enchanting is the right word.

204. Enchanting at the time.

Enchanted – the process of being enchanted by for example; supervisors and managers being the organisers. Is this a case of George wanting to be like the people he saw? What did he think he was getting himself into when he dreamed this dream? Is there an element of time in this code? G is aware that ‘at the time’ this was enchanting implying that now he sees it differently.

The above extract from the interviews shows how the researcher developed the raw interview data into categories, which formed the foundation of the emerging theoretical scheme. Column 1 is the verbatim transcript. Column 2 contains the open/descriptive code. Column 3 shows the researcher’s comments, rough working and questions, in response to the interview transcript in the Table above formed the embryonic memos that were written up during the research to develop understanding and meaning within the research, (Corbin 1986: p107). Column 4 contains the theoretical memos that were written as a result of a synthesis of the other three columns.

4:6.7. Memoing

The process of Memoing continues throughout grounded theory research as the research progresses. As Corbin (1986: p108) points out,

“The memos are generally written by the analyst for the analyst… The content [of the memos] tends to correspond to the phase of the analysis and
therefore reflects that process. ... the memos will grow in depth and integration as the theory grows.”

I include extracts from an early memo and a later memo below to illustrate Memoing as part of the analytical process.
Table 4:8. Extract from an early memo.

**Memo 3 Resignation (arising out of the following quote)**

"Even after this, I still thought that it was the right thing to do because it was going down anyway, if it went down a little further, I would have had to resign because I felt it had to be right change and that after a period time it would come up." (Q2RHaL189-92)

Researcher’s note: It seems that some decisions at board level affect the person who is pushing them forward and can cause a situation whereby they feel they have to terminate their employment. Notice the possible internal conflict for the individual director. Is there a way for directors to push through projects that are not liked by the board and still not lay themselves on the line of resignation?

The thought of resignation may affect a person deep down inside of their subconscious and as a result affect their career as a director. The associated consequences of loss of income and revenue. The impact they may have on the persons family life; with regards to their ability to pay the bills and support their family. This may produce a hidden stress inside the boardroom.

Table 4:9. Extract from a later memo

**Memo 7th September 2002. Surfacing from the pool. Developing visibility in the organisation.**

The question that permeates this research is how come some people become executives and other do not? Out of the people employed within the organisation or company there will some people who surface from the background and make the transition towards the executive position. This surfacing seems to be the visible start to the process of becoming an executive director. Are there people who seem to surface and then sink without trace? C.f. with career limiting moves. Anecdote about the senior manager who complained about his office. Also with research re careers that do not get seen.

There may be people who decide not to break the surface of the pool and stay submerged within the organisation. (c.f. research on Men’s Career Register) The men on the career register, who decided not to pursue an executive career, even though they had been selected to be developed in this direction by the organisation in which they worked, did so for the following reasons. The implications of the increased demands of the work on their family time. And how this would produce pressure on their lifestyle and work life balance. One person, (male aged 35) decided that he did not want to end up in the same physical and psychological state that his, then, senior manager was in. The senior manager in question eventually committed suicide and it was this action that sealed his decision not to commit to a senior career.
The question about whether or not to pursue an executive career can be seen to come out of the above memo. This question will be discussed more fully in the following chapter and will be developed in the final chapter of this thesis. (C.f. 7:2.2.) It does however, reveal an assumption, made by the researcher, that generally people within companies wanted to become executives and this was embedded within the original research questions.

4:8. The basic social process

Glaser & Strauss (1967), in their original monograph, emphasise that the grounded theorist is working towards a construction of the basic psychosocial process that the participants are managing in their working lives, (Gregory 1994). This basic psychosocial process or core category (Corbin 1986: p91ff) is fundamental to grounded theory, as the core category describes the fundamental issue that the participants are dealing with, as they conduct their lives.

4:9. Developing the theoretical scheme using the 6 C’s of Grounded Theory.

The 6 C’s are the analytical tool that was used in this grounded theory research to develop the theoretical scheme, by arranging the categories into a format that describes the experience of the participants, (Glaser & Strauss 1967: Gregory 1994: Locke 2001). The table below outlines the 6 C’s.

Table 4:10. The 6 C's of Grounded Theory.

1. Causes: The reasons, sources, or explanations for the occurrence of a phenomenon.

2. Consequences: The results, outcome, or effects of the phenomenon.

4. Contingencies: Imply the direction of variance in a phenomenon and how it varies.


6. Conditions: Under which the phenomenon occurs.

This researcher used the 6 C's to focus on phenomenon or category, so that questions could be asked regarding the dimensions (Strauss & Corbin 1990: p69ff) of the phenomenon and the relationships between the categories within the research. This researcher turned the 6 C's into questions about the dimensions of the particular category. For example when analysing the category 'moving on' the researcher asked the following questions:

- What caused this participant to move on from a job or piece of work he/she was doing?
- What were the consequences for him/her?
- Did anything else change as a result of this?
- Does this impact on another code or concept in the study?
- Is there a sense of directionality in the concept being investigated?
- What is the context in which this person was operating?

The 6 C's can be used to diagram the process of the eventual theoretical scheme (C.f. Figure 4:8.) and illustrate the construction of the core category and the relationships of the categories that support it. The figure below illustrates the next generation of the development of the theoretical scheme that will be described in Chapter 5. The theoretical pyramid (C.f. Figure 4:8) was grouped into three main phases:

- Forming a foundation for an executive career
- Developing and negotiating a path through the organisation
- Surfacing towards visibility as a potential executive director.
These are illustrated below.

![Diagram](image)

**Figure 4:8. The three phases of the individuals development towards the executive position**

These represent phases of the participants corporate careers and are divisions of a constant stream of activity, (Charon 2001: p124ff) which is separated for the convenience of this research thesis. However, "The reality of action is that it is a continuous and constant process..." (Charon 2001 p124) and within the context of this research these three phases can be recognised as signifying the phases that the participants development towards the executive position went through. It is also important to identify that these phases are based on the participants accounts of what constituted significant events, situations and processes. Therefore, the phases may not be representative of all executive careers. However, throughout their corporate lives the participants were often tacitly balancing their visibility to avoid over exposure and therefore ensure their viability within the corporation. The implications of this are discussed in Chapter 6.

**4:10. Chapter summary**

This chapter has focused on the process this researcher used when he applied Grounded Theory to this particular field of research. The main emphasis has been on describing and illustrating the methods by which grounded theory was applied and how this researcher developed the tentative theory that is described in subsequent
chapters, using a rigorous approach to interpreting and developing the conceptual framework that supports and substantiates the basic social process of 'balancing visibility and exposure' (C.f. Chapter 6).

The epistemological position of this research is from a social constructivist perspective and therefore differs from a social constructionists approach to research. Gergen (2002: p60) offers the following definitions and perspective regarding the differences between social constructivism and social constructionist approaches.

"Social constructivism... [is supported by the argument] that while the mind constructs reality in its relationship to the world, this mental process is significantly informed by influences from social relationships. [Whereas] social constructionism [places] the primary emphasis is on discourse as the vehicle through which self and world are articulated, and the way in which discourse functions within social relationships." (Op Cit)

This chapter has endorsed an interpretive approach to data analysis, which supports social constructivism while maintaining a strong adherence to the basic premises of grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss 1967) and in particular its symbolic interactionist roots, (Blumer 1969).

This chapter constitutes one way of applying grounded theory to this research field and therefore does not purport to be a map of how grounded theory should be applied within other research settings. However, it does provide a distinctive approach that could be applied further within the executive director field and used as a foundation from which further research can be developed.

The next chapter develops the findings and the interpretations that were developed from a rigorous application of the process of grounded theory. The discussion in Chapter 5 will focus on elaborating and disaggregating the processual model that supports the research findings.
Chapter 5

Overview of the research theoretical scheme: How individuals surfaced as potential executive directors.

5:1. Introduction

The previous chapter described how constructivist grounded theory was applied to the research field following the work of Glaser and Strauss (1964), Charmaz (2001) and Dick (2002). The discussion in the previous chapter identified a hierarchical concept model of the main categories developed during the research. This chapter takes the model further and demonstrates the theoretical scheme that underpins the core category of ‘balancing visibility and exposure’. In addition, links are drawn between the original research questions and the research categories.

The theoretical scheme and the conceptual linkages, which that support and empower the processual nature of the scheme, are offered as a model and tentative explanation of how individuals surfaced as potential executive directors. This chapter forms the foundation for a discussion in chapter 6, focusing on how individuals develop ‘visibility’ within the organisations in which they work.

This chapter is in three main sections, representing three phases of the individuals’ development towards the executive position. The three phases were identified in the research (C.f. Chapter 4:8.), in relation to the different periods of the research participant’s progression towards the executive role.

5:2.1 Overview of the research theoretical scheme

The pyramid diagram (C.f. Figure 4:6.) suggested a hierarchy of development towards the executive role, but provided no indication of the processual nature of the individual’s progression towards the executive position or the dynamic interplay between the various categories. Figure 5:1. shows the processual nature of the
various research categories and the relevancy to the different phases of the individuals’ movement towards the executive position.

Figure 5:1. Relationships between the research categories, the three phases of career development, and the core category becoming visible as a potential executive director.

Figure 5:1. is a diagram of the research categories that support the social process of becoming visible as a potential executive director and will be disaggregated and discussed as discrete theoretical categories throughout this chapter in the following sections. These appear to underpin the participants’ development towards the executive position, however, it is not synonymous or concurrent with the individual’s entry level into the organisation. The phase of ‘forming a foundation’ may apply to someone who enters the corporation at a senior position as well as
someone entering the organisation at a junior level. This representation of the process, through which people became executives, is based on the participant’s accounts of what affected their working lives and how they considered they progressed through the various organisations in which they worked. It may be applicable to people who have just started their career, as well as those people who have moved companies and are in the process of becoming visible within their organisation.

5:3.1. Forming a foundation for an executive career.

There were a number of interrelated activities and processes (C.f. Figure 5:2.) involved in the ‘forming a foundation’ phase of the participant’s movement towards the executive position. The relationships between the categories are discussed in detail in the sections below. The research suggested that, even though the categories are self-supporting and can be seen as discrete, they provide a basis for the development and emergence of other processes, which the person can utilise to move themselves through the corporation. For example, the category of ‘forming a sense of ambition’ develops the person’s intention and provides a position from which they can act and ‘develop their personal preferences and ambitions’. (C.f. Figure 5:1.) However, the individual’s personal preferences may need to be modified in the ‘development and negotiation’ phase of their progress through the organisation, as they are required to ‘manage their expectations and the expectations of the organisational constituents’ and ‘negotiate a path through the organisation’. They seem to do this by ‘learning from significant others’ and ‘aligning themselves to those significant others’. Alongside of these processes, because the business organisations in which the participants were working are predominately task focused environments, the participants needed to ‘grow proficient skills’, and ‘develop a sense of a capable self’. (C.f. Figure 5:1.)
5:3.2. Forming a sense of personal ambition.

The research findings (Research questions 1 & 2 Table 4:1) suggest that the individual who enters an organisation or corporation with a sense of ambition, personal drive and an understanding of their personal preferences will begin to work towards those positions in the organisation where they can fulfil their personal and professional ambitions, (Goffman 1968: 119).

The process of ‘forming a sense of ambition’ seems to have a number of influences within and outside of the organisational environment, including :-

family,

R.Q. “In your working life what actually influenced you during that time?

P9. ” I think an earlier influence was my father when I was a child and in my early teens.”

(Interview 9)

friends,
"I decided to join AN straight from school because my friends were going there." (Interview 3)

and schoolteachers,

"I had a maths teacher at school who was brilliant and I worshiped the mathematical ground he worked on. He was fundamental in my first choice [of career], which was to become an actuary because it was all maths. I wanted more of that because I wanted to follow him one way or another. So I got into that." (Interview 1)

which affected the formation of the participants’ ambitions prior to entering organisational work. In addition to these primary influences, the participants described how they developed their own sense of the work that they preferred to become involved with

P9. I prefer to manage a team first of all and you need a team to do that. I have a high need to feel that I complete a good days work or a weeks work or whatever.

RQ: A high need?

P9: Yes. A week full of transactional stuff. I know I’ve completed a lot of volume but I wouldn’t feel very happy about the week.

RQ: What do you mean by transactional?

P9: Racing around after interviews or appointments or contracts or somebody’s salary being lost and nobody can quite find the junior person who can put it right so it escalates, that sort of stuff. (Interview 9)

and they used this as a means of developing and directing their progress through the various organisations in which they worked.

The research takes into account that a person’s drive and ambition to move their position inside the organisation, or move from organisation to organisation, is more complex than an unambiguous desire to become an executive director. The
participant group did include one person who admitted to having an ambition to
become an executive director at an early stage of his career.

"P7: I would say that I had an objective right from an early age that I would
run companies but I never had a plan of how I would get there
RQ. How old were you when you first realized that
P7: probably about 18 19." (Interview 7)

However he was the exception, in that other participants described their career
trajectory in terms that reflected their personal preferences for the type of work they
wanted to be involved with, their view of what they wanted to contribute to the
corporation and the outcomes they were looking for within their working life.

There were some specific objectives that related mainly to the male participants that
included 'being in a position to make things happen' and 'making changes within
the organisation'.

"It's about being in a position to try out ideas or have your ideas acted on.
Perhaps you say again 'yes this is my idea and I will make it happen.' And if
you are not in that sort of a position [executive position] you can't readily do
that. I think there is a combination of both wanting that and having the
necessary drive to go and make it happen." (Interview 4 page13)

The findings suggested that, even thought some of the participants talked about
'wanting to lead' rather than following others,

"...in a sense I was leading I don't follow I'm not a very good follower."
(Interview 7)

the participant's tendency to look for leadership positions was being affected by
their personal preferences and their predilection for situations and organisational
roles that could satisfy their requirements for 'excitement and personal interest' and
a position where they could 'shape and structure' the organisation
"... the thing that gave me the buzz was actually making things happen at any level particularly, but I wanted to be in a position where I could shape an organisation." (Interview 2)

‘avoidance of boredom’

"I didn’t set out saying I wanted to join this function and I’m going to rise to the top of XYZ. I just said that, I get bored easily, I like changes.” (Interview 2 page 1)

and ‘making things happen or creating change’, (Interview 4 page13)

The cluster here comprises of a number of categories that are in a constant state of interplay. (C.f. Figure 5:3.)

![Figure 5:3. Categories that interact with 'forming a sense of personal ambition'.](image)

The position most often equated with the opportunity to contain all of the factors, illustrated in Figure 5:3.2. above, is the executive role. In addition to this, the female participants in the research also described their motivations in the following manner: ‘learning new things’,

166
'Well I know I've always wanted to learn. And you certainly have to, because everything is changing around you all the time, whether it's the Law or the Market, or whatever and I read a lot.‘ (Interview 16)

The more generic ambitions and personal preferences, which emerged from both the men and the women in the research, clustered around areas such as, ‘wanting to be in a position of autonomy’, ‘personal freedom’ and the avoidance of roles and organisational tasks where they were in a position of being ‘told what to do’. Other ambitions and preferences seemed to be linked to the type of work that the individuals preferred and choices regarding the people whom they liked working with.

In order to fulfil these vague and rather woolly ambitions within the corporate environment, the individual needed to develop organisational roles and positions whereby they could fulfil, consciously or unconsciously, planned or unplanned, their personal preferences. The challenge for the participants that underpinned this ‘sense of purpose’ was a need to ‘balance their visibility and exposure’ (C.f. Chapter 6:2.) so that any ambition or preference could be enacted within the corporate environment. This research focused on individuals who had become executives and therefore had maintained their ‘visibility’ within the corporate setting. No comparison has been made with individuals whose preferences have been realised outside of the corporate environment. There is an assumption here that the individuals who were interviewed during the research had made a decision to remain in the corporate environment so that they could realise their ambitions and preferences. However, this area requires further research work in order to qualify this assumption. (C.f. Chapter 7:6.)

5:3.3. Learning from significant others.

The process of learning within the organisation seemed, from the participants’ accounts (Research questions 3 & 4. Table 4:1), to have been affected by those people whom the participants considered to be ‘significant’ to them. The adoption of these ‘significant people’ as ‘mentors’ or role models,
"Several times in my life I have benefited from having a strong mentor or someone I wish to emulate. Whether they saw it as a two way role or not."
(Interview 1)

whether conscious or not, permeated the interviews as a fundamental part of the way in which the participants learned about their functional work, themselves, their values and beliefs about the work place

"It is their striving for perfection and their intolerance of lack of it. It is the striving to become better and better. Until I got to be in a position here, I didn't quite understand why it was worth having an obsession for perfection as an end in itself but I do realise now." (Interview 2)

and the systems and processes of 'making things happen' in the corporate environment.

"I went into the motor industry and thoroughly enjoyed my time there. I was in [an] extremely good company YYZ in America. I worked over there and over here [UK]and I had again a very strong mentor over there a guy called... I learnt a lot from him and copied a lot from him and things like that." (Interview 1)

The explicit and tacit aspects of organisations (Baumard 1999) seemed to be conveyed in the informal adoption of various role models and these formed the foundation from which many of the participants viewed subsequent corporations in which they worked.

5:3.4. Growing proficient skills

The majority of the participants (Research questions 5 & 6. Table 4:1) describe this as an 'ongoing process', of constantly finding out what is required of them in their role,
"I think it’s an ongoing process... I think it is a constantly evolving process and...in some areas, possibly you are ahead of the game. You are more competent than the minimum requirement, and in other areas you are not. And I think going back to what we were discussing earlier about knowing yourself, I think it's a question of knowing where you are a little bit weak, as it were and then compensating [for] that in the organization. And also working on that as your own personal development. (Interview 6)

in addition to this they talked about how much of the ‘growing’ depended on the ‘next step’ in their working lives.

“...as long as your responsibilities grow with your skill level then you keep getting challenged, and you keep coming across more and more different issues. So you know here you’re now running forty people... if I do that well in five years hopefully they will give me a bigger business unit, with different issues or more issues, well it would have to be more issues I guess, with more people and more sales.” (Interview 6)

The connection with a person’s ability to ‘take opportunities and responsibilities’ (C.f. 5:4.4.) is clear, in that in order to 'show' other people that they were capable of progressing within the organisation the participants needed to ‘grow and develop their skills’. (C.f. 5:3.1.) The skills that the participants developed were discussed in two main groupings, the first group was the management of people and the second group was identified as managing the operation of the organisation and the processes of the business. Included in the area of managing the organisation and business are the budgetary aspects of the participants work. (Interview 18) These groupings reflected the focus of the participant’s skill development, however, whether the participant developed their skills in managing people or in managing the organisation and business, budgets seemed to depend on the expectations (C.f. 5:5.2.) of the corporation in which they worked. The main emphasis that came out of the research was that in the majority of the corporations the effective management of budgets were rewarded and encouraged by the organisation.
"I mean how do many people get to the top of companies – it must be a question you are asking yourself? It is actually by producing the numbers so in a manufacturing lead organisation with lots of different companies it will be Fred who produces the profit cash figures – that's how he gets to the top. He's done what he's been told to do. He might not have expanded his business but he's done what he's been told to do and he has produced the numbers and he values facts and figures. And that's perfectly legitimate, that's right for a board." (Interview 8 page 9)

Other participants described how each phase of their career developed out of the previous phase. The academic work that participants undertook for their MBA or PhD was instrumental in developing the skills,

"I chose then to do an MBA in my own time, to give me, if you like, some formal qualifications of general business ability, and to back up my practical experience over the last fifteen to twenty years. And that was a very definite thing, and I said 'Right I am going now support my c.v. [with] if you like, this formal qualification, and I am going to go into general management." (Interview 3 page 2)

or the edge, which was required for the next phase of their working lives. Other participants described a process of 'finding out' about the next job and then deliberately learning it in preparation for an interview or an opportunity to arising. For one of the participants, however, 'growing proficient skills' was a more formal process organised by their company.

"On the business side, I think the things that have positively influenced the career, I would say, was the previous company I worked for, because that was... I worked for them in Geneva. I started with them in Geneva then I moved around a little bit and I think... they are in terms of training very very professional, and very dedicated and they spend a lot of time and money on training their people, which I think is very good." (Interview 6)
This contrast, between the informal, self-promoted learning, accidental, and formal and organised methods of learning, highlights a situation whereby individuals entering the world of work from the highly organised and structured educational world may experience dissatisfaction and frustration at the 'informal' and 'accidental' ways in which they are now expected to learn.

There are two dotted line boundaries in the theoretical scheme (C.f. 5:2.3.) and these represent the changing form of the participants route towards the executive position. As Figure 5:4. illustrates, there are three categories; 'aligning self to significant others', 'sustaining personal preferences' and 'developing a sense of a capable self', which cross over the boundary and two other categories; 'developing formal and informal relationships' and 'forming an understanding of how organisations work', which straddle the boundary between 'forming a foundation' and 'developing and negotiating a path through the organisation'.

![Figure 5:4. Forming a foundation: category development. (part of 5:1.)](image)
In the findings these categories carried the potential for the participant to move on through the organisation and continue their route through the corporation, reducing the career distance between themselves and the executive position.

The interrelated categories; (C.f. Figure 5:1.) 'learning from significant others', 'aligning to significant others'; 'forming a sense of personal ambition', and 'sustaining personal preferences'; 'growing proficient skills' and 'developing a sense of a capable self' are main parts of the foundation, from which an individual can 'negotiate a path through the organisation'. (C.f. 5:4.6.) In order for the participants to move from their foundation and develop a path through the organisation, they also needed to begin to 'develop formal and informal relationships' and 'form an understanding of how the organisations work'. This then led them into a developmental phase (C.f. 5:4.1.) of their organisational journey.

5:3.5. Aligning self to significant others.

This category develops out of 'learning from significant others' (C.f. 5:3.3) in that as the participants worked their way through the organisation they also needed to adapt themselves and their behaviour to the 'expectations' set within the corporation. Alignment became an essential aspect of negotiating their way through the organisation and the consequences of not adapting could limit the person’s progress.

P19: "To take feedback on style, find areas where you need to work on and make a contract with your boss or another to work on those areas."
RQ: "...to consciously do something about it?"
P19: "Yes and to be appraised the following year on those areas."
RQ: "And therefore does that mean you keeping your role."
P19: "It could be, an extreme could be. Certainly there are people who we have moved out because we didn’t see them adapting."
RQ: "So adaptability and the ability to change style and interpersonal style is very important."
P19: "Yes."
RQ: “And... when people aren’t adaptable they actually can lose their position?”

P19: “Yes.” (Interview 19)

Taking feedback on personal style and behaviour seemed to be an important factor within the process of ‘aligning’ however, the feedback was being given by significant people within the organisation. The feedback that the participant is referring to in the previous extract (Interview 19) came from the individual’s director and therefore carried considerable weight. The following extract illustrates this process of receiving feedback from senior people.

RQ: “Did they actually talk to you about how you were progressing and make observations on it?”

P3: “Yes they did they told me where I needed to change... and people in the past have, you know senior people, have taken me to one side and said this is not going to help and you know you need to modify this particular behaviour, so there has been some constructive criticism as well.” (Interview 3)

The individual’s development towards the executive position included the need to alter and change the way in which they worked with, and related to, seniors within the company. This category links in with the process of ‘learning from significant others’ and ‘developing formal and informal relationships’; a degree of alignment was necessary, as the person learned from their significant others about the expectations that various organisational constituents had of them. Altering and adapting oneself and the way in which the person presented themselves was considered to be central to whether an individual would develop to the executive role. One participant talked about his ‘blunt, outspoken approach’ and how his colleagues experienced as him being ‘personally critical of them’. As a result, this affected the way in which he was able to carry out his senior management role. Other participants (Interview 1) relayed how they were given specific advice on occasion, by their senior manager, about how they were required to behave.
RQ. “Did they actually talk to you about how you were progressing and make observations on it?”

P3. “Yes they did, they told me where I needed to change, because it sounds pretty awful at the moment, but I am not being modest, I am just trying to answer your questions as honestly as I can, but equally, as much as I can say I have good points, I have got some bad points as well…”

RQ. “Have you got examples of this type you’ve given us an example of the type of stuff you do well. Have you got an example of the type of behaviour that people were encouraging you to change?”

