

THE RELATIONAL REALISATION OF POLICY IN PRACTICE:
Negotiating a narrative community of race, gender and other privileged identities

Proefschrift ter verkrijging van de graad van doctor aan de Universiteit van Tilburg, op gezag van de rector magnificus, prof. dr. F. A. van der Duyn Schouten, in het openbaar te verdedigen ten overstaan van een door het college voor promoties aangewezen commissie in de Ruth First zaal van de Universiteit op dinsdag 6 juni 2006 om 10:15 uur

door
Myra Lee Dosia Virgil
geboren op 29 augustus 1969 te Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

Promotores:
Prof. dr. John B. Rijsman
Prof. dr. Mary Gergen

With appreciation to the Taos Institute and Dr. Ken Gergen
and dedicated

To Marc, a foundation and
Hailey and Madison, the motivation.

To Colm McNamee, Julia Pare, and Hoda Choueri, who set the stage and to
The second influential Julia (Krane), Linda Davies, and Kara Joyner, who set the standard.
To Prue Rains who may not know that to me, she is the articulation of courage and grace.

To Bev Morfitt who brought me “in” and to
Brenda Dale, who kept me “in” and helped me “up”,
And to special friends whose roles can’t be defined.

SUMMARY

The ‘relational realisation’ of practice in policy: aligning practice with policy

This study inquires into the relationship between policy and practice within a large organisation. The study begins with an overview of civil service work and the ways in which policy and practice can be misaligned. In Chapter 1, I propose that the potential for better policy/practice alignment can occur within at least four spheres of organisational interaction: relational networks; reflections of the organisation’s culture; statements on policy; and of best practice. These spheres are characterised by the degree, tone and content of communications amongst organisational participants. Organisational participants communicate their varied experiences in both *privileged* and *professional* ways; the two of which differ by context and degree of disclosure. Privileged narratives are typically detailed in content and are disclosed amongst a select and trusted few. Professional narratives are more likely to be tempered by expectations of some degree of public consumption. A model that describes these aspects of organisational discourse is presented.

These spheres of interaction are referred to as *elements of a discourse community*. Discourse, as a consequence, is regarded as both produced by and a product of people relating to each other. The discourse community is a creation of the people who participate in organisational life. Organisational participation, as such, is described as the content of, and extent to which people communicate their experiences. It is the “talk” of an organisation that comprises its unique structures, language, assumptions, culture, policy and procedural frameworks.

Social constructionism is presented in Chapter 2, as the study’s overarching theoretical framework, and is a perspective from which it is understood that people’s accounts are framed within their social networks. These accounts represent unique snapshots of coordinated social relations. In the absence of these relationships and social frameworks, there is no experience for which to account. These accounts are infused with understandings of identity.

Bermuda Government employees, from a wide range of civil service sectors, participated in the study. Study participants were invited to dialogue on their privileged and professional perspectives as members

of different racial groups, genders and other self-identified constructions of identity. *Appreciative Inquiry (AI)* became the basis for the study’s methods. This approach, based on social constructionist ideas, and described in Chapters 2 and 3, is a revitalising organisational development and strategy tool. Story telling or narrative, drawing on positive experiences, and centralising the notion of new understandings being jointly created are components of AI. Emphasising the value of narrative activity, participants were also asked to produce stories about their workplace with regard to relationships, policy and practice. Detailed in Chapter 4, study participants’ stories reflected their own identities, and that of their experiences in relation to other organisational participants. These dialogues (inquiries) were understood to be situated within a jointly-constructed organisational culture and in relation to the mission statement of the organisation.

The findings from the inquiry (Ch. 4) are organised into three sections: the potential for alignment amongst the four narrative spheres of an organisation; perspectives on identity; and offerings on the use of *Appreciative Inquiry* methods for research. The findings suggest that the interplay between organisational practice, policy and people’s diverse relational experiences is blurred by the language and notions of what are perceived as best practices. Chapter 5 discusses how, consequently and in a cyclical way, the narratives of working relationships and practical decisions represent people’s core beliefs about race, gender and social class. However, I argue that these narratives may compromise the ethical and moral underpinnings of the organisation. Ultimately, participants offered insights as to how to create opportunities for better alignment between policy ideals and local practices.

The study’s conclusion (Ch. 6) highlights the tensions between the “professional culture” of the workplace and a competing “privileged reality” representing how and what decisions are made. There are some considerations for the possibilities for moving policy and practice narratives together. Ideally, this movement might dictate that policies better reflect the voices of the people who enact and live them, and that privileged and professional discourse is in ultimate and practical alignment with best practice theory.

Samenvatting

De ‘relationele verwezenlijking’ van de praktijk in het beleid: het op elkaar afstemmen van praktijk en beleid.

Deze studie onderzoekt de relatie tussen beleid en praktijk in een grote organisatie. De studie begint met een overzicht van het werk in de burgerlijke diensten en de manieren waarop beleid en praktijk niet goed op elkaar afgestemd kunnen zijn. In Hoofdstuk 1 stel ik voor dat de mogelijkheden voor een betere afstemming tussen beleid en praktijk zich in minstens vier sferen van de organisationele interactie kunnen voordoen, dat is in de relationele netwerken, in de weerspiegelingen van de organisationele cultuur, in uitspraken over beleid, en in de beste manieren van doen (best practices). Deze sferen laten zich karakteriseren in termen van de hoeveelheid, toonzetting en inhoud van de communicatie tussen de verschillende deelnemers aan de organisatie. Deze deelnemers communiceren hun uiteenlopende ervaringen zowel op *geprivilegieerde* als op *professionele* wijze, wat neerkomt op een verschil in context en hoeveelheid van onthulling. Geprivilegieerde verhalen zijn meestal gedetailleerder qua inhoud en worden in de regel slechts onthuld voor een select gezelschap van mensen waar men vertrouwen in heeft. Van professionele verhalen daarentegen mogen we aannemen dat ze enigszins zullen worden getemperd door de verwachting dat ze ook in de publieke sfeer zullen worden gebruikt. We presenteren een model waarin deze twee aspecten van de organisationele discours worden beschreven.

De genoemde sferen van de interactie worden aangeduid als de *elementen van de gemeenschap van de discours*. Een discours wordt opgevat als zowel de productie als het product van mensen die met elkaar omgaan. De gemeenschap van de discours komt voort uit de mensen die deelnemen aan het leven in de organisatie. Deelname aan de organisatie wordt zo beschreven als de inhoud van en de mate waarin mensen hun ervaringen met elkaar communiceren. Het is deze “manier van spreken” van een organisatie die neerkomt op haar unieke structuur, haar taal, haar onderstellingen, cultuur, beleid en procedurale kaders.

In hoofdstuk 2 wordt het Sociaal Constructionisme voorgesteld als het overkoepelend theoretisch kader van deze studie, als het perspectief waarin wordt begrepen dat het relaas van mensen voortkomt uit het netwerk van hun relaties. Elk relaas vertegenwoordigt een unieke momentopname van gecoördineerde sociale relaties. Zonder deze relaties en sociale kaders is er geen ervaring die vraagt om een relaas. Elk relaas is doordrongen van opvattingen over elkaars identiteit.

Werknemers uit een groot aantal burgerlijke diensten van het Bestuur van Bermuda namen deel aan deze studie. Zij werden gevraagd om dialogen te voeren over hun geprivilegieerde en professionele perspectieven als leden van verschillende raciale groepen, geslacht, en daarnaast ook nog zelfgekozen constructies van hun identiteit. De basis van de gebruikte methodes in dit onderzoek is het zogenaamd Waarderend Onderzoek, of *Appreciative Inquiry* (AI). Deze benadering, die wordt beschreven in Hoofdstuk 2 en 3, komt voort uit de sociaal constructionistische manier van denken, en is een revitaliserende manier van organisationele ontwikkeling en een strategisch instrument. Het vertellen van verhalen, voortbouwen op positieve ervaringen, en het centraal stellen van nieuwe manieren van begrijpen die gezamenlijk worden gecreëerd zijn onderdelen van AI. Vanuit deze nadruk op het vertellen van verhalen werden de deelnemers uitgenodigd om verhalen te produceren over hun werkplek met betrekking tot relaties, beleid en praktijk. Zoals gedetailleerd wordt beschreven in Hoofdstuk 4, kunnen we zeggen dat de verhalen van de deelnemers een weerspiegeling zijn van hun eigen identiteiten, van hun ervaringen in relatie tot andere deelnemers aan de organisatie. Deze dialogen (of manieren van bevragen) moeten worden begrepen als gesitueerd in een samen geconstrueerde organisationele cultuur en in relatie tot de uitgesproken missie van de organisatie.

De resultaten van de bevraging (Hoofdstuk 4) worden ingedeeld in drie delen: wat is het potentieel voor het op elkaar afstemmen van de vier narratieve sferen van de organisatie; wat zijn de perspectieven op de identiteit; en welke vruchten levert het op voor het gebruik van AI als methode van onderzoek. De resultaten suggereren dat het samenspel tussen de feitelijke praktijk in de organisatie, het beleid, en de uiteenlopende relationele ervaringen van mensen wordt verstoord door de taal en de opvatting over hoe wordt aangekeken naar *best practices*. In Hoofdstuk 5 bespreken we op een opeenvolgende en cyclische manier hoe verhalen over werkrelaties en praktische besluiten eigenlijk de kernvisies van mensen op ras, geslacht en sociale klasse weergeven. Echter, ik betoog dat deze verhalen de ethische en morele steunpilaren van een organisatie zouden kunnen vormen. Tenslotte boden de deelnemers ons ook inzicht in welke mogelijkheden er zijn voor een betere afstemming tussen beleidsidealen en de lokale praktijk.

In de conclusie van de studie (Hoofdstuk 6) wordt de nadruk gelegd op de spanning die er bestaat tussen de “professionele cultuur” van de werkplek en de rivaliserende “geprivilegieerde werkelijkheids” voorstelling van welke beslissingen er worden genomen. We formuleren ook enkele bedenkingen over mogelijkheden om de beleidsverhalen en praktijkverhalen dichter tot elkaar te brengen. Ideaal gezien komen deze mogelijkheden erop neer dat het beleid de stem van de mensen die het beleid leven en uitvoeren beter moet weergeven, en dat zowel de geprivilegieerde als de professionele discours in uiteindelijke en praktische zin moeten afgestemd zijn op de theorie van de beste praktijken.

Table of Contents

PROLOGUE	1
<i>i. Family Preservation</i>	3
<i>ii. Training Day</i>	4
<i>iii. Cosby Gives It Straight</i>	5
<i>iv. The possibility of enhanced relational narratives</i>	6
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION	8
1.1. The Approach to this Study	8
1.2. Background	9
1.3. The problem: speaking of privileged experiences in the professional world	10
Figure 1	14
1.4. Socially constructed realities and the discourses of privilege and professionalism	15
Box 1	15
1.4.1. The misalignment of discourse on race, gender and class	17
1.5 Scope of Inquiry	18
1.5.1. The Overarching Questions	18
1.5.2. Study Objectives	18
CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	19
2.1. The Social Constructionist Paradigm	20
2.1.1. On the treatment and acquisition of knowledge	20
2.1.1a. “Reality” is created through social interaction	20
2.1.1b. Meaning is a product of social agents; facts are dependent upon language communities	21
2.1.1c. People generate their truths from the languages available to them	21
2.1.1d. Communicative and relational activity is a primary unit of study	22
2.2. Constructing knowledge in communities	23
2.3. On Language and Discourse (What creates meaning)	24
2.4. Power, relationships and participation	28
2.5. Narrating Social Constructionism into Theories on Organisational Life	30
2.5.1. Social Constructionist Research Methods	32
2.5.2. Social constructionism and perspectives on racial diversity	33
2.5.3. Social constructionism on race	37
2.5.4. Social constructionism on gender relations	42
2.5.4a. Gender Relations in Organisation	43
2.5.5. Social constructionism on 'social class' and other socio-economic constitutions	45
2.6. Moving Privilege: From Social Constructionism to Narrative Representations and Activities	46

2.6.1. An explanation of narrative	46
2.6.2. Drawing from and encouraging narrative in multiple contexts	47
Box 2	48
2.6.3. Narrative in the context of organisations	49
2.7. Relational issues in organisational behavior	51
2.7.1. Incorporating the political into relational narratives	52
2.7.2. Transforming organisational behavior through relationship and dialogue	52
2.7.3. Possibilities for transformative dialogue in shifting the relational experience	54
2.8. Appreciative inquiry: the application of social constructionism, narrative and transformative dialogue in practice	57
Table 1	57
Box 3	59
2.9. Applying Appreciative Methods to Research	61
2.10. An Appreciative Approach to Narrative Exploration	63
2.10.1. Methodological considerations for an appreciative application	63
Box 4	63
2.10.2. Taking action with AI	64
2.10.3. Appreciative inquiry and narrative on race, gender and class-based issues in relationship	66
2.11. Appreciative inquiry on organisational life: the challenge for practice in theory	67
2.12. Relational Enterprises and the Role of Narrative	68
2.12.1. The conversations that matter: the extension of AI to narratives on identity	69
2.12.2. Policy in People, people in policy: exploring the space where narratives diverge	69
2.13. The concern for integrating policy, theory and practice	70
2.13.1. Constructed narratives of best practice, policy, organisational culture and relational interactions	71
2.13.2. From ambiguity to clarity in moving theory into practice?	72
2.13.3. Aligning meaning with action	73
2.13.4. From the meanings of theory for practice to meanings in organisational narratives	74
Box 4a	75
2.14. Civil Service Narrative: Complex Contexts	77
Box 5	78
2.14.1. Civil service roles in relationship	79
2.14.2. The challenge of role alignment	79
2.14.3. Constructing ‘roles from roles’ and ‘relationships from relationships’	81
2.15. Relational interactions and organisational culture meet policy and politics: the pull of ethics, responsibility, freedom of choice and governance	82
2.15.1. Identity politics and governance	85
2.16. Governance in Bermuda: A civil service lesson in identity (role) politics	86
Box 6	86
Box 7	88
Box 8	88
2.16.1. Good governance and a Mission	89
Box 9	90
Box 10	90
Box 11	91
2.16.2. Reconstructing organisational mission and mandate: The case of the Department of Human Resources	91

Box 12	92
2.17. Shared understandings and discourse analysis as models for conducting interviews and facilitating other interventions	93
Box 13	93
Box 14	94
2.17.1. Discourse and narrative analysis	95
2.18. Summation of Literature Review	97
2.19. Summation of Objectives of Review of Literature	106
2.19.1. Moving from the Substantive Frameworks to Inquiry	106
2.19.2. Anticipated outcomes from Areas of Inquiry	107
2.19.3. Discussing the Findings	107
CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY: ACCESSING PRIVILEGED AND PROFESSIONAL NARRATIVES	109
3.1. The Method: Exploring Participant Narratives and Conditions for Continuing a Conversation	109
3.1.1. The strategic methodological questions	109
3.1.2. Methodological Processes and Procedures: Identifying and Engaging Study Participants	110
3.1.2a. Part 1: Workshop feedback on approaches to appreciative research	110
Box 15	111
3.1.2b. Part 2: Needs Assessment	112
Table 2	113
Box 16	113
Box 17	114
3.1.2c. Part 3: Facilitated Dialogue Training session	115
Table 3	115
Box 18	117
Box 19	118
Box 20	119
3.1.2d. Part 4: Dialogic Training session	120
Table 4	120
3.1.2e. Part 5: Participant selection for interviews	121
Table 5	123
3.1.2e.i. Quantity and quality of interviews.	124
3.1.2e.ii. Interview Procedure.	124
3.1.2e.iii. Crafting the interview protocol through an appreciative paradigm.	125
3.2. Working with the data	127
3.3. A Note On Reflexivity, Social Location and the Relationship of the Researcher to Participants	127
3.3.1. Reflexivity and social location	128
3.3.2. Why do this study	129
3.4. Summary of Methodological Considerations	130
CHAPTER IV: ALIGNING THE CIVIL SERVICE'S NARRATIVES AMONGST THE FOUR NARRATIVE SPHERES	131
SECTION 1: POTENTIAL FOR ALIGNMENT	131

4.1. Relational Networks	132
4.1.1. Amongst Relational Networks and Organisational Culture	132
4.1.1a. Building alliances in organisational culture requires a relational shift of understanding, acceptance and increased communication.	133
4.1.1b. Good relational experiences and good work make for good organisational culture.	136
4.1.2. Amongst Relational Networks and 'Policy' Development and Application	137
4.1.2a. Policy that speaks to the personal.	137
4.1.2b. Policy that marries theory and practice- what is experienced is “alive” within the policy and policy ideals.	139
4.1.2c. Participants’ relational wishes are addressed.	140
4.1.3. Amongst Relational Networks and Narrative Activities of Best Practice	141
4.1.3a. Individual achievements are relational achievements and enhance the greater good.	141
4.1.3b. Enhancing the relational tone of practice- refocusing on people.	142
4.2. Organisational Culture: Policy and Practice	143
4.2.1. Amongst the discourse of Organisational Culture and Policy Development and Application Activities	144
4.2.2. Amongst the narrative activity of Organisational Culture and “Best Practice”	145
4.3. Policy	147
4.3.1. Aligning ‘Policy’ with ‘Best Practice’	147
4.3.2. Figuring out exactly what we do... .	147
4.4. Section Summary	149
 SECTION II: CIVIL SERVANTS SENTIMENTS ON EXPERIENCE:	 152
4.5. Constructions of identity	152
4.5.1. Race	152
4.5.2. Class	153
4.5.3. Gender	153
4.5.4. Beyond Traditional Understandings of Identity	153
4.5.4a. Race, class and more	154
4.5.4b. Behaviour and Lifestyle as Constructions of Identity	154
4.6. Section Summary	156
4.7. Consequences of situated and complex meanings of identity: fluid centrality in the construction of identities	156
4.7.1 Moving past identity constructions to reflexive and privileged organisational participation	158
<i>4.7.1a. Transcending difference.</i>	158
<i>4.7.1b. Connectivity and reflexiveness.</i>	159
<i>4.7.1c. A spirit of acceptance.</i>	160
<i>4.7.1d. Extending hope, taking risks and becoming empathetic.</i>	161
<i>4.7.1e. Communicating mission-related activities.</i>	163
4.8. Section Summary	163
4.9. Offerings on the Inquiry Process: Appreciative Inquiry Versus More Traditional Methods of Research	165
4.9.1. Accessing the ‘Best’ of Experiences and Positive Reframing	165
4.9.2 Promoting Narrative Versus Dialogue	166
4.9.3 AI Changes Everything...?	166
Box 21	167

4.10. Chapter Summary	169
CHAPTER V (DISCUSSION): ALIGNING PRIVILEGED AND PROFESSIONAL DIALOGUES	171
PART I: THE ALIGNMENT OF POLICY AND PRACTICE AMONGST THE FOUR NARRATIVE SPHERES	171
5.1. Aligning narrative activities between relational networks & the organisational culture of the Civil Service	171
5.1.1. Incorporating curiosity into practice and enhancing the nature of communication	172
5.1.2. Aspiring to loyalty and commitment	173
5.1.3. Returning to basic levels of communication and relationship-building	173
5.1.4. Promoting and developing a capacity for reflexive practice	173
5.1.5. Allowing potential to flourish by acknowledging good work	175
5.1.6. Allowing potential to flourish by opening communication processes	175
5.1.7. Allowing potential to flourish by taking risks	176
5.2. Aligning the narrative activities between Relational Networks and Policy ‘Development, Communication and Applications’	176
5.2.1. Seeking the ‘personal’ as a policy	176
5.2.2. Adopting a policy on strategic caring	177
5.2.3. Incorporating what is experienced as “alive” in practice within the policy ideals	178
5.2.4. Adopting new notions of hierarchy that allow for flexible communication structures	178
5.2.5. Reinventing the policy on ‘policy’	178
5.2.6. Addressing relational wishes by aggressively seeking diverse talent	179
5.3. Aligning the narrative activities of Relational Networks and Best Practice	179
5.3.1. Acknowledging that individual achievements are relational achievements and enhance the greater good; welcoming new conceptualisations of leadership	179
5.3.2. Enhancing the relational tone of practice: Refocusing and connecting with people	180
5.4. Aligning the narrative activities of Organisation Culture and ‘Policy’	181
5.4.1. Envisioning new ways of communicating	181
5.4.2. Sharing leadership roles and risk	182
5.5. Aligning the narrative activity of Organisational Culture and “Best Practice”	182
5.5.1. Communicating spirituality in practice	182
5.6. Aligning the narrative activities of ‘Policy’ with ‘Best Practice’	183
5.6.1. Clarifying roles and responsibilities	183
5.6.2. Changing perceptions and expectations of best practice	183
PART II: THEMES ON IDENTITY	184
5.7. Constructions of identity and its implications	184
5.8. Moving past identity constructions to reflexive and privileged organisational participation	186
Table 6	186
5.8.1. Developing connections and a ‘spirit of connectivity’ at deeper levels	188
5.8.2. Encouraging risk-taking	189
5.8.3. Communicating vision	189

5.9. Section Summary	189
PART III: APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY AND RESEARCH	190
5.10. Reaffirmation that the human condition is inspired by and leans towards where it is directed	190
5.11. Producing data rich in detail	190
5.12. Locating the ‘positive’ in many areas of practice	191
5.13. Understanding that the very first communication is critical	191
5.14. Chapter Summary	191
CHAPTER VI (CONCLUSION): REVISITING THE CIVIL SERVICE EXPERIENCE AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THEORY AND PRACTICE	193
6.1. Overview of Study	193
6.2. The potential for enhanced alignment amongst the relational network, organisational culture, policy and practice narratives	194
Box 22	194
6.3. Conversational actions and self-reflective conditions that have broad-based transformative potential	196
6.3.1. Direct communication on value differences	196
6.3.2. Constructing environments conducive to good will	196
6.3.3. A spirit of observation	197
6.3.4. The vision is ours	197
6.3.5. Leaders find leaders in ways unseen	197
6.3.6. The Flexible Organisation	198
6.3.7. Let’s be what we can be, but know who we are	198
6.3.8. Working from the heart	198
6.3.9. Reflexivity in practice	199
Box 23	199
6.3.10. A conclusion on aligning policy with practice	200
6.4. Conceptions of identity, relationships and their presence in organisational narrative	201
6.4.1. Towards new constructions of identity	202
Box 25	203
6.5. Research from a perspective of Appreciative Inquiry	204
Box 24	204
6.6. The theoretical implications for resituating features of policy and practice	204
6.6.1. If policy included visions of a preferred future with respect to identity and experience	205
6.7. Limitations of the study, methodological considerations and other reflexive notions	206
6.8. My contribution	207
CHAPTER VII: ENVISIONING THE FUTURE: CONSEQUENCES FOR EXPANDING AND RE-SITUATING NARRATIVE ACTIVITY	208

<i>EPILOGUE</i>	213
APPENDIXES	214
SCHEDULE OF TABLES	214
LIST OF BOXES	214
FIGURES	215
Appendix A: An invitation to dialogue: The Conversation Project	216
Appendix B: Principles of Appreciative Inquiry	218
Appendix C: The Interview protocol:	222
Appendix D: The Constitution: Key Elements	225
Appendix E: News article on civil servantry	226
Appendix F: A step on a methodological journey: AI Consultative Group Feedback	228
Appendix G: The study's initial provocative proposition	229
Fundamental premises	229
Appendix H: Pre-constructionist interview guide	230
Appendix I: Constructionist (AI-enhanced) Interview Protocol: version 1	232
Appendix J: Constructionist (AI-enhanced) Interview Protocol version2	234
Appendix K: Towards a new training experience	236
Appendix L: AB Works Facilitated Dialogue Training Proposal and Feedback	240
Appendix M: Dialogic Training Exercise Outline with Narrative and Appreciative Focus	244
Appendix N: Pay Scales	251
Appendix O: Appreciative Interviews	252
Appendix P: Interview Consent Form & Face Sheet	263
Appendix Q: Introductory Remarks: The relational realisation of practice in policy	265
Appendix R: Research Involving Bermuda Government Employees	267
Appendix S: Letter of Introduction from Taos Institute/ Tilburg University	269
Appendix T: Civil Service Values	270

The Relational Realisation of Policy in Practice
Contents

Appendix U: Article on Rewarding Employees	273
Appendix V: Article on Relationships	274
REFERENCES	275

PROLOGUE

I became engaged in this study out of an interest in what people say in their most candid moments. For me, candidness is in those exchanges people have with their partners or at the office water coolers with trusted colleagues. These discussions can be the most intriguing because when they occur, they can reflect closely guarded values and beliefs. These speech actions can reveal, suppress or conceal bias. The persons who have access to the exchange are part of a privileged¹ relationship.

“Water cooler conversations”, “pillow talk”, “whispered impressions”, the silent exchange of “knowing glances”, the “down-low” or “keeping it real”, so to speak, have become popular expressions for what these privileged narratives represent². They are the equivalent of someone saying, “Now, let me tell you what I really think”, upon exiting a boardroom meeting or “Let’s have this discussion when we get home”. The privilege is not only in that the exchange is amongst select participants who are privy to the discussion (including oneself in what is often referred to as “self talk” or internal dialogue), but also in that the content of what is said can be most authentic, genuine or sensitive.

The privileged narratives I describe here are unfiltered and can be the most racist, sexist, sexualised, euro-centric, ethnocentric, prejudiced or elitist one can imagine. On the other hand, the dialogue can be very intimate, accepting and appreciative exposing intensely positive relationships. I have discovered that either way, the expression of these perspectives is revealing of bias. The dialogue is “allowed” to be constructed because the participants believe that whatever is exchanged, however passionate and risky, will be received, judged, understood or challenged, from within the context that was intended. The relationship has allowed for an extent of safety in the exchange.

Most people will accept the premise that privileged narratives or dialogues occur. What may be less acknowledged is that these privileged dialogues “leak”; they leak biases in non-obvious ways into areas of the external world. The external world can be that of the greater workplace, an organisation as a whole, or even in those moments when a decision is made as to how to work with a client or a colleague. For as much as individuals, as part of a family, friendship and work systems, may believe that a privileged narrative can remain separate from an external one, there is bound to be some overlap and integration; a connection from one context to another.

In an organisation, I believe that this overlap can be viewed from at least four spheres of discourse: 1) a best practice statement, usually a standard of excellence, that says, “this is

¹ The Oxford American Dictionary of Current English defines privilege as 1) a special right or advantage granted to one person or group and 2) confidential information. To be privy is to have access to or share secret or private knowledge. The term is also used in reference to a body of distinguished advisors.

² Lev Grossman writes of the ever-increasing use of BLOG pages, amateur websites that provide news, information and opinions, as “genuine alternatives to mainstream news outlets, a shadow media empire that is rivaling networks and newspaper in power and influence”. He conjectures that the phenomenon has exploded because BLOGS are fast, funny and totally unbiased. “They have voice and personality”. They’re human...they represent- they are- the voice of the little guy” (Time Magazine, June 21, 2004, p. 66).

what we say we want to do in our work” and “this is how we want to interact and behave towards each other”; 2) a policy statement that says, “ideally, this is what we say we are doing and the way we are going to do it”; 3) an organisational culture that says “this is what happens in practice, even though there may be a policy that says differently”; and 4) relational³ interactions, which make the statement “this is how we actually talk and interact with each other”. Therefore, functioning in the organisation are the aspirations for excellence (best practice), the professionally and usually collective ideals (policy and practice), the day-to-day decisions and practices (organisational culture) and the interpersonal discourse (relational interaction). These four areas or spheres of discourse interact are outlined in greater detail in the following Chapter (Figure 1: Elements of a discourse community and a co-constructed narrative process).

If the exchange within the four spheres were the same, few people could argue that the organisation is functioning at optimal and ideal levels. Meaning if there is agreement amongst relational networks, organisational culture, policy and best practice narrative, organisational participants are interacting in the way that they say, as a collective, they want to; in an organisation that is doing exactly what it says it wants to be doing. Employees are relating to each other and communicating in ways they describe as authentic, meaningful and respectful; the “best” possible ways. The organisation’s mission is the best because it reflects the participants’ experience and understanding of the way the organisation should be working, and its “theory” is practiced.

Whilst anything is possible, I recognise that to have all of these conversations “sound” the same may be eutopic, and not necessarily ideal. However, my concern is that there is a critical disconnect between what is said (sentiments) amongst us in our private lives, and the policy through which we aspire (wishes) to live and work through those lives. Yet, there is a significant connection between the privileged relationships that bring us to how we view the world, what we believe and value, and how and where we discuss it. This relational connection is the privileged dialogue that gets heard in unexpected and unanticipated ways in the workplace. The relational connection becomes an echo within organisational culture. The relational connection and disconnection may subtly drown out policy ideals; the privileged discourse whispering nuances into practice.

What I have become excited about, but with which yet struggle, is the extent to which the privileged dialogue is racially prejudiced, patriarchal or elitist (in its manifestation), goes unacknowledged, and transacts with the multiple layers of organisational behavior. That is, that attempts to suppress privileged dialogue and its representative bias, are generally unsuccessful. I believe that what employees regard as their most sacred and protected dialogues have an undocumented and generally unstated impact on how decisions are made, how we work together, how we relate to each other and what we aspire to be doing.

I am assured of the relevance of this topic because I have been privy to several instances where there has been a call for people to risk moving the “bedroom” at least as far as the

³ The term relational means “the co-construction of shared meanings”, activities coordinated with others or activities conducted whilst keeping others in mind.

“water cooler”); to take privileged narrative into the workplace (SHRM Poll, 1994; Page, 2004). And it has revealed exciting possibilities to me.

Firstly, what have I found is that what people say about people different from them, changes depending on where and with whom the dialogue is occurring. This phenomenon could be called the “situatedness” of dialogue.

The spontaneity and excitement generated by narratives of the self as racial beings credits the very necessity of the dialogue. In other words, when the topic has been introduced at workshops and in interviews, people become very excited and get lost in the stories they are asked to detail⁴.

Therein, narratives themselves tell a story of people struggling to contain the privilege aspect of their discourse, so as to appear to be politically correct and actively pursuing the organisation’s mission. That is, what people say in a situation representing privilege comes across as authentic and frank, sounding as if it were a brief unveiling of an individual’s truth.

Lastly, going beneath the surface of workplace narratives reveals powerful relational cultures and interactions, which seem to subliminally compete with the organisational ideals (policy) and the professional objectives (best practice). The following examples illustrate how privileged dialogues, the very discussions usually relegated to safe places, are beginning to be acknowledged for their relational presence in the professional domain- and the implications.

i. Family Preservation

I was strolling with a colleague through the foyer of a child welfare agency in 2003. The building had just been remodeled and stood in all of its glory, a glossy black and steel reception and waiting area, a credit to the business world. My colleague turned to me and said,

This is our new reception area for clients, kids and their parents, people who are anxious about greeting us and who may have never had any interaction with any big system”. She continued, “Did you know that our mission statement says? I said that I had an idea, but no, I could not recite it explicitly. She went on to say, “Well I don’t know the exact wording either but our mission and our best practice statement says that we will serve clients in a way that is respectful and caring”. “We aim to help them help themselves, support them, comfort them, through a difficult period”. “We do so by trying to work with them in their environment or in a comfortable environment so as to set the best stage for positive change”. As we continued walking, she did a backward glance at the sleek modern foyer and said, “Can you imagine how intimidating it would be for a child and their family to walk into here?” “No toys, no pictures of families or kids, nothing kiddie-friendly.” “What first impressions do you think they will have?” “Who sat on that planning committee, anyway?” “It probably wasn’t a worker and there were certainly no families or children- likely a wealthy bachelor with no kids”.

⁴ Through my work at the Bermuda Government’s, Commission for Unity and Racial Equality, produced a program (see Appendix A: An invitation to dialogue: The Conversation Project), adapted from the “Public Conversation Project, Boston” as described in Kenneth Gergen’s work, *Realities and Relationships: Soundings in Social Constructionism* (2001). When I called potential participants and described the program they expressed great excitement at the format, process and content. So much so that I had to ask them to hold on to their stories until the actual program commenced.

My colleague, with some annoyance and a bit of “safe” stereotyping, was expressing two things. One, that the policy or mission of the organisation (that of aspiration to best practice, supportive and inclusive work) was not echoed through to the practice (creating an environment for trust and support) - resulting in a final product, a structure that was very much maligned from the envisioned ideal. As a family and child-focused organisation, we could not have farther distanced ourselves from our service users with the new “corporate” face. Two, that the inclusion of more voices in the development of the plan, the voices of the service recipients perhaps, might have seen the creation of a product that was more in line with the stated intent.

ii. Training Day

A group of senior managers gathered together for a training session. After several days together, it appeared that the group had reached some sort of relational comfort level. When the instructor left the room for a minute after a particularly intense discussion on the role of civil servants providing a public service, the most vocal of the group sighed and said, “It’s not easy”. His comment led to a litany of verbal exchanges.

One person responds, “Areas of conflict are those where it is hard to determine the common good. For example, we withhold information from the public, in the public’s interests, yet, we have a responsibility towards openness and disclosure to the public”. Another injects, “Yes, but doing the job well is part of a political process”. “If we do it efficiently and well, we ensure political continuity. Yet we are apolitical”. The philosopher of the group adds that, “We have an accountability to moral consciousness, but we have to deal with whether we uphold a doctrine or do a deed for practical reasons”. “I ask you”, he expounds, “Do we have a right of appeal to deal with issues of conscience?” Perhaps not wanting to take that challenge on, another participant submits that, “there is Code of Conduct... is the Code [Code of Conduct] something to which people aspire? Can they?” “This is a no-win situation for us as individuals”. “Our cultural differences and ethics may not line up with our organisation’s culture”. “Codes of conduct are serious business but we have to work out what they mean in terms of personal conduct”. The philosopher re-enters the discussion to query whether we “do we do what is asked, or do we follow our personal ethic’s”. “If we can’t do either, do we leave?” and just as the lecturer re-entered the room, the last comment to be made is, “Anyways, nobody gets fired from here.”

The senior civil servants were expressing, in all of a rapid-fire 10-minute period, their sincere anxiety and concern for the competing interests (narratives) between the civil service, advisory boards, ministry heads and the public. For them, their roles in responding to the multiple narratives represented areas of contention. They found that reporting lines were unclear and that finding the persons who had the authority to make decisions was a challenging task. The quantity of work was not adequately represented in job descriptions. Competing visions and beliefs interfered with how and what advice was given to solve problems. Budget limitations and having to manage within restricted budgets was sometimes at odds with the service that was to be provided.

“No one is ever fired from Government”. This sentiment seemed another ironic statement on how inefficiency and ineptitude and even immorality are accepted in this particular organisational culture. The irony is that the group understood there to be a clear policy on conditions for termination and what constitutes misconduct; but apparently, few refer to it, let

alone apply it. The reality may be that in an intricately connected workplace community, few people have the nerve or the energy to follow through with timely and relationally threatening dismissal proceedings; so poor work is tolerated, and sometimes rewarded through ongoing employment. The privileged narrative (read underlying communication) that runs throughout the community is that a “job with Government, is a job for life”.

Further, one participant indicates that internal and accepted standards of practice were slightly at odds with actual practice. Amongst the litany of comments, balancing budgets while trying to provide optimal public service was a stressor; being the voice and vision of government but knowing that there are policies in place that go against the “grain” was another comment. The session closes with a participant’s final remark that, “somewhere between interests and policy is the civil servant”. Of all of the commentary, very little is accounted for in policy statements or training manuals, which would at the very least, provide new managers with a sense of the organisation’s operating culture- a “heads-up” on working in a civil service environment.

The participants in this group readily acknowledged challenges in doing their jobs and likened these challenges to competing and discrepant dialogues in organisational versus individual ethics. With very little persuasion, participants essentially let privileged narratives occupy a vacant space. What I heard, as a participant/observer was a privileged narrative expressing concern about the co-constructed workplace reality.

The training discourse really requires very little interpretation. A space was created for a dialogue and the dialogue gave expression to feelings of relational conflict and a culture of competition. There was concern that what is practiced is influenced by how and what is said, and in what context: the workplace, the public domain, the political arena and in the greater community. The exchange lay bare the hope that by dialoguing, change occurs- new understandings are negotiated, especially for civil service neophytes and an opportunity to share their experience is created, for the more longstanding civil servants. Without doubt, the new “realities” will influence a future collective dialogue.

iii. Cosby Gives It Straight

My father-in-law sent me a Chicago Times newspaper article (Mary Mitchell, 2004) that he thought I would find very exciting. I did. The headline shouted, “Cosby gave it to us straight—and it’s a valuable lesson”. The article was one of many responding in quick succession to remarks made by comedian Bill Cosby, criticising black youth and their parents.

What Cosby said, both explicitly and implicitly, is that Black people don’t have their priorities straight. “These people are not parenting”. “They are putting their money into material items rather than developmental and educational tools”. “They are buying \$500 sneakers... and won’t spend \$200 for ‘Hooked on Phonics’” (Mitchell, 2004; Page, 2004). They would rather challenge the criminal justice system than face the fact that a crime was committed. Mitchell supports Cosby’s position with the example of the NAACP nomination going to R. Kelly, a black singer presently indicted on 21 accounts of child pornography.

She basically points out that the system of relational checks and balances has gone awry when these sorts of things can happen.

The issue among many, as many columnists agree, was not so much that Cosby “told the truth”, but that he violated many aspects of an unwritten “Code”. He brought the “water cooler” discussion, a distilled public forum, into a very public “boardroom”. He suggested that the present “policy”, i.e. as a black community should support Black people no matter what kind of crimes they commit, is ridiculous. That “best practice”, in the Black community, that is to maintain the focus and pressure on whites and corporate America to solve and repent for race and equality of opportunity problems, is somewhat misguided.

Another issue that Cosby lays bare is that few have ever dared utter these privileged “truths” in a collective (read public) environment for fear of the consequences. Contrarily, and most ironically, are that Cosby’s remarks with all of their privilege and discomfort, have been met with resounding agreement. Black advocates and sympathisers seemingly agree with the content of Cosby’s discourse, taking issue primarily with the arena of delivery. Page (2004) writes in response to some qualifiers of Cosby’s statements, “Don’t report what [Cosby] said; report what he meant.”

Cosby is described as “breaking the silence”. But, I submit to you, particularly going forward, that it is not so much a silence that has been broken, but that Cosby took what was whispered in beauty shops and barbershops says Mitchell (2004), and shouted it across corporate America. And, it told a truth that many recognise and attribute as having meaning.

Not simply the statements, but reaction following the ‘privileged-turned-professional’ narratives is worthy of further inquiry. For example, how different would equality of opportunity policy be if a privileged discourse were occurring in the work place? What might we, both as employees and managers, be doing differently? We might be shifting from employer accountability to a partial ownership of success to all players. We might be recreating and experiencing policy shifts that acknowledge joint participation in creating the relational culture we want. We might be directing the most strategic efforts for equality in the workplace at the preparation and planning stages for individual destiny. Page (2004) suggests that we might be putting more emphasis and support into mentorship.

These are the possibilities for bringing the water cooler to the boardroom, or better yet, creating a new space for the talks that shape the organisation’s strategic functioning. These narratives go past the statements of “do you want my personal opinion or my professional one” (and each one is different) to an exploration of those stories that have yet to be fully scripted and are thus only nuanced in a public arena.

iv. The possibility of enhanced relational narratives

Participation in these types of authentic dialogues might make it is easier for individuals to accept that their privileged and/or internal narratives have consequences for organisational practice. As we become more accustomed to listening for, and seeking out, the hidden, removed or silent messages, it may become possible to hear the absence of the privileged narrative in policy. It may also become possible to experience how regardless of what is

stated as an organisational mission or best practice objectives, the exercise of opening what is privileged to a wider audience, opens up possibilities for support in relational networks, and an opportunity for checks and balances within the organisational culture.

In becoming inquisitive about privileged meaning, we may discover that the challenge for, and to, organisations is to create a space in the professional narrative for the privileged one to occur. This is not to say that a best practice or policy ideal would ultimately change, but that as it stands, the two are too disconnected from each other. They may be competing for the same space and energies, and telling competing stories.

Organisations and their employees will be able to speak about their best work when the narrative process is informed by individuals' most privileged stories. It is only then, in my opinion, that the possibilities for best policy, for best employment experiences, for best relationships and for best practice can be comprehensively narrated. These stories may have much better outcomes if they are co-constructed, increasing alignment between workplace culture, policy and practice.

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

1.1. The Approach to this Study

As a social worker, human rights and later, senior manager of a race relations commission, I have had opportunity to consider service practices from multiple vantage points. Moving from Canada to Bermuda allowed me a comparative experience of how organisations approach their work towards clients and the experience of civil service workers in carrying out their mandates. I have found there to be many similarities in the experience of employees, in several sectors: human rights, immigration, education, race relations and child protection. Generally, what I believe is that those civil service workers entering the human service fields do so with an expectation of what their roles, mandates and approach to service will be. There may also be a level of expectation as to what kinds of relationships they will have with each other, as service providers, as employees and as supervisors.

This understanding may typically be immersed in a genuine belief in and expectation of hope, change and possibilities for service recipients⁵ and a contribution to the betterment of the organisation as a whole. As the employee becomes immersed in the employment culture, they adapt the organisation's cultural philosophy, which is a reflection of people relating with each other on a daily basis. This adjustment may or may not be sound in orientation; it may also be fraught with latent objectives that may serve to undermine civil service work and the overarching objectives of the organisation.

To better understand this aspect of organisational behavior, the employee experience, and their impact on the concurrent service offered, I have reflected on my previous youth protection work experience. Originally, my focus was on the relationship between youth protection workers and their clients; the pursuant study and literature review reflect this direction. As I moved in my career from child protection to human rights protection, to race relations and equality of opportunity in employment my perspective shifted and my inquiry reflects not only on child protection practice, but on a larger organisational context.

This research is organised into seven main sections, the first of which describes my working experience across occupational categories, levels of employment, and types of service delivery and civil service organisational environments. I explain how I became interested in the relationship between policy development and its applications and a wide spectrum of decision-making practices. This background leads into a discussion of the study's substantive theoretical basis: social constructionism and its applications to narrative activities of identity. Narrative activities are broadly described as inclusive of dialogues⁶, stories and discourse, in part or in whole. Next follows a section on the transformative potential of dialogue and the ways in which dialogue can be enhanced in organisations. In this instance, the relational context of the civil service of Bermuda is detailed from a social constructionist paradigm.

⁵ For the purposes of this discussion, the terms "service recipient" and "client" are used interchangeably.

⁶ The process of dialogue is about sharing, questioning, listening, respecting and exploring new possibilities, rather than reaching a consensus (Civil Service College Directorate- CMPS).

This historical and social exploration of Bermuda is woven into an overview of the theoretical and substantive literature on the practical potential for enhanced discourse on organisational behavior. The premise of appreciative inquiry is also presented here as a means of paying attention to, and refocusing, meaning-making in the organisational context.

With the study parameters outlined, I next describe my methodological process. Demonstrating a multi-faceted approach to data collection, I describe how the data represent focus group, training group and individual interview participant input. The following discussion of the findings is divided into three parts: outcomes reflecting the potential for alignment amongst civil service narrative activities; constructions of identity; and reflections on the use of appreciative inquiry as a research method. A discussion of the findings reflects new ways of thinking about aligning discourse amongst four primary spheres of activity, diverse civil service relationships and practices. Lastly, areas for further study are discussed in the conclusion and summary

This study is rooted in several thematic and contextual concerns, which are both explicit and implicit throughout the paper, such as the nature of:

- 1) race, class and gendered relations;
- 2) governmentality and the civil service environment;
- 3) community and public discourse as situated in context and experience;
- 4) roles, expectations and obligations of the employee;
- 5) governance and governmentality in Bermuda, which dictates the civil service as a social entity.

The subsequent introductory remarks and review of the substantive and theoretical literature reflect my personal and epistemological journey through this exploration of the positioning and alignment of organisational narratives.

1.2. Background

My eight years in Montreal, Canada's youth and family service network allowed me a rich and varied experience in youth protection work. I have worked in several areas of child welfare and have experienced two distinctively different work orientations in this field of practice. In community services, for example, the orientation is towards being supportive of families while recognising that some parents are not able to adequately parent their children (Batslaw Youth and Family Centres, 1996). It follows that long term plans may be made for children in this area of service (including placement in substitute care or adoption) and that parents may or may not be a helpful part of this process. Often six-month or one-year court orders are extended to ensure child safety- sometimes, despite adequate parental improvements that might permit the return of a child.

In contrast, in my capacity as a worker in the family preservation division of service, I was struck by the readiness of some workers to get intensively involved with families, look for all possible strengths in families and sometimes take calculated risks in keeping families together. Here, family unity was the prime goal, not individual child protection. I had some difficulty adjusting to the differences in orientation. I found myself advocating for the reunification of a family in long-term placement situations and getting some negative feedback. At the same time,

I was also being cautious in my family preservation work, reluctantly taking “risks” in sending children home for fear that the family situation would break down and the child would suffer.

Functioning as a part-time worker in both community services and family preservation, in either youth protection capacity, the statutory framework was always present. Youth protection laws, which delineate risk to children and outline child welfare intervention, always functioned centrally in decision-making. What I began to struggle with was whether social workers, despite their best efforts, were reproducing prejudicial race, class and gender relations in everyday practice (Meyer, 1983). We advocates say we are supportive of families and our intervention process may indicate this, but when a family situation breaks down, front-line workers seek explanations for problems that blame mothers, problematise mother-headed families and let fathers abdicate responsibility (Gordon, 1998; Krane, 1994). Similar explanations are evident on a wider organisational level in several areas of client service delivery.

To elaborate, the youth protection system in Canada was based on assumptions of racial, ethnic, cultural, gender and class difference. In most societies, Canada, Bermuda, British, these differences matter. It is from an ethnocentric standpoint that the values, morals, mores, and color of one group of people are compared to another; very often the racial and cultural symbols of some group members are seen as deviant or inadequate, as are the group members themselves. Looking at class differences, lower-class families are often perceived to suffer personal moral failures rather than social or economic ones. Middle-class values permeate practice by dictating standards of proper lifestyle and attitude.

This viewpoint puts a focus and blame for poverty on mothers and families as the cause of their situations, as opposed to lack of access to adequate income, housing, and medical care. Often, families served by the child welfare system are poor. With respect to gender, women are oppressed primarily because they are women. Sex-role stereotypes and gender inequalities rooted in history provide a framework for policy and practice. It is from these understandings of race, class and gender that I prefaced research of the world of organisational behavior through human service delivery in the Bermuda government.

1.3. The problem: speaking of privileged experiences in the professional world

I entered the Bermuda Civil Service two years ago. My initiation to government work was via the Human Rights Commission. Similar to my child protection experience, I approached my job with the same hopes, visions and aims for my work, for my clients and for the working relationships I would have. As I became more immersed in the organisational culture, I became familiar with the statutory frameworks, policies and procedures of the organisation. I again began to develop a sense of the decision-making processes, departmentally and organisationally. What became evident to me was that despite best efforts on the part of civil servants at many levels, and with sound organisational visions and missions⁷, there was a latent and unstated struggle. The struggle was between what happens where client and colleague interaction occurs

⁷ An organisational vision compellingly responds to the question, “Where are we going?” or “What kind of legacy will we leave behind?” A mission asks, “What is our purpose?” or “What is most important to us?” A strategy responds to the question of “What will we do to get there?” Values are the results of a question of, “How will we act towards each other in this organisation?” The organisational culture demonstrates what people in the organisation value.

amidst the stories and dialogues of the organisation's culture, vision and practices; a divide between the narrative activities of individuals' lives. These narrative activities (dialogues, discussions, discourse and stories) often told competing stories about their expectations as employees, organisational goals and the practices stemming from civil service duties. By way of example, I describe the following scenario⁸.

A young black single mother comes to a child protection agency, voluntarily, to seek help with raising her three children. One of the children is having behavioral difficulties in school. One has a learning disability and all three children are described as aggressive at home and school. An intervention plan is drafted (plan of action for the family and outline of the services that will be offered). In this woman's life of relative poverty, her narrative might be one of struggle, hope for the family's success, hopelessness for the family situation and fatigue. The narrative of the worker assigned to this family might express hope, but recognise the limited resources, the limited and depleted personal and professional resources, high caseloads, a fatigue at seeing the same situations over and over, and possibly a perspective on single parents, blacks, and low-income families who have many children. The organisational culture might speak to the never-ending cycle of families in similar situations and the ongoing nature of the work in which there are decreasing resources and where some workers have wonderful skills and others have none.

The policy on family intervention aspires to offering the family-centered, supportive and compassionate service and the best practice guidelines support these notions (Canadian Association of Social Workers, 1995). But one "truth" would be that if the civil servant in this situation draws on any number of experiences and identities, i.e. as a woman, man, black, white, wealthy or poor, the narratives she or he will construct about this person (their client) will be influenced. Their narrative activities will also be influenced by the confusing and frustrating knowledge that comes with a policy and practice framework that has no easy fit with the necessary interventions. The participants in this scenario then begin to play out a struggle between policy, practice, relationships and the organisational culture.

I became concerned about this struggle for its underlying consequences for race, class and gender. I have also been concerned about the impact of this struggle, essentially one of misalignment, on the lives of people who serve the public. Of the latter, I would hear co-workers express discontent and confusion in negotiating daily work issues. For example, they would present as cynical in the face of client success. They could be found devising "collaborative" intervention plans, alone. Worse, within an idealistic, expectant and hope-filled organisational context, practitioners would find themselves establishing objectives that were almost impossible for a client to fulfill.

It seemed to me that there was a divide between what the organisation wanted employees to embrace as a cohesive group versus an individual or relational experience. The relational experience could encompass the less-acknowledged dilemmas over: hierarchies of obligation; value systems that interact amongst the working relationships; a system in which the statutory framework is ever-present, but an organisational culture which subscribes to rules, roles and

⁸ Based on the writer's experience as a social worker and one of many typical cases presented to the child protection agency.

expectations. These disconnections have consequences for its employees and the people they serve.

I describe this divisiveness as aspiration (missions, visions, policy and objectives) versus actual practice (intention, procedures, decision-making processes and actions). Aspirations and actual practices represent a range of activities communicated in multiple locations and at varied levels of explicitness, throughout the organisation.

Generally, service users, clients, and organisational participants adapt and develop ways of dealing with problems for which they seek services offered to the public. Through family services, in many ways workers intervene in an attempt to “protect” child and youth development (Callahan, 1993; Healy, 1998). And, in most instances, interventions are successful in meeting this primary objective. In human rights work, a vision is aimed at actively ensuring the rights of people who live in the country. As managers, job duties include carrying out policy objectives of the government of the day, serving the public and doing so within individual comfort levels of experience and context. They also seem to adapt, develop, aspire to and vocalise policy ideals and objectives. So, in some instances, the narrative activities of aspiration and what is actually practiced coincide.

However, there are some areas of division amongst activities of aspiration and that of actual practices. When I was first introduced to each department’s principles, which embody government policy on health, social services, human rights and race issues, I had already been working for several years. Yet, I received no formal job training at the outset of any of my jobs-an experience, which is not unique to me. I remember being surprised at how idealistic, supportive and solution-focused the policy ideals were. In some respects, these statutes were contrary to what I would see occurring between service users and workers, employees and other internal customers and the interactions at the courts, with the police and through the hierarchy of civil servants.

It was at that time that I began to consciously acknowledge that my interventions, my practice and my work were less a reflection of the agency’s policies and best practice initiatives and more indicative of collegial interactions and the organisational culture. My interventions were and are a reflection of the attitudes and interactions of my colleagues and supervisors. They represent an aspect of relational interactions and organisational culture. These narrative activities are either misaligned or layered amongst the agency’s principles and mandates. These principles and mandates represent the narrative activities involved in developing policies and statements of best practice. These former ‘constructed messages’ helped me, as a practitioner; formulate an idea of what is acceptable practice or what is the valid but unstated organisational mission. But, at times they were not representative of the constructed messages present in the legislative and policy frameworks.

The relational and cultural dialogues at the many levels they presented themselves, dictated my orientations towards practice, my interventions and decisions. But co-existent with policy and best practice statements, that political correctness drove the dialogue of privilege somewhat underground; relegating it to unexplored or less accessible spaces. Left is the professional

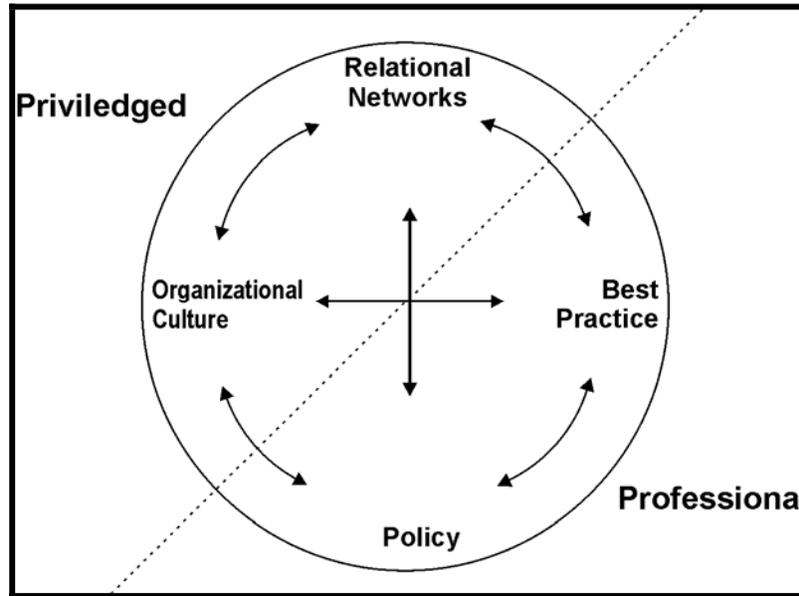
narrative activities; the “professional” discourse that speaks of best practice and eutopic organisational and strategic objectives.

For me and others (Smith, 1987), these socially constructed messages of what is “acceptable” became problematic. These messages tended to incorporate an underlying privileged discourse that disadvantaged clients. For example, a socially constructed message makes mothers responsible for social and child welfare problems (“Why won’t she get a job”; “Can’t she simply keep the house clean”; “this family is dysfunctional”). It also makes employees responsible for maintaining professional ideals (“We strive to keep families together using the solutions that families develop themselves” or “we keep families together”), at levels that do not account or allow for the human and relational interplay. The lines of privileged discourse that accompany these statements are that we judge a woman’s ability to parent by how well she manages a traditional role. As a consequence, the societal stresses, unemployment rates, the challenges of single parenting, cycles of poverty, violence and discrimination rarely figure in the discourse. Yet, the human and relational interplay has privilege at its core. A privileged narrative might begin with a statement that says, “really, this family does not have the resources to keep them together... we can’t provide them and we, as a society, are failing this family”.

Figure 1 illustrates the way that the privileged and professional narrative activities can be envisioned in the wider context of organisational activities and behaviors.

Figure 1

Elements of a discourse community and a co-constructed narrative process



This diagram outlines the four discourse communities to which are referred throughout the study. Each community has an influence on each other and as such, there is potential for the alignment of narrative activities amongst and within each. ‘Relational networks’ are those from within which communications occur between individuals in private, semi-private, semi-public and public spheres, dependent on the degree of privilege to which an individual is granted access. The network involves ways of talking of experience in privileged or professional ways that are imbedded in relationships. ‘Organisational culture’ refers to the day-to-day decisions, practices, traditions, habits, and perspectives through which policies and best practice standards are filtered. ‘Best practice’ refers to a statement on practice that reflects a standard, an ideal and/or aspirations of excellence and the actual practices (actions, procedures, rules, roles and decision-making processes) that influence excellence in this area. ‘Policy’ refers to stated visions, a mission statement, strategy, intentions, procedures, objectives, and policy statements for a collective of individuals.

The professional narrative activities represent an organisational context. This organisational context is comprised of policies, goals, missions, and some aspects of the agency’s visions and ideals. The privileged sphere represents a relational context of interpersonal transactions and relationships. It is the practical aspects of the day-to-day constructed processes, procedures, decision-making tools, and outcomes. These activities occur within the four aspects of co-constructed narrative contexts (relational networks, organisational culture, policy and best practice), reflecting a wide range of organisational activity.

1.4. Socially constructed realities and the discourses of privilege and professionalism

I came to realise that when we are speaking from experiences of actual practices, typically at the relational or agency levels, where the “targets of intervention can become obscured. For example, when we speak of families receiving youth protection services, we are often really talking about parents. And more specifically, when we speak of parents, most interventions are focused on mothers. As a consequence, I have had to move from believing that my efforts were genuinely directed at families, to believing that I effectively work and support parents, to a final belief that my youth protection interventions are primarily directed at mothers as parents- lower class, minority mothers with few economic options and high representativeness in the youth protection system. These mothers would ultimately bear the brunt of corrective “family” service interventions. Yet, professional *aspiration*, present in the organisation, stresses a “family” focus, typically leaving me and other workers perplexed as to how to conduct good family work with poor, single mothers with few resources.

The same analysis can be applied to the organisation. When we are speaking of aspirations, we speak of visions, missions and best practice theories that are in place to address specific objectives. These narrative activities may not adequately account for the practices and processes inherent to a system of accountability. This system has civil servants sometimes inexplicably and coincidentally acting in the interests of a political platform, a government supervisor, the public and possibly an advisory Board.

A final example of how realities are constructed through cultural narratives can be found in thinking through race relations issues. Aspirationally, the policy ideal of race relations work might be to eradicate racism. Best practice in race relations and the promotion of racial equality might include training and education on diversity. The goal of this training and interventions would be changing mindsets and raising individual awareness on the impact, influence and personal responsibilities for anti-discrimination. In practice, however, race relations practitioners speak of a management (the clients) commitment to training that is often half-hearted. Participant (another set of clients) involvement in training may be at the coercion of management. The most enthusiastic training participants are often highly representative of historically disadvantaged groups. Lastly, the people who continue to participate in training sessions are those already dedicated to the “cause”.

In this example of race relations training, actual practices may collectively recognise that racism is a problem that can never be fully solved. This perspective is very different from the lofty training expectations and policy goals of eradication. And so the blend of organisational practices, actual practices and aspirations may diverge in critical ways. The consequential misalignment of narrative activities results in stories of unfulfilled hope, unacknowledged anger, displaced blame, unspoken shame and fear. Box 1 describes another training experience on race relations and the way that policy and practice can be misaligned.

Box 1

A case example: The silence of policy in practice

How policy ideals can be silent in practice is exemplified in the British Broadcasting Company’s (BBC) undercover police documentary, “The Secret Policeman” (Daly, 2003). Investigating racism in the police, Mark Daly transcribes the following audio and video communications describing the British police forces policies and training on equality of opportunity and race relations:

The Relational Realisation of Policy in Practice **Chapter I: Introduction and Discussion**

“...would they go beyond using racist language and carrying their prejudices onto the street?” During the initial training period, the class was constantly reminded of the appropriate language policy. ‘There’s 4 words which you cannot say- Negro, Nigger, Coon and Wog. ... (laughs) Paki that’s five, totally unacceptable’. The instructor added an extra one to the list – negro- but the message was crystal clear...anyone breaking the rules would be dealt with severely. [Yet], the police union, the Police Federation, [had] made it clear that while they rejected racism, they would still defend those who used inappropriate language.

The above excerpt describes a policy of good intent and best practice, but a practice and organisational culture that is duplicitous. Daly proceeds to discuss a training experience that warns of a high number of racist officers, but a system that has failed to eradicate the problem. Police Constable Andy Hall states:

“I would never say this in class, [but] if you did not discriminate and you did not bring your prejudices you would be a shit copper...If you was on the street...and you wouldn’t stop anyone because of their colour, because of their race, because of how they dress... you’d be a shit copper. ...This is practical policing... and nine times out of ten you are right. But in the training environment you can’t be seen to do it because its discrimination- it’s against equal opportunities...”

Clearly the Constable’s narrative demonstrates an understanding of the policy and objectives for fair and respectful policing. Also clear is his very privileged exchange of deep-seated racism and prejudice. Undercover Constable Daly, summarises his findings by stating:

My time as a police officer demonstrated to me that there are policies now in place to combat discrimination and they are failing...If anything [the training] made them more aware that their views were seen as wrong, but this was driving the racism underground. Some used racially abusive language. Others went further and admitted they would put their racism into practice.

This example underscores the fundamental challenges inherent to realising policy in practice. Clearly stated anti-racist policies, training on equality of opportunity and threat of consequence had little impact on extinguishing or transforming a narrative and practice of racism- nor the past and present relational experiences- of a law enforcement officer, pledging to serve the public.

How the organisation behaves, then, is relationally-driven, impacted by multiple aspects of activity and discourse: some not granted enough attention for their impact on how an employee negotiates relationships throughout their organisational experience.

Open for inquiry is that in trying to balance both their roles and the implications of practice, civil service employees can become disengaged from a process of pursuing the agency mission (Valentich, 1986). This disengagement can result in departures, employee abuses, cynicism, frustration, diversion from policy objectives, or resistance. An anonymous client writes a local Bermudian newspaper on his or her perception of how Family Services “destroys” families,

...Family service workers all too often advise parents on how to raise a family without having the hands-on experience themselves. I am not underrating a degree in psychology, but when it comes to raising children, I have yet to see one book that will serve to raise every individual child in one family... Too often families are torn apart because they do not live the way the worker was raised... Some workers remove children because the home was not in order when they visited. I can tell you a known fact. Not all of you keep the cleanest home. So why destroy other families over mistakes that you yourself have made. Family services- help the families when you can. When you come across a family situation you are not familiar with, ask for help from someone more experienced... also stop leaving people who are seriously neglecting their children to go unaccounted for just because you are friends with their families... Often you workers come off as though you are God Himself. The judge takes the worker’s word even when it is proven that the worker has not followed up on that particular case at all since the family’s last court appearance” (Speaking from experience, The Royal Gazette, December 10, 2003)

This particular submission speaks to a client’s perception of how power, values and relationships impact child welfare intervention, irrespective of the agency’s objectives. Problems become exacerbated at the level of intervention (one form of actual practice) and how it is experienced.

This may be because the participants' stories- as women, disenfranchised people, powerless individuals or the poor (Darby, 1997), are not yet adequately or realistically aligned with policy.

1.4.1. The misalignment of discourse on race, gender and class

The scope of misalignment extends to employees' values, actual practices and aspirations. Differences involving race, social class and gender⁹ might then enter a discussion of organisational functioning in ways that may not be adequately explored. Thus narrative activities, privileged or other, must continue to incorporate that knowledge and generated shared relational experience (Eichler, 1986) so that it receives attention and is accounted for in discourse (Swift, 1991).

I find that the need to explore the narrative elements of employee experience, with its consequences for interpersonal relationships, is only slowly becoming shared or acknowledged in the study of contemporary organisational systems. In fact, the organisation's statutory framework and practice guidelines infrequently reference gender, class or race relations, and even less so the interplay of power and authority, the potential for harmful bias, the potential for competing 'realities' and narratives. The ramifications of, or course of action from within, these dynamics are non-existent without their full discovery. I suspect, however, that the existing framework contributes to a somewhat discomfiting reproduction of relations and processes that are hierarchically and power-bound, alongside everyday practices of service providers, who harbour the best of intentions.

I am interested in understanding how every-day civil service practice reproduces ideal expectations while operating from a system that reinforces hierarchy, authority and power. How is it that civil service employees can be supportive at the intervention and policy level but relate to each other and their clients, render decisions and takes action that are blaming, disempowering, divisive and divertive from the context of the organisation's core mandate, mission and values? Within this direction of inquiry is a quest for surfacing, unsettling and re-placing a downward spiral of discourse with a line of narrative inspired by hope, curiosity and reflections of individual's best experiences.

Although the Bermuda Civil Service is the site of the inquiry, there may very well be generalities that can be made to other service organisations. Contexts such as the community environment, the socio-political and racial history of a country, government and organisational structures, job roles and expectations inform this discussion. As well, present is the concern for the enhanced alignment of privileged and professional experiences - the very expression of beliefs about people, difference and diversity- reflecting a tacit agreement in principle but a lack of commitment to empowerment, support, equality, respect, sensitivity or the like.

An exploration of civil service workers' privileged discourse (private ways of talking of experience in the organisation), with regard to differences and relating to people who are different from them, may lend further understanding as to what happens in service relations. It is

⁹ The reference to 'race', 'class' and 'gender' incorporates the many ways that these terms can be constructed. Further discussion on the construction of identity, extending past but specific to race, class and gender can be found in Chapter II.

also possible that more generative activities in the multiple spheres of narrative can be born and can flourish.

1.5 Scope of Inquiry

1.5.1. The Overarching Questions

- 1) Is it possible to more closely align relational networks (which generally house the privileged discussions of the experiences of the people who give life to policy), organisational culture (the dynamics of practice influenced by relational interactions), policy (the workplace objectives as stated by the organisational missions and procedures) and best practice (the pragmatics of policy that typically reflect a set of international standards)?
- 2) How will such movement in turn influence the narrative activities of: relational networks, organisational culture, policy and best practice?

1.5.2. Study Objectives

This study will:

- a) Re-scribe the individual as fundamentally located within privileged relationships that are influenced by the cultural contexts, policies and practices of communities;
- b) Explore the “situatedness” of public service worker “talk” with regard to identity to the construction of their race, class and gender;
- c) Conduct an appreciative inquiry which incorporates input from varied sources and features how excellent relationships and “best” practices (in training, policy development, organisational communication) can be constructed;
- d) Demonstrate the applications of social constructionism in the articulation of the interpersonal relationships;
- e) Reconcile these narrative activities within stated organisational policy and practice;
- f) Contribute to a discourse on interventions that align dialogues and narratives on policy with the actual practices described by civil service employees;
- g) Contribute to a growing body of literature on race, gender and other aspects of diversity;
- h) Explore and expand the application of appreciative inquiry from a training and development strategy usually used in applications to a research paradigm; and
- i) Advocate for re-thinking “best practice” and “policy development” activities as localised and culturally-situated.

Consistent with a social constructionist paradigm, this research project draws from multiple sources, an acknowledgement that to explore aspects of relational behavior in organisations is to give rise to voices in a myriad of contexts. The next section details the study’s substantive theoretical basis, a journey through the social constructionist thought and its prospective applications.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This study concerns itself with the relational elements of policy and practice. I commence with a discussion of civil servantry in two contexts. The first is of aspiration and the activities involved in fulfilling a mission, developing policy, realising a vision and striving for the organisation's objectives. The second is of actual practice, where activities are dictated by intention, practice, procedures, decision-making processes and actions. The activities in both cultures are described as having a relational element, illustrated through narrative. I describe narrative as occurring in many forms, but at least being of privileged (amongst trusted colleagues or one's closest affiliates) or professional (within a spectrum of the public domain) nature. The different narrative activities are largely influenced by varying sub-cultural contexts and aspects of identity as they are constructed through relationship.

The following review of the literature commences with an introduction of social constructionism. Social constructionists' views on how knowledge is acquired, how power is negotiated, and how language creates meaning, form the basis of this discussion. Attention is next drawn to how social constructionism situates aspects of identity, specifically with regard to notions of racial diversity, gender and gender relations and socio-economic class. From here, considerations for civil service work and research activities are highlighted. This theoretical discussion moves into its practical elements with a presentation on the literature of narrative representations and activities. Narrative is presented as a conduit of social constructionism, which is then tied in to elements of relational theory and the political components of relational narrative.

Social constructionism and narrative analysis beckoned attention to a discussion on shifting lived experiences from one narrative sphere to another. Transformative dialogue and aspects of appreciative inquiry follow as topics of inquiry. *Appreciative Inquiry*, with its social constructionist influence, offers both a means to think through organisational practices and research methodologies. The framework also provides a means of which to query the thinking on *race*, *class* and *gendered* issues in organisational life. These relational considerations, for policy and practice, bring us full circle with regard to how the narratives of relational networks, organisational culture, policy development and implementation and best practice are experienced and realised. Additional models, shared understandings and discourse analysis, are also presented as perspectives for listening to and agreeing upon new meanings in dialogical exchanges.