P3. “Yes one example sometimes I was not forceful enough or aggressive enough at meetings. I guess by nature I have tended to be more of a listener, then have an analytical response in the head, and then give out an answer.”

(Interview 3 page 6)

The participants identified how, even though they were learning from other people, they also needed to adapt their existing behaviours and adopt different ways of behaving and interacting within the corporation (Sosik, Potosky & Jung 2002). The process of aligning themselves to the ‘significant others’ within their organisation provided them with a method of monitoring themselves within their work environment and a set of expectations, with which they could continue to align to themselves. (C.f. 5:5.2. & 5:5.3.)

5:3.6. Sustaining personal preferences and ambitions.

The process of forming and sustaining personal ambitions and personal preferences seems to be one where the participants developed their understanding of their value to the organisation early on in their career and the type of work in which they preferred to be involved. The type of work they were talking about seemed to be more about ‘preferring organisational process work’, as opposed to the more ‘transactional’ type of work within the organisation. The differences between types of work in the organisation is an important one. As Zaleznik (1997) identifies, the ‘transactional’ work of the organisation does not appear to be executive type work and the technical activities carried out within the organisation appear to resemble the
'mere mechanics' (Zaleznik 1997: p56) of the company. Whereas, organisational process work such as

"...moving an issue forward, or moving a piece of development forward, or if we’d brought interviews to satisfactory conclusions.” (Interview 9)

...involves the relational aspects of work and the application of information and knowledge, (Giddens 2001: p378). However, the ‘transactional’ aspects seem to be associated with the labour of tangible activities that produce results. This association with the ‘knowledge’ work of the organisation, rather than the ‘operational’ work of the corporation, seemed to form a personal style and work preference, which kept the person moving through the organisation. This led to the development of a personal career (C.f. 5:3.7. & Crawford 2003: p225), in parallel with their professional or technical direction.

The research suggested that the participant’s drive and ambition was connected to the type of work that they preferred to undertake within the organisation. However, work type seems to also be an important factor, in the participants maintaining their sense of ambition and sustaining themselves during the time it takes to attain an executive position.

"I became MD of this thing two or three years ago that took me 30 odd years to get to that stage where I’d become an MD.” (Interview 3)

They will need to sustain and maintain their ambition and the fulfilment of their preferences over the course of a long-term progression towards the executive position. The participants were mainly in their late 30’s and often in their early 40’s when they attained their first executive position. Their route towards the directorate was one where they had to work their way through their organisations for at least 10 years before they realized an executive role. Therefore, the preferences and ambitions that started them on their organisational journey would need to alter and change over time. (C.f. 5:6.)
Sustaining oneself over the length of time it took some of the participants to arrive at an executive position seemed to cluster around ‘finding interesting tasks’, continuing to ‘learn’, being ‘willing to lead’ and regular moves within and outside of the organisation in which they worked. One of the main factors that seemed to sustain them was finding a position from where they could undertake the type of work they preferred. With the majority of the participants, the assumption seemed to be that the executive position would fulfil those preferences. (C.f. 6:3.)

An essential ingredient in the type of work the participants preferred to become involved with were activities that placed in situations where they could ‘shape and influence’ the organisation.

“For me it has always tended to be more about... how do I describe this? Personal success and achievements isn’t the objective in itself, it is what I can do with that... It is about how I can influence an organisation. How I can make it achieve the things I think it ought to be achieving for the industry” (Interview 2)

This desire to ‘shape and influence’ the organisation developed a sense of purpose and meaning to the participant’s organisational journey.

5:3.7. Developing a sense of a capable self.

Perceiving oneself as capable of becoming an executive director seemed to be an important part of the participants’ development towards the executive role as it supported their self-confidence and fostered self-belief. However, for the majority of the participants this awareness developed out of a process of external validation of their personal skills and capabilities. (Interview 3) This process could be organised by the Human Resources team to include 360° feedback for the individuals from the people they were working with and from the individuals themselves. The individuals’ awareness of the information, regarding their potential, was therefore obtained through a third party who provided the feedback.
"...probably five years ago I realised that I did have some potential within general management, as was recognised by my progression in the company, we have some psychometric testing and their conclusion was that I could do anything in the company, given an opportunity, and when you read that you say to yourself 'hey I can go on a bit further from here.' (Interview 3)

The participants described how ‘self-belief’ was important as they progressed through the organisation. For many of the participants, beliefs form a set of markers that they use to assist them with their business decisions. ‘Strong ethics’ and ‘clear principles’ seemed, for some of the participants, to be important to them. Self-belief becomes crucial when the individual has to make decisions regarding what needs to be done within the organisation. Making changes within organisations requires the individual to ‘protect the company interests’, often against a hostile audience that is ‘blaming’ the individual for being the ‘architect of the changes’ affecting their working lives. In order to affect the changes required, the individual requires a degree of self-belief that they are ‘right’ in instigating change. The following extract illustrates the contextual factors and some of the conditions, under which it was regarded as important to have a sense of ‘self-belief’

“That [company] structure did not handle declines in business and you could see that the guy at the top was manipulating assistants to maximise their income. So you could see, sales going down, but their incomes were going up because they were hacking people out below them, and having their share. Everyone was dying, the company was dying, the client and the consultants were dying, but their income was going up, so they thought this was just as it should be. I didn’t, that’s not the way it should work. We stopped a lot of that, we lost two of our largest Regional Directors who tried to walk out with 170 people, so we went to litigation and privatised and all kind of things. Groups of people were leaping over to [sales] branches to hold them together for a period. I was publicly called a traitor by several of the [sales] Regional Directors. It was seen that I being the architect behind this, I got the blame for it, I was the person who had destroyed their vision, destroyed the whole of the sales-force, so it was all my fault. The fact that the
sales had been going down for the previous two years was neither here nor there. Even after this, I thought, it had been absolutely the right thing to do because it was going down anyway, If it went down a little further I would have had to resign, because, I felt that it had to be the right change and that after a period of time it would come up. After 18 months the guys who had been calling me a traitor did a presentation praising the current system to be the best thing in the sales-force at the moment. That was a seal of approval and that was nice.” (Interview 1 page 12)

There are consequences for the individual’s ‘self-belief’, in that they may be required to resign and look for alternative employment, however, such was the degree of belief in ‘self’ developed in this individual, that he was prepared to ‘take the risks’ associated with his strategy.

Participants described how each phase of their career developed out of the previous phase; the academic work that participants undertook for their MBA or PhD was in addition to the work where they developed the skills required for the next phase of their working lives. Other participants described a process of ‘finding out’ about the next job and then deliberately learning it in preparation for an interview or an opportunity to arise. The development, in terms of capability, was a continuous process. (Interview 6) In addition, the participants discussed their professional and technical development; they talked about developing a sense of a ‘personal career’, developed in parallel with their professional career of scientist, Human Resource professional, Information Technology, engineer. In their ‘personal career’ they became known for their skills in ‘problem solving’, ‘systems development’, ‘negotiation’ and a reputation for being able to ‘manage’. (Interview 9)

The ‘personal career’ underpins the person’s ‘sense of capability’ and appears to have been the means by which the participants were able to cross over from the ‘forming a foundation’ phase to the ‘developing and negotiating’ phase. (C.f. 5:4.1.) As will be discussed later in the chapter (C.f. 5:5.1.), the ‘personal career’ may require modification and adaptation as the individual ‘negotiates’ their way through the corporation.
The participants have been ‘aligning themselves’, ‘developing their personal preferences’ and ‘developing a sense of a capable self’. Now they have to continue to ‘develop formal and informal relationships’, ‘form their understanding of how organisations work’ and, in addition, ‘take opportunities’ and ‘make things happen’. These activities strengthened the position from which they can ‘negotiate a path through the organisation’. Figure (C.f. 5:4.1.) illustrates the relationships in the developing and negotiating phase.

5:3.8. Developing formal and informal relationships.

This research appears to have indicated that it was necessary for the participants to develop both formal and informal relationships within their organisations. The formal relationships seemed to focus on setting work objectives and expectations, while the informal relationships became the means by which participants arranged meetings, lobbied their colleagues for support and/ or opinions regarding organisational change or corporate policy development. (Interview 18) Other participants regarded the informal relationship as essential for developing a supportive learning network that was then employed when the participant required information, or an update on an aspect of their industry. (Interview 16) The informal relationship was also important in gaining access to the more tacit knowledge networks, which form part of the way in which the participants found out about employment opportunities within and outside of the organisation.

The anecdotal information (C.f. Chapter 2:5.) that infiltrates this field of research indicates that ‘getting to know the right people’ is an important part of becoming an executive director. The findings indicate that developing relationships with a wide number of people within, and outside of, the organisation is an integral aspect of moving towards the executive position. These relationships seem to span the more formal relationships with one’s immediate manager and customers and the informal ‘network’ type of relationship.
Developing informal relationships was an important aspect of the research findings providing the individual with a ‘network’ of relationships that can provide new information or bridge knowledge gaps. (Interview 16)

**RQ.** "Is [networking] something you have found helpful?"

**P16.** "Yes it is, because you can... call on resources and knowledge and all sorts of things to help your problem, even if it’s knowing somebody who knows somebody who knows somebody, rather than going directly to the source of the knowledge, and I try to return that as well." (Interview 16)

The informal relationship acts as a conduit for people to convey knowledge between each other in the ‘network’ and those who are inside the loop may benefit from this reciprocal form of relating. However, those outside of the network, either because they have moved organisations or have not developed a network of their own (Interview 19), may find that they do not have access to up to date information or changes that are occurring within their industry.

The participant’s relationships, whether formal or informal, supported other aspects of their work and enabled them to work effectively within the organisation. The informal relationship provided a means by which the participants could ‘make things happen’ and arrange the progression of a project or piece of work.

"You get a lot of business done in much an informal way as in a formal way. To set a meeting a meeting or a process to get things done and you can do that by the coffee machine or by just dropping in on people.” (Interview 9 page 3)

The informal nature of ‘making things happen’ in the organisation corresponds with the nature of the relationship that the participants preferred to have with the people with whom they worked. The participants described how they disliked relationships where they were ‘told what to do’ by other people. Preferring to have ‘conversations’ regarding their work and to be ‘coached’ rather than ‘taught’. (Interview 6, 9, 11 & 12)
5:3.9. Forming an understanding of how organisations work.

'Forming an understanding of the organisation' of the company and the industry in which one worked was regarded as a fundamental part of the participants' credibility within the organisation. To be visible, as a potential executive, the participant needed to be seen as someone who understood the company and the business sector in which they worked.

"Understanding, understanding the whole of the company, understanding the whole of the industry." (Interview 1)

The ramifications of developing an understanding of the way in which the organisation works can be viewed from a short, medium and long term, perspective. In the short term the participants described how 'understanding the organisation' provided them with access to opportunities for developing the range and scope of their work. (C.f. 5:4.4.) In addition to this the participants realised that without sufficient understanding of the organisation they would be unlikely to 'make things happen'. (C.f. 5:4.5.) In the long term the participants linked this category with the expectation that they would be able to contribute to any discussions that were held within the organisation at a senior level. 'Contributing' and 'being seen to contribute' was considered important, as it was in these situations that the participants 'demonstrated good judgement and sense making, both business and political'.

"I can see that the successful directors here at least and other places I have worked at director level, the ones who are successful, are the ones who could sensibly contribute to other peoples patches. So I think a breadth of understanding is important otherwise you are just a manager." (Interview 1)

The range of their corporate knowledge, from professional and technical skills to understanding the entire organisation and the industry, was an indicator of the level
at which the person was considered to be capable of working. However, this knowledge was often experiential and pragmatic rather than academic or theoretical.

"...managers who want to get up to the director level will have to develop their commercial acumen, develop their leadership skills and work up their skills in team working and facilitation." (Interview 8 page 15)

The relationship between ‘forming an understanding of how the organisation operates’ and ‘developing formal and informal relationships’ is a fundamental co-variance (C.f. Chapter 4:9.) in the process of negotiating a route through the corporation. The participant needed to discover the implicit and explicit methods in which they could ‘make things happen’ and what ‘opportunities’ they could possibly ‘take’. Without a connection between the relationships they developed and the process of finding out about the organisation the participants would have found it more difficult to ‘make sense of the organisation’ and consequently ‘demonstrate good judgement’ (C.f. 5:5.4.) in the way they worked with other people.

5:4.1. Developing and negotiating a path through the corporation.

This phase of the participants’ route towards the executive role appeared to be one where the individual consolidated and developed their existing skills and extended the range, scope and type of work they undertook for the corporation. The research findings indicated that the depth and extent of the individuals working relationships within the organisation continued to be crucial in the areas of ‘making things happen’ and ‘negotiating a path through the organisation’. ‘Developing formal and informal relationships’, (C.f. 5:3.8.) and ‘forming an understanding of the organisation’ (C.f. 5:3.9.) were outlined above.

Negotiation appears to consist of multiple facets with the individual continuing to maintain the task aspects of their work while at the same time ensure that they ‘meet the expectation’ of the organisational constituents (Crawford 2002). The expectations also included the acceptability of the individual as a potential executive. Consequently, the participants needed to ‘present an acceptable self’ to
the organisation as well as ‘negotiating’ and ‘meeting expectations’, Figure 5:6. This shows that the supporting categories that are relevant at this stage of the participants’ route through the organisations in which they worked.

Figure 5:6. Developing and negotiating phase supporting categories. (Part of 5:1.)

5:4.2. Taking opportunities and responsibility.

The participants discussed how they could ‘take opportunities and responsibility’ within the organisation when they understood how the organisation worked. (C.f. 5:3.9.) ‘Taking opportunities and responsibility’ was an opportunity to ‘show’ or make ‘visible’ the individuals capabilities and skills, by ‘making things happen’.

183
"I have tried to take the opportunities as they have come along so training and development opportunities I have tried to take advantage of those and use those." (Interview 5 page 1)

These opportunities did not necessarily equate with taking the ‘safe’ option as some opportunities were risky and demanded that the person take on tasks that other people were not prepared to do.

"One of the things that I have always done is, actually which I think is characterized how I have actually grown in companies, is that I have always been prepared to take on the impossible tasks which other people wouldn’t want to take on. So in other words if there was something others would back away [from] I would take [it] on. Now that could be a degree of stupidity, or the acceptance of a challenge, or just pure bloody mindedness, I suspect it’s all part of it..." (Interview 7 page 1)

However, the benefit/attraction of ‘taking on risky tasks’ was that the projects were successful and therefore gained the attention of the executives because the individual was able to ‘make something happen’.

"I had taken on a number of tasks which [involved] travelling abroad, in some cases, all engineering, all came to a successful conclusion, all got the attention of the board, which therefore accelerated my progress through, so in a sense I managed to move through [however it was] not as a planned process.” (Interview 7)

Even though ‘taking on more’ appeared to involve the participants in taking risks and making rash decisions, the person seemed to remain within the context of their own technical safety net, building on previous experience developed from within their technical area, for example, I.T., pharmaceutical research, engineering, and policy work, or by remaining in the industry in which they had begun their working life, for example telecommunications, chemicals industry.
However, in order to 'take opportunities and responsibility' and 'make things happen' the participants talked about the value of support and the contribution from other people within the organisation. The informal and formal relationships they had formed during their career were invaluable as they developed and refined ideas and put forward proposals for organisational change. (C.f. 5:3.8. & Figure 5:4.)

5:4.3. Making things happen.

The participants described how their value to the corporations in which they worked depended on their ability to 'make things happen' within the organisation. They also identified that 'making things happen' was part of the attraction and motivation associated with working within corporations, where the organisation is structured around a business purpose and where the provision of services and the manufacture of products are dependent upon the people who carry out the work. The relationship with a 'sense of purpose' and a high need to 'get something done' sets up a dynamic where the participants were committed to their work.

P9: “I feel I have a purposeful job, I know what it is about...”
RQ. “What is the underlying purpose?”
P9: “The purpose is that I want to get something done... I have high need to feel that I complete a good day’s work or a week’s work...” (Interview 9).

This category has an organisational context where the participants worked for and with other people within the corporation. (Interview 16) Consequently 'making things happen' within the organisation is contingent on the participant being able to 'meet the expectations' (C.f. 5:5.2.) of their managers and the organisational constituents.

5:4.4. Negotiating a path through the organisation.

'Negotiating a path through the organisation’ (Research question 10. Table 4:1) signals a part of the participants' development towards the executive position, where their strategies and modus operandi are under pressure to be changed and altered.
(C.f. 5:3.5.) Over the course of their development so far, the participants have been ‘aligning themselves’, ‘sustaining their personal preferences’ and ‘developing a sense of a capable self’. Now they have to continue to ‘develop formal and informal relationships’, ‘form their understanding of how organisations work’, and in addition they are required to ‘Take opportunities’ (C.f. 5:4.) and ‘make things happen’. (C.f. 5:4.3. & Figure 5:2.)

The participants identified that this phase of their development towards the executive position raised the possibility for conflict as the three categories of ‘aligning self to significant others’, ‘sustaining personal preferences and ambitions’ and ‘developing a sense of a capable self’ reach the point where they were expected to negotiate with their colleagues and the executive directors. (C.f. 5:5.1.)

"I had not previously appreciated the value of working behind the scenes with people, persuading them and so on. Very often it is about a political approach i.e. by political I mean by persuading people [missing word] policy rather than politics in the negative sense. You also do realise that you have very able people, very intelligent people who have a valid view. In my early career, I was full of total self-confidence but sometimes that blinkers you to think I could be wrong here." (Interview 2: page 5)

The early self-confidence from which a sense of a ‘capable self’ was formed brought the individual into a position whereby his strategy for working with other people was re-negotiated. This process of ‘negotiation’ appeared to be related to the category of ‘developing formal and informal relationships’ (C.f. Figure 5:3.) in that without the relationships, work projects and initiatives could fail or slow-down hindering the participants’ success. (Interview 1 page 22)

In addition, in this development phase the individual is faced by a number of competing categories, in that ‘aligning self to significant others’ is a continuous process in association with the ‘development of formal and informal relationships’. However, ‘sustaining personal preferences’ may come into conflict with how the person is expected to ‘meet the expectations’ of the various corporate constituents.
This phase of the participants’ progress towards the executive role was the beginning of a number of competing pressures and expectations.

5.5.1. Surfacing towards the executive position.

The term ‘surfacing’ developed out of the discussion in Chapter 2 concerning the pool metaphor of organisational structure. It is also employed here in line with Crawford’s (2003) assertion that opportunities are not necessarily open to everyone within the organisation. The pool model (C.f. Chapter 2:2.) presupposes that only a few individuals within the corporation will be visible and therefore open to being seen as potential executive directors. The categories that will be discussed within this section are identified in Figure 5:7. below.

![Figure 5:7. Surfacing towards the executive position: supporting categories. (part of 5:1.)](image)

In the final phase, prior to becoming visible as a potential executive director, the individual would need to continue to ‘meet the expectations of the organisational constituents’, ‘present an acceptable self’, at the same time as ‘demonstrating good judgement and sensemaking (Weick p54-55), concerning the basic situation that leaders face...at both a political and business level’. The previous sections have
identified the increase in potential conflict and the inter-competing expectations of the various organisational constituents.

5:5.2. Meeting expectations.

In the ‘development phase’ (Research questions 11 & 12. Table 4:1) the individual seemed to be faced by a number of competing categories, in that ‘aligning self to significant others’ is a continuous process in association with the ‘development of formal and informal relationships’. However, ‘sustaining personal preferences’ may bring the person into conflict with how they are expected to ‘meet the expectations’ of the various corporate constituents. (C.f. 5:4.4.) Even though the individual may begin to ‘signal their intentions to become an executive’, this has to be done in accordance with the ‘expectation set’ of the organisational constituents. as providing an inappropriate ‘signal’ may jeopardise the person’s intentions by ‘presenting an unacceptable self’ within the organisation. (C.f. 5:5.1.)

There are a number of differing expectations set by organisational constituents (Sosik, Potosky & Jung 2003: p212), which the individual is required to meet in order to progress within the organisation. The range of expectations includes business and organisational requirements, expectations of the person in line with their work, expectations from peers, team members, senior managers and executives within the organisation. In some cases, the customers that the participants are interacting with set other expectations that have an economic impact on the business and, as a result, the individual has competing sets of expectations to meet. Those from the organisation and from his team members can be in direct competition with those of the customer who can affect the business revenue of the corporation.

“[Customer] audits are very frequent, probably fifteen audits a year from customers, and most of them are ok. The auditors come in they list all their observations, we respond with a list of corrected actions that we will do and a date by which it might be” (Interview 3 page 22)
In addition to the tangible and objective oriented expectation described above, there are cultural expectations, which affect the political aspects of a person’s work. In the next example, the expectation focused on how a person ‘should’ handle an apparent change in his status.

P3: “I think the thing is to have the political awareness of knowing when you can afford to and when you can’t. I would never say always keep your mouth shut because you will never upset anybody if you keep your mouth shut but you don’t progress either. There is always a time for standing up and making your point, but do it on the substantive issues don’t do it on the silly issues as some people do.”

RQ. “What’s a silly issue that you wouldn’t advise somebody standing up for?”

P3: “I’ll try and give you a real example, a simple one, this one of the senior managers this office block. Although it’s only fairly recently been built, its already getting to being full and there are a number of new people that need to come in so one of my senior managers we have to move him to another part of the building which is not as nice as this with not so much light coming in the windows office; not quite the same shape or size and we need to do it as because organisationally we need to keep groups of people in the same areas and this guy is one on his own and could easily be moved. The logic of moving him was watertight but the guy has just whinged, moaned, written letters. Nobody objects to the initial disappointment and him saying these are the reasons it would be better for me to stay here, but he didn’t let it go at that; he just went on and on and on, and all he’s done for his career is capped it really because if the guys going to get like that for something as minor as that. Do you really want him handling things that are fairly substantial?” (Interview 3 page 24)

The interpersonal expectations that individuals have of each other within the organisation form another set of expectations. Not meeting expectations may be seen to invoke consequences and elicit sanctions, or a reaction that attempts to reinforce the expectation set by the other corporate constituents. The balance between
exposure to sanctions and visibility, in terms of meeting the expectations, depends on the action of others. The formal and informal working relationships support the delivery of expectations at both an individual level and a group level and

\[\text{"as long as they have developed a strong line [of managers] below them then that can take the day to day stuff." (Interview 5 page 4)}\]

this dependency upon the other people in the organisation to assist in the delivery of the work, is a critical aspect of meeting expectations. Without the support of other people within the organisation the individual may not be seen as capable of ‘making things work’ and therefore may become more exposed to the sanctions that occur as a result.

The findings suggested that as the participants progressed in their working lives the expectations of them altered. As they surfaced towards the executive role they were expected to move away from the ‘day-to-day’ (Interview 6) management of the operational aspects of the business and take a ‘strategic’ perspective of the organisation and, for some, this included being a visible leader. (Interview 18) This affected the way in which the individuals presented themselves and changed how the organisation perceived them. The participants described how they were expected to work with other people the higher up the organisation they went, instead of working on their own within their functional ‘silo’.

\[\text{"...helping the organisation to shape its vision, its mission and its values and leading that process of articulating what that mission, vision, values is or are... and then additionally developing the plan for how the organisation will move over the... we take a four year planning cycle here... to lead on developing that plan. A detailed plan of how we take our mission, vision, values into actual work and activity." (Interview 18)}\]

In order to take this level of expectations further, the participants described how they were expected to work with the other people within the organisation including the executives and non-executives of the corporation, extending in some cases outside
of the organisation to include external stakeholders. (Interview 18) This increase in expectation, that the participants worked with other people rather than in their own management functions, placed more emphasis on the participants existing relationships. (C.f. 5:3.8.) In addition to this, the findings suggested that the participants who continued to surface and become visible as potential executives were those who were perceived as being able to 'make a valuable contribution' to the organisation. (Interview 1) However, being able to make a valuable contribution also seemed to provide further emphasis on the participant to continue towards the executive role. (Interview 18)

5:5.3. Presenting an acceptable self.