Throughout the literature review aspects of the sub-cultural context of Bermuda's civil service: historical and socio-economic factors; politics, roles and responsibilities; and dialogues on identity are presented. In summary, civil service vision and mission activities are described as illustrations of the types of narrative activities occurring throughout the organisation.

2.1. The Social Constructionist Paradigm

The relational elements of organisational behavior have their roots in how knowledge, power, and organisational cultures are constructed. Whilst there is wide and varied research in organisational and policy development and their application to practice (Mumby, 1997; Lyotard, 1984), social constructionism effectively provides a framework from which to consider *race*, gender and other identity-based factors in relationships (Andreasen, 2000; Grandy, 2001; Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Ware, 1996).

The discourse on social constructionism, as a developing theoretical framework that acknowledges the constructed and contextual traditions of other paradigms, is well documented (Mumby, 1992, c. 2; Parton, 1994; Sands and Nuccio, 1992; Hardy, 2004; Moradi & Yoder, 2001; Ridgeway, 1991; Kvale, 1995; Barry, 1995). It has emerged (K. Gergen, 1999, 1994; 1985; Gergen & Gergen, 2004; Guerin, 1992; Sarbin & Kitsuse, 1994; Lieblich & Josselson, 1995) as a meta-theory related to how knowledge is acquired, the nature of language and discourse, and on power in relationships (Ewert, 2001). Its discourses have also influenced narrative studies.

I begin with an overview of social construction as a means of which to think about knowledge, power and relational participation.

2.1.1. On the treatment and acquisition of knowledge

The premise of social constructionism is that “reality” is created through social interaction (Gergen, 1999). From this premise stems several other principles of social constructionism¹⁰. If reality is created through social interaction, then meaning is a product of social agents. If meaning is a product of social agents, then what are considered as “facts” or truths are dependent upon the language communities that create and sustain them. Second, meaning is constructed and situated within communities that have their own language and thus, people generate their truths from the languages available to them, developed from within a sub-cultural context. Last, communicative and relational activity is a primary unit of study (Gergen & Gergen, 2004; Gergen & Davis, 1997, Shotter, 1993b). These three premises and principles give rise to an understanding of situated descriptions of experience, a healthy skepticism for claims on universal truth or overarching ethics and an overlap in description and influence. Generally, these social constructionist tenants can be further outlined in the following ways.

2.1.1a. “Reality” is created through social interaction

Considered a critical event in the social constructionism movement and its introduction as a perspective, to a wider academic audience, was the publication of Berger and Luckmann’s ‘The Social Construction of Reality’. Their publication characterised everyday life as a fluid, multiple, precariously negotiated achievement in interaction. The book’s principle thesis was that individuals in interaction “create social worlds through their linguistic symbolic activity for the purpose of providing coherence and purpose to an essentially open-ended unformed human existence” (Parton, 2000, p. 5).

¹⁰ Adapted from 1) John Shotter’s 1993 work on Rhetorical-Responsive Social Constructions. In ‘Conversational Realities’, London: Sage Publications; and 2) Ken Gergen’s 1994 work on Social Constructionism, Realities and relationships: Soundings in social construction, Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Essentially, a constructionist perspective proposes that society is composed of ideas, meanings and language. It is not simply a system, mechanism, nor organism. It changes all the time through human action. It imposes constraints and possibilities on human actors themselves. Parton (2000) emphasises that the constructionist approach prioritises the processes through which people define themselves (their identities) and their environments. They do so by participating in their social worlds, interacting with others and assigning meaning to aspects of their experience in everyday ways.

2.1.1b. Meaning is a product of social agents; facts are dependent upon language communities

Social constructionism is not so much a theory, but a tradition of linguistic exchange that feeds into ongoing dialogues amongst communities. These dialogues construct a “reality” for its participants. The constructionist framework establishes a position of acknowledging multiple voices for their capacities to contribute to perspectives on reality or meaning. This position on the co-constructed meaning of realism undermines a position of realism itself¹¹. As such, the constructionist premise is that knowledge is the product of the individual’s relationships, in communication with others in the world. Therefore, knowledge and meaning are not inherent to any one person or any one perspective or school of thought; constructionism may be understood as “the principle successor to empiricist foundationalism”¹² (Gergen, 1998).

2.1.1c. People generate their truths from the languages available to them

Social constructionist theory thus lends itself to relational thinking as a means of placing emphasis on shared meaning-making through relationships (Gergen, McNamee & Barrett, 2001). Participants are invited to speak in historically, socially and culturally informed ways as a means of becoming actors in a relational process and becoming reflexive.

¹¹ Two of the most central modes of representation have been essentialism and realism. Diana Fuss says that essentialism is most commonly understood as a belief in the real, true essence of things, the invariable and fixed properties which define the ‘whatness’ of a given entity (Essentially speaking, 1989). Importantly, essentialism is typically defined in opposition to difference. The opposition is helpful in that it reminds us that a complex system of cultural, social, physical and historical differences, and not a set of pre-existent essences, position and constitute the ‘subject’ (Fuss, 1989). However, the binary articulation of essentialism and difference can be restrictive, even obfuscating, in that it allows us to ignore or deny the differences within essentialism (www.english.emory.edu).

In contrast, realism is broadly defined as “the faithful representation of reality”. Although strictly speaking, realism is a literary technique practiced by many schools of writing, it denotes a particular kind of subject matter, especially the representation of middle-class life. The challenge to realism is the consequences of “its image of being a strategy for imagining and managing the threats of social change” (drawn from references to ‘Social Construction of American Realism and A handbook to Literature). Whilst realism may seek to render everyday characters, situations, dilemmas and events in an “accurate” or “realistic” manner, social constructionism challenges its ability to do so for its very renderings are a construction of some form. Social constructionism assumes that there is no such thing as ‘reality’ in the sense that some realities are more fundamental than others and that ‘reality’ is produced entirely by human discourse and interaction (Somerville and Bengtsson, 2001).

¹² In his works on narrative, moral identity, historical consciousness and the development of constructionist dialogues, Dr. Kenneth Gergen write extensively on how constructionism has emerged from foundationalism (1998). In brief, foundationalism is a position regarding the structure of justified belief or of knowledge. A foundationalist holds that all inferred beliefs must be supported by a finite set of supporting beliefs, rather than inferences or an infinite regress of reasons. A belief must have support that comes from beliefs other than itself.

Further, it is from within the flow of relational background activities and practices, that all other socially significant dimensions of interaction- with each other and with our ‘reality’- originate and are constructed in joint action (Shotter, 1993b).

Kenneth Gergen, considered a major contributor to social constructionist theory, suggests that we emphasise relationships as the site of world construction (Gergen and Gergen, 2004). Proposing that individuals each construct the world in different ways, the Gergens’ write that whenever people are describing a reality, they do so “from within a cultural tradition” (Gergen and Gergen, 2004, p. 11).

For example, if members of the civil service are considering the effects of a policy on recruitment, perhaps in favour of recruiting more women, perspectives might vary depending on an individual’s gender, hierarchy in the organisation, family status or even sexual orientation- in other words, the realities and cultural contexts of each individual and the relationship they have or have had to women. If one is a woman and has had positive relationships with other women, that person may be very much in favor of this hypothetical recruitment policy. If one is a father, mother, or has no children, the way that that person constructs this policy will be influenced by that relational aspect of their culture. Further, one’s construction of this policy will be influenced by his or hers’ employment status. If someone is already an employee, they will have a different understanding of the process than a potential employee. Someone outside of the civil service culture may not be familiar with the traditions of recruitment within the civil service community- the language or the history of policies that gave rise to this policy. Or for someone who is concerned or an advocate for people representing other disadvantaged groups, the relevancy of this policy may be questioned.

Critical to seeing this exemplified policy implemented would be an acceptance that no one individual’s viewpoint is constrained “by anything accepted as true, rational or right (Gergen and Gergen, 2004, p. 12). Rather, through dialogue, a process of listening to new voices, inviting questions and extending the possibilities for application amongst and beyond what seem to be the reasonable parameters for discussion, the possibilities for this policy are infinitely expanded.

Also critical to this process would be the use of the language describing this policy. One individual might describe the policy as promoting the representation of women; another might view it as discriminating against men. Typically, understanding and agreement with one individual or another might depend on the language that was used, within the tradition of an individual’s community. And in any culture, there are local conventions for describing and explaining (Gergen and Gergen, 2004, p. 5), contingent on having other participants listen for both content and consequence.

2.1.1d. Communicative and relational activity is a primary unit of study

A central constructionist assumption relating to research is that it is the “contingent flow of continuous communicative activity between human beings that warrants study” (Shotter, 1993a, p. 179). Instead of viewing the inner dynamics of the individual psyche (subjectivism), or the already determined characteristics of the external world (modernism and objectivism) as groundings for how the world is viewed and should be studied (Gergen, 1991), communication is described as lacking any completely determinate character. From this premise, we can assume a

partially specified, unstable world open to specification as a result of the human interchange. Thus the assumption of an already stable and well-formed reality, full of identifiable “things” independent of language, is rejected.

Because social constructionism therefore worries a position of inflexible knowledge bases, research practices must ever challenge these social and relational assumptions about how the world appears to be (Burr, 1985; K. Gergen, 1985). The challenge that social constructionism lays bare is how to adequately present a historical, cultural and socio-economic context in a way that most empirically signifies the context from which multiple truths are derived. Multiple truths or realities are derived from people in relationships. It follows that personal identity, a topic of concern in this study, would have its foundation in relationships (Gergen, 1994). Relationships do not lend themselves to absolute truths and scientific objectivity. Therefore, a study steeped in constructionist tradition makes few assumptions and offers many perspectives on “reality”.

The usages of language and the choices of ways to narrate on experience are embedded in broader patterns of activity. It follows that from within each grouping of activities, words and their collective stories take on significance. It also follows that continuing discussion on how social constructionism views knowledge, as having significance in communities, is relevant.

2.2. Constructing knowledge in communities

Of the number of themes informed by social constructionism, one relevant to organisational policy and practice is the recognition that the terms by which we understand the world and ourselves must be approached from a critical stance towards what is “taken-for-granted” (Greeley, 2003). What seems obvious or mutually acceptable must be challenged as historically situated conventional knowledge. Further, the suggestion that acquiring knowledge is not a matter of accurately reflecting the world but is a relationally embedded activity (the world we come to know and inhabit is a product of linguistic invention) may alter the way social scientists construe knowledge (Cooperrider, Barrett & Srivastva, 1995; Kios, 1998).

Social constructionism, in a most simplistic description¹³, submits that what is considered knowledge, or “truth” is in fact ideology, carrying with it knowledge and value claims. Particular forms of knowledge are not only products of their history and culture and are thus artifacts of it, but there are a number of forms available. We cannot assume that one way of understanding is necessarily the same as others or is in any particular way closer to the truth.

Social constructionism advocates that facts are culturally derived and that meaning is established within a tradition. If individuals remain within one tradition, one pattern of activity or one form of life, other traditions are likely to be considered less valuable, irrelevant or suppressed (Gergen and Gergen, 2004, p. 18). Knowledge, what is valued as the truth so to speak, is found within community and the language used within.

Extending this notion of community from an individual perspective to groups invites the consideration of how constructionist premises might influence research. A constructionist

¹³ A more detailed account of social constructionism follows in the next section, ‘Narrating social constructionism into civil service dialogues’.

research community would maintain the notion of values being vested in communities (Kios, 1998). Research methods of a particular community, would be constructed to validate the assumptions of a community. However, just because there are certain assumptions and truths inherent to each tradition's methods, constructionist would not suggest that the methods be abandoned. Rather, we must honor the contributions of each tradition, critically examine and challenge what is taken for granted within our own research paradigms and aspire to make sense of and use of the forms of data available from each.

Therefore, in keeping with a constructionist tradition, my work here draws on several sources: from historical and social content and contexts, the literature on organisational behavior, social work and many others. My inquiries involve individuals and groups, sharing their perspectives in different forms, forums and formats. I draw from approaches appreciative in content (following discussions), and speak to some relational elements of identity that have interested me and continue to draw my curiosity- *race, gender* and aspects of *socio-economic status*.

In this section, I covered the premises central to social constructionist thinking. I have described communication and relational activities as a primary unit of focus. I have discussed how knowledge is co-constructed and communicated through communities, where language is situated in context and tradition. I have also laid the foundations for the appreciation of multiple perspectives of meaning, given its location in communities of culture. Lastly, I have briefly described the implications of social construction on research, using an example of the development and implementation of a hypothetical Government policy and my own research considerations. Yet, social constructionism invites many more discussions. Before I consider its application to organisational behavior and specific areas of my study, I must speak more to its meta-theoretical applications, namely how meaning is constructed.

2.3. On Language and Discourse (What creates meaning)

This linguistic emphasis on meaning and knowledge is fundamental to social constructionism (Sands and Nuccio, 1992). Theorists like Foucault, forwarded that the power of knowledge has to be considered through language (Barry, Osbourne & Rose, 1996). Language has a powerful influence on community lives. When people talk, they speak of and through their knowledge, which carries a value commitment. These values imply or state a preference or desire. The very act of discourse and the language used to describe, structure and contextualise a relational experience creates meaning. Language is viewed as taking on and constructing meaning but from a social constructionist paradigm, has no intrinsic meaning.

Stemming from this view on language are two understandings. First, not only does external reality not dictate the terms of which the world is understood, but, second, we confront the world with languages already in place (Cooperrider et al., 1995). The terms we use are influenced “by the social conventions of our time: rules of grammar; structures for storytelling; conditions for writing; and common terms of understanding” (p. 165). Words, then, emerge in order to facilitate and support patterns of relevant activity. Words are tools that help members of a culture navigate and coordinate relations with one another. Words lack any specific meanings in themselves; they are inter-individual (Shotter, 1993b) and specify meanings only within that

dialogue. Ideologically, the tone of the words¹⁴ and other aspects of how they are shaped is an activity that constitutes a genre of speech, manifested in previous patterns or forms of words. We are socially accountable to these traditions of inter-relating, which can take the form of arguments, agreements, criticisms, justifications, suppositions, presuppositions, and other indicators of multiple perspective (adapted from Shotter, 1993b, p. 180).

Common indicators of multiple perspectives, like presuppositions, allow people to communicate without explicitly articulating every assumption. However, words in certain discourse communities or patterns of activity, forms of life do in fact require further clarification (Cooperrider et al., 1995). Social constructionists maintain that common assumptions are fictional narratives that create a structure around vague events that must be grounded in background circumstances. The framework from within which events are accounted can corroborate or refute the assumptions.

For example, terms used regularly in some organisational cultures such as ‘acceptance’, ‘improvement’, ‘acknowledge’, and ‘recognise’, acquire intrinsic meaning through the shaping function of language used in mediating relationships. There is no way for a person to stand outside of the use of language to talk about or give significance to “something” otherwise un-described or un-describable. In one context “acknowledging” someone is to say hello. In another, it is to reward them for a job well done. And in yet another instance, acknowledgement may be expressing or recognising a feeling. Discourses (power, language and practices interacting to produce specific ways of thinking) are central to this ‘policing’ and agreeing upon the use of language. For example, social workers, psychologists, or doctors could not do ‘assessments’ without some form of agreement on parameters or knowledge. Yet, it is important to note that the agreement upon the use of a term is mutable.

Another way of considering the impact of language in community contexts is to view it as embodying and maintaining a perspective of symbolic order whereby the terms within binary categories are valued differently (Sands and Nuccio, 1992). For example, one term (i.e. “male”) is “privileged” or dominant, resulting in the relegation of the second term (i.e. “female”) to a negative or subordinate state. “The privileging (or “valorising”) of one term, may result in the suppression, marginalisation or devaluation of the other” (p. 491). Recovering, evaluating or exploring meanings may be found in a process of analyzing text in relation to their social, historical and political contexts; listening for marginalised voices, identifying biases and giving prominence to what appears to be unmerged.

Using a group analogy, we can think of working communities as sharing a paradigm: common language, issues, experiences, understandings and assumptions. Gergen (2004) suggests that whatever realities exist, they are augmented and created by the language used within the group. What is taken to be reason, emotion, motivation or feelings, is secondary to the relationships. It

¹⁴ Shotter (1993) further details that as an intrinsic unit of this dialogue, an utterance needs to be considered. An utterance is always produced in response to previous utterances and bounded by a change in speakers or speaking subjects. These utterances are understood to be responsive, not in the sense that a listener comes to possess the same ideas as a speaker, but in terms of answering response such as affirmation, disagreement, puzzlement, elaboration, application, etc. (Shotter, 1993, p. 180). These responsive meanings can be sensed or “felt” within a conversation, as vague, unformulated “intra-linguistic tendencies” (Shotter, 1993, p. 180), which are amenable to specification and have meaning associated with a form of social life with a history to it.

is through the relationships and as a result of a degree of pragmatism, that narrative themes (i.e. the stories of life) and “things” have meaning. When relationships change, so does the narrative. Further, an organisation’s policy may change as a consequence or in concert with, its practices.

Now that I have discussed the structural aspects of language from a social constructionist perspective, I would like to return to how the formation and use of language influences community and organisational behavior.

Gergen (1998) posits that regardless of the site of activity, i.e. the forms of life of which science, education, business organisations, or governments could be considered, there has been a broadly shared belief in the capacity of language to represent or depict the world in an accurate and objective manner. But the presumption is of no small measure for it is primarily in the degree to which there is correspondence between theoretical language and real-world events that “theory” acquires value; the grounds for authority (knowledge); and a claim to objectivity (Gergen, 1998). Therefore, since every word has meaning due to its position within a language exchange, a single word may acquire several possible meanings; carrying traces of meaning from other utterances spoken in other social contexts.

Gergen and Gergen (2004) further substantiate this thesis that, in summary, proposes: 1) individual’s utterances in themselves possess no meaning; 2) the potential for meaning is realised through supplemental action; 3) each supplemental action requires a supplement, a granting of significance; and 4) traditions grant possibilities for meaning but need not determine what they must be (Gergen and Gergen, 2004)¹⁵.

For my examination of the civil service as a social context in and of itself, the importance of language has profound implications. If civil servants create meaning from within their traditions of culture, and these cultural contexts shift dependent on activities within that culture, then there are many possibilities for meaning construction. Meaning is constructed between individuals, within different departments, functions, practice experiences and policy perspectives. The possibilities for narrative and meaning-making increase when identity and the relational implications of those many other individual sub-contexts come into play. At the same time, common understandings may be difficult to achieve (Shotter, 1993b, p. 180).

Social constructionism substantiates that meaning is actively constructed and value-laden (Shotter, 1993a). Meaning is located in discourse and a product of social factors, powers and practices (Bruner, 1990). But, meaning is indeterminate. A word’s future use may take into consideration its culturally accepted meaning. But a word’s usage has the potential to be applied in novel and expansive ways. Social constructionist stress that the social factors influencing language are transactional in nature, situated in a relational context. Echoing this position, and by way of example, we can consider feminism, speaking from within the discipline of psychology. Some psychological feminists propose that resituating women in a relational context might mean seeking to privilege women’s experience in a positively redefined form (Gavey, 1997; Brown, 1994; Bodrib, 1992). Social constructionists would say that in order to privilege and redefine women’s experiences, the social factors influencing the language of those experiences have to be and can be restructured.

¹⁵ A discussion on action, supplemental action and meaning-making is detailed further in section 3.1.2, pg. 44.

There are three remaining and inter-related aspects of social constructionist views on language which I will discuss and which posit the following challenges and understandings: 1) “language mastery” may be impossible because of its ongoing potential for change within its situated sites of expression; 2) it has rhetorical features that live within languages’ multiple possibilities for expression; and 3) a strong emphasis need be placed on the power of individuals and their identities as voiced in narrative cultures of community.

Challenging a tradition of language as sites of power and knowledge means that no one can claim its mastery. Instead, social constructionists advocate a return to the discourse of each discipline or practice, reading its rhetorical features as versions of “truths” within a context. There then remains a dilemma in the character of dialogue, as it embodies an evaluative stance dependent on its speakers positioning to the world. What essentially follows, then, is the need for disciplinary or participant cross talk, for what seemed objective is no longer of simple social agreement and may have ramifications for power-influence on relationships.

Part of this constructive experience for individuals is learning how to speak and write with authority, so as to best be able to respond to the others around us should they challenge our claims. This learning includes conversations with ourselves- anticipating and speaking with an awareness of the possibility of challenges to our knowledge claims and being able to reply with a justification. Rather than merely claiming to depict or reflect a state of affairs or an external reality, talk and language have (or should have) the effect of moving people to action and changing their perceptions and views (Parton, 2000). Thus the idea of social construction is rhetorical. Language is not simply a representation of affairs, but actively changes the way people respond to a situation. As a consequence, language can change the situation itself.

It must also be noted that language is only one component of the multiple actions involved in relational activities. Accompanied by body language or facial expression, language is augmented by and contributes to new relational sequences. These sequences are akin to a performance, carried out in public or in private without the benefit of an audience (Gergen, McNamee & Barrett, 2001).

More recently, social constructionism has recognised the rhetorical aspects of construction. Here, the act of construction is partly a process of persuading oneself and others that one rendering of social reality is not more legitimate or credible than any other. For example, John Shotter (1993b) and Michael Billig (1987) have come to support the notion that conversation and language are critical to understanding identity. Identity embodies a special kind of knowledge, concerned with knowing how to be a certain kind of person according to the culture in which one is situated.

This situated knowledge is different from one used and acquired from working within a formalised set of theoretical understandings. It is also different from having persons demonstrate their “know-how” or abilities, gained from an experience. Further, it is different from having a practical, skill-based sort of knowledge. It is knowledge that one holds and develops from within a situation, social institution or society; the experience of relating within groups or amongst other individuals that according to John Shotter (1993a) has been “unvoiced” in socio-

psychological debates. The identity of concern to social constructionism and the narratives of aspiration and experience may also be “unvoiced”.

2.4. Power, relationships and participation

I move from this constructionist discussion on knowledge, language and meaning to one of power. Thus far, I have been increasingly exploring aspects of identity in large-scale organisations such as the civil service. I have reviewed how individuals might negotiate and make meaning in organisational culture through relationships and relational interactions. I have also made a connection between organisational culture, in which meaning is created, and the relationships, policy development and applications, and the practice dimensions that are existent in an organisation. Each has been presented as housing various dimensions of narrative activity. Left to explore is the element of power and its role in relationships and its influence on narratives of identity. In this section I set out to: 1) discuss social constructionism with regard to knowledge and its construction in communities; 2) consider how language influences meaning; and 3) consider how the acquisition of knowledge dictates the extent to which power and authority is held and used.

Behavioral theorist Robert Dahl (1957) is widely cited on his notion of power (Mumby, 1998) which aptly applies to the present discussion. He states that power is not something that a person possesses, but rather a relation among people. Enabling and constraining, it is the decision-making and change-mechanism process that becomes situated in the wider context of the organisational structure that provides the rule sand norms for relationships (Mumby, 1998; Barrett, 1992). Power, in essence, is both a product of organisational activity and the process by which activity becomes institutionally legitimated. Organisational interaction is therefore not something that takes place within the power structure of an organisation, but is rather the process through which structure is created, reproduced and changed (Mumby, 1998).

Power in relational and agency contexts is a dynamic that cannot be overlooked. Even in the most supportive, participatory and encouraging environments, power will always be a factor. To not acknowledge differentials in power, or even to neglect a duty to use this culturally and contextually defined power when necessary, is irresponsible and potentially dangerous. But, those who have power in the organisation and who want to envision a more flexible power structure, may want to examine the value of giving it up at times. Power may be in the form of knowledge, decision-making or acknowledging that not having power or control can be an empowering experience in itself. All employees may have the power of participation through narrative.

Because there are many communities and schools of thought on power, I draw not only from constructionism, but on behavioral and organisational constructions of power to give meaning to this discussion.

If we accept that knowledge of the world is the “product of particular communities, guided by particular assumptions, beliefs and values” (Gergen and Gergen, 2004, p.71) and that meaning is a product of individual’s daily interaction, than negotiated understandings can invite a variety of forms of action. However, while constructions of the world sustain some patterns of action, and some narratives, they also exclude others. Foucault (1978) submits that the narratives that are

heard in organisations are tied in with power and strategies to maintain power. If language and all other forms of representation gain their meaning from the way they are used in relationships, than meanings are coordinated among persons who agree, negotiate and affirm each other. Power is a dance between accepted and excluded discourse, the latter concurrent but sometimes silenced. But nothing (not power influences, imbalances or meanings) exists until there are relationships.

Social constructionism might view power in relationships as a critical component in the multiple relational transactions. The transaction is a communicative action or activity involving two parties or two things, reciprocally affecting or influencing each other. Fundamental to the transaction is the idea of reciprocity between persons and the environment. The interaction is a balance between power and authority, an individual versus a collective experience or even the nuances of the privileged versus the professional experiences. Perspectives of an exchange can be examined, not only for their valuing within and outside of their tradition, but for their power implications. If an organisation seeks to reframe and align practice with policy, new meanings of power have to be explored and generated. Ultimately, the patterns of organisational activity would have to allow for leveled power structures at the time when new meanings are being sought and in order for generative activities to come to light¹⁶.

Social constructionism thus places all organisational participants as important and valued contributors of knowledge; yet, there is recognition that individuals are not neutral or objective in their knowledge and that this understanding needs to be brought to the surface. Participation in an exercise that generates discourse: one infused with the knowledge of its participants and their willingness to participate, provides ways to simultaneously challenge existing traditions and offer new possibilities for actions and change (Parton, 2000; Gergen, 1999).

Marika Finlay (1989), along the same lines, submits a concern rooted in an understanding that the human subject could not be considered a central or primary object of study, yet needed to be a focus if there were to be a dynamic discussion on power and its interplay with relationship. The relationship between power and knowledge has seen some discourse as central to the “policing” of knowledge claims. For organisations, coherence, streamlining processes and unification has been at times achieved by suppressing differences and regulating discourse, best achieved through the existence of a power differential (Sawicki, 1991).

Knowledge and meaning are established in power relationships and for some, namely Foucault, there is no possibility of either objective disinterested knowledge or disinterested knowledge seekers. From an organisational perspective, a parallel might be that there are no organisational

¹⁶ Reversing the hierarchical relationship between men and women is an important phase in the deconstruction of hierarchy [authority in power relations] (Gavey, 1997, p. 51). As such, and as an aside, including and engaging organisational participants of all genders, in a process that is acknowledging, empowering and participatory means incorporating a change or a renewed commitment to the way work is thought of: i.e. fixed authoritative roles and accounts negotiated through different aspects of power. An extension of this line of thinking might see a shift of traditional hierarchical agreements. It might also mean handing over and sometimes handing down decision-making power- at all levels of the organisation. It may also mean allowing employees to take calculated risks within a supportive culture of environment: accepting the outcomes of rendered decision-making and relinquished power, offering guidance but acceptance.

participants who can be absent from the process of how the “organisation” behaves- that is how people make meaning within the organisation’s cultures and at various levels or narrative.

Power, language and institutional practices connect within specific socio-political and historical contexts, to produce particular relational and constructed activity and meaning. Social constructionism invites organisational participants to engage in collaborative meaning-making processes that may require leaders to suspend their right to exercise power in relationships. The suspended use of power may open up opportunities for more privileged narrative by illustrating critical relational sensitivities.

2.5. Narrating Social Constructionism into Theories on Organisational Life

In the introduction of this paper, I offered a personal experience on negotiating the overarching aspirations for excellence and the experience of actual practice in organisational settings. From within this framework, I have provided the theoretical underpinnings for understanding how narrative activity can be viewed in different spheres of organisational life.

Throughout, I have maintained that there is an ongoing but ever-changing impact of culture in context. Culture is often shaped by the discourse on identities such as race, gender, and socio-economic status. Consequently, a discussion of identity and its contributions to this inquiry is critical. The culture and construction of identity may be one major source of “disconnect” between practice and policy. The disconnection may be partially attributed to differences that yield prejudice, discrimination and mistrust (Billing, 1985). I stressed race, gender and socio-economic status as primary aspects of identity. A constructionist perspective acknowledges their meanings as relationally determined.

I then set out the premises of social constructionism as a meta-theory for understanding narrative cultures, organisational behavior, the construction of knowledge, power relations and how meaning is constructed from within and amongst relationships and cultural contexts. Social constructionism has provided a basis for an understanding civil service organisation as a relational entity in both a thematic (see Chapter 1) and substantive way. Constructionism, underscores the cultural, linguistic and relational input of organisational participants in forming the “construction” site of organisational activity. In these discussions, I have offered insight as to what participants might find important in negotiating a constructed organisational mission and its commensurate “moral or ideological authority”. I have also offered an avenue for its translation into working experiences (with each other) and practices. As a whole, I have endeavored to describe the social order of aspiration and actual practice.

At this point, I believe the implications of social constructionism on theory development and civil service dialogues, needs further attention. To reiterate, social constructionist theory stipulates that the social order of a given structure is viewed as the product of broad social agreement. Therefore, in an organisation, how the organisation functions and behaves is the result of an agreement amongst participants. In the civil service, in particular, the participants are employees, service recipients, politicians and other stakeholders. The agreement amongst these participants may be tacit or explicit (Mohr and Watkins, 2003), and is the result of narratives reflecting their participant connectivity.

Understanding the employment experience and the relationships and processes therein is therefore a question of probing “privileged” narratives within its socially constructed spheres. What follows is a discussion of the relational elements of discourse and the challenges they pose for study and theory development.

Relational contexts and organisational cultures are produced through discourses that are multiple, possibly contradictory, and unstable. Gergen (1998) forwards that whatever we experience of our own internal states, psychologically, is refracted through the social scenes in which we participate (p.10). Therefore, engaging in a study of an individual’s experience within an organisation is an exercise in accepting the premise that knowing or understanding the full context of this experience is improbable and infinite. Further, researchers are encouraged to imagine the possibilities for future theory formulation, the invention of new ways of framing human interaction, rather than to aspire to a grand theory.

As a consequence, social constructionism and its linguistic arguments apply “no less potently to our constructions and utterances we call theory” (Cooperrider, Barrett & Srivastva, 1995, p. 168). David Cooperrider and his colleagues state that to an extent, the primary product of science is systematically refined word systems (or theory). As a consequence, science, too, must be recognised as a powerful agent in the relational exchange governing the creation or obliteration of social existence (Cooperrider et al., 1995).

Therefore, the people who create “reality” essentially create theory. The observational terms and categories, through which understandings of the world are sought, are themselves products of historically-situated social relationships. Theories become the meaning systems of a group and have consequences for the existent patterns of social action. Social theories are ordered and re-ordered by social scientists. Social scientists create linguistic categories and distinctions that guide how people talk about life. Social scientists report, their own and other’s experiences; and indeed how people actually have experiences, simply by publicly defining reality (Cooperrider et al, 1995)¹⁷

The reporting of historical narratives, theories and sub-cultural contexts therefore governs what is taken to be true or valid and observed. Observation is the tool availed to all; researchers, laypersons, organisational participants, and employees. Observation is located within the conventional story, belief system or theoretical framework from which an employee, in this case, views the world. But observation must be married to a willingness to draw from the multiple experiences and contexts, accepting that data will take many forms. These may be forms such as media representations, discussion outcomes, interviews, literature reviews, and even the researcher’s offering of experience.

From this perspective, research on the organisational culture of the civil service, its patterns of social organisation and relational networks, are not limited in any tangible way. They have infinite change possibilities. Therefore, in the organisation, how employees speak to each other and on what topics are very much a product of the employees’ privileged talk and all other collective input. The privileged point of view is open to multiple interpretations, representative

¹⁷ Cooperrider, Barrett and Srivastva (1995) cite numerous authors on the topic of social theory and constructionism. See Giddons’ (1976) *New Rules of Sociological Method* and R.H. Brown’s (1978) *Bureaucracy as Proxies*.

of the equality of relational experiences and how they are described through a circumstantial or “situated” lens (Golembiewski, 1995). The professional ideal is also left open to wide interpretation, narrative and potential for fusion.

Accepting these premises on how knowledge and the social world are created and how the organisation may be understood has further implications for change and for organisational behavior. If experience, ideology and the substantive experience are predicated on the value systems, stories, ideas, beliefs, meanings and theories imbedded in language, organisational participants (and researchers) are free to seek transformations in conventional conduct by changing patterns of narration (Mohr and Watkins, 2003). And if people are free to seek transformations in knowledge creation, than they are also free to create new ways of deciding what constitute valid data.

In this section I have applied notions of social constructionism to organisational development and theory, to its specific applications to a study on civil service narrative. This brief focus on “study” has reiterated the promise of new knowledge constructions. Narrative and practice activities have been formulated as being key aspects of data. Research activities in social construction, such as data and theory development, are my next focus for discussion.

2.5.1. Social Constructionist Research Methods

Thus, social constructionism opens the door for research methods, “analysis” and meaning constructions that go past an emphasis on statistical reliability and validity. Steinar Kvale posits that if we accept a social constructionist position, there may be no standard methods of research (a consensus on what constitutes data, data gathering, collation, and analysis, for example) that correspond to the increasing, numbers of available research methods (1996). A constructionist position of considering the multiple research methods is presented in this section.

The richness of content drawn from several contexts (historical, cultural), encouraging dialogue and the production of narrative data, means that social constructionist’s “units of analysis” are quite varied, as will be the method and study outcomes. Encouraging the inclusion of multiple voices, their knowledge and expertise, simply as participants and creators of sub-contextual social landscapes, values this input. Regarding interviews as evolving conversations between two people and transcription as a translation of one narrative mode- oral discourse, to another, written discourse, the value of narrative is highlighted. Kvale (1996) warns of the dangers in devaluing narrative data:

“An emphasis on the transcription may promote reifying analysis that reduces the text to a mere collection of words or single meanings conceived as verbal data. The originally lived, face-to-face conversations disappear in endless transcripts and reappear butchered into fragmented quotes. The interviews become closed; they no longer open up a horizon of possible meanings to be explored and developed (p. 280)”.

As a consequence, Kvale encourages the use multiple cultural contexts as the researcher’s backdrop, and envisions the research method of transcription as a transformation (1996). This sentiment opens up the possibility for narrative data to be valued as a whole and to present findings as close to their language of presentation as possible. Doing so leaves some interpretation to the reader. The sentiment also invites the researcher to “enter into a dialogue

with the text, going into an imagined conversation with the “author” about the meaning of the text” (Kvale, 1996, p. 280). Meaning-making is then realised as an activity in which the researcher asks about the theme of the text and then goes into the text seeking to develop, clarify and expand what is expressed (Mumby, 1998; Rorty, 1982, Kvale, 1996). Interview statements and other data are not merely collected, they are coauthored. The presentation of data, the research finding, becomes part of the knowledge constructed at a point in time, but is also a part of a continuous unfolding of the meaning of what was said. Of research activities, literature review, data collection, interviews, transcription, it can be said that:

...answers open a horizon of possible meanings to be pursued during later conversational analysis with the interview text. The focus of the analysis moves from what has already been said beyond the immediately given, to what could have been said. The continued dialogue may lead to a renewed conversation with the (participant), sharing and developing the zone of possible meanings in the original interview. More often, the analysis will be in the form of an imagined dialogue with the text, unfolding its horizon of possible meanings (Kvale, 1996), p. 281).

Fundamentally, an accounting of experience is a reflection of relationships. If this account is linked to outcomes such as policy and practice decisions, than the most powerful vehicle for making change in the social order is through the acts of dialoguing and narration (Gergen, 1998; Mohr and Watkins, 2003).

And it is from within this sentiment of language-exchanging activities, that I ask readers to view this inquiry as a blend of multiple narratives: from history, literature, media, training opportunities, and conversations in various contexts and sites. These multi-contexts are the platforms in which individuals may describe their communities as cultures infused with experiences of identity. I now move on to discuss identity as socially constructed.

2.5.2. Social constructionism and perspectives on racial diversity

The number of perspectives and of potential characteristics by which people identify and categorise themselves and others is almost infinite.

However, one’s identity as a member of a group defined primarily by race¹⁸ or ethnicity is an extremely important component of an extremely complex identity structure (Gandy, 2001). People speak from racialised, gendered and social life experiences. In fact, in many studies, the importance and influence of race, socio-economic class and gender identity constructions on decision-making and how experiences are described, were found to be very critical to participants (Gandy, 2001; Rodkin, 1993). Following is a discussion on how racial diversity has been constructed in the social constructionist and social science literature.

¹⁸ The term ‘race’ denotes a group of people who perceive themselves and are perceived by others as possessing distinctive hereditary traits. For reference purposes, the term ‘ethnicity’, which is often paired with race, denotes a group of people who perceive themselves and are perceived by others as sharing cultural traits such as language, religion, family customs, and food preferences. Authors like Michael Omi and Howard Winant (2003) suggest that what is important about the social construction of race is not necessarily our perception of our own race but the recognition by social institutions (family, education, the economy, the state, and the media) of our membership in that race category. These categories are significant when they are constructed on a hierarchy from superior to inferior (Omi and Winant, 2003).

The social constructionist challenge to essentialist¹⁹ notions of *race*, and gender, offers an important, viable and practical rhetorical strategy for addressing racial and gender oppression (McPhail, 1994). “Social construction theory suggests that what we see as “real” (in this case, racial and cultural categories of difference and systems of inequality) is the result of human interaction (Ore, 2003, p. 5). Through this interaction, individuals may construct aspects of our culture, objectify these cultural aspects, internalise them and then take them for granted (Ore, 2003). Adopting a constructionist framework means understanding that individuals are not born with a sense of what it means to be black or white or male or female. People learn about these categories through social interaction. People give and are given meanings and values for these categories via social institutions, peers, and families. What is learned depends on the culture in which people live as well as their places within that culture (Ore, 2003; Schilling-Estes, 2004).

For example, Kathleen Nuccio and Robert Sands write that binary categories of difference or diversity permeate the social work literature but by no means can they “exclude” the oppressed or the oppressor (1992). In other words, the construction of these categories must include the insights and contributions of clients and their interests, interventionist and non-client observers.

Similarly, Rodkin speaks to the emptiness of race and gender constructs without their social definitions (1993). Grounded in “time and place”, constructions of constructs are also complex and difficult to define because their independence is negligible (Rodkin, 1993, p. 634). For example, the experiences of people who are poor and white versus those who are middle-class and black may be similar. The experiences of black middle-class people may be more similar to people of white middle-class than to poor Blacks even though they are linked by common racial identities.

Consistent with these notions of identity, Carol Gould (2000) submits that race and group differences should be conceived as initially ascriptive but changeable characteristics. Gould stipulates that the basis for membership in a racial group may initially be a matter of objective circumstances, of being put in a particular situation of oppression not by choice. To this degree, Gould (2000) argues that [race is]:

An ascriptive identity, that is, what members of the group are taken to be by others and in particular by the dominant group. Yet this does not commit us to an essentialist account of group differences, closely akin to an abstract universality where all the individuals of the different group are the same. Rather, what constitutes a relevant difference in social and political terms with regard to race and gender is not one’s genetic sex determination or one’s skin pigment but what has been made of these social and historical construals, largely by discrimination and oppression. On this view, it is not being black or female that constitutes the group difference but being subject to oppression as a black or as a female. This works the other way as well: the positive features of gender, race, or ethnic identity are also historical accomplishments (p. 4).

¹⁹ Essentialism is a tenet that human behavior is “natural”; predetermined by genetic, biological, or psychological mechanisms and thus not subject to change (Ore, 2003). Human behaviors that show some similarity are assumed to be expressions of an underlying human drive or tendency. With regard to race, gender and sexuality, for example, the notion of essentialism may be called into question. Many people are informed by essentialist thinking on these aspects of identity that attributes biological differences as central to the organisation of human society. Essentialism guides the way we order our social world and determines what is valued and devalued (Ore, 2003).

Gould (2000), as others (Devine, 2003; Frankenberg, 1995), emphasises the challenge of individuals attempting to throw off (disregard) or change the significance of a characteristic or bias, by themselves. To do so, may well “require joint [read collective/ narrative] action over a considerable period of time” (Gould, 2000, p. 4).

Yet the literature and explicit research on social constructionism, and its possibilities for transformed narratives infused by identity is limited. It is made much more expansive when the literature of social and counseling psychology, political science, counseling, education and governance are coordinated with it (Pope-Davis, Donald and Liu, 1998; Hardy, 2004; Crossley, 2003; Howard, 2000). I would like to examine how some of these schools of thought can be read in collaboration with social constructionism.

Psychologist Patricia Devine (2003) expressed concern over how people’s knowledge of others, gleaned essentially from inferences to ethnic backgrounds, is linked to other qualities such as personality and likely interests. In her study where she tests 123 psychology students for the expression of explicit race bias, she found that their quick inferences from group membership to personal qualities seemed unwarranted and were quite often wrong. Her conclusions, representing a perspective on how race is constructed, were that views formed without substantive relational information misrepresent individuals.

In another, but related study, Devine, Plant, Amodio, Harmon-Jones and Vance (2002) hypothesise that overcoming prejudice requires a lifetime of socialisation (relational) experiences (Plant, 2001). Social constructionism would suggest that prejudice and bias are inconsequential to the discourse on identity because by the very nature of the construction of reality, every social actor would have a position that biases their perspective. However, disregarding the notions of prejudice and bias for the sake of drawing on different schools of thought, the sentiment of layered and contextualised experience expressed in the psychological study is reminiscent and relevant to a social constructionist position on the construction of identity.

Research by Crosby, Bromley, & Saxe (1980) supplements the thinking on the manifestation of bias in evaluating identity. The authors found a troubling paradox in people’s professed egalitarian and non-prejudiced attitudes towards members of traditionally stereotyped groups (i.e. Black), and their actual behavior which often belied their egalitarian sentiments. Although the premises of bias and the afore-mentioned ‘prejudice’ are problematised in social constructionism, the understanding that situated experiences occurring in a community will have value for that community, contributes to, and is consistent with a constructionist perspective of the race diversity construct.

Also in the psychological literature, there are references to the amount of energy that can be invested in the activity of racial identification and perspectives about race. Referred to as strategic impression management, these are efforts to cover up truly endorsed but socially undesirable attitudes. Recalling comparative activities in social constructionism, one might say that individuals may tentatively negotiate and manage what they believe to be appropriate linguistic forms of expression on or about identity. Because constructionism invites perspectives from other disciplines to inform each other, there is a way to incorporate these psychological perspectives on discrimination, bias or prejudice in relationship into its framework- where their

premise would be valued for and within its community. This would be by placing those activities and actions as the production of a collective narrative, situated in its context and community, as potentially discriminatory in agency.

More recent discussions in psychology establish that race has no consensual theoretical or scientific meaning, although it is frequently used in psychological theory, research and practice as if it has obvious meaning (Helms, Jerigan and Mascher, 2005). In their critique of methodological uses of racial categories, Helms et al (2005) suggests that studies in psychology categorise race in a wide variety of ways from: biological characteristics of individuals as reflected in their physical appearance; as a pseudonym for impoverished backgrounds; or as a social construction that maintains a sociopolitical hierarchy. They contend that because “race” lacks precise meaning, its scientific merit has long been challenged as an explanatory construct in psychological theory, research, and by implication, practice. In fact, making meaning of a conceptually meaningless concept may mean using race only to describe differences rather than drawing connections between variables (Helms et al, 2005).

While psychology informs this discussion, so does political science. Discussing the highly politicised Clarence Thomas hearings, political scientist Jane Flax (1998) proposes that discourses on race, gender and power bias are largely contradictory. She contends that the hearings on whether Thomas, a black United States Supreme Court Justice should be approved for the Supreme Court, rather became focused on whether Thomas had in fact sexually assaulted Anita Hill, a former employee. The hearings no longer focused on the testimonies themselves. Race, sexuality and public’s perspectives were factors that drove the outcomes. Flax argues that the “hearings compelled the American public to directly confront their own race and gendered position” (p. 7) as it was impossible to apply the law as though it only had implications to an abstract individual.

The politics and science of race, has a historical component to its constructions as well. Smedley & Smedley (2005) document a history of *race* as 16th to 18th century folk idea in the English language. It was a term used to generally categorise people as a type, kind, sort, breed or species, emerging as a descriptor of the 17th century populations interacting in North America-Europe, Africans and Native Americans (Indians) (Smedley & Smedley, 2005). By the 18th century, race categorisations became more standardised and uniform, widely used as social categories for Indians, Blacks and Whites. Further, argue Smedley and Smedley (2005), race signified a new ideology about human differences and a new way of structuring society that had not existed before in human history. This new ideology was one that was needed because the “leaders of the American colonies at the turn of the 18th century had deliberately selected Africans to be permanent slaves” and needed to demote them to non-human status (Smedley & Smedley, 2005, p.18).

The critical concern of the historical perspective of race is its potential for many constructions. Race-based societies may perceive designated racial groups as biologically distinct and exclusive groups and certain physical characteristics become indicators of race status. Some histories of race hold maintain that people naturally unequal and therefore must be ranked hierarchically. Others are rooted in a belief that people have distinctive cultural behaviors linked to their biology and are innate or inherited. Regardless of their constructions, most racial histories

reflect an ideology or worldview that are culturally invented and have specific implications for social policy (Smedley & Smedley, 2005).

Accordingly, Flax (1998) suggests that in order to counter or challenge the domination of these types of Eurocentric forms of life, cultural beliefs and ideas and their reflective social orders, the history and impact of race relations needs to be incorporated into discussions of identity. In her opinion, narrative plays a powerful role in creating this aspect of the social order (maintaining one privileged narrative to the detriment and silence of others) and would have to play a larger role in dispelling uncompromising and discriminatory perspectives and re-scripting life stories.

2.5.3. Social constructionism on race

In the introduction of this section, I emphasised how identity is inherent to relationships and the development of organisational culture. People in both privileged and professional communities speak from racialised, gendered and class-influenced experiences. Social constructionism privileges the narrative activities of the speaker, from within his or her own life context. These premises make a discussion on identity quite critical and a discussion of social constructionism on racial identity apropos.

From a social constructionist perspective, how the notion of race is constructed has many potential manifestations. A belief in race as a biological or cultural “given” versus race as a cultural and historical creation divides most contemporary writings on race, racism, equality of opportunity and diversity (Palmer, 1995; Andreasen, 2000).

For many, race is considered a primary identity and identifier, closely matched to gender and social class. According to Palmer (1995), race either represents a real biological or cultural (generally unalterable) difference that we must learn to overcome, or race represents an artificial means by which societies categorise, rank, and sort people into social roles. A real difference, in attention to the construct, results. Proponents of the former concentrate on prejudice and improved human relations to solve racism, while the latter examine power and its political redistribution from Whites to groups that have been constructed as “Others”.

Social constructionism on race, then, encourages a move towards self-ascription (Gould, 2004) and a means of negotiating primary identities through relational narratives. From such an approach, skin colour as a criterion of group identity, understood as a matter of self-interpretation, changes the character or meaning of that bodily characteristic and hence of the group in relational terms.

Racial identity is the ascription by others of physical characteristics to persons as a basis for categorising them into groups, and their own interpretation of themselves as members of groups, i.e. their self-ascription of bodily characteristics (Gould, 2004). Narratives in the sub-cultural context create the meaning of racial identity within that community. With this introduction of how racial diversity and identity are constructed. I will further discuss how the race construct has been treated in the literature.

Anthony Appiah (1996), expressing a discomfort with any given identities, followed similar constructionist solutions to the race construct. He proposes the elimination of the category of

race itself and its replacement with a conception of racial identities. These identities would be understood as based on a ‘toolkit’ of options given by one’s social and historical context. These options are open to self-identification.

Therefore, the concept of racial identities has the distinct advantage of recognising the current reality of race and its pervasiveness in both Western societies and other societies, in culturally and historically significant ways (Gould, 2004). Despite their arbitrary and contrived developmental basis, race and racial identity remain central and critical categories for empirical, historical and social understanding.

For Donald Pope-Davis and his colleagues, the social construction of race construct is far from a randomly capricious enterprise. Race is a symbol of other social, political and economic forces that are constantly being renegotiated for meaning and reification (Pope-Davis, D.B., Liu, W. M., 1998; Green & Stiers, 2002). Highly contested and unstable within the counseling psychologies, constructions of race are sometimes described as simple stereotypes that do not go beyond a process of self-identification (Yee, Fairchild, Weizman & Wyatt, 1993). However, as we have seen, this construction is too simplified to give adequate attention or to be unanimously sanctioned by the scientific and collective communities.

Race is a contested term. Race is similar to other diversity dimensions such as gender, and as such, attempting to devise a singular definition has led to multiple understandings of race: as a mutually exclusive category; as simultaneously representing both majority and minority groups; as a euphemism for ethnicity or culture; and as a subset of multiculturalism. The multiplicity of definitions may have little meaning for organisational participants, until its usage is made contingent on the intent, history, understanding and context of a speaker and listener (Pope-Davis et al, 1998).

To reiterate, race may not simply be a biological category that is meaningful now, but a concept which “signifies and symbolises social conflicts and interests by referring to different types of human bodies... [wherein the] selection of these particular human features for purposes of racial signification” is always and necessarily a social and historical process [Pope-Davis et al., 1998; Omi & Winant, 1994, p. 55]. Following, I detail the treatment of this position further.

Jeanne Perreault, amongst others, posits that race issues have consistently been constructed as a problem belonging to people of colour: the “Others’ (Perreault, 1995; Omi & Winant, 1994; Pride, 1999). Through Ruth Frankenberg’s work (1993) with white women on race issues, Perreault examines the ways “whiteness refers to a set of locations that are historically, socially, politically and culturally produced” and moreover are “intrinsically linked to unfolding relations of dominance (p. 6). Green and Stiers (2002) and Frankenberg (1993) submit that racial identity is socially constructed for both white and black Americans, and that identity is both a given and changeable- diverse in complex, lived experiences such as age, class, family situation, sexual orientation, political values and experiences (1993). Further, racial identity is not constructed within isolated racial groups, but amongst the groups in relation to each other (Pope-Davis et al, 1998). Thus, the defining of a racial group serves to delineate other racial groups and determining, for example, who is a Black Bermudian, necessitates defining who is not.

Therefore, the race construct is difficult to typify (Omi & Winant, 1994). To enter a discussion on race and racism may mean exposing a perspective on race one wishes to hide. It may also mean grasping, perhaps unsuccessfully, for the subtle and complex vocabulary which allows participants to speak of their racial lives in ways other than unearned privilege or oppression²⁰. Grappling with these concepts illustrates some of the dilemmas that arise in negotiating narrative in privileged, private and public spheres.

The following citation exemplifies this dilemma even further. Frankenberg (1993) refers to responses to race categories as being along a continuum reflecting public discourse. There is one position which she calls “essentialist racism”, which is what many consider to understand by the word “racism”: a belief in biological, essential inequality. Her second finding was that race could be constructed through a discourse of “essential sameness”. In these narratives, individuals would purport that all humans are the same. Frankenberg (1993) constructs this perception as color-blindness but also colour evasiveness. She suggests that this perspective ignores the powers inherent in privilege, and “despite the best intentions of its adherents... preserves the power structures inherent in essentialist racism” (p. 147).

At this point, I have discussed a construction of race that speaks to essential differences in humans. I have also highlighted essentialist thoughts on race through references to proponents of it as a biological construct. I then spoke of the dilemmas in categorising race outside of historical and cultural formulations.

Another consideration in the construction of race is consistent with a social constructionist perspective. This premise for addressing racism posits that any one person may hold views or have reactions that fall into all of the three categories- a position typically articulated by people of colour. Termed “race cognizance”, Frankenberg (1993) submits that this dialogical shift is achieved in stages, over time. The struggle between race cognizance and power evasion may very well be being fought on the terrain of multiculturalism. This discursive activity clouds racialised discourses which call for a shift or a challenge to white people’s perceptions of responsibility. This shift sees white people as challenging the self-perception of racial neutrality, with its potential for the “neutral” to be constructed as “normal”.

Green and Stiers (2002) also refer to this normalised centering of a privileged “Euro” experience as the “invisibility of whiteness” that makes those who enjoy the advantages it confers oblivious and unaware (Robinson, 1999; Pride, 1999). “Normality” and “normalised categories of existence” are constructs only privilege allows one to assume. The normalisation of racial differences and inequalities effectively serves to keep individuals from examining how racial difference is structured daily and the examination of white systems of belief and behavior.

Frankenberg (1993) also advocates the interrogation, restructuring and transformation of these social existences, lending way to change in the material relations of racial inequality. Race cognizance would also involve 1) accepting differences as a strategy of people of color to retain cultural autonomy from white²¹ dominance, and 2) understanding that continued inequality is the

²⁰ See facilitated dialogue “invitation” (Appendix A) for an example of such possibilities.

²¹ In his book, “White Like Me” (Skull Press, 2005), Tim Wise describes “whiteness” or “white people” as those persons, typically of European descent, who are able, by virtue of skin color or perhaps national origin or cultures, to

result of racism and its social structures- not of the essential biological or cultural superiority of Whites or the inferiority of non-Whites.

If race matters are socially constructed and rendered problematic in their formulations, then so too must the terms utilised in race work. For example, the term *multiculturalism* has been used in importantly ambiguous ways, meaning different things to different people. By now it has some unfortunate connotations, according to Carol Gould (2004). The word itself, suggesting the multiplicity of cultures, is useful. In one instance, the term multiculturalism designates an aggregate or collection of different and relatively separate cultures. This usage connotes an awareness of an older dominant culture that recognises the contributions of the cultures of oppressed groups (i.e. also known as a celebration of diversity). Yet, opponents of the notion of multiculturalism suggest that members of the dominant culture are barely tolerant of culture diversity. The concept is essentially seen as idealist but unrealistic.

Other shifts in race terminology and intervention have seen the transformation of several related constructs. For example, there has been a transformation in the construct of 'equality of opportunity'. Once defined as a need to tackle discrimination and remove barriers to opportunity, new constructions of race intimated a need for more individual efforts to challenge oppression. This re-scripting of equality of opportunity sees: 1) changes in system performance at the level of the general public's lived experience (i.e. the public sees members of oppressed groups acquiring positions of prominence as systemic barriers are removed); more responsible media portrayal of ongoing events (i.e. the conceptualisation of blacks and crime involvement); changes in the social structures that have led to some upward mobility for historically disadvantaged groups; or a combination of these factors (Pride, 1999). Important is whether the public prefers and thus, constructs, a new racial policy.

Summarily, the formulation of the race construct and the terms used in its construction, such as "multiculturalism" versus "racial equality" or "diversity management" versus "equality of opportunity" or "affirmative action" articulate the designation of the constitutive and interactive role of culture. Racial identity (the construct of race) itself is open to plural definition. This social constructionist approach to race, cultural and difference allows the terms to be multi-structured, multi-layered or multi-racial. Yet, at a fundamental level, meaning-making involves social construction, as does its concomitant policy solutions. Politics, the social and political movements can be constructed as the stages and contexts for meaning-making. Moreover, whoever manages to construct meanings at the time of its occurrences, also structures the patterns of social lives- of the general public and of its civil service (Pride, 1998). I will make further reference to the civil service and its narratives in the following sections but will conclude this section on racial identity with the following thoughts.

Tracey Robinson urges the academic and non-academic communities to accept one fundamental premise, widely documented in the literature (Robinson, 1999; Ridgeway, 1991). Regardless of the unique and wondrous constellation of identities; and independent of both the indignities and privileges each person experiences because of who they are in a society that attributes, ranks and

be perceived as "white" members of the dominant group. "White" has no biological basis but acquires meaning in social terms and in reference to how white people access certain privileges in a racialised, class-based or patriarchal system.

values properties of birth, discourses cross race, gender and other identities and as forms of social practice, affect everyone. Robinson (2005) supports this premise in his article, '(White) Damsels in Distress'. He suggests that there is an underlying meta-narrative on race that values white females over blacks.

Consequently, discourses speak to the way in which people act on the world and as ways in which the world acts on individuals (Robinson, 1999). No one is ever face-to-face with someone who is just a man or a woman or just a black or white (Ridgeway, 1991). People are simultaneously a large array of other socially significant attributes (p. 368) that have been assigned a worth (a competence, a status) that has received consensus in at least one sub-text.

A review of literature illustrates several overlapping meanings of race: a biological one, with its association to visible and inherent differences; a sociopolitical one with its quasi-affiliations to biology, but stress on the sociopolitical history and experiences of domination or subjugation; and a cultural reference to race as being tied to customs, traditions, products, and values of a racial group.

The constructionist views on race challenges the "representationalism" or a determinant, fixed or intrinsic relationship between the words of race identification and the world (Gergen, 1994). Instead, constructionism encourages the cooperative and transformative creation of meaning-stressing the ability to "construe reality through language, myth, metaphor, narrative and other symbolic means" (Pope-Davis, 1998, p. 5). And in the case of re-situating civil service narratives, constructionism would stipulate that discussions on race reflect the agency-sanctioned definitions of how identity should enter the discourse. In this case, understanding and reflecting upon identity discourse is probably not adequate in realising policy and best practice pursuits that civil servants can best aspire.

I view these soundings on racial construction as a call for dialectical action in creating possibilities for increased intimacy in consensual "agencied" undertakings. I also view these constructions of race as an opportunity to develop clearer exchanges on the organisational responses to, and sociopolitical contexts of its racialised employees. Shifts in the definition of an issue, from that which is immutable to a set of constructed privileged narratives with their respective perspectives and possibilities related changes in public policy, are matters for further empirical investigation (Pride, 1999).

Going one step further, I hear a call for access to transformative voices²² (Green & Stier, 2002)-the discursive framework that acknowledges the roles that gender, race, social class, ability, and sexual orientation etc., play in the dynamics of organisational behavior and organisational culture (Barrett, Thomas & Hocevar, 1995). The suppression or un-acknowledgement of those who experience themselves as less privileged in any dimension are likely to hold a view that they are being silenced- and thus, not be active adherents to policy or best-practice arrangements.

Responding to this call for "transformation" is important to me because I have premised this inquiry on the understanding that a misalignment between policy and practice exists and is of concern. I have suggested that the misalignment between the two is as a result of at least two

²² Transformative dialogue is discussed in detail later on in this chapter.

concurrent streams of discourse- a privileged one and a professional one. The content of these discourses is contingent upon and influenced by perspectives on identity. Therefore, any movement towards the alignment of policy and practice, of which one avenue might be to promote the development of transformative dialogues in organisations, must acknowledge and include a perspective of identity. Whilst race is one construction of identity, gender and others may be considerations as well.

Now having explored the race construct, I will introduce concepts on how gender is constructed in the literature.

2.5.4. Social constructionism on gender relations

Like race, categories of sex and gender are also socially constructed in institutional contexts (Ore, 2003; Rajan, 1993). For some time, many women particularly in the feminist circles have pondered the effects of gender on their lives (Robinson, 1999; Acker, 1987; Featherstone & Fawcett, 1995). “Gender” most often refers to role or cultural distinctions associated with sex- such as socially mediated distinctions, perceived differences and relationships of power (Biever, De Las Fuentes, Cashion & Franklin, 1998; Moradi and Yoder, 2001). Whilst not always explicit, gender and sex identity issues often seem the sole domain of women. Yet men, as gendered beings, are also influenced by rigid and sexist discourses (Good, Dell, & Mintz, 1991). As such, the gender construct operates in much the same way as racial identity. There have been several schools of thought on how gender differences are constructed and how to challenge gender stereotypes (M. Gergen & Davis, 1997).

The traditional path is an empiricist one, still quite prevalent in psychology; this is an approach that favours the search for reliable and valid scientific evidence on gender (M. Gergen & Davis, 1997; Bohan, 1997). This perceived essentialism of gender, as something we “are”, rather than something we “do” (something that can be studied for the production of “objective” data rather than something that is socially constructed and undergoes transformation even during study) ignores the social processes by which masculine and feminist traits or characteristics are created. It also presents these gender “features” as immutable, downplaying the constructionist role and the impact of gender on the lives of both men and women (M. Gergen, 2001).

Here, significant is that sex²³ is the corresponding expectations that we place on people occupying these categories with regard to gender²⁴. ‘Gender’ is created and justified by a variety of societal institutions including the family, the state, the media and the economy (Clayton, 1993). Therefore, gender is transformed into a gender system in which men and masculinity are at the top of a hierarchy and women and femininity, are at the bottom. In a society where males dominate females (patriarchy), roles become divided by gender. Therefore, these essentialist ideas about gender influence the way people are sorted into social positions; and have consequences for how men and women access opportunities, labour division and the assignment of value for work (Clayton, 1993; Jackson, 1992).

Criticised as objectifying participants by removing them from their “real life” situations, and thus not contributing to the solution of practical problems, essentialist beliefs and empirical methods

²³ Ore (2003) defines ‘sex’ as the genetic (and sometimes scientific) determination of male and female.

²⁴ Ore (2003) defines ‘gender’ as the socially defined roles expected of males and females.

have given rise to alternative thoughts and methods on gender²⁵. Of these alternatives are perspectives that emphasise: the standpoint of a speaker; knowledge-gathering seen as a personal activity; and the encouragement of women to speak from their own experiences.

Another alternative, and that which has framed this inquiry, is the social constructionist position. There is wide variance on gender scholarship and their positions towards constructionism. Mary Gergen & Sarah Davis (1997) describe the broadly accepted themes, which are next presented.

Consistent with central constructionism is that “facts” are dependent upon the language communities that have created and sustained them (M. Gergen & Davis, 1997). In this respect, all forms of naming, including “seemingly basic biological categories, such as the female-male distinction” are social constructions (M. Gergen & Davis, 1997, p. 5).

Second, people generate truth from languages available to them (M. Gergen and Davis, 1997). Accepting this premise means that we generally agree that any “fact” about the world depends upon the language within which it is expressed. Words create how we perceive the world and their uses are open to challenge and reconstruction. From this perspective, Gergen and Davis suggest that a constructionist might challenge the notion of polarities between the sexes and even whether categories of gender distinctions are the most relevant units of study (1997).

Further constructionist positions on gender imply that any type of description of the nature of reality is dependent upon the historical and cultural location of that description. Nurius and Franklin (1998) point out that gender is both a concept and a set of socially constructed relationships, which are produced and reproduced through people’s actions. It is an important construct because gender touches the lives of every individual (Gergen & Davis, 1997; Moradi & Yoder, 2001). As rationale for and outcome of relationships and ideas, gender emerges from social and historical contexts and forms a structural context that deeply infuses and shapes people’s understandings of what is ‘normal’.

To acknowledging the multiplicity of worldviews is to accept the premise that different versions of gender realities are situated in time and place. “Creating conditions wherein separate parties can find opportunities for mutuality, tolerance and compromise” (M. Gergen & Davis, 1997, p. 7) then becomes an objective in gender work. Taking advantage of these opportunities may also mean challenging value and ethical considerations that have consequences for what are presented as facts. Gender through a social constructionist lens recognises the self as embedded in community, part of and constructing cultural constraints; inviting and creating new understandings of cultural life, through reflection, affirmation and ongoing regeneration.

2.5.4a. Gender Relations in Organisation

There are messages and meanings for all participants when we consider gender and its constructions in organisational communities.

Notions of gender are complex. They are typified as: 1) a concern for gender inequalities and the ways and means by which women are oppressed by patriarchal systems of inequality; 2) the need

²⁵ Mary Gergen and Sara Davis (Eds.), *Towards A New Psychology of Gender* (1997) conduct a thorough analysis of feminist scholarship and research approaches.

to acknowledge the individual experiences of men; and 3) a need for rigorous critique of how the roots of traditional research and its claims of objective, scientific methods and findings may have meaning in one community but also may contribute to and sustain an essentialist construction of gender difference (Biever et al, 1998, Harlow & Hearn, 1995).

Of each of these constructions, but primarily the first, those concerned are encouraged to take into account a society's belief system concerning accepted role patterns and behaviors that have been prescribed for males and females. Particularly limiting for women, in some instances, interventions could reinforce stereotypical communication patterns or reinforce existing inequitable power relations. For example, as briefly discussed above, men have typically been constructed as wage earners, rational, logical, controlling and in control. Females may be conceived as emotional, catty, or nurturing. From an organisational behavioral perspective, these notions acquire significance because membership and gender group identity affect processes organised along hierarchies and power differentials (Ely, 1995; Johnson, 1994).

In the scenarios described above, there are messages for participants of both sexes in areas of civil service work. Civil service work is characterised by bureaucracy, mastery of knowledge, emotional control and controlling, unilateral decision processes, autonomy, "self-management and detached collectivism have become firmly seated as masculine gender ideals" (Davies, 2000, p. 348). These gender ideals have consequences for women, but for men as well.

Sexism, the natural outreach of these binary constructions, categorisations, and differential power relations reserves virtues for men and the devaluing of women by both men and women. In this way, the premises have concern and influence for men too. Organisations can become institutionalised systems of inequity based on biological sex. Of androcentricism, whereby individuals respond to men as "humans" and women as "others", Robinson (1993) offers that:

Within a patriarchal system, men tend to have advantage conferred upon them due to their prescribed rank. Patriarchy interlocks with power and privilege, and sex, as an ascribed status, is elevated as a primary status trait. This system is inherently unjust because biological gender is immutable; nonetheless, it dictates how people are valued (p. 6).

The second premise, the need to acknowledge the experience of men and how that experience is constructed, encourages a reflection on patriarchy. Patriarchy does not, in and of itself, bestow power on all men and ultimately deny all women. However, research on men's perceptions of requisite management characteristics provides ample evidence in favor of stereotypically masculine attributes (Ely, 1995; Heilman, Block, Martell & Simon, 1989). Women may also hold perspectives that value male characteristics (even when they see these characteristics as residing in women who have adopted male practices and techniques in order to gain acceptance in male-dominated work settings). This sentiment applies to the third premise of how research, if not opened to critique of its methods, may prescribe to, and re-scribe essentialist perspectives of gender.

Related to these notions of how constructions of identity have consequences for both sexes, Robinson refers to another way in which alternative constructs of masculinity and femininity are excluded (1999). The confines of "masculinity" and "femininity" have made some men unable to comfortably experience and express a full range of emotions, such as fear, dependency, and

uncertainty. So while sexism grants some men power and unearned privilege, it simultaneously victimises them. “A system of privilege based on inequity eventually levies a toll on all incumbents” (Robinson, 1999). And for both men and women, constructs of masculinity and femininity deny the multiple identities of women and men (Harlow & Hearn, 1995).

Summarily, it is not only men who maintain patriarchy (nor whites whom maintain racial oppression, for that matter). Not all men share the advantage of being economically privileged or feeling powerful.

Race and gender are identities that amongst others influence the discourse of organisational behavior and practice. Constructions of identity mediate how people in organisations create or diverge on what has meaning for them. Aligning policy and practice may very well involve an exercise in exploring how narratives on identity and difference converge and diverge. Closely aligned with narratives of gender, are narratives of socio-economic status. I shall now turn to a discussion of the construction of class.

2.5.5. Social constructionism on 'social class' and other socio-economic constitutions

Ore (2003) writes that categories of social class are constructed within institutional contexts, just as are race and gender. Although ‘social class’ may be viewed as “a result of how much income (wages and salaries from earnings and investments) and wealth (the total amount of valuable goods) a person possesses, it is in fact more than this” (Ore, 2003, p. 10). What class an individual belongs to is determined by how much money the person has or the material possessions he or she owns, as well as by the institutions of our society, including government policies and the structuring of the economy (Ore, 2003). For example, a policy on poverty may affect the access of some individuals to financial assistance or other resources. Simultaneously, by establishing who is poor, social institutions function to establish who is wealthy, who is middle-class and so on.

For example, class elitism is a function of discourses regarding the appropriateness of material acquisition as representative of both self-worth and status. To be poor in the United States does not mean a dearth of rich spiritual, social and intellectual resources. But being poor does mean having a “tougher” life with much greater vulnerability to institutionalised systems: police, health services, courts, and schools. In Bermuda, an income of \$35,831 classifies a household at the margins of poverty (‘near poor’)²⁶; and a single parent family struggles to manage on this income. A solidly ‘middle-class’ working professional could be very near poverty if he or she lives close to the margins of their income.

Class can be measured in the way people dress, where they live, how they relate to each other (with deference, significance or other types of acknowledgement), life styles and experiences (by choice or by birth), occupation, wealth, levels of education, types of schooling.

Multiple citations on race, gender, and class propose that these identities are critical to individuals. As well, their influence and contributions to meaning-making and context can not be separated from each other (Rodkin, 1993; Kobayashi, 2003; McPhail, 1994). The term *class* is generally indicative of income or monetary worth, which may give rise to other indicators (i.e.

²⁶ As at 2000 (Bermuda Census on Population and Housing).

geographic area, type of employment, level of education). Class is therefore as highly situated as other identities and the same social constructionist interpretations apply.

As such, *class* is difficult to characterise. Its situatedness is not limited to monetary influences alone. When I began this study, I attempted to consider incomes and pay scales as determinants of socio-economic class. But what I came to recognise was that “class” can be valued and evaluated in many inconclusive ways.

Social class is highly vulnerable to socio-cultural contexts. This means that remaining consistent to social constructionist thinking involves a process of inquiry and a presentation of participant narratives that is as reflective of the stories they tell, as is possible, leaving the offerings and identities to be interpreted and created by the reader as he or she experiences them.

It is probably unfair to attempt to classify “class” just as it has been a challenge to describe the multiple ways in which race and gender are constructed. What is contingent to understanding the material aspects of identity is their role in narrative representations and activities, to which I shall now turn attention.

2.6. Moving Privilege: From Social Constructionism to Narrative Representations and Activities

I have reviewed the prevailing thoughts on how identity can be better read through an understanding of many frameworks and in many contexts. I have thus far presented the foundations of social constructionist thought and its regard for linguistic practices, its impact on the construction of identity. Each has implications for organisational development theory and practice.

I highlighted how social constructionism suggests much about the intersection of race, class and gender relations. To be expected, these discoveries warranted further formulation. No one particular aspect of diversity can be categorically defined. But this also sets the stage for a melee of narrative representations and activities that are constructed through relational activities.

At this point, I wish to impress upon readers the importance of the historical and cultural context of where and how meanings for diversity and identity are constructed. Yet, identity as experienced in organisations, particularly in the relationally interactive spheres, can be infused through the policies and other knowledge bases. ‘Identity’ is used to develop best practice narrative. Unpacking the privilege of these narratives, and introducing alternative narratives to a collective forum- an organisational culture- could be dissonance-provoking (Robinson, 1999). This may be because privilege narratives, presenting themselves as either personal or collective knowledge claims, have been allowed to be constructed. They have been allowed to exist without challenges to identity and potentially in the absence of an accurate understanding of the relational dynamics. I now discuss how the language of socially-constructed identities comes into existence in organisations.

2.6.1. An explanation of narrative

Knowledge claims (substantive social theories, policies or statements of best practice), be they feminist, postmodernist, post-structuralist, or social constructionist perspectives, acquire validity

through narrative creation. The narrative account is morally and empirically relevant. It reflects and impacts the social order as directly observed by its actors.

Narrative is a linguistic phenomena typically spoken or written but not exclusive of pictorial or other media (Gergen, 1998, p.1). A broad-based accounting of narrative activities could include parts of dialogues, discussions, and discourse, through to full conventional storying. In its many forms, narrative is a primary focus of social constructionism. The premises and traditions of social constructionism take form through narrative to the extent that it is argued that nothing acquires meaning until it participates in a domain of discourse (Gergen, 1998). Gergen (1998) writes that:

Narrative accounting in the present era gains its character from longstanding traditions of storytelling, oral history, accounts of personal memory, and a variety of literary genres (including historical writing, the novel and scientific accounts of cross-time change).

Therefore, narrative becomes social knowledge, which is value-laden, historically and culturally influenced. It may be observable and empirically documented, but it may also be relegated to the private speech of the mind²⁷. What becomes social knowledge, from a social constructionist perspective, is that which enters the domain of the collective: that which is shared, created, maintained and utilised by human participants, i.e. communities of employees, families or countries. The dialogue that is co-created determines a reality that becomes the knowledge base from which theory is derived.

2.6.2. Drawing from and encouraging narrative in multiple contexts

I have briefly summarised how we can draw from narrative activities in multiple contexts to inquire about relationships in organisations. The discussion indicates that just as there are many ways that knowledge is constructed through narrative activities, there are many ways to approach an inquiry through narrative activities. Long acknowledged are the complex inter-weavings of methodology, epistemological assumptions, value groundings and the nature of understanding generated through different forms of inquiry (Franklin, 1997). As narratives extend into the textual realms of human research, they necessarily lend themselves to the qualitative research approaches (Denzin, 1994; Kvale, 1994, 1995, & 1996). I next present some final considerations from the literature on the influence of narrative in individual's lived experience.

Recognising the profound role of talk and texts in everyday life is the first step in analyzing the interrelated set of texts, and "the production, dissemination, and reception that brings an object into being" (Phillips & Hardy, 2002, p. 3). The literature review thus far has revealed that social reality is produced and made real through discourses; and social interactions cannot fully be understood without reference to the discourses that give them meaning.

Therefore, a critical inquiry requires a thorough exploration of discourse as a representation of the realities participants choose to share (Schwandt, 1990). This exploration, a constructive process, incurs a systematic and thorough review of texts and contexts: the historical and social context, by which we refer to particular actors, relationships and practices that characterise the situation under study; the environments in which interaction is structured; and the

²⁷ Narrative is generally consigned to the domain of discourse, keeping in mind that individuals can talk to themselves (i.e. self-talk) as well as each other.

communications within the subtext (by way of example of drawing on multiple texts, Box 2 explains the relevance of and describes the historical and cultural text of Bermuda). Nelson Phillips and Cynthia Hardy submit that we can never focus on a single text because discourse in all of its manifestations, can never be found in their entirety (2002). The possibilities are infinite and change with each transaction over time- it is the interrelation between texts, changes in and new textual forms and systems of their distribution that constitute a discourse.

Box 2

Bermuda as a sub-cultural context for civil service work: In a land, not far away, rests a tiny island...

This study responds to a call for creative and more multi-dimensional research. The discussions on Bermuda which are interspersed amongst the literature review, detail Bermuda's social and historical text, and its role in creating the social lives and identities of its civil servant participants. This discussion and following represents the distal context²⁸ of the study such as: social class, ethnic composition of the participants, the institutions or sites where discourse occurs, and the ecological, regional and cultural settings (Wetherall, 2001).

If I am concerned and curious with the cultivation of narrative and dialogue within contexts, as they relate to policies or relations between people (Gandy, 2001), it is necessary to consider the nature of the contexts in which people create meaning. I have asserted that identity and its meaning in relational contexts is situational and complex. Identity is a function of a historical, social and cultural context and my discussions on social constructionism and AI highlighted the potential and need for research that acknowledges, promotes and advocates for multiple descriptions of data that include historical narratives, descriptions of cultural contexts, and narratives of sub-cultural contexts. Therefore, a study of contexts calls for least some discussion of the contexts in which civil servants function in Bermuda and make meaning.

Narratives of Bermuda

Bermuda is a small island located some 1050 kilometers off the U.S. east coast, approximately two hours by jet from New York City. The Island has a population of roughly 62,049, roughly 55 percent of who are black, 35 percent white²⁹ and 10 percent of mixed-race and others (Bermuda Census 2000). When the island was first discovered by Juan de Bermudes in 1511, Bermuda was uninhabited; its first permanent settlers were Englishmen shipwrecked on the island in 1609. The British Crown made its first legal claim to the island in 1612 by issuing a charter to the Somers Islands Company that gave British settlers a right to land backed by British law. Bermuda was subsequently declared a Crown colony in 1684. As was the case with the colonies established in North America by British settlers in the same period, the island began to develop its own institutions of self-government. A parliament was established in 1620, giving Bermuda the third oldest extant parliament after Britain and Denmark³⁰.

Bermuda is an extremely prosperous community with one of the highest per capita incomes in the world and a low unemployment rate. The Island's prosperity is tied to the insurance and tourism industries, and foreign investment through highly favorable tax laws for both corporations and individuals. Bermuda has no individual income tax, corporate profits tax, nor capital gains tax; with most government revenue coming from import tariffs, property taxes and a payroll tax (Walker, 1995, p. 3).

Bermuda was for many years a democracy without a constitution. In 1966, however, a constitutional conference was convened under the auspices of the British Government at Bermuda's request, which led to the adoption of a written constitution in 1968. The constitution formalises Bermuda's system of internal government as well as its relationship with Britain.

With respect to Bermuda's relationship with Britain, citizens of Bermuda are not necessarily citizens of Britain, a situation that was somewhat modified in April of 2002, whereby Bermudians could acquire a British passport. However, Bermudians do not vote in

²⁸ Nelson Philips and Cynthia Hardy detail multiple aspects of discourse analysis in their text.

²⁹ Again, "white", "whiteness" or "white people" as of those persons, typically of European descent, who are able, by virtue of skin color or perhaps national origin or cultures, to be perceived as "white" members of the dominant group. "White" has no biological basis but acquires meaning in social terms and in reference to how white people access certain privileges in a racialised, class-based or patriarchal system.

³⁰ The following historical and social Bermudian context draws significantly from Edward Walker's 1995 treatment of Britain's self-governing territories.

British elections. Yet the fundamental democratic principle that adults should not be the subject of law without the right of representation in making those laws is preserved because: 1) Bermuda is largely self-governing, with only limited powers reserved for Britain, and 2) those powers reserved for Britain were approved by democratically-elected representatives of Bermuda's citizenry when Bermuda's parliament ratified the constitution in 1968. The Government of Bermuda may request the convening of a special inter-governmental conference with Britain to consider independence. Moreover, Walker (1995) submits, Britain has made clear that, should the people of Bermuda indicate a preference for independence, Britain would honor that wish. In this sense, Bermuda is "sovereign" but not independent. Bermuda possesses a right to define its own political and legal status and is autonomous in many respects. But, Britain guarantees Bermuda's external security and domestic order, and represents the dependent territory with foreign governments and international organisations. Bermuda is in practice as close to being fully independent as possible without actually being so (Walker, 1995).

Similarly, Goldstein (1994) states that if, in practice, "we intend to keep the dialogue going, our duty would be to fathom meaning- and there may be many meanings- embedded in the client's narrative" (p. 43). The findings may not fall into "neat", "exclusive" categories, but qualitative researchers are people, as in any other relationship, engaged in reconstructing meaning (Goldstein, 1994).

Narrative activities, both written and verbal, account for the structures of economic, political and technological power, cultural domination, or individual success or failure. Narrative activities can be representative of expressed or self-reflective values, morals, hopes or other sentiments. As such, they may also account for and explain organisational behavior, of which a discussion follows.

2.6.3. Narrative in the context of organisations

Gergen (1998) submits that by contemporary standards the ideal narrative is one which gives an explanation. An explanation is typically linked to selecting events that are causally linked; a product of an event that preceded it or was somehow interdependent. Finally, the conventional narratives have had a beginning, middle and an end; framed, to an extent by these demarcations. These qualities of narrative, both fictional and non-fictional, generate a sense of coherence and direction in life events. Mumby (1998) further contributes to this understanding and functioning of narrative in organisations:

Organisational theorists have traditionally emphasized the role of organisational stories as overt expressions of underlying conduct. As such, stories are frequently explicated in terms of their organisational functions, such as descriptions, energy control, system maintenance, facilitation of recall, generation of belief, and encouragement of commitment (cites multiple sources). For example, recall of important organisational information is more complete when such information has been related to members in story form rather than as a set of statistics. Stories are regarded as more salient sources of information, and are thus considered more effective in the process of socializing organisation members. Discourses, in general, and storytelling in particular, provides a medium for understanding which plays a constitutive role in the creation of organisational reality. Second, stories are generally conceived as a form of organisational enrichment, enabling members to become more enculturated into complex meaning structures of the organisation. [Stories...] enable organisation members to make sense more easily out of initially ambiguous patterns of behavior, and to provide a collective sense of organisational culture. Organisations are viewed as functioning optimally when there is a shared sense of values and goals, and stories help to expedite this process (p. 103).

Herein, the narrative gives meaning and significance to life events (Mumby, 1998). Utilising employee narrative as a means of developing a picture of organisation life is highly functional, culturally specific, timely, linguistically situated and infused with information as reported by

active participants. The organisational narrative as a whole is also unlimited in form and definition because although the participants' stories are equally valid, they are unlikely to be the same. Some will narrate their stories as progressive ("I am beginning to love the job I am doing"; "I enjoy the people I am working with because..."), others as regressive ("I can't wait until I retire") and still others may offer a stable account ("It was okay; it was a job..."). There may be multiple endpoints or sidelines to the story, or a linear narrative of relational possibilities; all to be understood within specific cultural or sub-cultural achievements.³¹

Within these multiple endpoints and possibilities for 'storying' is the experience of remembering a life experience. Using the narrative account in the present undertaking is a pragmatic way of describing the relational processes that underpin organisational functioning. Gergen (1998) substantively submits that while there may be "something" beyond discourse, to a large degree, what there is makes its way into the practices of cultural life largely through lived narrative of social and relational undertakings.

At yet another level is the process of researching organisational narrative. Viewing narrative as an initial story told by a participant, and recognising that mining the data results in a "final story" told by the researcher, is critical to social constructionist research. Narrative contains a temporal sequence, a pattern of happenings. There is a social dimension, someone is telling something to someone. And there is a meaning, a plot giving the story a point and unity, says Kvale (1996). A narrative constructionist view on data analysis might mean going back to the original story told by the participant, and continuing a dialogue with the transcript, jointly constructing the final story to be reported to an audience.

In considering how data are presented, Kvale (1996) suggests that a focus on the interview and the presentation of sub-cultural contexts may even make the research better reading, if the participants are encouraged to speak in story form. To this end, Kvale (1996) offers some powerful insights:

An author starting on a novel may have a main plot in mind that will be developed on the way. An inquiry, too, may be seen as leading a story the researcher wants to tell, where the key points he or she wants to relate to the readers are kept in mind from the start. In both cases, the characters may take on a life of their own during the writing, developing along lines other than those intended by the author and following a structural logic on their own. The results may be a good story, providing convincing new insights and opening new vistas for understanding the phenomenon under investigation (p. 282).

In moving toward the presentation of data, and with consideration for multiple cultural contexts as the sites of construction, I have been intrigued by this notion of reconstructing the original story told to me by participants into a story I will tell to readers. Again, narrative becomes relevant for study as a socially pragmatic description of the relationships and operating processes that underpin organisational functioning. For if the realisation of cultural life is through social

³¹ In his detailed treatment of narrative, moral identity and historical consciousness, Ken Gergen (1998) emphasizes that the languages of description do not reflect or mirror "fact" or "objective appraisal", but that these narratives are a communal achievement, acquiring credibility within the cultural context. The language functions to index a state of affairs for all practical purposes within a given community. It is a derivative of social interchange and finds its utility in social functions (p. 6).

and relational undertakings, and if as Gergen (1998) puts it, “there is something beyond discourse”, than exploring narrative for its life-giving potential in organisational culture, must be a key to discovery.

Participants in this process must be valued for their individuated attributes, and be self-portrayed and self-referential but ultimately, must be represented as relational in nature. As such, it is apropos to enter a discussion on how relational issues influence organisational behavior.

2.7. Relational issues in organisational behavior

I have paid a great deal of attention and made many references to relationships, relational interactions and their networks. However, I have yet to describe, however briefly, the theoretical underpinnings of relational understandings. I will do so now.

Relational theory (Gergen, 1995; Smith & Gergen, 1995) attempts to move beyond the production of theories that attribute meaning to actors within a context, to meaning that is devised through relationships. Relatedness is seen as a pre-condition, a grounding structure, from which impulses are acted upon. “Subjectivities and personal experiences are both outgrowths of relational processes and, reflexively, are producers of relational processes (M. Gergen, 2003, p. 8). The premise of relational theory rests on seeking an understanding of social life and the models for change in the generation of interactive conversation.

Relational theory has potential implications for describing the employee identity issues as a series of relational messages that are mutually produced, contextualised by an organisational environment. John Shotter’s theoretical contribution to the relational framework outlines this third form of knowledge. Knowledge can be derived from within a “social situation, a group, an institution, or a society, and exists only in that situation” (Shotter, 1994). Referred to specifically as knowing from within the situation, people “act into” a set of future possibilities as much as they “act out” of a set of past experiences, and in doing so, their actions are influenced just as much by the actions of others as by any other prior interests or desires (M. Gergen, 2003, pg. 9). Herein, the possibilities meted out by relational experiences extend to outcomes that are influenced by diversity, difference and collective experience.

A relational understanding of organisational life, according to McNamee (1994) focuses on the interchange of persons within a micro-social inter-relational process. In this respect, employee’s problems and the responsibility for them are not theirs alone. Instead of placing failure for a process in the individual, problematising the individual’s decision-making, resulting in evaluation, reprimand, scrutiny or dismissal, we are directed to locate knowledge and experience in the “heart” or core of the organisation. Such is the way of crafting new ways of talking about organisational life, news ways of directing organisational development.

McNamee (1994) indicates a process in which one might begin to picture the organisation in both relational and collective terms, thus shifting key missioning activities from the privileged to professional narrative domains. Deconstructing organisational language is an exercise in understanding how words derive their meaning as they relate to other terms or words within a system. While a common exercise in organisational development is to collaborate on value, vision and mission statements, the literature suggests that incorporating the exercise of “valuing

meanings” might be an important advancement (McNamee, 1994; Shotter, 1994). This process is a way of deconstructing language so as to re-script organisational culture. It is a process that places individual language within a theoretical construct that ultimately attempts to objectify individual storytelling. Thus, at the core of constructing and deconstructing organisational narratives is a process of exploring and transacting on and within narrative discourse; a process in civil service organising that is situated in politics.

2.7.1. Incorporating the political into relational narratives

As well as the relational aspects of knowledge construction through narrative, there is a political aspect. Mumby (1998) states that storytelling has been traditionally regarded as an apolitical activity, unless, the story being told is explicitly political in content. He argues, however, that stories are narrative devices which cannot be viewed independently from “ideological meaning formations and relations of domination within which they are communicated” (Mumby, 1998, p. 105). Reiterative of social constructionist thought, stories are produced by and reproduce these relations. Stories help to position organisational participants (employees) within the cultural context. An interpretation of organisational stories that focuses on their ideological (policy and best practice development) must explicitly address the positioning process.

Outlined thus far is an employment experience that is relationally constructed, has its origins in interactions with infinite change possibilities that are socially constructed, and are dependent and impacted by culturally contextualised conditions. The discussion has lent itself to an organisational participant attributing and creating meaning though a context. However, to be explored is the process of meaning making amongst organisational participants as a group. Relational theory (Gergen, 2003; K. Gergen, 1995; Smith & Gergen, 1995) is a means of bridging intra-personal, interpersonal and inter-relational theoretical approaches.

The relational, transactive and transformational aspects of social constructionism inform the point of inquiry where: narrative acquires meaning in relationship; and where the privileged individual transacts with the professional narrative of idealism.

2.7.2. Transforming organisational behavior through relationship and dialogue

Having established that the existence and attribution of meaning is determined by a relational framework, influenced by historical, cultural and political factors, I shift attention towards the potential for individuals to create new meaning together: the transition from a language of “we” over “me” and the action supplemented by a response that creates a combined opportunity for new meaning. Delineating this process is important to my study because I believe it responds to two questions: 1) once we have explored narrative and highlighted certain narratives, how do we make the findings applicable to everyday organising; and 2) how will these findings become real for participants in communities that want to move towards change? The process of meaning-making in a way applicable to everyday organizing and change, may find potential in the notion of transformative dialogue.

The process of creating new meanings in organisational behavior has been described as transformative dialogue. Transformative dialogue is a form of interchange that succeeds in transforming relationship between participants committed to otherwise separate and antagonistic

realities, and their respective practices, to one in which common and solidifying realities are under construction (Gergen, 2001).

Whilst dialogue, in and of itself, brings social constructionism and the “knowing” one has from previous relationships (including internal dialogue) into public space, it may have little transformative capacity. The potential transformation occurs when individuals go back and forth within a limited selection of supplemental responses (i.e. reframe, acceptance, denial, justification, and counterattack) until a new meaning is agreed upon. Once these conditions of relationship are harmonious, then the people within it begin to make “rules”, which then have value to the people who initiated them.

Transformative dialogue and its impact on organisational behavior, has potential in several areas. It offers an intriguing means of proceeding in practice, advocating for locating practice, research and organisational development activities into the world of action, and specifically to cases in which people are wrestling successfully with problems of multiple and conflicting realities.

In workplace relationships, transformative dialogue might succeed in transforming the tone and content of communication and relationships. For example, there might be movement towards narrative alignment for participants otherwise committed to separate and antagonistic realities. This might be a situation in which participants respective practices and ideological frameworks move closer towards more common and solidifying constructions (Gergen, 1982). Examining these instances may move us to locating conversational actions or conditions that have both broad-based transformative potential, and theoretical implications.

There is no one formula for transformative dialogue, save that it is invested in reflexive and reflective activities. Reflexivity and self-reflexiveness are core constructionist premises that may materialise through a process of unraveling for oneself the multiple meanings of identities, their relationships to other identities, and to other people (Robinson, 1999).

Reflexive activities are continual attempts to place one’s premises into question and to listen to alternative framings of reality in order to grapple with the potentially different outcomes arising out of different points of view. Parton (2000) proposes that reflexivity is not necessarily a prelude to rejecting the present and the past but it is to underscore the importance of entering into a dialogue in order to clarify what might lead to improvement and, in particular, to recognise that there are differing notions of what improvement might mean. This process also encourages an expansion on the range of valued considerations taken into account in any outcome and the need to set in motion dialogues in which these competing and potentially conflicting values or outcomes may be articulated and weighed.

Participants who are successful in being reflexive, are more likely and able to coordinate their experiences and activities on a platform of meaningful conversations- a pattern of interchange involving active listening and paraphrasing to demonstrate understanding (Schon, 1983). Highly affiliated with these increasingly coordinated actions and discourse, is the process of moving towards a jointly satisfactory mutual language via subtle substitution of words that imply support and a willingness to continue the conversation- if not necessarily in full agreement.

Gergen, McNamee, and Barrett (2001) treat the journey towards transformative dialogue as an organisational process. In their treatment, the politics of division and conflict in the organisation are normal outgrowths of social interchange, often an underpinning of organisational life. But the affirmative and coordinated potential for unity, cohesion, commitment and organisational community exist in tandem with bias, conflict, and abuse of power (Gergen, McNamee and Barrett, 2001). But the potential for re-constructing a downward spiral of narrative in the culture of experience exists within an organisation. What is required is the willingness of participants to engage in a reflective process that then lends itself to transformative possibilities.

To improve organisational functioning from a transformative perspective, participants would also be encouraged to develop the degree to which they “speak” with many voices, recognising multiple, simultaneous systems. This ability and organisational aspiration is improved through this self-reflective analysis of one’s work. It is also significant to the transformative dialogue process.

Relevant to a focus of improving organisational functioning, through increased understanding of employee experiences, is a question of what is available to confront the challenge of successfully allowing either aspects of unity and conflict, or the privileged and professional dialogues to comfortably co-exist. If it is through dialogue that conflict is constructed, than dialogue lends to a solution for treating contentious realities (Gergen et al, 2001, p.2).

Social constructionism, to this end, calls attention to the possibility that individuals do not have to live within their value-laden traditions, if they are willing to become and stay a part of a dialogue. And the dialogue, itself, has transformational possibilities.

2.7.3. Possibilities for transformative dialogue in shifting the relational experience

At this point, I have considered the applications of social constructionism to discussions on identity, and the potential for dialogue in the contexts of experience and aspiration. I have framed the civil service as housing traditional organisational behaviors and activities, situated in a sub-cultural context. In this community, there is the potential for co-existent narratives that are both unifying and divisive. I have also delineated a gap in the literature which calls for further exploration of organisational narratives- ones that explore identity and possibilities for relational, cultural, policy and practice enhancement. Finally, responding to a call for a way of making ideas on narrative alignment practical, I have introduced the concept of transformative dialogue.

These discussions have reinforced the notion that aligning privileged and professional perspectives broadens the potential for transformative conversations. It also appears that these discussions might promote a shift in perspectives on relational experiences. There are possibilities and challenges for this type of movement in work relationships, focus groups and in groups such as training workshops. Also to be described, are possibilities for policy enhancement and revisions to ‘best practice’ structures. This next section narrows that focus into a search for making constructionist thoughts on organising and narrative meaningful to organisational participants, from within the cultures to which they subscribe.

Gould (2000) and Hanofin, 2004 suggest that interpersonal relationships in an organisational community are characterised by their degree of receptivity. Therefore, shifts in privileged

dialogues happen when people become open and responsive to others. Colleagues would be demonstrating this increased receptiveness by being open to hearing, discussing and responding to individual differences and needs, as well as their cultural and racial differences. While fairly easy to describe as an ideal, in practice this approach may require new methodologies for organisational behaviors and activities, such as a theory of new training and policy development. Current research appears to be fairly limited in addressing the practical aspects required to effect change.

However, taking on this challenge, Laura Shue O'Hara and Marcy Meyer (2004) make a recommendation for increasing receptiveness, which is core to accessing more privileged dialogues or "keeping it real" as they describe the process. They submit that discussing how people construct perspectives on identity must incorporate new methodologies. They propose that focus groups designed to elicit a variety of viewpoints may be the answer; providing opportunities for people to explore relationships between members of different discourse communities. In their work on communication, they support a premise that identity, specifically tied to race and racial prejudice in this case, is socially constructed through interaction. They advocate for scholars to take responsibility in examining the role that discourse plays in creating and reinforcing prejudice in daily interactions (O'Hara and Meyer, 2004). Focus groups, the authors submit, provide a fruitful way of accessing how social life is discursively constructed in everyday talk:

Conversation, public discussion, and gossip are all important in the production and reproduction of meanings in everyday life... [focus] groups can be understood... as a simulation of these routine, but relatively inaccessible communicative contexts that can help us discover the process by which meaning is socially constructed through everyday talk. In other words, rather than regarding the group context of focus group discussions as a convenient (or contained) source of individual opinion, we suggest that the group context may itself be significant to the theoretical framework of the research (p. 27).

Despite their utility, O'Hara and Meyer report that few have used the focus group to examine discursive activity. They also highlight a concern that a researcher's role in the group might lead members in the direction of dialogue- a concern for researcher-presence effects on participants' responses that a self-directed focus group may overcome. Yet, unacknowledged, is that in every group, a leader generally emerged- whether researcher-identified or "elected" by the group. Further, a social constructionist view posits that participants will dialogue on and in a way that represents the "present" for them. Therefore, to have participants engage in a discursive activity that is self-directed but acknowledges a role for each participant (researcher included), the self-directed focus group methodology can be incorporated into more transformative, appreciative, and reflective activities.

Other researchers and trainers have been debating the way forward for organisational experiences that would help participants experience a shift in perspective (O'Hara and Meyer, 2004; Blanchard, Lilly & Vaughn, 1991). They have found that negotiating racial and cultural differences and perspectives is yet another challenge. From a psychological perspective, Fletcher Blanchard and his colleagues have proposed creating social settings that minimise the public expression of discriminatory or otherwise interracially insensitive behavior (1991). This might mean ensuring that participants in a training environment, who hold moderate or

“normative” views on race and difference, can express them. Allowing and encouraging the expression of these views may in turn encourage disclosure from others. The concept acknowledges the malleability of perspective. However, it does not account for the role of privileged narrative, its presence in safe places which are influenced by situations and environments, and its function pre and post-training experience that continues to formulate meaning.

A transformation in narrative considers the merging of these situational and environmental system concerns: and the coordination of action and belief systems. Therein, it draws from the individual inter-relations, the community context and constraints; allowing what was once individualistic to become an organisational core that reflects the individual employees. It is an attunement to the whole person and a felt understanding of otherness in its individuated modes, rather than of types or general categories (Gould, 2000, p. 9). A core of integrity no longer has to reside or be the responsibility of one individual. Receptivity as the inter-relational organisational core will mete out its effects. Anticipating the utility, McNamee’s premise sees the submersion of practices [culture] that undermine, confuse and blame being displaced by practices that acknowledge uncertainty, but centre on an inter-reliance of mutual respect gleaned from emphasis on the core (1994). The organisational participants have generated the core and live it via their global and cooperative connection.

In this process, McNamee (1994) tentatively advocates for the elimination of “judgment”, “evaluation” or “decision-making”, in their traditional sense. Practical applications of the theory might see the advocacy for maintaining existing organisational processes but making them more interactive. Thus, evaluations might not only occur between manager and employee, but with input from the team in which the employee works. This team might incorporate departmental partners, colleagues and external affiliates. The aim would be to have a relational and cooperative process rather than a judgmental or punitive one.

Noteworthy is that the concepts of receptivity and self-reflexiveness, described in the previous section, cannot be taken to imply or support an absence of organisational principles or laws. To make this implication would render the concepts inapplicable in a domain where fair treatment of large groups of people is central. Rather, as Gould (2000) expands, it would entail a competence in the formulation and application of laws, policies and best practice principles to particular cases, which is sensitive to differences in people’s needs and interests, such as those associated with racial and gender identities. It also, in my opinion, puts relational cognizance and privileged narratives in the foreground, endorsing flexibility in dealing with exceptional or special circumstances.

Incorporating relational understandings into organisational life is an invitation to organisations to incorporate conversation and interaction that allows uncertainty in daily work. It problematises a premise of sole individual responsibility, seeking a highly participatory approach to better understanding processes. As it stands, the discussion of this approach has been almost wholly theoretical. However, its practical applications may be realised in the promises of appreciative inquiry and its potential for encouraging transformative dialogue. We shall now examine the appreciative approach.

2.8. Appreciative inquiry: the application of social constructionism, narrative and transformative dialogue in practice

When I began this inquiry on narratives of organisational life, I soon needed a way of conceptualising the research from within its constructionist foundations. Appreciative inquiry (AI) came to my attention.

Typically considered an approach applied to strategic planning or organisational change processes, appreciative inquiry has these applications. But, its potential applications are infinite (Bushe, 1995; Bushe & Pitman, 1991; Cooperrider, 1996; Cooperrider, Barrett & Srivasta, 1995; Cooperrider & Whitney, 2003; Mohr & Watkin, 2003; Whitney & Cooperrider, 1998; Whitney and Trosten-Bloom, 2003; Whitney & Schau, 1998). Appreciative inquiry refers to the act of enhancing recognition and value while asking questions, studying, searching and exploring (Whitney and Trosten-Bloom, 2003). Its outcomes are most audible or visible when the questioning process is affirmative and focused on topics available to the people involved; and directed at topics, concerns and issues central to the success of an organisation (Whitney and Trosten-Bloom, 2003). Viewed as having a catalytic effect, appreciative inquiry advocates the merging of hierarchies through cross-cutting participation in the dialogic process.

The underlying assumption of appreciative inquiry theory is that there is a positive core of organisational life. Human systems, as in the organisation under study, grow in the direction of what they persistently ask questions about. An aim of incorporating “appreciation” into organisational developmental theory and practice would be to liberate the human spirit and to consciously construct an organisational future that explicitly mandates ownership of the positive core to all (Cooperrider et al, 2003). Its proponents centralise the issue of inquiry via unconditional, positive questioning.

There are five phases from which the appreciative inquiry approach envisages organisational change. Stage 1, the “definition” phase is where participants decide what to learn about and create an inquiry process. Stage 2, the “discovery” phase is when an inquiry is conducted into the topic and the stories and key ideas that came out of the inquiry are assembled. Stage 3, the “dream” phase” is where participants generalise their discoveries into an image of how the organisation would function if what they have discovered were fully alive in the present. Stage 4, the “design” phase sees participants develop ideas about the organisation’s socio-technical architecture when infused with what has been discovered. The last stage, “deliver/destiny” is when the dream and design phases are aligned with the organisation’s socio-technical architecture and AI learning competencies are built into the system. Table 1 details the five part cycle of appreciative inquiry.

Table 1		
The 5-D Cycle of Appreciative Inquiry		
PHASE	ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION
DEFINITION	Clarifying	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The AI process is introduced and defined • The process to be implemented is agreed upon by the consultant and client (guidance & support structure) • An inquiry process is created that is appropriate to the organisation- identifies qualities that an organisation chooses as

		<p>a concern and which represent more about what people really want to learn</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A plan for the interview process is created
DISCOVERY	Appreciating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The core task is to appreciate the best of “what is” by focusing on times of organisational excellence when people have experienced the organisation as most alive and effective • Interviews are conducted; usually by a group of people who have worked with the AI consultant to create the process and interview guide • Once the interviews are completed, the group has a dialogue about what they discovered • The stories and key ideas (exceptional accomplishments and life-giving factors) that come out of the inquiry are assembled • The group agree upon the major themes and topics that emerge from the interviews
DREAM	Envisioning impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Once the topics have been identified, the group generalises those topics into an image of how the organisation would function if those topics and ideas were fully alive in the organisation in the present • Stakeholders engage in possibility conversations- the organisation’s position, potential, calling and unique contribution • The image is put into words that create a “macro provocative proposition
DESIGN	Co-constructing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The group develops ideas and images of how the organisation could be structured (the organisation’s socio-technical architecture) to reflect the best of what has been discovered and created in previous phases • The group looks at the roles, jobs, and relationships, the organisational structures, management systems, policies, and governing beliefs and assumptions that exist to support the core work of the organisation • The decision on the possibilities for the socio-technical architecture and image of the organisation are articulated in provocative propositions
DELIVERY/ DESTINY	Sustaining	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To complete the cycle, the whole organisation begins to innovate to align the organisation’s structure with the proposed socio-technical architecture that came out of the Dream and Design phases • An ‘appreciative eye’ into the organisation’s systems, procedures and ways of working- strategy development processes, focus group methods, surveys, performance appraisals, leadership training programs, diversity initiatives... • AI learning competencies are built into the system so that the AI process becomes imbedded into the fabric of the organisation

Adapted from the work of Bernard J Mohr and Jane Magruder Watkins, AI for Organisation Change, 2001

The present undertaking draws from the definition, discovery and dream phases of appreciative inquiry. The definition and dream aspects of this study’s inquiry are outlined in the Chapter on methodology. In applying these phases to research rather than organisational change, I used a core group structure to assist in the formulation of the interview protocol terminology and questions (definition). I incorporated the discovery phase into this study by adapting and

conducting several training processes and interviews that highlighted excellence and the best of participants' experiences with regard to workplace relationships, practices, and policies. The discovery phase is also represented in the findings of this paper where the major themes, ideas, topics and life-giving forces have been assembled.

Serving as a precursor, introduction and summary of the study, I developed a "provocative proposition". The "provocative proposition" represents several phases of AI work and underwent several modifications, depending on its use. Box 3 offers one version of the provocative proposition, which was used to outline this study at the outset.

Box 3

The study's initial provocative proposition: decision-making practices and the reproduction of race, class & gendered relations in the Bermuda Civil Service

This dissertation propels inquiry in the areas of social constructionism, relational theory and appreciative inquiry, in organisational life. The Bermuda Government civil service provides an enriching backdrop to this study, for its Bermuda resident participants represent a range of diversities.

Organisational participants co-construct a working reality on the infinite basis of their experiences. Some of these experiences may be understood through a lens of post-colonialism, patriarchy, matriarchy, racism, sexism, ethnocentrism, equality of opportunity policy, organisational mission and vision and other theoretical constructs of human life.

What many of these constructs imply is that the issue and interplay of people's diverse identities is lost in the language and notions of best practices. Invariably, working relationships and decisions are guided and more reflective of people's fundamental beliefs about, for example, race, gender and social class, than of the guiding principles, the ethical and moral underpinnings, of the organisation.

This inquiry invites participants to reflect upon how their fundamental belief systems, as influenced by their experiences as, and with, members of different racial groups, genders and social class constructs for example, impact their working relationships and decision-making practices. The cross-disciplinary participants' "stories" on how aspects of identity, both their own and others, mediate between the organisation's fundamental philosophies and how people in the organisation relate, function and task on a daily basis. The participant's stories reflect not only their own identities, but of the individual in relation to other organisational participants within a co-constructed system. They give meaning to what is alive in all organisations.

Fundamental premises

It is human nature to reflect upon, interact and work from our understandings, experiences and beliefs about people. We acquire these beliefs from many sources, our life experiences, our families, our communities, religion, daily interactions and anticipation of daily interactions. What we believe about others, influences how we relate, and the decisions we make in concert with others. Beliefs may be an underlying factor in many organisational processes, such as interpersonal and intra-personal relationships and decision-making practices. The underlying presence of beliefs about diversities means that people may think about them, act from within an understanding of their beliefs about themselves and others, but it is not usually overtly expressed as part of the co-created organisational world. Beliefs about race, may be stated, but may also be transmitted through practice (decisions that are taken) or through a tone of interaction.

An appreciative framework suggests that to probe the influence of race, gender and social class relations in the workplace, inquiry is directed at respondents' experiences or connections with someone who is different from them. There are options as to whether the differences or diversities (i.e. race, social class, and gender) should be delineated in

the questioning, or whether respondents are encouraged to construct their own understandings of diversity. Further, if we want to expand an understanding of meaningful workplace relations, how race, gender and social class diversities, often considered the most prominent on a scale of diversity hierarchy, are experienced and perceived would be an important direction for inquiry. These perceptions influence equality of opportunity policy and strategy, and are fundamental, but must also be understood from within a context of other mediating diversities, such as ethnicity, religion, sexuality, disability, or political opinion.

I have introduced the basic tenets of AI and the way it can be applied to both organisational change and research, as in this case. I will now present AI's theoretical underpinnings to further an understanding of its applications to this study.

In essence, appreciative inquiry grounds itself in three areas of thought: 1) social constructionism; 2) image theory; and 3) grounded research. The social constructionism aspect has been examined fairly extensively in this paper and posits that human communication is the central process that creates, maintains and transforms realities. The tradition serves as the theoretical foundation for appreciative interviews and the notion that bringing all the stakeholders together is essential to constructive organisation change (Whitney and Trosten-Bloom, 1997; Anderson et al, 2001). In brief, social constructionism provides the foundation for three of the eight principles central to AI (Appendix B outlines all eight principles): the constructionist; simultaneity; and poetic principles.

First, for AI, the constructionist principle speaks to human knowledge and organisational destiny as being intricately interwoven. Appreciative inquiry presumes that at the outset, organisations as centers of human relatedness have infinite constructive capacity (Cooperrider et al, 2003). 'Constructionism' establishes that human knowledge and organisational destiny are also mediated by the individual and interpersonal relationship. Knowledge is built on an understanding and conceptualisation of the inter/intra-personal, through language and discourse. Constructionism "problematizes" absolutism and grand theories, emphasising generative theory and a communal basis of knowledge. Organisational leaders must be able to pay attention and understand their organisations as living, human constructions and knowing that stands at the heart of almost every attempt to change.

Second, the principle of simultaneity stresses that if organisations are living human constructions, than inquiry, in its many forms and with varied objectives, is joined with change. In other words, inquiry and change co-exist and co-develop. Inquiry is a form of intervention from which future action is conceived and constructed. If we ask questions, the very things that get talked about, are discovered and learned in community, set the stage for change.

Third, a human organisation is very similar to a good book (Fitzgerald, Murrell & Miller, 2003). The analogy that this underpinning AI principle, the poetic principle, makes is that an organisation's story is constantly being co-authored. The past, present and future stories are sources of learning and inspiration, much like the interpretive possibilities of a great novel or piece of literature (Fitzgerald, Murrell & Miller, 2003).

It is primarily from these three constructionist principles that my inquiry into civil servants' lives draws perspective. But associated with appreciative inquiry, its three constructionist principles and the notions of image theory and grounded research, are five additional foundational

principles (See Appendix B for details). Cooperrider et al, (2003) detail the principles as being: 1) positive; 2) wholeness; 3) anticipatory; 4) enactment; and 5) free choice.

The ‘positive’ principle is premised on the experience of building and sustaining momentum for change requires large amounts of positive affect and social bonding. The premise of appreciative inquiry theory and work is that crafting unconditional positive questions guides and is instrumental in realising success and longevity in the change effort. Appreciative inquiry bases itself on a theory of affirmative change actions and renders positive language, shared power, and the construction of positive interpersonal dynamics visible.

The principles of ‘wholeness’, ‘enactment’ and ‘free choice’ respectively emphasise: the value of all stakeholders participating in a dialogue of change; that a vision for a positive future is enacted in the present; and that people thrive in an environment of, and with opportunities for, choice and free will. The anticipatory principle states that images of the future guide and inspire present-day actions and achievements. Organisations exist, in part, because people are drawn to and share images and projections of the future. If images are created of where people believe they are going, they will organise to those images. The more positive and hopeful the image of the future, the more positive the present day action is likely to be.

Whilst the others have been briefly outlined, the constructionist, simultaneity and poetic principles are most alive in this study.

Returning to discussion on the areas of thought that inform AI, I can now describe image theory. Image theory suggests that the images participants hold of the future influence the decisions and actions they take in the present. Collective imagery, held in the stories and dreams of participants, is a powerful untapped organisational resource³².

Lastly, on grounded theory as a contributing premise to AI, Whitney and Trosten-Bloom (1997), amongst many other theorists write of a methodology that is:

Based on an openness to understand culture, society or organisation through the eyes of its inhabitants. [Grounded theory] suggests that participant observation is the best means of gathering data, for those who are interested in understanding and describing live cultures. It puts forth the idea that all research is intervention. Building on the notion that inquiry is intervention, appreciative inquiry engages members of an organisation in their own research- inquiry into the most life-giving forces in their organisation, the root causes of their success, and discovery of their positive core (p. 52).

With these thoughts on research and appreciative inquiry, the next section details areas of application.

2.9. Applying Appreciative Methods to Research

As we have discovered, appreciative inquiry is a “paradigm of conscious evolution geared for the realities of the new century” (Cooperrider et al, 2003). The act of appreciating involves valuing, recognising the best in people or the world around us, affirming past and present strengths,

³² Multiple citations: see references on appreciative inquiry and social constructionist theory.

successes, and potentials; to perceive, to increase in value. Inquiry is the act of exploring and discovering. It is to ask questions and to be open to seeing new potentials and possibilities.

Methodologically, appreciative inquiry builds on its constructionist premises, emphasising metaphor and narrative, relational ways of knowing, on language, and on its potential as a source of generative theory (Gergen, 1994 in Cooperrider, 2003). Appreciative inquiry diverts from problem-focused query, to strength-based, participatory development of theory, policy and practice.

Appreciative approaches to research might therefore emphasise making concerted efforts to avoid assuming or predicting any participant's reality. The reality that is shared with the researcher is one that is very much influenced by a myriad of relational contexts. Personal verities (meanings) are created from one's relational cultures, the relationship to oneself, and to the community, and "together shape the necessary story for one's existence" (Goldstein, 1994, p. 47).

Appreciative inquiry requires imagination and creativity in the pursuit of understanding. In a way similar to what is referred to as critical inquiry, it is prepared to grapple with ambiguity and uncertainty about where things end up; misunderstanding illuminates what could be further understood (Goldstein, 1994). The researcher attempts to read and make sense of the dynamics that have unfolded within a particular context. In a sense, these attempts are from an acknowledged self-held meaning structure, and from within an understanding that meanings and the text of lives at a moment in time are infinite, expressed within a unique relational circumstance (Goldstein, 1994, in part). The appreciative approach invites the impressions and reactions [narratives] of participants from a range of organisational situations- including voices from a wide spectrum of activity.

Methodologically, appreciative inquiry has appeal as a process of engaging participants in a dialectical process to explore and create meaning. A methodological premise proposed by Gergen (1999) is that change movement should happen first in the world of action, in the case where people may be wrestling with problems of multiple and conflicting realities (p. 154).

By examining these cases we may locate conversational actions that often seem to help people in going on together. This is not to establish a set of rules for transformative dialogue, but rather a vocabulary of relevant action. On any given occasion we might then draw from this vocabulary as useful for conditions at hand. This is not a vocabulary that can ever be set in stone for as meanings are transformed over time, and as further voices are added to the mix, the vocabulary itself will be altered and augmented. There are no universal rules for transformative dialogue, for dialogue itself will alter the character of what is useful (Gergen, 1999, p. 154).

Hence, engaging study participants is an exercise in transformative dialogue. To probe the influence of policy or practice developments on people, such as race, gender and social class relations in the workplace, inquiry must be directed at respondents' experiences or connections with someone- thus an interview protocol from appreciative approach, not only expands appreciative inquiry applications, but creates the potential for "best" reflection and self-reflexive activities during the course of study.

Appreciative forms of research stress the importance of sub-cultural context and the participants' frames of references. The participant's references are naturally pluralistic and if aspiring to organisational change, participating in the study could forward several potential outcomes.

However, quite different from using appreciative inquiry as a change process, change outcomes are of minimal concern from the study perspective. More, I hope to broaden the scope of research tools by using an appreciative process as a means of discovery. I intend to take its basic premises and use them as a basis for research and policy development. It became the lens from which I developed future-orientated questions that value and honour the participants' experiences while attempting to make sense of the process in which the existing organisational mission has come into existence.

2.10. An Appreciative Approach to Narrative Exploration

In prior sections I have reviewed social constructionism and its framework for thinking about organisational behavior and narrative activities. Above, I discussed appreciative inquiry as a process for information gathering, inquiry and strategic change, with its foundations being in social constructionism. I also detailed some thoughts on a methodological approach to research, using AI. What is left to be discovered is how one might comprehensively and specifically apply appreciative inquiry to research in a practical way that maintains and realises its commitment to social constructionism and constructing meaning in community through a 1) methodological process; and 2) with consideration for the AI phases of action that might best apply to research activities.

2.10.1. Methodological considerations for an appreciative application

Practitioners Bernard Mohr and Jane Magruder-Watkins (2003) document a process of data collection from within an appreciative construct. Their work provides the foundation for a four-step process. This process (as outlined in Box 4) follows interviews that are guided by a social constructionist and appreciative protocol and that as such: invite a diagonal slice of organisational participants to tell a story; query the best moments and highlights of the topic choice; encourage participants to reflect upon their strengths, values and contributions to the organisation; encourage images of the self and others to be constructed and imagined by the participants themselves; and encourage the participants to express their wish for the future. The process itself involves locating the themes that appear in the stories by:

Box 4

An AI-infused data "analysis" process

- 1) Mining the inquiry (interview) data for themes or life-giving forces;
- 2) Expanding the positive dialogue about these themes and the visions expressed by participants; and asking from within information gathered from sources and communities, as well as customised protocol interviews:
 - a. What do we hear people describing in the interviews as the life-giving forces of this topic of inquiry?
 - b. What themes are imbedded in the data and from which historical and cultural context are they derived and situated?

- 3) Reflecting on the potential for narrative, expanding the dialogue and continuing a conversation with the lived narrative by transcribing it with as much of the participants' words as they were stated, as possible; This involves asking the question:
 - a. What themes and life-giving forces provide a link between the types of themes we have discovered in the past and an image of a preferred future?
- 4) Creating synergies of dialogue, by creating and preparing a mechanism through which the data can be absorbed and ingested by others- "allowing people to take it all in and to react to the messages and meaning in ways" (Mohr & Watkins, 2003) that contribute to new understandings. Note that there may not be consensus in the presentation of data. This process involves asking:
 - a. What is the potential for a collectively imagine organisation or way of functioning that highlights these exceptional moments and locates opportunities for fusion?

Adapted from the work of Bernard J Mohr and Jane Magruder-Watkins, AI for Organisation Change, 2001

Drawing from the methodological perspective documented above, the data collection process can be multi-faceted, a collage of group meeting outcomes, training participant offerings and more structured interviews, guided by a protocol. The very term "analysis", from this appreciative and constructionist perspective, begins to imply that the researcher is an objective, impartial body, judging and determining how meaning should be constructed, rather than and more aptly as a co-constructor him or herself. Therefore, an analysis of data ("mining") is not so much an analysis but an exercise in seeking moments of themes and ideas that seem to resonate within and amongst participants.

Different from traditional research, what are often referred to as findings, become opportunities for narrative synthesis. Mohr and Watkins (2003) stress the importance of working with the data in a way that continues the inherent value of the conversations as a stage for building shared images, dreams and visions of a preferred future. For me, this latter objective is tied in to a vision of exploring aspiration and experience and highlighting areas of potential or increased fusion amongst the relational, organisational culture, policy and practice narratives.

Ultimately, an appreciative approach to research focuses on people as members of groups and their embeddedness within networks of social relations (Kvale, 1994). Human experiences and behaviors are situated and contextualised by their culture and history. As such, an adaptive AI methodology accepts the many ways of knowing, and empowers empathy as a tool for understanding. In making meaning, an interview or study is active and interactive, building upon itself in the creation of new meaning. It also draws from existing research and theory from the field or context from which it may have originally found life (Kvale, 1994). The data of an AI-based study are presented as a well-told story, rather than a mass of published reports or an empiricist collection of interview quotes (Kvale, 1994). And within this promise for AI research, rooted in its constructionist beginnings, is a quest for producing knowledge worth knowing.

2.10.2. Taking action with AI

It is at this point that I will specifically discuss the three phases of action that have been described (Fitzgerald, Murrell & Miller, 2003) as giving life to the constructionist, simultaneity

and poetic principles of AI. The appreciative approach encourages authentic dialogue and may reveal mythical aspects of a story. It may explore how some narratives may be expressions of that previously unexplored, and so less “well-formulated”. But further, and most critically, the application of AI concepts to research methodology realises several phases of action: “defining”, “discovering” and “dreaming”. These phases of action framed the way I conceptualised the methodology of this study.

The defining phase of an inquiry process is when a topic for inquiry acquires focus. I describe this process briefly in previous sections. I bring this phase to life in this undertaking by explaining the origins of the work, the process of AI and inviting participants to take part in an interactive process that encourages self-definition in almost all of its aspects.

The discovery phase is when participant’s experiences of their group, organisation or community at its most vital and alive point, are queried, and discussed for their elements of what made those times possible. I bring this phase to life in my research by asking civil servant participants to tell me a story about the best relationships they have had at work with regard to people whom they believe to have identities different from their own. The question becomes more specific when participants are asked to talk about those experiences in the organisational context, the impact of identity and what they understand as policy (See Appendix C for the interview protocol that was used in this study to query participants’ experiences and perceptions).

The last aspect of AI relevant to this discussion is the dream phase. This is when participants encourage or are encouraged to envision a future in which those exceptional experiences form the basis for organising in the future. I bring this phase to life in my research by asking participants about their wishes for the civil service.

The AI paradigm as a whole sees the exploration of a sub-cultural context that provides insight, via stories, as to how participants interact in their co-created social worlds. It is possible that grander theoretical applications can be formulated and transformed utilising the data generated by the participants. The appreciative approach, steeped in the social constructionist tradition, suggests that points of view represent a perspective, but how to evaluate them is dependent upon where the researcher is theoretically situated. The researcher, whom seeks to share understanding and to engage in a dialogue with the participants, not only has a perspective, but is active in the meaning-making process: both in the interview and analysis.

On the relationship between theory and practice, an appreciative perspective suggests that all facts, as participants narrate them, are important. Facts are situation ally-relevant. An analysis of the data is the act of exploring what is situationally relevant and may lay undiscovered.

A reluctance to avoid assuming or predicting another’s reality is another premise present in appreciative inquiry. The notion resonates with me and is value position I place on myself as a researcher. That this process of narrative interviews represents extant and potential meaning development is present in these perspectives. The process of meaning-making as collaborative and requiring participation from throughout the organisation is a common theme, as well.

As a result of approaching this inquiry from multiple lenses, I draw the possibility of exploring unexplored/unexposed relationships from a unique perspective. I am also excited by the possibilities of engaging in a dialogue towards new meaning, regardless of how we, as participants, make sense of interactions. For I welcome and I am eager to hear new voices on the issues raised in interviews.

I expect to engage participants in a dialogue that is respectful and encouraging of their perspectives. I hope to explore relationships, identity and implications for policy and practice through dialogue. I hope to hear of stories and perspectives perhaps rarely expressed previously. I proceed with careful attention and intention to engage participants in a safe, semi-structured, highly participant, thought-provoking way; offering opportunities to participants to be heard and to build relational understandings.

Summarily, appreciative inquiry is a practice in conjoining realities. It is founded on a narrative tradition, and is encouraging to the extent that it promotes the location and valuing of people's stories as "reality". An appreciative approach is underpinned by the notion that in every structure [system, organisation] there can be strengths, positives, and "beauty". If the beauty can be found, the question surfaces as to how organisational participants use it towards envisioning a new future. A response might be that not only through strategic action activities, but through research activities, appreciative premises can underscore and contribute to the construction of the ideal realities of shared meaning systems.

2.10.3. Appreciative inquiry and narrative on race, gender and class-based issues in relationship

In the previous sections, I introduced appreciative inquiry as a model for change processes in organisations. I discussed its basic premises, research potential and the meta-theoretical constructionist principles from which it draws. Prior to the treatment of appreciative inquiry, I detailed the multiple elements on social constructionism. In that discussion on social constructionism, I considered its treatment on facets of identity. A natural follow-through of thinking about social constructionism on race, gender and socio-economic class, is to do the same with some understandings of appreciative inquiry. The foundational AI principles of constructionism, positivism and wholeness hold much promise for considering how race, gender and class can be explored from an appreciative framework. I begin this discussion with these three considerations and then offer some general perspectives on the influence of appreciative inquiry on narrative activities and identity.

From the approach of the positive principle, appreciative inquiry may seem an uneasy fit with discussions on identity and the construction of discrimination that typically accompany race and gender descriptions. However, a way of negotiating the potential and more traditional leanings towards cynicism and a downward description of experience, appreciative inquiry would advocate a narrative on best relational experiences with people of different identities. An AI stance towards constructing race could underscore the potential for co-constructed and new meanings of experience during training, work group and team building activities and the provision of service.

Therefore, the constructionist aspect of the appreciative stance adds elements of self-determination into the research process (participants in organisational activity might be asked to self-define what aspects of difference and diversity are most prominent for them). These offerings may include the appropriation and ascription of diverse cultural and racial characteristics as well as the traditionally ascribed characteristics of the races, as matters of birth. Merging these constructionist possibilities with the poetic principle's premises may see organisational activity that encourages participants to tell their stories, from a deeply personal space, so as to contribute to the meaning-making process.

I previously referred to 'wholeness' as the AI principle which values all stakeholder contributions to a dialogue of change. AI's principle of wholeness in exploring organisational activity and its convergence with identity is therefore vital in structuring a training program, meetings and other relational and change-orientated activities. It speaks to the need to consider participants as complex, multi-faceted individuals, with varying perspectives and interpretations. Gould (2004) stipulates that some degree of change in [privileged and professional] narrative is possible, with the proviso that individuals must be understood to be capable of belonging and identifying with multiple diversities. It would seem that encouraging those perspectives to become part of the "activity" enhances its meaning to participants.

Possibilities for civil service work with appreciative applications implies that change communities not only tolerate diversity, but find ways of supporting and celebrating diverse individuals, compatible with the basic principles of respect and equal treatment. It would need to eliminate the favoritism of traditional and dominant "life" descriptions in favour of developing new forms of relational life reflective of the community's racial, gendered, socially-classed and cultural variety (in part from Gould, 2004). It would also ask participants to consider their most positive past relationships with people who are different, and draw on the best aspects of the experience to enact the future.

Lastly, on matters of utilising appreciative inquiry as part of the practice for change, participants would have to be allowed to choose the nature of their contribution. They must be encouraged to decide on the extent to which they will engage in a conversation, likely reflective of their comfort levels. Participation at any of the levels of organisational activity may also depend on the degree to which they have begun to script a narrative on their own diversities, differences and how these identities play a role in practice and policy.

2.11. Appreciative inquiry on organisational life: the challenge for practice in theory

In its relational understandings and objectives, social constructionism and an appreciative agenda open the door for "a constructive co-creation of the future in the here-and-now of inquiry" which is simultaneously the joint production of subjects and objects (Cooperrider et al, 1995). The organisational participants are both relating to each other as individuals within an organisation, but they are also the essence of the organisation themselves. Consequently, the act of inquiring into the relational aspects of policy and practice, seeking out those critical human aspects that can be silenced in the act of work, seems ever more necessary.

Developing and trying new theories of social-organisation an AI-related activity supports methodological activities that "put the practice of constructive inquiry into the hands of people in

living relation to it”- involving participants, researchers and theorists (Cooperrider et al, 1995, p. 171).

However, there is a missing connection in this type of thinking on organisational life. I have presented evidence that suggests that the actors who conducts research, develops theories and who uses its applications are one in the same. But this may not, in fact, be entirely true. If we consider my earlier premise on the misalignment between theory and practice, and a loss of a relational tone in policy, then we also need to acknowledge that theory and its subsequent policy development may be absent of the voices of the people who realise its practical applications. The co-constructed future envisaged in AI may not represent the simultaneous and joint production of subjects and objects, but of *aspects* of the subject and object brought to an inquiry at a particular time. I turn to an example to examine this notion.

During a 1979 study and 1980 related work, Cooperrider, Barrett and Srivastva (1995) noted that it became readily apparent that the general spirit and guiding logic behind the organisation’s growth was markedly different from the predominant bureaucratic rationality of efficiency and effectiveness³³. Somehow, then, the “collective” mentality brought something different to the task of management practices. An emerging consensus amongst participants in the study was that the broader, open-ended, interactive, responsive and cooperative relational process was critical to the functional acts of organising and operating (Cooperrider et al, 1995).

Programmatically, social constructionism can be read as this invitation for open, interactive self-reflexiveness. As a call to organisational participants, its premises may bring practice activity (the practice of knowing/making/developing) into congruence with social relatedness. The closer connection between practice and social relatedness would allow for more constructive meaning-making and imagining of common futures.

2.12. Relational Enterprises and the Role of Narrative

The practice activities and structures that might surround dialogues of identity, particularly with respect to race, gender and difference have been articulated throughout this study. Described above is a means of enhancing organisational behavior by encouraging the application of AI principles. As core inquiry topics, their possibilities extended to each and every aspect of relational and organisational functioning. For example, when I attended a workshop on appreciative inquiry, as an ice-breaker exercise, participants were asked to pair with someone whom they considered to be the most different from themselves. The subsequent narratives on the processes that led to the pairings indicated that participants had taken both race and gender as primary considerations.

Participants spoke of how they regarded the differences in identity, recalled how people had introduced themselves, and then regarded differences in how people dressed, articulated, and other physical representations to make their choices. This experience, in addition to the prevalence of literature that asserts the construct of identity’s ongoing prominence (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; McPhail, 1994; Ewart, 2001; Drexler & Sibbet, 2003) in relational enterprises, reinforced my interest and the relevance of keeping these aspects of identity central.

³³ These findings were similar to that of J. Thompson’s *Organisations in Action* (McGraw Hill, New York) 1966 work and referenced in this respect.

2.12.1. The conversations that matter: the extension of AI to narratives on identity

Thus, from within the main research question of the possibilities for better alignment of policy and practice, I highlight relationships. I assert that how people relate to each other, and the piece of identity that becomes present in interactions, has implications for broader policy and practice issues.

Race and diversity relations involve policy and practice at each level of the organisation. Policy considerations are made throughout an organisation. Recruitment, hiring, training and policy outcomes filter through the organisation and should be representative of the individual employees and their multiple identities³⁴. Therefore, policy makers should aim to be almost all-encompassing in their concern for the people who work in the organisation and how that work is carried out.

People's personal investment and perspective of people in the work they are doing is critical and lived through the work experience. An organisational mission statement (or provocative proposition) must be powerful, positive and compelling. It must drive people to remain or become invested in their work. And herein is the ironic challenge.

A personal investment is personal. It must consider identity and its implications for the person. The person must be realised in the policy. In all of its contextualised ways, people make policy and policy makes practice; they are the constructors of meaning.

2.12.2. Policy in People, people in policy: exploring the space where narratives diverge

The review of literature up to this point highlights how individuals reflect upon, interact and work from understandings, experiences and beliefs about identity, developed in concert with other people. These relational narratives are life long in development, acquired through many relationships, and are as a result of multiple life experiences: family of origin, extended communities, religious connections, present and past interactions and anticipation of daily interactions. I have gone on to describe these narratives as being critical to civil service work and organisation, as co-creating, constructing and deconstructing meaning for participants in actual practice and in aspiration (Gray, Bougon and Donnellon, 1985; Berger and Luckman, 1967). Constructionism and aspects of AI have been reviewed as the organising frameworks for driving this inquiry into relational networks, organisational culture, policy and best practice narratives of the civil service.

In my discussion of transformative narrative, I supported proposals that held promise for organisational change. That discussion on narrative spoke to potential movement for organisations in at least one area of critical disconnection: the relational network and organisational culture. There are some instances, however, that describe a space in an

³⁴ By way of example, I offer remarks from Adrian H. Thurston, in his commentary in the 'Monitor on Psychology' (February 2005, Vol. 36, No. 2). Thurston notes that if the issue of race is to become less prominent and less divisive, not only does the public need to understand the arbitrariness of such distinctions, but public policy must reflect a legal equality of all such demarcations (p. 8). Therefore, how policy impacts practice, influences and is influenced by the public. The "successful policy" treads a blurred line that acknowledges but mediates a course of seeming arbitrariness.

organisation where it seems that what people do, what people say and what people believe or hope to be doing are very different. These instances have many descriptions but are generally presented in bodies of literature as the integration or segregation of theory (policy and best practice) and practice (a combination of organisational culture and relational interactions). Much of the research in this area has tended towards critiquing existent theory and proposing generalist solutions on how to align policy and practice (Wasow, 1992). Yet, we might garner a better understanding of this research were there to be more discussion on the relational themes of organisation life (Pilalis, 1986).

Specifically, delineating the overlaps, gaps, spaces and concerns for the multi-dimensional influence of policy to practice, is critical to a discussion of how organisational culture is experienced- both in practice and vision.

This next section describes how authors have operationalised the challenges for integrating theory and practice in organisational cultures. I first describe the concern itself, and then describe some aspects of how the theory of ‘best practice’ and ‘policy’ has developed. I end this section with a discussion of two ways of thinking about exploring divergent narratives: a model for shared understanding, and discourse analysis.

2.13. The concern for integrating policy, theory and practice

There is a concern about the values that are communicated throughout an organisation. There is a concern for the extent that these values may largely ignore the actual content of the organisation’s statements of vision (Larwood, Falbe, Kriger and Miesing, 1995; Pilalis, 1986; Fook, Ryan & Hawkins, 2000). This problem is largely conceptualised as a disconnection between policy and practice, or between theory and practice. Further delineated, this “problem” may be one of allowing the meaning of the term “integration”, as in ‘the integration of theory and practice’ to remain constructed and unchallenged (Pilalis, 1986). Deconstructing the ideologies of ‘theory to practice’ sees the potential for policy being ascribed multiple manifestations, such as: visions, missions, strategy, procedures, objectives, and policy statements. Practice also takes many forms: intentions, actions, procedures, rules, roles and decision-making processes. Whilst neither policy nor practice labels are mutually exclusive of these activities, a distinct narrative of aspiration versus actual practice, accompanies each activity. Deconstructing and constructing new narratives requires that we question how the meaning of each is acquired.

The actual contents of visions or mission statements are often assumed to be unquestionably objective and attainable. This notion is supported by references in the literature to ‘the problematic nature of the relationship between theory and practice’ and ‘the lack of fit’ (Pilalis, 1986; Goldstein, 1992). This institutional separation of theory and practice constructs ‘theory’ as synonymous with that which is taught in a ‘course’. Practice’ is constructed as that which is done in an agency or organisation. Such a separation or divide “compounds the confusion of meanings and discourages a focus on the relationship between “theorising and practice” (Pilalis, 1986, p. 81). In other words, the space between privileged narrative, organisational culture, policy and best practice objectives is unclear and relatively unexplored.

Expanding further on where theory (policy) and practice disconnect, and where the stories of aspiration and actual practice become markedly different, Goldstein (1992) speaks of a continuum or dialectic of theory that has some sort of resonance with practice. Subscribers to the belief in their inter-relatedness believe that progress in practice will be the payoff for progress in theory development. But as Goldstein rightly asserts, even though it seems that this prescription has worked for some communities, it is difficult to ignore evidence that what happens in theory (learning environments, at the stage of policy development) does not always extend to practice (1992). Goldstein (1992) shares that the “dissonance” is not necessarily a result of apathy, recalcitrance or some critical flaw in conventional wisdom, but a need for more buy-in in a belief that: 1) practice informs theory and not the other way around; and 2) the continuum between the two is difficult to achieve because so-called scientific theories and naturalistic practices each employ a distinct language and metaphor that are mutually exclusive in important ways. They are, in substance, critically misaligned.

These findings might mean that we, as researchers and organisational participants are being called upon to rethink the policy-practice continuum. It means that how organisations position themselves on policy and practice should reflect workforce considerations and employee perspectives; aligning them and incorporating them with the language, stories and dialogues of those perspectives. Lastly, there is the suggestion that exploring the relational spaces between policy and practice is unseen, ambiguous and uncertain work.

2.13.1. Constructed narratives of best practice, policy, organisational culture and relational interactions

From the ambiguous possibilities for what constitutes policy and best practice ‘theory’, a dominant perspective arises (Au, 1994; Pilalis, 1986). Theory is constructed or can be described as generated through empirical research and accepted as a general rule or law. It is the premise and justification for the work. It is ‘knowing’ what to do, based on ideal statements regarding the nature and purposes of the organisation’s work (Choo, 1998). It is the challenge of wanting to impose order on unordered experiences (Au, 1994).

On the other hand, theories can be seen as providing a limited, perhaps idealised, understanding of everyday events by way of a statement of principles. Nigel Parton illustrates this dilemma quite concisely by stating that,

“While [civil service work...] has never been completely dominated by scientised and narrowly positivistic approaches to knowledge, rarely has it been able to articulate an approach to its theory and practice which adequately reflects the nature of its operations. Knowing, in many situations, is invariably tacit and implicit” (Parton, 2003, p.2).

‘Knowing’ develops from dialogue with people about the situation, through which the organisational participant can come to understand the uniqueness, uncertainty and potential value conflicts that must be addressed. The process of dialogue assists organisations in reaching a ‘new theory’ of the unique case that informs action (Parton, 2003).

Transforming these seemingly unambiguous, ordered statements, into binary ordered ones, exemplifies how the notions of ‘best practice theory’ and policy are created. Best practice implies that there is one dominant way of coming to optimal solutions and that there are optimal

solutions to which one can aspire. Problematic are the questions of to whom these best practices and policies are addressed and whether these practices are, in fact, to the greater benefit of organisational participants, as a whole.

Gergen and Davis (1997) in a deconstructive exercise, stress that slogans, like “best practice” or “organisational policy” or even “principles”, may not be specifically defined but are socially constructed. The authors suggest that the underlying philosophies behind many socially constructed words are invested in a Northern European cultural, social and religious value system. The use of these professional terms, while apparently aspiring and saying something all-encompassing and good, may “evolve into something that belittles and excludes those who do not conform” (Gergen & Davis, 1997, p. 8). Extending this thinking to relational concerns means that the language of best practice may exclude or discount the narrative constructions of the ‘persons’ who carry it out. Policies and policy development activities, in an attempt to create order and align an organisation at many levels, influence relationships. They also shape organisational practices in unexpected ways.

2.13.2. From ambiguity to clarity in moving theory into practice?

From the ambiguous possibilities on how what constitutes privileged narrative translates into organisational culture, is a process in which ‘theory’ is put to use in the organisation’s work (Porras, 1991). The theory’s permutation becomes normative. In ‘doing the work’, there is a disparity between theory and practice. This is the paralleled disparity between privileged and professional dialogues. It is the disparity of working towards unattainable ideals from amongst realistic possibilities; it is potentially a disparity between ideologies regarding the purposes of civil service work held within and between organisational participants and their employee sub-groups (Pilalis, 1986). Again, from a social constructionist perspective, professional narratives may represent multiple approaches to civil service work and other privileged ways of viewing relational experiences- some of which have been rendered silent or obscured.