As the individuals progressed through the organisation, they described (Research questions 11 & 12. Table 4:1) how they gained their knowledge and information needs by learning from significant others in the organisation. As a consequence of this strategy, the participants 'aligned' themselves with those significant others'. (C.f. 5:4.2.) Eventually the participant arrived at a point where they were more visible as potential executives and, at this juncture, the 'expectations' of the organisational constituents and the executive, regarding the type of person who is suitable for an executive position, became paramount.

In this developing phase, 'presenting an acceptable self' begins to become more important, as the individual approaches the organisational surface. What may have been acceptable in an earlier phase of becoming may now be viewed as unacceptable, in the light of the changing expectations of the individual. Working out what is acceptable and what is not acceptable, in terms of how the individual presents themselves to other people within the organisation, is an inherent part of 'forming an understanding of how the organisation works' and is related to the 'expectations' of the organisation.

There appeared to be a number of facets to this category. The 'acceptable self' seemed to be related to the degree to which the participants were 'similar' to the existing executive group (Interview 1), however 'similarity' did not appear to be
related specifically to gender, in that, out of the four women interviewed in the research, only one person identified what for her were gender specific issues regarding the presentation of an ‘acceptable self’. (Interview 6)

The participants discussed the interplay between the changing nature of the organisational expectations and the degree to which they were required to alter or change their approach to their work. In the early phases of their career the person who appeared to be task and results focused, with an emphasis on ‘making things happen’, (C.f. 5:4.3.) was accepted within the organisation. (Interview 8) However, this changed, the nearer the participant came to the organisational surface, from managing the operational aspects of the business towards a leadership and strategic focused role. This subsequent shift in emphasis, from the ‘day-to-day’ management to leading and thinking strategically, affected the participants in different ways. For a few the alteration, in who they were expected to be, produced significant stress and pressure...

P5: “I think one of the hardest things that I have found is, letting go of the day to day management, and moving towards what I would consider ... is the role of the director, which is looking at strategy, looking at process planning, planning ahead, not just the next week, month, or six months, but the next three to five years. It’s taking the big picture, and putting that into the business, and then into a business planning process. All the things that I feel I should have been doing I have found difficult to do because I have not had the time, and you maintain your comfort zones, the bit of the day to day operation management, you keep doing that a) because there isn’t enough resource for you to be able to step back away from it b) because its what you know and are familiar with, because you feel not as confident about doing the other things, more or less the stuff you should be doing, and so you therefore you sort of lapse into the management role, as opposed to the director role.” (Interview 5 page5)

...while, for the majority of the participants, it was an opportunity to ‘sustain and fulfil their personal preferences’ (C.f. 5:3.2. & 5:3.6.) and ‘take on further opportunities and responsibilities’. (C.f. 5:4.2.) However, the findings suggest that
the impact of letting go of the day-to-day work appears to have a bearing on the nature of the relationships between the participants and the people with whom they may have worked for a number of years. (Interview 18) The participants talked about ‘distancing’ themselves from the teams in which they had worked and from the people with whom they had developed friendships.

P3: “...there’s still a tendency for those people you have been working with for five years to loop round the new person, as a manager, and come and ask you directly, but I am trying to distance myself, it is hard for me because I have worked with the workforce. We are on very good terms. I know all their names, you know we have worked together at midnight trying to get jobs done, we have suffered together, we’ve played together, to suddenly try and distance yourself from that, I find at times has been very difficult.” (Interview 3)

In addition to the ‘personal distancing’ that some of the participants described, the findings suggest that part of the process of ‘aligning self to significant others’ (C.f. 5:3.5.) may have demanded they adopt behaviours that were not necessarily part of their personal style.

“One has to make a decision, its like I said, trying to get firmer and more aggressive, you go from being one of the loved members of the group to being ... really aggressive.” (Interview 3)

This perception of the changes that may occur in the relationships between the potential executive and their colleagues seemed to be important, in that balancing the emerging expectations of the organisation and those of the existing work groups placed greater emphasis on the participant’s capability to negotiate their way through the organisation. (C.f. 5:4.4.)
5:5.4. Demonstrating good judgement, sensemaking, both business and political.

The findings suggest (Research questions 11 & 12. Table 4:1) that the individual who is developing towards the executive position is expected to make decisions and judge the performance of other people, the business and the organisation. (Interview 18) Demonstrating to others that capacity and sense of judgement seemed to be essential for the participants. In addition to this, the participants described how it was important to know when to make a point or raise an argument. The person’s ‘knowledge of the way the organisation works’, associated with this, was considered to be an integral aspect of ‘demonstrating good judgement’.

The breadth and scope of the organisational terrain that the participants were expected make judgements about covered the future of the organisation, its current operations, the skills of the people who worked within it and the financial management of the corporation. (Interview 18)

In addition, the participants talked about gathering information from a wide group of people within the organisation, so that they could synthesise and make sense of a number of different opinions and views when making their decisions regarding the future and the current operation of the corporation. (Interview 18) The findings suggest that the exercise of judgement is part of how the participants constructed their choices and therefore participated in the process of ‘leading and setting direction’. This appeared to be related to the category ‘presenting an acceptable self’, in that the judgements made by the individual were a facet of how they were perceived by the other people within the organisation. (Interview 3 page 24: & 5:5.2.) In addition, this became a preparation and demonstration ground for the potential executive to show the organisation how they would fare, if selected to be an executive director. Therefore, the findings suggest that whenever the participants were ‘demonstrating good judgement’, they were ‘presenting’ themselves as potential executives. (Interview 18)
5:5.5. Visible as a potential executive

Surfacing within the organisation brings the person into view and makes them more visible to a wider circle of people. Whereas the manager and senior manager roles were visible, the visibility was within the context of their technical, operational or specialist function. The findings suggest that the participants were being judged on their ability to ‘make things happen’ (C.f. 5:4.3.), ‘demonstrate good judgement’ (C.f. 5:5.4.) and ‘meet the expectations’ (C.f. 5:5.2.) of the organisation and the executive team. At this point in the participants’ journey towards the executive position, the research appeared to indicate that many of the categories explicated in the model outlined in this chapter seemed to cluster together.

“I think effectiveness... delivery would be one thing, certainly a degree of innovation and keeping pace with good practice would be another, I was always committed to improving things and developing processes and practice and wasn’t complacent in any way. That my judgment was sound and I could make good contributions to strategic discussions. And I suppose because of the culture as well I suppose I fitted in...” (Interview 18)

At the executive level, the person’s visibility extends outside of their functional role and spreads out across the organisation. Instead of being encased within a technical area, where they felt safe and secure, they are open to the public arena of the executive position, where people expect them to have something to contribute and add.

“my experience of it is that its tough, and you become so much more in the limelight, so much more accountable for things, and the expectations of you are so much higher. Yet they all start from day one. When the day before, say, you were a hands on manager, the day after you’re a director and suddenly all these things come with that transition and you know I don’t think that, certainly our company, you would sink or swim pretty quickly, and if you don’t swim then the time runs out pretty quickly for you and they
would try somebody else from a different approach. So its tough at the top.”
(Interview 5 page 5)

The participants described how success and viability at the executive level was dependent on their ability to ‘get things done’. If they did not achieve the work they had responsibility for, the consequences may be that someone else would be given the job. Succeed or lose the job.

“A negative is that you are never off the hook. You are having a bad hair day or a lousy day, or whatever, and you feel like that, but you are never off the hook with your staff, so they think she’s having a bad day or she’s a bit tense today. I have bad days too or a thing you haven’t communicated – you are never quite off the hook.” (Interview 9 page 19)

The tension in ‘never being off the hook’, always ‘being on show’ and the relentlessness of having to present oneself constantly as the executive director, appears to be in direct contrast to the ‘preferences’ and the ‘position’ that the participants had talked about wanting from the executive role.

‘Being visible as a potential executive’ will demand that the individual remain visible as a potential executive and, at the same time as balancing his or her exposure to any risk, that may act as a barrier to the individuals emergence as an executive. The relationship between ‘visibility’ and ‘exposure’ will be discussed in the next chapter.

5:6. Chapter summary

This chapter has outlined three phases of the career trajectory of the executive company director;

• Forming a foundation.
• Developing and negotiating a path through the organisation.
• Surfacing towards the executive position.
Each was described by the research participants and interpreted within the analytical process. The theoretical scheme (C.f. Figure 5:1.) seems to support the view that an individual’s movement towards the executive position is an iterative process, where a number of active and interconnected variables are in motion at any one time. The individual moves through the organisation ‘step by step’ and, in doing so, process are encultured and socialised into corporate work. In addition to this, the participants described how they adapted to the corporate environment and adjusted themselves, in alignment with the next set of organisational expectations.

The individual begins the process of becoming an executive by having a sense of their ambitions and personal aims. As they move through the organisation they adjust and adapt their behaviour to the significant others within the organisation, so that they can balance visibility with exposure. By the time they have attained an executive position, they have become part of the organisation or corporation and, as such, even though they are in a position from which they can change and alter things, they are now responsible for the very organisational structure that they have negotiated their way through.

The learning process that appears to underpin the participant’s career trajectory seems to be based on the influence of significant others in the corporation, who may inadvertently role model the organisation’s culture and methods of working. This process supported the participants learning throughout their route towards the executive position, however, as will be explored in the next chapter, when the participants arrived at the executive position the absence of role models altered this method of learning.

In addition to this, becoming visible as a potential executive did not seem to guarantee that the individual would continue towards the executive role. And as the type of visibility (C.f. Chapter 6:2.) became operationally important, so the reaction of the individual may have required modification. This process was described by the participants regarding other people they knew and who had not been able to attain the executive role. The individual may have satisfied the expectations of the organisational constituents and presented an acceptable self but still encountered
problems associated with becoming a member of the executive performance group. (C.f. Figure 6:2.) The nature of the visibility and the relationship with exposure is discussed in more detail in the following chapter. However, at this point it is important to connect the core category, ‘balancing visibility with exposure’, which has been surfaced within this research with the notion of a basic social process. Glaser (1978: p93) states that,

"The goal of grounded theory is to generate a theory that accounts for a pattern of behaviour which is relevant and problematic for those involved."

(Op Cit)

Swanson (1986) points out that, in order to understand the basic social process identified by Glaser as being fundamental to the process of grounded theory generation, “it is helpful to view it first as a core category.” (Op Cit 1986: p135) During the research, one of the categories that developed was the one of visibility, for example, of being seen to be ‘capable’, of ‘getting things done’ and earlier in this chapter (Figure 5:1.) a model was described that brought the idea of ‘visibility’ to the surface of the research. The concepts behind the core category ‘visibility’ and the basic social process of ‘balancing visibility with exposure’ will be explored in more detail in the next chapter. However, as will be identified in (C.f. 7:6.), the basic social process in this research remains a tentative one that will require further research to extend and extrapolate across a wider population than the participant sample that took part in this research.

In Chapter 6 there will be a discussion of the basic social process of balancing visibility and exposure’, which has been identified in this research and the relationship between ‘visibility’ and ‘exposure’ will be discussed, in order to develop further understanding of the implications of this social process. The full implications of ‘visibility and exposure will be discussed in Chapter 7.
Chapter 6

The Emergence and Social Career of a Potential Executive Company Director.
Discussion of the core basic psychosocial process:
‘Balancing visibility and exposure’.

6:1. Introduction

The previous chapter outlined an emergent theoretical scheme and model as a tentative explanation of the process of how the research participants worked their way towards the executive director role. The core category, ‘balancing visibility with exposure’, was identified as a fundamental psychosocial process, which the participants were managing within their working lives. Whether they were aware of this aspect of their working lives and therefore overtly managed their ‘visibility’ and the degree to which they were ‘exposed’ will be discussed in a later section. One of the underpinning premises of this chapter is that ‘balancing visibility with exposure’ is a fundamental social process, which individuals working in corporations are faced with on a continuous basis in their daily work.

This chapter will use the previous chapter as a bridge from the field into a more theoretical discussion of ‘balancing visibility and exposure’, so that the concepts supporting ‘balancing visibility with exposure’ can be clarified and explored. The psychosocial nature of the core category will be discussed, particularly from a symbolic interactionist and social constructivist perspective. (Charon 2001) This differs from a social constructionist perspective (Gergen 1999: p235-237), in that the social constructivist’s approach to creating meaning favours a psychological approach, where individuals mentally construct their world of experience. (Op Cit) According to Gergen (1999: p236), however, social constructionism approaches the construction of meaning from the perspective that, ‘...language is real.’ (Op Cit) and that, ‘...meaning is continuously negotiable... recognising meaning’s fragility.’ (Op Cit) However, the model outlined in the previous chapter may also be seen as a bridge between a social constructivist approach to data analysis and recognition that,
similar to social constructionism, the meaning contained with the model is in a state of continuous renegotiation within the executive practice community.

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss how the research participants became visible within their companies and how they balanced their visibility with exposure. The focus of this chapter will be a discussion of how the participants became visible within their respective organisations and the action and interaction processes they used to manage this process. In order to facilitate the process, this chapter has been constructed using the 6 C's of grounded theory (C.f. 3:7. & 4:9.) Table (4:10.), which is shown below, to remind the reader regarding the 6 C's and the sections in this chapter, to which the table refers, are included in brackets beside the relevant part of the table.

Reproduction of Table 4:10. The 6 C's of Grounded Theory.

1. Causes: The reasons, sources, or explanations for the occurrence of a phenomenon. (C.f. 6:4.)

2. Consequences: The results, outcome, or effects of the phenomenon. (C.f. 6:7.)

3. Co-variances: Nature and extent of the relationship between the variables in the phenomenon. (These are included in each of the following sections as they become relevant to the discussion.)

4. Contingencies: Imply the direction of variance in a phenomenon and how it varies. (C.f. 6:6.)

5. Context: Social world in which the phenomenon occurs. (C.f. 6:3.)

6. Conditions: Under which the phenomenon occurs. (C.f. 6:5.)

In this introduction it is important to remind the reader about where the basic social process developed from and the links between the interview data and the category
that were subsequently developed. During the research, a theme that developed was the category of ‘becoming visible’. Originally the category referred to how individuals began to stand out from the large numbers of other people working in the corporate setting in which the participant were employed. The individuals could be seen in the organisation, however, what they were seen ‘as’ became an important issue. One of the participants described how a senior manager had become more visible in the organisation however, he was ‘visible’ for doing something that was countercultural, in that he mounted a campaign of complaining about an office move.

“...the logic of moving him was watertight, but the guy just whinged and moaned, [he has] written letters. Nobody objects to the initial disappointment... but he did not let it go at that... and all he’s done for his career is to cap it. If the guy is going to get like that for something as minor as that do you really want him handling substantial things?” (Interview 3 page 25)

In this the individual was visible, however the consequence of his visibility was to ‘cap’ his career, in that he did not balance the ‘visibility’ with the risks, associated with the ‘exposure’, which he was also creating. The balance between being seen and not exposing oneself to the sanctions of other people within the organisation appeared to become more important as the individual progressed towards the executive position. In another extract, the importance of visibility and the individual’s progression towards the executive role is illustrated.

“my experience of it is that it’s tough, and you become so much more in the limelight, so much more accountable for things, and the expectations of you are so much higher. Yet they all start from day one, when the day before, say, you were a hands on manager, the day after you’re a director and suddenly all these things come with that transition, and you know certainly our [in our] company you would sink or swim pretty quickly, and if you don’t swim, then the time runs out pretty quickly for you, and they would try
As the individuals developed towards the executive position their 'visibility' became more apparent and consequently the degree of potential exposure increased in proportion. (C.f. Figure 6:1. & Section 6:4.) As has been identified earlier in this thesis, individuals react to things as social objects that have meaning for them. (Blumer 1969: p2) Therefore, in terms of 'visibility', individuals appeared to perceive this category as being important, as failing to manage their 'visibility' may lead to a situation whereby their prospects and the career trajectory was affected.

6:2. Defining the terms: Balancing, Visibility, and Exposure.

This section will offer a working definition of the terms 'balancing', 'visibility' and 'exposure', as a route into a discussion of the core category, 'balancing visibility and exposure', which has been identified as the basic social process, or 'BSP' (Glaser & Strauss 1967) that the participants were managing. In addition, this will illustrate and confirm the meanings that were associated with these terms, as this researcher analysed and interpreted the data and worked with the appropriate literature.

According to Webster's Dictionary (Online version page 1614), visibility can be defined in the following way.

"The quality or state of being visible."

In addition, being visible may be understood to be a process where the person is

"Perceivable by the eye, capable of being seen, in view." (Op Cit)

According to the definitions cited above, there seem to be three main aspects to visibility: being perceived, capable of being seen and in a position where the individual is in view. Marwell (1963 cited in Moreland & Levine 2003 p372) makes the point that visibility can be defined as,
“...the extent to which a person’s characteristics are noticed by other group members.” (Op Cit)

In addition to this, The New Oxford Dictionary of English (1998: p2066) highlights that visibility is a

‘state of being able to see or be seen.’

This last definition can be related to the ‘surfacing’ phase (5:5.1.) of the participants’ career trajectory, where they had reduced the ‘career distance’ that they experienced during their earlier working life between themselves and the executive position

“...[directors] seemed so remote, at this point. [early stage of career]”
(Interview 2 page 1)

... and could begin to ‘see’ the executive role as being attainable and within their grasp. (5:5.1.)

“...five years ago I realised that I did have potential within general management as was recognised by my progression within the company.”
(Interview 3 page 2)

Moreover, the definition (The New Oxford Dictionary of English 1998: p2066) is a dynamic and interactive one, where the person is no longer passively waiting to be seen and is in an active state of being able to be seen. However, as Blumer (1969: p2) identifies, there are other factors that affect a person’s visibility. Actions are defined by others in terms of the ‘meaning’ that the action has for them,

“...instead of merely reacting to each other’s actions... response is not made directly to the actions of another but instead is based on the meaning which [is] attached to such actions.” (Blumer 1969: p 108)
Therefore the definitions of visibility cited have neglected the variation, inherent in visibility, that is socially constructed. If we take the position that actions are interpreted and the individual, according to that interpretation and the meaning that is subsequently derived, makes a response. Then we can infer that the participants worked their way towards the executive position through a process of developing and responding to the meanings that they constructed regarding the corporate world in which they were working, (Blumer 1969). Therefore, it is possible that a person’s visibility within an organisation will vary according to the people involved in an interaction (Charon 2001: p120). The variation of a person’s visibility within the same organisation is an important element of any definition of visibility that is derived within this research. As visibility may be a variable construction, the conditions under which visibility alters and changes can be seen as contingencies that can affect visibility over time and over a person’s career trajectory. For example, what works within the ‘forming a foundation’ phase of a person’s path through the organisation may not be as effective during other phases, such as ‘developing and negotiating’ and ‘surfacing as a potential executive director’. (C.f. Figure 5:2.1.) This variation, in the form of visibility and the action interaction strategies that the participants used during their route towards the executive director position, will be developed further in a later section. (C.f. 6:6.)

The core category being explored and discussed in this chapter, ‘balancing visibility and exposure’, implies a direct relationship between the two central concepts of ‘visibility’ and ‘exposure’. The next part of this section will therefore define exposure. Then the relationship between ‘visibility’ and ‘exposure’ will be developed using the concept of ‘balancing’ forming a basis for the discussion about the basic social process of ‘balancing visibility and exposure’.

According to The New English Dictionary (1998: p648), to expose something is to make it visible, ‘typically by uncovering it’ and Webster’s on-line dictionary, page 529, affords this definition:
There appears to be a difference between being ‘uncovered’ and the act of ‘laying open’, ‘setting forth’ or ‘laying bare of protection’. Within Webster’s definitions is the proviso that being exposed could make a person vulnerable, as care and protection may be absent. It is the connection between exposure and vulnerability that is an important aspect of the participant’s necessity to ‘balance visibility and exposure’. The participants appeared to want to be visible as potential executive directors, possibly because of their assumptions regarding the apparent benefits of the executive director position and the connections they therefore made with their personal preferences and ambitions. (C.f. 5:3.2. & 5:3.6.) In addition, the participants did not want to be in a position whereby their trajectory was impeded or their career became blocked. Therefore, in order to be seen as a potential executive director they required action and interaction strategies that could develop their visibility and, in concert, reduce the degree to which they became exposed within the organisation.

Furthermore, exposure can also be part of an individual’s experience.

“Exposure (experience) when someone experiences something or is affected by it because they are in a particular situation or place.” (Cambridge online Dictionaries)

As the participants’ career trajectory developed, for some of them they became exposed to executive directors, as a consequence of their early working experiences. (Interview 2: Interview 9) This kind of exposure appeared to have some benefits that were important for the participants, as they became more senior; this will be discussed further in a later section. (C.f. 6:5.)

There are two other aspects of the definitions of exposure that are necessary for the discussion of ‘balancing visibility and exposure’; the use of the word as a way of
‘making public’ i.e. ‘when something that someone has done is made public’. This may have connotations of being ‘exposed’ for misconduct, as when executive directors are disqualified from practice and therefore this is made public, so that people within the wider society know, including, when ‘exposure’ is used to call ‘attention’ to someone or something.

“When an event or information is discussed in newspapers and on the television.” (Cambridge online Dictionaries)

The use of the word is therefore similar to when someone is ‘exposed’ for apparent wrongdoing. However, the implication is that this kind of exposure is relatively positive. We therefore have a number of shades of the term exposure that can be developed further within this chapter. However, the term is being used to reflect situations when the person is visible and is vulnerable. Using the discussion held so far in this chapter, it is possible to construct a diagrammatic illustration of the relationship between the concepts of visibility and exposure. However, in order to illustrate the relationship one more concept is required, that of the state when a person is not visible or exposed and can be considered to be ‘concealed’.

Figure 6:1. Relationship between the concepts, concealed, visibility, and exposure.
The use of metaphors, such as ‘not putting ones head above the parapet’ (Interview 20), illustrated the idea that being visible was ‘risking’ becoming a possible ‘target’ for, or the subject of, negative politics within the organisation. However, to remain concealed and therefore hidden from view appears to be associated with a reduction in any opportunity for the person to be considered for an executive director position. Remaining concealed may also lead to situations where the person ‘risks’ being ignored or not taken into consideration. Goffman (1986: p216ff), drawing on the language of the theatre, uses the idea of concealment and being concealed to provide an interesting metaphor for understanding the relationship between the concepts ‘concealed’ and ‘visibility’, that of the term the ‘backstage’ or ‘out of frame activity’. This provides the individual with an evidential barrier (Op Cit p216), behind which they and activities that they do not wish to reveal or expose to the organisational gaze, can be concealed.

The participants therefore appeared to be ‘balancing’ their ‘visibility’ and the degree of ‘exposure’ they were subjected to through the use of the ‘backstage’ activities, which were intentionally ‘concealed’ from view within the corporation. These ‘backstage’ activities or, as the participants’ described them, the ‘behind the scenes work’, (Interview 2) appeared to be part of executive work, however it is a part that is relatively ‘unseen’ by many of the organisational constituents.

The emphasis on being seen within the organisation and consequently for the research participants being seen as a potential executive highlights two further aspects of visibility, ‘being seen as...’ and ‘being seen to act in a certain way.’

“What they saw was someone who had a good grasp of the issues and could express those clearly on paper, could build relationships at senior levels within the organisation, could persuade and negotiate and challenge the organisation.” (Interview 10 page 4)

‘Being seen as...’ for example someone who has a, ‘good grasp of the issues’, ‘rational’, ‘a thinker’ and still be able to develop the necessary relationships, appears to be dependent on the person’s actions within the organisation. Therefore
acting in a certain way seems to generate a person who is ‘being seen as...’ within
the organisation partly because of their visible actions. This relationship, between
the actions and the ‘image’ created, appears to lead to what Goffman (1959)
identified as part of the construction and the development of the ‘social self’. This
sense of being ‘seen as’ also links into the idea that the participants perceived
executive directors as ‘entities’ within the corporation and, as such, construed that
the executive position was a place where they could obtain an independent and
distinct existence.

“Entity a thing with a distinct and independent existence.” (The New Oxford
Dictionary of English p615)

Marwell (1963) offers another perspective:

“visibility represents the accuracy with which an individual’s feelings or
ideas are known to other[s].” (Op Cit p 311)

Introducing and supporting the idea that, in order for a person to be visible to others
in the organisation, they will need to convey what is inside themselves, ideas,
feelings, opinions and thoughts, to others. The dynamic interaction between the
viewed and the viewer is an important one, in that as the participants ‘negotiated a
path through the organisation’ (C.f. 5:4.1.) they appeared to be looking for the
organisational position that would satisfy their personal preferences and ambitions.
(C.f. 5:3.2. & 5:3.6.) The focus seemed to be on finding a role that could provide
the them with opportunities that could satisfy their preferences. (C.f. 5:3.6)

However, in order to accomplish, this it was necessary for the participants to
‘present an acceptable self’ (C.f. 5:5.3.) and ‘meet the expectations of the corporate
constituents’ (C.f. 5:5.2.) through the ‘demonstration of good judgement and
sensemaking’, both in terms of the ‘business and interpersonal politics’. (C.f. 5:5.4.)

However, they became ‘visible’, as part of the corporation, as a corporate entity or
social object that ‘belongs’ to the corporation. The progression of the model to
include this dimension will be discussed further in a later section. (C.f. 6:7.) The
stream of human activity that makes up the working lives of the research
participants often takes place primarily within corporations. The context, or in a symbolic interactionist’s terms ‘perspective’ (Charon 2001: p1ff), that working within corporations brings to grounded theory research, the relevancy and the effect this may have had on the research participants, is discussed in the next section.

6:3. The social world of corporations.

Context is described by Chenitz (1986: p42) as capturing the “social world of the individuals engaging in the phenomenon [being researched]” and part of this context is the corporation and the organisation in which they work.

In Chapter 2 the differences between management and executive work was discussed, with the conclusion that the majority of writers in this field support the idea that there are fundamental differences between managing an organisation and setting company direction, (Garratt 1996: Coulson-Thomas 1993: Rigby 1995 & 1998). The research participants, who described details of what they considered the differences between managers and executives directors to be, generally supported this view. It is against this background, of an underlying belief that there are differences between managers and executives that the participants were working. The belief produces an assumption that managers and executives who work within organisations will require different skills and capabilities. Even if this argument is founded on folklore and assumption, the existence of this assumption within the organisation produces a lens, through which people come to a view regarding each other’s capabilities and promotional prospects (C.f. 2:6.).

The essential nature of the core category appears to be part of the relationship between the individual and the structure of the organisation, in that, as identified in the previous chapter, the individual may have ‘personal ambitions and preferences’ (C.f. 5:3.6.) that are affecting their career trajectory. These, however, are operating within a corporate organisational frame and context and, in addition, the organisation is not as clearly defined and structured as organisational charts suggest. As Weick (1979: p11) points out, the organisation is a
“...superimposed structures... that are inventions of people, inventions superimposed on flows of experience and momentarily imposing some order on these streams.”

The logic of the hierarchical management structures produced by corporations does not necessarily represent the way in which departments and people work within the organisation. The fluidity, complexity and collective nature of the organisation do not represent the logic of linear management pathways, through which the potential executive makes their way. Ayas (1999: p182-3) recognises this point in her discussion of the impact of organisational design on learning within the organisation:

“When the organisation is large and complex, it is almost inevitable that one deals with parts of the organisation rather than the whole. As organisations grow they differentiate: to realise economies of scale and benefit from specialisation...” (Ayas 1999: p182-3)

The continual de-layering of the organisation and the tendency towards flatter management structures (Holbeche 1997) has produced an organisational form that is often more complex and diffuse than the theoretical order and separation between the different management layers. (Watson 1994)

“...every other company I have ever worked for, it takes 12-18 months before you really understand the company, where the levers are and CXY was fundamentally easy to understand, but I went into retail in PXY and that was more complicated because it was less mechanistic you would pull a couple of levers and something over there would happen. That was a surprise and took some understanding. This company is generationally more complicated. I have been here 6–7 years and I still don’t properly understand the finances by any stretch of the imagination.” (Interview 1 page 19)
It is within a high degree of ‘organisational complexity’ (Interview 1) that the participants were working and ‘making sense’ (C.f. 5:5.4.) of what was going on, so that they could make the decisions that were necessary for the company to continue. Furthermore, the individual may, according to Gergen (1999: p120), find themselves in competition with other people within the corporation.

“[when] We enter the work place... we traditionally find ourselves in competition; only a few will rise to the top... the workplace [is] individualism in action.”

According to Crawford, (2003: 234) career progression is not open to everyone in the organisation and it is against this aspect of corporate context that the participants developed themselves towards the executive position. Therefore, it appears that, in order to progress within the organisation, individuals may find themselves within a corporate competition where ‘only a few will rise to the top’. Gergen (1999: p120) The following extract illustrates this process and identifies that it continues even when the participants were progressing at senior levels in the organisation.

“I met another guy in reception and asked him what he was doing and he had come to see about this job. We went up to the director’s floor and sat down at the meeting and we were jointly interviewed. Question for me, question for him etc – it was really most curious. The ... partner and the client wandered off and came back ten minutes later and said [to me] you’re the man and the other guy cleared off. It was strangely cut and dried. I felt like a chattel.” (Interview 1 page 5)

It is against this background that ‘balancing visibility with exposure’ can be identified as a fundamental process which individuals appear to be managing within their corporate lives, in order to maintain their ‘viability’ within the organisation.
6:4. The social construction of visibility within the corporate environment.

Marwell (1963: p311) maintains that visibility may be shaped and affected by the social values and norms involved within the group and, by implication, the corporation in which the individual is operating. Marwell’s contribution is significant, in that visibility appears to be socially constructed as well as a function of the individual’s characteristics, qualities and capabilities. By implication, ‘exposure’ may be socially constructed through similar processes to which ‘visibility’ is formed.

In the discussion of how visibility can be defined and framed, several aspects require further discussion. The basic premise of the definitions cited above is that the person is noticed in some way, either through their own efforts at attracting attention or through a characteristic, which attracts the attention of other people. (Moreland & Levine 2003; p372) This raises the question of what brought the research participants to the attention of the organisational constituents. In the previous chapter (C.f. Figure 5:5.1.) the following categories emerged as contributing towards the construction of an individual’s visibility within the corporation in which they worked.
These interacting categories illustrate the diverse and dynamic nature of an individual's visibility. The individual has a wide range of activities to balance and manage in their working life. The findings suggest that these categories, and there may be more as further research is conducted in this field, work to construct the nature and features of a potential executive's visibility within an organisation. However, even though these categories appear to be subjective in their nature and submerged within the organisation, they do raise a number of questions regarding how an individual would make themselves visible through 'presenting an acceptable self', 'meeting expectations' and how they would 'demonstrate good judgement and sensemaking, both political and business'?

Visibility has been described as the "...extent to which a person's characteristics are noticed by other group members." (Marwell 1963: cited in Moreland & Levine 2003: p372). However, such characteristics do not necessarily produce 'visibility' for the individual. According to Moreland & Levine (2003: p 372), the power of the characteristic to develop, in this case visibility, is dependent upon the degree of
saliency that the characteristic holds for that particular group. In the case of the potential executive, it is important to identify the salient features and aspects of the processes, by which the participants became executives. However, prior to discussing the process of developing visibility within the corporate environment a working definition of visibility will be elaborated.

Visibility, as a state in which the person can be seen (The New Oxford Dictionary of English 1998: p2066), highlights that being seen is a state; a state whereby the person’s characteristics may be part of the phenomenon of visibility but not necessarily the complete answer. To be ‘seen’ implies that there is an interaction between the person and another person, or may be part of being ‘seen’ by oneself, as in being aware of oneself. This aspect alters the view that visibility is a state and emphasises visibility as a social process. It appears that the process of visibility is shared with the social construction of exposure. The implication that there is a relational aspect to visibility is reinforced by a person’s ‘action’ (Charon 2001 pl24) coming to the ‘attention’ of others or ourselves. In the constant stream of human activity, an individual may become visible when an activity they are engaged in attracts the attention of other people, (Charon 2001 p125).

“...descriptions of human action as an ongoing stream of action is not all that obvious to a casual observer. Most of us tend to focus attention on single isolate acts. He stole a pig, she took a bus to the store... We watch others and we label their acts; we look at our own action and label those acts.” (Charon 2001 p1125)

In Charon’s (Op cit) argument, above, the nature of visibility is extended from a passive process, whereby the person is somehow ‘seen’ and that is all there is to it, into an interactive relational process of becoming visible. Charon is implying the presence of other processes that may be taking place in the activity of being ‘seen’. Another important aspect is the nature of the stream of action that the person is engaged in. There were a number of situations in which the research participants were required to be visible through ‘Presenting an acceptable self’ (C.f. 5:5.3.), which included job interviews, either within their company (Interview 19) or when
they were in competition for work in another organisation. (Interview 1 & 2) Other situations encompassed work meetings and the times that they were going about their daily praxis and incidentally presenting themselves to other people within the organisation. These situations are examples of where and when the participants were presenting themselves to other people within their working environment. So far the action has been described as an overt one, whereby the person is engaged with an external relational process between themselves and others. However, as Charon (2001 p125) identifies, the person is also involved with covert action within themselves, as an “...ongoing conversation with ourselves.” Charon 2001 p125) and this process may affect the construction of the individual’s visibility.

If visibility is a social construction, incorporating the relational aspects of self and others and the intra-relational dimension of self-conversation, then what is visibility? In Charon’s terms, it is the person’s ‘action’ that is seen, therefore the person becomes part of the ‘act’ and there is a blending of ‘action’ with the individual into a form that is labelled and categorised depending on the perspective being used. The “…individual acts are simply social objects pulled out from the ongoing stream of action.” (Charon 2001 p128). The visibility that this researcher is focusing on is the type whereby the person is seen by significant others within the corporate world. The degree to which the individual ‘sees’ him/herself (Crossley 1996 p61) has not been addressed within this research. The focus has been on how the individual develops and balances their visibility with exposure within the corporation.

However, there was another process over which they had less control and that is how they were presented within the organisation. This was related to how other people within their working environment were ‘presenting’ them to a wider group of organisational constituents. Charon (2001: p160) identifies that people...

“...define who others are... as [they] interact. [And] attribute identities to them...”
The attribution of identity and labels, which can then be used to determine and define the other person, is an aspect of how a person is presented within the organisation that creates an ‘intersubjective self’ (Crossley 1996: 65) within the working environment; this is separate from and yet inextricably linked to the individual concerned. (Charon 2001) This aspect of the socially constructed self that is inside the organisational ‘mind’ creates a view of the individual that affects the participants’ self-presentation and producing contingencies that shape the degree and type of visibility with which the individual may become associated, (Gergen 1999). The creation of an organisational reputation appeared to be an aspect of the ‘organisational self’ that was constructed by other people within the corporation. A reputation for ‘being able to manage’, for being a ‘safe pair of hands’ and ‘problem solver’ were all aspects of the reputation that the participants talked about generating as they progressed towards the executive role. (C.f. 5:3.7.) The reputation ascribed through ‘trusting’ what the person could deliver and through ‘association’ of that person with other people constructed an image or perspective of the person within the organisation, to which other people could then relate. (Interview 14)

The implication of this is that the participants could be visible within the organisation in a number of different forms and images, producing ‘multiple presentations’ of themselves in a variety of situations and for an array of representations. The acceptability of these multiple presentations of the person may vary across the different levels and functional areas within the organisation. The argument that has been pursued so far in this section is that in order for an individual to become visible they must be ‘seen’ in some form or other. So far, the discussion has identified the inter-relational aspects of being seen as one is seen by another and is similar to Merleau-Ponty’s (1968 p136) depiction that “others have only an exterior image of me, which is analogous to the one seen in the mirror.”

It is also necessary to take into account the social construction, or the “social structuration of experience and action...” (Crossley 1996 p49), of a person’s visibility and the process by which individuals, groups and organisations construct visibility. The sense of there being a process, or processes, whereby a person is ‘noticed’ within a group and therefore ‘visible’ to other members of the group, and
outside of the group, requires further clarification. It has been argued that the phenomenon of visibility is a product of social interaction between individuals within the context of e.g. a corporate society. Charon 2001, Crossley 1996 and Watier 1998 identify that there is another dimension to the social construction of a social object; that of an inter-subjectivity where the person is seen beyond that of a physical entity sharing the social space of the other. The inter-subjective arena is one where the person is ‘seen’ as a mental construct within the individual, held and related to as a social object within the mind of the other. Creating the possibility of what Buber describes as ‘I-It’ relationships (Cited in Crossley 1996 11ff) and the use of our “capacity for mental symbolisation”. (Gergen 1999: p123)

Developing visibility within the corporate world would therefore seem to entail the inter-relational-self and the inter-subjective-self of both one-self, and the other (Crossley 1996 Gergen 1999). This surfaces the importance of the form in which the individual, is held as a social object, within the organisation and the minds of other individuals, and how this affects the praxis of daily relationships. This process also creates that which is then related with (Weick 1995 p38), this can be seen as fundamental to the processual nature of visibility within the organisation.

However, it is in the differences between form and content (Watier 1998 p71) that the phenomenon of visibility can be clarified further.

“The contents, motives, dispositions, such as hunger, love, work, religion or the impulse to sociability are not in themselves social... become... social only through the forms of reciprocal action through which and within which, individuals associate with and influence one another.” (Watier 1998 p71)

The nature of the reciprocal action between the individuals may find a focus around, for example, ‘executive work’, as opposed to ‘managerial work’ or a ‘secret’ (Watier 1998 p78) This produces the form from which the content of visibility can be determined including the reciprocal relations of the individuals involved, all of which takes place in the context of the corporation. (Crossley 1996 p103-4)
6:5. Conditions under which visibility occurred.

It was indicated, in C.f. 6:4., that visibility occurs as a result of a number of different factors or a variety of action strategies undertaken by the research participants and each of these appears to lead to different consequences (C.f. 6:7.) for the individuals involved. In the model outlined in the previous chapter (Figure C.f. 5:2.1.), the main concepts that appeared to determine an individual’s visibility focused around three categories: ‘Presenting an acceptable self’, ‘Meeting the expectations of the corporate constituencies’ and the ‘demonstration of good judgement and sensemaking both political and business’. Beneath these three interacting categories, there are another two main groups: relationships, or ‘forming and developing formal and informal relationships’ and tasks, i.e. ‘making things happen’. Connecting these two main groups is the category of ‘negotiating a path through the organisation. Beneath these two main groupings, of ‘task’ and ‘relationship’, were a number of supporting categories. (C.f. Figure 5:2.1. reproduced below)
Reproduction of Figure 5:1. Relationships between the research categories, the three phases of career development, and the core category becoming visible as a potential executive director.

The tasks that the individual could become involved in are dependent on their capabilities and skills. The degree to which the person can add ‘relationship’ value appeared to be contingent on their social and interpersonal networks. Therefore the individual’s ‘awareness of their capabilities’ (C.f. 5:3.7.) and the extent to which they had, or could ‘develop, formal and informal relationships’ (C.f. 5:3.8.) formed some of the conditions as to whether they were seen or became visible within the organisation. The degree to which the participant was seen to be ‘taking on opportunities and responsibility’ within the organisation also affected their visibility, in that participation within the organisation (Moreland & Levine 2003 p372) and the
level of contribution to the organisation is an indicator of the ‘task’ value of the individual. Participants could extend their visibility within the organisation by increasing the number of tasks that they were responsible for and by increasing the ‘risk level’ (C.f. 5:4.2.) of their responsibilities so that more attention could be gained from senior managers and executives within the organisation. ‘Risk’, however, had to be balanced with the person ‘demonstrating good judgements’ regarding the project, in that the act of ‘taking on’ also generates ‘expectations’ set by the constituents within the organisation (Sosik, Potosky & Jung 2002: p212, 216), which have to be met by the participant. The benefits of ‘increasing the level of risk’ within the project or type of work that the individual undertakes, are varied, in that the individual may increase their visibility at the executive level, while also demonstrating their capabilities and skill level. In which case their reputation, as someone who can ‘make things happen’ and ‘get things done’, is consolidated and reinforced. This connects their ‘task value’ and their ‘relationship value’ and produces evidence, inside the organisation at senior levels, of the person’s value and begins to ‘close the gap’ between them and the executive role, thereby allowing the participant the opportunity to ‘align themselves to significant others’ within the company. This is similar to the self-regulation processes described by Sosik, Potosky & Jung who argue that the,

“...individual desires congruence between their own and others perceptions of their behaviour, and, therefore, set and work towards goals to reduce perceptual discrepancies, gain congruence, and improve their effectiveness.”
(Sosik, Potosky & Jung 2002: p212)

The ‘relationship value’ of the individual can be affected if there are any adverse consequences of ‘taking risks’. The effects could alter the person’s status and credibility within their work group and impact upon their visibility. (Moreland & Levine 2003 p372) This way of being seen may produce the sense of being wanted for what the individual can offer the organisation and constructs the individual in terms of their value to the corporation. The question of what is valuable to the organisation and the corporation as a result, is an important part of visibility. In that if people are ‘seen’ in terms of their value, then it could be construed, that there are
some people who are not ‘seen’ to be valuable and, as a consequence, may remain hidden from view in the organisation and may not be ‘seen’ as potential executive directors. If ‘being seen as valuable’ is an important part of ‘becoming visible’ within an organisation, then individuals may act in ways in which they can be seen as valuable, rather than in ways that fulfils their work objectives. The ways in which value can be made visible may depend upon whether the individual displays those social objects that are considered by the group to be valuable, (Moreton & Levine 2003 p372). The relationships of value can be described in terms of ‘task’ value and ‘relationship’ value; There is the individual who exhibits high task value, such as the ability to solve problems (Interview 1) or ‘clean up organisational systems’ (Interview 23) and other personal careers that the individuals develop, however, if the individual develops a ‘personal career’ (Goffman 1964) that is not considered valuable within the organisation then their progress towards the executive position could be significantly hindered. (C.f. 7:2.2.)

The discussion, so far, has focused on the social construction of ‘visibility’ derived from the analysis of data taken from the interviews carried out in this research. The question that surfaces at this point in the chapter is “how is ‘exposure’ constructed?” Much of the above discussion concerning the social construction of visibility may well relate to the social construction of ‘exposure’, in that both are socially constructed concepts, which are used to describe people within an organisational setting. (Gergen 1999) However, it appeared that ‘exposure’ could also be ‘felt’, rather than constructed through social interaction.

R.Q. “How do you currently up-date or maintain your knowledge base?”

P1. “I don’t think I do and I haven’t been. I see that as a great failing, and I feel particularly exposed at the moment, because I can see that we have done a lot to the sales-force and a lot with the sales-force and pretty well now we’ve got most of the ducks in a row, the sales-force is going well. There are a few odds and sods that we want to tweak, but I can see that I work from 9am to 5pm more or less at the moment whereas before I couldn’t. Now I realise that I have been introspective to the extent of focusing only on the sales-force for too long and I think it is a reflection of the company that R and
I have pretty well solved many of the technical issues, but not addressed the strategic issue in terms of what is happening around us outside the company. I know little or nothing about the products, which is probably not a problem but I know little or nothing about what is going on in the industry which I think is a problem, things just kind of accumulate and I should read them, but I don’t have time enough when I’m here and it is the last thing I feel like when I get home.”

R.Q. “So there seems to be a lack of time to keep abreast with ideas and read the Financial Times?”

PI. “Yea, I spend too much time in here when I should be out and about.”

R.Q. “Too much time in the office?”

PI. “Yes, I should be out meeting other people, other successful people, in the same industry and see what’s going on. I don’t do any of that, I’ve taken this job, not as a kind of strategic direction, but as my current project, which is to sort out the sales-force, and that’s to the detriment…”

R.Q. “You think it’s too narrow a focus?”

PI. “Yes, I think I just…being a consultant external or internal consultant is kind of a cosy little niche really, because you forget all the crap going around you because you have only got a single focus. My job is to do this and I get paid when I get out and then you can do that as an internal consultant, new assignments, go over there sort that out and don’t worry about what is going on around you. I think this job is very much in that direction. Consciously I think about it, unconsciously that’s the way I tackle it, that is the way I tackle every other assignment and I think in retrospect now I’ve suddenly come to the other end of the same pool and I’m climbing out, then Oh shit I’ve done it again. I think it has probably had a beneficial effect as far as a single focus on the job, but now there is another job to do which is strategically going to de-assess it and I’m not equipped to do that because I’ve not invested the time to look outside of my little project.”

R.Q. “This leaves you feeling exposed?”

PI. “Absolutely…” (Interview 1 page 26)
Illustrated in the extract above are a number of different aspects of ‘exposure’ that can be identified. (C.f. Figure 6:2.)

![Diagram](image)

**Figure 6:2. Conditions under which visibility may turn into exposure.**

The participants described how, when they focused on the ‘day-to-day’ issues and worked within the projects they were responsible for, they tended to neglect the ‘strategic’ concerns that could emerge from within and outside of the organisation.

“One of the hardest things that I have found is letting go of the day to day management and moving towards what I would consider is the role of the director. Which is looking at strategy, looking at process, planning forward, planning ahead not just the next week, month, or six months, but the next three to five years. So its taking the big picture[into account] and putting that into the business, and then into a business planning process. All the things that I feel I should have been doing I have found difficult to do because I have not had the time. And you maintain your comfort zones, if you
like, in a way the bit of the day to day operation management that I do you keep doing that, a) because there isn’t enough resource for you to be able to step back away from it, b) because its what you know and are familiar with, because you feel not as confident about doing the other things, the stuff you should be doing, and so you therefore, you sort of lapse into the management role, as opposed to the director role.” (Interview 5 page 4)

The focus of the participants work alters and changes as they become more visible as a potential director. However, a fundamental element of the categories that support an individual’s visibility is the subcategory of ‘keeping up-to-date’; a category that has been identified as being embedded within the following three categories: of ‘meeting the expectations of the corporate constituents’, ‘demonstrating good judgement and sensemaking, both business and political’ and ‘presenting an acceptable corporate self’. In the next section, Figure 6:4 represents the support and, by implication, the conflict that may be present within the activity of ‘balancing visibility and exposure’.

6:6. Contingencies

When the participants described their progress towards the executive position they often referred to how their degree of visibility increased ...

“...you become so much more in the limelight... (Interview 5 page 5)

...as they ‘negotiated their way through the organisation’. (5:4.1.)

Marwell (1963: p318ff) highlights three main areas that produced a higher degree of visibility within the groups he researched: ‘assertiveness’, ‘friendliness’ and ‘intelligence’. Assertiveness correlated more strongly than did friendliness or intelligence. Marwell (1963: p318) offered this explanation:

“Two possible reasons for this present themselves. Friendliness and Intelligence may be more ‘submerged’ qualities than Assertiveness and thus
require longer association or perhaps different circumstances before they can be adequately assessed. On the other hand they may be more complex concepts, not as rigorously defined by the culture, and less prone to being agreed upon.” (Op Cit)

However, Marwell (1963) offers no definitions of the terms ‘assertiveness’, ‘friendliness’ and ‘intelligence’, therefore it is difficult, with any degree of accuracy, to compare them with manifestations of the findings from this research. However, Marwell’s work is important, in that he raises the differences between qualities that are more evident and therefore those qualities that are more submerged within a given group or society and which may be more difficult to ascertain. Consequently the aspects of ‘friendliness’ and ‘intelligence’ may require a longer period of relationship (C.f. 5:3.8. Developing formal and informal relationships) before the individuals can appreciate the dimensions and nature of the submerged qualities. The length of time that individuals have to pursue their relationships introduces the notion of ‘time’ and the effect of ‘time’ on the individuals ‘visibility’ and/or ‘exposure’ within an organisational setting. The assumption that it would be beneficial if an individual has a longer period in which to develop their ‘visibility’ within the working environment may not reflect the experience of people working within corporations. However, because the cultural definitions of these aspects are more diffuse, then these aspects may be open to a more subjective interpretation and are therefore less amenable to definition and operational use within the groups in which the individual is operating. In addition, knowledge regarding a persons’ visibility and what is noticed about them, may be related to the way in which knowledge is encoded within the organisation. This may be part of what Baumard (1999: p2) identifies as either ‘implicit knowledge’, that which is known but people are unwilling to express, or ‘tacit knowledge’ something that is known but people are unable to express.