Speaking to the potential for alignment between privileged and professional, Nigel Parton reviews some of the social work and human service literature on policy and practice (2003). Parton (2003) finds that the central message about policy versus practice is that successful and “meaningful” implementation is not about a particular model or technique, but the quality and value of the relational experience. The success of service provision not only lies in the “relationship” but in the way we understand and come to terms with difficult and painful experiences through “talk”- the opportunity to engage in active conversation about oneself that brings understanding and change. Parton’s participants (clients involved in a program that offers social assistance) said that what they value of service provision, is the experience of talking. This interaction helps them make sense of their experience, gives them the opportunity to better control and to cope with their lives and try to change them accordingly (2003).

Parton (2003) speaks to a number of instances where workers constructed a process whereby the ‘theory’ of how to work with a client or colleague was generated mutually. There were elements of uncertainty and complexity that pervaded their accounts and the exchanges, but they were willing to risk the uncertainty, to co-construct and coordinate a discourse. The primary task was seen to be creating these improved experiences, and mutually generated solutions through dialogue.

Aligning narratives is an exercise in querying the incongruence between the privileged and the professional (best policy and practice) objectives: the latter representing narratives of organisational practice and possibilities for renewed construction. Pilalis (1986) submits that a sense of total fusion/alignment cannot occur because privileged narratives are informed by: 1) “ideological conflicts” (Au, 1994; Pilalis, 1986); 2) gaps in knowledge; 3) scarce resources; 4) power struggles (multiple stakeholders, multiple voices); and 5) the infinite variability of human situations at the levels of “general collective purposes and context-bound institutional practices” (p. 93).

Therefore, attempting to view alignment as integration may be a mistake and a misunderstanding of what is feasible. It seems more realistic and desirable to encourage action (dialogue) in an organisation, particularly given that political processes tend to generate social policies that are inherently vague. These processes require interpretation as to their intent. Civil service organisations are more often characterised by conflicting values, unclear goals and uncertain technologies than are private business enterprises (Au, 1994 citing multiple sources), because of the political influence.

2.13.3. Aligning meaning with action

Both Au (1994) and Pilalis (1986) suggest that it is almost unthinkable to exclude the ‘professionalism’ of policy from the relational politics of privileged narratives- however confusing, non-rational, complex or contentious they may appear to be. What Pilalis (1986) further advocates is an inquiry into what factors play into the distance (space) between theory and practice. Essentially, this query probes the content and process of turning ‘meaning’ into ‘action’ (which has implications for supporting the critical analysis of discourse). Meaning, what we believe about others, influences how we relate, and the decisions we make in concert with others (Kiros and Teodres, 1998). Beliefs may be an underlying factor in many organisational processes, such as interpersonal and intra-personal relationships and decision-making practices.

For example, with respect to beliefs about diversity in civil service work, the underlying presence of diverse qualities (as women, as racial beings and as people operating within economic systems of hierarchy) in relationship means that people may think about them, act from within an understanding of themselves and others [and the relationships they have had]. Aspects of diversity are not usually overtly expressed as part of the co-created, professional narrative. Yet, ‘identity’ may be the primary conceptualisation from which narrative activities are created.

These conceptualisations may be significant components of relational networks and organisational culture (privileged discourse to some). They may be transmitted through practice (decisions that are taken) or through a tone of professional interaction. From practice to policy, and where the two meet, accounts for much of the range of organisational behavior.

Another example is illustrated by strands of narrative on equality of opportunity. On the surface, there appears to be a commitment to equality of opportunity, best practices, fair and equitable use and distribution of resources, dialoguing, interacting and intervening in a way that transmits dignity and respect (Commission for Racial Equality Scotland, 2000). However, notions of these

"good organisational practices" have been rendered problematic (Parton, 1998; McMahon, 1994; Jones, 1994). Therefore, any understanding of the political, social, relational or power influences and problems for the "civil servant", are also problematic (see Chapter 2, 'Civil Service Roles in Relationship').

What has been upheld as the ideal way of functioning, interacting and conceptualising the organisation and its participants needs to be scrutinised by researchers, scholars and practitioners. This scrutiny is required because policies, procedures and initiatives continue to operate in a way that assumes a conventional organisation of systems and developmental processes. The conventional organisation of system does not necessarily allow for the fair, respectful and dignified practice required for the success of equality of opportunity.

All of these understandings of how practice might influence policy or vice-versa are critical to my present study in three ways. First, extending Howard Goldstein's premise that practice informs theory, these understandings forward the notion that not only does the influence go from practice to policy, but in both directions (1992). Practice and theory influence and overlap with each other. Yet, they are distinct.

Second, I intend to illustrate how a continuum may be better achieved, perhaps through dialogue and the merging/marrying of dialogue used in an organisational community. On this journey, we may find that the privileged and professional sentiments expressed amongst communities in the civil service are not in fact very different at all.

Third, whilst it is not an easy task to ask of people invested in the daily practice of public service, Goldstein promotes the quest for and use of language that is free from jargon and encourages a dialogue on everyday lived experienced in everyday language (1992). In pursuit of policy/practice alignment, this exercise may allow participants to offer a story that, of course, has its own brands of situational fiction and truth, but carries with it what the participants believe to be the central themes of their lives.

Bringing these stories to a reader is both an art and science; it is interpretive, imaginative, and constructive. In summation, it is the art and science of negotiating theory and practice in relational terms that requires more attention.

2.13.4. From the meanings of theory for practice to meanings in organisational narratives

These discussions on the convergence and divergence of theory and practice hold further concerns for the development of a perspective of aligning dialogues on relationship, meaning and action. In response to calls for more alignment of theory and practice, and thus the increased similarities in soundings of organisational narratives, there have been several proposals.

First, there has been a call for an evaluative framework for understanding how people are maintained in their social identities through historically-bound contexts and interactions with others (Darby, 1997; Sherwood, 2001). Box 4a describes an aspect of a sub-cultural context for civil servants working in Bermuda: "Of Race and Politics".

Box 4a

Of race and politics in Bermuda: Continuing a discussion on sub-cultural contexts

Between 1616 and 1623, a working population was brought to Bermuda as indentured servants. It is unclear when servants became slaves (Simon, 2001) but in 1623, legislation was introduced to control Negroes, who were recorded as being slaves. 1656 saw all free Blacks banished from Bermuda³⁵. Emancipation, the freeing of slaves, did not occur until 1834 but segregation continued until 1959.

These are just a few of the historical events that led up to the establishment of Bermuda's constitution in 1968. Others, like the campaign for universal adult suffrage and the movement for racial equality, were "closely intertwined and had been spawned by longstanding injustices passed down as historical legacies from earlier administrations" (Smith, 2000, p. 4).

For many years after 1620, white male property owners controlled Bermuda's Legislature, a state of affairs which accorded them a dominant role in the running of the Island's affairs. Just prior to Emancipation Day on 1st August 1834, an Act was passed which doubled the property qualifications for voting in elections and from running for parliament and other important public office, making it abundantly clear that the Legislature of the day wanted to protect the status quo and guard against too rapid an assumption of political influence by the ex-slaves. The existence of a property qualification for voting and other privileges was instrumental in perpetuating the colony's owner structure over the years and went a long way towards explaining why racial discrimination and segregationist practices persisted for so long after slavery had officially ended in Bermuda. Against that backdrop, it is also easy to understand why the greatest impetus for change and progress came from Bermuda's black community" (Smith, 2000).

Since emancipation in 1834, black versus white³⁶ issues have continued to figure prominently in Bermuda elections and social life, with the black population experiencing minimal representation until the second half of the 20th century, when in 1953 an unprecedented 9 blacks were elected to the House of Parliament (Smith, 2000). The political scene in Bermuda changed dramatically in 1998 when the Bermuda Progressive Labour Party won the General Election with a total of 26 out of 40 seats, and the United Bermuda Party assumed the role of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition for the first time in their 35 years of existence. Given that Bermuda is a country with a black majority; the Government employs a majority of Black employees. Numerous senior and executive management positions are held by women. The 1998 election results meant that for the first time in Bermuda's history, the government of the day was actually racially representative of the historically disadvantaged black working class. This change in power meant that Black people were represented by a black and purportedly working-class party for the first time in the country's history.

Therefore, the social, cultural and racial history of Bermuda has played an instrumental and relational role in the content and means of community discourse. Simon (2001) refers to a 'trend of silence' as a resultant phenomenon of the way people in Bermuda relate their experiences. She describes Bermudians as private people, a probable consequence of the challenges to the "linguistic historicity" taking a rightful place amongst the Bermuda's holistic national space. The social tensions between Bermudians and non-Bermudians, blacks and whites have been defined by historians, such as

³⁵ Beyond the scope of this paper, Bermuda's legislative and racial history is well documented by: James Smith, *Slavery in Bermuda*; Dr. Eva Hodgeson, "Second Class Citizens, First Class Men; Virginia Bernhard, "Slaves and Slaveholders in Bermuda 1616-1782; William Zuill, "The Story of Bermuda and her People; George Rushe, "Bermuda as a Matter of Fact and many others.

³⁶ The white Bermudian population is described in most historical text as divided by class, but ultimately synonymous with wealth or potential for economic prosperity. The class lines demarcated a difference between aristocratic whites (descendants of the first seventeenth century English settlers and the ruling class for more than 300 years) and the English, Irish, Scottish and Americans brought to Bermuda as labourers in agriculture, construction and later civil servants, teachers, police, doctors, nurses and executives. The Portuguese immigrants were among this second-wave of workers, becoming established as another significant sub-grouping of Bermuda's population. The Portuguese have also had a history of second-class citizenship in Bermuda; initially being barred from immigrating with their families. Herein, the country's racial hierarchy is interwoven with hierarchy. Note that the process took into consideration significant discourse on adult suffrage and gender representation through history.

Margaret Straight, as an undefined phenomenon (Simon, 2001).

The narrative tradition has been one where the nation's space (media, literature, arenas of public and private discourse) has begun to echo refrains of the historical oral but privileged narrative tradition. Soundings of what was once inhibited or suppressed appear quite frequently in the local media, giving voice to a number of Bermudian perspectives, incomparable in some ways to any other country (Burchall, 2004).

On nationalism and the consequences of becoming a fully independent country, privileged narrative in the media speaks volumes (Cox, 2003). The pros and cons of independence are debated in the media. Some link the need for Bermuda's independence to enhancing feelings of national pride. John Zuill (May, 2004), social commentator submits that the debate of independence is truly a race issue; a response to slavery and the "deep rifts it made in [the] culture". Zuill (May, 2004) also refers to the consequences of a cycle of blame and mistrust, which ultimately begins and ends with everyone who participates in the dialogue. The will of the people, which will ultimately determine Bermuda's status, echoes multiple sentiments, grounded in all manner of relational interactions³⁷.

Race issues are voiced in similar ways by members of the public. In describing his new vision for Bermuda, former premier of Bermuda and prominent businessman John Swan criticises the Opposition for lacking representation consistent with the population demographics while he commends the Government for doing a better job of embracing all Bermudians (2004). Tying the race issue with politics, he calls for open scrutiny/transparency in government processes through more dialogue. Senator Kim Swan (2003) accuses the Government of associating the Opposition with 300 years of overt racism, even though many of [the] early founders played key roles integrating Bermuda. Zuill (June, 2004) illustrates the cross-sectional nature of race and politics in Bermuda with the following observation:

"There was a time in Bermuda when factions were of one race [white] or the other [black]. That made sense because people's racial lives were profoundly different and laws and social practice deliberately divided people into races. This political tendency among Bermudian citizens is still strong today. The habit of congregating in racial groups before dividing into groups based on opinion necessarily divided the power of any political cause to race. The two races develop distinct political vocabularies and by this division a governmental party effort can easily subvert the intent of any faction of ordinary citizens. Both parties rely on racial division to breakdown factions into easily manipulated parts. ...Party politics in Bermuda has stultified the natural expression of political movements, of which its factions, should have worked in the production of good government".

Similarly, Gray et al (1995) implore the research community to seize opportunities for studying the development of, and changes in the degree, structure, content and durability of intra- or interpersonal meaning in organisations (Gray et al, 1995; Henriques, Holloway, Urwin, Venn & Walkerdine, 1984). They also call for the development of research approaches for uncovering the tacit value systems, which guide how meaning is constructed in organisation.

As well, Gergen (1998) encourages the exploration of the relational frontier in determining collective organisational futures. Lastly, there are indications that new research should reflect on whether and how powerful organisational participants construct key concepts, relationships and values to create and attempt to control meaning (Gray et al, 1995).

³⁷ Racism may now be about intelligent and powerful people of all races choosing to ignore equality policies and imperatives (Gonzalez, 2002; Jacques, 2003), perhaps believing that the policies themselves or their actions are insignificant. Mark Gonzalez writes powerful commentary on racism in the face of constitutional duty and breakdown; making an argument for how public opinion, individual or corporate interest puts the integrity of jurisprudence at risk. This situation can occur even with standing legislation enacted specifically to protect racial minorities.

2.14. Civil Service Narrative: Complex Contexts

In this discussion of premises and considerations for how better to align policy and practice, I have reviewed the thinking on how the two can be aligned or misaligned through a history of multiple contexts. I have also discussed how the exploration of enhanced alignment involves careful consideration of how meaning is constructed in an organisation. I have offered a brief excerpt on how social and racial identities and perspectives have been shaped, using the case example of Bermuda. From the basis of these premises, I would now like to turn to the civil service organisation as a context that gives life to a discussion on sub-cultural contexts and constraints, roles, relationships and responsibility.

Relationships amongst participant employees in the civil service, are just one representation of the aforementioned organisational life. They are impacted by many factors: service to the public, service to public representatives and obligations to the self. Describing the multi-facets and multiple voices of the participants is critical to an analysis of organisational functioning. These political, social and historical contexts have contributed to the individual and collective lives of Bermuda and have had their influence on race, class and gendered relationships. The contexts have helped to create the discourse. These factors may also contribute to a dialogue on negotiating systemic authority (hierarchy) and power (Mumby, 1992, p.55).

The civil service machinery and its manifestations for employees are important indicators of the relational demands, beliefs, expectations, challenges, member identification and roles of employees (Dutton & Dukerich, 1994). The essences of relationships are interactional bi-products of published and unwritten employment “rules” such as: attitudes and behaviors guided by policy, job/role expectations, and agency versus personal belief systems; rules mitigated by an array of sub-cultural activities; perceived organisational identity. Activities and collective identities that represent the beliefs that members share and that are described positively generally have positive outcomes- good working environment and good service (Dutton & Dukerich, 1994). Negative indicators would have negative outcomes- conflicted, confrontational or challenging employee relationships.

The historicity of the Bermuda Civil Service is influenced by narratives on the social constructs, constraints and the availability of material and cultural resources. How government employment is conceived, organised and carried out is not simply determined by these conditions, however. It is constructed through employees’ narratives of actions located within historical events. The culture of the organisation is central to an understanding of government employment as a uniquely constructed experience. Keeping the organisational and community “situatedness” of Bermuda in mind, one can comfortably make the following statement. Unless, as a community, transformative relational spaces are created to jointly construct the policies, practices and worlds the community desires, the participants voices will get lost. Effectively, the narratives will continue to function as though they were underground, where they essentially become relegated to the privilege of back rooms. The notion of bias versus situated perspective must be displaced.

One way of breaking free of ideological encapsulations of what it means to work for the civil service is to deconstruct the elements that are often fused within the definition of an organisation. Government employees are often merged as if one employment body; individual actions and activities fused. Interests of government, of public and of employee, might conflict for this is the

politic of civil service (Gordon, 1991, 1986). Box 5 describes the structure of governance and the civil service of the Bermuda Government. The example illustrates how roles and responsibilities can be both complimentary and divergent. Therein, the identity of the employee, as an individual versus being constructed as a member of a group, gets called into question.

Box 5

Governmentality and the construction of the civil service

Few countries, if any, run without a governmental and legislative framework. Bermuda operates uniquely within the framework of the British Government. Under the Constitution, the Legislature consists of Her Majesty (represented by the Governor), the Upper House (the Senate, consisting of members appointed by the Governor, on the recommendation of the Government and Opposition Leaders) and the Lower House (the House of Assembly, which consists of 36 elected representatives. The latter two jointly form what is called the House of the Legislature. The debates in the House of Assembly and the Senate have been broadcast over the radio, to the public since 1991.

The “delegate” affairs of the U.K. Government fall into four categories: external affairs, national defense, internal security, and the police. Executive authority for these powers rests with a Governor who is appointed to Bermuda by the British Monarch after nomination by Britain’s Prime Minister in consultation with the Government of Bermuda. The British Monarch is Bermuda’s Head of State, with the Governor being the Queen’s local representative.

The Governor appoints the Premier (essentially a formality) and may dissolve parliament and call for new elections if he/she concludes that the current Government is untenable. The Governor may also refuse a request to dissolve parliament made by the premier. However, it is understood that the Governor will act at his/her own initiative rarely, and only in the interest of coherent government and not in pursuit of particular political ends. The Governor also chairs a “Governor’s Council, which advises the Governor on policy in the four reserved areas of Britain’s competence. The Council members are the Premier, along with not less than two or more than three cabinet ministers. It is assumed that the Governor will exercise his/her powers with due consideration for the preferences of the Government of Bermuda (Appendix D depicts the Government’s Constitution and reporting structure). The Governor may delegate certain powers to the Government of Bermuda, such as the control over matters of recruitment, training and finance of the police.

The overwhelming majority of the laws that bind citizens of Bermuda are either found in British common law (which Bermuda shares with Britain) or are in statutory laws adopted by Bermuda’s parliament. Key laws, relating to the economy and social policy, are adopted by Bermuda’s parliament.

Lastly, in relation to governance, Bermuda has its own court system; a Magistrates Court for small civil claims, minor criminal offenses and domestic matters. Appeals from the Magistrates Courts are made to the Supreme Court, which is also the first court for serious criminal offenses, major civil claims and divorce and marriage matters. Appeal to the Supreme Court is made to Bermuda’s Court of Appeal, the members of which are appointed by the Governor. The final appeal is to the British Privy Council in London, which is appointed by the Queen and only considers matters involving substantial points of law and has discretion over whether to accept particular cases. Decisions of the Privy Council are binding in Bermuda.

Here, we are presented with a picture of one arm of governance in Bermuda. The supporting structure of Government is the civil service. The nature of work in Bermuda government is a reflection of its British Overseas territory status. Modeled after the Westminster model of governance, the civil service gets its concept and organisation from the United Kingdom. Like other formal organisations, Bermuda’s civil service and its governance exist to meet demands for production or service (Haigen, 2000). Issues of dependence over independence are part of the daily discourse. Race issues figure prominently because although the majority is black, power has historically presided with a white minority, some of who are not indigenous to Bermuda.

The civil service is an employing organisation like many others, but it has responsibilities to a public electorate, like no other type of “business”. Therefore, its roles and responsibilities, as an employing structure with public functions make it quite distinct from private industry. Governmentality³⁸ and governance feature in its description (Burchell, 1991) as the organisation is tasked with its public functions.

³⁸ Foucault (1979, p. 20) argued that the idea of governmentality has increasingly dominated politics since the eighteenth century. Governmentality refers to the ensemble formed by institutions, procedures, analysis and

When there are changes in the society, all organisations are faced with new and unfamiliar requirements. Large corporations, such as civil service may function for a long time “as if” market changes had not happened. In contrast, small organisations may need to respond to market changes more quickly or close down. Public institutions, like Bermuda’s civil service, endure because they are not so directly tied to markets. They are, however, constrained by political and public decisions.

Large segments of the public question the quality and relevance of public services offered by the civil service Haugen (2000). Therefore, the civil service is responsible not only to its political “heads” (Ministers who are selected Members of Parliament whom directly head a branch of the civil service) but to the public, whose voices feature largely in the social and cultural discourse.

Bermuda’s political organisation is complex from the perspective of unstated nuances. As indicated, some of the agreements on policy and practice are simply customs, assumptions or understandings, very much reliant on the relational components of the actors, i.e. Governor consultations with the Premier on appointments. The relational component of politics and the relationship of Government, its designates and the public is very much contingent and mitigated by public discourse. The public discourse is therefore an important consideration in shaping public policy and is therein, extremely “political”. Public perceptions and actions can impact how the civil service responds to topical situations, and as such, help shape the organisational culture.

Gergen (1998) and several other authors have tackled this question, emphasising transformative narrative as a response (as discussed in Chapter 2, the section entitled, “Appreciative Inquiry: the application of social construction, narrative and transformative dialogue”). Accepting that internal decisions or actions have broader consequences for organisational change raises the question of how participants contribute to the overall organisational behavior. The way the organisation behaves is therefore neither insignificant nor trivial.

2.14.1. Civil service roles in relationship

My discussion on theory and practice has considered how complex discourse can occur amongst participants and particularly with regard to context. I presented scholarship on how narrative activities within the organisation can be linked, but also quite distinct. I briefly explored a similar relationship between the concepts of roles and responsibilities. I embarked on the discussion of roles and responsibilities as entities which give rise to narrative activity in the organisation. Alignment or misalignment of a role or responsibility can contribute to a “disconnect” in narratives about policy and practice. In other words, the misalignment of roles and responsibilities contributes to a “disconnect” between what is considered good practice over what occurs in the actual practice. I would like to re-visit those notions and further explore the work and thinking on relational roles and responsibilities in civil service work.

Given the relational and interactive possibilities of narrative activity, how people are situated within their roles and responsibilities is an important consideration. Roles can be described as reciprocal, becoming relationally problematic when people do not follow role expectations. Roles are not easy to substantiate. Often intertwined and immersed in job responsibilities, roles are not easy to clarify. Informed by writings in social work and psychology, the following section considers the relationship of roles and responsibilities.

2.14.2. The challenge of role alignment

Nigel Parton (1998) clearly outlines the duplicitous nature of work roles, and lends way to thinking about civil service work in general. In his analysis of current debates around child

reflections, the calculations and tactics that allow the exercise of a specific... complex form of power, and it is the regulation of the population which has proved its unending concern.

welfare and refocusing the “subject” of protective practices, Parton claims that in their roles as child welfare workers, they no longer “do” child protection. The focus [of intervention] is that of assessment and risk. Yet, whilst the focus has changed, the outcome or product remains the same. He argues that because basic philosophical and policy notions have not been supported by practice. The limited allocation of funds and small degree of worker training and preparation for the job is contrasted by the responsibilities that are assigned to workers. This contrast exposes a duplicity, ambiguity, or uncertainty in service delivery.

Further delineating the conflict of role responsibilities in social work practice, Parton (1998) submits that whilst there is a need to respond to an increased number of child abuse cases and to “police” families more; there is also a need to provide “supportive”, protective services to children and families. Resources are limited and few resources increases risk. Risk as a collection of uncertainties, is inherent to the whole process. It is not a variable that can be analyzed from any one perspective. The end result can not be some sort of objective outcome, as the allocation of increased caseloads and decreased resources would imply.

Speaking to this fine line between stated and unstated goals, objectives and roles, Parton credits Foucault with underpinning his position with two notions: 1) ethos, as that premise, which challenges current constructions of meaning, destabilises and allows organisational participants the freedom to challenge and change narrative patterns; and 2) a concern with liberalism- that which shapes political contours of the present, questions freedom of thought and can be exercised by rules (Parton, 1998; Foucault, 1991, 1986, 1978, 1977a, 1977b). He describes ethos and a concern for liberalism as linking several related concepts that are interdependent but require balancing.

Ethos and a concern for liberalism mediate and challenge the range of mechanisms, which regulate knowledge and construct individuals, families, and communities. The working relationship between them, as described above, has a range of implications for relational networks, the culture of the agency, policy construction and best practice theorems. Risk management becomes understood as inherent to the roles and responsibilities of civil service work; when very little else documents this objective. Further, civil service narratives, on ‘practice’ versus ‘theory’, can move farther away from each other, through the process of managing ‘risks’.

This analysis has implications for civil service work. Employees and employing agencies may have lost perspective around how to manage what seem to be competing or conflicting roles and activities (safety and support for example in child welfare). They may also be lost as to how to frame a narrative on the organisational culture at all of its levels. Challenging the construction of risk and questioning how the work is done, becomes critical for better role alignment.

A conundrum is therefore created. The social welfare organisation may be forced to increase the number of cases it undertakes. Yet, it is called upon to provide more interventions at a highly personal and interactive level. The “cases” and their outcomes have an unquantifiable human component. Deeper still, this human component is relationally-based and uncertain, as is the concept of risk. Therefore, the compilation of all of these factors and the discourse that accompanies them is likely to diverge in critical ways.

Aligning, reconciling or balancing this conundrum of roles and responsibilities requires that we first acknowledge how practice is a struggle and that finding a balance is difficult (here is consideration for ethos and liberalism). It is difficult from a moral and intervention perspective. It is also difficult from within time limits, resource deficits, legal requirements, dealing with responses of clients and personal dynamics- the sub-cultural context of the civil service. Not only do employees suppress their work-related stories- except for in what seem to be isolated settings, there is little opportunity or space for these privileged dialogues.

While some research focuses on building on strengths from within and between people to enhance organisational behavior (Cooperrider et al, 2003; 1996); others focus on a problem-solving model of organisational development (Pepitone, 1995). However, central to most discourses is a theory of organisations that is essentially systemic. The theory adapts and builds on relationships between people tasking within the organisational culture. This means that as an actor in a system, the employee has many roles and responsibilities: as civil servant, as public servant and essential links between the two. The recognition of role and responsibility structures, and the binary categories of employment, informs how employees manage their multiple and infinite roles as civil servants; public servants; and liaisons/brokers.

2.14.3. Constructing ‘roles from roles’ and ‘relationships from relationships’

Understanding roles necessitates further exploration of how the schemes of employees’ relationships to each other are constructed, within the organisational structure. The central idea of how roles and relationships are constructed, particularly from a constructionist perspective, is that civil servants manifest an idea of whom they are, what they will do and how and to whom they will relate, through narrative and narrative interpretation. An analysis of this discursive behavior, in which change is possible, involves identifying: interpersonal behaviors; and social perceptions as narrated through dialogue.

Internal, self-contained or external dialogues may give rise to and influence organisational dialogues as a whole. McNamee and Gergen (1998) probe organisational essentialism as the tradition of locating attributes, motives, intentions, desires, emotions and virtually all psychological qualities, traits and characteristics within an individual. Analysis in this area attempts to delineate what qualifies as an individual characteristic or individuated self-reference. In that process, what was once relegated to individual or privileged narrative, shifts into more public spaces. McNamee and Gergen (1998) submit that applying what were typically individual terms to organisational life, represents that shift. That shift can be a challenge to negotiate once realised, particularly if the shift goes relatively unacknowledged. In practical terms, a policy can be established that has very little concern for its impact on employees or customers. Quite possibly, the policy has unintended and negative consequences. Yet, it is well-drafted, well-communicated and well-intentioned.

Thus, expanding the notion of the “self-contained individual” to organisational debates gives ready access to competing “rationalities”, such as ways of living, belief systems, rituals, opinions (K. Gergen 1991 in McNamee & Gergen, 1998). McNamee and Gergen (1998) hold that our daily activities, for the most part, now require that we acknowledge and coordinate diverse view

points. These viewpoints range from the daily and typical activities to the far-reaching implications of the organisational activities.

These diverse views are impacted by an interconnectedness and sometimes interdependence on different communities, organisations and cultures. An important implication of this on organisational life is the increasing difficulty of holding on to the view that individuals should be the primary source of decision, action and organisational life in general (Gergen, 1991, p. 1). With access and input from diverse understandings of the world, questions of what can be considered a competent, moral, ethical or rational choice- the subjective experience operationalised and applied- are raised.

The subjective experience of the employee, as a civil servant, is therefore complex, fraught with obligations, responsibilities to government and the public and a mediating self-interest and perception³⁹.

Existence of historical and social variation in the approach towards employees confirms that being an employee, like other roles and institutions, is socially constructed. The social constructionist view implies that searching for universalities without consideration of sub-cultural activities, is probably futile. Every contradiction, every experience, every definition, is to be qualified.

However, the experience of employment in the civil experience within its historical and social specificity recognises differences and commonalities in the experience of human agency. It positions employees as workers, as public servants and as political aides within the relational sub-culture. It is at this juncture of the review of literature, that we re-visit the narratives occurring in aspiration and actual practice with new considerations for governance and politics. This discussion highlights the influence of Bermuda's history, roles, relationships and narratives on identity on the individual that lives from within and co-creates relational, agency, policy and practice narratives.

2.15. Relational interactions and organisational culture meet policy and politics: the pull of ethics, responsibility, freedom of choice and governance

Considerable evidence has been presented as to how relational interactions, if not an active voice in the organisational culture, are constructed and mediated by an organisational context. The organisational context is comprised of social rules, attitudes and behaviors guided by policy, job/role and best practice expectations. This relational sub-culture and organisational context represent what Foucault has termed the 'art of government' (Burchell, 1991; Ashford, O'Neill, Regina & Lawrence, 2001): its primary function being to govern and describe how to govern⁴⁰ individuals. Governing individual action is 1) a process in and of itself, which contributes to 2) how the organisation is constructed and 3) how participants transact theory and practice.

³⁹ See Appendix E for an example of the role tensions for civil servants as illustrated by a newspaper editorial on the posting of a Senior Civil Servant position.

⁴⁰ Burchell (1991) forwards the notion that government policy is the "calculating of detailed actions appropriate to an infinity of unforeseeable and contingent circumstances, met by the creation of an exhaustively detailed knowledge of the governed reality of the state itself, extending [at least in aspiration] to touch the existences of its individual members" (p. 10).

To govern individuals is to get them to act and align their particular wills with ends that are imposed on them. These ends constrain and facilitate models of possible actions. Government presupposes and requires the activity and freedom of the governed (Burchall, 1991). In other words, the act of governing and working within a governing system is to convince individuals in relationship to the organisation (and to each other) to do what is socially imposed or sanctioned. Paul Veyne (Burchall, 1991) offers reflections on individuals in governing structures. He posits that because individuals attach a value to their self-image, they are most deeply affected by political power when it impinges on the self-referential framework they have of themselves. They are most profoundly affected, vis-à-vis the fundamental meaning and value of the self, when the way they are governed requires them to alter how they refer to themselves as governed subjects.

Deeper to the concern of people working within a governing machinery, is how they conceive themselves (Rajchman, 1995). The question of individual conceptions arises as they become the targets of the 'rational' political techniques of government. These government techniques are meant to simultaneously augment and secure the 'greatness' of the state and the happiness of its public. This process becomes an exercise of politically objectifying and integrating the concrete aspects of people's lives and activities into the pursuit of the country's objectives (Burchall, 1991). It is a method of government; a dialogical and ideological process of creating, justifying and addressing multiple and sometimes opposing needs. It is the fundamental mechanism whereby there is pursuit of individual interests which spontaneously converge in the production of the general or public interest (Burchall, 1991, p. 127).

Similarly, Albert Hirschman describes "passions of interests" as being privileged means of solving a problem (the conflicting means and ends of governance) of how to make individuals governable (Burchall, 1991). Described as a social contract, individuals relate and reconcile their "passions of interest" with rights. Once contracted, individuals find themselves under a higher obligation to a social and legal transactional framework. They remain within this framework as long as the benefits continue to weigh in their interests. Foucault (Foucault, 1991; Burchell, 1991) submits that interests, these passions, are produced and produce localised unities and allegiances. The original contract involving the exchange, transfer and surrender of natural rights has occurred within a social-historical context which is ever present in the 'state' (p. 135).

The civil service machinery and its manifestation are natural outgrowths of human contracts. They are driven by interests. Its demands, expectations, challenges and roles (Kiros and Teodres, 1998; Parton, 1994) center on employment as an interest and employees as government and governing subjects. The governance aspect of government employment has a basis in power. A natural basis of power is found in difference in personal qualities and capabilities. A natural basis of power also exists in the form of authority. Graham Burchall (1991) describes power and authority as:

...natural or acquired differences in skills, knowledge and accomplishments made evident in the performance of necessary collective tasks which evoke admiration, esteem and respect of others. It involves the capacity to influence others, to command their obedience in actions and gain their submission one's views in counsel. On these, and the associated or consequential bases of age, property and descent, it gives rise to 'ranks'. The legal codification and restriction of authority

comes after it has fulfilled necessary functions and taken historically viable form, and is a function of spontaneously formed social relations of authority and subordination. Power is seen as being as natural and necessary to civil society as...language...is to man (p. 136).

Power and policy transcend government functioning and the relationships within. The romanticism of secure government employment may render issues of power less visible or seemingly irrelevant.

However, government work takes place in a social context that includes “unequal power relations between men and women, between dominant and subordinate racial groups”, between the colonized and colonizers (Glenn, 1994, p. 17). It is also a place where organisational goals are often unclear. People frequently disagree on the organisational goals. A sub-unit of the organisation may have different and often incompatible goals. The goals may change over time dependent on the political context and climate (Au, 1994). Thus, the civil service cannot escape being an arena of political struggle.

Burchell, Gordon and Miller re-enforce the notion of civil service politics as a domain of unifying bonds and collective forms of life which are generated spontaneously at different levels and sites within the civil society (1991). The “problem of political power is thus expressed in terms of governmental tasks and objectives in relation to an already existing [cultural context] which frames both economic and legal [relationships] as partial but invariable elements within the dense complexity of a historically dynamic, socio-natural milieu” (Burchell et al, p. 138).

Described here are collective relationships at multiple levels of the organisation, with people tasking towards outcomes and a mutually acceptable meaning for pursuing objectives. Gray, Bougon and Donnellon (1985) describe this process as a dynamic, conscious and subconscious one through which meanings are constructed and destroyed. On a continuum, these relational meanings can be idiosyncratic. They can be widely shared. They can also be deeply held (privileged); left unexpressed and unacknowledged, and thus, unquestioned.

Ultimately, the meaning of what participants feel they are doing within, and for, the organisation is in flux; and action is predicated on coincident meaning. Therefore, Gray, Bougon and Donnellon (1985) submit that to understand how organisations are constructed is to access and understand the [privileged] meanings held among organisational participants as well as the process by which these meanings coincide (action), are reaffirmed (supplemented) and lead to other organised actions.

For instance, privileged meaning would be bound in the process of valuing. Value is given significance through the individual in relationship and what is deemed valuable in organisation is that which is jointly (coincidently) valued. Gray et al (1985) stress that joint “value interpretations involve judgments about personal wellbeing and typically are not manifest in everyday communication” (p. 88). Instead they constitute a tacit [privileged] knowledge structure, and therefore, are not necessarily part of conscious awareness [organisational culture]. Drawing on the discussion of politics and the individual, in which the powerful shape meaning for organisational participants, it seems meaning and its value is somewhat imposed upon what might otherwise be ambiguous contexts.

Contradictions in meaning construction can arise in at least three different ways (Gray et al, 1985, citing Smith, 1982). There can be differences in the frame of reference, the privileged narrative of those who have the power to define “what is”. There can be discrepancies in meaning (allegiance, sub-cultural context, approaches to work) for those who have little control over “what is”. There can also be discrepancies in meaning for those who mediate the system that may agree on the actions but not necessarily the reason for taking those actions. All of these participants may have difficulty making sense of each others’ meaning. Thus, these same participants may have difficulty dialoging for positive action and change.

Summarily, Hartman (1992) submits that there is a painful paradox in being an organisational participant in the public service and being committed to any aspect of empowerment. A key part of this role is in the possession of knowledge, yet this knowledge has the power to disempower service users and thus, subvert civil service goals. Herein, Gray et al (1985) call for further articulation and demonstration of how powerful organisational participants construct meaning in relationship for or to others.

Several struggles have presented themselves through an examination of the milieu and the effort spent constructing organisational meaning: governance of the individual, the balancing of practice tenets and theory. Central to the civil service is the notion of ‘public service’ or “public servitude”. Described as a three-way pull, public service has three primary areas of accountability: to the public; to government, the party in power; and to the legislature.

These areas of accountability represent the ethical duties and responsibilities of the civil service, rather than simply a reporting or organising structure. The rationale for activities within the service represent the transacted and contracted responsibilities of the “state”: self-defined, self-regulating and self-limiting principles and processes of what must be ethically governed. In the name of society, government therefore criticises itself and demands of itself within a mutable transactional interface of political power. The employee, then, is political, with a political identity steeped in his or her capacity to exercise political power through governance. How this identity is constructed in many directions and in many ways is next discussed.

2.15.1. Identity politics and governance

Kenneth Gergen (1999) offers an approach for considering relational elements of civil service employment from a perspective of identity politics, thus offering insight as to how employee identity is socially constructed. He submits that employees may become polarised when transitioning from professional, often front-line or clinical positions, to the global parameters of management. Becoming a manager is a transition from the language of application and service to a language of organisational development. The two roles are not altogether different, but are grounded in different epistemological foundations. Groups of employees, for example, generate an identity, a group consciousness.

This employee group exercises political power and governance. The extent of their power and ability to govern depends upon and is facilitated by a proliferation of techniques meant to ensure the disciplinary integration of individual employees at critical points in the social order. Individuals occupying human resource and human management services delineate a “tactically polymorphous” political technology for governing the lives of individuals (Burchall, 1991, p.

142). This means that employees fashion forms of conduct and performance appropriate to their inclusion (i.e. men granted exclusivity in management positions) or exclusion (i.e. women relegated exclusively to the role of primary caregivers) from the varied circuits of social life (Burchall, 1991).

Very generally, the principles and procedures of government in a democratic political order presuppose, either explicitly or implicitly, some kind of more or less unified and unifying legal-political framework (Burchell, 1991). Through this framework, governed individuals are “integrated into [a] state [of organisation]” (Burchell, 1991, p. 144).

This framework on its own is not a sufficient basis for the organisation of government. Practical principles (policies and best practice philosophy) for the effective conduct of government will additionally contribute to the dialogue. Conceiving of how these individuals are to be integrated into various sectors of society is a journey in itself. Civil servants reflect diverse social and economic forms of existence (experienced in privileged and professional relationships), specific groups and communities, and have different interests, needs, aptitudes and abilities. As such, the politics of civil service identities are next explored.

2.16. Governance in Bermuda: A civil service lesson in identity (role) politics

In Bermuda, like many public service organisations, binary hierarchies and authority take precedence over ways of practicing. These are documented and undocumented ways in which most employees may comply to, or become polarised around, a culture or code of practice. This hierarchy is subsumed by relational elements such as friendships, alliances, and political affiliations, to the extent that one might recast relational responsibility as rhetorical policy ideal. Both the responsibility and ideals dictate service on behalf of, and within, the Government. Box 6 provides an illustration of the roles and responsibilities of civil servants.

Box 6

Expectations of Civil Servants

The officers of the public service owe loyal service to the duly elected government. They must:

- Assist it with integrity, honesty, impartiality and objectivity
- Give full information and informed advice to, and not deceive or mislead Ministers
- Comply with the law and uphold the administration of justice
- Retain the confidence and trust of Ministers by not taking part in any political or public activities which might be seen to compromise their impartial service
- Deal with the public courteously, efficiently, promptly and without bias or maladministration
- Ensure the proper, effective and efficient use of public money
- Treat all information with confidentiality, sensitivity and discretion
- Never seek to frustrate the policies, decisions or actions of Ministers by the improper disclosure of information
- Never decline to take or abstain action which flows from decisions by Ministers

(Senior Management Development Training Program, Bermuda Government, October 2003)

These statements describe the tone of narrative activities occurring at the policy and best practice levels. They are rules and guidelines, but they are also expectations. For example, at a policy level, the narrative activity for the first bullet might include statements that say, “I am honest with my colleagues”. But within the organisational culture, people might be saying something to the effect of, “I’m honest but so many of my colleagues are not- people lie to cover their mistakes”. The ‘policy’ reflects great aspirations for honesty. Best practice, in its own quadrant of activity, might mean that people in the organisation are demonstrating behaviors that indicate they have integrity and are honest.

There are many imbedded understandings in these role expectations of public servants (Box 6). The premise of impartiality and objectivity are rendered problematic from a perspective that speaks to individuality. A premise of impartiality or objectiveness is also rendered problematic from the “realities” that are constructed and reconstructed on a daily basis. Civil servants hold political views and are members of political parties; they are integral participants in family and community systems to which they are very likely partial and subjective.

Also with reference to Box 6 above, with the public servant responsible to the Minister, it is a conundrum to ascertain who is responsible for the “unbiased” application of policy and best practice. Other areas of potential divergence arise when information that is confidential or sensitive is also that which the public has a right to know. Still other disconnections might flow from a decision made at the Ministerial level, that a civil servant considers an act of maladministration. These inherent conflicts dictate when one right or obligation supercedes another. These inherent conflicts also contribute to the misalignment of policy and practice. Impartiality, examined within these contexts may well be a contradictory euphemism for ‘following directives’ without question: and without consideration for the relational networks in which the alignment between what people say and do may be better.

How “loyalty” (as in Box 6, “officers of the public service owe loyal service...”) is defined also gives rise to discussion. Loyalty could be construed as following directives without question. It could also be interpreted as challenging directives as a means of protecting the government or protecting the use of public funds. Loyalty and how it is understood cannot be universally defined as its meaning derives itself from a constructed reality of the organisational participants.

Amalgamating organisational values, such as a ‘commitment to the employee as a person’, and ‘improving organisational output through enhanced appraisal processes’, indicates a common philosophy towards employee and organisational development.

Ministers are also in a position whereby they share in the construction of the organisational world. They participate fully in the high level confidential, decision-making processes of Government. They share collective responsibility for what is decided. They bear total responsibility and accountability for all subjects within their own portfolio, and conduct all related business in Cabinet, in the legislature and in public. They determine policy, within the convention of collective responsibility, for matters within their portfolio. Finally, they participate in parliamentary, constituency and political party business. To fulfill these responsibilities, there is much reliance on the perception, intention, ability and motivation of

public officers. From within a theoretical understanding that submits that the organisational perspectives are socially constructed, areas of accountability and conduct become an arena for un-reconciled dialogues. The ability of a civil servant to serve loyally, honestly, impartially and so on, while involved in privileged activities, may become compromised.

Participant training experiences within Bermuda's civil service speak to the existence of multiple meanings and conflicts living in the agency (Box 7). In 2004, a group of mid-management civil servants were asked a series of questions within a relatively privileged environment of colleagues. When asked to relate what gets in the way of translating policy into practice and policy implementation, participants responded (Box 7) with openness.

Box 7

Senior Civil Service Managers' Offerings on Challenges in Translating Policy into Practice

- Personal agendas
- Politics and power struggles
- Costs, Resources, lack of resources
- Infrastructures not in place
- Interpretation of policy
- Skipping elements of the policy implementation cycle
- Time constraints
- Consultation
- Changing priorities
- Flawed policy
- Unproductive civil service and civil servants/ ineffective labour relations
- Lack of leadership
- Resistance to change
- Public outcry/ stakeholders' influence
- Scandals
- Choosing the wrong policy option
- Poor communication/ misunderstanding
- Conflicts of interests
- Not living up to the spirit and intent of an agreement

Senior Management Development Program, Bermuda Government, July 2nd, 2003, Civil Service College

The following question: "What factors in managing people contributed to successful policy-making and organisational development?" was also responded to with a great deal of input. Box 8 summarises these offerings.

Box 8

Factors Contributing to Successful Policy Making and Organisational Development

- Inspired team work
- Creating opportunities for professional development
- Loyalty
- Mentoring

- Motivation
- Integrity
- Trust
- Respect
- Commitment
- Acknowledgement

Senior Management Development Program, Bermuda Government, July 2nd, 2003, Civil Service College

The content of the offerings in Boxes 7 and 8 above lays bare the relational experience of conflict, conflict of interest and power struggles in agency. It also highlights the very personal and relational context (i.e. “personal agendas; “politics”; poor communication”) from which civil servants work. Yet, factors of success that are envisioned in Box 8 exist in stark contrast to what these civil servants describe as the workplace reality. This pragmatic work experience is the ultimate description of how policy applications, organisational culture and relational networks interact.

In most aspects of civil service functioning, i.e. law enforcement, immigration, human rights, social services, etc., there are roles, and responsibilities, and challenges to these roles and responsibilities. There are also aspects of those roles and responsibilities that contribute to positive workplace experiences. However, these frameworks and understandings can be interpreted in many ways. Their interpretation is dependent on the situation as it is presented. Their ‘situatedness’ is located within the decision-making process and derived from a collection of narrative activities, the organisational culture, the policy and professional narrative and the legislative system in which the law operates. The end interpretations can be diverse.

Almost without debate, however, is the understanding that organisational spheres represent human interplay. For every action/reaction combination within the relational network and organisational culture, an organisational space is created between policy and practice. That which fills that space in quality and content be is authentic and may prove to be the ultimate relational realisation.

Summarily, civil service roles, relationships and contexts are complex and possibly contradictory. They are an amalgamation of culture, ideology, experience and practice (Mumby, 1992). Thus the notion of competing narratives has been introduced. The inherent organisational activities position, push and pull employees into subtle roles subsumed by politics, public desires and opinion, and wage earning capacity. This organisational activities and narratives become central to governance within one grand set of stated policy objectives- the mission. To understand the extent to which policy statements influence the other ‘narrative spheres’, a full accounting of the civil service’s mission and vision is important.

2.16.1. Good governance and a Mission

An organisational mission is supposed to be a statement that is the most compelling, positive and powerful indicator of what the organisation does. It is meant to drive its participants to be purposely and personally invested in the tasks of the organisation. Box 9 and 10 present the texts of Bermuda’s civil service mission, vision and value statements.

Box 9
Public Service Mission Statement
<p><i>“The Bermuda Government- a job, a career, a future”. “We are committed to providing accurate information and advice to Government to assist in the formulation of sound social and economic policies and enhance the welfare of the community. We pledge to be a motivated and accountable workforce that will deliver these services in an effective, efficient and equitable way”</i></p> <p><i>“We will continue to demonstrate our commitment to excellence by providing our customers with a full range of progressive human resource services. By attracting and developing employees, we will enhance the Public Service for the betterment of the community. We are dedicated to function as a team in an environment of respect and opportunity for all”.</i></p> <p><i>Source: The Bermuda Government, Public Service Mission Statement, Code of Conduct and Conditions of Employment, 2003.</i></p>

Box 10
Public Service Values
<ul style="list-style-type: none">a. <i>To provide the Government and people of Bermuda with impeccable service.</i>b. <i>To provide sound, impartial and timely advice, options and recommendations.</i>c. <i>To promote and reward good performance.</i>d. <i>To be accountable and ensure value for money.</i>e. <i>To be a fair and equal opportunity employer and to be the employer of choice.</i>f. <i>To encourage continuous training, development and advancement for officers.</i> <p><i>Source: The Bermuda Government, Public Service Mission Statement, extracted from the Code of Conduct and Conditions of Employment, 2003.</i></p>

These explicit examples of missions and values (best practice policy and intent) starkly contrast with the experiences described in Box 7. This critical disconnect is concerning and must be explored within a context of aligning the intent for good governance (the mission) and narratives of practice and experience.

Recall that aligning relational narrative, organisational culture, policy and practice, were specific concerns for the development, longevity and continuity of sound initiatives reflective of a commitment from the organisation’s participants⁴¹. Therein, the defocusing of the organisational mission is problematic. It is also likely where there is the most potential for better alignment.

Substantively, the stated goals and visions of the organisational environment, as documented by employee statements, policy documentation and public statements are: to improve service; to improve employee experience; improving organisational efficiency; implement measures to improve the image and output of the organisation; improving communication with the public and

⁴¹ See Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001 for an excellent source on motivating employees by alerting work meanings, work identity and crafting jobs- thus stressing the individual’s psychological construction of the experiential world (Gergen, 1994) and the employee’s potential to reconstruct that construct.

access to service i.e. through new Government websites and concentrated efforts to publicise and mainstream policies.

There are some organisational activities that align themselves with these best practice objectives. However, silent in these goals and objectives is an acknowledgement of how to realise these visions within the interacting relationships and organisational culture so tangible in participant discourse and the successful recognition of the perspectives of civil servants bring to their roles and responsibilities. Clearly there are some sub-cultures, i.e. in and amongst the relational network, whose alignment is better. Bringing more of the interpersonal and of 'identity' into policy might involve repositioning "best practice". Strengthening the impact of the spheres might also mean aligning the politics of the organisational culture with the elements of individual's personal qualities. A closer look at organisational behaviors and how they align with each other may provide insight into one avenue of successful change management (Box 11 describes some areas for consideration when looking at organisational change).

Box 11

Strategising for organisational change in the civil service sub-culture

In a Senior Management Development Training workshop held in October 2003, managers and supervisors almost in their entirety indicated that they value: networking; clarification of hierarchy of roles and inter-department ties; the use of organisational models in identifying multiple influence; provision of a forum as to how to handle multiple pressures; and understanding the pressures of each organisational participant. Within these concerns, a wish for enhanced relational activity was declared.

These types of workshops are among many activities which indicate heightened awareness of the "people" within the civil service. In his speech, Hon. W. Alexander JP, MP emphasises Government's continued commitment to developing its people in order that they increase their potential and by extension that of their Organisation and of Bermuda". "Enthusiastically pursue your dreams. He states, "Be passionate, enthusiastic and energetic in the pursuit of your career" (Strategy into Action, 2003).

Closely preceding this public comment, the Bermuda Government conducted a Civil Service Employee Opinion Survey in September 2002. Evidence from the survey indicated that a key priority for employees was improving the way performance is managed. 70% of employees reported not receiving regular performance appraisals. 74% did not receive regular feedback on their performance. 90% did not feel the process was fair and 75% of Respondents thought that poor performance was tolerated.

In response to survey outcomes, the Department of Human Resources outlined the following initiatives: to use the evidence from the survey to drive improvements in performance management; to devise a new appraisal system; to gain commitment from the Civil service executive, unions and hiring board; and to provide the supporting documentation to enhance the process. This response from the Human Resources department began a process in which employees were asked to begin to help create meaning for themselves as organisational participants in agency with Government.

2.16.2. Reconstructing organisational mission and mandate: The case of the Department of Human Resources

Very much in keeping with a focus on people, promoting and encouraging feedback and dialogue, and their importance in the working relations of the organisation, the Department of Personnel Services changed its name to the Department of Human Resources. This change also emphasised and gave credence to the value the department places on meaning- the meaning and

construction of terminology and how that would be constructed in the department's relationships with others.

The revised (2004) mission statement of the Department of Human Resources (Box 12) commits its team members to:

Box 12
Revised Human Resource Mission Statement
<p><i>"...providing a full range of Human Resource services we support you- or colleagues and customers- so that you can do your job as effectively as possible... People are at the heart of what we do, and our success depends on getting the best out of everyone. To do so however, we recognise that we play a pivotal role in balancing caring people management in a learning environment in a way that enables Government to achieve its objectives. Effective Human Resource Management is therefore a means to an end".</i></p>
<p>Source: Department of Human Resources, Bermuda Government</p>

Responding to employee concerns and dialogues, the department went on to establish a commitment to training and development of employees. Outlined specifically are the roles of the manager, the individual employee and the department of personnel services. The Department's commitment to improving service is highlighted, as is the goal of working together to improve the development of "our most important resource, the people that comprise the civil service" (Strategy Into Action Bulletin No. 3).

Viewing the civil servant from within the broader organisational context and narrative spheres, repositions them as a valuable human resources. Their identities become prominent in detailing, deconstructing and balancing roles and change- weighing in on the extent to which the organisational mission can be fulfilled with respect to the alignment of multiple interest-group needs. This discovery positions employees as valued resources, as individuals and as people.

Conducting a survey as discussed in Box 11, and following up on its results is a very important and strategic organisational development initiative. However, if we consider social constructionist and relational theory, more possibilities in the development of the organisation could present themselves- that of an in-depth understanding and increased involvement of the organisational participants. The strategy and its outcomes may have more of an impact and become an initiative that employees own if their experiences are probed at a relational level.

Studying the development of and changes in structure, content and durability of interpersonal meaning; developing research approaches for enquiry about experiences and values and how they acquire meaning; encouraging the exploration of relationships and their role in determining organisational behavior, are areas where more study is encouraged. These opportunities and challenges for future research into how meaning is turned into action have garnered some attention in the current literature.

The proceeding discussion presents two models from which researchers have conceptualised interventions: encouraging shared understandings and discourse analysis. Broad in applicability,

for these interventions primarily speak to interviewing techniques, their applications are likely relevant to any organisational practices that have a relational component.

2.17. Shared understandings and discourse analysis as models for conducting interviews and facilitating other interventions

Turning ‘meaning’ into action is an activity located in interviewing, training, conducting needs assessments and many other means of employment communication: from their interactive features to the analysis of its outcomes. Outcomes from these interventions (the data) can take many forms with narrative being quite central. Narrative representations are “a series of statements that describe and order a number of actions and/or experiences” (Franklin, 1997, p. 106). Narrative representations and the data gathered from a shared understanding or discourse model of interviewing as narrative representations. I will discuss the possibilities for developing a shared understanding in the interview, training or group facilitated context, followed by a discussion on one way of making sense of this data through textual and discourse analysis.

Referred to as a shared understanding interview model (Table 1), Franklin (1997) describes a situation in which the interviewer attempts to gain understanding of how the interviewee experiences aspects of his or her own life and/or the world of objects and other persons (p. 102).

“The interview is construed as an interpersonal situation and it is recognised that the interviewer’s characteristics, sensitivity, and other qualities affect what is said. The presence and necessary participation of the interviewer is not viewed negatively. Further, it is asserted that the interview is a process during which meanings are not only brought forth but sometimes newly formed. For example, the interviewee may change his or her mind about something or speak on an experience not previously articulated” (Franklin, 1997, p. 103).

Franklin (1997) exposes and expands upon what she cites as this process of “phenomenological interviewing” (Box 13 below). The process draws on Kvale’s 1994 practices of moving towards an in-depth understanding of the “other’s” experience. The minimal use of prepared questions, allows for changes of direction, and an opportunity for corroboration of interpretations (Franklin citing Reinharz, 1992, p. 21). Responding to the call for richer and new ways of “doing research”, this process of interviewing is designed to yield person-centred, richer responses [narratives].

Substantively, Franklin’s shared understanding model described above (Franklin, 1997), prescribes that:

Box 13
Aspects of the Shared Understanding Interviewing Model
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1) The interview is semi-structured, following a guide rather than a predetermined set of questions; the interviewer is free to pursue lines of thinking introduced by the participant;2) The interviewer comes to the interview as open-minded as possible, with few pre-suppositions;3) The interviewer aims for clarification (by asking questions, providing tentative interpretations) but not at risk of eradicating genuine ambiguity in the interviewee’s

- view of what s/he is talking about;
- 4) The interviewer paraphrases or interprets while the interview is in process, encouraging the interviewee's responses and questions; where possible, the interview may arrange a follow-up session to corroborate further interpretations.

Source: Derived from Franklin, 1997, p.104

Franklin (1997) states that:

“The aim is to obtain rich, nuanced descriptive material that reflects the participant's experience of her or his life world (or some part thereof) and lends itself to qualitative analysis in one or more nodes- for example, identifying and categorising central themes, or extracting core narratives. Drawing attention to this ‘shared understanding’ model, the major theme is that the interview should come to understand the participant's sense of her or his life experience from her or his perspective- the texture and feeling as well as the ‘facts’- through a process of exchange and even empathy. Such understanding does not preclude applying a theoretical framework that yields interpretations at another level from the participant's own” (Franklin, 1997, p. 103).

This first model of interviewing describes a process whereby meaning is expressed and understood (as a goal) within a context. This model shares assumptions with what is referred to by Franklin (1997) as a discourse model (Box 14).

Interviewing, in the discourse model, is conceptualised as a situated speech event. Emphasis is placed on an ongoing interaction between two or more people, carried out through language (Franklin, 1997). The interactive component is central to this model in that participants are deemed to have active roles in the transaction. Challenging the possibility of interviewer “distance” or “objectivity” the discourse process would posit the interview participants as entering the transaction with “infused with personal experience” (Franklin, 1997, p. 104). Echoing social constructionist thought, meaning is formed, not merely expressed or reported, through the speaking that takes place in the interview process.

Box 14

Characteristics of the Discourse Model

- 1) The interviewer enters into conversational mode, and responds to interviewees' questions, perhaps even talking about her own experience;
- 2) While a topic or focus generally exists beforehand, exploration of new themes that arise in the exchange is encouraged;
- 3) Cross-connections may develop: one interviewee may say something that can be used productively in subsequent interviews with others; and
- 4) The interviewer attends to and, if desired, re-arranges power relations between participants to the ends of establishing equality, or even a collaborative relationship.

Source: Derived from Franklin, 1997, p.104

Franklin (1997) speaks to the value of responsiveness, rather than distance, as being appropriate and desirable in an interviewing context, but which can be applied to relational contexts as a whole. She augments others' (Oakley, 1981; Harding, 1987) views on researcher involvement in interviewing by supporting the notion that rather than introducing "influence" or "bias", the researcher's full participation (sometimes including self-disclosure) is seen as conducive to establishing the trust and reciprocity that facilitate open expression, and the possibility of an egalitarian relationship between interviewer and interviewee" (p. 102).

In addition to a constructionist foundation, research activities, team building, policy development, interviewing, training development and facilitation can be devised to incorporate a shared understanding model. Such structuring would speak to an organisational, research and/or inquiry processes that is less structured, dialogical, narratively-based and person-centred. Equal participation would be encouraged because meaning is expressed, and also formed through the speech act.

Moving these shared understandings to a place where participants are aspiring to create new meanings from their interactions may be yet another process. These activities fall into the realm of 'analysis' or 'mining for data', as a means of investigating the processes of social construction. One option which partners well with social constructionist and appreciative thinking is that of discourse and narrative analysis. I present these models, the afore-mentioned shared understanding model and the following discourse analysis model, as a means of describing the multiple possibilities for thinking about, understanding and treating research outcomes. Although I have centralised appreciative inquiry methodological considerations, the extension of that approach incorporates the documented ways of thinking through discourse and narrative.

2.17.1. Discourse and narrative analysis

Reflexive and interpretive, discourse analysis explores how socially produced ideas were created in the first place, and then maintained. It uncovers the way in which the narratives unfold and considers how language constructs phenomena. Further, this type of analysis can not be stripped from its broader contexts and the data gathered can take the form of interviews, focus groups, documents and records, newspaper articles and political commentary and naturally occurring conversations (Phillips and Hardy, 2002; Potter and Wetherall, 1987). The interpretive techniques and methods are also varied, ranging from conversational analysis, to ethnographies, linguistic analysis, thematic and now, appreciative techniques. Most notably, discourse analysis as a methodological approach recognises that there is a plurality in research which invites new ways to study phenomena, appreciatively and ephemerally, given organisations fluid and contradictory states. As a result, we need to "search for the stories, narratives, and symbols- the discourses- that hold together these contradictory flows and make them real for us" (Chia, 2000).

Herein, theories on narrative representations posit that they are articulated and presented in some medium that must be distinguished from a semi-formulated, perhaps submerged narrative that lies beneath the surface (Fairclough, 2003; Phillips & Hardy, 2002; Franklin, 1997). Implied is that which I have referred to as privileged narratives and has at least three representations: an explicit one formulated into and by, pre-scripted (that which has been "told" before to oneself or others) representations; an underlying, perhaps semi-formulated or submerged representation (a

story perhaps never before articulated); and an assumption of the existence of yet-to-narrated experiences (i.e. image).

The narrative representation is typically an aspect of a life story, which the participant has told before. In this way, it is possible that this form of narrative is pre-scripted- genuine- but still something with which the participant has grappled with and told before.

The underlying narrative may be less well “formulated” as its “telling” may be new- something the person has just scribed and is sharing for the first time- or its development as a story is being improvised. The question may refer to an experience to which the participant has not given previous thought. Franklin (1997) suggests that participants in this latter instance do not even have a relevant underlying narrative to draw from and draw on “memories and experiences, perhaps fragments of related narratives, to improvise a narrative representation” (p. 107). “This representation may then be ‘stored’ more or less intact, may settle in and become part of an already existing underlying narrative” or be abandoned (Franklin, 197, p. 107).

Modifications to the form and content of the narratives may be influenced by situational factors (Franklin, 1997; Gavey, 1997). These factors could include: how the participant transacts with the researcher; whether the researcher actively participates; how such participation has meaning for the participant, etc.

There are several possibilities for analyzing these narrative representations. One view is to consider all forms of the narrative (spoken interaction, formal and informal and written texts of all kinds) and read the text for a better understanding of social life and social interaction. This analytical method, a textual analysis, focuses on the substance and aspects of how the content is presented, as a major focus. Also referred to as a theme/plot orientation (Franklin, 1997), we can read participant’s narratives for principal themes, subsidiary or secondary themes and how they are elaborated upon. Franklin (1997) specifies how narratives can be analyzed by reporting that:

Primary narrative representations draw on underlying narratives and once articulated can sift down and become part of them. Also..., primary narrative representations can be affected by secondary narrative representations, and so forth. Secondary narrative representations are certainly theory-guided, they remain closely tied to the specific phenomena of a particular case [that which was described by the participant]. Yet, such narratives can become the “raw” material for another level of narrative construction, a level that draws on theoretical concepts transcending the particular case, and that is specifically geared towards explanation. In constructing such underlying narratives, the researcher can use established, codified theory (for example, psychoanalytic theory) or improvise theoretical formulations” (p. 111).

Here, Franklin (1997) establishes exciting premises for data analysis. In summary, she proposes reading narratives for their potential in relaying primary, secondary, underlying and constructed themes. Similarly, by exploring participants’ narratives of identity in organisational practice, as presented in a focus group, needs assessment meeting, training sessions, and interviews, privileged narrative can be viewed as central to its participants.

This presentation on the ways that life experiences can be explored drawing from approaches to shared understanding and analyzing discourse, concludes the literature review. In this present inquiry, I use appreciative thematic analytic techniques to categorise my observations into some of these broad thematic patterns that reflect discursive constructions of identity, policy and practice (Mohr and Magruder, 2001; Lindlof, 1995). This approach is quite similar to the concepts described above and in fact, some of the premises presented above have been incorporated into my methodological activities. Box 4, pg. 60 describes the appreciative inquiry methodological process that involves thematic categorisation. Following a summary of the literature review, the study methodology is presented in detail.

2.18. Summation of Literature Review

In this review of the literature, I have described a world of civil service work comprised of several components. This “world” is constructed by employees’ hopes, visions and aims for their work, the service population and the working relationships they have. The culture of this agency is one mediated by the statutory frameworks, policies and procedures of the organisation. These frameworks encompass complex decision-making process, departmentally and organisationally. Within this process, we find civil servants tasking and dialoguing in multiple ways, through their best efforts at practice, aspiring to live and experience the organisational visions and missions; and through their lived experience. These narrative activities often tell competing stories about the expectations of and for employees, organisational goals and the practices stemming from civil service duties.

Having outlined my concern for this struggle, I considered the role and consequences of race, class and gender on these narrative activities. It seemed to me that there was a ‘disconnect’ between what the organisation wanted employees to embrace professionally group versus the dialogues of relational experience. This disconnect involves differences that yield prejudice, discrimination and mistrust (race, gender and class, primarily). The disconnect also encompasses the less-acknowledged dilemmas over: hierarchies of obligation; value systems that transact the working relationships; a system in which the statutory framework is ever-present, but an organisational culture which subscribes to rules, roles and expectations. This potential divide has consequences for employees and the people they serve.

I describe this phenomenon as divergent narrative activities of *aspiration* (missions, visions, policy and objectives) versus *actual practices* (intention, practice, procedures, decision-making processes and actions). Expressed through narratives, dialogues and discussions, these narrative activities occur in multiple locations and varied levels of explicitness, of the organisation. The narrative activities represent both a professional and privileged tone of discourse.

In some instances, the narratives of the ‘professional’ and ‘privilege’ coincide. But there are some areas of contention amongst the two. The actual practice of civil service work may be less a reflection of the agency’s policies and best practice initiatives and more indicative of collegial interactions and the organisational culture. Actual practice may be more indicative of relational activities, the attitudinal and interactive discourses of colleagues and supervisors (relational networks and organisational culture) over the organisation’s policy ideals and best practice objectives. These former ‘messages’ help practitioners formulate an idea of what is acceptable

practice or what is the operational but unstated organisational mission. At times, they are not representative of the messages present in the legislative and policy frameworks.

Co-existent with policy and best practice statements, political correctness drives the dialogue of actual practice underground; relegating it to privileged spaces. What is left is the professional narratives; the collective voice of a discourse that speaks of best practice and strategic objectives.

Problematic is that the underlying privileged discourse disadvantages service users- both internal and external, presenting itself as a series of situated and competing narratives occurring in both privileged and professional circles: the former representing practice in agency; the latter representing aspiration, of policy, vision and ideals. Each is situated in within a context.

I summarised my introductory remarks by describing the professional narrative activities as those occurring within an organisational context of policies, goals, missions, and some aspects of the agency's visions and ideals. I then summarised the privileged narrative activities as those occurring in a relational context of interpersonal transactions and relationships. The privileged discourse represents the practical aspects of the day-to-day constructed processes, procedures, decision-making tools, and outcomes. Professional and privileged narrative activities occur within the four aspects of co-constructed narrative contexts (relational networks, organisational culture and the patterns of behavior it engenders, policy development and application and best practice perspectives), reflecting a wide range of organisational activity.

From these descriptions, I inquired as to how civil servants can manage their roles in an organisation. I suggested that civil service employees can become disengaged from a process of pursuing the agency mission. I highlighted the notion that differences such as race, social class and gender (relationships to, feelings about, life experiences with or as) enter a discussion of organisational functioning in ways that may not be adequately explored. Enhanced alignment of narrative activities might therefore require that differences in identity that yield relational outcomes of discrimination and disservice be considered. Thus narrative, privileged or other, must continue to incorporate that knowledge and generated shared relational experience so that it receives attention and is accounted for in discourse. It also seemed advisable to 1) explore the narrative elements of employee experience, with its relational consequences; and 2) explore its more recently acknowledged consequences for the study of contemporary organisational systems. These systems, the sites of narrative activity, seem to be contributing to a somewhat discomfiting reproduction of relations and processes that are hierarchically and power-bound, alongside everyday practices of service-wide service providers, whom harbour the best of intentions.

I lastly expressed an intention to pursue an understanding of how every-day civil service practice reproduces expectations and dominant notions of ideal aspiration while operating from a system that reinforces hierarchy, authority and power. How it is that civil service employees can be supportive at the intervention and policy level but relate to each other and their clients, render decisions and takes action that contrast and discourage these efforts. Within this direction of inquiry was a: 1) quest for surfacing, unsettling and re-placing a downward spiral of discourse with a line of narrative inspired by hope, curiosity and reflections of individual's best experiences; and 2) exploring civil service workers' privileged discourse (ways of talking of

experience in private spaces or in agency, that are imbedded in relationships), with regard to differences and relating to people who are different from them, with a hope of furthering understanding as to what happens in service relations and promoting more generative activities. To theoretically ground this process of inquiry, I introduced the substantive elements of social constructionism. Social constructionist theory and its acknowledgement of relational behavior in organisations was presented in detail, with respect to how knowledge is acquired, how power can be understood, and how meaning is created through language.

In the section on social constructionism, I substantiated the major premises of the meta-theory stipulating that: 1) what are considered as “facts” or truths are dependent upon the language communities that create and sustain them; 2) people generate their truths from the languages available to them; 3) a description or perspective is dependent on its historical and cultural locations; 4) because they are constructed within discrete social and language communities, ethical standards or universal truths may take many forms, but are not independent of their communities of origin; and 6) claims to any one perspective or experience may be viewed with skepticism, emphasising for their situatedness in cultural constraints and communities. In this discussion, considerable emphasis was placed on the relational construction of the world through language.