The participants described how ‘time’ affected their ‘visibility’ within the organisation and how the length of time can surface other contingencies that may increase their degree of exposure within the organisation. In the model (C.f. 5:2.2.) in section (C.f. 6:4.) the three phases of a person’s career trajectory are:
• Forming a foundation. (5:3.1.)
• Developing and negotiating. (5:4.1.)
• Surfacing as a potential executive director. (5:5.1.)

This illustrates that, for the participants within this research, the first two phases of their organisational journey appears to have focused on moving towards a position in the organisation where they could be ‘visible’ as a potential executive director. Therefore, in order to become ‘visible’ the person was required to be seen and, in order to achieve that, it seemed to be necessary for the individual to gain access to the ‘zone of visibility’ within the organisation. The routes of the participants varied according to the company in which they worked and the type of work in which they were engaged. However, it can be seen that at some stage of their career they became aware that the executive position offered them opportunities to exercise their underlying ‘ambitions’ and ‘personal preferences’, (C.f. 5:2.1.) The executive position appeared to become a symbol of the position, which, if they could occupy it, would enable them to achieve the changes they considered necessary within the corporation.

"...how do I describe this? Personal success and achievements isn’t the objective in itself, it is what I can do with that. Becoming a director... is about how I can influence an organisation, how I can start to make it achieve the things I think it ought to be achieving for the industry." (Interview 2 page 3) there is something missing here or the bullet 3 can be deleted

The presence of the executive directors within the system reinforces the idea that the power and authority to change the corporation resides within the executive position.

“One makes the assumption that once you are a director, things will happen...” (Interview 2 page 3)

However, in order for the participants to enter the ‘zone of visibility’, as Lorenzi-Cioldi & Clemence (2003: p321) highlight in the quotation below.
"Groups are located within a network of intergroup relations that cause groups to vary ... dramatically in terms of their prestige, status, and power. This social positioning of a group has important consequences for the production of social representations... as a result, groups are distinguished one from another by fuzzy boundaries.” (Lorenzi-Cioldi & Clemence Op Cit)

The dimensions of ‘forming a foundation’, ‘developing and negotiating’ and ‘surfacing towards the executive position’ appear to form boundaries within the model (C.f. 5:2.1.) that are similar to what Lorenzi-Cioldi & Clemence (2003: p321) name ‘fuzzy boundaries’ between social groups. (C.f. Figure 6:3.)

![Diagram](image_url)

**Figure 6:3. A Cairn diagram of the flatter organisation with possible entry points for an organisational career.**

The participants varied in how they moved across these ‘fuzzy boundaries’ within the organisation.
Some took a linear route through the organisation, starting in a relatively junior role, (C.f. Figure 6:4.) moving every two to three years and ‘taking on more responsibility’, until they arrived at a point in their career trajectory that brought them into contact with the opportunity to enter the zone of visibility and surface as a potential executive director. Other participants entered the organisation at more senior levels and were able to avoid some of the boundaries of the phases outlined in the research model presented in Chapter 5. Figure 6:7 illustrates the entry point of the research participants at their first entry level. For some of the participants the entry level provided them with organisational ‘visibility’ from the beginning of the corporate career. However, as will be discussed in section 6:7, this produced a number of consequences that raised the degree of exposure for the individuals concerned.
The following figure represents the contingent categories that affected the individuals' 'visibility' within the organisations in which they worked.

![Figure 6:5. Relationship between visibility and exposure supporting and conflicting categories.](image)

It can be seen in figure 6:5, above, that there is a dynamic interplay between the supporting categories of 'prospecting for expectations', 'maintaining a float of information' and 'creating and rehearsing identity', which are contingent on the activity of the category 'negotiating a changing path through the organisation.' This category has undergone some modification since it was first outlined in the previous chapter, to take into account the dynamic relationship between visibility and exposure. It can be seen however, that the balance between visibility and exposure is contingent on four main supporting categories, with a further three contingent categories 'prospecting for expectations', 'maintaining the information float' and 'creating and rehearsing identity' that are supporting the integrity of the model. These categories will be discussed in section 6:6. Figure 6:4 illustrates the categories.
that supported the participants as they ‘surfaced through the organisational membrane’ and became recognised as potential directors within the organisation.

The concepts of ‘visibility’ and ‘exposure’ now appear to be different faces of ‘surfacing as a potential director’. As the participants become visible to the organisation, so the ‘risk’ of ‘exposure’, which is carried within the ‘sphere of visibility’, shadows the individuals ‘visible’ actions. If the connections between the ‘sphere of visibility’ and it’s supporting categories are severed, or are allowed to deteriorate, then the weight of ‘visibility’ can turn the sphere over at the organisational surface allowing a higher degree of ‘exposure’ to occur. However, ‘visibility’ is, in part, a social construction (Gergen 1999), which can therefore be socially deconstructed. The process of deconstructing ‘visibility’, to reveal the ‘exposure’ beneath the veneer of visibility, is one that is contingent on the maintenance of the supporting categories. (C.f. Figure 6:4.) In the next section the fragility and ephemeral nature of visibility will be discussed with an emphasis on how the skin of the sphere of ‘visibility’ can be peeled away, either by the individual’s own actions (Charon 2001: p149) or in the intersubjective atmosphere of the corporate world, where the participants were in social interaction with each other. (Crossley 1996: p79-80)

6:7. Consequences of visibility

This chapter has so far discussed the conditions (C.f. 6:5.) by which the research participants became ‘visible’ within the organisation. This section will outline the consequences that emerged from this research; the means by which the individual became visible may form a set of expectations by which the person is perceived within the corporation and their value to the organisation, (Moreton & Levine 2003) the constituents and the executive group. Value has been identified (C.f. 6:5) as being composed of several elements, including ‘task’ and ‘relationship’ value. However, the relationship between ‘expected value’ and ‘realised value’ is an important distinction to make. In ‘expected value’ there is attachment of potential and anticipation to the person for them to bring something that is required and valued by the corporation’s constituents and the organisation as a business.
However, in ‘realised value’ the individual has to ‘make things happen’, (C.f. 5:4.3.) and ‘meet the expectations’ that the person appeared to be able to deliver. Between these two sets of values the individual is working within a corporate environment with other people. Gove (1994) makes the point that within a situation where the task requirement is high then the individual is expected to fulfil that type of role, whereas the socioemotional aspects of the situation are not valued as highly. The person who becomes ‘visible’ is expected to perform and deliver the tasks effectively, through entering what Goffman (1959: cited in Charon 2001 p190ff) has described as a ‘performance team’. This performance team, in the potential executive’s case is, the senior management and executive group. The individual is then expected to ‘maintain and foster’ the social impression and expectations of the ‘team’ within the corporation. (Charon 2001: p190ff)

The participants described how it was important to ‘know when to talk and what to talk about’ as an aspect of maintaining their ‘visibility’ within the organisation and reducing their level of ‘exposure’.

P3 “Another part of being a chief executive is having the political awareness to know when to open your mouth and when to keep it closed part of it is the art of survival the higher up you go in an organisation the greater the chances you may not feel full term to retirement I guess I’m a bit of a cynic as well I’ve seen so many people go in this organisation that I know you cant make too many mistakes.”

R.Q. “Do you mean you must not upset too many people as well or is that different ?”

P3 “That’s different I think the thing is to have the political awareness of knowing when you can afford to exact them and when you cant I would never say always keep your mouth shut because you will never upset anybody if you keep your mouth shut but you don’t progress either there is always a time for standing up and making your point but do it on the substantive issues don’t do it on the silly issues.” (Interview 3 page 14)
There is therefore an element of what Goffman (1959: cited in Charon 2001: p191) describes as 'concealing' or "playing down certain facts" (Op Cit) within the participants 'visibility'. As the extract above illustrates, this is an expected part of being an executive and therefore a function of the activity of 'balancing visibility and exposure'. At the root of this 'balancing act' is the person's desire to remain 'viable' within the organisation, so that they can continue to progress towards the executive role and maintain themselves within that role.

6:8. Chapter summary

This chapter has discussed the model identified in (5:1.) and related it to the basic social process (BSP) of 'balancing visibility and exposure'. The BSP highlighted a number of related issues that appeared to affect the career trajectory of the research participants. The main premise of this chapter therefore, is that during the participant's work within the corporation the BSP identified in this chapter will influence and affect their personal decisions regarding the categories and concepts identified in C.f. Figure 5:1. For example, when a participant was 'demonstrating good judgement and sensemaking, both political and business', they were also considering the consequences of their judgements on their 'visibility' within the organisation and the degree of 'exposure they may be subjected to as a result of their decision. The claim that the BSP identified within this chapter exerts an influence on all of the categories remains tentative and requires further research. Particularly as the activities the participants were engaged in appeared to lead to consequences that increased their exposure within the organisation and, as result, created an increasing tension between the visibility that they required and the exposure that militated against their visibility. An example of this may be when participants 'took on more and more responsibility' only to find that the responsibility also kept them focusing on the task elements of their work, which may have led to the neglect of the strategic aspect of their work. (C.f. Figure 6:2.)

In summary then, this chapter has discussed an important psychosocial process which requires further research (C.f. 7:6.) to explore the degree to which 'visibility and exposure' affects the working lives of individuals within UK corporations. This
may be contrasted with research in other European countries and possibly in Asia, Australasia and the Americas. The additional categories and concepts uncovered in this way could then be used to identify situations where the negative case can be contrasted with the findings of this research.

The following chapter will summarise and draw together the research presented in this thesis, develop ideas regarding the contribution that this research has made to the academic community at the University of Surrey, the wider community and the potential of this research as a basis for further research work within the community of executive directors. Such future research could serve to bridge any potential gaps between the work of the executive company director and the theory that may assist and develop their working practice.
Chapter 7

Summary and contribution

7:1. Introduction

This final chapter sets out the main conclusions and the principle areas of contribution to the research community that have emerged from this research. In addition, it addresses the limitations of the research and evaluates the research, in line with an appreciation of the methodology that was used to conduct the research. There will be a discussion of ideas that may be used as a basis for further work in this arena and the outcomes of the research are identified and considered.

7:2.1. General conclusions and research summary

This research has provided insights into how a particular group of executive company directors, drawn from a range of corporations across a number of commercial sectors, appeared to work their way towards the director role. The general conclusions can be summarised within the following interconnected processes. The relationship between an individual’s professional career and the technical, functional career, which they enter the organisation with and have been preparing for within their early organisational work, e.g. accountancy, law, engineering, marketing and using Goffman's (Cited in Crawford 2003) idea of a moral career, the personal career of the individual appears to be fundamental. Throughout their trajectory towards the executive role, the individual is required to provide a ‘valuable contribution’ to the operation and eventually the strategy of the corporation. Furthermore, the individual is confronted with making their contribution known to the rest of the organisation, through the interpersonal relationships they have developed over the course of their working life in the organisation in which they work. It appears that the main means of demonstrating the value of the individual’s contribution is through a combination of the ‘Presentation of an acceptable self’, ‘Demonstrating good judgement and sensemaking, both business and political’, ‘Meeting the expectations of the corporate constituents’ (C.f. 6:5.) and the use of language in describing their activities in organisations where most of the work is hidden from general view.
7:2.2. Adopting a personal career.

Even though the individuals appreciated the financial rewards and the status of the executive position, they described how money, per se, did not motivate them to work their way through the corporation. They were mainly energised by personal preferences for different aspects of organisational work and activities such as ‘making things happen’ and ‘making changes’, which demanded that they took personal responsibility for action within the organisation, rather than remaining in a passive position where they were instructed and had to follow the lead of other people. In order to be in a position where they could ‘make changes’, ‘take responsibility’ and ‘shape the organisation’, they continued to move through the organisation to positions where they considered they could affect and alter the organisation. However, the process of managing the different aspects of ‘making things happen’ and ‘developing the formal and informal relationships’ that could support their actions, required more than the professional functional career they had been prepared for in the early phase of ‘forming a foundation’ for their career. Their value and contribution depended on a synchronicity between the requirements of the operational part of the organisation, the business objectives and the expectations of the organisational constituents.

7:2.3. Contributing value to the organisation.

The concept of ‘making a valuable contribution’ permeates the categories underpinning the basic social process of ‘balancing visibility and exposure’. The individual who is perceived as valuable to the organisation may remain employed within their technical and professional function. However, it appears that in order for the participants to become ‘visible’ as potential executive directors, a shift in ‘value’ or a synchronicity of the value they had been developing throughout their trajectory is required, so that ‘value’ can become aligned with the ‘needs’ of the executive team and the needs of the business in which the company is engaged. This synchronicity of ‘needs’, however, appears to focus on the tasks and business systems of the company, rather than the ‘group’ or socioemotional requirements of
the people within the business. This instrumental view of ‘value’ may affect the lens through which successive generations of individuals within the organisation are seen and assessed for their suitability as executive directors. As such, ‘value’ may act as a criterion with which potential executives are considered and may be part of the corporate boundary between managers and executive directors, which individuals make contact with as they work their way towards the director position.

The development of a ‘personal career’ (Goffman 1968) that is considered to be ‘valuable’, in organisational terms, is in the context of the organisational expectations of the participants. Participants talked about being expected to ‘make things happen’ within the organisation, whether it was operationalising the business objectives or maintaining and developing the systems and processes with which the organisation performed its function. In addition to this, the participants were expected to ‘make changes’ to their area of responsibilities, so that opportunities could be exploited. As a result, the individuals were expected to manage multiple expectations from a wide range of corporate constituents, however, their visibility as a potential executive appeared to be seen through the language lens of the organisation. The way in which the participants described their work, successes and failures, constructed a view of their capability and information from which to judge the ‘value’ of their contribution to the business and the organisation. Part of the ‘value’ that an individual brings to the organisation may also be contained in our ideas of ‘leadership’ and whether the potential executive is a leader. Within this research, only one of the male respondents and one of the female respondents talked about leadership. The man talked about how he had always been a leader rather than a follower (Interview 6) and the woman talked about how she recognised leaders when she was interviewing people for executive positions. The man may have been justifying his penchant for being the person who shaped and controlled the group or organisation he was a member of, while the woman was talking about her perception of who makes a suitable executive. In either case this area did not emerge into a full category within this research, however, in the light of the discussion in (C.f. 2:6.), this area is an important one in which to carry out further research about the relationship between leadership and being an executive director. As this research focused on the social processes by which individuals worked their way to the
executive position, it may be that researching the process of ‘being an executive director’ may reveal more about this area.

7:2.4. Visibility as a construction of organisational language.

The participants described how, through the medium of language, their visibility was constructed either through what they talked about or how other people within the organisation described them in meetings and dialogue.

Reproduction of Figure 6.1. Relationship between ‘visibility’ and ‘exposure’; supporting and conflicting categories.

The categories of ‘prospecting for expectations’, ‘maintaining a float of information’ and ‘creating and rehearsing identity’ appear to be categories that depend on language and interpersonal contact in order to operate. However, language, according to Noels, Giles & Poire (2003: 246-7) is not a neutral phenomenon. It can be labelled in terms of power and submission, with some forms of word and sentence structure being perceived as ‘powerful’ and other forms experienced as ‘powerless’. The organisation may recognise ‘powerful’ language as ‘valuable’ and
‘powerless’ language structures as less valuable. In addition, the organisational language structure may be arranged around mathematical and objective language, which, according to Simmel, may be part of the “calculating character of modern life.” (Op Cit 1907/1978: p444) leading to...

“...the tendency to emphasise quantitative rather than qualitative factors in the social world... at the expense of individual culture.” Ritzer (2000: p171)

7:3. Principle areas of contribution.

7:3.1. Methodology – application of Grounded Theory to the research of the social processes affecting people as they progress in their corporate lives.

Applying Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss 1967) to the study of the social processes that affect the progression of individuals towards the executive company director position has addressed the limitations of the literature in this field of research practice, as outlined in a previous chapter (C.f. Chapter 2). The limitations appeared to reveal a gap, where the individual executive director’s experience of working towards the company director role was left out. This methodological approach enabled the researcher to bring the ‘talk’ of executive directors, about their experience of becoming an executive, to the level of theoretical modelling. As Gregory (1994: p329) points out it...

“... is important to clear a space for participants in the research field to access and articulate their own implicit theories about what is going on in their world.” (Op Cit)

Gregory (Op Cit) is also referring to the process of leaving out well-known theories and bracketing the experiential knowledge of the researcher, so that this process of ‘space clearing’ can be achieved. The effect of ‘leaving out’ well-known theories is discussed in more detail in the next section. (C.f. 7:3.2.) This corresponded with the researcher’s aim of conducting research that reflected the participants’ perspectives and opinions of their world, rather than imposing personal biases and judgments,
which may have prevented the emergence of the basic social process ‘balancing visibility with exposure’.

During the research, data was gathered about individuals progression through the corporations in which they worked and the significant factors that affected this process. Information regarding their career histories, important events and people that shaped their trajectory towards the executive position, was also collected to develop a rich data source that could be used for the process of constant comparative analysis. Other questions were asked about the knowledge and skills they expected executive directors to have. These questions were asked so that the researcher had a comparison with the knowledge and skills expected from other professional groups. As the research developed and the categories emerged from the findings this information was left to one side and the research focused on developing the categories that were related to the basic social process identified above. However, the contextual aspects of this information can be drawn on in further research in this field.

Grounded theory is an established research methodology and has been used in a number of different settings, such as hospitals (Glaser & Strauss 1967), schools (Glaser 1998) and nurse educational settings (Gregory 1994) to research psychosocial processes that actors are engaged with in their working lives. Within the corporate environment, Locke (2001) identifies that grounded theory has been used to research issues such as production systems and the social system associated with batch production, (Reeves & Turner 1972). However, grounded theory does not appear to have been used to research the social processes by which individuals make their way to the executive role. Therefore, this research adds to the body of knowledge in this field and may form a basis for further research (C.f. 7:6) to be conducted with executive company directors.

In addition, there does not seem to be a uniform pattern of representing the findings of grounded theory research, therefore the use of the 6C’s to form Chapter 6 and the use of the processual model in Chapter 5 can be seen to be a contribution to the diagrammatic representation of social processes that influence the individuals route.
towards an executive position. One of the limitations of this particular approach to diagramming the social processes affecting career trajectory, is that this representation is based on accounts that have taken the 'work experiences' of the participants' to be the sole focus. It leaves out the personal and social life of the participants and the effects that these facets of the participants lives may have exerted on their trajectory towards the 'top' of the corporation. (Evans 2001)

7:3.2. Literature

The literature reviewed in chapter 2, as part of setting the context of this research, was mainly concerned with the content of the knowledge and skills that the individual would require in order to become an executive director, (Garratt 1997). Other areas of the literature focused on the type of people who become directors, their social and educational backgrounds (Lee 1981: Tait 1995) and the occupational preparation that executive directors have received (Barry 1998). The social issue of the preponderance of white males within the executive role was identified and discussed as part of the social context of the research. However, the model appears to be gender free, in that the categories appear across the participants regardless of gender. The women in the research were divided regarding the question of whether being a woman had produced difficulties for them or whether other processes were involved. Within the categories that support the surfacing phase of the model, there are a number of processes that appear to affect both men and women within the organisation, (C.f. Figure 6:1. reproduced in 7:2.4. above) which raises questions and challenges for concepts, such as 'the glass ceiling', that have been the subject of intense debate in recent years. (Lord, Brown & Harvey 2003: p303)

The categories may inadvertently discriminate against a wider range of people within the corporation than the feminist debate focuses on. However, this is not to deny the essential nature of the debate regarding discrimination against women that writers, such as Marshall (1995) and Witz (1992), make a case for. However, Witz's argument is based on a certain view of men within corporations, the 'patriarchal male', that may symbolise the 'father' image of executive directors and hence reinforce notions of who 'ought' to be executives within UK corporations. The
participants talked about ‘being tough enough’ as part of their capability to ‘present an acceptable self’ and be seen as suitable for the executive role. For many of them, the feedback they received was that they needed to ‘toughen up’ if they wanted to succeed as an executive director. This may preclude and bias the organisation against individuals who display a softer more emotional face to the organisation. Gove (1994) asserts that men are more likely to become ‘task leaders’ and women are more likely to assume the ‘socioemotional leader’ role. The discussion in Chapter 5 (C.f. 5:4.2. & 5:4.3.) highlighted the ‘value’ of ‘taking on tasks’ within the organisation and the importance of ‘making things happen’; these appear to favour the ‘task leader’ approach to work and, while this does not preclude women from these roles, it may present them with choices and decisions (Simms 2003: p29) about whether they ‘play’ what Simms describes as the ‘male game’ within the organisation. Marshall (1995: p15) argues that many of the norms that prevail within the corporation reflect “idealised male sex role stereotypes” (Op Cit p15) and, as such, may exclude and marginalise some men and women from the executive role.

In addition, the social replication of a dominant stereotype may be part of the perceived requirements of the executive that is rewarded within the organisation, through ‘valuing’ certain behaviours and social action more than other behaviours and actions. The requirements of the organisation’s ‘expectations’ and the relationship between this and when a person ‘presents an acceptable self’ (C.f. 5:5.3.), may provide an acceptable method for the organisation for controlling the route towards the executive role, thereby ensuring that unsuitable individuals are screened out of the executive role, by the social construction of ‘presenting an acceptable self’ and ‘meeting the expectations of the organisational constituents’.

One of the men in the research referred to the Myers-Briggs profile (Krebs Hirsh & Kummerow 2000) and argued that certain profiles within the corporation were more likely to be seen as potential executive directors, depending on the profile of the executive director group in place.

P8 “They had been cloning themselves over the years. They were all ‘S’ [sensing] preferences in Myers-Briggs terms, so they all valued data but none of them were ‘intuitives’ [intuition].”

241
R.Q. “So how did they clone themselves over the years? How did that process happen?”

P8 “Just by track record, I mean, how do people get to the top of companies? It is actually by producing the numbers so in a manufacturing company it will be ‘Fred’ who produces the profit cash figures – that’s how he gets to the top.” (Interview 8 page 7)

The representation of ‘type’ across gender has not been part of this research however, it may indicate an area that is also worth exploring further, to expand on the differences in representation of men and women in corporations. In addition to this, the expectations of women, by their parents or other women (Interview 16)and the socialisation and education of women and men (Purvis 1991: Acker, Megarry, Nisbet, & Hoyle 1984) may produce certain stereotypes about what it means to be an executive director and therefore influence career decision making. The issues of ‘expectations’ partly of the ‘class’ and the ‘gender’ that executive directors appear to represent and the mismatch between different groups within society that this may bring, develops the issue of gender discrimination into a wider issue of social discrimination. This raises questions of how society constructs leaders and how the expectations of leaders are developed within the social psyche.

This thesis has contributed to developing understanding regarding the social processes that affect the individual as they make their way towards the executive role, by providing a processual model that has highlighted the possible tensions that may exist within the executive community. The issues raised above can be usefully explored using the model (C.f. 5:2.2.), identified in this research to ask further questions regarding gender and social discrimination. One of the questions that may be asked in seminars and workshops could be ‘Is the model developed in this research gender biased in any way?, If so how? and What does this model highlight with regard to a person’s progress towards the executive role?
7:3.3. Implications of this research for policy makers.