I pursued constructionism’s central assumption on how the contingent flow of continuous communicative activity between human beings warrants study, substantiating my introductory thoughts on the flow of relational background activities and practices as constructed in joint action. The work of Kenneth Gergen, a major contributor to social constructionist theory, was reviewed, ascertaining that meaning is a product of social agents and requiring that we emphasise relationships as the site of world construction. It followed that from within each grouping of activities, words and their collective stories take on significance and that continuing discussion on how social constructionism views knowledge, as having significance in communities, is relevant.

At that juncture of my discussion, I proposed that the current literature advocates that researchers honor the contributions of each tradition of experience, critically examining and challenging what is taken for granted within our own research paradigms and aspiring to make sense of and use of the forms of data available from each. I then extended this proposal to the constructionist invitation to organisational participants, to engage in collaborative meaning-making processes that may require leaders to suspend their right to exercise power and in relationship, thus opening up opportunities for privileged narrative to illustrate critical relational sensitivities.

What followed was a discussion of the relational elements of discourse and the challenges they pose for study and theory development. Relational contexts and organisational cultures were described as being produced through discourses that are multiple, possibly contradictory, and unstable. The observing and reporting of historical narratives, theories and sub-cultural contexts therefore govern what is taken to be true or valid and observed was discussed as critical for inquiry; married to a willingness to draw from the multiple experiences and contexts, accepting that the data will take many forms- media representations, discussion outcomes, interviews, literature reviews, and even the researcher’s offering of experience.

The latter statement led into my discussion of a call for research methods, “analysis” and meaning construction that goes past an emphasis on statistical reliability and validity; considering and accepting research methods that value narrative data, encourages the use multiple cultural contexts as their backdrop, and envisions the research method of transcription as a transformation. I asked readers to view this inquiry as a blend of multiple narratives: from history, literature, media, training opportunities, and conversations in various contexts and sites.

Building on the theme of blending multiple narratives, I moved into a discussion on identity. The literature offered a number of perspectives on identity, from one structured primarily by race or ethnicity, to the gendered and social life experiences. The social constructionist position on individual narrative privileges the speaker, from within his or her life experiences. Therefore, the concept of perspective and dialoguing on perspective, particularly from within a relational context of identity, was deemed quite critical.

Accordingly, some authors suggest that in order to counter or challenge the domination of Eurocentric forms of life and a reflective social order, the history and impact of race relations needs to be incorporated into discussions of identity. In her opinion, narrative plays a powerful role in creating this aspect of the social order (maintaining one privileged narrative to the detriment and silence of others) and would have to play a larger role in dispelling uncompromising and discriminatory perspectives and re-scripting life stories.

I continued the review of the literature with consideration for how the notion of race has been constructed from a biological, psychological and political sciences, as well as one which situates racial identity in a social and historical context. From a constructionist approach on racial identity specifically, I noted that skin colour as a criterion of group identity, needed to be understood as a matter of self-interpretation. This formulation of ‘race’ changes the character or meaning of it from bodily characteristics to the group experience in relational terms.

‘Race’ was described as similar to other diversity dimensions such as gender, and as such, attempting to construct a singular definition has lead to multiple understandings of race: as a mutually exclusive category; as simultaneously representing both majority and minority groups; as a euphemism for ethnicity or culture; and as a subset of multiculturalism. The multiplicity of definitions may have little meaning for organisational participants, until its usage is made contingent on the intent, history, understanding and context of a speaker and listener (Pope-Davis et al, 1998). In this discussion on identity, I positioned discourses on race, gender and class constructs as forms of practice that affect and concern everyone: from the more traditional understandings and activities that reinforce biological, essentialist, role or cultural distinctions to the more situated, culturally and relationally-derived constructions.

Representing areas for further inquiry, the review of literature in the areas of racial construction, gender and class-influenced interaction delineated a call for dialectical action in creating possibilities for increased intimacy in organisational activities. There also seemed a need for: 1) clearer exchange on the organisational responses to and sociopolitical contexts of racialised employees; and 2) access to a discursive framework that would help transform downward-spiraling narrative and deconstruct limiting perspectives on individual abilities. Finally, there

was encouragement for inviting and creating new understandings of the racial, gendered and class representations, through reflection, affirmation and ongoing regeneration in organisations.

Having reviewed the prevailing thoughts on how identity can be better read through an understanding of many frameworks and in many contexts, I moved on to consider the how identity as experienced in organisations, particularly in the relationally interactive spheres, can be infused through the policies and other knowledge bases used to develop best practice narrative. This transition allowed for a discussion narrative. I described the narrative account as morally and empirically relevant, reflecting and impacting the social order as directly observed by its actors, arguing that nothing, acquires meaning until it participates in the domain of discourse.

Organisational narrative as a whole was presented as unlimited in form and definition because although the participants' stories are equally valid, they are unlikely to be the same. Using the narrative account in the present undertaking is a pragmatic way of describing the relational processes that underpin organisational functioning. And, viewing narrative as an initial story told by a participant, and recognising that mining the data results in a "final story" told by the researcher, is critical to social constructionist research. Further, a narrative constructionist view on data analysis might mean going back to the original story told by the participant, and continuing a dialogue with the transcript, jointly constructing the final story to be reported to an audience. This relational and constructionist perspective attempts to move beyond the production of theories that attribute meaning to actors within a context, to meaning that is devised through relationships.

In this respect, employee's problems and the responsibility for them are not theirs alone. Instead of placing failure for a process in the individual, problematising the individual's decision-making, resulting in evaluation, reprimand, scrutiny or dismissal, we are directed to locate knowledge and experience in the "heart" or core of the organisation. Such is the way of crafting new ways of talking about organisational life, news ways of directing organisational development.

From this premise, I asserted that through stories, through narrative, organisational participants are positioned and repositioned within an ideological context and that an accounting of civil service narrative must explicitly address the positioning process. I posed the inherent challenge to this maintaining this position as being presenting outcomes of an inquiry that are applicable to everyday organisations. In response to this challenge, the literature offered several theoretical and practical ideas. One was the quest towards engaging participants in transformative dialogue by: proceeding in practice, and advocating for locating [research] in the world of action, and specifically to cases in which people are wrestling successfully with problems of multiple and conflicting realities: the goal being to locate conversational actions or create self-reflective conditions that have both broad-based transformative potential, and theoretical implications.

These reflexive activities⁴² were framed as continual attempts to place one's premises into question and to listen to alternative framings of reality. These activities were also a means of grappling the potentially different outcomes arising out of different points of view.

Having considered the applications of social constructionism to discussions on identity, and the potential for narrative of experience and aspiration, I had framed the civil service within traditional organisational behaviors and activities, situated in a sub-cultural context, with the potential for narrative that is both unifying and divisive co-existent. I had also delineated a gap in the literature which called for further exploration of organisational narratives- ones that explore identity and possibilities for relational, cultural, policy and practice enhancement. Finally, responding to a call for a way of making ideas on narrative alignment practical, I introduced the concepts of transformative and reflexive activities.

These discussions reinforced the notion that negotiating privileged, private and public narratives considers opening conversations about multiple realities, and thus a shift in perspective or the lived experience. I outlined possibilities for this type of movement in work relationships, focus groups and in groups such as training workshops, as well as possibilities for policy enhancement and revisions to best practice structures.

One possibility that arose from my discussion on "keeping things real" (conceptualising the research from within its constructionist foundations) was the incorporation of appreciative inquiry. As a model for exploring organisational behavior and change, appreciative inquiry was presented as centralising inquiry via unconditional, positivistic questioning. Grounded in a constructionist premise, appreciative activities emphasise metaphor and narrative, relational ways of knowing, on language, and on its potential as a source of generative theory. Appreciative inquiry was explored as diverting from problem-focused query, to strength-based, participatory development of theory, policy and practice.

In this section of the review, I state an objective of engaging in a study that: 1) stresses the importance of sub-cultural context and the participants' frames of references and 2) broadens the scope of research tools by using an appreciative process as a means of discovery. Appreciative inquiry became the lens from which I developed future-orientated questions that aspired to value and honour the participants experience while attempting to make sense of the process in which the existing organisational mission has come into existence. I adapted the appreciative inquiry change process into a proposed research/methodological process that included:

- 1) Engaging in interviews that are guided by a social constructionist and appreciative protocol and that as such: invite a diagonal slice of organisational participants to tell a story; query the best moments and highlights of the topic choice; encourage participants to reflect upon their strengths, values and contributions to the organisation; encourage images of the self and others to be constructed and imagined by the participants themselves; and encourage the participants to express their wish for the future;

⁴² Goldstein (1994) offers another interpretation of reflexive activity. He suggests that in practice, though conversation (dialogue and critical reflection), organisational participants (employees and clients, colleagues, employees and supervisors) search for an increase in self-knowledge, the reduction of illusions, shared meaning, the restoration of meaning or the alleviation of injustice and discrimination.

- 2) Mining the inquiry (interview) data for themes or life-giving forces;
- 3) Expanding the positive dialogue about these themes and the visions expressed by participants; and asking from within information gathered from sources and communities, as well as customised protocol interviews:
- 4) Reflecting on the potential for narrative, expanding the dialogue and continuing a conversation with the lived narrative by transcribing it with as much of the participants' words as they were stated, as possible;
- 5) Creating synergies of dialogue, by creating and preparing a mechanism through which the data can be absorbed and ingested by others.

This approach to research sees a transformation from traditional methods. Data and data collection processes are more likely to be multi-faceted. The formulation and presentation of findings will indicate movement towards high regard for offering opportunities to participants to be heard and to build relational understandings; from “analysis” to the use of terms more consistent with “mining”, “exploring”; and to a relatively un-generalised presentation of data.

I then spoke to how the foundational appreciative inquiry principles of constructionism, positivism and wholeness hold much promise for considering how race, gender and class can be explored from an appreciative framework. I discussed these formulations of identity as understood from essentialist perspectives to ones where individuals are understood to be capable of belonging and identifying with multiple diversities. Encouraging those perspectives to become part of the activity enhances its meaning to participants by reflecting on positive past relationships with people whom are different, and draw on the best aspects of the experience to enact the future. I advocated for a position that sees participation at any of the levels of organisational activity dependent on the degree to which a narrative on diversities, differences and identities play a role in practice and policy.

Wanting to reconnect these findings on social constructionism, narrative, appreciative inquiry and their relationship to aspects of identity influence organisational behavior, I returned to a discussion of the relationship between theory and practice. The section described appreciative inquiry, organisational life and challenges for practice and theory.

An emerging consensus in the literature was that a broader, open-ended, interactive, responsive and cooperative relational process could be critical to the functional acts of organising and operating. There was much concern for the disconnect between theory and practice, but a limited focus on relational concerns. Reiterated was the social constructionist's invitation to bring the sphere of organisational activities (the practice of knowing/making/developing) into congruence with social relatedness.

Operationally, this meant deconstructing the ideologies of theory and practice, inquiring as to how meaning is acquired, and revealing the potential for how: 1) policy is ascribed multiple manifestations, such as a: vision, mission statement, strategy, procedures, objectives, and policy statements; and 2) practice takes many forms: intentions, actions, procedures, rules, roles and decision-making processes.

I presented two models within which there was narrative and relational potential for the construction/deconstruction activities: the shared understanding and discourse analysis models, as a means of describing the multiple possibilities for: thinking about, understanding and treating narrative research outcomes; and listening to and agreeing upon new meanings in dialogical exchanges.

The review of the literature recognised the profound role of talk and texts in everyday life is the first step in analyzing the interrelated set of texts, and the production, dissemination, and reception that brings an object into being. Therefore, a critical inquiry was highlighted as a thorough exploration of discourse as a representation of the realities participants choose to share. This exploration, a constructive process, incurs a systematic and thorough review of texts and contexts: the historical and social context, by which we refer to particular actors, relationships and practices that characterise the situation under study; the environments in which interaction is structured; and the communications within the subtext. With support from the literature, I assert that we can never focus on a single text because discourse in all of its manifestations, can never be found in their entirety.

From this assertion, I went on to describe aspects of the cultural sub-text in which civil servants function and make meaning, in Bermuda. I presented a discussion on civil service work, governance, roles and responsibilities. The civil service's distinctiveness as an employing structure with public functions was highlighted, as well as the challenge for civil servants in negotiating multiple reporting responsibilities: to the public, to a Ministerial and political figure, to colleagues and potentially to appointed executive Boards. Themes emerging in Bermuda's socio-cultural discourse were topics such as independence and neo-colonial status, race and politics, concerns about justice and equality. I proposed that the voices of the Bermuda's context raise a cautionary message about race issues as relational entities, potentially re-distributing the action/reaction role required of its participants.

Race issues were described as continuing to be complex entities, its dynamism closely affiliated with the struggle and interest raised by the impact of race, gender and class on organisational participants. I laid that discussion to bear as an ideological challenge for employees attempting to conceptualise their organising constructs within Bermuda's unique organisational and communal sub-contexts. How policy and practice are critically misaligned from an employee's perspective, was highlighted reflecting on comments offered by some civil service managers.

This overview of substantive areas indicated several possible factors entering the world of civil service work and employee relationships. It is possible that employees struggle to define a role for themselves. In doing so, they must negotiate a myriad of challenges: responding to conflicting demands from multiple interest groups; balancing policy ideals with day-to-day practice; aspiring to a standard of being apolitical, while fulfilling politically-driven mandates; serving and being responsible to the public while managing interests that may endanger the public; and/or trying to assist in the solution of problems in which the impetus and root of the problem within its instigators.

Civil service employees may be placed in a position to exercise abstract, moral and personal opinions in decision-making and agency practice. On the other hand, they are aware of and try

to incorporate larger systemic understandings of problems into procedure and practice. Civil service workers may be clear on what they think of as good “work” or as being a “good” employee, taking “good” decisions. These understandings may be moral and individual.

This analysis has implications for civil service work in the following ways. Employees and employing agencies may have lost perspective around how to manage what seem to be competing or conflict goals (safety and support for example in child welfare). Reconciliation or balancing these goals requires that we establish that practice is a struggle and that finding a balance is difficult- not only from a situated moral and intervention perspective, but within time limits, resource deficits, legal requirements, angry clients and personal dynamics. Not only are employees unlikely to express their feelings around work- except for in what seem to be isolated settings, there is little opportunity.

The way forward in organisational development for the Bermuda Civil Service is presently being negotiated. The organisational climate is such that issues around diligent use of the public purse, value for money, training and development are more or less consensual. However, organisational development may aspire for longevity and continuity of initiatives. It may call for increasing staff buy-in and commitment. It asks the question of how to ensure that best intentions, dreams, hopes and possibilities, do not get lost. It explores professional dialogues and competing narratives.

These relational transactions continue to warrant critical attention from within the context of the historical and social relations: post colonialism, feminism, racism, sexism, and renderings of social class, value and belief systems. Organisational participants may not be in a position to examine their narratives: rendering invisible the relationships and realities of organisational contexts and the impact of that context on their interactions, actions and supplemental responses.

Lastly, if the employment experience and the potential for negative outcomes and the consequences for future organisational development and initiatives are not adequately addressed, the responsibilities for systemic and inter-relational realities are not fairly distributed amongst the actors. The result may be a curious and discrepant balancing act for employees and service recipients that reproduces aspects of relationships that are paternalistic, racist, sexist, disempowering or non-supportive in nature.

Further considering identity, politics and some increasingly relationally-focused strategies undertaken by the Bermuda Government for organisational change, I made the following summary remarks.

Unless, as a community, transformative relational spaces are created to jointly construct the policies, practices and worlds the community desires, the participants voices will get lost. Effectively, the narratives will continue to function as though they were underground, where they essentially become stored- relegated to the privilege of back rooms. Privileged narrative, and its existence within its own set of civil service sub-cultural activities, is critical to the discussion on the civil service

In the introduction to this study and review of the literature, I set out the criteria for this study as being to explore the relational narratives of civil service employees, as they relate to relationships, policy and best practice objectives. I also committed to conceptualising aspects of an appreciative inquiry process; and an analysis of the data using constructionist theoretical and substantive constructs. It was also my hope to invite a discussion on the underpinning themes governing relational interactions, organisational culture, agency policy and best practice. From these perspectives and understandings:

2.19. Summation of Objectives of Review of Literature

This review of background and literature has:

- a) Re-scribed the individual as fundamentally within privileged relationships that interact amongst the cultural contexts of agency, community, policy and practice;
- b) Explored the “situatedness” of public service worker “talk” with regard to identity and with respect to the construction of race, class and gender;
- c) Contributed to a growing body of literature on race, and to an extent, gender and class, through a discussion of the social construction of race, new ways of thinking about racism;
- d) Demonstrated the applications of social constructionism in the articulation of the interpersonal relationships between racial beings;
- e) Substantiated the need for agencies to systematically inform and seek feedback from their employees through narrative, encouraging reflective practice and reflective practitioners;
- f) Explored and expand the application of appreciative inquiry to research paradigms;
- g) Furthered a narrative constructionist view on data analysis which views the process as a continuing dialogue from that which is transcribed to that which is transcribed, resulting in a jointly constructing story which is recorded and shared; and
- h) Advocated for re-thinking “best practice” and “policy development” activities as localised and culturally-situated.

2.19.1. Moving from the Substantive Frameworks to Inquiry

Following from this review of substantive frameworks, the subsequent offerings must:

- a) Encourage a line of narrative inspired by hope, curiosity and reflections of individual’s best experiences;
- b) Draw from the multiple experiences and contexts, accepting that data will take many forms and from multiple narratives- media representations, discussion outcomes, historical records, interviews, literature reviews, training activities, conversations in various contexts and sites and even the researcher’s offering of experience;
- c) Engage participants in a collaborative, meaning-making processes that suspends researcher privilege and ideally opens up opportunities for privileged narrative and access to critical relational sensitivities;
- d) Present narrative, privileged or other, that incorporates the knowledge generated in shared relational experiences in a way that it receives attention and is accounted for in discourse (i.e. offer highly textured descriptions of experience, hopes and goals).
- e) Remaining as true to the words of the participants as possible);

- f) Encourage and explore civil service workers' privileged discourse (ways of talking of experience in private spaces or in agency, that are imbedded in relationships), with regard to differences and relating to people who are different from them;
- g) Invite and create new understandings of the racial, gendered and class representations, through reflection, affirmation and transcription; and
- h) Centralise inquiry via unconditional, positivistic questioning and a strength-based, participatory focus; emphasise metaphors and stories as ways of knowing and generating theory.

2.19.2. Anticipated outcomes from Areas of Inquiry

Utilising methods grounded in the offerings outlined above, the findings should respond to the following areas of inquiry.

- a) Situating participants' visions for enhanced alignment between "policy" and "practice" within their relational networks (the forums through which people describe privileged and professional experience), organisational culture (the dynamics of practice influenced by relational interactions), policy (the workplace objectives as stated by the organisational missions and procedures) and best practice (organisational ideals that aspire to a set of international standards);
- b) Considering possibilities for the transformation and alignment of narrative alignment within and amongst the narrative spheres;
- c) Identifying other themes and life-giving forces arising from civil service dialogues and discourse; and
- d) Discussing the consequences of, or offerings on the experience of an appreciative inquiry approaches;

2.19.3. Discussing the Findings

The findings should be discussed with consideration for the alignment of narrative activities that:

- a) Explore the narrative elements of civil servants' experiences, with its relational consequences;
- b) Position participation at any of the levels of organisational activity as dependent on the degree to which a narrative on diversities, differences and identities play a role in practice and policy;
- c) Explore narrative's more recently acknowledged consequences for contemporary organisational systems as contributing to somewhat discomfiting relations and processes that are both hierarchically and power-bound but amongst the everyday practices of service-wide service providers, whom harbour the best of intentions;
- d) Contribute to a discourse on practices that align stated narratives with those of experiences described by civil service employees;
- e) Advance thinking on constructs that are participant-derived and exploratory in determining the features of excellent relationships and what "best" practices (in training, policy development, organisational communication) can be;
- f) Locate conversational actions or create self-reflective conditions that have both broad-based transformative potential, and theoretical implications, thus bringing the sphere of organisational activities (the practice of knowing/making/developing) into congruence with social relatedness;

- g) Respond to a call for a way of making ideas on narrative alignment practical;
- h) Further understanding as to what happens in service relations and how to promote more generative activities; and most importantly, and to
- i) Honor the contributions of each tradition of experience, critically examining and challenging what is taken for granted within each paradigm or context.

The following chapter on methodology outlines the way in which I proceeded with this inquiry.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY: ACCESSING PRIVILEGED AND PROFESSIONAL NARRATIVES

3.1. The Method: Exploring Participant Narratives and Conditions for Continuing a Conversation

This inquiry began as a concern for the relationship between theory and practice. This concern was conceptualised as a discrepancy between privileged and professional narrative and its impact on best practice, policy and organisational culture. This journey of exploration keeps central the notion of adding new perspectives to a conversation on aspects of organisational behavior. It also encourages the explicit recognition of organisational participants' perceptions and reflections. The data gathering processes in which I engaged encouraged a line of narrative inspired by hope, curiosity and reflections of individual's best experiences. From feedback in training sessions and qualitative interviews, I drew from the multiple experiences and contexts, accepting that data will take many forms from multiple narratives.

As my respondents and I engaged in collaborative processes, I aimed to suspend the privilege I have as a researcher, offering my personal experiences in interviews and challenging participants to speak in privileged ways. I also invited participants to co-create new understandings of their identities through reflection, affirmation and positive questioning. This process is inherent to an appreciative inquiry approach to dialogue. It is unconditional, strength-based, and participatory in focus and emphasises metaphors and stories as ways of knowing. Remaining true to a vision of AI, the narrative outcomes will be presented as highly textured descriptions of experience, hopes and goals.

The data that were produced for this study were acquired in response to four strategic questions. These questions were developed in consideration of the theoretical and contextual issues described in Section 1; and which operationalised the research questions, study objectives and areas of inquiry (see Summary of Chapter 2). The research more closely considered how to align the myriad of narratives occurring in organisational life and to consider the extent to which such movement influences and reflects privileged narratives in "best practice". The study objectives raised the issues of the "situatedness" of narrative activities. They also aspired to consider applications for appreciative inquiry in research, and in areas such as the narratives occurring in sub-cultural contexts.

3.1.1. The strategic methodological questions

I chose to document my process of adapting the appreciative inquiry change process to a research one. The exercise led me to inquire about and ask the first strategic question relevant to the methodology, "What is the impact of social constructionist theory and appreciative inquiry methods on aspects of a study design process?" The outcomes of this process saw the development of a text that incorporated focus group input and the application of appreciative inquiry on research. This process is detailed in Box 15 (next section) and Appendix F entitled "Appreciative Inquiry Consultative Group Feedback: A step in a methodological journey".

Next, given my involvement in policy and training development, I chose to document three training programs that were being conducted in collaboration with sections of the Bermuda Government

Civil Service. These training forums were: 1) a needs assessment and the documentation of its outcomes (outlined in Part 2 of this section); 2) the communication on a short-term training project with supervisors of a law enforcement team that saw narrative and dialogue as its core (Part 3); and 3) a revision to a longstanding training program infused with appreciative inquiry (Part 4). These parts of the methodology responded to a second strategic methodological question which was, “What is the potential influence of appreciative inquiry on the training process of race relations?” By using the premises of appreciative inquiry, in part, I transformed aspects of the communication and training processes that were traditionally used. In each of the following sections, examples of the ‘transformation’ are provided.

Finally, I developed an interview protocol using aspects of appreciative inquiry and focus group feedback (outlined in Part 5 of this Chapter). The fifth portion of the methodological discussion notes the reflexive and methodological issues arising when devising a protocol for research purposes, versus organisational change activities. The results respond to the third and fourth strategic methodological questions of, “What is the impact of appreciative inquiry on interview methods, designing the interview outline and protocol?” and “What were some findings from the interviews with regard to relational activities, organisational culture, ‘policy’ statements and ‘best practice’ narratives?”

I begin a detailed discussion of methodology by summarising its 5 parts and considering each part separately.

3.1.2. Methodological Processes and Procedures: Identifying and Engaging Study Participants

Encouraged by both the nature of appreciative inquiry and by researchers such as Wasow (1992), who implores researchers to expand who we talk to and how we learn and do research, I selected participants representing a diagonal slice of the civil service. Participants came from a range of organisational strata and through a wide range of entry points.

Participants were selected from: a workshop participant focus group, the needs assessment process, several training sessions, and interviews, described briefly above. The inquiry material for each grouping of participants was modified to incorporate the underpinnings of appreciative inquiry, within the limits prescribed by the participant group. Specifically, the needs assessment participants, were limited by time and a restrictive mandate; the dialogic training group attendance was mandated by management, extremely time constrained and thus required significant amendments to an appreciative inquiry process; the training group was limited by time and a requirement to cover legislative and policy material during the sessions; and the interview participants agreed to participate in the process provided their involvement was limited to one session. Regardless of modifications brought on by organisational constraints, the consequential narrative texts became data sets, as presented in the following sections.

3.1.2a. Part 1: Workshop feedback on approaches to appreciative research

Part one of the study involved 8 participants who attended a workshop on Appreciative Inquiry. In focus group format, participants indicated their response to interview protocol questions that

delineated race, class and gender identities. Their input was recorded by a member of the group and verified by the group.

I summarised the group's feedback (See Box 15: 'A Step in a Methodological Journey' for a discussion of the process).

Box 15

Appreciative Inquiry Consultative Group feedback: A step in a methodological journey

The Appreciative Inquiry Consultative group met on 4th December 2003 as an adjunct session to a foundation workshop on Appreciative Inquiry. The group was presented with the study's provocative proposition (Appendix G: A Provocative Proposition) and an explanation as to the aims of the research and dissertation.

After some discussion, the group questioned what "race" means and would mean to participants in the study. There was concern that when some people are asked to think about "race, they think about "racism" and their defenses are raised. They may then be more inclined to offer politically correct answers to the questions rather than ones that probe their innermost thoughts and feelings. One group member thought that as a white male, the pointed questions on race (1st set of draft questions as presented to the group) were good and challenging. Another participant submitted that the race construct is hard for her to accept because she was taught to think of only one race, "the human race".

The groups' collective wish was that I ask more general questions regarding differences amongst us, rather than predetermining race and sex categories. For example, questions could be posed as to what were a person's experiences when they encountered someone who was different. This type of questioning also satisfied a belief that people are not all that they appear to be and that it is too restrictive to put race, class and gender constructs into binary categories. There was also the feeling that a more general line of questioning might provide access to individual's innermost thoughts and values, self-talk and first-impressions.

Another wish was to see the generalist questions posed to select members of a macro group, such as a core group. The hope of the group was that questions on differences might yield the data sought for the inquiry, and if not, the participants would have at least had an opportunity to self-define the differences that are meaningful to them. It might mean that race, gender and class differences come secondary to a host of others. The group then proposed that from the macro-group feedback would determine whether the questions should be reframed. In reflecting on the feedback, I acknowledged the perspective that pre-selecting the constructs of which difference would be defined (race, class and gender) puts at risk the notion of subjectivity and co-created meaning. A useful exercise may be to use the constructs of race, class and gender, as outlined in my first set of draft questions, to analyse the data; determining whether these notions surface in participant responses.

As a consequence of considering the group feedback, I essentially drafted two sets of questions, the first of which specifically inquired into experiences where race, gender and social class differences may have factored into an interaction. These first questions are less appreciative in focus in that they were drafted with the intent to inquire without provoking change. They do not inquire about "best" experiences, but simply experiences generally as they relate to race, class and gender differences.

The second set of questions take into account the group feedback and are much more generalist in their approach to the inquiry. Participants are asked about difference and diversities rather than race, social class and gender as specific diversities. The questions also reflect the study's enhanced parameters on developing a strategy for improved work relations between people of multiple diversities. The components of this strategy have been included in the inquiry for two reasons: firstly, the results of the inquiry will inform how differences are perceived and treated in the organisation and may respond specifically to the overarching research question; and secondly, the inquiry itself will lend to the development of equal opportunity policy and strategy for improving relations between people of different races and diversity in the work environment. The latter addresses a specific need and request of the organisation "under" study to develop and adopt an equal opportunity statement, policy and strategy.

The process of transitioning from more traditional qualitative methods to Appreciative Inquiry meant that I moved through three different outlines for data-gathering via interview. The first model for interviewing represented a more traditional approach⁴³, as evidenced by a question-answer interview guideline (Pre-constructionist interview guide: Appendix H). I made some requests for stories and descriptions of “best” experiences but they were incorporated somewhat unsystematically throughout the text.

My second interview guide begins to reflect my understandings of constructionist theory and appreciative inquiry. There are two versions to this guide. In the first, I inquire quite specifically about race, class and gender (Appendix I). In the second draft, representing input from an appreciative inquiry consultative group, I inquire about “difference”, letting the participants self-define what identity and “difference” means to them (Constructionist-guided interview protocol: Appendix J). The third incorporates appreciative inquiry premises, and is formulated on the basis of a revised provocative proposition. It embraces appreciative inquiry tenets (The Interview protocol: Appendix C).

The three phases in the development of the study’s “inquiry” represent my transition from more traditional methods of research to a constructionist and appreciative approach.

The outcomes are further highlighted in Part 5 by a presentation of the study’s methodological and data-gathering/creating process which examines the development of an appreciative interview protocol with respect to exploring identity in civil service organisational activity.

Materials for the focus group session included: flip charts, self-recorded notes and observations, and notes and observations recorded and provided by a co-participant.

3.1.2b. Part 2: Needs Assessment

In part two of the study, I jointly conducted a meeting with a government-affiliated team to discuss concerns and make plans for future work together. This “needs assessment” process was framed and documented using aspects of an appreciative-inquiry enhanced focus- particularly in comparison to previous and more traditional processes on race relations training. There were 7 participants in the needs assessment interview group (Table 2).

⁴³ Traditional qualitative research methods can include unstructured or semi-structured interviewing methods. Traditional methods can also include participant observation, direct observation and case studies as common methods in qualitative measurement. Less evident in the literature on traditional methods, which highlights their distinction from Appreciative Inquiry methods, is: the acknowledgement that participants are perpetually creating new realities, even during an interview; the acknowledgement of the researcher as a participant in constructing a reality; the valuing of the participants’ ability to construct their own meanings of the topics under discussion; the valuing of storying and narrative as data ; and the inquiry into what participants construct as their best experiences. For the most part, even in an unstructured interview setting, the traditional methods suggest that the researcher follow a guide, deviating little from its format. On the other hand, an interview guided by an Appreciative Inquiry protocol encourages the researcher to engage in a dialogue with the participant, allowing the flow of the interview to be guided by the narrative and dialogue.

Table 2

Needs Assessment Meeting Participants- Data Identification #- 1

Identifier	Position	Area/ Service	Race	Gender	Ethnicity	Nationality	Class	Other Diversity
GB	Lawyer, Senior Representative	Special interest Committee member	Black	M	Jamaican	Bermudian	Unknown for all	Long term resident
VD	Professional	International Business	Black	F	Bermudian	Bermudian		Long-term community activist
AH	Administration	Education/ Race Relations	Black	F	Bermudian	Bermudian		Strong affiliations with the community group
VI	Professional	Not reported	White	M	British	Bermudian		Strong affiliation with community group
DH	Retired professional	Not reported	White	F	British	British		Long – term commitment to org.

The request for the needs assessment was client-driven. The researcher/ facilitator (I) was asked to review documents and reports relating to the issue of race relations in this particular community organisation. The committee requested an exploratory meeting to process the organisation’s history and to brainstorm on training needs. Given the contentious organisational history, I conducted the needs assessment and presented the feedback and training proposal from within an appreciative context.

Whilst there were some limitations as to how much the traditional training program could be revised (some mandatory content), there were some areas where an appreciative or transformative narrative could be infused. The outcome was that the group feedback was presented with more positively-focused terminology; acknowledging participants’ expression of “wishes” for change as opposed to “problems”. The discussions from this needs assessment meeting became a data set of the study.

The training proposal was devised with great consideration for the relational elements of the groups experience (Box 16). For example, the agreements and expectations, carried over from the original method of training, incorporated a proposed lecture on the situatedness of experience.

Box 16

½ Day Workshop Training Outline for Needs Assessment Group

A Spiritual Conversation

“Exploring the best of working relationships that form our [name of organisation] community”

Introductory remarks (15 minutes)

 History of CURE’s work with the [] organisation/community/ family

 The concern for what is sacred: The [] community’s experience

Workshop purpose (5 minutes)

Agreements and expectations (10 minutes)

- ✚ Respectful, empathetic and empathic contributions are most welcomed
- ✚ The personal experience is valid; no one's experience is more truthful than another's
- ✚ Questions are for clarification; comments are for support; concern is for the person
- ✚ We speak only from our personal experience, and not of another's
- ✚ Confidentiality is respected
- ✚ Empathy, commitment and caring are appreciative qualities that benefit this process

Approach and premises of the workshop (5 minutes)

- ✚ Dialogue leads to better understanding
- ✚ The goal is to increase understanding, build better relationships rather than conversion
- ✚ Sharing personal stories is an intimate and risky exercise but can ward off disconnection

Dyad (people discussing in pairs) processes and the conversation (1 hour)

- ✚ Protocol exercise (Inquiry): the story of the self in relation to others

Small group process (1 hour)

- ✚ What were some of the most compelling elements of the stories that came out of this interview?
- ✚ What of the person's story made you think differently about the relationships you have with other members of the organisation?
- ✚ What were 1-3 themes that stood out most for you during the interview?

Refreshment Break (20 minutes)

Large group consensus (30 minutes)

- ✚ What gives life to the best of our community's relationships

Small group discussion and statements (30 minutes)

Presentation of discussion highlights (30 minutes)

Commitments: Large group process and summary (1 hour)

- ✚ Looking towards the future, what are we being called to become?
- ✚ What small thing might we do which could have a big impact in moving us forward?
- ✚ Witnessing the commitment

Close (10 minutes)

A modified protocol exercise (inquiry) was merged into the existent training outline (Box 17). Further, reminiscent to a full appreciative inquiry process, the training proposal sees a call for "looking towards a future that the group feels called to become".

Box 17

Proposed protocol exercise (inquiry) for Needs Assessment Group workshop

A Spiritual Conversation[∞]

[∞]Adapted from the Public Conversations Project, Boston, MA and Appreciative Inquiry framework (prepared 170604)
Considerations:

1. Which members of the operating body of the organisation are responsible for achieving the mission?
2. Who will be responsible for ensuring that the functions and guiding principles from the session are incorporated into the system?

“Exploring the best of relationships that form our [name] community”

- ❖ Tell a story about the best time you had with someone in this organisation, who is as different from you as you can imagine? Looking at your entire work/church/school/neighborhood organisational experience, recall a time when you felt most alive, most involved, or most excited about an exchange or relationship with this person? What made that experience so valuable? Who was involved? You are invited to tell this story. Describe the experience in detail.
- ❖ Regarding [the issue] that has brought us here today (organising committee members to adapt from needs assessment), what is at the heart of the matter for you?
- ❖ Are there any grey areas for you? Areas where you feel conflicted about the situation?
- ❖ When you are feeling the best about this community, what do you value about it?
- ❖ When you are feeling the best about your role in this community, what do you value most?
- ❖ What would you want people to remember or take away from today?

Examples of commitments

- ❖ Consider someone in this room from whom you feel distant but with whom it matters that things go better?
- ❖ How can you be responsible for bringing that person closer to you?
- ❖ When you return to your role in the church, what can you do to make the relationship go better? To enhance it?

3.1.2c. Part 3: Facilitated Dialogue Training session

Part three of the study involved applying aspects of appreciative inquiry into a training experience. Thirty law enforcement Officers (see Table 3 below) were engaged in a dialectical training process. The workshop was time-limited (2 hours). The workshop was held at the request of the Department Head. Participants were voluntary, but paid overtime salaries to attend the session.

Table 3
Facilitated Dialogue Participant Grid (Data Identification #2)

Identifier	Position	Race	Gender	Ethnicity	Nationality	Class	Other Diversity
LS	Senior Management	Mixed	F	Bermudian	Bermudian	Upper-middle	Long term service
BC	Officer	Black	F	Bermudian	Bermudian	Middle	16 yrs. Service
LB	Customer Service	Black	F	Bermudian	Bermudian	Middle	28 yrs. Service
ES	Officer	Black	F	Bermudian	Bermudian	Lower middle	2 yrs. Service
DS	Customer Service	White	F	Bermudian	British	Middle	13 yrs. Service
LP	Officer	Mixed-Black/White	F	undeclared	Bermudian	Lower middle	1 year service
CF	Supervisor	White	M	English/British?	Bermudian	Middle	16 yrs. Service
MS	Officer	Black	F	Bermudian	Bermudian	Lower Middle	1 yr. service
JP	Officer	Black	F	Bermudian	Bermudian	Middle	1 yr. service
NB	Senior Officer	Black	M	Bermudian	Bermudian	Middle	32 yrs. Service
AB	Officer	Black	F	Bermudian	Bermudian	Middle	17 yrs. Service
KS	Senior Officer	Black	M	Bermudian	Bermudian	Middle	30+ yrs.

								Service
MF	Officer	White	M	Bermudian	Bermudian	Lower Middle	4 yrs.	Service
MS	Officer	Black	F	Bermudian	Bermudian	Lower Middle	2 yrs.	Service
MS	Officer	Black	F	Bermudian	Bermudian	Lower Middle	2 yrs.	Service
CB	Officer	Black	F	Bermudian	Bermudian	Lower Middle	11 mos.	Service
ES	Officer	Black	F	Bermudian	Bermudian	Middle	11 yrs.	Service
AV	Officer	Black	M	Bermudian	Bermudian	Middle	25 yrs.	Service
CH	Officer	Black	F	Bermudian	Bermudian	Middle	16 yrs.	Service
CS	Officer	Black	F	Bermudian	Bermudian	Lower Middle	1 yr.	Service
KS	Officer	Black	F	Bermudian	Bermudian	Lower Middle	2 yrs.	service/ transferred in
WS	Officer	Black	F	Bermudian	Bermudian	Lower Middle	12 yrs.	Service

In order to establish the training format, I had a meeting, followed by several e-mail communications with the team’s supervisor. In these communications the supervisor highlighted some of her concerns and wishes for training. The initial proposal was met with significant concerns and questions, which are explored and negotiated throughout a series of e-mail communications (Appendix K). The process and the design of the workshop itself was a social construction. The initial proposal included introductory remarks that were to be made to the participants, these remarks prefaced the issues that were highlighted by the supervisor and an introduction to some of the concepts related to having a respectful and appreciative conversation. At first, the supervisor and her management team were not satisfied with the direction of the proposed dialogue and expressed their concerns.

Throughout the communications to determine the direction and format of the training, and even in the final training outline, I did not use the term “appreciative inquiry”. I replaced the name of the approach with terms such as “exploratory” and “facilitated dialogue”. In a previous training session, the use of the term, “appreciative inquiry”, in the absence of a full briefing on the approach seemed to raise some confusion/ anxiety as to what the approach would be. My intention, in this respect, was to utilise the concepts, but not the entire approach (for time considerations and the level of commitment in attendance)⁴⁴. This was a completely new training direction for the supervisor, participants, my co-trainer, and me.

The final training outline (Box 18) was eventually forwarded to the supervisor and her management team.

⁴⁴ This training event was time-limited. As well, the potential participants were attending on a relatively voluntary basis. Yet, there was some resistance to the training given the participants “mistrust” of management and thoughts about the motivation of management to host this training. In other training sessions, and in conducting the interviews, where the participants are eager and requesting the training, I have been very forthright about the appreciative inquiry approach.

Box 18

Facilitated Dialogue Proposed Training Outline- AB Works

Introductory remarks

We have been invited here today, not for “sensitivity” training, as you may have heard, but to engage in a dialogue, really, about our organisation’s work and people. In a previous session, members of your department told us that customer service is really important to them and that race and diversity issues are not separate from excellent customer service. This rang true for us with an added element. That element is the issue of power and authority.

The issue of authority and power is an important one. As Officers, you have power and authority over people- the right to go into people’s most private spaces. This right is granted to you for no other reason than it has been vested to you through employment.

Yet, when we do our jobs, we can not simply “turn off” who we are as people. We bring into our jobs our personal experiences, our happiness, our sadness, our anger about life events. We also bring into it, our perspectives about people- how they are different from us- better off, worse off, more powerful, less powerful, linked to oppression or that they remind us of what we or our families don’t have.

Bermuda has a distinct history of tensions between foreigners [also referred to as guest workers or ex-patriots] and locals. This history ties into all sorts of issues of the “have” and “have-nots” and of the differences in experience for blacks and whites. Every organisation has a culture which is unique in some way and reflects the countries culture.

We’ve been asked to meet with you on the issue of being Officers, the power you have and how the power is used with people who come from different places, and are guests to the Island. We ask you to reflect on how this organisation offers their services with respect to diversity. Is there a difference in treatment and whether it is possible to aspire for “best customer service” or “best customer treatment” in the face of our personal experiences?

From this backdrop, we would like to engage in a dialogue on this particular type of authority and your views on how your team offers its services. We ask you to speak as unique individuals- about your own ideas and experiences- rather than as representatives of AB WORKS. We thought we might start this discussion by posing some questions and asking each of you to respond. We ask that no one interrupt any one else, for the time being, and let them speak to each question.

Dialogic Training Session: Group Inquiry

1. What is your personal relationship, or personal history with this issue? (What has been your experience or your approach to this work?)
2. Please tell us more about your particular beliefs and perspectives on this issue? (Do you have a perspective on the treatment of visiting and guest working foreigners? What is your perspective on the type of service your team should be offering?)
3. Many people we’ve talked to, with similar job experiences, have told us that within their experience with this issue they find some gray areas, some dilemmas about their own beliefs or even some conflict... Do you experience any pockets of uncertainty or lesser certainty, any concerns, value conflicts, or mixed feelings that you may have and wish to share?

Now that each person has had a chance to speak, we invite you to ask questions of each other. However, we ask that these questions not be ‘challenges in disguise’ but of ‘things, which you are really curious’.

Follow-up questions:

4. What needs to happen from your perspective?
5. From your perspective, how close are you to offering this best service?

What offering can you personally make to help this happen going forward?

The participating Officers were divided into two training groups, representing their two primary work teams. Each group received the same introductory remarks. The remarks were strategically devised to evoke appreciative responses⁴⁵. The dialectical and appreciative approaches represent an

⁴⁵ The questions were adapted from the Public Conversation Project in Boston described in Gergen, 2001.

extreme divergence from diversity training previously conducted by the researcher (and with this group). It is highly participatory and interactive as opposed to the presentation/ Power-point format of the past. Participants were asked to identify their agreement to have their responses recorded and reported upon, in session, and in follow-up requests for feedback. The session is recorded.

Each participant was asked in turn to respond to the introductory remarks via these questions (Box 19):

Box 19

Facilitated Dialogue Training Session: Group Inquiry

6. What is your personal relationship, or personal history with this issue? (What has been your experience or your approach to this work?)
7. Please tell us more about your particular beliefs and perspectives on this issue? (Do you have a perspective on the treatment of visiting and guest working foreigners? What is your perspective on the type of service your team should be offering?)
8. Many people we've talked to, with similar job experiences, have told us that within their experience with this issue they find some gray areas, some dilemmas about their own beliefs or even some conflict... Do you experience any pockets of uncertainty or lesser certainty, any concerns, value conflicts, or mixed feelings that you may have and wish to share?

Now that each person has had a chance to speak, we invite you to ask questions of each other. However, we ask that these questions not be 'challenges in disguise' but of 'things, which you are really curious'.

Follow-up questions:

9. What needs to happen from your perspective?
10. From your perspective, how close are you to offering this best service?
11. What offering can you personally make to help this happen going forward?

The training session was transcribed by both the interviewer and a co-facilitator. During the session, the participants were advised that their offerings would be recorded and that some of the material would be published in aggregate form but in a way that the participants would be unidentifiable. Participants were also advised that although they had been asked to be in attendance, they could leave without repercussion; but also, to stay meant that they agreed to participate in their own ways and to have their offerings recorded. At the end of the session, feedback forms were distributed. The forms indicated that as well as requesting their feedback, the information and submissions from the training might be used in research. A follow-up letter was sent to the Director, copied to the supervisor⁴⁶ (Box 20).

⁴⁶ This follow-up procedure is similar to previous processes, although the format reflects a more appreciative presence (See Appendix L for comparative examples).

Box 20

Communications illustrating the influence of appreciative inquiry and an appreciative tone

18th August 2004

AB Works Bermuda
Hamilton Hill
XX Front Street
Hamilton, HM 50
Attention: Director



Dear Madam,

Thank you for granting us the opportunity to work with your teams at the Airport. They were engaging, encouraging, reflective, contemplative, humorous and frank. And we absolutely loved what they had to say and how much they had to say. The authenticity in sharing, and within these shared experiences, is quite valuable. Your team was generous with us and we most appreciated working with them.

As part of our commitment to each participant, we summarised some of their highlights and comments of both groups. No one participant is attributed any specific remarks, but each comment had its supporters, detractors and neutralists.

I enclose the feedback package (attached) for your information and I thank you again for encouraging these dialogues to happen.

I would appreciate if you could forward these session feedback forms to each participant and ask them to complete them and return them to us. This feedback will let us know how and what we can do better or differently in future sessions.

Regards,

Myra Virgil

cc. Training Officer

The final training experience described in detail in Appendix L, is entitled “AB Works Facilitated Dialogue Training Feedback”. The groups’ offerings and wishes were transcribed, summarised and sent to each participant. The training notes and summary became the third text that was used to report on the study’s findings.

3.1.2d. Part 4: Dialogic Training session

In part four of the study, the applications of appreciative inquiry and training are further piloted with 12 Law Enforcement Officers. The training opportunity used to forward this portion of the inquiry was a regular and mandatory segment of the Officer training program. The participating Officers were new to the Civil Service and have never seen active duty. The participants are of mixed races and gender, but with a majority of males. The trainers (researcher included) always request a training group, representative of the full spectrum of Officers available: but the selection of participants is determined by the Department’s management. The median age of participants was 20 years (see Table 4 below).

Table 4

Dialogic Training Participant Grid - Data Identification #- 3

IDENTIFIER	POSITION	RACE	SEX	ETHNICITY*	NATIONALITY	CLASS	OTHER DIVERSITY**
MI	Officer	Black	F	Bermudian	Bermudian	Lower Middle	20 yrs. Old/ previous cadet/ self-declared homophobic
DJ	Officer	Black	F	Bermudian	Bermudian	Middle	21 yrs. Old/ sportsman
SW	Officer	White	M	Bermudian	Bermudian	Middle	21 yrs. Old/ previous cadet/ golfer
JR	Officer	Black	F	Bermudian	Bermudian	Lower	20 yrs. Old/ chose to stay in Bermuda.
KS	Officer	Black	F	Bermudian	Bermudian	Lower	20 yrs. Old/ previous mechanic and emergency med tech
CJ	Officer	Black	M	St. Lucia	Bermudian	Middle	Spouse of Bermudian/22 yrs. Old/ Parent of 1/ singer/ lived all over world
RC	Officer	White	M	Portuguese	Bermudian	Middle	Parent of two/ 43 yrs. Old/ wife’s grandfather in KKK
MM	Officer	White	M	Bermudian	Bermudian	Lower/ Middle	24 yrs. Old/ previous dog handler
JB	Officer	Black	F	Bermudian	Bermudian	Middle	Worked overseas/ 40 yrs. Old
GW	Officer	White	M	Bermudian	Bermudian	Middle	19 yrs. Old/ wanted to be a lawyer
PE	Officer	Black	M	American	American	Lower Middle	Ex-patriot/ 23 yrs. Old/ paralegal
JJ	Visiting Officer	Mixed	F	Bermudian	Bermudian	Middle	Degree in

			Race					criminology; lived in California for 14 years	
--	--	--	------	--	--	--	--	---	--

* Self-reported during ice breaker exercise

**Any participant who self-described as having a partner who works, was listed as middle class.

At the commencement of the training session, the participants are asked for their consent to participate in a pilot training project which incorporates more dialogue than in the standard training (Appendix M: Dialogic Training Exercise outline). The Officers agree. The training commences with the standard opening remarks and exercises but then moves into a discussion of relational well-being, which is new. The training objectives have been reframed to request that participants use the opportunity to learn about each other’s experiences, strengths, hopes and resources, and to share their most powerful stories. This portion of the training is also new, adapted from an appreciative inquiry approach to training. The final portion of the training incorporates a modified dyad process and conversation, culminating in a discovery, sharing and commitment process.

Participants were asked to record their discoveries, ‘sharing’ and commitments on flip-charts, which were later collated to become the fourth text from which study findings were derived.

3.1.2e. Part 5: Participant selection for interviews

This portion of the study’s inquiry considered the offerings of interview participants from across Bermuda’s Civil Service sector. Given that research participants to a large extent create the study outcomes- providing the content, discussion, vision and commitment to organisational life (Weisbord, 1986), I considered participant selection quite carefully. I aspired to interview individuals in the organisation that represented a diagonal slice of participants; not only in the range of primary diversities (i.e. race and gender) but representing: key power positions to front-line workers; higher and lower employment levels; people with varied lengths of experience; those with some degree of diversity in socio-economic class via income; and individuals from different vocations or trades, indicated by industry.

Therefore, in part five of the study, there are contributions from 12 civil service workers. The racial make-up of the participant group as they categorised themselves was: 5 Black; 1 Mixed Race (Black and White); and 6 white. The gender composition of interview participants was: 6 males and 6 females. They represented 10 Bermuda Government programs or departments. The participants were selected with regard to specific characteristics and qualities which included their race, gender, Bermudian status/nationality. I next considered a mixed-range of diversities such as: their economic status as determined by their pay scales, age, occupational category, marital status, children, and ethnicity. Race and gender were my initial considerations for selecting people for the participant list; followed by an objective of achieving balanced representation by race, gender and Bermudian/Non-Bermudian nationality.

I then considered the mix of other diversities using a test of pay scales; requesting interviews with civil servants from amongst the full range of published government pay scales. I hoped that multiple differences in life experience and perspective would present themselves within the interview process. These multiple differences might be sexuality, marital status, children or ethnicity, for example. I did not sample specifically for these diversities.

I had an unanticipated struggle with the concept of “class”, which I referred to extensively throughout the literature review. When I considered the class construct from a Bermudian perspective, I realised it was virtually impossible to designate a participant to a specific class label. The lines that typically designate social class distinctions are blurred in Bermuda. Specifically, income levels, occupations, geographic locations, or level of study have very little relevance to what I have known as “class constructs” such as earnings and income or level of education. Taxi drivers can be some of the wealthiest people on the Island. Construction workers, if they own their own companies, can do very well. Manual labourers, although less frequently, can be wealthy. If an Administrative Assistant owns his or her own home, they can be fairly well off, as well. People, who may not have acquired formal educations, have done well in the trades. Therefore, I was challenged by the task of designating a lower, middle or upper class participant identifier.

As a consequence of this challenge and as a novice social constructionist, I decided against making any selections affiliated with the class construct, aside from a range of pay scales. I opted to include an optional “pay scale level” (See Appendix N for full listing of pay scales) query on my interview face sheet because pay is an indicator of the type of income coming into a household. As well, because employee’s pay scales are a matter of public record, I did not feel that I was asking too much of participants to have them indicate their pay ranges.

As for the analysis of the data, I believe the collection process and my approach to the topic to be consistent with social constructionism. The class construct is a difficult one to develop and perhaps should not be developed in great detail in a qualitative process. However, I have documented some of the specific indicators of “class” (income, occupation) for future reference and study⁴⁷.

I developed a grid to identify the best possible mix of participants for the interview segment of this study. I completed the grid using the information on race, gender, nationality, position and area of service. I then requested interviews from people based on these identifiers. Therefore, the participating employees were approached for interviews, initially, as a consequence of their race, gender, nationality (British or other) and national status (Bermudian or non-Bermudian), position and work area within Bermuda’s civil service. Again, my interest was to reflect the best mix of diversities amongst these factors.

From this initial categorisation, I reviewed the list and sought to connect with people who were not reflected in the initial list. For example, my first interviews were with two Black British Bermudian women and one White British Bermudian women. Their ethnicities were varied, some describing themselves as African Bermudian and another as White Portuguese. I then determined that to improve the representation of the interview outcomes, I would need to interview several males; Black, White, and from different parts of the Civil Service system. I listed potential participants and alternates from these categories and areas. Ultimately, this process resulted in a group of participants that reflected the following diversities (Table 5).

⁴⁷ Using income as an indicator for class has some interesting, but limited, potential. For example, Bermuda’s Census Report constructs: an “upper class” of household incomes over \$100,000; a middle class of incomes \$45,000- \$99,000; and a lower class construct of \$15,000-\$44,000. Persons earning between \$36,000 and \$45,000 per annum are considered near poor, by Bermuda’s Census 2000, and may barely meet living expenditures in Bermuda with its high costs. Any household earning \$36,000 per annum or less is considered poor. Nineteen percent (19%) of households were classified as poor; 11% of households were near poor (Census, 2000).

Table 5
Interview Participant Grid

I.D. #	CODE	POSITION	YEARS SERV.	AREA OF SERV.	RACE	SEX	ETHNICITY	NATIONALITY	CLASS ⁴⁸	OTHER DIVERSITIES
4	Bella	Senior Management	20	Human Service	W	F	Portuguese	Bermudian	40-42	Trainer/ Mid-aged/ Overseas Experience
5	Dina	Professional	14	Statistics/ Economics	B	F	Bermudian	Bermudian	26-28	37 years old/ Bachelors degree
6	Sasha	Professional	3	Education/ Race Relations	B	F	Bermudian	Bermudian	27-29	29 years old/ Overseas experience- Masters degree
7	Katya	Non-Professional	4	Administration-Community Affairs	B	F	Bermudian	Bermudian	15-17	37 years old
8	Neil	Senior Management	25	E-Commerce	W	M	English/ British	British	42-46	Ex-patriot, 46 yrs. Old/ Graduate degree
9	Darren	Supervision/ Middle management	20	Child/ Family Services/ Social Work	M	M	Undeclared	Bermudian	23-25	Overseas Schooling/ single-parented, Masters deg.
10	Ted	Management	14	Transport/ Airport Operations	W	M	English-British	Bermudian	36-38	Parent of two/ B. Sc./ 37 years old
11	Sid	Management	16	Cabinet	B	M	African	Bermudian	35-37	Parent, religious, 41 years old
12	Larry	Technical/ Professional	9	Housing	B	M	Bermudian	Bermudian	25-27	39 years old
13	Jill	Non-Professional	3	Administration/ Judicial	W	F	English/ British?	British	15-17	Ex-patriot worker/ 56 yrs. Old
14	Carl	Senior Management	10	Human Resources	W	M	English/ British	British	38-40	Ex-patriot / longer term resident/ 48 years old
15	Meg	Program Coordinator	1	Law/ Philanthropy	W	F	Welsh, New Zealand/ Eng.	New Zealand	30-32	Long term resident/ 45 years old

⁴⁸ Refers to pay scale structures as reported by participants- see Appendix N for details.

3.1.2e.i. Quantity and quality of interviews.

I constructed an initial list of 15 civil service employees representing 10 government departments with the intent of interviewing 10-12 people. I approached these candidates and requested 45 minute to 1 hour interviews with them. If they were unable or unwilling, I asked them for referrals- using the referral if the potential participant met the initial vetting criteria. In my research proposal, I had indicated that there was a possibility that former civil servants might be interviewed for their experiences. This codicil was a hedge in the event that there was a situation where current civil service workers were unwilling to participate. This was not the case. All participants were employees of Bermuda's civil service. A final participant list saw the exploration of the narratives of 12 people from 10 areas of service within the Bermuda Civil Service.

3.1.2e.ii. Interview Procedure.

I called each participant and briefly outlined the study. Once the participant agreed to be interviewed, I forwarded (via post or e-mail) an interview package containing: a consent form (Appendix P); interview face sheet (Appendix P); research introduction and contextualisation (Appendix Q)⁴⁹; form outlining research involving Bermuda Government employees (Appendix R); and letter from the Taos Institute/ Tilburg University introducing me as a student researcher (Appendix R). We established a time to meet, either at my office, which is private, or theirs. The participants were asked to complete the consent form and interview face sheet and bring it with them to the interview. The participants kept the remaining documentation from the interview package.

Upon arriving at the each interview session, I greeted the participants and offered them a drink. I asked their permission to tape the interviews. All but one consented. I then asked the participants if they had had an opportunity to read the contents of the interview package. If they had not, I reviewed the package with them. Next, I asked them if they had any questions. I then asked them if they would mind if I framed the project for them before starting to ask them some questions. All consented. I presented the project to each participant by doing a verbal synopsis of the research contextualisation. I prefaced my interviews with a brief explanation of my interest in the research and how I came to the research topic.

Following, I presented four of the basic premises of appreciative inquiry as they applied to interviewing: describing the constructionist, poetic, positivist and wholeness principles. I felt that hearing my perspective on the construction of experience would provide a framework for the participant to begin to think and respond in terms of stories and lived experiences. I explained that the experiences I was asking them to reflect on would be positive; and that part of the reason they had been selected for interview was because of their locale and occupation within the civil service. From my perspective, this introduction was critical to relationship building and expanding the participants' level of comfort. I responded to the queries that arose out of this brief presentation.

I then proceeded to engage the participant in a quasi-interview/narrative process using the interview protocol, carefully crafted for this purpose (Appendix C: Interview protocol) and detailed in the next session).

As described in Chapter 1 of this study, applying appreciative inquiry techniques to research was of great interest to me (See Appendix N on tips for conducting interviews, gathering information

⁴⁹ For the information of my employer, I also prepared a sheet entitled, “

through interviews, and locating themes in the data). So coincident with shared understanding and thematic discourse analysis approaches, I informed this study with appreciative methodological influences: identifying themes/ “life-giving forces” that appeared in the stories; and expanding on the dialogues and narratives with consideration of the substantive cultural and theoretical contexts (more on this process in Chapter 5: Findings).

I taped the interviews and took notes. I had originally adopted a form of note taking utilising appreciative inquiry. This method suggests that the “interviewer” note the themes, “life-giving forces” or key points of interests from the speaker’s stories. Whilst this was effective, my growing concern for “missing” a relevant portion of the participant’s story provoked me into abandoning this short form of note taking. I elected to tape and fully transcribe the interviews. In retrospect, while more comforting, the “note-taking” recording of “life-giving” themes and highlights amply represented the critical aspects of participant’s stories.

Therefore, I finally settled on a recording method that was involved handwritten script supplemented by audio recorded interviews. This “scripting” process is a variation of an approach used in the appreciative inquiry design. I documented what appeared to be the highlights of the participants’ stories. These highlights are described by appreciative inquirists as “life-giving forces”. To verify my understanding, I would probe, reframe and even feedback some statements made in the interview.

I then transcribed interviews in preparation for mining the data and seeking out themes. To simplify the analysis, I color coded the interviews, so that when I wanted to make reference to a specific offering, I might also be able to refer to aspects of the speaker’s identity.

From there I highlighted what I believed to be life-giving forces of the narratives, leaving much of the participants’ stories intact. This was a strategic choice made as a consequence of the limited availability (time) of study participants.

As noted in the review of the literature section on appreciative inquiry research considerations, I diverged from appreciative practices post-interview. I reverted to the more traditional method whereby a researcher “analyses” the data and produces the results in the form of a report. The participants were not invited to mine the data with me; a result of logistics and participant availability. Therefore, I left the data in much of its raw form, as a testament to social constructionism and with the hope that readers will feel that they have the opportunity to make meaning of the data for themselves as well.

3.1.2e.iii. Crafting the interview protocol through an appreciative paradigm.

As indicated above, an interview package was developed to provide participants’ with information on the study. A cover sheet was developed to provide a simple basis for reflecting on the participants’ diversities. The participants were asked to identify their employment levels, job categories and service industry within the Bermuda Civil service. This request and distinction of participants was meant to allow for reference and further analysis if warranted.

In devising the interview protocol, selecting an affirmative topic choice and how best to conduct one-on-one interviews to discover a narrative description of the “best of what is”, were very much

present for me. The appreciative focus of the questioning was meant to encourage participants to dream and explore “what might be” in a practical and ideological sense. I aimed to design a set of statements (provocative propositions) that outline possibilities for “what could be” and to formulate a set of inspired actions that support ongoing learning and innovation on “what will be” as central to this process (Whitney and Trosten-Bloom, 2003, p. 8-9). Because the ‘art of the question’ is an essential component to appreciative outcomes, I put much focus on question development.

The research aspect of appreciative inquiry draws from one approach within the change strategy: that of core group inquiry. The core group process was adapted for this study to include topic identification, the crafting of questions and the conducting of appreciative interviews. In this study, workshop and interview participants themselves assisted in the orientation, formulation, and modification of the topic and questions (see Appendix F for a fuller description of the methodological journey).

The resultant interview protocol (Appendix C) asked participants to envision specific scenarios as they responded to the questions. Constructionist elements of this study weighed considerably in this process. Revised multiple times in its development as a framework, I attempted to craft questions that would contribute to a feeling of inclusiveness, regardless of race, class, gender and the multiple other diversities. I aimed for questions that each participant could own, congruent with an aspect of their lives. Therefore, regardless of employment level, diversity, roles, etc., each interview participant was encouraged to find some meaning, interpretation and response to the questions, for themselves.

The constructionist notion was further augmented by my desire to allow the interviews to become free-flowing conversations (Franklin, 1997). I recalled references in the literature that suggested that participants respond less positively and productively, if at all, to a series of pre-formulated questions (Franklin, 1997). A ‘spontaneity of exchange’, that might enable participants to articulate half-formed thoughts, which might later prove illuminating, was encouraged. Such an exchange encouraged the use of story-telling and metaphor and aimed to provide the participants with opportunities to introduce and develop his or her lines of thought. Behind or in partnership with this premise was the sentiment that interviewing provides an opportunity for participants to be heard, to build relationships or relational understandings, and for participants to story and dream (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003).

The following example illustrates why spontaneity and flexibility through the data collection process is beneficial. Some of the study participants are responsible for: supervising a group of employees; offering professional services to clients with special needs or members of the public who seek services; or for providing service to internal customers. Some, the executive civil servants, are primarily those whom influence or participate in policy development. The participants were selected for the possibilities of their varied perspectives, rather than by educational or experience qualifications: the job categorisation and employment levels would have some indicators of qualification. Therefore, the interview protocol needed to be maleable enough to allow for the varied experiences.

3.2. Working with the data

Using the combined narratives from the needs assessment meeting, training sessions and interviews, I followed a process of:

- 1) Merging some participant's statements for enhanced clarity;
- 2) Mining the data for highlights, life-giving forces, resonating statements, sentiments and wishes. This process required several reviews of the transcripts whereby I assigned each offering a color code.
- 3) Grouping the data into major categories and themes by assigning thematic⁵⁰ labels, where I generally left participant's stories intact, including several participants' offerings in their entirety. Inclusive and expansive, the data were eventually organised into two categories: 1) areas for potential alignment and 2) sentiments of identity, policy and practice.
- 4) Aligning and highlighting the potential for fusion in the data by category or theme; and
- 5) Moving out of an AI framework, generating some meanings and outcomes from the narratives (which meant moving more towards probing relationships rather than coordinating actions and activities).

3.3. A Note On Reflexivity, Social Location and the Relationship of the Researcher to Participants

Akin to Gergen and Davis' (1997) notes on approaches to research, I adopted (aspired to) the authorship qualities described in their text. I frequently reflected on my position to the research with respect to the participants and my understanding of the organisational culture. As a consequence, I revised the interview protocol several times. I spent a significant amount of time determining whether to address race, class and gender specifically, or to allow room for participants to define "difference" from their own relational experiences. Ultimately the latter approach was adopted.

Also as a result of multiple dialogues, although not incorporated into the final portion of this work, I adopted and utilise collectively, the term "racial beings" to allow people to self-define their affiliation to, if any, a racial identity. I approached the interviews with a great deal of openness, with regard to how the questions would be responded to and whether further clarification was needed. I asked for clarification and rephrased and sometimes offered my own and other experiences as examples for clarification.

As well, on a more personal note and becoming immersed in critical and appreciative thought, I gave much consideration to my role and perspective as a researcher, grappling with the following self-reflexive issues.

⁵⁰ Mohr & Watkins (2003) describe a theme as an idea or concept about what is present in the stories when people are reporting the times of greatest excitement, creativity and reward. For example, in many stories, they propose that when you may hear a topic described as "a feeling of success" or "clarity about purpose", or fun and excitement". These phrases are themes (Mohr & Watkins, (2003), adapted from AI for Organisation Change). The authors stress the importance of resisting the temptation to place the data in an order of priority or to sort or combine ideas; for what might appear only once in the data, may have resonating consequences. This is different from the traditional approach to data analysis where governed by scientific ideas about statistical validity, something has to be mentioned a certain number of times before it can be called a theme.

3.3.1. Reflexivity and social location

I experienced some feelings that I attribute to reflexivity while conducting this study: that of being an insider vs. outsider; and of being a black, Canadian, woman. And now, as a mother, watching my children learn to socialise and experience a consistently racialised world. In the first instance, having worked in the high-pressure environments of child welfare, I was very conscious of potential employee anxieties. I felt some guilt about having been afforded the opportunity to “get out” of working directly in the system and to study and reflect from a position of management in a fairly well resourced system (Bermuda’s). I also negotiated a concern for privacy and confidentiality as it relates to Bermuda’s small population and the perceptions of bias leading to discriminatory practice. Possibly, I experienced some discord in my concern about how the workers would feel about being asked about their core beliefs and whether they would feel wary about the power of their words. I was also concerned with how I would frame the study and my point of entry without alienating the employees (i.e. expressing an interest in how race, class and gender bias may enter their working relationships without influencing their narratives as to whether or not they are a consideration, and if so, how).

The second piece of subjectivity that informs my interest in this area of study is the process in which I developed my identity as a Black, Bermudian and Canadian women who moved to Bermuda from Canada as an adult. There is a fundamental difference in culture and upbringing and strong insider/outsider undercurrents permeate my relationships and those within the community. As such, being or “not being” Bermudian has become a defining aspect of identity. Being a foreign-born Bermudian has allowed me access to jobs and experiences (i.e. on-island extended family connections) foreign guest workers might not have. These opportunities seem closely guarded by Bermudian nationals, as what might best be described as a right to culture by birth. I am essentially “included” by birthright, without benefit of experience (being raised in the culture). To borrow an expression used to describe U.S. Presidential candidate John Kerry and his affiliations to Boston, Massachusetts, “I am from [Bermuda], but not ‘of’ [Bermuda]”.

My country of origin and subsequent upbringing has also influenced my perspective. My perspective includes experiencing being black as a minority; a woman amongst others, with slowly increasing power; and working in a civil service environment with extremely limited resources, but a policy of ensuring a social safety-net. Yet, that safety net is not always present in practice. I believe that minority, women, and class issues are important, as well as having a sympathetic view towards families facing social problems, is very much a reflection of my life experiences. I also feel that civil service employees are often undermined and unappreciated for their work. At times, they are discredited by individual employees who misrepresent the whole. This perception is one gleaned from experience in both Canada and Bermuda. In Bermuda, there is very little in the way of a real “safety-net, vis-à-vis long-term social assistance (i.e. what is known in North America as welfare). There are, however, limited funds available to people in financial need due to disability or a temporary lack of housing. However, there is very little for able-bodied men and women or single-parents.

Race issues are prominent, for the black majority population is a historically disadvantaged group from an economic, social and equality of opportunity perspective. Allegations of racism and economic disenfranchisement for the local Black population are quite prominent. This reality

represents quite diverse perspectives on race, class and social issues. It also represents quite diverse perspectives of how the issues are present and should be addressed.

My personal experiences as a community member and an employee very much impact how I approach this research. I was one of few black children raised in a white, middle class suburb. I was subject to taunts for being different but I was also an object of pure curiosity. I had two sets of friends: a white middle-class set with which I engaged in “appropriate and accepted” activities; and a culturally mixed set of friends who introduced me to culturally rich, but sometimes delinquent and risky activities. I felt comfortable in both worlds and both taught me how to negotiate and interpret different aspects of my life. The first set of friends taught me how to deal with people in a professional and “socially acceptable” (read normalised from a Eurocentric perspective) way. The second set taught me about what it is like to “not have”, to struggle, to “know” nightlife, to rebel, but also to have an understanding of what it is like to be black. Luckily, the mix of the two worlds led me to know that I needed to get an education and get away from several aspects of the world my second set of friends lived in- but this did not mean abandoning all aspects. And so I came to Montreal, in search of a different kind of understanding of Black culture, and to be independent.