The impact of the theoretical model (5:2.2.) and the results of this research on policies relating to succession planning, recruitment of executive directors, graduate training programmes and initiatives, such as the Institute of Directors Chartered Director programme, are as yet undetermined, as the results are not in the public domain. However, this researcher envisages contributing articles and presentations at seminars, workshops and conferences, where these issues are being discussed and debated. The contribution to policy is an important one, as the future role of the executive director is shaped and possibly altered by flatter organisational structures (Holbeche 1997). As the development of the ‘knowledge-worker economy’ (Giddens 2001: p378) affects the distribution of knowledge workers within the corporation, the executive’s traditional connection to and association with the intellectual power of the organisation (Garratt 1997), may be weakened. A consequence of this may be that traditional organisational structures will be challenged and an emancipatory agenda developed within this field of research (Burgoyne & Reynolds 1997). In addition, the effects of globalisation on the parameters of corporations, with people being able to access the internet (Giddens 2001: p53) and therefore overriding traditional hierarchies of knowledge control, may also lead to changes in the social processes that affect the role of the executive director and therefore the career trajectory towards that position. The potential executive director will possibly require different preparation to the haphazard manner in which most of the participants reported they were prepared. Therefore, this increases the importance for continuing to research this field so that future executives can be prepared in accordance with a current idea of the executive role, rather than be prepared for the role through a number of years, by which time the role has altered and changed beyond their recognition.

This research has raised, because of its social constructionist nature, the issues of the social construction of visibility within the organisation and who decides who becomes visible. The decision making process, regarding the succession of potential directors, is an important one, in that if the executive position is socially constructed (Gergen 1999) by the members of the organisation, then images of leadership and
directors may require further examination before embarking on complex succession plans that may be prone to failure. The research implies that most of the participants made their way through the organisations in which they worked in a 'step by step' manner rather than as part of a 'grand plan' to become a director. However, two participants within the research did have an idea that they would strive towards the executive director role. Both of these participants were male and yet they appeared to follow a similar route to the other participants that matched the processual model described in an earlier chapter. (C.f. 5:2.2.) A result of this is that any plans for recruiting or developing potential directors may need to take into account a wider range of social processes than 'content based knowledge focused programmes' appear to address. If individuals are concerned about their visibility and the degree to which they are potentially being exposed within the programme, then their behaviour may become resistant to attempts that encourage them to reveal their weaknesses or admit mistakes. This may affect the efficacy of development programmes that are based on action learning principles and other person centred programmes of development. There is a case for examining the processes by which potential executive are prepared and for uncovering more of the assumptions made during the formation of policies and practices. Burgoyne & Reynolds (1997: p105) identify that critical reflection of the management development scene is germane and, therefore by implication, is a critical review of the way in which potential executive directors are made visible within corporations. They continue with their argument for a critical inquiry into management at all levels in the organisation, linking it into the changing nature of organisational life, with managers and therefore directors facing more complex issues within corporations,

“...such as social discrimination and environmental damage, which do not lend themselves to formalised or purely technical solutions.” (Op Cit p106)

The invitation for critical inquiry is important in the light of this research, in that grounded theory could be used as a methodology for surfacing the tacit knowledge (Baumard 1999) embedded within corporations and, through a reflective sensemaking (Wieck 1995) process of participative inquiry (Reason & Rowen 1990; Marshall & Reason 1997), directors and potential directors may be able to use the
research process as a safe method of asking questions about the preparation and selection of future directors.

7:4.1. Limitations of using grounded theory research in this field.

A discussion of the limitations of grounded theory and a critique of the methodology was carried out in (C.f. 3:9.1.) the main point of that discussion, which focused on the position of grounded theory in relation to other methodologies that have been influenced by the post-modern movement and feminist approaches to research (Denzin & Lincoln 1998: p1). Other arguments that were raised (C.f. 3:9.1.) surfaced issues regarding the researcher's voice and the relationship between the researcher and the research participant within grounded theory research. The decision-making processes within grounded theory and the way in which these decisions may be affected by the researcher's personal biases and previous research experiences (Archer 1988) were also identified as important aspects of using grounded theory.

This section will briefly discuss any further limitations, which appeared to affect this research, and discuss the ways in which this researcher managed these limitations. One of the main limitations appeared to be the way in which using grounded theory affected the relationship between the researcher and the research participants. The process of grounded theory has been outlined in previous chapters (C.f. Chapter 3 & 4) and will not be repeated here. However, it is within the coding process that this researcher became aware of the risk, and possibility, of increasing the distance between the researcher and the participants through the use of research language. The participants used words that described their experiences and, through coding and categorising the collections of words, sentences, paragraphs and extracts from the various participants, the researcher produced interpretive categories (Charmaz 2001) to represent the participant's world view and the meanings (Charon 2001) within that perspective. However, within that process, as Strauss & Corbin (1990: p69) identify, there is the possibility of using 'in vivo' codes, i.e. codes that utilise the participants own words and phrases (Glaser 1978 p70: Strauss 1987 p33), thereby maintaining the contact between the research and the researched. Therefore
the use of 'field' language within the analysis creates a stronger linkage (Locke 2001) between the field and the theory emerging out of the data. Even though the theory is emerging out of the data, in this research it was considered necessary to maintain the links between the interviews and the theoretical model (C.f. 5:2.1.). This enabled further discussions about the theoretical model, so that executive directors and people from other professional groups could identify with the model and follow the connection between their experiences and the ideas within the theoretical model. However, it appears that when a researcher is coding and conceptualising field data, there may be a tendency to employ theoretical concepts from the academic discipline within which they are conducting the research, which carries with it the possibility of creating distance between the researcher and the researched.

7:4.2. The position of the researcher in grounded theory research.

In some forms of qualitative research, the researcher is bracketed out of view, taken to one side and kept out of the picture. In grounded theory, the relationship between the researcher and the researched is hazy, in that the researcher is carrying out research into a field of human activity using an interpretive analytical process that involves a subjective interaction with the data and the participants throughout the life of the research. Yet the researcher is invisible and somehow not meant to be seen in the reporting of the research, because the objective is to provide a perspective of the field that is congruent with the participant's world view and experiences and not a reflection of the biases and prejudices of the researcher. The researcher is therefore seen as being the holder of biases, which are required to be eradicated from the research. This somewhat pure form of qualitative research tends towards the positivistic paradigm of research, which endorses the viewpoint that there is an objective reality that the researcher can discover or find out about by researching the field properly. However, when the researcher is using the methodology of constructionist grounded theory, the relationship between the research, the researched and the researcher becomes an important issue. How far can a constructionist grounded theorist bracket themselves out of the application of grounded theory to the research field? If the researcher does bracket themselves out
of the field, then what happens to the self of the researcher? Is it possible that the researcher’s self will act out, in some way, so that the researcher is made visible within the research by subconsciously introducing ‘biases’ that infect the analytical process and affect the results? These are important questions to address in constructivist grounded theory research, as the underpinning ontology of grounded theory arises from constructivism and symbolic interactionism and both of these approaches carry the idea of the ‘human being’ being an active agent in a socially constructed world. In Gerber’s terms, (1999) the individual co-creates their world and the meanings they use to organise their action against, in relationship to the ‘other’ person/s. Therefore to bracket out the individual from the research, may be to deny one of the underpinning ideas and threads of symbolic interactionism and create the illusion that constructivist grounded theory is an objective methodology, that is somehow free from the biases and the self of the researcher. In this approach to constructivist grounded theory, a number of methods were used to separate the ‘self’ of the researcher from the findings of the research, so that the findings were grounded as firmly in the field as possible. However, personal reactions to the analysis kept surfacing, as the attempts to bracket ‘self’ out of the research picture produced personal conflict for the researcher between the findings, their personal assumptions, imagined expectations and their preconceptions about what the findings ‘ought’ to be. The position of the researcher in the research picture, as far as controlling biases is concerned, is well documented within the literature. However, the emotional impact of bracketing out the self of the researcher is not discussed. The impact of this on the results of qualitative research is ignored within the findings chapters. Over recent years, there has been a move towards recognising the researcher as bricoleur. (Denzin & Lincoln 1998: p3ff) This is, however, recognition of the process of constructionism within qualitative research, where the researcher...

“The bricoleur is adept at performing a large number of diverse tasks, ranging from interviewing to observing, to interpreting personal and historical documents, to intensive self-reflection and introspection.” (Denzin & Lincoln 1998: p4)
rather than the interaction of the self of the researcher, (Punch 1998: p164ff) recognises that

"The actual conduct of research and success in the field can be affected by a myriad of factors, including age, gender, status, ethnic background, overidentification, rejection, factionalism, bureaucratic obstacles, accidents, and good fortune... We are systematically denied public information on what happens [in the field]."

However, Punch (Op Cit) is dealing with the politics and ethics of research, rather than the interaction of the self of the researcher within the research process. The closest he gets to discussing the self of the researcher is when he inserts the category of 'overidentification' inside his discussion, but even then he is using a term that can be interpreted as pejorative, in that to 'overidentify' with the participants of the research is to 'go native' or become too close to the field and reduce the objectivity of the researcher. As Manning (2001: p157) points out,

"The central connection between person and society is the self, including the 'I' and the 'me'."

If the researcher takes the position of bracketing out the self of the researcher in the analytical process, then this connection between self and society can be interrupted. Four basic positions can be identified as affecting this process of bracketing;

Position 1) The ontological and epistemological position and theoretical standpoint.
Position 2) The relationship of the researcher to the researched and the research.
Position 3) The reaction and responses of the researcher to the research findings.
Position 4) The personal and intrapersonal implications and consequences of the research for the researcher. (Evans 2001: Guba 1990)
7:4.3. Representation of the researcher's voice in the thesis.

Creswell (1998: p171) raises the rhetorical issue of authorial representation of the 'self', the researcher, within the narrative research report. In the grounded theory narrative form, exemplified by Glaser & Strauss 1964, May 1986, Strauss & Corbin 1990 and Chenitz & Swanson 1986, the researcher's voice is bracketed out as the emphasis is on revealing the theoretical voice of the participants. Whereas by adopting a constructionist symbolic interactionist perspective of grounded theory to the research, the relationship of the researcher, as author and interpretive constructor of the thesis, is surfaced. If the voice of the researcher is silent in the research thesis then the challenge is

"... that every text [can be] contested terrain and cannot be understood without references to ideas being concealed by the author and contexts within the author's life." (Agger 1991)

However, the limitations of grounded theory as a methodology, as described above, also provided some boundaries within which the researcher could work with people from the field of executive practice. The proceeds of working with grounded theory are described in section (C.f. 7:7.).

7:5. Evaluation of the research.

May (1986: p151-152) suggests the following as a framework for evaluating grounded theory research:

- Nature of the research question.
- Nature and scope of the literature review.
- Multiple data sources.
- Evaluation of the theory itself.
- Usefulness of the theory.
By using May’s (Op Cit) framework, the research can be taken section by section to produce the following evaluation. The nature of the research question (C.f. Chapter 1 & Chapter 3) is an important one, in that Glaser & Strauss (1967) and other writers, Locke (2001), May (1986) and Gregory (1994), maintain that the question in grounded theory research needs to be broad enough so that the researcher can enter the field and in addition, the broad question is to be derived from the field, rather than from a preconceived notion of the researcher’s or from the literature. In the case of this research, the question was decided upon as a result of discussions with executive directors, members of the researchers peer learning group and conversations with executive developers working in the research field. In which case the question can be seen to have a sufficient focus for the research and appears to bracket out potential researcher bias.

The nature and scope of the literature reviewed (C.f. Chapter 2) in this research was categorised as a context chapter and formed what May (1986) describes as an opportunity to

“...allow the reader to see the phenomenon of interest as the investigator did at the beginning of the research.” (Op Cit p152)

The context that was formed in this way, provided a background for the research findings, which were outlined and discussed in Chapter 5 & 6. Thus, the context formed, reflected this researcher’s perspective of the field at the commencement of this research and, therefore, is not intended to be a full and comprehensive review of the literature. However, a full and comprehensive critical review of the literature in this area appears to be overdue and would allow ideas regarding the executive director to be updated and a literature foundation for further research in this field to be set up.

In this research twenty-six participants were interviewd and the research findings were discussed with a number of seminar and workshop groups (C.f. Figure 4:2.), in order to produce a wide range of data sources from which the researcher could draw the information required. In addition to this, the sample of participants was taken
from a range of different commercial sectors and corporations (C.f. Table 4:1. & 4:2.), which provided an array of data that offered the richness and complexity that grounded theory requires. However, no observational data was gathered which may be an area for further work.

The theory that was the focus of this research, has been presented in Chapter 5 & 6 to illustrate and demonstrate the linkages between the various categories and the supporting concepts. The model presented in Chapter 5 represents the conclusion that the model and the theory outlined in this research is congruent with the data analyses that has been undertaken during this research. The findings, in the form of the model and the tentative theory, have been shown to a number of executive groups and Human Resource professionals and have been well received. The comments received have been in the form of further questions, which could be a basis from which one could take the research further. Some of the people who have seen the model have considered that it is an accurate reflection of their own career trajectory towards the executive position and have been surprised to see the relationships between the categories and how they mirror their own experiences. This ‘fit’, between the experiences of the practitioners who work in the field and the findings of the research process, is further validation that this research has produced a tentative theory that appears to have a degree of ‘face validity’ within the executive director community.

The researcher has held conversations with a number of consultants that practice within the career development arena and, so far, the model has been well received, in that the individuals who have been involved with this ongoing conversation claim to see a connection between their work and the model. Whether the model (C.f. 5:2.) fills a gap in this field of research will be tested over time as the researcher discusses the results at research seminars and facilitates workshops, using the model and the theory as a basis for further work. At the time of submission of this thesis, this researcher has planned to present the findings from the research to a seminar group at the University of Surrey, to continue the process of validating the model that has been outlined in Chapter 5.
7:6. Suggestions for further research in this area.

This research has identified a substantive model and tentative theory concerning the psychosocial process of working towards the executive director position. Even though this bridges some of the gaps identified in the literature (C.f. Chapter 2) concerning the process of working towards the executive position, the model and the ideas that have been presented in previous chapters remain tentative and open to alteration and further development. Glaser & Strauss (1967) point out that grounded theory produces substantive, rather than formal theories and ideas regarding the psychosocial processes that people are working with during their working praxis. In order to progress the research further and develop it from the tentative model and ideas that have been described so far, (C.f. Chapter 5, & 6), the research could be taken into research domains and work areas other than the corporate field. For example, research could be conducted within the following types of organisation: political organisations, the charitable sector, other types of organisations and with individuals such as Head teachers and Vice Chancellors within Universities. The findings could then be compared and contrasted with the model and ideas that have been presented within this thesis, to identify similarities and differences. This comparison between different organisations, would then develop the substantive ideas into a more general model (Glaser & Strauss 1967: Locke 2001) of how people work their way towards the ‘top’ of organisations. Locke (2001) makes the following suggestions for taking grounded theory research further where theoretical sampling can continue on the grounds of prior substantive theory:

"... (a) testing [of] prior theory by replicating previous [work]. (b) extending theory by choosing [examples] that provide the opportunity of filling [gaps] in theoretical formulations, (c) extending the theory by choosing [examples] that are the polar opposites of previous [work]." (Locke 2001: 102)

Locke (2001) appears to make a case for remaining with grounded theory methodology, even when researching from a ‘known’ base. However, if the position is taken that the methods of grounded theory can be used to develop further understanding of the emergent model, then even though the researcher is using the
substantive theory developed in earlier research, this can be supported because the original research was grounded in the field. Strauss (1970) argues that grounded theorists can use existing theory to develop and elaborate grounded theories, provided that the theory being developed has been grounded in the research field. (C.f. 3:7.1.) He suggests that existing grounded theory research can be expanded on using the methods available within grounded theory to take the ideas further. Therefore, this research can be developed from the model presented in previous chapters, by using different organisations to continue to theoretically sample (Glaser & Strauss 1967 p45-77: Locke 2001 p54-57) and develop ideas regarding the basic psychosocial process of ‘balancing visibility with exposure’. The researcher can then develop the theory, from the substantive theory offered in this research, into a more formal theory regarding the activity of ‘balancing visibility and exposure’ within the wider society and the consequences of this basic psychosocial process within individuals working lives.

- There are a number of questions that have been raised during seminars and workshops based on the research findings, which remain unanswered at this closing stage of the research. They are:
  - How widely distributed within the working population of men and women is the ambition to become an executive director?
  - Do individuals select themselves out of the executive director trajectory?
  - If so, what are their reasons and what do they do instead?
  - At what point are individuals selected in or out of the path towards the executive director position?
  - What are the exit routes out of the model (C.f. 5:2) that are available for people to take?
  - What are the entry routes into the model that are available for individuals to use?

... and may form the basis for either further grounded theory research (Glaser & Strauss 1967: Dick 2000: Charmaz 2000), developing the symbolic interactionist’s view, by focusing more on the common symbols and understandings that emerge
and provide meaning to the interactions of executive company directors And/or focus the research using phenomenology (Moustakas 1994), heuristic research (Moustakas 1990), action research (Robson 1993) or collaborative inquiries (Reason & Rowan 1985). Further research may involve working with executive directors and individuals from other professional groups, such as Human Resources, Executive search and recruitment, internal executive development consultants, independent executive coaches and mentors.

The possibilities for continuing this research are illustrated in the following examples:

(a) Using the original questions with a purposive sample from a different organisational setting such as Higher Education, Charities, and businesses that are not corporations, e.g. owner-managed businesses or partnerships. The findings could then be compared and contrasted to illustrate similarities and differences between corporate career progression and non-corporate routes to the ‘executive’ position.

(b) Develop further theoretical sampling through purposive interviews with people from the corporate sector, to discuss the model presented in Chapter 5 and refine the ‘6 C’s’ of ‘balancing visibility with exposure’. Focus this on working with the model from the core category, so that the supporting categories within the model can be refined and the theory that underpins the assumptions within the model can be critically examined and identified.

(c) Longitudinal research, with the same sample or a similar sample to determine if their understanding of attaining an executive position remains constant, or how it alters over time as different experiences within the corporate field affect their working lives. Further questions may be asked regarding their understanding of succession within the corporate setting and how the processes affect them as executives or how they shape and attempt to manage succession within the companies in which they work.
(d) Longitudinal research using grounded theory, to follow individuals who have been identified as ‘potential executives’ and to uncover the psychosocial processes that they manage throughout their route towards the executive role.

(e) Another suggestion that emerged from this research, was to interview individuals who have chosen to decline opportunities that would lead them towards an executive position and compare the categories from the model in this research with their experience of corporate work. The idea for this type of research emerged from different sources; peer review of this research and consultancy evaluation of the Men’s Career Register in which the author interviewed individuals who had been part of a National Health Service initiative to prepare men and women for executive roles within the N.H.S. in the U.K. During this evaluation process, several of the men who were interviewed talked about how, since they had been part of the executive preparation programme, they had decided not to pursue an executive career. This type of research may provide ideas regarding the espoused incentives and assumptions regarding the executive role; why some people seem to aspire and others do not. In addition, this may uncover more information about the symbolic representations associated with the executive position and, therefore, why some people will aspire to the executive role while others may avoid the executive position even if opportunities are presented to them.

(f) In the light of the fact that the executive population appears to be similar in composition, (C.f. Chapter 2) further research with individuals from groups, that are under represented in the executive community, such as ethnic minorities, women, people with disability, including occupational groups that appear to be under represented, such as scientists and human resource professionals.

(g) Further research may be conducted on the phenomenon of social visibility and what makes certain individuals or groups appear more visible than other groups. This research would address one of the gaps in the social science literature identified by Moreland & Levine (2003) in their review of research on social groups.
In light of the criticism raised in an earlier section (C.f. 7:3.1.), that the research focused on the corporate work of the participants and left out the influences of their personal and social lives, further research could be conducted that broadens the contextual frame, by borrowing a wider band of social context from the ‘Life History’ approach, used by Evans (2001) in her research with ‘self-employed professionals working in the field of Human Resources’. This would encompass the personal and social lives of the actors working within the corporate environment and produce alignment between the categories and the events within the individual’s lives that may have led to that category becoming significant. The dimensions of time and age could have been mapped more clearly, to determine whether these had any impact on the shape and construction of the figure in C.f. 5:2.2.. This could produce categories that are contingent and covariant with the categories in the theoretical model (C.f. Figure 5:2.2.) identified in this research and provide insight into issues such as ‘work life balance’, ‘personal ambitions and motivation’ to achieve an executive position and some of the influences that may affect an individuals trajectory to the ‘top’ that are outside of the ‘corporate plan’ and the ‘development plan’ of the individual, thereby identifying a domain of experience that affects people who make executive work their career. At the present time this area appears to be left out of the research in the executive director arena.

In addition to the suggestions for further research that have been outlined above, the model developed in this research could form the basis for learning conversations with executive directors and potential directors, to develop and foster what Finger & Burgin Brand (1999: pi48) describe as an “environment that is conducive to learning”. The model could be used as a means of beginning a mentoring relationship (Clutterbuck & Megginson 1999) and possibly used in conjunction with a model of mentoring, such as the one suggested by Clutterbuck & Megginson (Op Cit p22-23) reproduced below in Figure 7:2. However, this researcher is not suggesting that the model dominates, or usurps, the ideographic and iterative nature of a mentoring relationship, rather for it to be used to assist with the identification of areas that can then be developed further through the conversational and inherently learner-centred, mentor and mentee, dialogue.
Furthermore, the model could be used to underpin interventions that focused on the
development of potential executives within the corporate environment. These could
be formal or informal programmes of development, or action centred (Burgoyne
Pedler & Boydell 1994) organisational learning processes, which promote and
support the development of individuals within their place of work. In addition, the
model may be applicable in the area of career reviews and/or transition, where the
individual is looking for a tentative route map that could act as a template for
considering action and preparation for a new field of work or further development
within an existing domain.

7:7. Outcomes of the research.

The purpose of the following sections is to provide a discussion concerning the
outcomes of this research and illuminate some of the personal learning process that
this particular researcher has experienced and benefited from.
7:7.1. Research outcomes.

The research has produced a tentative model and the foundation for a theory regarding the route and passage of individuals as they work their way through corporations towards the executive position. The model has been discussed in a number of different forums, with executive directors, senior managers, management consultants and peer researchers. Throughout the seminars and workshops a number of executives, senior managers and consultants have confirmed that the model appears to represent what they realise, as a result of the discussion they have been managing during their career trajectory. Therefore, some confirmation has been received to begin the process of validating and refining the model (C.f. 5:2.1.) that has emerged out of this research.

Peer researchers have asked a number of questions, some of which have been addressed throughout this research, while other questions have been identified as suitable for taking this research further. (C.f. 7:6.)

7:7.2. Personal outcomes.

The outcomes for this researcher, at a personal level, include the development of research skills, based on a recognised methodology (Glaser & Strauss 1967: Locke 2001: Dick 2002), which can be utilised within the researcher's professional work as a mentor and facilitator of learning. Even though research skills can be equated with professional development, the consequences of embarking on a research path have been felt and experienced throughout this individual's life journey. Moustakas (1990: p99) describes a process that he recognises as part of heuristic research and which may now be associated with the experience of grounded theorists when they are conducting research. The process of symbolic growth experience (SGE) is described in the following way.

"Symbolic growth refers to a sudden and dramatic shift in perception, belief, or understanding that alters one's frame of reference or world view. The internal change or revision is usually connected with an external event but
the connection is synchronistic, an intentional or spontaneous happening rather than the result of a cause-effect relationship. The shift in perception and meaning launches in some measure a new attitude, a new process of learning, a character or personality shift in identity and selfhood.” (Moustakas 1990: p99)

During the process of conducting research using grounded theory, the discipline and the creativity of becoming a grounded theorist has produced, in Moustakas’s words, ‘synchronistic shifts’ within this researcher’s personal and professional learning. According to Frick (1990), the symbolic growth experiences can be described as a..

“...conscious perception of the symbolic-metaphorical dimension of immediate experience leading to heightened awareness, the creation of meaning and personal growth.” (Frick 1990: p68)

The shifts in the perception and attitude of this researcher can be illustrated by reference to the following dimensions of experience. Thinking, feeling and imagining. There were three phases to these dimensions, before, during and after the research.

The thinking dimension can be described as being altered from an assumptive, quick, decision-making form, into a slower, reflective and open form of thinking. Prior to the research ‘thinking’ was more automatic, with the biases and assumption relatively unexplored, or ignored, producing decisions about people, situations and processes within which the research was engaged that were ‘intuitive’ rather than reflective. Through the practice of using grounded theory, the boundaries that come with the territory of research have ‘rattled and shaken’ the cage of thinking within which this researcher had been operating. In the aftermath, the post-research period, this researcher has learned not to trust his immediate conclusions, but rather to use them as data from which to develop further inquiry. Other effects on the researcher’s thinking will become more evident following the research and can be used to maintain the challenge and creative edge necessary to develop the critical research mindedness that appears to be required of research practitioners within the executive
director field. One of the methods used to develop awareness of the impact of personal thinking on the research process, was to share results and findings with both supervisors and to discuss the findings and the research process with a number of peers. The process of talking about the research during the activity of researching, ensured that personal biases and attitudes, which may otherwise may have interfered with the operation of grounded theory, were aired and open for semi-public discussion.

Before undertaking the research, this researcher’s feeling world was connected with his imaginative metaphorical world and, prior to the research, was a main driver for his professional and personal career. During the research process, the connections between imagination and feeling were challenged, as fears about the research were written down in a personal journal and discussed with a confidante, who then encouraged the following strategy to be developed. The fear was recognised and discussed and then some distance between the fears this researcher was experiencing was created by adopting the following strategy; even though the researcher was anxious and afraid, the discipline of the writing and researching was continued, so that further experience could be added into the assumptions that the fear or anxiety was creating within the mind of the researcher. This produced ‘an-up-to-date’ experience for the researcher and provided a valuable comparison between the researcher’s past experience and the recent situation. Grounded theory therefore has provided a methodology, with which the researcher could add some structure to the apparent formlessness of qualitative research, thereby developing a sense of meaning, both at a professional research level and a personal felt experiential one. The methodology provided the map, which could be used to make a way through the unmarked field of executive practice.

7:8. Epilogue

This chapter has drawn to a temporary close the numerous strands related to how individuals work their way towards the executive director position, which have been surfaced during this research.
This research has been written up in the third person as a way of bracketing the 'I' of the researcher out from the data that was obtained from the research participants, and the emergent findings. This has resulted in a slightly stilted presentation and a personal distance from the research for me that has, as indicated in (7:7.2.), been developmental and continues to be a learning experience. One of the reasons for undertaking this research was to learn how to 'see' what was happening around me and learn methods that could be used to 'make sense' of my professional work and the personal journey that I had begun on the Facilitator Style programme at the University of Surrey several years ago. Using grounded theory, with its boundaries and methods of data analysis, has taught me to be patient and thoughtful and less judgemental. However, this process will continue as I develop the research I have presented in this thesis and continue to work on the themes that have been demonstrated in the preceding chapters.

What began as an attempt to produce the 'perfect thesis' has ended with a thesis with slightly frayed edges, which leaves space for further research work to be undertaken in this area, possibly using a heuristic or phenomenological approach, to reveal more information and refinement of the model and ideas that this research has unearthed and created.
Appendices
Appendices

Appendix 1

Overview of the various Acts of Parliament that may affect the company director.

1) Theft act
4) Insolvency act
7) Employment Law
9) Acts relating to unfair dismissal of employees.
11) Intellectual Property Law covering Patents (intellectual property requiring registration) and Copyright (intellectual property not requiring registration)
12) Environmental Protection Act 1990.
13) The Water Act 1989

(Taken and adapted from Watkinson 1996)
Appendix 2

Preliminary questions used in the primary interviews.

1) Did you have a career plan?

2) If so, was part of the plan to become an executive director?

3) I would like to hear about your working life; the influences on you during that time; the elements you perceive that have assisted you and hindered you in your progress towards executive director level.

4) What do you think is important for an executive director to know?

5) What do you think are the important skills for an executive director to have?

6) How did you acquire the knowledge you required?

7) How did you acquire the necessary skills?

8) What ways do you currently use to maintain/update your knowledge base?

9) What ways do you currently use to maintain/update your skill levels?

10) How do you notice when it is necessary for you to learn something?

11) Is there anything else about your move towards becoming an executive director that you think is important for other people to know?

12) Is there anything else about being an executive director that you think is important for other people to know?
Appendix 3

Cluster Diagram Education and Learning

- Relationship between knowledge and response from peers
- Risks associated with developing people
- Making sense and understanding
- Learning from experience
- Executive skill set
- Mentoring
- Knowledge and understanding of the business, and the organisation.
- Role modelling
- Educational/Learning
- Developing professional knowledge
- Role of Business School
- Feedback
- Relationship with learning as an executive
- Expectations of development
- Pressures on updating knowledge and practice
- Developing guiding principles and beliefs
- Learning style
- Keeping the organisation up-to-date.
- Relationship between learning from experience and organised learning
- Learning through experience and personal decisions
- Knowledge outside of and beyond functional boundaries
Cluster Diagram Relationship with the organisation

- Legitimizing executive work
- Arriving at the executive position
- Permissive working environment
- Altering corporate values and beliefs
- Politics of changing an organisation
- Impact of Government legislation on company performance
- Hierarchy of organisational activities
- Hierarchy of change-ability within the organisation
- Conflict between personal working style and a constantly evolving and changing organisation
- Distribution of power and authority
- Positioning
- Moving on
- Holding position
Cluster Diagram Practice Work Elements

- Bread organisational experience
- Responding to change
- The impact of external factors
- Executive work, nature and process
- Innovate/ideas into action
- Application of ability
- Power to change and alter, influence and shape
- Transporting skills
- Creating an effective working environment
- Executive qualities
- Operational scope
- Working behind the scenes
- Capability
- Achieving
- Maintaining order and structure
- Operational scope
- Working behind the scenes
- Career pattern
- Career distance
- Forming policy and strategy
- Work style, strategies
- Implementing effective company systems
- Selecting the executives
- Tension between task and relationships
- Practice / Work elements
- Organisational complexity
- Re-shaping the organisation
- Authority to re-shape the business
- Moving beyond being a specialist technician
- Protecting the company
- Managing within an environment of multiple changes
- Managing risk and opportunity
- Attending to the whole
- Executive style of working within the organisation
- Planning to reduce complexity
- Preserving organisational information boundaries
- Career plan/direction
- Anticipating the outcomes and consequences of executive decisions
- Organising other people
### Appendix 4 Coding Interview 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verbatim Interview Transcript</th>
<th>Descriptive code</th>
<th>Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>R.Q.</strong> Did you have a career plan at any stage and, if so, was being an executive director part of that?</td>
<td>200. The term career plan sounds grand.</td>
<td><strong>Plan/career direction</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2. That all sounds very grand doesn’t it – have you got a career plan?</td>
<td>201. Plan or a direction ever since school age 17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think, ever since I’ve left school I’ve had a plan or a direction.</td>
<td>202. Directors seemed so remote [at age 17]</td>
<td><strong>Career distance from executive director position.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>R.Q.</strong> How old were you when you had that earliest recollection?</td>
<td>203. Observing who was responsible for organising people and managing the resources of the organisation.</td>
<td><strong>Organising other people.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2. About 17-18.</td>
<td>204. Enchanting at the time.</td>
<td><strong>Enchantment</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It wasn’t about being a director, they seem so remote at that point.</td>
<td>205. Awareness of the Icons of non-manufacturing industry</td>
<td><strong>Icons</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It was about seeing supervisors and managers organising teams that seemed to be for every meeting and</td>
<td>206. Fancied becoming an</td>
<td><strong>Self-comparison.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>that seemed quite enchanting at the time. If enchanting is the right word.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>But certainly at that early phase I also was aware of some of the icons of non-manufacturing industry, bank managers, stock brokers and people like that so I fancied getting to that sort of position</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Part of benchmarking was then, what salaries do they earn. This is in about 1969 and it was about £5,000 per year and I was earning £650.

That gave me a scoreboard to work against and then I could see how I was progressing.

As time has gone on, then yes, the career plan becomes a bit more shorter term and a bit more focused.

When I was working at AXD, I must have been in my later 20’s that I decided, yes, the thing that gave me a buzz was actually making things happen at any level particularly but I wanted to be in a position where I could shape an organisation.

Not realising then, as I do now, that even when you get here it isn’t as easy as you think it is going to be so you have that impact.

One makes an assumption that once you are a director, things will happen but, of course, it is not as straight forward as that but it was about setting policy

and it’s only retrospective that you realise that the way one’s always

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>icon.</th>
<th>Earning power</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>207. Benchmarking salaries,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>208. Salary Scoreboard to measure career progress.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>209. Career plan became more focused as time went on.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>210. Making things happen gave him a buzz. [late 20’s]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>211. Position to shape an organisation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>212. Even when you get here [at director level] it isn’t as easy as you think it is going to be...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>213. Assumptions about the ease of being a director.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>214. Retrospective realisation about his thinking style.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Career distance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>207. Benchmarking salaries,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>208. Salary Scoreboard to measure career progress.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>209. Career plan became more focused as time went on.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal excitement.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>210. Making things happen gave him a buzz. [late 20’s]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>211. Position to shape an organisation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Power to influence and shape.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>212. Even when you get here [at director level] it isn’t as easy as you think it is going to be...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Imagination about the executive role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>213. Assumptions about the ease of being a director.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Illusions about arriving at the executive position.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>214. Retrospective realisation about his thinking style.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assumptions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>213. Assumptions about the ease of being a director.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal thinking style.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>214. Retrospective realisation about his thinking style.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
thought right to left. By that I mean
that I identify where I want to get to
and work back to the point of how I
get there. The thought of people
working left to right was my next
thing to do.

For me it has always tended to be
much more about... how do I
describe this? personal success and
achievements isn’t the objective
itself, it is what I can do with that.
Becoming a director isn’t about
becoming a director and earning
riches. It is about how I can
influence an organisation,

how I can start to make it achieve
the things I think it ought to being
achieving for the industry.

In this industry, I’ve seen it from the
bottom, I’m seeing it from a much
higher position now.

I know what the industry is capable
of bringing to peoples lives so I
know the good and bad sides of it.

I’d like to feel that I’m in a position
now where I can influence not only
company but help to influence
industry so that started to develop
the objectives that I personally
wanted to get to achieve. I’ve been
pretty lucky so far and I’ve achieved
a significant proportion of it.

R.Q. When did you start thinking
you would (or wanted to) become

| 215. Personal success and achievements | Intention |
| 216. Ability to utilise power and authority | Power to change and alter. |
| 217. making things happen. | Power to achieve |
| 218. Different perspectives. | Perspective |
| 219. Knows about the capability of the industry to affect people’s lives... | Affecting people’s lives |
| 220. Position to influence outside of the company. | Positioning |
an executive director?

P2. Wanting to become one was one of the reasons I left AXD. I was 34 years old. I had always hoped that I could get to that point in AXD. The bigger the company, the harder it sometimes is and I suspect that some aspects of me, two issues, one is that sometimes you need to go and start with a clean slate so you lose some old baggage having been there man and boy. You need then to test yourself, can I do this again? Once you grow up with something, sometimes it is easier to say well, I can only do it in one environment. One of the reasons for me taking the opportunity to join G/P, as it was then, was to say a) can I do it and b) it’s a better opportunity for me to make, if I can do it, those steps whereas I gained a lot of experience at D, worked with a lot of very able people very closely but I knew everything inside out and sometimes you need to be able to get away from that.

At D, I was always Him who was very young, a young lad and all that sort of stuff. Sometimes, you need to draw a line in the sand that says that is now past and I need to start from a different angle.

I had also recognised that that point had come for me maybe five years before and that I was getting to the point where I was in danger of becoming stale so I wanted a fresh start – a fresh environment, something new and challenging where I would have utilise my management abilities in an environment that I wasn’t familiar with. I didn’t know the products,
didn’t know the people, didn’t know the systems, didn’t know the culture and that was part of the test really.

R.Q. Would you be able to talk about your influences on you at that time and the elements that you perceived have assisted you towards the executive director?

P2. The influences on me in my career have been people mainly. The odd incident. Having spent a lot of my early career setting up and running a claims department and having had personal interaction with customers who were bereaved and so on and certainly realising how important some aspects of the business I was in was. Enabling a daughter to get married, a father dying, a mother to carry on you suddenly realise that this is a business still worth being in.

People, W, J and B who is now on the TIC board, working with people like those,

setting out what their policy and approach to things was, was important to me and important to my opinions is what is a life company about really?

Sure, it’s about profit, it’s about service but also the industry is about making a difference to people’s lives. When I set out to become a director to want to change things, it is with that in mind.

I dare say, that there is an element to enjoy, the position and the power and all that sort of stuff, the authority as I suppose everybody does
but it is what you do with it that drives me.

R.Q. What do you think it is about those people that really influenced you?

P2. It is their striving for perfection and their intolerance of lack of it. It is the striving to become better and better. Until I got to be in a position here, I didn’t quite understand why it was worth having an obsession for perfection as an end in itself but I do realise now much more why you need to be over-the-top in things like that because if you are going to have an influence all the way down an organisation, you do often have to go over the top both in terms of praise and being energetic, being enthusiastic, all those sorts of things. Determination and desire for perfection is just another element. Everything has to be heightened to magnify it at my level, particularly if you want to have an impact. I have not previously appreciated the value of working behind the scenes with people, persuading them and so on. Very often it is about a political approach i.e. by political I mean by persuading people [missing word] policy rather than politics in the negative sense. You also do realise that you have got very able people, very intelligent people who have got a valid view. In my early career, I was full of total self-confidence but sometimes that blinkers you to think I could be wrong here.

R.Q. Behind the scenes work sounds like low-key work you have to do

P2. Yes, a lot more and its those

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Making an impact on the organisation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Need to be over the top as an executive</td>
<td>Executive qualities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire for perfection</td>
<td>Making an impact on the organisation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exaggerating to produce impact within the organisation</td>
<td>Working with people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value of working behind the scenes</td>
<td>Accepting the validity of different viewpoints.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with people who have a different viewpoint</td>
<td>Role modelling</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

275
sorts of issues that have influenced me a lot.

Watching some of the, of the time, J’s and so on a) being determined to be prepared to stand alone. He was prepared to dig in and say I’m sorry I’m not going to sacrifice my position on this one. You might overrule me. Watching how they operated and being a new company as HAL was originally, everything had to be established from scratch and one of the great strengths about that organisation, certainly in the first 10 years was this preparedness to give responsibility and accountability to very young junior people. I had only been working a year and a half and was given the design procedures and processes that the company was going to run on. I was given a lot of freedom. That was one of the reasons why it was successful because everybody was so committed. The issues there are that, it had to build everything, an approach and policy for what will be our culture as a company, what were our values and setting all those things out. For me, some of the softer issues, are very important. It isn’t just about what you do, it is the way you do it that is critical.

R.Q. Why do you think they are important?

P2. At the end of the day, people perform better in any operation if they believe in what they are doing. They don’t have to believe that this the way I would personally do something or that this is the best product but I believe in the product and it is a good product and what I am doing is the right thing to be doing and I don’t feel embarrassed

| 239. Prepared to stand-alone. |
| 240. Establishing policies from scratch. |
| 241. Responsibility, accountability and freedom. |
| 242. Personal commitment. |
| 243. Building a shared company. |
| 244. The process by which the task is delivered is important. |
| 245. Belief in the work is important so that people can perform. |
| 246. Authentic working |

Exposure to a permissive culture.

Developing an understanding of how organisations operate.

Developing guiding principles and beliefs.

Authenticity
about it. You need to be able to create an environment where people realise that is how they fit in or at least, in the other sense that this isn’t for them. The worst thing you can really do is have people work under false pretences, both for themselves and for the organisation because sooner or later, you have to face up to the reality that I am not happy working here or wherever that might be so I’m very much the believer that there is nothing wrong in developing people to the point where sometimes they go on and do things elsewhere. Hopefully, most of the time it will be in here. I do remember a programme where Walt Disney was interviewed, in the early 60’s where they talked about how Disney was set up, how he launched his company. He had a reputation for letting a lot of people of go, very good able people went on to Hanna Barbara. His view was ‘I haven’t got a problem with that, I am delighted they have made a terrific successes and they got to the point where they could go off and do that but they weren’t going in the same direction as I was but I haven’t got a problem with that and it is a part of life that at some point people go off and develop on their own in different directions’. He didn’t agree with the view that said we should fight to keep everybody and persuade them they should stay but that doesn’t mean to say that you shouldn’t value them or develop them. Two years of valued work from somebody is worth having and if they go on, positive and competent, they will actually be a good advert for your organisation anyway. They are issues that have affected my thinking.

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>247. Taking the risk of developing people</td>
<td>Risk of developing people.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>248. Developing a personal direction.</td>
<td>Moving on</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>249. Creating a working environment.</td>
<td>Knowing how to create an effective working environment.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Another objective for me to become a director was to try to help create an environment where people could do those sorts of things, where people don’t feel… I don’t have a problem when people say they want to go and work for another department, go off with another company, or want a career break. I value honesty, people who try to be honest about themselves. People don’t quite realise how much progression they have made and so on. They also think of the here and now as the point of where they are at. You can get to a point where you are not making much progress but partly that is maybe doing the wrong thing in the wrong place and the difficulty very often is actually getting the people themselves to recognise the amount of time they move to something different. Positively say I would like a change and I don’t that is in British working life anyway. There weren’t barriers to working — in other words one of the things I’ve got written down here — was unrestrictive vision. By that I don’t just mean having good ideas, it is about saying just because I happen to work in this division, doesn’t mean to say that I shouldn’t be interested in what’s going on there. Breadth of vision. Not only can that help with a seamless approach to the way you operate as an organisation. You can offer ideas to other parts of the patch, receive them and look for them. I suppose those are the values that I appreciate most, is where people don’t think, well, I shouldn’t comment on that, because it’s not my patch.

R.Q. What do you think has hindered you in your progress

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>250. Knowing when it is time to move on</th>
<th>Moving on</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>251. Breadth of vision.</td>
<td>Broad knowledge of the organisation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>252. Contribute ideas about other parts of the organisation.</td>
<td>Contributing ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>253. Blunt, outspoken approach.</td>
<td>Personal style</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
towards executive director?

P2. This is again a biased perspective because obviously other people would have an alternative view maybe the same view but I think I have been very blunt at times. I don’t tend to hold grudges but I tend to say my piece and I say it pretty directly and if I think a certain thing, I’ve tended to say it. Certainly in the past, not everybody has taken to it in the way it’s been meant, a) it is taken as a personal criticism but it comes that I volunteer of you so in other words the view I am trying to take, is how do we actually get this to work together to help the business even if none of it is to do with my patch and sometimes that upsets people.

R.Q. So, you are likely to offer opinions about other peoples territories?

P2. Yes, I still do but I have changed the style of doing it. As I say, canvassing opinion, trying to network more, in both private as well as business life, I try to make sure that I maintain contact with people I work with or met, professionally and socially. In the last three years, I have rung people I haven’t spoken to for 20 years and met up with them. I got to the point where I thought I am always saying I must do this, I must ring so-and-so, people leave – you say I’ll give you a ring in a couple of months but never do. I just make notes to myself that I will do that. Two reasons, one is that you can still get a lot of updated information that helps you in the job. You never know when it might be of help to you. I’ve worked hard at

| 254. Altered his personal style to include networking and canvassing opinions. | Adapting and changing personal style. |
| 255. Staying in touch with people. | Updating knowledge |
| 256. Wide net of relationships. | Managing personal profile |
| 257. Informal decision making | Tacit selection process |
| 258. Interested in constant improvement. | Personal interests and motivation. |
networking which is another valuable aid for anyone who wants to aspire to bigger positions because I suspect more decisions get made in that sort of environment than in the straightforward around the table meeting. More of the formal stuff is more rubber-stamping more often than is actually making the decisions or determining what is the right thing to do.

I have been more interested in doing the job that I have in, some respects, building the career of getting to executive director. I wanted to get to executive director to have an influence and, for a long time, I thought by doing more and more of what I was doing well better that would automatically provide opportunities. I think it does up to and including middle management. I think that the game changes when you get to the reaches of how well do they get on, who do they know, how do they influence decision making and so on. So it is the behind the scenes stuff that becomes more and more important which wasn't natural to me. I would go up and say I don't think we should do it this way anymore. These are the reasons why. I was very straightforward. I daresay it is the same for everybody who has ability, that perhaps doesn't fulfil as much as they should or as early as they should because they don't apply the ability in perhaps sometimes a skilled way.

R.Q. What did you see as the main differences between a director and a senior manager?

P2. I think you have got to be prepared to take some risks, take the
gambles. In the sense that the further up the tree you go, the less definite the result is going to be because you are making some assumptions, which are variables. The time scales further out, the longer out it is, the more variables come in as you go through. One thing you do know is that it won’t turn out exactly as you imagined it at the start and you’re forming policy, you’re forming strategy rather than deploying it or carrying it out. I’ll set strategy about competencies or trying to work on how we can develop management development.

I think that you need to try to get away from is actually just carrying out more and more of the same thing. In middle/senior management terms, it is about carrying out those things better and better. I think when you get to the senior levels, it is about doing new things. Doing things in a different way. Looking at things that you don’t know much about. How to take an initiative when there doesn’t seem to be anything there.

R.Q. How do you take initiative when there doesn’t seem to be anything there?

P2. In the sense that you can easily go into it and say I want a job evaluation package. I want to do competencies, I’ll go and get someone to put it in the program. One should, at senior levels of any organisation, be adding value, which is then about saying OK, does this actually fit how the organisation wants to be, does it do it for us, is it just a good idea that you are carrying on just purchasing off the

| 267. Shift from repeating the familiar to experimenting with the unfamiliar. |
| 268. Adding value as an executive. |
| 269. Researching changes. |
| 270. Changing the way people within the organisation think about work. |
| 271. Providing development pathways for people within the organisation. |

The nature of executive work.

The process of executive work.
shelf. I'd give competencies as an issue where when you look at competencies we went and talked to loads of companies about it, it's great as far as it went but it tended to focus simply on the behavioural stuff – it was really directed at management. If you believe that the difference between management and non-management needs to change you are sort of being the hybrid manager that takes all their doing skills up with them and you want to change them in to become managers where they are not doing but they are managing people and the processes get done rather than the cases are done in the processes. You also need a development route for those people who are then much more focused on being technically proficient and expert at providing the direct face-to-face elements to the customers and that's not where we've necessarily been. When you then start to look at the competencies to back that up, there aren't any. If a service company particularly is 90% about interaction with customers then that's surely one of the areas you need to be most closely focused. When we set about doing our competencies, is to say look I wanted to have a means of measuring and also for people to measure themselves and accumulate skill and experience from the most junior levels to the most senior. Management is a different tree, a complimentary one, but it's not one that goes into the other necessarily. It is just simply trying to say OK, it would have been easier to take a package off the shelf, the same then goes for job evaluation. If you take a job evaluation package, you will tend to say this is what the job

| 272 | Management different from technical roles. |
| 273 | Researching the most appropriate method of carrying out the work inside the organisation. |
| 274 | Moving the organisation away from the typical. |
| 275 | Executives synthesis and integrate the whole organisation. |
| 276 | Working as a co-operative group to keep a |

Hierarchy of organisational activities and the distribution of power and authority.

The nature of executive work.

Changing the organisation from within.

Working with the executive group.
evaluation scoring looks like for one of the typical jobs. If you take Wyatt's survey, which we tended to use, about IT jobs, it was taking the typical norm and saying this is typically what we score but if you are creating a non-typical environment, then you can't easily use a typical framework. We then look at the pros and cons of constructing our own.

R.Q. As an executive director, you see that as your responsibility?

P2. It is still in that direction but keeping the whole thing together, I think that the executive directors have to operate cohesively on the whole. I have responsibility for IT and client services but that can't operate if HR isn't functioning well, it can't operate if the compliance function doesn't operate well and so on. They can't work well if I can't work with them and the same with the branches. Executive Directors, I think, have got to try to keep a holistic view of direction, of policy rather than of being parochial. The further down the tree you go in management terms, I think there is another more greater element of parochialism in terms of what they do each day but not necessarily on the way they should be thinking so I think that is where I would say the difference is for me. I think that the whole structure of the way in which companies are now starting to view themselves is moving around, it went from core businesses to conglomerates and has been refocusing back to core businesses but that is not quite the same as the original core business I don't think, I think that there are synergy's, organisations working with other

277. Organisations in change.

278. Working in a changing business landscape.

279. Taking the lead.

280. Open to ideas inside and outside of your domain.

281. Developing best practice.

282. Networking, finding out, talking to people.

283. Knowledge of the wider issues affecting the

Keeping the organisation up-to-date.