I became involved in Black advocacy groups- an interest that is still present and demonstrated in my ongoing involvement with community groups, black professional organisations and my practice of social work. Because of those adolescent years and experiences, I was very interested in youth protection and young offender issues and working with families. My frustration with the system and some of the very families whom I pledged to help, is also a reflection of who I am; I was frustrated when I put effort into my work with families and into the organisation and I did not see results. Often, this is the case with family work in child welfare. Often this is the experience of civil service work. The work can be frustrating, devaluing, conflicted and unrewarding. Different areas of service represent different realities; there are discrepancies between policy and practice that can be perceived as irreconcilable.

As of late, I have been privy to very candid and life-giving discussions on the conflicting and challenging nature of the work. These discussions have begun to acknowledge different perspectives and ways of “understanding” what we do and why we do it. These have been hope-filled transactions. These are the types of issues with which I have grappled in order to remain cognizant of my own subjectivity and socially constructed viewpoint in this study.

3.3.2. Why do this study

After I had submitted my research proposal and was immersed in the literature, I struggled with the question of “what was the point?”. “Who cares about the relationship between practice and policy?” I was able to ground myself by recalling an article, which I read while preparing my research proposal. Rehner, Ishee, Salloum and Valesques, in their 1997 study of social workers’ attitudes toward poverty and the poor concluded,

That social workers with BSWs [Bachelor of Social Work degree recipients], few years of practice, working directly with clients held negative attitudes relating to factors such as irresponsibility, unworthiness, denigration and lost rights in respect to their clients. These attitudes were in direct conflict with the profession’s values of respect, self-determination, and a structural view of poverty that avoids blaming individuals (p. 139).

They suggest that social work education [training, research and the stomping ground for many future civil service workers] must provide opportunities for students to compare their worldviews to those of the profession. Students need supportive environments in which to explore their own worldviews and the consequences of those views as they related to practice. Failure to provide such environments may lead students to recoil against the *professional* values and to go underground with ideologies that reflect [race, class and gender bias] and act on personal deficit beliefs of clients (blaming may be a consequence). By the same token, civil service workers, in general, need supportive environments and opportunities to explore their worldviews.

Kobayashi's (2003) observations contribute to this sentiment. She posits the notion that research outcomes and activism, to an extent cover a wide range of actions. Research can prod others to rethink a position; it can encourage students to do so, but it can also be much more practical or novel. My objective is to produce new insights or different perspectives that move readers into positions of reflexive narrative and encourages dialogue on what best practice means and how to best work within a relational context.

Reading through these sentiments, I hope that aside from the predominate research questions and quests, this study will sensitise and highlight how: identity plays a role in civil service work; to train, teach and practice in a way that provides a forum for more open discussions on race, class and gender beliefs; and to improve or change the way we work through authentic dialogue about the work.

3.4. Summary of Methodological Considerations

The background piece of this inquiry refers to an ever-changing and continually developing knowledge base and an acceptance that theories are derived from multiple sources. This work, flowing from appreciative inquiry paradigms, and the dialogues recorded within are open to critique and change. Lastly, this inquiry represents an experiment in adopting an organisational strategy into research, with the aim of acquiring data that have textualised and authentic meanings for present and future organisational participants.

CHAPTER IV: ALIGNING THE CIVIL SERVICE'S NARRATIVES AMONGST THE FOUR NARRATIVE SPHERES

This chapter has three sections, each of which presents the data from the multiple inquiries described in the previous chapter. Both sections of this chapter represent an attempt to situate participants' visions for enhanced alignment between "policy" and "practice" within their: 1) relational networks (the medium through which people may speak in privileged ways on how policy impacts them); 2) organisational culture (the dynamics of practice and behavior influenced by relational interactions); 3) policy implementation activities (the workplace objectives as stated by the organisational missions and procedures); 4) and best practice activities (the pragmatics of policy, often influenced by a set of international standards).

The first section, 'Potential for Alignment' presents participants' offerings on elements of the relational network and organisational culture that have the potential to be aligned with policy and best practice narrative activities. This section highlights the multi-dimensional nature of alignment and envisions the movement of dialogues within and amongst the narrative contexts.

The second section outlines participants' sentiments on identity, experiences of policy and practice, and wishes for relational interactions and organisational culture. This latter section speaks to the civil service culture as it is described by participants. The third portion of this chapter features participants' offerings on the inquiry process.

SECTION 1: POTENTIAL FOR ALIGNMENT

Throughout this inquiry, I have been referring to four interacting discourse communities: relational networks; organisational culture; policy development and application, and best practice. Within any one of these contexts, dialogues can be privileged or professional, on offer for various levels of public consumption.

Furthered detailed up to this point has been the journey of exploring privileged and professional 'storying' on civil service work, identity, relationships and hope. The inquiry has been focused on the possibilities for enhanced organisational contexts by way of better aligning policy with practice. Better aligning policy and practice means fostering a complex and deepened understanding of the essence of people. It means realising the full potential for synergies of participants' dialogues, and their narratives of identity and of relationships, within the operating structures of an organisation. It may have implications for what it means to be reflexive in practice beyond standing apart, taking a look, and grappling with different perspectives on workplace activities.

What follows are civil servants' offerings on what might create opportunities for more movement and sharing from one culture to another and from one sphere of discourse to another. This section presents participants' visions or wishes for moving dialogues and narratives of experience to ones located in aspiration or vice versa; the potential for synergy between the sub-cultural and broad narrative contexts. The participants' stories, in this respect, offer insight as to

what thrives and has meaning for them in one sphere, and that which can become a life-giving feature in another. Organising their offerings into themes is an attempt to reconcile privileged narrative activities with the professional statements of organisational policy and practice.

Specifically, areas for alignment, fusion and movement between spheres of dialogue are highlighted. I present how participants envision possibilities for having their descriptions of experience merge with their visions and aspirations, and those outlined in the organisations policies, procedures and best practice expectations.

It is important that I emphasise that these phenomena are not unidirectional. There is the potential for alignment amongst and within every narrative community. The possibilities for influence and transformation then appear and are presented as multidirectional and infinite in possibility, beginning with the relational network

4.1. Relational Networks

“My question is, “how to better align policy with practice”. That’s the overarching question. And then using strategies that are being tested in many organisational sectors, I am calling upon you to tell me your story- a story that you may not have told before- and to give me the privilege of hearing it. This may be a story that you might only tell to someone you are close to, something you consider private... Can we bring the best parts of your story more into the work sphere so that policies are more applicable and have more meaning for people?”... “Now, some of the questions I am going to be asking you, you may think, “How’s that going to relate?” “Why are you asking these questions?” “And well, one of the things that I thought might be pertinent to this study is bringing in aspects of relationships, and our relationships with people”. “One factor of that relationship is our racial and other identities”. “So I ask you about that, but in a way that asks you to think about times when this experience has been most positive”

(Excerpt from researcher’s inquiry, explaining how relationships and policy are linked).

The narratives and offerings within and amongst the sphere of relational networks tell of participants’ most compelling experiences that they draw upon to build better relationships, to serve, to protect and to envision a community of people who may be different from themselves.

Consistent with the notion that the narratives from each sphere influence each other, I present the participants’ offerings represented by their areas for potential influence, beginning with how narratives in the relational network and organisational culture have implications for each other. This means, for example, that if we extract aspects of relational culture and transpose them into the organisational culture, there are new and better opportunities for workplace narrative. There may also elements of the organisation’s culture that would enhance the person in relationship. I present these findings as the relationship between, and potential for, relation interaction, policy and best practice.

4.1.1. Amongst Relational Networks and Organisational Culture

Of and within relationships, participants’ say that, regardless of identity, the way to an enhanced organisational culture is to explore colleagues’ and customers’ experiences and to be curious about the qualities that comprise their experience. They suggest that these qualities are generated from racially, culturally and from the constructions of gendered experiences.

Participants told of times when they sought each others strengths and encouraged colleagues before judging them. Other participants' offerings describe seeking the personal qualities they value in themselves, in other people. They hope for those qualities in their working relationships and they describe aspirations and experiences occurring at a relational level. These qualities would then have to be echoed in the organisational culture.

4.1.1a. Building alliances in organisational culture requires a relational shift of understanding, acceptance and increased communication.

If we want to enhance relationships in the organisation, participants suggest changes and challenges to perceptions, trust honesty and forthrightness in communications. This change might improve the workplace dynamic in ways more consistent with participants' most valued qualities in relationships.

An administrator tells of the way she challenged her own perspectives, going against a strong cultural upbringing, to become closer to a woman who had a very different life experience and identity from her own:

*“When I got out of high school, I started a job at Knick Knack. My supervisor was Portuguese and we were really close. All the other people working talk about Portuguese behind their backs. They called them names. I don't think they liked it. My supervisor and I got along so well. She was nice. She gave me advice when I was pregnant- what to expect. We had a loyalty towards each other in relation to them. We worked well together. I had this perception that Portuguese people didn't like Blacks much, but **working with her squashed that perception**⁵¹. She was older than me as well- 15 years older.”(7)*

The participant suggests that had she not built a relationship with this work colleague, so different from her, she would have been inclined to join others in stereotyping. Instead, because of their relationship, she felt a loyalty and commitment to that person, different from, and stronger than the dictates of people of her culture, and of the organisational norm. From these offerings, it appears that if narrative activities are to become more aligned with each other, the process will require that employees interact and build relationships with people who are different. Through this process, loyalties and alliances may be built and it no longer becomes possible to discriminate on the basis of physical differences.

Acknowledging a similar phenomenon of how the perceptions of other group members can become a part of the organisation's reality, a needs assessment group member says that *“the lack of females in leadership roles and the racial tension may be based on perception, but is nonetheless very real for some members”* (1). This may mean that as group members develop perceptions about others, these perceptions become increasingly meaningful. It may become difficult to think of the person outside of their group's conception.

The importance of acknowledging these sorts of interpersonal dynamics is reinforced repeatedly. Participants from the areas of race relations, justice, and law enforcement, did not speak of

⁵¹ In this chapter, all bold highlighted references indicate what I believed to be compelling perspectives, key themes or life-giving forces of the data.

improving work practices in their departments to improve the overall culture of the organisation. Rather, they spoke of relationships: of carrying relational elements such as trust, honesty and respect into the agency's culture to bring about an improved culture:

"...I like the fact that there comes a time in my interactions with people, even the most difficult... You just strike a common cord ... and we can begin to work together. And they are coming to me for help and it feels good when I can begin to offer them some assistance." "Sometimes it's quite a, well, it is, a lot of conversations and meetings, where criticisms are being leveled at things not happening quickly enough et cetera, but I think it's what I mentioned in one case that we didn't talk about and it's the point at which there is a sense of trust and respect being built between us. Yes, I think it's at the point normally where they kind of leave things in my hands and trust that I will move it on, and we can finally begin to work together."(13)

Here, an administrator suggests that to align policy with practice, civil servants need to return to very basic levels of communication and relationship-building. This seemed to mean going through the effort of having many conversations, and leveling frank observations at each other. Further, alignment might mean "taking people as you find them- and working with them", as another group of civil servants offer.

They suggest that as challenging or unrealistic as it may seem, civil servants must face "whatever experiences" they have and "look within them for a positive note"(2). Further, they advise that at a relational level, their colleagues work at "letting go of the little things" and try to "take people one-on-one, each day, everyday (2). This approach, a "take people as they are" attitude, seems to reflect a belief that both the relational and organisational culture have the potential to become more critically aligned when civil servants respond to each other and their customers with more openness and a willingness to accept the many representations they will bring to the relationship.

Along similar lines of working towards shifting understanding within the relational network to promote change in the organisational culture, a Bermudian civil servant suggests that understanding and acceptance begins with a reflection on the self. Describing an experience where she meets a man from Africa, so different from any one she knew prior, she says:

"I had never met an African man before. I only had an image based on TV- meaning poor and this type of thing. I was struck by how I had such great respect for him, not because I had an impression that Africans were dumb, but just by speaking to him. I found he was really intelligent. His "take" and perspective were so much bigger than my own; and he had such respect for me. I was more like, "wow", I really like this person and I thought that had I seen him outside, I would never have gotten to know him or converse with him. It was a cultural difference. Because I had an impression but yet I had an impression that I could relate to him, I liked him for how he thought (5).

As the civil servant reflects on this interaction, she acknowledges that her impressions have been limited by her experience. She indicates that the relationship broadened her scope and understanding of another person and culture. Last she indicates that outside of this opportunity, it was unlikely she would have met this person. All of these reflections

link to a theme of increased communication as a means of increased alliances. These increased alliances are reflective of an organisational culture where people have the types of relationships they want to have with each other.

Through other highly engaged interactions, the civil servant began to recognise that even amongst considerable racial, cultural, language differences, she and another women had much in common. Her description of one such relationship was that she recognised a commonality. Saying, *“I realised that she was the same as me”*, the civil servant expresses that through moments of reflexivity encouraged by the relational interaction, she had increased her capacity to engage in narrative activities that changed her perspective. As a consequence, the shift had implications for how she contributes to elements of the organisational culture.

Civil servants had much more to say on the types of relational contributions they believe could be made to the organisation as a means of improving the work experience. Further aligning the dialogues occurring in relational networks with those of the organisational culture meant *“getting concerns and feelings out”* (5); *“honesty and communication in thoughts, words and actions”* (4); and *“valuing of differences and celebration of differences”* (4).

On improving relational tones, there is the suggestion that *“accepting that everybody else is different from you but each difference is something that can be valued”* (4). Along similar lines, a civil service manager implies that the narrative activities in the organisation’s culture cannot be aligned with either relational activities or practice unless *“there is a basic premise that there is value in another person”* (4). She says that essentially *“if you start with the basic premise of ‘I value what you are’, you can expect the best”* of people. Similarly, another civil servant suggests that if the civil service truly strives for narrative alignment, the qualities of trustworthiness and honesty must be repositioned and valued for, as she says, *“If you can’t trust these people, why would you want to work with someone you can’t trust?”* (7).

The notion of honesty in communication and honesty in relationships continued to be prominent in the discourse of the organisation’s culture. Members of the needs assessment group implored leaders and members *“to be honest with themselves about their role in ensuring good relations between each other and the membership”* (1). Honesty and straightforward communication meant that what would typically be said in a privileged network, i.e. *“I want to be able to say, ‘you are right, but you are wrong’ and that they can hear that and not be hurt, angry or offended”*(2), would find its way into the professional realms of narrative activity. Such direct and honest communication, instead of being viewed as unprofessional or unrealistic to expect in professional circles, seems to be appreciated. For example, a civil serviceman in the construction industry says of a communication with a man he describes, at one point, as Anglo-Saxon:

“I appreciated his honesty in telling me his position-it was an open discussion- we just got into a conversation, and it was real. If a white person was able to tell me that they didn’t like me because I was black, I don’t have a problem with that. I really don’t. As long as they were honest enough to tell me, then it is fine. I mean, the problem comes

from when you don't know. If I know that you don't like me openly, why would I try to deal with you or through you? If I have to go through you, then I need to look somewhere else" (12).

Likewise, some group member participants encourage leaders to more directly communicate. They ask that they “*share their experience and create opportunities for young people to learn*”. But they also acknowledge the difficult task it is to communicate in this way and that it will take “*the strength and will to do so*” (1). Speaking to the need for open and honest communication, they too suggest that civil servants must “*demonstrate 'a willingness' to dialogue about how racism is experienced or perceived in its very open way*” (1).

There seems to be evidence that relational interactions have very real consequences and meaning for participants. A civil servant working in human affairs describes a shift in camaraderie at the relational level, when moving to a group setting. She attributes the shift to a culture of organisational narrative that separates civil servants by race. She expressed a wish for better alignment between the dialogues at an interpersonal level and those at an organisational level:

“They [Blacks] are treating me in ways that they have been treated because they think that I am going to do it [to them] and it took me a while to realise why I was being alienated. [But] dealing with anyone, one-on-one in the social setting was very pleasing. We immediately could bond on a number of levels. I have to try and make my awareness more tempered to stay in business” (15).”

Like others above, these sentiments suggest that to align the discourse of organisational culture with that occurring amongst relational networks, civil servants’ awareness of each other, and of each other’s perspectives, must be heightened through reflexive activities. This might mean sitting back from a situation and examining it. This reflexive activity might mean considering a person from the number of levels on which you know them; marrying that knowledge with action.

4.1.1b. Good relational experiences and good work make for good organisational culture.

Considering the best relational elements that are present in the experience of their working lives, or what they envision the agency’s culture of work to become, participants spoke of feeling honored by someone who does really good work. They described *honour* as attending to each other with a great deal of personal investment. Says a manager of one of his team members, “*She carries out the work that needs to be done. She is very good at what she does. She is very proficient and organised. You tend to go back to people that provide that sort of service to you*” (10). What is implied here, and in the following statement, is that in order for relational interactions to influence the experience and description of organisational practices, organisational practices must reflect a good experience. If people “*try as far as possible to give each person the time that... they deserve*” we will “*get to a point where [customers] are willing to leave [things] with me and trust me with it*” (13). The sentiment in this reflection is that a good interaction builds trust. It enhances how people experience the work and the working environment.

This notion of practice alignment continues to carry through to sentiments about relationships. According to participants, it seems that relational opportunities to do “best work” and to be able

to take risks, can be married to a larger agency narrative. Participants spoke of taking risks, an activity more typically reserved for privileged relationships, as having potential in organisational agency. They spoke of valuing a space where they are allowed to and supported in expressing themselves as relational beings in the workplace.

This ‘valuing’ would come from both colleagues at their own levels, as well as the heads of the civil service. For example, a senior manager describes his professional experience as one where the “*organisation that would maybe do its lobbying behind closed doors and at a senior level*” (13). Yet, at a relational level, the manager most valued “*the ability to take risks*” (13). The manager described ‘risks’ as those activities where he could put himself into his work and do the job as he truly believes it should be done. This sentiment suggests that his wishes for the discourses of organisational culture to incorporate a narrative allowing for flexibility in the work experience. This flexibility, in his experience, was generally accepted within relational networks, but less acknowledged in the organisational culture.

The relational elements found in enjoying work and feeling valued continued to be expressed in proposals for better aligning with elements typically described in organisational culture. In describing his work as it relates to the civil service mission, a senior manager says he “*tells a story*” and “*the enjoyment I get out of advising others around me on matters of importance... allows me to express who I am without confining to some rigid guidelines*”. Here, the manager expresses that the flexibility of privileged narrative activities from the professional ones “*can conquer individual style and expression*. He also suggests that if individual style and expression are “*conquered*”, managers lose the ability and the drive for “*having a concern for people that goes beyond the topical*” (11). Modeling and living this type of concern is central to relational developments, but has been less present in discussions on enhancing the organisational culture. Actively promoting a concern for people that goes beyond the topical would be a powerful dynamic to have in an organisational culture.

4.1.2. Amongst Relational Networks and 'Policy' Development and Application

This section presents participants’ offerings on what they believed to be present in the relational elements of their work that might also apply to how policies get formulated and adopted and communicated. There are some possibilities for policy enhancement. There are also some possibilities for how organisational developments can be better aligned by relational narratives. Some excerpts speak to producing a better balance between theory and practice. Others, call for the civil service to bring in more elements of the relational experience.

4.1.2a. Policy that speaks to the personal.

In a discussion on the professional development of civil servants and the implications for policy, a senior manager outlines a wish. The wish is for incorporating highly relational attributes and approaches into the decision-making and supervision process. The powerful narrative clips he would like to see incorporated into dialogues on policy are:

“Primarily, that the civil service can be a place where persons can develop career objectives that bring out some degree of personal and professional satisfaction. What it takes [to make that happen] is the consistent process of instilling in leaders of the civil service that we need to have an eye and discernment for the unseen attributes for those who work for and under them.” “The unseen attributes, the unseen desires. A concern

for the unspoken, it's not unseen, it's unspoken, career hopes and objectives. And somehow translating that into something that is spoken.

Continuing with a privileged narrative on why infusing a relational element of 'strategic caring' into a policy of professional development is important to him, the Manager offers that:

*"...I guess the reason that I have been in the civil service as long as I have is because I have been a recipient of that type of development or that type of mentality, especially early on in my civil service career. I was fortunate enough to have the type of supervisor who didn't have to have a long conversation with you, to see what your inclinations were. But with very little communication, **find ways to make the job suited to the individual to the extent that it could and that individual would need to stay in the civil service and to guide that.** Now it hasn't always been that way and it won't always be that way for each and every individual but my wish would be for the **Civil Service to have managers and Directors that would discern the individual objectives, wants and desires of those who work for them and then find ways, win-win solutions, for them to pursue those objectives.**"(11)*

Below, law enforcement officers suggest that policies might need to reflect the perspective of who does the work and how it is done. There is an expressed need for flexibility in communication, flexible work hours and the involvement of civil servants in the policy development process:

*"Whites can't deal with black authority. American, English, West Indian, Indian--." "Americans expect Bermudians to be grateful". "The English owned Bermuda". "**I adapt to suit people.**" "But, Bermudians don't take shit." "Individuals push buttons. Color isn't an issue, its culture. It's June 6th when you push my buttons, **I am going to say what I have to say**". "**It's not what you say; it's how you say it.**"(2)*

*"Bermuda's civil service needs to change in how we're working. We can't be a 9-5 organisation. We've got to encourage home working, we've got to encourage more part-time working, we've got to **encourage more flexible hours.** This whole way that change is going to be brought about is certainly going to **change the current structures-** I mean where no one can be made redundant has got to change. **Jobs change.** I mean you can't say that you will always need someone to take cash at a till just because they have always done it that should always be their job."(8)*

*"I think the whole thing is around involving people more in a process. **By making people more accountable you give them more responsibility in certain areas.** I think some areas of Government are better at that than others. The whole thing certainly improves the service we are giving to the public but it is going to take some time to change. Motivate them and the whole thing improves—and service to the public."(8)*

From a perspective of narrative activity, the Officers suggest that policy at all levels take on relational tones. In the first instance, these relational tones would include the experience of ethnic identity, gender, and a range of unspecified identities. In the second instance, the policy on how work is organised in the civil service requires attention. While there is dialogue of "flexibility", the dialogue is enhanced through structural change ("involving more people in the process"). In the last instance, there is a call for bringing people more into the organisation. The suggestion here is that even in the face of what are pretty much standard group processes

(strategic planning sessions, team meetings), there is still a need for group work that has inclusiveness as its focus.

4.1.2b. Policy that marries theory and practice- what is experienced is “alive” within the policy and policy ideals.

According to participants, relational elements of narrative can be aligned with policy. Participants spoke of balancing theory and practice by engaging in more dialogues with each other. They also spoke of gathering more information to develop a policy, by speaking directly to those on whom the policy will have an impact. As a consequence, realising a relational tone in policy would mean incorporating these practices into the training process and into policies on organisational communication.

For example, with regard to training, civil servants explicitly indicate that the organisation needs to “*learn to balance a process*” of using theory to explain practice by “*introducing elements of experience*” (2). This sentiment does not imply that the whole training structure needs to change, but simply that a relational element of policy would invite a generative review of the training process and objectives, with regard for whether there are adequate narratives of experience in the training program.

With regard to organisational communication, another example of the heightened potential for relational elements of discourse is introduced. A front-line civil servant suggests that policies on communication could be enhanced if the notions of hierarchy and roles were occasionally abandoned. He says:

[I think] the people in power need to take off the suits; put on a pair of old sneakers and go see what the trenches are really like. You don't have to indulge. A lot of people in the church don't indulge in everything that goes on. Some people are there because they have friends there. Some people are there because they have brothers there; because they have cousin there. Some people are just there because they can be there. If you wanted some real hard core answers, you couldn't just walk up to the wall, dressed like (that) and talk to these people. In order to get correct knowledge, you have to go to the source” (12).

The implication here is that if civil servants want to infuse policy with relational tones. Increasing the alignment of policy and practice means the approach to communication has to change. Essentially the change calls for a ‘shedding’ of rigid role structures that allows employees to communicate across lines in the “chain of command”. This sentiment suggests that the civil service is being called to ‘take a leap of faith’ with regard to policy on communication. For example, at present, there are very strict lines of reporting- from employee to supervisor to Manager to Director and Permanent Secretary and so on. The somewhat freeing civil servants from a highly structured communication process, to a newly envisioned one encourages a line of narrative that might say, “I can go to the person from whom I need answers- without the repercussions that fear, insecurity and wishes to retain power engender”.

Another consideration arising from the theme of aligning an experience of privilege with the professional discourse of policy was introduced in the study. Civil servants suggested that in looking at the organisations capacity to offer a service, the Civil Service should reflect on

whether in fact it should be offering the service at all. A civil servant encourages a review of the organisation's mandate using the example of members of Bermuda's public who seem to do "nothing" all day. He says,

"The focus is too much them sitting on the wall. If they want to sit on the wall, it is nothing you could do about it. That's just going to happen. It is a life pattern. All you can do is to carry on business as normal. You are not going to be able to save everybody" (12).

Here, he offers a challenge to current professional narrative activity that aspires to be all things to all people as a public service organisation.

"When the Black community says Government is not doing enough for these guys, they say these things to you, your reply is not, "What, you didn't get up this morning to make sure he was out of bed to go work? Did you get a chain around the fridge; make him get his own fridge?" No seriously, these are issues that have to be addressed. I am not one who looks to the Government for assistance. I don't think the Government could assist me."(12)

When one considers the relational element of this dialogue, it offers a fresh approach to mandate-driven activities.

The offering brings to the surface the idea of making it both daily and strategic practice to reflect on the mission of the civil service and becoming prepared to accept a highly defensible position of not offering service to each and every member of the public. Most organisations engage in a strategic planning process that asks this question. This approach is not new. What might represent a shift in strategic activities is the concept of governance and civil service pulling back from service. This shift might see the civil service involving the public as stakeholders in its vision. It might also see the civil service holding some stakeholders accountable and responsible for themselves. The possibilities inherent to this new stream of narrative in policy would also have implications for the organisational culture. For example, the image of the civil service might shift from one of a safety net to one that has a more needs-driven perspective towards service. Whether or not this shift is desirable or not, is not the intent of the reflexive exercise. The intent is to explore the potential for this enhanced relational approach to policy.

4.1.2c. Participants' relational wishes are addressed.

Civil servants offered other relational lines of discourse to which they suggested had meaning for policy changes. The narrative activities on gender-based networking, indicated hopes that opportunities to bring more gender diversity into the team will be created. A male civil servant expresses hope for the creation of structures that improve the chances for black males in employment. One civil servant in particular says, *"I wish for more male Officers to become part of the teams" (2).*

The sentiment and wish for a more diverse working team is mirrored in comments from his civil service team in that they agree that, *"females are more prepared"* and are getting more access to opportunities as a consequence. However, alongside this sentiment is a relational dream for policy which is that *"we shouldn't allow any talent to go wasted, but every member of this community must want to live this too" (2).* The sentiment incorporates the relational wish for a

diverse workforce. It is also consistent with a policy shift that encourages employers to look to every sector of the community to find it. Aligning the two perspectives might mean encouraging dialogues on strategies to seek male applicants for employment in previously unexplored places.

4.1.3. Amongst Relational Networks and Narrative Activities of Best Practice

I have brought together civil servants' perspectives on the ways that their privileged experiences, of their relational networks, organisational culture, and policy could be more aligned. Presenting the findings of these three spheres, leaves one element of the relational network pairings to be explored. The narrative activities in this section speak to aspects of participants' privileged experiences that they feel have relevance to their experience of practice.

4.1.3a. Individual achievements are relational achievements and enhance the greater good.

Aligning the discourse of the relational network, to perspectives of best practice seems to be an exercise in sharing vision, accountability and information. A civil servant of 14 years describes her hopes for the conceptualisation of best practice by intimating that her best relational experiences at work were ones "*where people are working because of something greater*". She says that, "*you need a leader that instills a vision in people and has them work towards that vision*". "*Make them a part of it*". "*Make them feel that the vision is theirs too*".

Similarly, a civil service manager offers that this process of "instilling vision" is one that shifts individual relational practices to the broader organisational context. Of the organisational culture at present he says, "*I think it [the process of sharing a vision] happens more on an individual basis than on a professional basis*". His suggestion is that taking the responsibility and accountability remain on a relational level that does not necessarily extend to the organisation as a whole. The position seems to contrast a general understanding and belief in an organisation that is already practicing in this way.

Indicating that these dialogues are uncommon in practice, another supervisor says that it was "*somewhat of a revelation*" that his supervisor had encouraged him to develop the skills that he was learning (11). Yet, the civil servant says that it was being a recipient of just this kind of attention that gave him "*added motivation to want a career in the civil service*" (11). Drawing from a relational component of instilling vision, it seems that leadership practice could be far more enhanced. Civil servants have offered testimony as to the impact and extent to which a relational component in the practice of various leadership exercises (supervision, training) had on them.

Along similar lines, training-needs assessment participants say that the commitment to people at a privileged level needs to be aligned with practice. They say that the civil service needs to "*honor its commitment to embrace young people of all races into our [organisation] by providing them with opportunities to advance- training, mentoring and succession planning for real*" (1).

The threads of the discourse above emphasise the critical roles of leaders in ensuring that the full wealth of employees' talents, identities and experience be somehow accounted for in supervising, training, mentoring, team building, delegation, planning and task-completion activities.

4.1.3b. Enhancing the relational tone of practice- refocusing on people.

Participants also spoke of the power of relationships, accountability and their relationships to best practice. They implied that more consistency in practice, across the organisation, means being accountable to a relationship within the work arena. In what I paraphrase as, “working from the heart”, life-giving relational activities in practice took a variety of forms. One participant described her experience of best practice as incorporating a most intense relational element such as listening closely to customers:

*“The first time I did training was the best. We were in training, doing a training and I noticed that for the first half, I didn’t have everyone engaged. Three officers held back. 3/4s of the lunch break they talked and I **listened to their concerns**. What were their perspectives? They didn’t see the benefits of what we were doing. Why was I at my best? **“[I was at my best because] what I was doing wasn’t something that was written in a book. It was something I cared about and I was working straight from the heart. I was glad I was able to be there.”**”(6)*

The implication of this statement is that work has to engage and involve the ‘person’. Organisations have moved towards reducing activities that are interpersonal (personalised customer service to voice recording, technical training over basic customer service and ethics) in tone. However, engaging and involving the “person” may mean reverting back to a very personalised practice and service. The alignment of the relational network with the best practice sphere speaks to the longevity and impact of a ‘connectedness’ with people. It highlights the need to infuse the best practice environment with the relational narratives of listening with empathy, believing in someone and creating environments of trust.

This sentiment is mirrored in the description of a social worker who described a chance meeting with a client who has since grown up, gone to university, acquired a degree in social work himself and has a family. The social worker has asked his “client” what turned things around for him when he was in residential care and then left. The young man replies that it was, “*Not so much the experience but the people that were there*”. The emphasis and need for heightened connectivity practice is further underscored as the social described the rest of the exchange:

*“The person that really inspired me to get my degree was you”. “What, why?” I said. Because I was a real task-master. I really didn’t let them get away with anything. So I thought I would be the last person one would expect anyone saying thank you to. At least maybe not until they got 30 or 40 years down the line when they could look back and say, you know, thanks. And I said, “What made you... why me?”. And he said because I remember everything I went through and you said the best revenge on all those people who said you can’t do it is to do it. You just say, “Ha, I did it” and that is your revenge on all those people. And he said, “So the thing that followed me through, got me through college, and graduating was that **all of those people who said I couldn’t do it, I remembered what you used to say, “Ha”. “Ha”. “I can just say, “Ha, I did it”**”. “And that was really something to me. It just came out of the blue”.*
(9)

The emphasis on connectivity in the alignment of relational and best practice activities extends from the notion of ‘service to the public’ to collegial experiences. Describing the importance of helping civil servants share their identities and life stories with each other was also raised. The

issue was raised as a matter of improving how people work together as well as the practice outcomes. A civil service supervisor says, quite critically, that aligning best practices with relational networks to him means that:

“I keep people informed about what is going on. And I really, really work hard at team building especially since we are a lean department on man power- it’s vital that we all work together. We can support each other. I think the social side of it is important too. We don’t do enough outside of work. The few times we’ve had, you can see how quickly we learn about people after just ½ an hour, an hour of being around them. It makes it a lot easier when you’re in the workplace to relate to people. Otherwise all you see is the work of the person and you don’t understand what’s going on behind the scenes. You just learn more and more about people in a social atmosphere and much quicker than you do at work. (10)

The sentiments above clearly suggest that a focus on work and job-related tasks is important but that an interpersonal element of practice is also important. The manager above says that people are “*not very worried about who is the other person is and what’s behind them*”, but this relational piece “*has a huge influence on what they do at work*”. “*And also*”, the civil servant offers, “*it makes it more personal when your dealing with people- sometimes you can get things done better at work by having that relationship with them*”(10).

Practice enhancements, according to participants, also meant creating relational opportunities where narratives of best practice can thrive. The implication, particularly in the situation next described, is that a consideration for the planning of any group activities (strategic planning, group work, general meetings), should include how to create a safe, non-threatening environment:

“The particular group that I was working with were all very open. We were all fairly senior. I don’t believe any of us had any agenda and it wasn’t a threatening environment, it was trusting. We weren’t going to get slapped around for an idea that was stupid. Intellectually, we were able to debate and discuss and it was just a comfortable, safe atmosphere and environment to have that type of debate” (14).

In this situation, the civil servant describes feeling comfortable and secure in a work group situation. This security, reminiscent of the security one would expect in a relationship of privilege, seems to have possibilities for the best practice sphere.

The findings from the dialogues occurring in relational networks have highlighted several areas of potential for the organisational culture, policy and best practice spheres. As well, there has been the suggestion that the multi-dimensional influence of relational networks, may even change the tone of narratives within relational networks themselves. I now move to a detailed look at the discussions occurring in the organisational culture, and how these discussions might better align themselves, or become aligned with, narrative activities on policy and best practice.

4.2. Organisational Culture: Policy and Practice

When I considered the offerings on organisational culture, I recognised that an analysis of findings in this sphere could be consistent with that of relational networks. Similar to the way shifts can be envisioned from relational networks to the other spheres of narrative, so too are

there opportunities for aligning discourse and dialogue amongst the organisational culture, the ‘policy’ and ‘best practice’ spheres of narrative.

4.2.1. Amongst the discourse of Organisational Culture and Policy Development and Application Activities

From what comprises the interactions in the organisational culture, I asked participants to level a critical look at whether narratives of experience can be better aligned with policy ideals. For them, a shift in communication processes is envisioned.

A group of civil servants suggest that both the organisational culture and the policy on communication require attention. There were fewer ‘stories’ on this envisioned shift. However, civil servants would like to see the civil service change “*from a culture of hierarchy to one that welcomes multiple lines of communication*“. The civil servants also say that they would like to be able to speak of experiences where there is more communication “*as colleagues- top down and bottom up*” (2). Such a shift in the dialogues of the organisational culture would not only require a clearly communicated policy change, but a change in the type of relational activities that promote a leveled communication structure.

Echoing this sentiment is a wish for an organisational culture where the policies on vision and operations are communicated, period. The concern for civil servants, on communication, is that the organisational culture can not be reflective of policy if civil servants are unaware of the policies. The issue of alignment, in this case, would be quite practical. Alignment would indicate that: 1) “*that the policies of government are well known*” because, as it stands, the policies are “*not known at all*”. Further, as some civil servants suggest, “*If they [the policies] do exist, they aren’t shared in a way so that people are familiar with them.*”(4).

Also around the issue of communication was that the narrative activities of the organisational culture would be enhanced when policies are introduced and then allowed to live, grow and thrive. For example, a civil service manager speaks of her concern for employees’ experiences of the organisational culture when policy decisions are too short lived.

“An example of an effective policy is that no one can accumulate more than 20 days of vacation per year. Use it or lose it. It is effective. The goals are clear. It reduced a measurable loss in money, and reduced government’s liability. People do need holidays; it responded to a need of people. It had a good purpose. It was good for them and their families-it renews. Its underlying purpose is legitimate. I was distraught to hear that we don’t have to stick to it anymore- we can relax. We need to stick to it. People have gotten used to the fact that here is a policy, it had effect and had gotten compliance.”(4)

In this instance, must narrative activities in policy be allowed time to take root and flourish. To promote this shift from policy to the experience in the organisational culture, civil servants propose that “*open, honest communication with staff*” be encouraged (4). They also suggest “*that there truly be fairness and equal opportunity*”. This meant that staff have fair access to promotion, that all applications be reviewed and evaluated on the basis of criteria (4). With respect to this offering on equal access to opportunity, it seems that while there is both privileged and professional “talk” of equal access, the premise is not upheld in practice. Civil servants say

that “*some jobs are not advertised*”; “*there is promoting the person from under, without adequate preparation, without support*”. People are “*set-up to fail*”(4).

Shared ownership and risk were final themes that presented themselves with regard to envisioning more alignment between the discourse of organisational culture and policy. Two civil service managers spoke of how to foster a culture where policy statements on team work and leadership truly embrace responsible communication, recruitment and professional development. One civil servant says that her vision for living the civil services vision of leadership was that in the decision-making process, leaders will say, “*It’s not just my choice*” with regard to an issue. Her belief and hopes for the dialogues on an issue would be that people “*talk about an issue, pass it on and share ownership*” of the process (4).

Of risk, and in relation to leaders helping fellow civil servants develop and thrive, a civil servant suggests that “*generating an atmosphere that allows for civil servants to take risks- take chances on making mistakes*” makes a difference (8). I would suggest that being able to take risks is an activity typically located and allowed for in the culture of an organisation, and even within relational networks.

However, the sentiment of generating an atmosphere that allows civil servants to take risks would have to be an activity that is promoted and supported in policy. This would mean that leaders (Managers, Supervisors) would need to have a sound policy statement on how to develop employees. Generating an atmosphere that allows for risk may not mean taking uncalculated or even dangerous risks in practice, but perhaps seeking to explore the talent of an employee or encouraging an employee to extend or “stretch” to new or different tasks that were not originally envisioned.

4.2.2. Amongst the narrative activity of Organisational Culture and “Best Practice”

The last combination of interactions in the four spheres I have outlined is that of the narrative activity amongst organisational culture and best practice. Narrative activities in this section speak to experiences occurring in day-to-day civil service work that have potential for practice enhancements.

In the exercise of seeking potential for alignment, some of my reflection was based on a question of: How do you shift a discourse of organisational culture from practice to general work experiences and the nuances of behavior in an organisation? I asked myself, and civil service participants, “what needs to be present in practice that will impact how people view the organisation, the work we do and how civil servants believe themselves to ‘fit’ within the structure?”

In this paper, as a general theme, I have referred to activities occurring in the best practice sphere as the ‘pragmatics’ of policy. Yet, it seems that civil servants felt that best practices were a combination of very practical activities but also very spiritual activities. They spoke of demonstrating trust and good will; recognising and believing in the potential of all civil servant participants; taking the mission statement to heart; and treating clients as though they were family as being critical practices. These were very spiritual activities to which civil servants allowed best practice activities. These spiritually-based best practices were believed to be the underpinnings of organisational culture. Some civil servants asked that members of their team

“recommit to relationships of trust and goodwill” (1). Another civil servant seems to highlight this vision when he speaks of changing the organisation’s culture with consideration for the more spiritual and personal elements of work. These spiritual; and personal elements of the work relates to people’s self-perception and personal development:

“One, and most important was in the way they saw themselves. They had to have more confidence their ability to deliver. Two, ensure they received the training they needed to better motivate clients and to better meet their needs. Things went better as a result of the better training. Three, was to not ensure, but to maximise the chances of being successful in the interventions with the clients. I think that if you can think better of yourself and if we teach it, than we can deliver a better service- we deliver that service and the client benefits as a result of it than, than, you are better able to see yourself as a professional.”(9)

It also seems that aligning the discourse of best practice and organisational culture, meant that their meanings were extended from the limits of standardised “good practice norms” to a far more personal definition of best practice. Below, a civil servant suggests that best practice can be operationalised as thinking in terms of concern for others:

“... I think in terms of concern for others. ...More the attitude where people look out for others. I try to give 100-150% and I will if I can... I think if we all did that, from the most junior member of staff up, there would be good results. Accepting people as they are and for what they are, is my other”. “...I think the most rewarding part is not to do individual one-off things, although they are quite rewarding, like to organise a conference or speak at a seminar or organise a meeting. It’s driving—it’s making other people see the benefit in carrying out certain actions or initiatives, that’s the most value that one can bring to an organisation—where you’ve changed the culture of an organisation to where you have helped to change the culture in some area”(8).

The consequences of extending meanings of best practice to the culture of the organisation were that people were also taking the Civil Service Mission statement to heart. Whilst it may be challenging to envision an explicit statement on alignment from the following sentiment, there is a message of how best practice is ‘practiced’ in the organisation:

*“... We took to **the heart of the mission statement**. The realisation of the term needs to be more intensely felt by government employees. The term is “civil servant”. And a servant is there to meet the needs of their employer, whatever that need is. When you think of a butler, every single thing that their employer needs is there, **ready to deliver at a high level of quality**. That’s what I think every single civil servant should be doing, whatever that is”. “Mediocrity is almost a motto-treating that person as anything less than they are a member of your family. I guess one of the reasons I am obsessed about it is that I hate when a person leaves a message and people don’t return the message. When I get a message I return it as soon as I possibly can because if it wasn’t important, they would not have left a message” (9).*

What seems to have arisen to the forefront of enhanced organisational culture and best practice is a movement from standardised definitions of practice to ones that are spiritual. Civil servants suggest that good practice involves placing a level of caring and concern for others that extends past the topical.

For civil servants, an enriched workplace culture would see people who demonstrate that they are giving 150% to each other and to the organisation; and they are reading the mission statement as something that belongs to them and with which they need to personally engage. Finally, although difficult to conceptualise, a civil servant manager proposes that being able to give more

than asked and to engage with the expectations of the mission to the greatest extent it requires. It requires that civil servants are offered opportunities to explore their roles and lives as people, before they explore the roles, lives and deliver services to other.

Whilst these notions seem to have very specific applications to some areas of the civil service, such as the helping and social service teams, there may be some elements that could be incorporated into orientation and other training programs.

4.3. Policy

4.3.1. Aligning ‘Policy’ with ‘Best Practice’

Narrative activities in the ‘policy’ sphere of civil service work, speak to the organisation’s vision, mission and development activities. The alignment of discourse on policy with that of ‘best practice’ is the final area of interaction between the spheres of narrative influence.

The influence of policy on practice is not a topic that is easily constructed (See Chapter 2, section, entitled ‘The concern for integrating policy, theory and practice’). To prepare study participants’ for the study’s challenging inquiry and topic, I told them a bit of the story of how I came to be interested in my research. I present an excerpt of my remarks to the participants on this topic, because 1) they best represent how critically involved a researcher is in the process; and 2) they frame the findings on what was then offered as perspectives on aligning policy and practice:

“So I started out doing this when I was a social worker and was supervising a team of people, social workers, whom I would hire straight out of university and they would have really good ideals, lots of good ideas, lots of enthusiasm about what they wished to be doing. But by the end of the year, they would be dropping like flies, and I said, ‘well either there’s something wrong with how we are doing things, there I something wrong with our philosophy, or there is something that is critically disconnected’. And so I started looking at what could be put in place, what are some ideas that we can consider to make it more workable”.(Excerpt from researcher’s narrative)

And then,

“I would like you to think about it and I will give you some time... I would like you to think of a time when someone in this organisation made this statement very real for you. Where you felt that they demonstrated this mission statement in what your opinion would be the ideal way. Did they do something, an action or um, in a relationship with you, a colleague, did they connect with you? They made you feel ‘proud to be a part of this civil service’, as some people have described. It really hit your heart- this situation or relationship”. (Excerpt from researcher’s narrative, contextualising the study)

From these expectations and curiosities about policy and practice, we entered a dialogue.

4.3.2. Figuring out exactly what we do... .

Civil servants offered several proposals on how to best align policy activities with best practice. These proposals, resulting from an appreciative inquiry framework, were phrased as ways that the Civil Service’s mission statement- the overarching Government policy- comes alive and have meaning for them.

We can extend those meanings to a narrative or discourse on how practice draws from policy. It seems that civil servants believe that practice involves “*figuring out exactly what you are supposed to be doing, and doing it*” (10). One executive describes his experience of making practice on policy a reality through a budget process. He says that what was powerful for him was “*strip[ping] back what you are doing to your core function and identify your core function and build your budget from what you think is your essential function to the add-ons*”. He continues by saying that they had one of these meetings where “*we saw bright lights at the end of the meeting*” and thought:

“Yes, why didn’t we ever see it like this way before? ... It made me feel very pleased, happy and proud that we were nearly in tears at the end of it”. This realisation that there we were, the department that is doing all this placing ads, getting applications in, getting new staff, but we weren’t doing anything to contribute to making your workforce a better, more organised, better directed workforce” (14).

For me, what is very powerful in this statement of ‘policy-turned-practice’ is that the experience of best practice had both, relevance to operations, and to process. The Manager indicated that the realising of best practice in policy is not only about conducting a task, but in creating an atmosphere and opportunities where processes and roles can be safely discussed. The reason why it would be important to create a space where processes and roles could be discussed is because these elements may ensure that practice reflects policy and policy statements.

Civil servants, as indicated by the following statement, need to fully understand their roles and responsibilities to the organisation- that is, if in fact the organisation intends to have the participants working with respect to the mission statement:

“I feel I am an important part of achieving [the department’s] goals- even if it was a small part”. “If something is going to change because I played a part in it, that’s good” (7). “...and I think that’s why the work is important is that that was exactly what they were doing [living the mission statement]. They were providing accurate information to Government to assist in the sound formulation of policy. And the Central Policy Unit was doing it in a way, because they were chaired by an excellent person, that that was what it was doing. And that’s something that doesn’t often happen, it sometimes doesn’t happen in this Government because (fade). They were doing this exactly as quote, unquote, the “mission”. “They were doing it in such a way that it was excellent” (8).

Aligning ‘best practice’ with statements on organisational ideals also seemed to mean that participants experimented with changing perceptions and expectations of best practice. One manager implies that best practice statements tend to be too ideal and unrealistic. For his perspective, they may see both employees and clients aspiring to unattainable goals. In a very practical way, the manager suggests that the best practice discourse in his area of work would be need to be redefined if it were to more considerably mirror policy. He says that his definition of best practice is “*making a positive difference in people’s lives*”. He offers that making a positive difference in the children’s and families’ lives is being able to see that individual family to a higher level of functioning than when he first met them.

By extension, if notions of best practice are to take on a “subjective” (as the manager frames it) tone, then the accompanying policy statement might discuss indicators for practice “success” as situated within an individual context. For example, the manager says that even while ‘subjective’, there are:

“...certain indicators that you can see that you... and anyone else can see that there has been a positive difference- a positive change”. “I mean, even if a person who argues with their child 3 nights a week instead of every night, or where before, the child’s parent never went to school unless they got into trouble and here, the parent is going to the PTA meetings. Or if a family was eating Kentucky Fried Chicken every night and is now getting to the point where they are actually cooking meals for the children and being there for the children in the mornings when they go to school. This is positive” (9).

Accomplishing better alignment between policy and practice may be one of the most challenging features of improved organisational functioning and behavior. Future directions for aligning the dialogues and discourse of practice with the policies meant to enhance it include helping civil servants explore their specific roles, functions and responsibilities; creating an atmosphere where this process can be fostered; and reframing and exploring new meanings of best practice.

4.4. Section Summary

On a whole, the civil servants envisioned several areas of alignment of narrative of activities through relational networks, the organisation’s culture, in policy and in best practice. These activities involved shifts in understanding, increased communication, promoting an extension of role responsibilities and creating spaces within each context to facilitate each shift.

At the beginning of this study, I indicated that its findings should situate participants’ visions for enhanced alignment between “policy” and “practice”, within their narrative spheres. In this section, I have placed the civil servants’ offerings within loosely categorised relational, cultural, policy or practice spheres. This exercise led to a multi-directional task that saw a shift in, exchange of, or dialogue about the narrative activity amongst the spheres. The result of this exercise has been that I have offered several possibilities for enhanced alignment between policy and practice- in essence, the relational realisation of policy and practice. By referring to the enhanced alignment of policy and practice as the ‘relational realisation of policy in practice I mean the following. Considering possibilities for the transformation and alignment of narrative alignment within and amongst the narrative spheres, using the narrative clips of civil servants, has meant that these activities have been infused with an interpersonal component. The interpersonal perspective of civil service life is, in fact, built on relationships and perspectives thereof.

From the findings on alignment, it seems that there are five main drivers in the alignment between policy and practice as a whole:

- 1) The notion of ‘strategic caring’ as a policy and professional development focus for managers. ‘Strategic caring’ is the phrase I use to encompass the idea that managers must begin to demonstrate a concern for people that goes beyond the topical. They might be trained on such interpersonal skills as interacting as a means of discerning unseen attributes and unspoken desires. For example, when I met with a member of my team to

discuss professional development objectives, I was very attuned to the subdued tone of the interaction. When I pressed my officer a bit as to her personal objectives, she revealed that she had an entirely different career direction in mind. I was surprised by the response and had to be prepared to accept the feedback. Ultimately, I knew that the conversation, up until that point, was not affirmative. What I believe took some courage and curiosity was to delve deeper into the interaction. From that point, we were able to translate those personal and somewhat privileged objectives, into a jointly constructed plan. This ‘caring’ skill is one that gives permission to, and rewards the people who are responsible for others, for exploring what’s ‘behind the person’. Consequently, the employer can better determine what’s going into the work.

- 2) Another alignment initiative that was identified was the organisation around, what I would call, ‘tactical mixed alliances’. Another way of framing the offerings on these activities would be “diversity enhancement with a vengeance”. In many ways, participants indicated that diversity is a powerful and important influence in organisations⁵². The organisational culture needs to be a place where people can demonstrate willingness to dialogue about experiences in a very open way. In this diverse culture, employees are encouraged to take risks and to let people bring their own brands of individualism into the organisation. A plan for creating tactical mixed alliances calls for the development of people who courageously speak up for marginalised group members because these group members are amongst their trusted colleagues and employees.
- 3) The creation of an ‘environment of concern’ was another major theme. The environment of concern was an organisational culture that demonstrated a value for honesty and open discussion in thoughts words and actions (see Appendix T for the outcomes of a civil service exercise on demonstrating a commitment to these sorts of values). In this culture of open discussion, interpersonal activities are guided by a philosophy that centralises real life experience. In a way, the notion of ‘communicating spirituality’ seems to fit within this premise. ‘Spirituality was offered as a common and life-giving force in civil servants’ lives.
- 4) Leadership issues were raised in almost all discussions on practice/policy alignment. What rose to the fore was the notion of ‘nuanced leadership’ as a foundation for policy. Civil servants called for leadership that draws everyone into the organisation’s vision. The process of sharing this vision is one where lines of reporting cross what were once rigid role structures; there is demoted hierarchy in communication: “people talk about an issue, pass it on and share ownership”.. Responsibility for change and communication is shared, as is accountability. As a consequence of having more people sharing a vision, the ability to explore talent is enhanced. Employees are encouraged to extend themselves

⁵² The American Psychological Association’s (APA) April 2005 edition of ‘Monitor on Psychology’ reports on a task force to bolster APA’s diversity (p. 15). The task force is examining diversity in membership, developing plans to make APA more welcoming to marginalised minorities and devising plans to reconcile any differences among diverse groups. Task force member Beverly Greene, PhD, indicates that the way psychologists do research depends on their values and perspectives. These values and perspectives can limit the research unless it is broadened with the experiences of other colleagues. Diversity is also credited with strengthening psychology education and practice by prompting new and improved methods for treating and teaching diverse populations (p. 15).

past the outlines of their job descriptions. These nuances of shifted and shared accountability might extend to the public.

- 5) The last major theme that developed from the data was that of the 'subjectivity of best practice'. From this perspective, understandings of best practice are shifted from standardised ones to personalised ones. Described as 'working from the heart', 'intensely feeling the mission' or 'accessing that deep concern for others' seems to be an experience that civil servants believe is accessible to everyone. Accessing a 'personal best' in practice might mean guiding people through a process of self-perception. Civil servants believe that each employer should be asked, "How can I be ready to 'deliver' a level of high quality?" "What would I need to know or understand to help me feel intensity about this work?" By responding to these self-reflexive questions, a personalised understanding of best practice is developed. Essentially, the subjectivity of best practice situates best practice as an understanding of practice success within an individual context.

These five themes encompass what I thought were significant offerings on transposing and aligning dialogues occurring in the four narrative spheres. There were two other commitments of this study to which I will now draw attention. I have demonstrated how civil service narrative activity, in its manifestations, reveals many themes and life-giving forces. By extension and particularly given the emphasis I have placed on identity as arising from civil service dialogues and discourse, was the potential disconnect in dealing with differences. These differences in identity could yield prejudice, discrimination and mistrust (race, gender, and elements of socio-economic class, primarily). On the other hand, these differences could prove the foundation of strong and supportive relationships.

Second, I indicated that I would reflect on the use of an appreciative inquiry approach to the research process. Therefore, the next portion of the discussion explores the sorts of experiences that reduce these disconnects, followed by a discussion on the consequences of, or offerings on the experience of the appreciative inquiry approach.

**SECTION II: CIVIL SERVANTS SENTIMENTS ON EXPERIENCE:
“WHAT IS GOING ON HERE, AS WE SEE IT”**

“The premise of the conversation I want to have with you is about the people in Bermuda, who come from a variety of places and backgrounds. They grew up here, or they have come here from somewhere else. They work here or have worked abroad; they have studied here or abroad. In that, when we try to think about how we can best work together, there are all of these diversities, races and cultures; all of these identities that we bring to the table. The way I might look at this is to ask you to think of a time that you met someone very different from you. And had an unusually good connection with that person, but they were very different. But for some reason, you just felt connected. I would like you to tell me the story of that time and when you met this person” (Interview protocol question- best experience with someone different, Oct. 2004).

I have placed significant emphasis on identity as arising from civil service dialogues and discourse. Particularly, I have placed identity as a source of misalignment for narrative activities that deal with differences of identity can yield prejudice, discrimination and mistrust. I suggested that the constructions of race, gender, and elements of socio-economic class were traditional identity considerations. However, I strongly suggested that from a constructionist approach, identity has an infinite number of manifestations. In this section, I wish to present some civil servants’ perspectives on identity.

The highly interactive approach to the interviewing process of this study yielded a variety of perspectives on how the narrative activities amongst the civil service could become more aligned. The process also invited perspectives on the way narrative activity is shaped by an infusion of life experiences. Narrative activities in organisations are also magnified by the sub-cultural contexts of participants’ lives.

Study participants’ narratives illustrated their perspectives on difference, diversity, race and how constructions of identity take meaning for civil servants. Their offerings generally suggest that the vehicle for better alignment amongst interpersonal relationships is through reflexive activity.

The dialogues presented here 1) describe the multiple conceptualisations of identity; 2) illustrate the consequences of situated and complex meanings of identity for civil service participants; and 3) represent the life-giving forces for reflexive activity amongst civil servants. Loosely categorised into themes, the findings highlight how constructions of identity can diverge and converge. Specifically, these constructions have consequences for the tone of narrative activity occurring within the relational networks and organisational culture.

4.5. Constructions of identity

The construction of identity by civil servants contributed to the notion that identity is complex, layered and situated in a sub-cultural context. However, the more traditional notions of race, class and gender were present as well.

4.5.1. Race

On ‘race’, participants commented on whether it is a factor in their work. They said, quite explicitly, that the relational issues they face are “*about race in their department*” (2). Yet there are challenges to the construction of race as simply conceptualised by colour. They say that

“with the racial and cultural diversity Bermuda sees now, our work is more of a challenge-linguistically and culturally... the stereotypes are not as consistent with past beliefs as once before”(2). Illustrating how the concept of race quickly becomes multi-faceted, a participant offers that race issues are not simply along colour lines, but are connected to social ties and affiliations:

*“I mean, how are you going to tell me individually, that I am going to have the same Project Management credentials as the two they just hired. **These are two black guys, don’t get me wrong- race don’t go straight to white you know. Race cuts into your friends- they have their little cliques.*** (12)

4.5.2. Class

On class, a wider spectrum of understandings becomes audible. Civil servants said that when they serve a customer, they feel like, *“there is a class difference between us and themselves”* (2)”. Supporting this expression of experience, a civil servant indicates that beliefs about class continue to permeate civil service work. She says, *“I get the impression that she comes from a more working class- more of a struggling class... she had to struggle through her life... I think she was brought up in a single parent family and she has a high school education... that’s all she has... she didn’t further her education, so that’s different”* (10). By the same token, there were offerings that reflected a belief that ‘class’ is linked to background and personal choices:

*“Well, maybe, again I did think like “white”, but than I don’t think of this as differences. It’s not a real difference to me. In terms of work, more, **in terms of social differences, yes, definitely.** Those who perhaps who come from a sort of background... because I think there were very different life choices”* (13).

4.5.3. Gender

Regarding ‘gender’, there were reflections that mirrored the dialogues on race. Civil servants indicated that gender diversity is a prominent influence in working relationships. Some said that, *“the lack of females in leadership roles and the racial tension may be based on perception, but is nonetheless very real for some of us”* (15). This reflection might mean that while ‘gender’ issues are every present for some, others may believe that the issue is more one of perception than a shared representation of the current situation.

4.5.4. Beyond Traditional Understandings of Identity

In addition to these more traditional notions of race, class and gender, participants described experiences involving very textured understandings of identity. One such understanding of race comes from a civil servant working in land development. He suggests that race has nothing to do with skin colour, but with social class. He believes that access to money transcends a construction of skin colour:

*“Races, to me, race, racism, to me are over-publicised. People are really into making money now. **If you want to talk about race, you talk about money versus no money. That is race.**” I don’t classify race as black and white no more. It is such a diverse opinion now on race. Like I said, I see now the biggest issue is money. Who has it and who don’t. Some people don’t want to hire people that have money; and visa versa: **It’s just not black and white.**”(12)*

4.5.4a. Race, class and more

The conceptualisation of race (above) blends the categorisation with a notion of class status correlated with money. This finding speaks to a generally accepted premise amongst research communities, which is that race cannot be understood without class and other considerations. Yet, this premise may not be as widely accepted amongst the community-at-large. For example, the civil servant who offered that his construction of race has little to do with colour describes an instance where race as constructed by colour, has a significant impact on his life:

“First of all let me tell you something. I am politically motivated; I have political interest. I solicit politicians for different projects. I am a young black male, so I find it very difficult to even think about voting for any other party [referring to a political party in Bermuda that is perceived as the black working class party] ...maybe that’s stereotyping but that’s just how I am. I will never do nothing against that; I will never forget what I am. But I don’t see where the Government could help many people. Other than what they have done. Put it this way, I know for a fact that I pay for babies that I never see; I pay for food that I will never eat; I pay for housing that I will never use; I pay for gas in cars that I will never drive. I know how far my dollars go. And that’s just in the blink of an eye.”(12)

The two, almost competing, conceptualisations of race suggest that the prominence of identities shift dependent on situations. Race as strictly defined by colour had little meaning for this civil servant in one context. But in another, where race has become a historical consideration, entrenched in the social, political and economic “world”, race becomes more critical. Particularly, the civil servant’s identity as a black male became very important to him when he spoke of his role as an aspiring leader of the country.

Supporting this notion, another civil serviceperson suggests that a construction of race goes beyond a definition of colour. He says that he can not always allocate a person’s position to the issue of race, but that there is something related to race that is functioning in the relationship:

“Yes, being a white guy has had an effect on my work and how it is here. Not so much my relationships at work but when I am dealing with outside contractors. I am very cognizant of that fact; then again it tends to go back to the political arena: Some people are awarded contracts to give them the opportunity to develop. And I have seen over the last years, quite a few of these contracts have gone to small Bermudian business people who, the majority of them are black. And when things don’t go right, we have a difficult time addressing this with our Minister. And it puts you sometimes in an uncomfortable situation. It is nothing as visible as a black and white issue, but you can sense it and know that there is something underlying it”. (9)

4.5.4b. Behaviour and Lifestyle as Constructions of Identity

The alternative or non-traditional conceptualisations of identity extended past definitions of race to behavior. Some civil servant constructs their experience with difference and diversity as personal qualities. Describing differences as behavioral or lifestyle in nature, civil servants offer:

“She is quite different from me. I work in a low key, fairly measured way and interaction in the work environment is fairly low key. To be frank, I think she has a significant future both socially and from a work perspective- incredibly bright and likely to think outside the box. She was willing to put energy into the situation. She loses some friends by her

outspokenness. She has no respect for authority but with her, it was one of the best working relationships I've ever had.”(8)

In this instance, an understanding of identity is described in terms of behavior or personality. The behavioral qualities described as “different” are contrasted with a description of the speaker’s qualities: low key and measured versus energetic and outspoken. Interestingly, the speaker, who is a male, selects a female colleague as a person he believes to be the most different from himself, but never raises gender as a critical difference.

A civil servant with 14 years of experience also moves away from the more traditional notions of difference and diversity, to construct difference as being more about culture than race:

“Majority of my friends are white. But that’s certainly not why they are my friends. They are just my friends. [When I think of my friends and how we became friends] I looked more at their lifestyle, their background, their ethics and morals, personalities, culture. Doesn’t matter if they may or may not be black. But that [race] is not the primary factor of how I look at it.”(10)

This civil servant is joined by another who says that social differences are most prevalent for him in constructing notions of difference:

*“I started thinking sort of life choices and then I couldn’t give any specific examples. More in terms of **social differences**, it goes to people with **less opportunities** than me- those that come to me in my office- that was very diverse.”(13)*

Again, as in the previous example, while speaking of a female colleague, this male civil servant has made no direct reference to gender. In terms of narrative activities that can be rooted in identity difference, it is of particular interest to see identity framed in non-traditional ways. It seems that while the stories that concern identity involve gender difference, that difference is simply not the one most typically recalled. For example, a civil servant who described himself as male, asked for an explanation of how the notion of diversity has been constructed by other study participants. I provided the participant with a response that considered notions of race, class and gender, as well as an invitation to create a more broader undefined conceptualisation. The civil servant responded that until I had offered an explanation, it never occurred to him “*to think about gender and perhaps we [men] do not have the experience of having to think about gender*”(9).

On the other hand, notions of the construction of gender are present for some. A civil servant, reflects on identity conceptualised difference in both the more common descriptions (gender) and with respect for the qualities of a woman he met whilst training overseas for work in the civil service:

“She was very strong-willed, a strong-willed individual and because of the type of person she was, she didn’t fit into her country- Muslim, Shariah, which tends to see women as possessions. There was a difference between her country philosophy and the types of things she thought about and that I had knowledge of. She was very courageous. I often wondered why she would want to go back to all of that”. “... She knew that she could be imprisoned. Her family had been imprisoned. She was willing to go through

that. Her experience was so different than mine. We are a smaller country; females do not have to go through that” (9).

In this passage, the study participant discusses an experience of gender that is highly influenced by culture and geographic origin. For this civil servant, the diversity he most quickly identifies, however, is of character. When he explores the connections he has had with this woman, what surfaces is not her gender, nor her culture. What becomes prevalent for him as a difference which he experienced as a positive, was her strong will.

4.6. Section Summary

Clearly, amidst the more traditional assumptions and experiences of race, class and gender, there are many other understandings of the construction of identity and difference. There appears to be almost ambiguity and flexibility in how identity is constructed by participants.

This fluid conceptualisation of identity decentralises the demographic characteristics of identity, replacing them with far more nuanced perspectives of character. This finding might mark the importance of filtering through the cultural categories of people as definitive markers of identity.

Regardless of the multiple manifestations of identity, one understanding is important to note. The multiple stories and understandings about difference give rise to as many possibilities for narrative activities in the organisation. Consequently, these exchanges, prefaced and constructed by perspectives on identity, have ultimate possibilities for the construction of new ones. The convergence and divergence of dialogic exchanges than becomes contingent on how each participant is constructing and experiencing both their own and others' identities.

For example, if a male is communicating from a perspective that views behavior as a primary identity, he may miss the nuances of a communication from a female colleague perhaps concerned about an experience where she is a sole female on a work team of men. Or a black woman, who constructs race as primary and defined strictly by colour, might misconstrue the message of another black colleague, who believes race to have a broader conceptualisation that includes economics and culture. Or, in the same situation, race might be of concern for one colleague because a situation arises where that identity needs to be at the forefront for the participant. The tone of the dialogue may change, as might the relational network and organisational culture, dependent on how and which identity surfaces at the time of the exchange.

4.7. Consequences of situated and complex meanings of identity: fluid centrality in the construction of identities

Readers may recall that consistent with a social constructionist paradigm, I asked participants to frame their perspectives of identity and diversity in ways that had meaning for them. What I found (as indicated above) was that the notion of identity had many faces for civil servants. Race, gender and class were present but unique in their formulations. The responses to the line of inquiry below underscore how complex the notion of identity can become:

“... but when I think of this context or framework and about what are some of the identities that get carried over into the workplace, I think about perspectives about race, perspectives about gender, and what I have been finding is that there are the

other diversities people put as prevalent. There have been other ways of thinking about difference, but usually they respond gender, race and class. And it is interesting in that the other diversities keep coming up more and more, and there may be differences between the way men and women think about diversity- or perhaps it is just a sign of the times of what people regard as really important to them (Researcher's response to a request for clarification on "diversity" and a query on what other participants talked about).

In response to this question, participants engaged me in varied descriptions about their identity-based experiences. Civil servants suggest that notions of identity are layered and complex. What may be central to identity and a feature in a relational exchange (i.e. ones identity as a woman, or as a person of colour) may have no significance to the person with whom each is relating. Consequently, if the notion of identity is complex, situated, influenced and amplified by participant experiences in relational networks, so too are the narrative possibilities on identity.

One example of how racial identity has been experienced in a newly-conceptualised way is provided by a civil servant. This civil servant, working in transportation, says that his experience in the civil service has been largely influenced by his race. However, his experience is one of a non-traditional perspective of privilege. Where it is assumed that because of his race, he has been privileged, he feels he has not. He tells a story of being a member of a group perceived as privileged, but not truly a recipient of the privileges:

"I feel I have to prove myself more in Government with a government job because I am white. Prime example was recently. I have been promoted, but you had to go through the whole interviewing process and all of that. And I was the recommended candidate and was offered the position. I took it. But you just have that feeling of, "Look, the white boy just got promoted again." "Here we go, another senior manager who is white." Which in our department, is not a problem, we have four senior managers- two white and two black. So it is not an issue really but quite often I wonder and feel that maybe people look at me and say, "Okay, maybe you got promoted because you're white." But I feel that I have had to work hard to prove myself to get to where I am. Well, let me clarify, that is in Government. Because I know outside, one of the first jobs I had, it was easier, because I was white. I think it was because the person who was in charge had that thinking."(10)

Another civil service officer tells a similar story of how his experience dispels or contradicts a perceptions of white privilege and says, "People see me as white male, and not needing the money but it's not true"(2). Typically, understandings of privilege, of white privilege, have been constructed as whites having advantages to opportunities primarily because of their colour. Yet, another perspective is offered here. This perspective (captioned above) is derived from a white male who has worked hard to get promoted and is not granted acknowledgement for his accomplishment because it is perceived to be unearned.

The description of this experience may have consequences for understandings of identity and enhanced reflexive and narrative activities. By this statement I mean that an understanding of one racial experience or another can no longer be confined to traditional notions of what it means to be 'white', i.e. privileged, or 'black', i.e. powerless or underprivileged. Enhancing understandings of race might require becoming more reflective and reflexive. Becoming more

reflective or reflexive may require engaging in spirited interpersonal exchanges. These interpersonal exchanges might acquire the look and feel of narratives of experience. These exchanges may occur in relational networks but have significant consequence for the organisational culture, policy and best practice.

Overall, the experiences offered by civil servants, on identity, speak to 1) how meanings of identity are co-created, dependent on the people who are in the relationship; and 2) that layered and fluid manifestations of identity mean that people and systems would have to respond to these identities in layered and fluid ways. In other words, the civil servant aspiring to become more reflexive in practice may have to account for this 'situatedness' of identity when relating to others and when attempting to make sense of organisational behavior.

4.7.1 Moving past identity constructions to reflexive and privileged organisational participation

Part of the work in aligning the dialogues and discourse of the narrative spheres involves interpersonal activity and growth. In the review of literature on how to promote transformative dialogue and experiences, one approach to generating transformative experiences was to increase the opportunities for reflexive practice. When we consider the findings from a thematic perspective on 'reflexiveness', several perspectives are envisioned.

These perspectives combine references to work-life situations where differences in identity may have been a factor in the relationship. They also credit participants who were trying bridge those differences. Civil servants suggest that bridging differences requires reflexive activity that encourages what might be termed as 'privileged invitations for deeper connectivity'.

4.7.1a. Transcending difference.

One example of how to engage in reflexive activity is offered. A civil servant, who identifies herself as white, describes a relationship she had with a black woman. Although their differences in racial identity are in the forefront of their interactions, the civil servant suggests that what gave the relationship meaning for her, was finding a way to move past the differences. Moving past the differences meant having an exchange about each person's experience of identity.

"How are we different? Predominantly when she first met me, she was very shut down. So again it was that one-on-one, I could reach her; like crossing the divide. Again, she brought to the table, "Well you're white, what would you know? I cannot work here. My own community is blocking me out." And I say, "Well, that doesn't just happen to you girlfriend, let me tell you what I've just been through." By the sharing my story and my experiences, it stopped it being about her being a black woman, about it being about not being a part of the power scene, about it being about her not being good enough and that her earning opportunities are less than"(15).

By sharing their stories, the civil servants found ways to connect with each other in a way that brought new meanings of experience for both of them. In doing so, they may have also created a new way of relating to each other and for outlining a strategy for interpersonal reflexivity in organisational practice. This form of reflective interaction, of sharing stories of experience, may also change the tone of the narratives occurring in their relational networks.

Echoing this sentiment of seeking to transcend differences in identity as a means of strengthening relational networks, a longstanding civil servant in Finance says that he too became quite good friends with someone of a different race. He felt he could confide with this person, perhaps even “*to a greater extent*” than either did with other people. He offers that the life-giving sentiment of his experience with this person of another race was that “*even in our differences, we had something in common*” (11). Critical to the development of the connection, he says, was that they developed a friendship and “*represented acceptance*” to each other. “*He had the ability to transcend his racial difference..., and I think I was a part of that in my own small way*” (11).

Similarly, says another civil servant working in public protection, “*what I did carry with me was whether I liked that person or didn’t like that person- I may remember whether they were male or female, but I won’t remember whether they were black or white*”(13). The suggestion inherent to these remarks is that regardless of the identity that surface in a relationship, acceptance of the person is at the core of what brings life to relational elements of civil service life.

The theme of civil servants understanding and perceiving racial differences (as above) is quite present throughout the data. Equally as present seem the efforts made by civil servants to know more about the individual and their backgrounds, rather than their physical representations. It seems that participants are suggesting that while the race, gender and class identities may be present, their significance surfaces at different times. These identities may be highly aligned with other non-physical qualities.

4.7.1b. Connectivity and reflexiveness.

Threads of ‘connectivity’ and reflexivity are woven into parts of other civil servants’ stories. A civil servant describes how her approach to working with clients has involved a process of relationship-building, which is forthright and committed in tone.

*“Getting there- to a place where you can work together, sometimes it’s quite a, well, **it is, a lot of conversations and meetings**, where criticisms are being leveled at things not happening quickly enough et cetera, but I think it’s what I mentioned in one case that we didn’t talk about and it’s the point at which **there is a sense of trust and respect being built between us**. Yes, I think it’s at the point normally where they kind of leave things in my hands and trust that I will move it on, and we can finally begin to work together”* (13).

The civil servant implies that reflexive activity is something that is required on her part to make the relationship work. It seems that she speaks to an investment in the person, of which the commitment to a process is critical.

In a similar way, other civil servants suggest that committing to a process of offering a client-centered service is aspiring to “*reflect that we are open-minded and can get personal*”(2). To the speaker, in this instance, becoming open-minded and more personal (reflective and reflexive) meant leaving an interaction with “*just a little more knowledge, a better understanding of others and a good outlook on life*” (2).

If a primary element of reflexive activity is around getting personal and building trust, as participants suggests, than there are also allowances for the more intimate elements of interpersonal behavior to flourish. Outlining a relational wish and reflecting on how her best interpersonal interactions have developed, a civil servant says:

“You just strike a common cord and we can become friends- no that’s not the right word, not friends- we can begin to work together. And they are coming to me for help and it feels good when I can begin to offer them some assistance” (13). ... “well, I think I try to be patient and not you know, it would be all too easy in some of these cases, you know, to send them away, and to say, stop pestering me but to try as far as possible to give each person the time that I feel they deserve- until we get to a point where they are willing to leave that with me and trust me with it. Good?” (13).

Reflexivity in civil service practice also seems to mean that there is honesty and transparency in the exchange. *“I don’t know if you’re a scientist, but if a duck quacks, it might just be a duck” (12)*, says one study participant, who is earnest in his wish for direct communication. This wish is explicit here and in the following narration:

“I wish for transparency in the “business” processes of [this organisation] - in recruitment, hiring, relational and professional processes at the upper levels”. “More transparency might dispel the perception of the “old boy”, cronyism and protectionism networks in appointments and how the system works which seems to prevail over the perception of “white racism”. “Leaders and members must demonstrate a willingness to dialogue about how racism is experienced or perceived in its very open way, in the church community”. “Members of our group will need to recommit to relationships of trust and goodwill” (1).

Trust, good will, honesty and open communication were consistently voiced as outcomes of reflexive activities. For example, a group of civil servants wished for:

“people to be more willing to listen so that we can have honest communication going both ways ... when I approach a team member because I am concerned about how they have handled a situation, I want to be able to say, “you are right, but you are wrong” and that they can hear that and not be hurt, angry or offended”.... “[we need to] communicate more as colleagues- top down and bottom up”... “[if someone has] concerns and feelings, [than they should be able to] go to whomever- in confidence and get those feelings out and get it resolved- within department”... “don’t stay annoyed”... “Attitudes affect the job- we need each other's back-up” (2).

4.7.1c. A spirit of acceptance.

The wish for open, transparent communication was paired with a wish that civil servants would approach each other with a spirit of acceptance and openness acquired through some process of reflective and reflexive activity. It might be helpful to recall that reflective and reflexive activity, in simplistic form, meant stepping back from a situation, reflecting on one’s perspective, and grappling with how that perspective fits with others. Below, are several examples of how civil servants envisaged and experienced a good exchange in the sphere of relational networks.

- 1) *“My daughter goes to a school where there are a lot of Black Bermudians. It is essentially a black Bermudian school. For her, I have come to see her language change- she has black friends. I have come to see my daughter as a Bermudian “girlfriend”. I think of it as funny. Anyways, I had a work colleague and we were discussing our children and I told her about how my daughter had become and we talked about the differences in culture. “But it was in the spirit of observation- no pros or cons.”(Pilot interview)*
- 2) *“I was telling her about how polite the youngsters are. 10 kids say good afternoon to me and then ask me for a lift home. We actually enjoyed the differences and for once, I didn’t feel like a white expat [foreign worker], which I am socially and at work. There was an authenticity and an openness” (Pilot interview).*
- 3) *“My old boss, I still remember him from 13 years ago”. “He was really nice to work with. I felt I was part of a team. He was from a different country, but he was fun loving and I never got the impression that he was prejudiced.”...“Sometime I look to see if I get a vibe from a person of a different color. I am always kind of tentative. When I was growing up, I didn’t know many people. Deep down, I still look for it whenever I meet them. I didn’t see that in this man. He took me at face value. I took them as not seeing color, or if they did, it didn’t matter. With others, I felt there was a barrier and it was that they noticed a difference. I don’t think they are prejudiced, I think that they just knew there was a difference. I don’t know. But people like my supervisor, obviously he knew there was difference, but it just didn’t matter. Perhaps it was personality- he was outgoing. Like alcohol, it seems like it breaks down everyone’s defenses. That’s how he worked; he broke down defenses. To a large a degree, it depends on personality, people have a certain personality. Open. Open enough to appreciate that everyone is different and not be bothered or defensive by the differences” (5).*
- 4) *“Everyday, something is going to happen to tick you off, but I want to let go of the little things”. “Take people one-on-one, each day, everyday- yes, they will disrespect us sometimes, but it is not everyone or all the time”. “Those trainees whom come out of the training are more prepared for what it is really like to do the job”. ‘Perhaps we could include more Officer’s personal stories and experiences in the orientation phase of training’. [In this way, we might] “all recognise the humanity in each other and in the people we serve” (2).*

These four interview excerpts typify participants’ suggestions for enhancing the tone of relational interactions in the civil service. They suggest that a shift in narrative activities will require a high degree of openness and acceptance, a suspension of judgment on others experiences and practice in accepting people at face value. They indicate that they believe in the possibility of having some form of transformative dialogue occurring amongst their networks. They have lived these experiences and can attest to how new understandings were created for themselves, at those times.

4.7.1d. Extending hope, taking risks and becoming empathetic.

In the following excerpts, there are two main wishes for enhanced relational networks and the culture of the civil service as an organisation. The first involves a hope that a person who is placed in a position of authority will use that authority to make a decision. The second, linked to the first, is for persons in positions of power to recall or imagine what it must be like to experience hope, discouragement, and anxiety when it comes to professional or workforce aspirations. The civil servants express a wish to for people with decision-making powers to

make decisions. At the same time, there is a wish that some civil servants would empathise with the perceptions and experiences of job candidates. An interview participant offers:

“I had a presentation to present but I never got a chance to present it. I don’t know what made me show up in a suit with a briefcase with all of my credentials... But it takes me out of my element. I would rather go to the meeting like this (dressed in comfortable clothing), then you don’t have to worry about throwing shit on my clothes. I am comfortable this way. I know the formal way; I know the formal procedure. And most of the time we are taught to take it. But to me it just dresses you up to throw you down. That is a main factor of black guys going to get jobs. Because number one, I don’t like people that wear pants all down by their knees and stuff like that there. But who is to say how one should wear their pants. When guys go into an interview, they have to change their clothes. This is a psychological situation now. You are dealing with somebody’s feelings. And when somebody doesn’t get a job, that’s like... it crushes them...”

*It doesn’t do it to me [crush me] because I am not getting the job for financial gain. But you have to look at it as if someone was doing it for financial gain, and they need- I mean these people are ironing their clothes [in anticipation and preparation]. People don’t think like that, of someone ironing their clothes. Little small things like that. **The little small issues like that mess people right up.** I have seen guys go get wrung right out after a job interview. You know why, because they made them dress up- for nothing.*

*“What happens to those people that rely on these Human Resource people **to be non-biased and to be as fair as possible**? Those are the ones that are sitting on the wall (reference to young males who are not working and hanging around on the streets). I told a woman once that she was responsible for it and walked out of her office. She was in the Human Resources at ----- . I don’t know if she is still there. And I told her straight to her face. I said, “Lady, you don’t know me. The worst thing you could have done was done what you was doing.” She even offered that I speak to the president at -----, because I am telling her, I said, “Look. **Your job title is Human Resource Manager.** Who do you keep telling me you need to refer to? Tell me? Tell me you have a fancy name but you cannot make a decision?” That’s useless. [The problem with] her answer was that somebody, I mean you are sitting up here and your job title is Human Resource Manager and you can’t make a decision. You keep telling me that you have to refer to this or that. I am here with my credentials, applying for a job that met the credentials. (12)*

Two participants, one senior management civil servant, the other at a technical professional level add to the above-captioned notion of risk-taking in decision-making. Revealing, again, that risk-taking in the service is complex, one speaks from a perspective of taking risks, the other wishing that people in decision-making positions would take more risks on unexplored human talent:

*“I can afford to take risks to try to get things done, which aren’t done. **I value the opportunity that I can afford to take risks.** I can do it with some success because other people would have never taken those risks... just the work would never have been done or it might have been done but not for years to come because what I do is to initiate things and to take things forward.”(8). “...Whereas generally, the culture is to wait until there is a problem or until a Minister asks you to do something and then you do it. **Not to say, ‘we should do this’.** So I think, unfortunately, I can do that- not because of any ability I have—because the situation I am in—but because I was going to an environment where I could take risks”(8); and*

*“During the interview for the same Project Manager’s job, I got my boss to talk. He talked himself right in a hole. My next question after he was talking was, “What, the job is already filled? What am I doing here?” “That’s how much I let him talk. This is an interview and he has already hired somebody; he’s told me in the interview. But that’s just what they choose to do. **You’ve been in my shoes- bring me in, pick me up and help me stay there**” (12).*

These statements imply that the opportunity to take risks and to exercise that opportunity is a position that is valued. The implications, not only for the relational sphere of narrative activities, but of the three others, is that the organisation must invite its civil servants to trust in their experiences, make and take decisions based on those experiences. The organisation, as well, it seems would have to invite its employees to take ‘chances’ on members of the community; much in the way that the civil servant believes was done in the past.

4.7.1e. Communicating mission-related activities.

The final way I wish to discuss how civil servants envision moving past constructions of identity to more reflexive activities, is in the communication of mission-related activities. A civil servant offers that her best experience of a combination of relational, organisational, policy and best practice factors was with a supervisor:

“When I was working [in that Department], we would meet every Monday. He would explain how the department was doing. For some reason, that has always stuck with me. He gave us the greater picture. “See what we are doing and this is what has happened”. He was teambuilding, even back then, giving us a goal to work towards.”(5)

The civil servant, speaking of her work experience, outlines both a reflexive strategy for management, a best practice offering, a policy, and an objective for interpersonal connectivity. She suggests that managers reflect upon the organisation’s mission in a way that prepares them to communicate it clearly to their teams. She also suggests that the mission be communicated quite frequently, so that teams can build upon the mission and make meaning of it for themselves. The reference to team building seems to speak to a wish for connectedness amongst organisational participants.

4.8. Section Summary

If we consider the suggestions of the study participants on how they envisage reflective and best practice, there are several main themes. The first involves exploring past differences to the extent that there is improved understanding of other’s perspectives and experiences. Participants spoke of transcending racial differences and crossing a divide around differences in culture and experience.

A second theme speaks to finding ways to connect that build on common experiences. The reflexive activity would involve approaching others in the spirit of enjoying the differences they bring to the relationship. Civil servants also suggest that reflexive practice involves approaching colleagues with an attitude of open communication and respect. In this way, trust develops. Finally, amidst trust-based relationships, participants can appreciate each other’s expertise and differences. They can include each other in the development of a shared vision and take more risks, as a matter of practice.

I also heard very candid stories of experience and of privileged relational interactions. Participants took risks in expressing displeasure and hopes for leadership and management. Critical is that these wishes help to identify the connection between what is experienced, and that to which is aspired.

Generally, it seems that the civil servants involved in this process of inquiry very much envision a generative relational future. They spoke of wanting to be included in fulfilling the mission, but needing to know their specific roles in making that happen. They spoke of aspiring to meet both the business needs and spiritual needs of their service communities. In their narratives of aspiration, I heard whispers of concern for ensuring that the unique identities of the “person” do not get lost in the privileged and professional lives of experience.

4.9. Offerings on the Inquiry Process: Appreciative Inquiry Versus More Traditional Methods of Research

“... This question is on your best personal experiences. I would like you to think about a specific period in your life”. “A story in your life when this question applied”. “And I want you to tell it to me in the format of a story, with a beginning, middle and end, as opposed to just answering a question, which you might be prone to do”. “I want you to think about your best personal experience, someone with a different culture, background, life experience- however, you would define them as different, and think of that time when you had a relationship with this person or a good connection and I would like you to tell me about that time”

(Excerpt from researcher’s introduction to the inquiry process).

I began this inquiry with questions about the alignment of civil service narratives on policy and practice. I was also curious about how an appreciative and social constructionist approach to research varies from more traditional methods. This section describes the study participants’ offerings on their experience of the AI-based training process. I make several observations, drawing from my perspective as researcher. I also reflect on comments made by participants during the data collection processes.

4.9.1. Accessing the ‘Best’ of Experiences and Positive Reframing

My first observation comes out of the progression of my work as I gathered the data in their many forms. My first participants were a group of Officers, who at the request of their Department Head, participated in a training session.

Working within strict time limits, and with a quasi-voluntary group, I needed to find a way to adapt the inquiry process. I did a brief introduction of the social constructionist premises for appreciative inquiry. I placed emphasis on the poetic and positivist principles. I then engaged the group in a conversation.

The conversation was framed by the inquiry questions (see Appendix L: Facilitated dialogue proposal and feedback). However, without adequate time to spend briefing the group on AI, the participants’ were more likely to go into a downwards spiral of narrative. What I found happened was that the participants dialogued but were less likely to narrate. Their dialogues became swift exchanges of experiences where they felt disrespected or treated badly because of a difference.

This phenomenon becomes particularly evident in Section 2 of the findings (following), where I describe challenges to diverse working relationships and the “stories within the stories”. For example, one participant offers:

“We are professionals. We are informed, and we are even committed. But sometimes we are coping with, and pushing down so many feelings of anger. I feel like I have been disregarded” (3); or

“Some visitors are surprised to be received and questioned by Black people in authority and respond with disdain, contempt or challenging behaviors”. “[They] see the uniform, see the colour of the skin and feel offended [to be questioned by me]... “Whites can’t deal with black authority.”(2)

Not having had adequate time to process the appreciative approach with participants meant that I spent more time encouraging (urging) them to seek the positive cores of their narratives. This observation affirms the positive and progressive potential of AI. As I increasingly worked with the concepts of AI, I could hear the negative elements of participants' dialogues or narratives- and we had to work so much harder to explore the best experiences of the participants' past and a powerful future.

4.9.2 Promoting Narrative Versus Dialogue

Secondly, I make an observation with regard to the power of "storying" an experience. If we look back on the offerings presented in the previous two sections, the most engaging to me are those where a participant told the story of their experience. Where a participant seemed to simply respond to a question, the data are less rich in detail. It is more difficult to find the life-giving forces of the interactions and perspectives they describe. In the latter instance, I have had to engage in an additional and more interactive role when I proceeded to 'analyse' the text. This process has involved trying to envisioning what the participant aimed to express, but may have left unstated.

4.9.3 AI Changes Everything...?

Thirdly, and on a personally reflective note, I speak to adopting an appreciative approach as a whole. In the prologue and background of this study, I describe my experiences as a student and a researcher: moving from schools of feminist thought to social constructionism.

This movement has followed through to my practice orientation over time. I have found that taking on appreciative inquiry in this study has had implications for my present work. It has changed the way I approach training and even the way in which I prepare documents for my colleagues and the public. I refer to Box 21, the content of which is similar to that of Box 20 (Chapter 3). This presentation illustrates how the tone of communication can incorporate an appreciative inquiry perspective- even in written form).

Box 21

Communications illustrating the influence of appreciative inquiry and an appreciative tone

18th August 2004

Law Enforcement Body Bermuda
Hamilton Hill
XX Front Street
Hamilton, HM 50

Attention: Director

Dear Madam,

Thank you for granting us the opportunity to work with your teams at the Airport. They were engaging, encouraging, reflective, contemplative, humorous and frank. And we absolutely loved what they had to say and how much they had to say. The authenticity in sharing, and within these shared experiences, is quite valuable. Your team was generous with us and we most appreciated working with them.

As part of our commitment to each participant, we summarised some of their highlights and comments of both groups. No one participant is attributed any specific remarks, but each comment had its supporters, detractors and neutralists.

I enclose the feedback package (attached) for your information and I thank you again for encouraging these dialogues to happen.

I would appreciate if you could forward these session feedback forms to each participant and ask them to complete them and return them to us. This feedback will let us know how and what we can do better or differently in future sessions.

Regards,

Myra Virgil

cc. Training Officer



The communication in Box 21 illustrates how an appreciative message can be infused into almost every aspect of organisational practice. In the example, the use of words such as “engaging”, “encouraging” and “reflecting” attempt to express hope, community and appreciation.

I have become very much aware of the use of language and how what I read as authoritative or negative or discouraging impacts how I respond. I consider how my interventions can contribute to a downward and negative spiral of communication. I have also found that having committed to listening for life-giving forces, and participating in a discourse that respects and honours participants, I have engaged upon a journey for which there is no turning back. Now, in my everyday life, I find myself listening for, reacting to and attempting to re-construct stories that I hear, with a view towards seeking their best elements.

Lastly, several participants offered reflections on participating in the process. They commented on how the questions were asked and how the process made them feel. For me, their comments represented the consequences of, or offerings on the experience of an appreciative inquiry approaches. In one interview, a participant asked for more detail about social constructionism and the idea of shared-meaning making. In my response, I suggested that the interview process may be viewed as a way of co-creating meaning. As such, I might actually have a dialogue with him during our time. This was his response, and that of another participant, on this theme:

“You mean I might find it a bit unnerving or that some people might find it unnerving to have you actually talk.” “Well what it does for me is it makes it feel better than a survey- there is more interaction with the questioning.”(8)

“I am enjoying [this process]. I had forgotten it [the story]. I had lost respect for someone and now, as I am thinking of it, I am now remembering fondly and it has stuck with me.”(5)

And in these next excerpts, a participant and I discuss the interview process. At its conclusion, he expresses how his experience with it has been different from other times he has been interviewed.

“Do the questions matter?” “Yes, it matters very much as to how they are asked. Because, for example, I could have just said to you, tell me how a policy works”? “That is how I originally started this research and I wasn’t getting the type of rich responses you’ve given me here.” “And I think that is because asking about the policy does not tell us anything about how people in their relationships with each other give the policy meaning”.(Researcher’s response to query of Participant #8)

“So I’m finding the difference is in the way you ask the questions as well as the types of questions you are asking- it’s really different for me.”(8)

“Yes, and because social constructionist theory underpins the appreciative inquiry, it stresses how important relationships and dialogue are, as opposed to just the planning and processes- people talk about what they are doing and how they are doing it- that is what makes it real”.(Researcher’s response to query from participant #8)

In response to a participant's question on what this inquiry was about and what the process would be like, I responded in the following way. I think the response frames the previous sections' outcomes and identifies the way forward into analysis.

"So, my study looks at four layers of interaction and I am really trying to explore what is there between what we say we do and what we do and what is happening between those two dialogues or narratives." "I am talking about what best practice objectives are and what are policy ideals as one piece". "This might be the mission statement and how people best carry it out, for example". "And then we consider the relational pieces and what can undermine the policy and the best practice objectives". These can be alternative stories that people tell in their personal relationships with each other and in their working relationships in the agency, with its own culture". "What I aim to present, is that we don't hear enough of that relational element in policy and that is why people don't buy into them, understand them or aspire to them". "They policies and objectives are there on paper, but what might we do to reach them in ways that people believe are meaningful?"(Excerpt from researcher's explanation on privileged narrative)

I invite readers to explore the implications of these civil service narratives in Chapter 5, which presents an analysis of these findings.

4.10. Chapter Summary

This Chapter delineated the data into three main categories: 1) the alignment of civil service narrative activities; 2) sentiments of experience on the organisational culture as a whole; and 3) perspectives on the use and applications of appreciative inquiry for conducting research.

The data on the alignment of policy and practice were designated into the discourse/narrative spheres described throughout this paper. The data were also organised thematically. The findings in this area indicated that policy and practice can be aligned in several ways.

Of the many ways alignment is envisioned, participants' suggested that the spheres are enhanced when civil servants return to very basic levels of communication and relationship building. These activities are at their best when people in an organisation become willing to explore their colleagues' and customers' experiences. Further, the relationship building process may be enhanced through the acknowledgement of perceptions in respectful and honest ways as demonstrated by giving people the time they deserve and having a concern for people that goes beyond the topical.

An enhanced relational-cultural link is also dictated by policy that incorporates a dialogue that seeks the unseen attributes of employees. The alignment in these spheres is one where policy becomes quite personal as a skill for bringing out unspoken aspirations is culled. As such, training activities incorporate practice experience; roles and hierarchies are redefined and flexible; and individuals' contributions are honored. The organisational participants are working straight from the heart because they feel they have a stake in the organisation's success.

The data on how identity is constructed by study participants indicate that race, gender and socio-economics are primary considerations in how organisational participants experience the workplace. The experiences were 'tinged' by these identity considerations. However, racial identity was blurred by socio-economic factors. Racial identity was also reframed with a new

perspective on the effects of 'privilege'. Uniquely, identity was constructed as behavior, lifestyle and value differences.

Study participants suggested that moving past rigid or traditional identity constructions was both necessary and possible, if the civil service is to better align policy with practice. The means of transcending "difference" is through reflexive activity. Reflexive activities were described as those that encouraged an exchange in life stories. Reflexive activities were also described as those which promoted open-mindedness, direct communication and a spirit of acceptance. Reflective practitioners are apparently those that extend hope, take risks and express empathy.

Finally, I presented both participant's feedback and my perceptions on the influence of approaching this study with methods adapted from appreciative inquiry. I suggested that the difference between AI methods and those of more traditional interview and training approaches become quite apparent in the process. I substantiated that the AI approach lends itself to the recall and envisioning of positive experiences, over negative. The AI focus promoted the production of narrative. In its absence, participants tended towards discussions and exchanges that had fewer story-telling features. Lastly, beginning to use AI, even partially, has consequences for many other areas of work.

CHAPTER V (DISCUSSION): ALIGNING PRIVILEGED AND PROFESSIONAL DIALOGUES

PART I: THE ALIGNMENT OF POLICY AND PRACTICE AMONGST THE FOUR NARRATIVE SPHERES

Throughout this inquiry, I have been referring to four interacting spheres of discourse: relational networks; organisational culture; policy development and application; and best practice. The spheres have been operationalised as:

- 1) the interpersonal mediums through which people may speak in privileged ways on how policy impacts them;
- 2) the dynamics of practice and behavior influenced by relational interactions;
- 3) policy implementation activities such as the workplace objectives as stated by the organisational missions and procedures; and
- 4) the best practice activities which include the pragmatics of policy, often influenced by a set of international standards.

Within any one of these contexts, I have suggested that forms of communication (narrative activities ranging from dialogues to discourse to full narrative) can be privileged or professional, dependent on their offer at various levels of public consumption.

I have also submitted that while exploring the privileged and professional ‘storying’ on civil service, the inquiry has been focused on the possibilities for enhanced organisational behavior by way of better aligning the narrative activities of policy and practice. Better aligning policy and practice meant transposing portions of dialogue from one sphere to others. Better aligning policy and practice meant fostering a complex and deepened understanding of the essence of people. It meant realising the full potential for synergies of participants’ dialogues, their narratives of identity and of relationships, within the operating structures of an organisation.

The landscape of the narratives is complex. Whilst no line of narrative lends itself to one neat category, some narrative themes emerged. What follows is a discussion on how privileged narrative activities can be aligned with the professional statements of organisational policy and practice. Terms such as multi-directional alignment, synergy, and fusion are compatible with this discussion. Specifically, areas for alignment and the movement of dialogue from one sphere of discourse to another are discussed; the participant-envisioned possibilities for narrative transformation and alignment are now presented.

5.1. Aligning narrative activities between relational networks & the organisational culture of the Civil Service

Consistent with the notion that the discourses of each sphere influence each other, I present the findings represented by their areas for potential influence. I begin with how narratives in the relational network and organisational culture have implications for each other.

5.1.1. Incorporating curiosity into practice and enhancing the nature of communication

Of and within relationships, participants' suggested that people working towards an enhanced organisational culture generally incorporates a curiosity about privileged experiences into their interactions. Becoming curious about others and moving from narrative activities typically located in a relational network to an organisational culture, meant that participants sought each others strengths and encouraged colleagues before judging them. Participants suggested that 'expanding curiosity' from the personal to the professional meant learning how to find and describe the personal qualities they value in themselves, and in other people. The specifics of this finding are as follows.

First, participants described what seemed to be a process of building alliances in organisational culture. They suggested that enhancing 'culture' requires a relational shift of understanding, acceptance and increased communication. This relational shift appears to be driven by challenges to perceptions, trust-building activities, and honesty and forthrightness in communications. At a practical level, the relational shift may driven by training and team building activities that explore identity and difference, and encourage open and forthright communication.

From this perspective, public services and businesses could consider adaptations to their business functions such as team activities (morale and relationship building, staff meetings); supervision (giving feedback); decision-making (policy development, influencing others), and career development (supervision, mentoring, training). Almost all activities in these realms could incorporate new means of asking privileged questions or making offerings that speak to the core of the issues. In my methodology, for example, I describe a dialogic training workshop where the facilitator collaborates with a training participant representative to craft an introduction to the session. The introduction speaks to the very heart of the issues that brought about the training request. This brief but concise introduction quickly draws people into the discussion at its very onset, for it has meaning for them.

Incorporating these new meanings into practice, and drawing a spirit of curiosity, openness and forthrightness into a room, may require little effort but good intentions. I have had an opportunity to experience a 'questions without answers' exercise (described and referenced in footnote 54) this exercise as recently practiced within my present position. My Director, who had just recently returned from a training experience, commenced a management meeting by asking if there was anything on people's minds that they would like to put on the table. She went on to say that if team members had preoccupations unrelated to the tasks at hand, it was unlikely that they would be able to be 'present' at the meeting. By creating a space where team members could explore a challenge or offer a privileged experience, the meeting took on a different tone. The possibility for honest communication and openness was made available. Regardless of whether individuals chose to reveal a story of privilege, the mere opportunity to do so was presented.

There are further applications for revising business functions in the realm of training. In my most recent experience where I conducted a training program on race relations, I chose to incorporate aspects of appreciative inquiry. Rather than begin with an explanation of the terms and a description of the experiences most typically used, I first asked about the training

participants' experiences with people of different races. I asked them to tell each other of their experiences, directly and from their personal perspectives. The result was that unlike previous training experiences, I saw a shift in the exchanges. The shift was from responses and interactions that were fairly generalised, politically correct and topical responses, to those that were rich in detail, quite privileged and quite revealing.

One participant in particular made two indicative comments. First, he indicated that not only had no one ever asked about his experience as a white person in similar trainings. Second, had he not heard a first-hand perspective of discrimination on the basis of racial identity from one of his black colleagues, he might have continued to believe that a group of his black team mates were making complaints about nothing. By asking, not only what was the best of an experience (an AI approach) but by also using the experience of the person to develop the training experience, we were able to shift the tone of the conversation at a relational level, and possibly the interactions occurring within the organisation's culture as a whole.

5.1.2. Aspiring to loyalty and commitment

Extending the applications of relationship building to a wide range of organisational activity has a further implication. The findings suggest that if attention is paid to relationship-building in multiple "business" contexts, organisational participants may be driven by a dictate of loyalty and commitment stronger than a stereotyped perspective of a cultural norm. The importance of acknowledging these sorts of interpersonal dynamics was reinforced repeatedly as a means of carrying relational elements such as trust, honesty and respect into the agency's culture. Consequently, a changed and improved organisational culture was envisioned.

5.1.3. Returning to basic levels of communication and relationship-building

The data indicated that to align policy with practice, civil servants need to return to very basic levels of communication and relationship-building. This meant encouraging and setting the stage for organisational participants to have many conversations, and leveling frank observations at each other. This approach, a "take people as they are" attitude, seems to reflect a belief that both the relational and organisational culture have the potential to become more critically aligned when civil servants respond to each other and their customers with more openness. This 'openness' also indicates a willingness to accept the many representations they will bring to the relationship.

5.1.4. Promoting and developing a capacity for reflexive practice

Along similar lines of working towards shifting understanding within the relational network to promote change in the organisational culture, the data suggest that such understanding and acceptance begins with a reflection of the self.

Readers may recall that the alignment of discourse was an activity that was linked with aspiring for transformative exchanges amongst the discourse spheres. This process was proposed to be imbedded in reflexive and reflective activities. Reflexivity and self-reflectiveness were described as a means by which organisational participants begin to unravel the multiple meanings of identities, their relationships to other identities, and to other people. The reflexive activities are continual attempts to place one's premises into question and to listen to alternative

framings of reality in order to grapple with the potentially different outcomes arising out of different points of view.

The concept of reflexivity underscored the importance of entering into a dialogue in order to clarify what might lead to improvements in relationships, in the experience of the organisational culture, in the application, communication and development of policy and in practice. The findings indicated that the term ‘improvement’, for example, may take many meanings. Lastly, organisational participants who are successful in being reflexive are more likely and able to coordinate their experiences and activities on a platform of meaningful conversations. Meaningful conversations are patterns of interchange involving active listening and paraphrasing to demonstrate understanding. Highly affiliated with these increasingly coordinated actions and discourse, is the process of moving towards a jointly satisfactory mutual language.

Through their highly engaged interactions, it seems that civil service participants felt there is the potential for heightened recognition that even amongst considerable racial, cultural, language differences, civil servants have much in common. Making reference to moments of reflexivity encouraged by the relational interaction, some study participants indicated that the interaction increased a capacity to engage in narrative activities that changed a perspective. As a consequence, the shift had implications for how they contribute to elements of the organisational culture and began to communicate in a mutually satisfactory way.

According to participants in this study, the potential for reflexive practice was built upon a basic premise of valuing people. The findings indicate that if the civil service truly strives for narrative alignment, the qualities of trustworthiness and honesty must be repositioned and valued. This latter sentiment again gives way to a notion of enhanced communication as a means to better alignment between the spheres of discourse. For example, the notion of honesty becoming more prominent in the discourse of the organisation’s culture continued to be present.

Promoting and developing the capacity for reflexive practice was found to be an exercise in learning to be honest with oneself about one’s role in ensuring good relations with others. Honesty and straightforward communication meant that what would typically be said in a privileged network, i.e. “I want to be able to say, “you are right, but you are wrong” would be both: 1) combined with a wish that a fellow civil servant would be able to hear the feedback in the way it was intended; and 2) would find its way into the professional realms of narrative activity. It would appear that such direct and honest communication, instead of being viewed as unprofessional or unrealistic to expect in professional circles, is appreciated.

With regard to alignment between relational and organisational practices, the topic of leadership and reflexiveness is introduced by participants. The data indicate that leaders have to be prepared to communicate their experiences to young people and create opportunities for them to learn. The reflexive process that this activity requires of leaders is to acknowledge that it will take both strength and will to do so. Accordingly, and as the findings indicate, leaders in their many manifestations must begin to demonstrate a willingness to dialogue about how conceptions of identity emerge, are experienced or perceived. The reason why this sort of reflexive activity would be critical is because constructions of identity were determined to be sites of difference that could yield prejudice, discrimination and miscommunication. Ultimately, being closed to

issues of identity contributes to the very disconnection and misalignment we would aim to address.

The data suggest that to align the discourse of organisational culture with that occurring amongst relational networks, civil servants' awareness of each other, and each other's perspectives, must be heightened through reflexive activities.

5.1.5. Allowing potential to flourish by acknowledging good work

Shifting or aligning the best elements of the relational network to an organisation's culture and the experience of working lives appears to have much to do with the production of good work. This 'experience of good work' was outlined as one that honors the contributions of organisation participants. 'Good work' also stands for becoming personally invested in seeing a wide spectrum of organisational participants encouraged to take risks and to succeed.

The data in this area spoke to finding ways to communicate appreciation for work not only between people in a close-knit relational sphere, but by influencing an aspect of the organisation's culture by more broadly communicating this same appreciation.

Implied was that the communication of good work and good experiences changes the tone of interactions in the organisation as a whole, from one that merely 'does work' to one that perhaps, 'values work'. There is also the implication that reflecting this experience of good work, either as a direct recipient or as an observer, takes concentrated and concerted effort.

5.1.6. Allowing potential to flourish by opening communication processes

The findings support a wish for an organisation that conducts its processes openly and at all levels. For example, incorporating elements of this philosophy into work may see managers adapt their communications: in meetings, in supervising or preparing policy documents.

For example, when I meet with my team members to discuss assignments, I not only discuss what needs to be done but how and what the impact will be for the organisation. When I discussed a statement that I was drafting for a Minister, I told my team members of the channels which the statement would go through, who would review it, why and the reasons behind the position. When I received feedback on the statement, I forwarded the feedback to the team so that they could see how the process worked; both the areas where the work was well drafted and where it could be improved. I also sent them the revised statement before it was released. They had had input and an opportunity to give feedback from the perspectives of their work and lives. As a consequence, when the Minister finally read the statement to the public and the presentation was reported upon in the media, my team, at all levels was familiar with the process and its outcomes.

In this instance, there was an unanticipated outcome to expanding communication processes and encouraging narrative activities in the direction of free-flowing information. By sharing information in a transparent way, the door was opened for feedback from the team. This team, representing their life experiences and identities could then make offerings that reflected and invited a community perspective on the work. Had the process been less conducive to open communication, such as in this newly revised interpretation, all of the richness that the additional perspectives could bring, would be lost.

5.1.7. Allowing potential to flourish by taking risks

The notion of spreading the word of ‘good work’ as a means of relational and practice alignment carried through to the exercise of pursuing relational opportunities to do ‘best work’. The study findings suggest that pursuing and realising the opportunity to be able to do one’s best work meant that being able to take risks is married to a larger agency narrative. The findings suggests that taking risks, an activity more typically reserved for privileged relationships, is an activity that has potential in agency. Creating and having a space where organisational participants are valued, and are supported in expressing themselves as relational beings in the workplace, seems to be a consistent finding throughout the study. This ‘valuing’ would come from both colleagues at their own levels, as well as the heads of the civil service.

The relational elements found in enjoying work and feeling valued, were present in much of the data. The narrative activities related to these processes have implications for the way the relational network constructs itself. Taking risks included providing opportunities for civil servants to advise others on matters of importance and allowing this expression without confining to extensively rigid guidelines. The implication is that including the flexibility of privileged narrative activities into the professional ones can promote individual style and expression. There is the suggestion that if individual style and expression are promoted, managers may be exercising an ability and drive for “having a concern for people that goes beyond the topical”. Modeling and living this type of concern is central to relational developments.

At a relational level, these findings of: incorporating curiosity into practice; expanding the narratives of communication; promoting and developing a capacity for reflexive practice and embracing the ‘potential to flourish’; encourage organisational participants in a direction. It seems that they are being asked to lean into new experiences, explore the landscapes of each others perspectives and to take risks in exercising their professional expertise. These data suggest that the alignment of discourse between the relational networks and organisational culture constitutes a process of incorporating and allowing for flexibility, open communication and risk-taking in the work experience. This flexibility seemed generally accepted within relational networks, but less acknowledged in the organisational culture.

5.2. Aligning the narrative activities between Relational Networks and Policy ‘Development, Communication and Applications’

There are many means by which policies might get formulated, adopted and communicated with respect to participant-derived suggestions for their relational enhancement. In other words, the data indicated some possibilities for policy enhancement and new meanings for how organisational developments can be better aligned by relational narratives. Some findings spoke to producing a better balance between theory and practice. Others called for the civil service to align itself with the relational experience by introducing some of its elements.

5.2.1. Seeking the ‘personal’ as a policy

In a discussion on the professional development of civil servants and the implications for policy, a wish for incorporating highly relational attributes and approaches into the decision-making and supervision process is outlined. The enhanced policy direction or vision describes the

organisation as a place where persons can develop career objectives that bring out some degree of personal and professional satisfaction. In place, is a consistent process of instilling in leaders of the civil service that we need to have an eye and discernment for the unseen attributes for those who work for and with them. Management and colleagues are encouraged to seek and be concerned about unseen and unspoken attributes, career hopes and objectives and translating them into something that is spoken in each other.

In some ways, I suspect that making this vision practical involves leaning into levels of discomfort with regard to managing conflict. It might mean extending oneself to a struggling colleague and helping them develop a skill for success. On the other hand, it might mean having some very frank conversations with an employee about where their strengths lie, versus the needs of the organisation.

Realising a relational vision in policy means communicating directly, i.e. explaining exactly why a piece of work is important and how it will impact the rest of the system; or in job interviews, when asked a direct question, answer it directly- even if it means being clear with a candidate about where their strengths and qualifications fit or misfit with a job; or in training, become very pointed in addressing the concerns of individuals; or lastly, in a student-teacher relationship or in a manager-employee relationship, paying attention to unstated needs. Regardless of direction, these frank conversations amongst both colleagues and employees are essentially about devising personal strategies for successfully negotiating roles and their affiliated policies. This direction suggests that organisational behaviors are directed towards seeking relational possibilities in practice as a matter of policy itself.

5.2.2. Adopting a policy on strategic caring

We can continue with a discussion on why infusing a relational element into a policy of professional development, might be an important alignment exercise. The notion of ‘strategic caring’ is introduced. The data indicate that an expectation or aspiration for managers and supervisors might be to look for ways to craft a job or employment experiences to suit an individual to the greatest extent possible, once a commitment has been made to that employee. The narrative activities that complement this process appear to be those that seek to determine what an individual needs to stay committed to the civil service. Once these needs are determined, the individual is guided through a developmental process. These strategic and caring activities see managers and directors learning how to discern the individual objectives, wants and desires of those who work for them and then finding ways towards win-win solutions in pursuit those objectives. Win-win solutions include becoming more flexible in policy and practice. ‘Win-win’ findings in this area included: 1) encouraging work from home; 2) adapting the organisation to allow for part-time working; 3) encouraging more flexible hours; 4) becoming open to changing jobs, people and job structures to accommodate a fluid and changing organisational structure.

The data very clearly point to these ‘caring’ activities occurring by involving people more in a process and by making people more accountable to the organisation. Increased accountability is acquired by giving employees more responsibility in certain areas. Inherent to these activities is a high level of interpersonal communication and dialogue for change.

5.2.3. Incorporating what is experienced as “alive” in practice within the policy ideals

The data reveal that relational elements of narrative can be aligned with policy. A process of balancing theory and practice involves increasing the potential for dialogue that is more direct and draws on the data gathered from those on whom the policy will have the most impact. As a consequence, realising a relational tone in policy would mean incorporating these dialogue-focused activities into the training processes and into policies on organisational communication. For example, with regard to training, the findings explicitly indicate that the organisation needs to incorporate ‘experience’ into the programs.

This sentiment does not seem to imply that the whole training structure needs to change. More simply, a relational element of policy would invite a generative review of the training process and objectives. It would also have regard for whether there are adequate narratives of experience in the training program.

5.2.4. Adopting new notions of hierarchy that allow for flexible communication structures

With regard to organisational communication, another example of the heightened potential for relational elements of discourse was introduced. This new form of communication sees the notions of hierarchy and roles occasionally abandoned. Abandoning strict categories might allow people in the organisation to feel as though they can go directly to a source.

The implication here is that if civil servants want to infuse policy with relational tones, they are also implying that they want to increase the alignment of policy and practice. To do so would essentially require that communication changes. Rigid role structures are shed. Employees are allowed (encouraged) to communicate across lines in the “chain of command”. These sentiments suggest that civil servants are being called upon to ‘take a leap of faith’ with regard to policy on communication. For example, as previously cited, there are very strict lines of reporting- from employee to supervisor to Manager to Director and Permanent Secretary and so on. The ‘somewhat freeing’ of civil servants from a highly structured communication process, to a newly envisioned one encourages a line of narrative that might say, “I can go to the person from whom I need answers- without the repercussions that fear, insecurity and wishes to retain power engender”.

5.2.5. Reinventing the policy on ‘policy’

Another consideration arising from the theme of aligning an experience of privilege with the professional discourse of policy, was introduced in the study.

The findings suggest that the organisation’s capacity to offer a service should be a focus of discussion in ongoing and generative ways. Civil servants should reflect on the primacy of the services they offer and be prepared to consider whether in fact it should be offering the service at all. This finding came out of the sentiment that challenged current professional narrative activity that aspires to be all things to all people as a public service organisation. Stewart (2005) vaguely conceptualises and problematises how increasing the power of Government and bureaucracy diminishes individual freedom, which is the stream of narrative that presented itself in the data.

When one considers the relational element of this dialogue, which challenges the notion of an ‘all-powerful Government’, it offers a fresh approach to mandate-driven activities. The offering

brings to the surface the idea of making it both daily and strategic practice to reflect on the mission of the civil service and becoming prepared to accept a highly defensible position that sees the civil service back away from attempting to meet each and every public need. The possibilities inherent to this new stream of narrative in policy would also have implications for the organisational culture. For example, the image of the civil service might shift from one of a safety net to one that has a more needs-driven perspective towards service. Whether or not this shift is desirable or not, is not the intent of the reflexive exercise. The intent is to explore the potential for this enhanced relational approach to policy.

5.2.6. Addressing relational wishes by aggressively seeking diverse talent

Civil servants offered other relational lines of discourse to which they suggested had meaning for policy changes. The narratives and dialogues on gender-based networking expressed hopes that opportunities to bring more gender diversity into the team will be created. In a unique twist on enhanced diversity (for the more traditional call is for more women and people of colour) the findings indicate a hope for the creation of structures that improve the chances for black males in employment.

The sentiment and wish for a more diverse working team is repeated throughout the data. They indicate that from some participants' perspectives, women are in fact more prepared for the job market than are men. As a consequence, the perception is that in Bermuda's civil service, women are getting more access to opportunities.

Alongside this sentiment is a relational dream for policy. This relational dream is that no talent shall be allowed to go wasted. The findings also indicate that every member of the 'community' must take ownership and be implored to strive for diversity. The sentiment aligns a relational wish for a diverse workforce with a policy shift that encourages employers **and employees** to look to every sector of the community to find it. Aligning the two perspectives might mean encouraging dialogues on strategies to seek male applicants for employment in previously unexplored places.

Policy that 'seeks the personal' finds people who are not afraid of striving to do their best work. They are assisted in finding areas where they can do their best work. It means engaging in healthy discussions about work by communicating in ways that are respectful and reflective.

5.3. Aligning the narrative activities of Relational Networks and Best Practice

The discussion of the alignment between the privileged experiences of the relational networks, organisational culture, and policy leaves one element of the relational network pairings to be explored. The findings on aligning the 'relational network' with best practice speak to aspects of participants' privileged experiences that they feel have relevance to their experience of practice.

5.3.1. Acknowledging that individual achievements are relational achievements and enhance the greater good; welcoming new conceptualisations of leadership

Aligning the discourse of the relational network, to perspectives of best practice seems to be an exercise in sharing vision, accountability and information. The findings indicated that the conceptualisation of best practice is when people are brought to an understanding that they are

working towards something greater than just their jobs. It appears that the responsibility for communicating this understanding is a leader.

However, the term ‘leader’ gets deconstructed from its traditional meanings in the data. Leadership is described as, as fluid and flexible as identity, in the participants’ vision of its construction. A leader instills a vision in people, has them work towards that vision, and can be from any part of the organisational hierarchy. A leader may emerge dependent on the project or situation, and is not necessarily the head of the team or the organisation.

According to participants, this envisioned leader has aligned what they do, with what they enjoy and experience at most privileged levels of interaction. They are a part of the ‘vision’ and the vision has become practice. They are made to feel as though “the vision is theirs too”. This process of “instilling vision” is one that shifts individual relational practices to the broader organisational context. Of the civil services’ organisational culture at present, the findings indicate that the process of sharing a vision occurs more on an individual basis than on a professional basis (the latter being dialogues occurring at an organisational level).

The threads of the discourse above emphasise that leaders can manifest themselves in many ways. As well, the alignment of ‘the relational’ with ‘best practice’ sees the narrative systems becoming more open to the possibility of situated leadership. Inherent to this notion of leadership is that the leaders take a full accounting of the wealth of employees’ talents, identities and experience be somehow accounted for in supervising, training, mentoring, team building, delegation, planning and task-completion activities.

5.3.2. Enhancing the relational tone of practice: Refocusing and connecting with people

The findings on how best practices can better influence relationships and vice-versa also spoke to the power of accountability. The theme drawn from the data on this issue is that more consistency in practice, across the organisation, means being accountable to a relationship within the work arena. In what I phrased as, “working from the heart”, life-giving relational activities in practice took a variety of forms. Best practice could incorporate an intense relational element such as listening closely to customers. The alignment of the relational network with the best practice sphere also speaks to the longevity and impact of ‘connectedness’. As well, the best practice environment is infused with the relational narratives of listening with empathy, believing in someone and creating environments of trust.

The emphasis on connectivity in the alignment of relational and best practice activities extends from the notion of ‘service to the customers (both internal and external)’, as above, to nurturing collegial experiences. The importance of helping civil servants share their identities and life stories with each other is raised, in this instance. One finding indicated specifically that the civil service had moved away from exploring the personal aspects of employees and colleagues.

However, it appears that if best practice means supporting each other in offering a service or intervention, a movement towards getting connected must quickly be regenerated. The findings suggest that civil servants and other organisational participants have to begin to worry about who another person is and what’s behind their initial identity presentations: this relational piece has a huge influence on the work they do.

Practice enhancements, according to participants, also meant creating relational opportunities where narratives of best practice can thrive. People are afraid of not being able to do their best work. Helping them to do their best work would include helping them find areas where they can do their best. It means engaging in healthy discussions about work and communicating in ways that are respectful and reflective. The implication is that a consideration for the planning of any group activities (strategic planning, group work, general meetings) should include how to create a safe, non-threatening environment. But this planning, instead of being something that is 'presented' to participants as a 'fait accompli', should become part of the structuring and co-constructing of the activity itself.

The findings from the dialogues occurring in relational networks have highlighted several areas of potential for the organisational culture, policy and best practice spheres. As well, there has been the suggestion that the multi-dimensional influence of relational networks may even change the tone of narratives, within relational networks themselves. I now move to a detailed look at the discussions occurring in the organisational culture, and how these discussions might better align themselves, or become aligned with, narrative activities on policy and best practice.

5.4. Aligning the narrative activities of Organisation Culture and 'Policy'

In leveling a critical look at whether narratives in the culture of the organisation can be better aligned with policy ideals, a shift in communication processes is envisioned. The findings indicate that both the organisational culture and the policy on communication require attention.

5.4.1. Envisioning new ways of communicating

Envisioning a shift in communication seems to mean that new ways of communicating are welcomed. The new form of communication essentially demotes hierarchies. Such a shift in the dialogues of the organisational culture would not only require a clearly communicated policy change, but a change in the type of relational activities that promote a leveled communication structure.

Echoing this sentiment is a wish for an organisational culture where the policies on vision and operations are communicated, period. The concern for civil servants, on communication, is that the organisational culture can not be reflective of policy if civil servants are unaware of the policies. The issue of alignment, in this case, would be quite practical in that the policies of government are communicated and shared in a way that they become familiar to its participants.

Also around the issue of communication was that the narrative activities of the organisational culture would be enhanced when policies are introduced and then allowed to live, grow and thrive. In this finding is another practical area of alignment in that policy decisions should be allowed enough time to take root. The experience seems to be that when policy decisions are made, their implementation time is so short-lived that by the time the policy is known, it might be retracted before its consequences are fully realised.

In this instance, the data suggest that narrative activities in policy must be allowed time to take root and flourish. To promote this shift from policy to the experience in the organisational culture, several practical activities in several areas of organisational functioning are proposed. There is both privileged and private talk of policy on 'equal access': 1) open, honest communication with staff is encouraged; 2) employment opportunities are fairly advertised; 3)

all job applications be reviewed and evaluated on the basis of criteria; 4) secondments and the securing of alternative employment on the basis of merit; and 5) promotional activities incorporate a plan for preparation and support.

5.4.2. Sharing leadership roles and risk

Shared ownership and risk were final themes that presented themselves with regard to envisioning more alignment between the discourse of organisational culture and policy. Two civil service managers spoke of how to foster a culture where policy statements on team work and leadership truly embrace responsible communication, recruitment and professional development. A vision for “living” the civil services’ vision of leadership was that in the decision-making process, leaders will say, “It’s not just [only] my choice” with regard to an issue. The belief and hope expressed here is for dialogues on an issue where people would talk about it, pass it on and share ownership of both the problem and its solutions.

Of risk, and in relation to leaders helping fellow civil servants develop and thrive, the findings suggest that “generating an atmosphere that allows for civil servants to take risks- take chances on making mistakes” makes a difference. I would suggest that being able to take risks is an activity typically located and allowed for in the culture of an organisation, and even within relational networks. However, the sentiment of generating an atmosphere that allows civil servants to take risks would have to be an activity that is promoted and supported in policy. This would mean that leaders (Managers, Supervisors) would need to have a sound policy statement on how to develop employees. Generating an atmosphere that allows for risk may not mean taking uncalculated or even dangerous risks in practice, but perhaps seeking to explore the talent of an employee or encouraging an employee to extend or “stretch” to new or different tasks that were not originally envisioned.

5.5. Aligning the narrative activity of Organisational Culture and “Best Practice”

Another combination of interactions in the four spheres I have outlined is that of the narrative activity amongst organisational culture and best practice. Narrative activities in this section speak to experiences occurring in day-to-day civil service work that have potential for practice enhancements. In the exercise of seeking potential for alignment, some of my reflection was based on: How do you shift a discourse of organisational culture from practice to general work experiences and the nuances of behavior in an organisation? I asked myself, and civil service participants, “what needs to be present in practice that will impact how people view the organisation, the work we do and how civil servants believe themselves to ‘fit’ within the structure?” The outcomes were as follows.

5.5.1. Communicating spirituality in practice

In this paper, as a general theme, I have referred to activities occurring in the best practice sphere as the ‘pragmatics’ of policy. The findings seem to suggest that best practices are a combination of very practical activities but also very spiritual activities. The spiritual activities that would have to be communicated from organisational culture to practice and vice versa would be: the demonstrating trust and good will; recognising and believing in the potential of all civil servant participants; taking the organisation’s mission statement to heart; and treating clients as though they were family.

The data capture these sentiments in the phrase, “re-committing to relationships of trust and goodwill”. The data also provide evidence of an extended meaning of standardised “good practice norms”. Best practices are constructed as personally defined. As such, best practices can be viewed as demonstrating a concern for others or helping others see their benefits in their carrying out their responsibilities. The findings are consistent with a notion that “you’ve changed the culture of an organisation to the extent where you have helped to change the culture in some area”.

The consequences of extending meanings of best practice to the culture of the organisation are that people may in fact start to practice in a way they positively envision the organisational culture. Generally, what seems to have arisen to the forefront of enhanced organisational culture and best practice is a movement from standardised definitions of practice to ones that are spiritual. Whilst these notions seem to have very specific applications to some areas of the civil service, such as the helping and social service teams, there may be some elements that could be incorporated into orientation and other training programs.

5.6. Aligning the narrative activities of ‘Policy’ with ‘Best Practice’

Narrative activities in the policy sphere of civil service work, speak to the organisation’s vision, mission, theories, training, development activities and strategic areas of function. The alignment of discourse on policy with that of practice is the final area of interaction between two spheres of narrative influence. Ironically, given the focus of this paper, the influence of policy on practice was not one that was easy to draw from or to construct.

5.6.1. Clarifying roles and responsibilities

The findings in this area spoke to organisational participants viewing the best alignment between policy and practice as a process of figuring out what people are supposed to be doing, doing it, or helping each other do it. The finding suggests that as much as policy is supposed to clarify roles, responsibilities and procedures, it has not yet. Therefore, in operations and process, realising best practice in policy is not only about conducting a task, but in creating an atmosphere and opportunities where processes and roles can be safely discussed. Organisational participants would need to fully understand their roles and responsibilities to the organisation so that they could truly be working (practicing) with respect to the mission statement.

5.6.2. Changing perceptions and expectations of best practice

Aligning best practice with statements on organisational ideals also seemed to mean that participants experimented with changing perceptions and expectations of best practice. The findings suggest that best practice statements tend to be too ideal and unrealistic in that they may set both employees and clients aspire to unattainable goals. In a very practical way, the implications of the findings are that the best practice discourse in this area of work would be need to be redefined if it were to more considerably mirror policy. One new construction of both practice and policy would be the realisation of “making a positive difference in people’s lives”, to the extent that they reach a higher level of functioning than previously. This construction, with its enhanced relational tones, could be the foundation of a new policy statement or organisational vision.

Accomplishing better alignment between policy and practice may be one of the most challenging features of improved organisational functioning and behavior. Future directions for aligning the dialogues and discourse of practice with the policies meant to enhance it include: helping civil servants explore their specific roles, functions and responsibilities; creating an atmosphere where this process can be fostered; and reframing and exploring new meanings of best practice.

Aligning policy with practice, or the relational realisation of policy and practice, envisions ‘shift’ on a philosophical, spiritual, and behavioral levels. Concretely, these shifts are those in understanding, increased communication, promoting an extension of role responsibilities and creating spaces within each context to facilitate each shift. Analyzing the findings on the transformation and alignment of narrative within and amongst the narrative spheres has indicated that these activities have been infused with an interpersonal component. The interpersonal perspective of civil service life is, in fact, built on relationships and perspectives thereof.

PART II: THEMES ON IDENTITY

I have placed significant emphasis on identity as arising from civil service dialogues and discourse. Particularly, I have placed identity as a source of disconnect for narrative activities in that dealing with differences of identity can yield prejudice, discrimination and mistrust. The findings on identity are in keeping with a constructionist notion that identity is fluid and flexible.

The data also suggest that, given the fluidity and flexibility of ‘identity’, the vehicle for better alignment amongst interpersonal relationships is through reflexive activity. I will discuss the findings in order of their presentation in the previous chapter: the consequences for multiple conceptualisations of identity and the life-giving forces for reflexive activity amongst civil servants.

5.7. Constructions of identity and its implications

The construction of identity by civil servants contributed to the notion that identity is complex, layered and situated in a sub-cultural context. The suggestion that race, gender and class are primary considerations on thinking about identity was reinforced. As well, the power and influence of these diversities was also reinforced.

The data that supported these findings revealed relational enterprises that are identity-driven, even when professional discourses imply that they are not. The consequence of this type of divergent narrative is that if identity is central to some, particularly in privileged circles, they will speak from a position that places identity as central. However, if the professional narrative is not open to this discourse, participants may be trying to communicate in two different ‘languages’.

By way of example, I offer a summary of a discussion with a friend who was reviewing this paper. She said that when she reached the section of identity, she recalled a conversation with her friend who was a business manager of a food processing company. The friend, a white woman, said she was having a lot of difficulty with a fellow supervisor, a white male. He would make hiring, promotion and training decisions quickly and with a goal of getting the tasks completed. Yet, employees seemed disgruntled and would complain and sometimes leave the company. She found herself struggling with the same hiring and human resource decisions but

took the time to contemplate both the decisions and the process. Ultimately, it seemed that she retained people and, in her opinion, employees seemed fairly satisfied.

On closer reflection of the issue, the female manager began to develop the understanding that she was making decisions from a relational perspective. When she went to hire, transfer, or promote an employee, she gave careful consideration as to how the change would impact the person's life- parenting responsibilities, needs, personal growth desires- professionally, personally and emotionally. What she also realised was that her colleague had a different approach. He was focused on a sense of timelines, accomplishments and tasks. He was not thinking about relationships or relational components, even though in her opinion, they were influential. And so, when both supervisors went to have a discussion, their conversations and strategies were of two different directions and were clearly, about two separate issues- one inclusive of identity and the other focused on responsibility.

In addition to the more traditional notions of race, class and gender, the data indicate that textured understandings of identity include an acceptance that identities can shift. If we accept a premise that identities can shift than we must also consider the possibility that constructions of 'identity' can no longer be limited to race, gender and socio-economic class.

The alternative or non-traditional conceptualisations of identity extended past definitions of race, gender and class, to behavior. Some of the data indicate that identity is becoming more diversely constructed on both privileged and professional levels and in ways such as: tone of interaction, personality and more culture intonations of lifestyle, background, ethics and morals. What also came out of this discussion on identity was again that people talk about identity from different perspectives. While identity (particularly on gender) may be a very present concern for some, it may be less of a concern or consideration for others. The implication of these differing perspectives for organisational behavior are that people may be having conversations about what they believe are the same topic, but in fact are very different.

For some participants, thinking of identity in terms of race was not an immediate formulation. This may mean that these participants have less regard for how their lives are privileged and the influence of their identities on others. This may also mean that not recognising the construct of race and its privileges leaves some people (mostly whites and men) freer to think of other identities. This perception is consistent with the literature on 'race' and 'gender'. These participants may also live what is still aspiration for many; the opportunity of seeing people as they are, in terms of character, qualities and contributions, rather than physical identifiers.

The findings on identity have borne out a perspective that suggests that if asked to self-define and story on experiences of identity and difference, participants would speak to race, class and gender. But, more particularly, the construct of identity is in no way limited to these three constructs.

Clearly, amidst the more traditional assumptions and experiences of race, class and gender, there are many other understandings of the construction of identity and difference. Regardless of the multiple manifestations of identity, one understanding is important to note. The multiple stories and understandings about difference give rise to as many possibilities for narrative activities in the organisation. These exchanges, prefaced and constructed by perspectives on identity, thus

have ultimate possibilities for the construction of new ones. The convergence and divergence of dialogic exchanges becomes contingent on how each participant is constructing and experiencing both their own and others' identities.

When I presented the findings on the construction of gender, I suggested that gender has implications for communication. For example, if a male is communicating from a perspective that views behavior as a primary identity, he may miss the nuances of a communication from a female colleague perhaps concerned about an experience where she is a sole female on a work team of men. Or a black woman, who constructs race as primary and defined strictly by colour, might misconstrue the message of another black colleague, who believes race to have a broader conceptualisation that includes economics and culture. Or, in the same situation, race might be of concern for one organisational participant because a situation arises where that identity needs to be at the forefront for the participant.

Lastly, the perceptions on the influence of identity, i.e. white privileged, may need to be re-envisioned with regard to far, more situated in a context of experience. The tone of the dialogue may change, as might the relational network and organisational culture, dependent on how and which identity surfaces at the time of the exchange. From a constructionist position, if a set of participants view race or gender constructions as primary to their relationship, and others do not, the landscape of narratives can be quite dissimilar. As such, participants might find themselves approaching workplace situations and practice from quite different perspectives and it is not until that narrative space or gap is explored, can a best practice or policy narrative be truly relevant to the narrative community as a whole.

A highly identity-based accounting of policy and practice highlights the concern for identity and its influence in the civil service. The data indicate a concern for the need to understand diverse service populations and the 'biases' with which they may present.

5.8. Moving past identity constructions to reflexive and privileged organisational participation

Part of the work in aligning the dialogues and discourse of the narrative spheres involves interpersonal activity and growth. In the review of literature on how to promote transformative dialogue and experiences, one approach to generating transformative experiences was to increase the opportunities for reflexive practice. A thematic perspective on 'reflexiveness' warrants some discussion.

The findings on enhanced reflexivity as a means of aligning the narrative activities across the organisational spectrum indicate that there may be several possibilities. The possibilities include activities geared towards bridging differences through invitations for deeper connectivity and a commitment or re-commitment to relationships of good will. Table 6 summarises the findings for enhanced reflective and reflexive activity in the organisation, and that which demonstrates movement beyond simple constructions of identity.

Table 6			
Strategies for Reflexive and Privileged Organisational Participation			
Life- giving force	Reflexive strategy	Privileged line	Professional line of

theme		of narrative activity	narrative activity: Aspirations for Organisational Behavior
Transcending racial difference	“Even in our differences, we have something in common”	“I can be part of this; “I like this person”	Relational: Approaching the relationship with acceptance at the forefront, and as though seeking a lost friend; Placing qualities of the person as central
Crossing the divide	“By sharing our stories, it stops “it” being about gender, power or race- it becomes “it” being about people”; “Take people one-on-one, each day, every day”	“I can reach you”; “Not everyone is the same”	Relational: Exchanging stories and experiences; Best Practice: In training and orientation activities, incorporating more of Officers’ personal experiences and stories
Enjoying difference	“We are approaching each other and discuss our differences in culture in the spirit of observation- no pros or cons”	“For once, I feel included and not like the ex-pat I’m said to be”	Relational and Organisational culture: Creating or fostering environments where communication can be authentic and open
Developing a sense of trust and respect	“You’ve come to me for help- how can I best be of your assistance”	“I will learn enough about you so that you can trust me enough to leave things in my hands”	Relational: Seeking to know more about the individual and their background Best practice: Giving each person the time they deserve and that which is adequate to clearly formulate a service need- many contacts, many conversations
Honesty and transparency in communication	“We can get personal”; “You are right but you are wrong... and I care enough to tell you”	“Let’s be honest, if it quacks like a duck...”	Relational and Organisational culture: Honest communication both ways- establishing workplace environments, settings or opportunities to “get those feelings out and get them resolved”
Expressing deep	For some, a	“The small	All spheres: fair and

empathy for others	recollection of humble roots or origins; Recall a time when you needed help	issues can mess people up”; “you’ve been in my shoes, bring me in, pick me up and help me stay there”	unbiased communication and decision-making practices
Risk-taking in decision-making	Taking a “chance” to do the jobs people are trained to do and using the expertise of each team member	“We should do this”	Best practice: take action on what seems right and be prepared to justify those actions
Sharing in a vision; shared leadership	“See what we are doing here”?	“It has always stuck with me... that he gave us the greater picture”; “What am I/ we trying to accomplish here”	Best practice: meetings and team building activities that emphasise what people are doing and how their activities fit into the greater picture.
Appreciation of difference	“I acknowledge that there is a difference, but it just doesn’t matter”	“Take me at face value”	Relational: An attitude that demonstrates acceptance Policy: Respect for diversity

Reflexiveness meant, in many instances, taking stock of one’s own practices and perceptions. It meant taking the time to learn about another’s perspective so that work together could proceed in a mutually satisfactory way. The following sections detail some of the table’s contents on reflexivity.

5.8.1. Developing connections and a ‘spirit of connectivity’ at deeper levels

In very practical ways, the data suggest that bridging differences and working towards good will involves 1) having an exchange about each person’s experience of identity; 2) sharing stories about life experiences; and 3) strategising on ways of relating with each other that invites new meanings of experience for both of them.

The objectives of these processes and activities, whether in privileged circles, or on a level of organisational development such as training and team building activities, is to enhance a process of organisational development. The enhancement of organisational development includes: 1) building trust and respect; and 2) inspiring people to interact of levels that are more open-minded and more personal.

The wish for aligning policy and practice that becomes very prevalent in the data is for transparency in the “business” processes of an organisation, i.e. in recruitment, hiring, relational

and professional processes at the upper levels. This wish reflects for both a transparency in dialogue and process. The wish for open, transparent communication was paired with a wish that civil servants would approach each other with a spirit of acceptance, observation, authenticity, empathy, curiosity and openness acquired through some process of reflective and reflexive activity.

The data directly suggest that more ‘transparency’ might dispel the perception of the “old boy” (cronyism and protectionist networks in appointments). Increased transparency may also mediate and prevail over beliefs about how the system “works” and perceptions of “white-[on-black] racism”.

5.8.2. Encouraging risk-taking

The notion of change in approach to people and process was advanced by an additional premise. ‘Change’ was presented with regard to risk-taking in decision-making. A complex activity, the data suggest that risk-taking could enhance alignment activities related to trust-building and feeling connected to the mission of an organisation. Risk-taking involves actively exploring the landscape of human talent. The landscape of human potential is one of taking a chance on someone who seems to have possibilities. It is also inherent or developed in a process of using people’s talent to the fullest by delegating tasks and allowing a person the full responsibility.

The implication of this finding is that the opportunity to take risks and to exercise that opportunity, is a position that is valued. The organisation must invite its civil servants to trust in their experiences, make and take decisions based on those experiences. The organisation, as well, it seems would have to invite its employees to take ‘chances’ on members of the community.