The impact of the external environment on the nature of executive work.

Creating a working environment.

Broad bandwidth of knowledge.
organisations, Virgin and Marks and Spencer’s and all those sort of things but is changing the landscape quite significantly. I think, at any level but certainly for an executive director if you are going to lead an organisation forward you have got to be prepared to not say can’t and I think you have got to be prepared to be open to any ideas not just in your own domain. Benchmarking now also means that you can’t afford to be just best of breed, you have got to be best practice full stop. If we want to develop a new system, what is the point in developing a new system to the best of what might be a poor market so it is about going out and networking, finding out, talking to people.

R.Q. What do you think is important for an executive director to know?

P2. He needs to know what is going on in his marketplace, he also needs to know what’s going on in his or her company. He needs to know what is going on politically countrywide in a sense of how that political landscape change will affect the business because you have got to be planning for some eventualities, possibilities and how you might or might not take advantage of the opportunities, demographics all that sort of stuff. It doesn’t mean to say that every director has to have all the knowledge of everything but as a group you have to have a complimentary pool of knowledge.

R.Q. So an executive director isn’t operating on his/her own – they operate as a group?

P2. They will have to unless your

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>organisation.</th>
<th>Working with the executive group.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>284. Executive group as a knowledge pool.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>285. Perception of the Chairman’s role.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>286. Mainstream business is complex and diverse.</td>
<td>Beyond current knowledge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>287. National, European, international, global.</td>
<td>Working with the impact of probability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>288. Anticipating future changes.</td>
<td>Working with emerging ideas.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
chairman of your own company and then you make your own choice about that but I think that the smaller companies are perhaps less so, if you are in a niche market perhaps but if you are trying to be in the mainstream of the financial services industry, which now has elements of banking, it isn’t just life and pensions, you need to be aware of what is going on all round the place. You need to have an awareness of what is going on in France and Germany. I have to go to Paris to talk about our parent company about what their IT strategy is and what ours are. Very different levels of topic will demand varying degrees of knowledge and detail. Clearly, one needs to know your own backyard. You need to know just where that sits in a global perspective than as a technology issue. If I forget I’m IT director for the moment and a client services director, I’ve got to know what the next range of tele-servicing functionality is going to be at and who is the market leader? Who is developing interesting work? Microsoft have done a big launch but does that or doesn’t that give us opportunities and start to also say how do we take advantage of some of those new things coming along or should we ignore them.

R.Q. There is a lot of decision making about the value of new ideas as well?

P2. Yes but I think the most important thing is knowing who to ask because you can’t possibly know everything, you need to know who the people are that I can ask about these topics. It’s about contacts and networking and saying,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>289. The interrelationship of companies.</th>
<th>Evaluating new ideas.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>290. Considering the possibilities of emerging ideas.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>291. Knowing who to ask and where to get the information and opinion.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>292. Making sense of questions about business direction.</td>
<td>Sense making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>293. Developing a response to change.</td>
<td>Responding to change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>294. Keeping at the breaking edge of changes in knowledge.</td>
<td>Continue to innovate and change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>295. Able to articulate and</td>
<td>Self as a model of qualities and values and behaviour.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
OK, I can go and ring up Jo and say what have you heard about this, hear his views and it is like broad management job. But at the end of the day, you then take all that knowledge that you are trying to gain from other people into some sort of decision. Do we go onto the internet? I'm pretty sure the answer is only going to be yes, the big question is how and when because it is still forming so the Internet in some shape of form is going to be a medium for most people in the next 10 years. The big question is OK, what do we do about it now? - We'll keep an eye on it. Talk to people who are perhaps trying to use it, start to consider where that fits into the scheme of what we are currently doing and then should we start looking at it in a more detailed way and that's the time to do something about it. Do you want to be first? Even if you are not first, you want to be first among the people who know what is going on. 

R.Q. What kind of skills do you think an executive director needs to have?

P2. It helps if you are articulate both in understanding and communicating out. You are always an advert for your company as well as yourself and that also means you are an advert for the people you work with as well as long aside you. You are setting an example so you have got to have determination. One needs to be seen to be straight dealing, honest, even when you are not telling all. That is one of the hardest things to learn is that sometimes you can't be... there have been sometimes when you know there is a

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>R.Q.</th>
<th>P2. It helps if you are articulate both in understanding and communicating out. You are always an advert for your company as well as yourself and that also means you are an advert for the people you work with as well as long aside you. You are setting an example so you have got to have determination. One needs to be seen to be straight dealing, honest, even when you are not telling all. That is one of the hardest things to learn is that sometimes you can’t be... there have been sometimes when you know there is a</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R.Q.</td>
<td>communicate with other people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R.Q.</td>
<td>296. Integrity and honesty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R.Q.</td>
<td>Maintaining information boundaries in uncertain situations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R.Q.</td>
<td>298. Damage limitation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R.Q.</td>
<td>Politically astute.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R.Q.</td>
<td>299. Coherent prudence when conveying information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R.Q.</td>
<td>300. Understanding the business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R.Q.</td>
<td>Executive skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R.Q.</td>
<td>301. Regard for people as human beings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R.Q.</td>
<td>Regard for the rights of other people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R.Q.</td>
<td>302. Belief in what you as a leader is doing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R.Q.</td>
<td>Self belief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R.Q.</td>
<td>303. Prepared to get muddy and dirty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R.Q.</td>
<td>Executive leadership</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

286
redundancy and somebody says to you ‘are there going to be redundancies?’, you don’t turn round and say yes even if that is the honest answer. A) you may not know how many and b) you don’t know what area it will affect. I don’t want to say no when I know there are but by the same token unless I have got a coherent and thought through response then you can create more damage than being honest would necessarily achieve. You have to be careful with what you say, you have to be prudent.

Skills go on and on when I think about it. Obviously have an understanding of the business you are in. You don’t have to be an expert. I think most times you are responsible for a lot of people so you have to have a regard for people’s rights and decency is also important. I am not sure everybody believes that but they are mine. It is difficult to be a leader if you don’t believe in what you’re leadinG. It doesn’t mean that people won’t follow you for a variety of reasons. You have to have belief in the work that you are doinG. I’m one of those people who want to operate on the basis that I wouldn’t want to ask people to do things I wouldn’t be prepared to do myself. It doesn’t mean to say I can do them myself but if it is to get muddy or dirty or whatever it is, why would I expect somebody else to do that willingly if I wouldn’t be prepared to do it. I think at that level you are the top of the organisation, therefore you have got to be leadinG.

R.Q. What do you think leadership qualities are about?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>304. Leading by example.</th>
<th>305. Envisioning an organisational direction.</th>
<th>306. Influencing people to accept the vision.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self as a model for other people.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>307. Creating a belief in the authority of the executives.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>308. Evaluating and respondinG.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>309. Establishing meaning regarding the separation process.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>310. Relationships at work are different to personal relationships outside of work.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The nature of relationships with the executives?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

287
P2. There are about setting a vision, enabling people to have a belief in you and in what you are setting out and sometimes they will often carry you through even when they are not sure that you are right. You can argue whether or not people like Churchill were great leaders but certainly people followed him even when they weren’t sure that we were going to win. I think that people also want to believe that they are following somebody who has got something about them, personality perhaps or character is probably a better word. If they make a different decision, they are doing it for the right reasons, that there is not a side to the individual. In the past I have had to fire people not because they were horrible people and weren’t trying hard but they just weren’t up to the job or weren’t suited to the job they were then doing. I’ve often had those self-same people say that was the right thing to do and I am much happier but I couldn’t face it myself at the time. At least it was seen that I wasn’t making it because I didn’t get on with them. It is nice to be able to get on with people and like them and be friends with them but very often the only reason you know people at work is because you are there working with them and great teams are necessarily great buddies all the time but they have a respect for each other and a respect for each others abilities and they are supportive in that sense. It is about doing all those things.

R.Q. How did you acquire the knowledge you required?

| 311. Respect for each other’s abilities. | Learning through experience and personal decisions. |
| 312. Experience and luck |  |
| 313. Developing contacts and establishing a social network. |  |
| 314. Broad experience of the whole organisation in a relatively short period of time. | Broad organisational experience. |
| 315. Visible to the executive group. | Exposure to the executive group. |
P2. Experience mostly. I was very lucky, the biggest bit of luck I had was firstly, when I decided to join AN Life straight from school because my friends were going there and at the time there was about 450,000 unemployed so jobs were easy to get hold of anyway. That’s when I met Jo J. Then when W and J started HAL two years later, I rang Jo and said I wanted a job in the new company and I got the job. I was fortunate enough to start with a very successful organisation right at the very beginning. Because it was so small, I had an opportunity to do almost every job so I did new business, I did claims, I did servicing, I did design and processes, I did training, I did pensions, I did life products whereas normally it would take you 10 years to get through all that. I also had the opportunity, because it was a small company, not only was the breadth relevant but also the depth in that I would have conversations with Jo about policy on claims or why we should or shouldn’t decline a claimant and all sort of issues. Meeting a board director of their calibre, you don’t often meet when you’re 20, that was my second stroke of luck.

My third was actually the opportunity to come here which represented a completely different set of problems for me to hack. At D, we had the opportunity to do what we couldn’t do at AN. AN started early 60’s and put together it’s processes and didn’t computerise until the early 70’s so it already had a whole legacy of problems. When we started at D, we built from a clean sheet of paper with computers at the outset, with

| 316. Experience of implementing new technologies. |
| Keeping up to date. |
| 317. Uncovering gaps in organisational knowledge. |
| Developing an understanding of how the organisation operates. |
| 318. Political sensitivity. |
| Maintaining order and structure. |
| 319 Preventing havoc and chaos. |
| Preserving organisational information boundaries. |
| 320. Keeping secrets about what is happening. |
| Role model effect. |
| 321. Good role models |
| 322. Need people who support and believe in you. |
computers in mind so you didn’t have the same issues. Some of the issues that I face when I came here, I never had to really worry about.

R.Q. What were they?

P2. Well simply that the records just weren’t there. People didn’t know that things weren’t being done. For example, I had been here three months and I found out by accident that when we cancelled old policies we were not recovering commission and nobody knew. The company was out of pocket. We then had to put a project and program together to deal with that and deal with it in a politically sensitive way. There are a whole range of issues. Doing things straight forward and honestly would be writing a memo round to everybody and say sorry we’re having these problems but this is what we are doing to deal with it but that would have created havoc at the time. We then had to work behind the scenes with the right people to keep it confidential and to actually process it through in a phased way. I was an associate director at this point. I have learnt a lot from Bob. He is very good at handling diplomacy and the political niceties and the canvassing behind the scenes stuff. I’ve been lucky throughout my career to have good role models and that is one of the things I had down here. You always need someone who believes in you and with D it is people like Jo and Bob here. People who look for the best in you rather than always focusing on what you haven’t done well. Someone who supports you and is prepared to share their knowledge and experience. You can do it without that but I think it is

| 323. Risks of trying out new things. | Taking risks |
| 324. Obtaining information about the right thing to do. | Judging what is right. |
| 325. Opportunities and the freedom to work with a wide range of people. | |
| 326. Learning from experience supported by organised training programmes. | Relationship between learning from experience and organised training. |
| 327. Learning to work with other people. | Evaluating outcomes. |
| 328. Right results | |
| 329. Larger organisations have more | |

290
a help, particularly if you are going to make decisions and do new things where there is an element of risk, you want someone there that is let you fall over and skin your knees. Sometimes, will counsel you, tell you when something is not the right thing to do. Having a bit of sponsorship is important.

I have had opportunity to work with brokers, direct salespeople and direct business and have had a large amount of freedom in order to get involved in those things.

R.Q. How did you acquire the necessary skills? (but you might have answered that?)

P2. Partly through working with those people and also that D had excellent training programmes which went from time management through to transactional analysis. I am not an expert in those things but I understand them a lot more. These were formal processes which I was encouraged to go through. Facilitating on some of them so you learn those other skills such as working with a group of people, trying to get them to work out for themselves which is giving feedback, taking feedback – am I really happy with what I’ve done? Getting a result isn’t necessarily the only thing that counts. Making sure that next time we get it right is an important thing to learn because one of the things about this company has been, in the past, lots of energy, lots of attack, very action orientated and has got there but sometimes by a lot of luck and stuff. We’ve got there just but the bigger you get the more
complicated those processes become, the more likely you are going to fall over. D was a bit like that really because it started to focus heavily on the need for planning and good planning and organised planning not just thinking, 'well, what am I going to do?'

R.Q. Which ways do you currently use to maintain and update your knowledge base?

P2. I still spend a lot of time with people that report into me, particularly IT, because that is the area I have least knowledge in but it isn’t to become technically proficient in writing programs – I haven’t got a clue really but it is essentially to understand what they mean by things, what are the risks, what are the opportunities, how they might explore certain things so I spent a lot of time still finding out what’s going on and still wanting to be involved in the debating process about how we might move things on. Certainly organisationally, certainly in terms of goods and services that we might to argue about supplying – is this a good standard or not? Also, continuing to network and read, and seminars. I have got a very good network in the industry. What I want to do next is actually work harder on expanding my knowledge outside of the financial services industry into other areas.

R.Q. How are you going to do that?

P2. Not sure yet. One way forward for me is to use DTI which is inside UK Enterprise which we are a member of, where we go into other companies in other sectors,
manufacturing etc. I want to go and see Rover and F knows people at Rover. Because of their working practices, I am quite intrigued how they have been able to offer guaranteed no redundancy scenario. What they offer, as I understand it, is that if you come up with the idea to improve something that results in you losing your job, you will not be made redundant, you will be redeployed elsewhere. That is quite a nice development I would like to go and see more of.

I go to workshops at M&G seminars (Mercantile and General Reinsurance). I go to the London Insurance Club and they talk about a range of issues, the Internet through to government changing and implications. I keep contact with Mark and talk about what is going in certain places, particularly in the HR area of learning and learning techniques so I find that quite helpful.

R.Q. How do you maintain and update your skill levels on your knowledge base?

P2. Maintaining them is about continuing to do them. Sit down and work down what the budgets and forecasts are going to be and what I think the risks are but as an area that we need to work more on as a group, I think often executive directors get there and then stop thinking about how they should formally develop and add to skills. I think that is the greatest area of weakness because I think if more executive directors spent more time trying to do that they would appreciate more of it and provide more of it lower down.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>R.Q. Is that an area you feel you yourself need to do more of?</th>
<th>345. Tension between following areas of interest and the work focus.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P2. Yes. It is one of those areas where you are under constant pressures - the formalised side of training is the first thing to go so you try to do it on the cheap. When I can (and I get loads of stuff through the post anyway), I go along to things to see how they go.</td>
<td>346. Ideas combine into Solving organisational problems and issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R.Q. How do you notice when it is necessary for you to learn something?</td>
<td>347. Personal Following personal interest in relationships and conflict management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2. Two areas. One is when you definitely know beforehand when you don’t know enough about something – I don’t know enough about computers so I then must go and find out how I can switch the machine on. Learning a bit more about disk space, what’s IBM. That is about having meetings with people who have got the knowledge and getting them to explain to me why is this important. For example, last summer we had a problem with the computers because the CPU couldn’t cope and the system overheated and then I got involved with working with the CPU, they weren’t big enough to scale up so I then had to get involved in the technicalities with working with people and had to decided whether or not we should upgrade etc so that is an obvious awareness thinG. If you are going to sign off a couple of hundred thousand quid’s worth of kit, then you need to have a reasonable understanding that not all these guys know what they are talking about technically but is there any other way of doing this?</td>
<td>348. What is the future going to look like?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>349. Use of</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The second thing is picking up on areas of interest, a documentary on TV or something you read in the paper and industry press and saying who do I know that might know a bit more about that, then trying to look out for some seminars or go and see a company or somebody I know and learn a bit more from that.

R.Q. It sounds like you are constantly on the lookout for things?

P2. I am. I get criticised for that sometimes. Sometimes you have got to keep your eye on the ball and it is a valid criticism. I am trying to look out there a bit more and occasionally my focus does drift particularly if you find something you get preoccupied with. Occasionally, that's what you need colleagues for, both below and alongside. Yes, I am constantly on the lookout for that. I am interested by the fact that ideas beget ideas. Very rarely do you get a solution that is just there, a solution is often a collection of putting together a series of ideas - either one building on another or that idea, this idea works together and suddenly you get the solution which is a number of the two but not necessarily the total. I like areas of interest both on TV or whatever where those sort of things can happen.

R.Q. What sort of programmes are you talking about?

P2. Well, I went with Mr Goldrat to a seminar, he wrote a book called The Goal. I paid for me and my wife to go to a seminar he gave in Birmingham, just for an evening out and this particular one was the next stage on about relationships and

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>350. Listening to what other people think about issues.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>351. Personal commitment to development.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>352. Importance of self belief.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>353. Ways of getting to the executive position.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>354. Worked hard to get there</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Arriving at the executive position

Self-belief.
how you could do more to cut... it's a bit like an extension of TA but it was about how you could turn issues in relationships round to make them more productive rather than the other way round and it is a form of contracting in the end. Like most of these things it is about recognising the signs and symptoms so whether it is Ken Blanchard and listening to situational tapes, it is about getting enough of those issues together, hang on a minute that's what happening now and this is what's causing it. From a non-relationships issue, I am interested in seeing OK, what is technology going to do for us, where is tele-servicing going? There are some things that I don't think I can justify and if I don't feel I can directly justify it and I'm interested them I'll take a day off and go and see that. I am naturally nosy in ideas and theories. There are much cleverer people than me around so I am quite interested to see what they make of some aspects. Sometimes you can say I don't make sense of what's going on, that's what I am trying to do and it reinforces some of the ideas you have. It is surprising how many rehashed ideas there are around the world.

Overall, apart from all of that, self development is important. I sat down with Mark and said these are the things that I want to do and these are the areas I want to get better in and how can I find out a bit more about understanding balance sheets because I'm not an accountant. We talked about how we might go about doing that and I worked out a mini programme for myself and I did the programme. I
believe now that I have done that bit, there are some areas where I want to take them a lot further, I realise, like a lot of things, you suddenly realise you are consciously incompetent so you get into that sort of cycle. Underneath it all any successful person has got to have self-belief that not only do they want to but they believe they can get there. Some people get there because they are incredibly clever or they are gifted. Other people will get there through sheer hard work but you have to believe you are going to get there. I put myself in the latter category, I have to work hard in order to achieve [end of tape].
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Title and Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barber P</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>“The Practitioner Researcher: An educational approach to the facilitation of social inquiry within groups and organisations.” Module 9: MSc in Management Consultancy, University of Surrey School of Educational Studies,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barry R</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>“The One Thousand: The men and women who command the heights of the UK’s economy.” University of Warwick The Institute of Employment Research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baumard P</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>“Tacit knowledge in organizations.” Sage Publications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Title</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boydell T.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Editors)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cadbury A</td>
<td>1993a</td>
<td>“The code of best practice on corporate governance”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cadbury A</td>
<td>1993b</td>
<td>“Corporate Governance”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Title</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chenitz W C</td>
<td>1986</td>
<td>“The informal Interview.” Chapter 7 in Chenitz &amp; Swanson <em>From practice to grounded theory: qualitative research in nursing.</em> Addison-Wesley Publishing Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chenitz W C</td>
<td>1986</td>
<td>“Getting Started: The research proposal for a grounded theory study.” Chapter 4 of Chenitz &amp; Swanson (1986) <em>From Practice to Grounded Theory. Qualitative research in nursing.</em> Addison-Wesley Publishing Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chenitz W &amp; Swanson J</td>
<td>1986</td>
<td>“From Practice to Grounded Theory. Qualitative research in nursing.” Addison-Wesley Publishing Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clutterbuck D &amp; Megginson D</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>“Mentoring executives &amp; Directors.” Butterworth Heinemann</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Title</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

301
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;The Changing Nature of Employment: How Self-Employed HR Professionals Manage Their Lives,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evans C</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>&quot;Managing For Knowledge, HR's Strategic Role.&quot;</td>
<td>Butterworth Heinemann</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fagerhaugh A Y</td>
<td>1986</td>
<td>&quot;Analysing data for Basic social processes.&quot; Chapter 11 in Chenitz &amp; Swanson (1986)</td>
<td>&quot;From Practice to Grounded Theory: qualitative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;research in nursing.&quot; Addison-Wesley Publishing Company</td>
<td>research in nursing.&quot; Addison-Wesley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sociology Press</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finger M &amp;</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>&quot;The concept of the 'learning organisation' applied to the transformation of the public</td>
<td>&quot;Organisational Learning and the learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Burgoyne &amp; Araujo (Editors) (1999)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freiré P</td>
<td>1972</td>
<td>&quot;Pedagogy of the Oppressed.&quot; Pelican Books</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garratt B</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>&quot;The Fish Rots from the Head. The crisis in our Boardrooms: Developing the Crucial Skills</td>
<td>Harper Collins Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>of the competent Director.&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gergen K J 1999  "An invitation to social construction" Sage Publications


Glaser B 1968  "Organizational Careers: A sourcebook for theory." Aldine Publishing Company


Gregory J 1994  "A Grounded Theory Study of the Education of Hospital Nurses: How Education for Interpersonal Relating Influences the way Nurses Relate to each other in the College and on the Ward." Thesis presented to the University of Surrey in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Gregory J Lee A 2000 “Grounded Theory in Educational & Social Science Research.” Distance Learning materials. Research Methods Programme. School of Educational Studies. University of Surrey


Hertz & Imber (Editors) 1995 “Studying Elites using Qualitative Methods.” A Sage Focus Edition


Institute of Directors 1997 Notice of Special General Meeting Wednesday 26th November 1997

Jarvis P 1983a “Adult and Continuing Education. Theory and practice.” Croom Helm

Jarvis P 1983b “Professional Education.” London Croom Helm

304
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Publisher/Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lammiman J &amp; Syrett M</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>&quot;Inside the mind of the Visionary Board.&quot;</td>
<td>Roffey Park Institute Horsham West Sussex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guba E</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lindon-Travers K</td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>“Non-Executive Directors.” A guide to their role, responsibilities and appointment. Published in association with the Institute of Directors. Director Books.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marinoff L</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>“The big questions: therapy for the sane or how philosophy can change your life.”</td>
<td>Bloomsbury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Reference</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mumford A, Robinson G &amp; Stradling D</td>
<td>1987</td>
<td>“Developing Directors. The Learning Processes.” Published by The Manpower Services Commission Moorfoot, Sheffield</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parkin F</td>
<td>1979</td>
<td>“Marxism and class theory: a bourgeois critique.” London Tavistock</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Publisher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pettigrew A (Editor)</td>
<td>1988</td>
<td>&quot;Competitiveness and the management process.&quot;</td>
<td>Basil Blackwell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authors</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Location and Publisher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Publisher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simms J</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>&quot;Gender Blenders: If women want to improve their standing in the workplace then they need to be more male in their approach.&quot; Director. November 2003 p29</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stones (editor)</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>“Key Sociological Thinkers” Palgrave Press</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swanson J M</td>
<td>1986</td>
<td>“The formal qualitative interview for grounded theory.” Chapter 6 in Chenitz &amp; Swanson “From practice to grounded theory: qualitative research in nursing.” Addison-Wesley Publishing Company</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

310
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Source/Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thomas R</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>“Interviewing Important People in Big Companies.” Chapter 1 in Hertz &amp; Imber</td>
<td>Studying Elites using Qualitative Methods, A Sage Focus Edition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Useem M</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>“Reaching Corporate Executives.” Chapter 2 in Hertz &amp; Imber</td>
<td>Studying Elites using Qualitative Methods, A Sage Focus Edition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Title and Details</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Witz A</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>“Professions &amp; patriarchy.” London Routledge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watier P</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>“George Simmel” Chapter 5 in Stones (editor) “Key Sociological Thinkers” Palgrave Press</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>