5.8.3. Communicating vision

The final way that a vision for alignment amongst organisational behavior was envisioned was in the communication of mission-related activities. People want to be introduced and involved in the “greater picture” of the organisation. This introduction and involvement occurs in orientation and team-building activities. Such activities would see managers reflect upon the organisation’s mission in a way that prepares them to communicate it clearly to their teams. The mission is also communicated frequently so that teams can build upon the mission and make sense of it for themselves.

5.9. Section Summary

An analysis of the data on aligning policy and practice reveals that there are several areas where alignment between the narrative spheres and hence, from policy to practice, can be envisioned. The crux of these data indicates that relationally-enhanced policy is highly communicative. It is also reflective, and in some ways risky. Leadership is flexible and shared, as are the ways that communication amongst ‘leaders’ should be. The notion of policy is deconstructed and re-created in a way that allows its consequences for individuals to be acknowledged. Policies are also assessed for the intended outcomes, rather than intentions. Relationally-enhanced policy invokes curiosity and a quest for an opportunity to exchange perspectives on experience. It encourages the people who apply a policy, to explore ‘privilege’ and acknowledge its multiple manifestations in practice.

PART III: APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY AND RESEARCH

An analysis of how appreciative inquiry may change the method and tone of more traditional approaches, begins with an understanding that there are and will continue to be many ways of constructing its applications. My approach, which probed relationships, diverted from the existing practice of utilising the offerings of participants to move the organisation through a series of integrated actions and activities. I chose to explore the findings with high regard for re-defining and re-locating narrative activities. It was in this way that I re-constructed AI's method for discovering the way to greater coordination, collaboration and alignment.

5.10. Reaffirmation that the human condition is inspired by and leans towards where it is directed

AI might support a notion of encouraging positive stories to be told as means of aligning privileged conversations with professional ones. For example, if people in an organisation want their interactions to be characterised by honesty, then they would need to look at the best ways in which honesty has been demonstrated in their lives. Personal strategies for "living honesty" might see a supervisor explaining to an employee exactly why a piece of work is important and how it will impact the rest of the system. In job interviews or in performance appraisals, when asked a direct question, a recruiter might answer it with forthrightness.

There are other ways in which I can substantiate that AI has implications for moving 'policy' and 'practice' together. Where I discussed a finding on moving privilege to the forefront of organisational interactions, a practical realisation of this notion was that in training forums, discussions become very pointed in accessing the concerns of individuals. In student/teacher relationships, the teachers might find themselves listening closer for the stories of the students' lives (for their implications on the students' academic performances).

A relationally-infused perspective pays attention to unspoken needs and to all of its participants' perspectives so that business practices can shift in the direction of seeking the best outcomes for the organisation's people on a whole. The conclusion on these types of interactions is that once people come to know each other, relationally, they can no longer remain outside of the relationship. Being inside of the relationship and affirming the positive leads to generative practice and productive relationships.

5.11. Producing data rich in detail

During the interview and training group processes, I developed a high regard for the power of "storying" an experience. Again, if we consider the offerings presented in the previous two chapters (Methodology and Findings), the most engaging data came from excerpts where a participant narrated the story of their experience. Where a participant seemed to simply respond to a question, the data are less rich in detail. It was more difficult to find (mine for) the life-giving forces.

Consequently, the study outcomes support the notion that the process of storying evokes vivid and rich descriptions of experience. True to the premises of Appreciative Inquiry, these rich data become a participant-rooted vision for the future on policy and practice alignment.

5.12. Locating the ‘positive’ in many areas of practice

Thirdly, and on a personally reflective note, I spoke to adopting an appreciative approach as a whole. Whether or not the constructionist and Appreciative Inquiry principles are adopted in whole or in part, there may be consequences for both personal and professional life. Using portions of Appreciative Inquiry as a method and beginning to become familiar with its applications has changed the way I approach training and even the way in which I prepare documents for my colleagues and the public.

As a consequence, it seems that it would be accurate to suggest that finding ways to locate the positive in many areas of practice, becomes a way of practicing. Even if AI is applied in part (meaning that the whole process from definition through to design), there are consequences for activity in day-to-day practice.

5.13. Understanding that the very first communication is critical

Lastly, the data regarding feedback on use of the AI premises to construct an inquiry reveal that both how the study was introduced and how the “questions” were posed was very important to the process. When there was less time for an introduction of the premises of AI, the data were less narrative and less rich in detail. Where participants were exposed to a full accounting of AI and its applications to the study, they responded with wonderfully detailed stories. The questions that were posed to them throughout the process encouraged story-telling and saw those results.

By example, I contrast the responses of this study to that of my previous work where the questions had no AI formulation. When I first commenced doctoral studies, I had devised an ‘interview guide’ for the study. The questions in it were open-ended and meant to inspire dialogue.

5.14. Chapter Summary

The data indicate that it is possible to align policy with practice in concrete ways. In an exercise of ‘realising policy’ in practice we might be shifting from employer accountability to the “partial ownership of success” to all players. We might be recreating and experiencing policy shifts that acknowledge joint participation in creating the relational culture we want. We might be directing the most strategic efforts for equality in the workplace at the preparation and planning stages for individual destiny. We might be putting more emphasis and support into mentorship. These are the possibilities for bringing the water cooler to the boardroom, or better yet, creating a new space for the talks that shape the organisation’s strategic functioning. These narrative activities go past the sentiments of ‘privilege’ or ‘professional’ to an exploration of those stories that have yet to be fully scripted and are thus only nuanced in a public arena.

Relationally-infused policy encourages and values every team member’s input. It encourages them to make suggestions and to take risks. In a relationally-driven organisation, employees participate in activities that re-evaluate and re-situate with the work with regard for its transformative potential- in teams or as an entire system. Narratives of actual practices and experience (the stories of people who are members of the community) are incorporated into training modules to balance a discussion and understanding of policy and practice. Communication is driven across, throughout and external to the organisation, on issues of relationship, practice, policy and procedure.

The relationally-driven practitioner creates environments that invite open and transformative discussion. He or she ensures that decision-making bodies consist of people representing several diversities- including race and gender, but also levels of employment and ethnicity. These people co-create an infrastructure that is well-resourced to the extent that it seeks and uses the member's talents; aspiring to put people in a position to be able to do the jobs they are hired to do. They review existing structures with regard to the extent that they address the organisation's vision for relationships, practice, policy and working culture.

The data indicate that it is possible to more closely align the spheres of narrative with Bermuda's civil servants. Their offerings, at times consistent with each other, were reminiscent with a social constructionist call for re-focusing the 'situatedness' of dialogue. Their narrative offerings also spoke to the ways they viewed as most helpful in addressing the challenges posed by competing narrative activities.

CHAPTER VI (CONCLUSION): REVISITING THE CIVIL SERVICE EXPERIENCE AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THEORY AND PRACTICE

6.1. Overview of Study

This inquiry has been a journey that began with front-line child protection work. The journey extended to the horizons of the civil service as a whole. Concepts such ‘privilege’, ‘professionalism’, and the potential for alignment of multiple narrative texts were introduced and explored. The study also inquired into the concepts generated by relational experiences and perspectives on identity.

This exploratory process encouraged study participants to offer insight into an experience of civil service work. It also encouraged a dialogue on perspectives of identity that differ from traditional offerings. I was compelled to explore the narrative processes of the civil service and civil servants’ by reflecting on their most privileged stories about their best work. Their privileged stories and dialogues included the possibilities for best policy, for best employment experiences, for best relationships and for best practice. This exercise highlighted the potential for aligning workplace cultures, policies and practices around relational concerns.

Throughout this paper, I used the constructionist perspective to demonstrate how the accounts people generate are a reflection of their worlds and a unique snapshot of coordinated social relations. Privileged and professional dialogues as co-constructed knowledge bases were found to be similar in many ways. However, there was the suggestion that their detail was relatively unexplored.

For example, the findings also suggest that identity mediates interventions and interactions in ways that were previously reported primarily in aggregate, quantitative or ethnographic forms. The text of the dialogues offered new insight into the nuances of organisational behavior. I discussed policy and practice as expressed through narratives, dialogues and discussions. These narrative activities occurred in multiple locations, and at varied levels of explicitness, of the organisation.

For all of the ‘talk’ on strategic organisational activities, it seems that for employees, an emphasis remains on relational issues. The ‘personal’ is still very relevant to improved organisational functioning⁵³.

The study outcomes resulted in findings that were categorised into three groups: 1) the potential for alignment amongst the four narrative spheres of an organisation; 2) the construction of identity; and 3) offerings on the use of appreciative inquiry methods for research. The

⁵³ In Bermuda Sun newspaper articles (June 15, 2005), two columnists speak to relational issues. Quoting the 1998 U.S. Marriage Preparation and Preservation Act, Stuart Hayward expresses that relationship building and relationship skills training continue to be critical to interpersonal communication. Carol Kleiman reports that recognition and support are still highly valued employee awards. She also refers to a Maritz Poll (undated) where respondents spoke to an appreciation for personalized rewards that strengthen employee/employer bonds and create memorable moments for workers. Personalized recognition that had meaning for an employee was categorized as priceless.

conclusions of these findings and the subsequent discussion are offered here.

6.2. The potential for enhanced alignment amongst the relational network, organisational culture, policy and practice narratives

Aligning the participants' narratives was an exercise in affirmatively querying the incongruence of privilege, with the professionalism of best policy and practice objectives. The process involved designating participants' offerings to either the: relational network, organisational culture, 'policy' or 'best practice' spheres. Each sphere represented an aspect of organisational narratives and the possibilities for renewed construction. Using an interview protocol that diverted from problem-focused query, to strength-based, participatory inquiry, participants were encouraged to engage in narrative exchanges that explored those "concerned spaces" of the civil service culture, revealing aspirations, experiences and whispers of hopes.

In this approach, I acknowledged that a sense of total synergy or alignment amongst the dialogue of narrative spheres was probably not a realistic or necessarily desired study outcome. There are an infinite number of human situations at these levels. These human situations are context-bound by aspects of organisational behavior. However, what I aimed to do was to generate dialogue on civil service organisation amongst its multiple sources and to explore the space of a policy to practice continuum. Box 22 summarises the findings on the alignment between policy and practice.

Box 22

Summary of findings on the alignment of policy and practice

Aligning policy with practice is, in the most general of terms, a process of incorporating curiosity into practice and enhancing the nature of communication through a process of building alliances in organisational culture. Enhanced alignment might mean:

- 1) Enhancing organizational 'culture' with a relational shift of understanding, acceptance and increased communication.
- 2) Aspiring to loyalty and commitment by carrying relational elements such as trust, honesty and respect into the agency's culture and consequently, changing and improving the culture.
- 3) Returning to basic levels of communication and relationship-building by encouraging and setting the stage for organisational participants to have many conversations, and to level frank observations at each other.
- 4) Promoting and developing a capacity for reflexive practice through the enhanced coordination of experiences and activities on a platform of meaningful conversations (moving towards a jointly satisfactory mutual language).
- 5) Promoting and developing the capacity for reflexive practice by learning how to be honest with ourselves; and our responsibility for ensuring good relations between each other.
- 6) Demonstrating a willingness to dialogue on how conceptions of identity emerge, are experienced or perceived.
- 7) Allowing potential to flourish by acknowledging good work and becoming personally invested in a wide spectrum of organisational participants being encouraged to take risks and to succeed.
- 8) Allowing potential to flourish by opening communication processes and by sharing information in a transparent way.
- 9) Allowing potential to flourish by taking risks and creating a space where organisational participants are valued: taking risks included providing opportunities for civil servants to advise others on matters of importance and allowing this expression without confining to extensively rigid guidelines.
- 10) Seeking the 'personal' as a policy by becoming an organisation where persons can develop career objectives that bring out some degree of personal and professional satisfaction.
- 11) Adopting a policy on 'strategic caring' which means examining what an individual needs, to stay committed to the civil service and guiding that developmental process.

- 12) Incorporating what is experienced as “alive” in practice within a policy ‘ideal’ by engaging in more dialogues with each other and gathering more information that speaks of and for those on whom the policy will have an impact.
- 13) Adopting new notions of hierarchy that allow for flexible communication structures
- 14) Reinventing the policy on ‘policy’ by consistently evaluating the organisation’s capacity to offer a service.
- 15) Addressing relational wishes by bringing more diversity into teams and by ensuring that no talent is allowed to go wasted.
- 16) Acknowledging that individual achievements are relational achievements and enhance the greater good; welcoming new conceptualisations of leadership and ensuring that employees feel that they are a part of the ‘vision’.
- 17) Enhancing the relational tone of practice by refocusing on people and working from the heart. This means listening with empathy, believing in someone and creating environments of trust.
- 18) Envisioning new ways of communicating by demoting the concept of hierarchies.
- 19) Expansively communicating policies on vision and operations.
- 20) Introducing policies and allowing them to live, grow and thrive.
- 21) Sharing leadership roles and risk.
- 22) Generating an atmosphere that allows for civil servants to take chances and make the decisions that fall within the auspices of their jobs.
- 23) Communicating spirituality in practice by demonstrating trust and good will.
- 24) Recognising and believing in the potential of all civil servant participants.
- 25) Taking the organisation’s mission statement to heart.
- 26) Treating clients as though they were family.
- 27) Clarifying roles and responsibilities so that people know what they are supposed to be doing, can do it, and can help each other in “doing it”.
- 28) Changing perceptions and expectations of best practice by helping civil servants explore their specific roles, functions and responsibilities; creating an atmosphere where this process can be fostered; and reframing and exploring new meanings of best practice.

The study findings support the notion that privileged meaning is bound in the process of valuing the distinct identities of individual and their relationships. Civil servants represent various social and economic forms of existence (experienced in privileged and professional relationships). They are members of particular groups and communities and have different interests, needs, aptitudes and abilities.

Consequently, their dialogues illustrate that within a process of aligning relational narrative, organisational culture, policy and practice, there should be specific concerns for the development, longevity and continuity of initiatives. These concerns should reflect a belief in, and commitment from, the organisation’s participants.

On the connection between organisational culture and policy, participants wish for better alignment between the mission statement and the activities that govern its realisation ("I just wish that more of us believed in it and felt good about it"; "I wish there were more of us who believed in the mission"). Relationally, participants hope that their colleagues will aspire to value the "positivity of the person" and become "uplifting" in each of their interactions by being fair and honest. To this end, a vision for negotiating a myriad of challenges is illustrated. The five key conclusions on how policy can be better aligned with practice were:

- 1) Managers and organisational participants demonstrate a concern for people that goes beyond the topical. They help each other live to their potential and they seek unexplored potential and unspoken desires. These activities are categorised as elements of ‘Strategic Caring’. Strategic Caring is adopted as a policy and professional development focus.

- 2) Diversity is valued for its powerful influence on organisational life. Management teams are diverse, as are the teams of employees. The decision to become tactically diverse acknowledges the value that varied perspectives on identity has for customer service.
- 3) An environment where honesty, open communication and curiosity is fostered. This 'environment of concern' is one where organisational participants are beginning to communicate spiritually. Their real life experiences, so to speak, are the central and life-giving forces of interaction, participation, and intervention.
- 4) Leadership is flexible in that responsibility for change is shared. All participants are invited to share in the organisation's vision and as such, people extend themselves outside of their typical roles and rigid job descriptions.
- 5) Best practice is constructed as a notion that is framed by what is data-driven and co-constructed. However, best practice must encapsulate a deeply personal belief and standard for civil service work. This reflexive construction of best practice is what ultimately guides interventions and should be shared amongst colleagues, as well.

These statements on alignment are constructed from participants' textured offerings of excellent relationships and best practices. The dialogues that constitute these offerings can be located within any narrative sphere, provided that there is the commitment to conversational actions with transformative potential.

6.3. Conversational actions and self-reflective conditions that have broad-based transformative potential

6.3.1. Direct communication on value differences

Participant data indicate that life-giving conversational activities would have to take the direction of more open communication and trust. Participants would want to see the organisational culture enhanced through "direct communication on value differences". They would want help in resolving difficulties in a way that demonstrates "shared ownership" for problems that might not appear in a policy paper because it "gets to the personal". These expressions seem to mean that communication becomes more "transparent" in agency and there is "willingness to dialogue about how racism is experienced or perceived in a very open way". This might mean, for example, that meetings, as opposed to being focused on the text of a policy or practice, become more focused on relational elements. These relational elements would represent the consequences of, implications for and feelings about the policy.

6.3.2. Constructing environments conducive to good will

A "recommitment to good will" was a relational theme that participants envisioned in the organisational culture. In practice, and for the fulfillment of transformative objectives, participants described this premise as one where civil servants "try as far as possible to give each person the time... they deserve". They do this so that each can come "to a point where they are willing to leave" their respective responsibilities with each other and trust each other with it". Giving people the time they deserve also meant that participants had to contribute to the construction of environments that are "non-threatening"⁵⁴ and "trusting" where [are] able to

⁵⁴ In training forums on organisation development (National Training Laboratories) Allan Drexler, David Sibbet and Russell Forrester speak of the notion of 'unpublished thoughts' and 'surfacing feelings' as processes whereby team members are encouraged to make observations or share a dilemma with team members. The practitioners submit

debate and discuss. The environment that is created is a comfortable and safe atmosphere that allows for that type of debate”.

6.3.3. A spirit of observation

This recommitment could also be demonstrated by engaging in conversations with "authenticity and openness" and taking people "at face value" ("take people as you find them- and work with them); and becoming "open enough to appreciate that everyone is different and not be bothered or defensive about the differences". To study participants it means regarding each other "in the spirit of observation- no pros or cons" and at least momentarily, becoming empathetic. Empathy is described as reflecting on one's own moments of vulnerability ("the little small issues like that mess people right up"). The concept of increased empathy through reflection is consistently reinforced throughout the study in statements such as, "you've been in my shoes- bring me in, pick me up and help me stay there".

6.3.4. The vision is ours

In training, conditions for transformative potential moved relational activities from the policy to best practice spheres by seeing the inclusion of "more Officer's personal stories and experiences in the orientation phase of training". Training, and the "practice" of workforce development might also be enhanced revisiting the organisation's vision and mission with a goal of helping civil servants "realise that they are working for greater things... to make them a part of it and to ... make them feel that the vision is theirs too".

6.3.5. Leaders find leaders in ways unseen

In practice, in doing the daily job-related tasks, the relational conditions coincided with 'policies' in that civil service officers emphatically expressed a desire to "make a contribution to the development of sound economic policies". They relish in the enjoyment experienced in "advising others... on matters of importance". A relational-policy conflict, however, was in being allowed to work "in a fun way and to be allowed to express" who [they] are without confining to some rigid guidelines that [they] feel that can conquer [their] individual style and expression". Counteracting these ideological challenges between policy and practice were three initiatives. First, there was the notion of: fostering a "concern for people that goes beyond the topical". Second, there was the notion of "modeling encouragement, even if it does not always come from the "top"". The third policy-practice initiative was a policy on developing a management team that would be able to "discern individual objectives, wants and desires of those who work for them and then find ways, win-win, solutions for them to pursue those objectives". As well, in this area, a civil servant offering of strategies for enhancing front-line supervision or management practices saw, "the consistent process of instilling in leaders of the civil service that [they] need to have an eye and discernment for the unseen attributes for those who work for and under them... the unseen attributes, the unseen desires".

that if an opportunity to express a thought or feeling is not created, these 'unpublished sentiments' could get in the way of proceeding with a task. They suggest that "data" needs to come out from under the table, be prioritized and attended. They proposed an exercise, entitled "Questions Without Answers", which is when team members are invited to pose questions or make observations that are meaningful and of importance to the team success or well-being. These questions are invited at the beginning of each meeting. The exercise has been described as one that excluded, could mean a team might take a counter-productive direction or position based on unspoken concerns; potentially wasting a lot of time (Source: Bermuda Government, Management Team Discussion, report from Management participant in a National Training Laboratories forum, October 2004).

6.3.6. The Flexible Organisation

In terms of the organisational structure, policy and best practice would have to be revisited from the perspective of "change how the civil service works". The civil service would need to more consistently reflect relational realities such as parenthood and globalisation. Civil servants vocalised that the civil service can no longer be a "9-5 organisation". We've got to encourage home working, we've got to encourage more part-time working, we've got to encourage more flexible hours". Further relationally-enhanced organisational behavior sees shared leadership that involves "people more in a process". This premise seemed grounded in a theory that says, "By making people more accountable you give them more responsibility in certain areas". "There is a basic premise that there is value in another person". "If you start with the basic premise of 'I value what you are', you can expect the best of them".

6.3.7. Let's be what we can be, but know who we are

Another unique feature of relationally-enhanced policy as described by a participant work is in assessing and critically evaluating the feasibility of some civil service objectives. The premise being that for some, policy objectives are too far-reaching. Policies outlining the organisation's vision were perceived as impossible to attain, i.e. "trying to "save everybody" or "fostering a belief that the community should look to the Government (Civil Service) for all kinds of "assistance"(Appendix Y: The Lottery Economy, presents a recent newspaper article, which supports this perspective and initiative by indicating that the Government should no longer be viewed as a 'savior' for all people).

Civil servants expressed a wish that "people would be more realistic in confronting some of the problems that they have", addressing them before they turn into "a little larger a problem or become deeper entrenched". For example, resituating the notion that "the home plays a vital role" in the success of interventions from family services and "unless you get in tune with that, you are just wasting your time, the government's time".

Additionally, civil service departments could reframe their objectives by describing "change" and "improvement" in new and personalised ways. "Improvement" might come to mean bringing service users to a "higher level of functioning than in their first contact".

Relationally-enhanced policy further recognised the vitality in "working together" and of the power in using power respectfully. Use of power in equitable and informed ways seemed to be a key relational feature. The data indicated a concern for civil servants, as colleagues, and worry for "who the other person is and what's behind them". Participants felt that this relational activity has a "huge influence on what they do at work" and that "it more personal when you dealing with people... sometimes you can get things done better at work by having that relationship with them".

6.3.8. Working from the heart

Lastly, there remained a healthy uncertainty about being able to reflect a balance of relational good throughout an agency and through to policy and practice ("I am not sure if you can divorce the politics from the practice"). This skepticism could be tempered with an outlook that takes primary responsibility for the 'personal' and says that what a civil servant can do is, "listen to

concerns" and "don't always aspire to something written in a book" (or dictated by policy) for the best response may be to do "something you care about and... work straight from the heart". For, as participants say, the work is important and relevant when we are "doing exactly what we should be doing" and we are "living the mission statement".

Aligning policy and practice means that civil servants are "providing accurate information to Government to assist in the sound formulation of policy". They are "writing good, solid, sound advice on how to approach and this should be taken forward". They are "learning the legislation and regulations" and putting "it into practice". And lastly, if there is anyone who is not "doing what they need to do", the relational network aligns with an organisational culture that allows them to "call each other on that".

Inherent to this notion of "living the mission statement", was an expressed wish that best practice would more realistically acknowledge a civil servants' capacity to become experts in their fields by allowing them to take risks and encouraging them to embrace young people of all races to provide them with opportunities to advance. Of risk, participants simply said, "Give me "the ability to take risks" and "I value an opportunity where I can afford to take risks". Participants storied on risk-taking in detail and offered that risk-taking can be shifted from a relational activity to one which is alive in the organisational culture by "involving people more in a process". The alignment of sentiments on risk and performance sees the organisation "making people more accountable" by giving them "more responsibility in certain areas". People are enabled and supported in doing the jobs they were "hired to do- to take risks and to risks the consequences".

6.3.9. Reflexivity in practice

Reflexive practice was discussed as a means of better aligning practice and policy with regard to how people work with and treat each other. Box 23 summarises the findings in this area.

Box 23

Summary of findings on reflexive activity in practice

Enhancing reflective and reflexive activity in an organisation means:

- 1) Developing connections and a 'spirit of connectivity' at deeper levels by bridging differences and working towards good which involves: a) having an exchange about each person's experience of identity; b) sharing stories about life experiences; and c) strategising on ways of relating with each other that invites new meanings of experience for both of them.
- 2) The enhancement of organisational development includes: a) building trust and respect; and b) inspiring people to interact of levels that are more open-minded and more personal; making transparency in the "business" processes of an organisation a norm.
- 3) Encouraging risk-taking by actively exploring the landscape of human talent; "offering opportunity is a position that is valued".
- 4) Communicating vision by introducing and involving people in the "greater picture" of the organisation.

This inquiry has traversed a rich landscape of complex narrative activities. Whilst no line of narrative or dialogue lends itself to one neat category, some themes and new understandings

emerged from this study. Combined with offerings on alignment and identity, the reflexive activities described above illustrate the great potential for enhanced relational activities in organisations.

6.3.10. A conclusion on aligning policy with practice

My first commitment to this study was responding to the question of whether it is possible to align policy with practice. Specifically, I asked what were the possibilities for more closely aligning the discourse amongst relational networks (the privileged descriptions of the experiences of the people who give life to policy), with activities in the organisational culture (dynamics of practice influenced by relational interactions), policy (the workplace objectives as stated by the organisational missions and procedures) and best practice (the pragmatics of policy that typically reflect a set of international standards)? The finding (as detailed above) was that, yes, there are areas in each organisational sphere where better alignment of narrative activities can be envisioned.

Recently, a work colleague told me of a training experience. His employers, in the financial sector, held a meeting for managers. The presenter asked the team of managers the following three questions on how they rate the quality of customer service. One, “Who believes that staff of the organisation are motivated, hardworking and deliver excellent customer service?” I’m told that about 10% of the management team raised their hands. The second question was, “When you think of the organisation as a whole, by show of hands, is the organisation a well-run place that is perceived in the marketplace as delivering a high quality service?” “Do we differentiate ourselves from our competitors by offering a high quality service?” I’m told that about 20% of the management team raised their hands. Last, “Who believes themselves to be hardworking and deliver excellent customer service?” 90% of the management team raises their hands.

The difference in responses to this exercise validates a curiosity and concern for alignment. The conversations at one level of an organisation, for example where policies are developed, are different from those where a service is delivered. This difference may be one of a story of hope (“We are doing a great job”) to one of a story of hopelessness (“They are not doing a good job”). Efforts to align these two streams of narrative are imbedded in relational and reflexive activities.

My second commitment to this study was to discuss how such movement influences the tone of narrative activities within and amongst the organisation. There were three main outcomes of this discussion: the first relating to the fluidity of identity as a mediating force in narrative activities and organisational behavior; the second relating to new constructions and understandings of identity; and the third on devising new meanings for reflexive and constructive practice in the civil service.

Identity, traditionally viewed as a contributing factor in the divergence of narrative activity, was discussed as being situated flexible. Identities come to the surface of dialogue dependent on context. Regarding identity as flexible and fluid allows for flexibility in the understandings of identity manifestations. Identity becomes understood as a range of diversities that present themselves more or less predominantly, dependent on the situation.

6.4. Conceptions of identity, relationships and their presence in organisational narrative

The literature review substantiated that what employees regard as their most sacred and protected dialogues have an undocumented and generally unstated impact on how decisions are made, how we work together, how we relate to each other and what we aspire to be doing. Participants' offerings described this impact in practice as one that sees them placed in an environment that can be uncomfortable because the issues that need to be addressed can not be or are not addressed. And while some participants offered alternative constructions of race, the discomfort that was described had very present racial undertones. Of this discomfort, they said "it is nothing as visible as a black and white issue, but you can sense it and know that there is something underlying it". Further, the position of "race" that apparently had no impact on organisational issues was a motivating relational and organisational matter for at least one civil service participant.

Participants shared very powerful stories of experience that would impact their ability to fulfill a responsibility within an environment that does not acknowledge situated experience: a civil service that asks its employees to be "unbiased". More on the complexity and privilege of race dialogues was the sentiments of perception that "whites can't deal with black authority"- of which the civil service of Bermuda represents a majority.

Misperceptions (or missed perceptions) of whites, from a white person's perspective spoke to the belief that most whites are wealthy and are given positions and promotions just because they are white. White people, according to another participant, face challenges in the culture of agency in that they feel stifled from speaking honestly ("I think it's hard for the powers that be to hear these criticisms coming from a white guy"). For the most part, participants brought to light an experience of a civil service culture that has racial identity conflicts at its very core of narrative ("it's about race in this department"), but which is layered by a relational discourse expressed by "disdain", "contempt" or "challenging behaviors", and described as a "strange culture" of "cliques" and "work ethics".

There were also candid discussions of male and female experiences describing a lack of females in leadership roles and a racial tension as based on perception but nonetheless, "very real". Men on one civil service team described women as "simply more prepared". Some men lamented a lack of opportunity to bond with men on the job because they felt that there were simply not "enough men" and as a consequence, "black men miss opportunities" for advancement. Nicely summed, a study participant acknowledges a degree of uncertainty in that they are "dealing with perceptions about age, race and gender with regard to who will and can be involved" with the organisation and how "the stereotypes are not as consistent with past beliefs as once before".

These offerings spoke to and contribute to the description of work experiences as relational, the interactions contingent on the culture of the agency, policies and practice expectations. Engaged in their narratives, study participants generously spoke of more of their experiences, speaking to their realities and describing some hopes for future working relations. They wished to be respected, connected and encouraging of each other- similar in relationship to the sentiments of policy. Yet, within these longings for respect and connectivity was an acknowledgement that "every situation and person is different" and that "thinking outside of the box and not just stereotyping" would have to be more than current-day cliché. There was acknowledgement that

there isn't "much integration" at the relational level and in agency, regardless of idealistic policy intent.

Better mediation of these relational issues would mean that civil servants would somehow have to "let go of the little things' and to try to use each other "in a way that is effective". In practice, participants indicated that mediating relational issues would ultimately mean putting no "less than what you would be expecting" between themselves and someone in their families: involving the "same type of intensity of the relationship" that one puts "into a relationship with a person you care about". This practice might also include activities where civil servants are asked to "look very hard at how to motivate people".

6.4.1. Towards new constructions of identity

When understandings of what role identity plays in transforming narrative were explored, new meanings and beliefs about how better to align policy with practice were formed.

According to study participants, meanings of identity moved past race constructions of the physical and included seeking common experiences of exclusion and inclusion by gender, race and many other less traditional constructions of identity. Participants spoke of efforts to counteract race and gender differences of experience, rather than of the differences themselves; being a part of transcending in relationships with each other. They spoke of caring and liking certain qualities of each other, such as "energy", "intrigue", and "vivaciousness", and seeking those qualities in team mates and prospective employees. They expressed awe and joy in meeting and connecting with someone from vast different racial and cultural groups, and realising that "their moral beliefs were the same". Finally, participants spoke of being inspired by others to "go beyond their cultural and legal stipulations", to "try to figure out how I could make that difference" and to "bring professionalism to their work and make some changes" in their workplaces.

Different and unique conceptualisations of race described an experience of whiteness, little voiced. In one instance, a participant described how Bermuda's racial demographics and sub-context have meant that a white person has had to prove that he or she is capable, qualified and deserving of promotion, rather than receiving a privilege vested in being white. Additionally, unique in its conceptualisation, was a definition of race as exclusively economically-derived: "If you want to talk about race, you talk about money versus no money- that is race." This conceptualisation situates race as a "social difference", based on opportunity.

Returning to discussions of difference and identity, participants, particularly males, offered conceptualisations that went beyond race, saying "race was not the primary factor" of how they looked at "it". They considered alternative identity constructs such as ways of behaving ("outspoken", "low key"), ways of thinking ("strong-willed"), lifestyles, roles, background (a "struggling class", a "social difference" or "different life choices"), ethics, morals, personalities, and culture. However, there was acknowledgement that the experience of gender and context was possibly different for males and females in Bermuda. There were indications that "females do not have to go through that" or that "it never occurred" to one participant "to think about gender. Perhaps, offered this particular participant, "we do not have the experience of having to think about gender". A final conceptualisation of identity was one of age. Participants described

a generational difference in attitude, feeling that within the younger generations, "respect is at a low".

In the "analysis", I moved entirely away from traditional racial categorisation theories, organising the findings into conceptually meaningful themes to which people of different racial, gendered and class backgrounds speak. Therefore, as indicated above, identity did not become a theoretical explanation for aspects of narrative, based on behavior or physical appearance. Identity was constructed as a variable of experience and perceptions, external to and within the research context. Identity was used to describe a difference in narrative, rather than to draw connections. Identity, as a construct, became one that embodied a subtle, complex vocabulary of experience, past that of unearned privilege or oppression, and exploring the dilemma of negotiating the privileged, private and public narrative spheres.

The strong consideration of this inquiry was to respond to an absence in the literature, and call for, a detailed exploration of the experiences of individual as influenced by identity. Research in psychology, social work and narrative studies identified gaps in the literature such as a need for discussing how people construct perspectives on identity by incorporate new methodologies. There was also a need for an examination of the role that discourse plays in creating and reinforcing prejudice in daily interactions.

Social constructionism established a position of acknowledging multiple voices for their capacities to contribute to perspectives on meanings- of identity and on other narrative activities. The constructionist premise positioned knowledge as a product of the individual experience in relationship to the world. It is also the product of the individual's relationships, in communication with others in the world.

The challenge that social constructionism laid bare was how to adequately present the historical, cultural and socio-economic context in a way that most empirically signifies the context from which multiple truths are derived. I elected to explore participant narratives on identity as derived from their descriptions of their relationships with people who are different from them. Box 25 summarises the offerings that were articulated on the influence of identity in the civil service organisation.

Box 25

Summary of findings on the influence of identity on organisational activities

Given the fluidity and flexibility of 'identity', the vehicle for better alignment amongst interpersonal relationships is through reflexive activity. Meaningful 'professional' narrative must become reflexive and more open to a discourse on identity. Findings indicate that:

- 1) To enhance communication, people speaking from perspectives of self-acknowledged identity must begin to communicate the implications of 'experience' and a 'privilege' to others.
- 2) Identities can shift and an understanding of textured identities means that constructions of 'identity' can no longer be limited to race, gender and socio-economic class.
- 3) 'Identity' has prevalence and consequences for some, and not others influences relationships and communication across an organisation
- 4) The multiple stories and understandings about difference give rise to as many possibilities for narrative

activities in the organisation.

- 5) A highly identity-based accounting of policy and practice highlights the concern for identity and its influence in the civil service and service provision.

6.5. Research from a perspective of Appreciative Inquiry

The last main area of findings speaks to the adaptation and use of Appreciative Inquiry as a methodology and research tool. I conclude on this topic by referring to the summary of outcomes in Box 24.

Box 24

Summary of findings on using appreciative inquiry in research

Appreciative inquiry in research changes the method and tone of more traditional approaches and begins with an understanding that there are and will continue to be many ways of constructing its applications. Appreciative Inquiry:

- 1) Reaffirms that the human condition is inspired by and leans towards where it is directed.
- 2) Produces data rich in detail.
- 3) Assists with locating the 'positive' in many areas of practice.
- 4) Highlights the understanding that a very first communication is critical.

6.6. The theoretical implications for resituating features of policy and practice

Workforce narratives reveal powerful messages. The offerings of participants indicated that they believe it is possible to more closely align the spheres of narrative with Bermuda's civil service. Their offerings, at times consistent with each other, were consistent with a social constructionist call for re-focusing the situatedness of dialogue. Their narrative offerings also spoke to the ways they viewed as most helpful in addressing the challenges posed by competing narratives.

Consequently, we have heard calls for: a balanced workforce; training opportunities that explore perspectives and experiences and offer participants an opportunity to take risks; training and communication activities that highlight the organisation's mission; and communications that celebrate employee contributions to the workplace, in their programs and for the organisation as a whole.

Creating a new narrative space (enhanced alignment) for the talks that can shape an organisation's strategic functioning opens up the possibilities for enhanced relational narratives. It heightens awareness in an organisation by helping the organisation's participants become fully aware of what it is, allowing for informed choices about what changes need to occur.

As well, remaining curious and seeking to engage each other with genuine interest- one on one interviews, team meetings where perspective are explored, rather than issues- asking questions in a way that invites reflection ("What have you learned"?, "What did you see?", "What are the implications for you?") are activities which invite organisational participants to challenge their assumptions, beliefs and thinking about a policy or practice intervention. These activities followed with encouragement to all organisational participants to pay attention to the way information is collected and framed in the organisation is an important feature of enhanced

organisational behavior.

Because differences such as race, social class and gender (relationships to, feelings about, life experiences with or as) enter a discussion of organisational functioning, we must continue to aspire to study and research these dynamics for findings that may not be adequately explored. Thus narrative activities must continue to incorporate new nuances of knowledge of generated and shared relational experience so that it receives attention and is accounted for in discourse. In this process, best practice and its theory will include and acknowledge the alternative voices and expressions of individuals and their social lives in the following ways.

New visions of practice and theory will advocate the production of detailed narrative data and a description of in-exhaustive sub-contextual social landscapes. These policies and practices will represent multiple participant voices; new and textualised way of constructing knowledge; and expertise on racialised, gendered and other life experiences. These policies and practices provide for opportunities for people to explore relationships between members of different discourse communities. They also encompass an understanding that when it comes to alignment, narratives of identity disappear, and we are negotiating the core human value systems of trust, respect, honesty, communication.

Of the people who make the alignment of policy and practice a reality, they are the ones who are willing to explore and self-define diversity. They centralise and value identity concerns in an effort to reduce the potential for divisiveness that results from misunderstanding and differences in experience.

These visions for alignment acknowledge elements of "keeping it real" in a large organisation and that an aspiration of perfect alignment is probably unreal. In order to function, as a large employing and service entity, there needs to be an overarching legislative, policy and practice framework. However, rooting this framework is an acknowledgement that it would be good practice, and indeed 'best practice', to ensure that 'policy' is communicated throughout an organisation. True communication and truly valuing relationships and people means that information is shared and discussed before implementation; to both encourage buy-in and so that people who are excelling can be recognised for their accomplishments from within the structure.

6.6.1. If policy included visions of a preferred future with respect to identity and experience

Earlier in this study, I spoke to a call for self-reflection and dialogue at a deeper, self-reflective level than that which currently seemed to be occurring. I spoke to a call for research that encouraged organisational participants to reframe their system of rules and resources of the organisation in terms of the interests of those other than that of a dominant group. In other words, these activities would help organisational participants develop a level of discursiveness. This level of discursiveness might assist organisational participants in deconstruct a dominant organisational ideology by transforming the narrative practices articulated in constructionist and appreciative inquiry principles.

The study outcomes articulated the construction of organisations that acknowledge and

reconstruct the present constructions in generative ways. This new ‘realities’ are shaped by the way members view their relationships in the organisation and the ‘privileged’ and insightful narrative activities which have transformative capacities.

6.7. Limitations of the study, methodological considerations and other reflexive notions

There were two areas where I think I might have approached this study differently. First, because of organisational constraints on the process, the forums for exploration and thus data collection were limited by time. This meant that I was unable to fully brief participants on the appreciative inquiry process. I supplemented these larger discussions by incorporating shorter exercises driven by constructionists’ methodology. But from my perspective, the subsequent data were not as they could have been.

Not having had adequate time to process the appreciative approach with participants meant that I spent more time encouraging them to seek the positive cores of their narratives throughout the sessions than I would have had I had time to brief them thoroughly beforehand. This observation affirms the positive and progressive potential of AI and that in the absence of its full description as a process, participants could favour more digressive a degenerative forms of narrative.

Secondly, I make an observation with regard to the power of 'storying' an experience. If we look back on the offerings presented in the data section, the most rich in detail were those where a participant narrated the story of their experience. Where a participant seemed to simply respond to a question, the data are less rich in detail and it is was more difficult to “mine out” the life-giving forces. In the latter instance, I was required to engage in an additional and more interactive role with the text; envisioning what the participant aimed to express, but may have left unstated.

Again, I have found that taking on appreciative inquiry in this study has had implications for my present work. It has changed the way approach training and even the way in which I prepare documents for my colleagues and the public. Now, in my everyday life, I find myself listening for, reacting to and attempting to re-narrate stories that I hear, with a view towards seeking their best elements.

Additionally, I noted that participants spoke to the process as enjoyable and recalled stories of respect and fondness for people that perhaps had been stored for years. These outcomes reflected the premise that group work in appreciative inquiry requires a clear and thorough briefing on its premises, and that without, participants are likely to digress into more traditional and problem-focused forms of workplace narrative. These outcomes also make a statement about the life-giving power of ‘storying’ on positive relational experiences. Participants also spoke of the high interactional component to the interviews and of the unusual formulation of questioning. From their comments I gleaned that while experiencing the interviews as unusual, participants again, enjoyed the process ("it felt better than a survey").

Reflecting on a different aspect of this inquiry’s path, I wonder about the decision to encourage interview participants to self-determine their understandings of diversity. This decision meant that I was not specific about race, gender, or socio-economic class constructs as being topics of interest for the inquiry. For some participants, not having a parameter for thinking about

diversity caused them to struggle to search for stories. They first had to recall what diversity and difference meant to them, and then they tried to recall experiences. Although the consequent offerings were detailed and spoke to a wide range of diversities, I wonder if I would have had more contributions on race, gender and class had I focused the line of inquiry. Or, would participants have challenged me on a limited scope of difference?

There were two other considerations that I would reflect on more in future study: the wisdom of using multiple narrative texts; and secondly, the impact of my race on narrative outcomes. In the first instance, while drawing on multiple sites and sources for narrative expanded the landscape of dialogue, the multiple texts were difficult to negotiate methodologically. For one, mining the data from a group process without the benefit of ongoing contributions from the group, was challenging. Secondly, adequately reflecting on the group offerings was another challenge. Perhaps in future studies, working with one committed group through the process, as AI suggests, would provide less varied data but would be far more manageable.

The second consideration was for the degree to which my identity as a black female impacted the narrative exchange. Whilst for me, not problematic, I wonder if some participants who may have struggled with conceptualising a relational experience of difference, either used race or avoided race as a construction of identity. The rhetorical question that I have asked myself is whether race representation changed the narrative exchange to a larger extent than it would have had the diversities between researcher and participant been similar.

6.8. My contribution

This study guided a process of viewing civil service work and research activities through a constructionist lens. It asked that in future studies and work on organisational behavior that we think through elements of relationship in a unique way.

Unique to this inquiry was an investigation into how constructions of identity continue to influence civil service life. Also highlighted was how identity can be constructed very differently by people in one community. Inherent to this discussion was that possibilities for divergent narratives are infinite, correlated with congruent and divergent interests and experience. These perspectives can result in conflict, misunderstanding and competing activities- but they also root the potential for creative and productive ones. As such, narratives and dialogues of experience- beyond race, class and gender have been communicated in this study. Further, there has been a rediscovery of the presence of and aspirations for fundamental values (respect, trust, honesty) to flourish in organisational and relational cultures, as differences in identity are negotiated.

CHAPTER VII: ENVISIONING THE FUTURE: CONSEQUENCES FOR EXPANDING AND RE-SITUATING NARRATIVE ACTIVITY

The driving feature of this project was to better align the relational narratives and actions of civil service employees with the policies from which they work. The study participants were chosen from a wide range of civil servants in Bermuda. A core aspect of the study was that all experiences are created through human interaction. The study process was also influenced by how civil servants perceived themselves as doing their jobs, with respect to the people they work with, and the policy and best practice frameworks in place to guide this work.

The study was divided into three main sections. The background section described my process of arriving at the question of the possibilities for aligning policy with practice. In this section I described civil service work as being ambiguous and highly dependent on the perspectives people bring to relationships. A review of the literature presented: social constructionism as the grounding theoretical foundation; adapting appreciative inquiry from a means of engaging organisational participants for change, to research methodology; the nature of narrative activities; and transformative dialogue as an objective for conversations of change in the workplace.

To simplify the discussion on alignment between policy and practice, I suggested that an organisation be regarded as having four areas of activity. I referred to these four areas as: 1) relational networks; 2) the organisational culture; 3) 'policy'; and 4) 'best practice'. This meant that I would seek possibilities for redirecting the 'talk' in the mediums where: 1) people may speak in privileged ways of how policy impacts them (relational networks); 2) the dynamics of practice and behavior are influenced by relational interactions (organisational culture); 3) the workplace objectives are stated by the organisational missions and procedures (policy implementation activities); 4) and the pragmatics of policy, often influenced by a set of international standards (best practice activities) are considered.

I suggested that the activities occurring in each of these four areas are contingent on the interactions between people; specifically, the dialogues that they have and the discourse that they produce. As a consequence, and for ease of reference, I referred to the areas of activities as narrative spheres. The narrative spheres are loose and fairly fluid categorisations of how and where organisational 'talk' occurs. In the narrative spheres, a whole range of 'storying' occurs that in turn, determines how people relate to each other in the organisation. This range of 'storying' can be deeply personal and was referred to as 'privileged'. It can also be far more politically correct and is referred to as 'professional'. The range of narrative activities in any of the narrative spheres includes discussions, dialogues, the creation of discourse and full narratives. I proposed that the alignment of policy and practice is strongly correlated with the alignment of narrative activities among the four narrative spheres.

In a far more detailed discussion of influences on the civil service role, I discussed roles and responsibilities and the implications of an organisational mission and mandate on the tone and quality of narrative within its spheres. Merging the themes of narrative and narrative alignment, with roles and responsibilities, constructionism and appreciative inquiry, I proposed to consider

the narrative activities of civil servants in Bermuda. Considering the narrative activities of the civil service meant not only exploring what they are, but using participants' data to determine areas of alignment.

The study was framed as an inquiry into the lives of civil servants, observed within a consultation group, training workshops and interviews.

The study participants revealed that there are several ways to align the relational elements of people with policy. The study findings determined that if we consider the privileged and professional dialogues of organisational participants, there are very powerful ways to enhance the dialogue.

First, aligning the narrative activities of the relational networks, organisational culture, 'policy' and 'best practice' meant:

- 1) Incorporating 'curiosity' into practice;
- 2) Enhancing the nature of communication through a process of building alliances in organisational culture.
- 3) Enhancing 'culture' with a relational shift of understanding, acceptance and increased communication.
- 4) Aspiring to loyalty and commitment by carrying relational elements such as trust, honesty and respect into the agency's culture and consequently, changing and improving the culture.
- 5) Returning to basic levels of communication and relationship-building by encouraging and setting the stage for organisational participants to have many conversations, and to provide frank observations at each other.
- 6) Promoting and developing a capacity for reflexive practice through the enhanced coordination of experiences and activities on a platform of meaningful conversations (moving towards a jointly satisfactory mutual language).
- 7) Promoting and developing the capacity for reflexive practice by learning how to be honest with ourselves; and our responsibility for ensuring good relations with each other.
- 8) Demonstrating a willingness to dialogue on how conceptions of identity emerge, are experienced or perceived.
- 9) Allowing potential to flourish by acknowledging good work and becoming personally invested in a wide spectrum of organisational participants being encouraged to take risks and to succeed.
- 10) Allowing potential to flourish by opening communication processes and by sharing information in a transparent way.
- 11) Allowing potential to flourish by taking risks and creating a space where organisational participants are valued: taking risks included providing opportunities for civil servants to advise others on matters of importance and allowing this expression without confining to extensively rigid guidelines.
- 12) Seeking the 'personal' as a policy by becoming an organisation where persons can develop career objectives that bring out some degree of personal and professional satisfaction.
- 13) Adopting a policy on 'strategic caring' which means examining what an individual needs to stay committed to the civil service and guiding that developmental process.

- 14) Incorporating what is experienced as “alive” in practice within a policy ‘ideal’ by engaging in more dialogues with each other and gathering more information that speaks of and for those on whom the policy will have an impact.
- 15) Adopting new notions of hierarchy that allow for flexible communication structures; envisioning new ways of communicating by demoting the concept of hierarchies.
- 16) Reinventing the policy on ‘policy’ by consistently evaluating the organisation’s capacity to offer a service.
- 17) Addressing relational wishes by bringing more diversity into teams and by ensuring that no talent is allowed to go wasted.
- 18) Acknowledging that individual achievements are relational achievements and enhance the greater good; welcoming new conceptualisations of leadership and ensuring that employees feel that they are a part of the ‘vision’.
- 19) Enhancing the relational tone of practice by refocusing on people and working from the heart. This means listening with empathy, believing in someone, creating environments of trust, and generating an atmosphere that allows for civil servants to take chances and make the decisions that fall within the auspices of their jobs.
- 20) Expansively communicating policies on vision and operations and clarifying roles and responsibilities so that people know what they are supposed to be doing, can do it, and can help each other in “doing it”.
- 21) Introducing policies and allowing them to take root.
- 22) Sharing leadership roles and risk.
- 23) Communicating spirituality in practice by demonstrating trust and good will.
- 24) Recognising and believing in the potential of all civil servant participants by taking the organisation’s mission statement to heart and treating clients as though they were family.
- 25) Changing perceptions and expectations of best practice by helping civil servants explore their specific roles, functions and responsibilities; creating an atmosphere where this process can be fostered; and reframing and exploring new meanings of best practice.

Second, given the fluidity and flexibility of ‘identity’, the vehicle for better alignment amongst interpersonal relationships is through reflexive activity. Meaningful ‘professional’ narrative must become reflexive and more open to a discourse on identity. Findings indicate that:

- 1) To enhance communication, people speaking from perspectives of self-acknowledged identity must begin to communicate the implications of ‘experience’ and a ‘privilege’ to others.
- 2) Identities can shift and an understanding of textured identities means that constructions of ‘identity’ can no longer be limited to race, gender and socio-economic class.
- 3) ‘Identity’ has prevalence and consequences for some, and not others influences relationships and communication across an organisation
- 4) The multiple stories and understandings about difference give rise to many possibilities for narrative activities in the organisation.
- 5) A highly identity-based accounting of policy and practice highlights the need for increased concern for identity and its influence in the civil service and service provision.

Third, enhancing reflective and reflexive activity in an organisation means:

- 1) Developing connections and a ‘spirit of connectivity’ at deeper levels by bridging differences and working towards good which involves:
 - a) having an exchange about each person’s experience of identity;

- b) sharing stories about life experiences; and
 - c) strategising on ways of relating with each other that invites new meanings of experience for both of them.
- 2) The enhancement of organisational development includes:
 - a) building trust and respect; and
 - b) inspiring people to interact of levels that are more open-minded and more personal; making transparency in the “business” processes of an organisation a norm.
 - 3) Encouraging risk-taking by actively exploring the landscape of human talent- “offering opportunity is a position that is valued”.
 - 4) Communicating vision by introducing and involving people in the “greater picture” of the organisation.

Lastly, Appreciative Inquiry in research changes the method and tone of more traditional approaches and begins with an understanding that there are and will continue to be many ways of constructing its applications. Appreciative Inquiry:

- 1) Reaffirms that the human condition is inspired by and leans towards where it is directed
- 2) Produces data rich in detail
- 3) Assists with locating the ‘positive’ in many areas of practice
- 4) Highlights the understanding that a very first communication is critical

Consistent with an appreciative inquiry focus on using the best experiences of the past and present to envision a future, study participants indicated that some of these life-giving dialogues are occurring in their workplaces right now. These encouraging, supportive and curiosity-driven conversations are becoming more ‘privileged’ in tone and are present in the civil service and other places of business.

However, these findings illustrate that there is room for the tone of these dialogues to shift in ways that demonstrate a high regard for the people who give meaning to policy and practice activities. When this shift occurs, and incorporates the offerings on aligning activities between narrative spheres, we will better align policy and practice. As such, we will have also moved one step closer to the ‘relational realisation of policy in practice’.

This study bore out a challenge for new conceptualisations of best practice. Best practice should be challenged by the promotion of excellence in practice. Excellence is that combination of human and policy factors that reflect the realities of work, the experience of the public sector being served, and allows for genuine and authentic public and political exchange. Excellence would be the “best of” the professional experience. Excellence would view the contributions of individuals from within their many roles and identities, as a source of organisational strength. Further, excellence would encourage participants in a direction of having dialogues that seek the best of individuals, the best for the culture of the organisation, the best applications for policy and the best practice of practice.

Participation in these types of authentic dialogues might make it is easier for individuals to accept that their privileged and/or internal narratives have consequences for organisational practice. As we become more accustomed to listening for, and seeking out, the hidden, removed or silent messages, it may become possible to hear the absence of the privileged narrative in

policy. It may also become possible to experience how regardless of what is stated as an organisational mission or best practice objectives, the exercise of opening what is privileged to a wider audience. Authentic dialogues open up possibilities for support in relational networks, and an opportunity for checks and balances within the organisational culture.

In becoming inquisitive about privileged meaning, we may discover that the challenge for, and to, organisations is to create a space in the professional narrative for the privileged one to occur. This is not to say that a ‘best practice’ or ‘policy ideal’ would ultimately change, but that as it stands, the two are too disconnected from each other. They may be competing for the same space and energies, and telling competing stories.

Organisations and their employees will be able to speak about their best work when the narrative process is informed by individuals’ most privileged stories. It is only then, in my opinion, that the possibilities for excellent workplace relationships, good employment experiences, sound policy and excellence in practice can be comprehensively narrated.

These stories may have much better outcomes if they are co-constructed with high regard for the situated experience of identity. These respectful, accepting and diverse exchanges increase the potential for alignment between workplace culture, policy and practice.

EPILOGUE

I suppose if someone were to ask me in a most candid way for my most privileged perspective on my study, I would start the dialogue like this.

I expected that I would find that what people say in their most privileged relationships is far different from what is said in the professional arena. This was true. The civil servants who I spoke to were not afraid to speak frankly. In fact, it seemed they had been wishing that someone would ask them. However, there was something distinct about the ‘truths’ of civil servants’ lives, as civil servants described them. From executives to administrators, across all sorts of identities, the privileged dialogues sounded very similar. Reminiscent in each story were those basic wishes and needs for respect, acknowledgement, honesty, and curiosity. What was evident was that civil servants felt that these perspectives were relevant, possibly known, but unaddressed.

Therefore, bringing the “water cooler” narratives to the “boardroom” may not seem so much the risk I first proposed, but an exercise in futility. The privileged experience is masked by a wide array of policy and best practice statements. However, what I found is that the visions for policy and practice, and their accompanying narratives, are not that different at all. Almost regardless of identities and experience, people seem to aspire to some very core human values.

Yet, what I suppose is surprising is that for all of the talk of “organisational development strategies”, and for all of the current work that goes into organisational enhancement, civil servants continue to speak of these core needs. Therefore, the challenges of alignment persist.

Good ‘strategy’, great mission statements, sound policies and even well-worded and highly sophisticated ‘best practices’ moderately influence the synergy of policy and practice. The greatest influence seems to be a relational one. The policies are as great as the people who work with them. Practices are at their best when people are at their best. The organisation is at its best because people make it so.

Consequently, the relational realisation of policy in practice is the exercise of valuing people.

APPENDIXES

- A. An invitation for dialogue: The Conversation Project (p. 3)
- B. Principles of Appreciative Inquiry (AI) (p. 57, 58)
- C. The Interview Protocol (Guide) (p. 62, 108, 121, 123)
- D. The Constitution of Government (p. 75)
- E. Article on role tensions and responsibilities for civil servants (p. 78)
- F. A Step on a Methodological Journey: AI Consultative Group Feedback (p. 105)
- G. A Provocative Proposition: a vision of this study through an appreciative lens (p. 107)
- H. Pre-constructionist Interview Guideline (p. 108)
- I. Constructionist (AI enhanced) Interview Protocol version 1 (p. 108)
- J. Constructionist (AI enhanced) Interview Protocol version 2 (p. 108)
- K. E-mail communications on the construction of a training workshop (p. 112, 167)
- L. AB Works Facilitated Dialogue Training Proposal and Feedback (p. 115, 157, 167)
- M. Dialogic training exercise outline with narrative and appreciative focus (. 117)
- N. Pay Scales (p. 119)
- O. Tips for Conducting Appreciative Inquiry Interviews and Gathering information (p. 121)
- P. Interview Consent Form and Interview Face Sheet (p. 121)
- Q. Introductory Remarks (p. 121)
- R. Research involving Bermuda Government Employees: Information & Processes (p. 121)
- S. Letter of introduction from Taos Institute/ Tilburg University (p. 121)
- T. Letter of introduction from Taos Institute/ Tilburg University
- U. Civil Service Values
- V. Article on Rewarding Employees
- W. Article of 'Relationships' as a skill

SCHEDULE OF TABLES

- 1. The 5-D Cycle of Appreciative Inquiry (AI) (p. 55, 283)
- 2. Needs Assessment Meeting Participants (107, 114)
- 3. Facilitated Dialogue participant grid (Data identification #2) (p. 111)
- 4. Dialogic Training participant grid (Data identification #3) (p.)
- 5. Interview Participant grid (p. 119, 171)
- 6. Strategies for Reflexive and Privileged organisational participation (p. 180)

LIST OF BOXES

- 1. Case Example: The silence of policy in practice (p. 141)
- 2. Bermuda as a sub-cultural context for civil service work
- 3. The study's initial provocative proposition (p. 56)
- 4. An AI infused "analysis" process (p. 60)
- 5. Of Race and Politics in Bermuda (p. 71)
- 6. Governmentality and the Constitution of the Civil Service
- 7. Senior Civil Service Managers offerings on challenges in translating policy into practice
- 8. Factors contributing to successful policy making and organisational development (p. 84)

9. Public Service Mission Statement (p. 85)
10. Public Service Values
11. Strategising for organisational change in the civil service sub-culture
12. Revised Human Resources Mission Statement
13. Aspects of the shared understanding interview model (p. 89)
14. The discourse model (p. 90)
15. AI Consultative Group Feedback (p. 106)
16. ½ Day Workshop Training Outline for Needs Assessment Group
17. Proposed protocol exercise (Inquiry) for Needs Assessment Group Workshop
18. Facilitated Dialogue Proposed Training Outline: AB Works (p. 112)
19. Facilitated dialogue training session: Group inquiry (p. 113)
20. Communications illustrating the influence of appreciative inquiry and adopting an appreciative tone (p. 114)
21. Towards a new training experience: E-mail communications on establishing the parameters of a dialogue-based workshop (p. 166)
22. Summary of Findings on the alignment of policy and practice (p. 189)
23. Summary of findings on reflexive activity in practice (p. 193)
24. Summary of findings on using AI in research (p. 200)
25. Summary of findings on the influence of identity on organisational activities (p. 197)

FIGURES

- Elements of a discourse community and a co-constructed narrative process (p. 14)

Appendix A: An invitation to dialogue: The Conversation Project

Introduction

This program is a joint effort between the Diversity Institute of Bermuda and The Commission for Unity and Racial Equality- a team of employees and volunteers that have as their focus: to promote best race relations between people of different races; to tackle institutional and workplace discrimination; and to promote equal and fair employment opportunities for those who have been disadvantaged in the workforce. As such, we do workshops and training programs on race relations, challenging personal biases and prejudices. Last year, CURE hosted a program called the Leadership Diversity forum in which almost 100 of Bermuda's business, political and community leaders participated. Out of this program came a request for more opportunities to dialogue- on Bermuda, on race issues- with residents of Bermuda. To have conversations amongst community members and to have these individuals represent a perspective of their lives, as racial beings in Bermuda.

And so, we have gathered a group of people together today, and more for upcoming months, to continue these conversations on our understandings of our racial lives. We've challenged them with the task of engaging in open, honest and authentic dialogue- and, to stay in the room with these people, who may be very different from themselves. We challenge, you as viewers, to respond with your questions, comments and feedback. So on behalf of the Commission and the Diversity Institute of Bermuda, we present to you, "The Conversation Project".

Note: The end of the program will make special thanks to DIB for assisting with the facilitation and to the company that supplies the venue. Viewers will be informed that if they would like to be a guest on the program, they should contact CURE. To make comments, viewers are asked to go to www.cire.bm or to email CURE at cure@ibl.bm.

FACILITATED CONVERSATIONS: THE "BURNING QUESTIONS"

Premise

Following CURE's Leadership Diversity Forum (January 2004), there was a call for more dialogue in and amongst the community on race and diversity issues. CURE has initiated several programs that have children and youth as their focus, leaving an opportunity to develop an initiative for adults.

The questions, concerns and areas for further dialogue were identified by Leadership Diversity participants. These individuals participated in an exercise facilitated by diversity trainer, Lee Mun Wah, entitled "The Burning Question". Some of the burning questions were adapted to become the premise of our first "conversation". They were:

- *What is your perspective on race issues in Bermuda today?*
- *How has "race" played a part in your life- if at all? Is racism a problem in today's Bermuda?*
- *To what degree do you think racial discrimination is a problem for Bermuda?*
- *If so, how is it experienced?*

- *Do people really care about race issues? If not, what will it take for people to care? Why do you think racism, or the perception of, still exists?*
- *What should be done to move forward, in your opinion?*

The people who join us for the “conversation” are asked to reflect on their racial lives. We challenge them with the task of engaging in open, honest and authentic dialogue—and, to stay in the room with the other people, who may be very different from themselves. Their sincerity and courage will help us to encourage other members of the community to join us.

Vision Statement

The facilitated dialogue/conversation is a lively facilitated program that provides a forum for a range of adults to:

- 1) Share perceptions and increase understanding of issues that “divide” the community;
- 2) Increase public knowledge and awareness on issues that arose from the diversity workshop and ultimately to;
- 3) Engage both participants and the public in an ongoing dialogue on the personal experience of race, diversity & discrimination.

Continuing the Conversation

The program will be filmed and aired on local television broadcasts once the committee members establish the programs format and content⁵⁵. Viewers will be directed to write their feedback to CURE at www.cure.bm.

⁵⁵ Originally, the dialogue was to be produced “live”. Logistically, this proved too much of a challenge and cost. CURE proposes a three-hour discussion, which will be reduced to a one-hour broadcast.

Appendix B: Principles of Appreciative Inquiry

While the 5-D Cycle for applying Appreciative Inquiry is presented as a systematic approach to organisational change, it is important to understand that variations on, or even alternatives to the model will inevitably emerge as each system takes the AI approach and makes it their own. Once grounded in the principles of AI, organisations inevitably become generative and creative, which leads to even more innovation in the use of AI itself.

Principle	Definition	Explanation
1. Constructionist	<p><i>Words create worlds</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Reality, as we know it, is a subjective vs. objective state. ○ It is socially created, through avenues of human communication: language, storytelling and conversations. 	<p><i>An understanding and acceptance of the social constructionist stance toward reality and social knowledge, i.e. that what we believe to be real in the world is created through our social discourse, through conversations we have with each other that lead to agreement about how will we see the world, behave, what we will accept as reality.</i></p> <p><i>Human communication and language is at the center of human organising and change. Meaning is made in conversation, reality is created in communication and knowledge is generated through social interaction. Knowledge is a subjective reality- a social artifact resulting from communication amongst groups of people. Words, language, and metaphors are more than mere descriptions of reality. They are the product of social agreement that create knowledge.</i></p>
2. Simultaneity	<p><i>Inquiry creates change</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Inquiry is intervention. ○ The moment we ask a question, we begin to create a change. 	<p><i>A realisation that inquiry is change; that the first question we ask is fateful in that the organisation will turn its energy in the direction of that first question, whether positive or negative; and as a result, the seeds of change are embedded in it.</i></p> <p><i>Change occurs the moment a question is asked. Inquiry and change are simultaneous. Questions, whether they are posed to oneself or to another, can create identities and give hope where none existed before. There is provocative potential in questions which give form to identities, relationships and patterns of living; they also stimulate ideas,</i></p>

		<p><i>innovation, invention, knowledge and theory. Practically speaking, the art of crafting and asking questions is in producing those that will illicit an affirmative response.</i></p>
<p>3.Poetic</p>	<p><i>We can choose what we study</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Organisations, like open books, are endless sources of study and learning ○ What we choose to study makes a difference. It describes- even creates- the world as we know it. 	<p><i>A valuing of story telling as a way of gathering holistic information that includes not only facts, but also the feelings and affect that a person experiences and the recognition that stories (like all good poetry) can be told about any aspect of an organisations' existence.</i></p> <p><i>Organisations are endless sources of learning, inspiration and interpretation, like open books. The stories in an organisation can be told and retold, interpreted and reinterpreted, through any frame of reference or topic on inquiry. The topics that are chosen for study determine what will be discovered and learned, as well as create that topic. Questions about joy and enthusiasm at work evoke stories, images and experiences of joy. Conversely, questions about stress lead to stories, images and experiences of stress. Metaphors have significant influence on human organising- going beyond naming an experience, to actually becoming an experience.</i></p>
<p>4.Anticipatory</p>	<p><i>Image inspires action</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Human systems move in the direction of their images of the future. ○ The more positive and hopeful the image of the future, the more positive the present day action. 	<p><i>The impact of anticipatory images; i.e. understanding that behavior and decisions about actions are based not only on what we were born with or learned from our environment, but also on what we anticipate, what we think or imagine will happen in the future.</i></p> <p><i>Images of the future guide and inspire present-day actions and achievements. Organisations exist, in part, because people are drawn to and share images and projections of the future. If images are created of where people believe they are going, they will organise to those images. Success or failure may rest with the images participants hold of the future, which can be portrayed visually</i></p>

		<i>through, pictorial or creative expression, or narratively through stories and conversation, residing in the day-to-day dialogue among individuals and groups. Organisational images of the future reside in the inner (informal) dialogue of the organisation- rich accounts of past successes and vivid images of future potential.</i>
5.Positive	<p><i>Positive questions lead to positive change</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Momentum for large-scale change requires large amounts of positive affect and social bonding. ○ The momentum is best generated through positive questions that amplify the positive core. 	<p><i>A belief that a positive approach to any issue is just as valid as a basis for learning and that it is just as contagious as a negative approach, which makes taking the positive stance an antidote to cynicism.</i></p> <p><i>Positive questions lead to positive change. The momentum for change requires large amounts of positive affect and social bonding- hope, inspiration and sheer joy in crating with one another. Positive questions bring out the best in people, inspire positive action and create possibilities for positive futures. Given opportunities op study, learn and dream about the positive core, people and organisations feel hopeful, get excited and naturally gravitate towards what works⁵⁶.</i></p>
6.Wholeness	<p><i>Wholeness brings out the best</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Wholeness brings out the best in people and organisations. ○ Bringing all stakeholders together in large group forums stimulates creativity and builds collective capacity. 	<p><i>The experience of wholeness brings out the best of people, relationships, communities and organisations. It reflects times when people are able to: hear, witness and make sense of each other's differing views, perspectives and interpretations of shared events- to understand the whole story through a synthesis of multiple stories shared and woven by the people involved. The experience of wholeness and healing emerges no in the discovery of commonalities, but rather in understanding, accepting and enjoying differences. The understanding of the whole story- with all its differences and distinctions- brings with it a kind of contentment and trust that does not require agreement.</i></p>
7.Enactment	<p><i>Acting “as if” is self-fulfilling</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ To really make a change, we must “be the change we want to see”. ○ Positive change occurs when the process used to create the change is a living model of the ideal future. 	<p><i>Transformation occurs by living in the present what is most desire din the future. Positive change comes about as images and visions of a more desired future are enacted in the present. Effective organisational change requires that the process used for change be a living example or enactment of the desired future, i.e. If an organisation wants people engaged in the business, they must act as if high participation and commitment are the norm.</i></p>
8.Free Choice	<p><i>Free choice liberates power</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ People perform better and are more committee when 	<p><i>People and organisations thrive when people are free to choose the nature and extent of their contribution. Treating people as volunteers- with freedom to choose to contribute as they most</i></p>

⁵⁶ An organisation’s positive core is the wisdom, knowledge, successful strategies, positive attitudes and affect, best practices, skills, resources and capabilities of the organisation. It is the source of life-giving potential, consisting of the organisation’s creative, life-affirming qualities, capabilities and resources (Cooperrider and Whitney, 2003).

	<p>they have freedom to choose how and what they contribute.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Free choice stimulates organisational excellence and positive change. 	<p><i>desire- liberates both personal and organisational power. This premise facilitates a democratic work environment with processes for people to choose how and when to participate based on their strengths, interests, values, hopes, and dreams.</i></p>
--	--	--

Source: Adapted from Whitney and Trosten-Bloom, 1997, p.54 and 'AI for Organisation: A Workshop Resource Book' by Bernard J. Mohr & Jane Magruder Watkins

DEFINING APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY

Appreciative Inquiry is about discovering and applying new knowledge and new ideas about key aspects of organisational life. In particular it focuses on generating and applying knowledge that comes from inquiry into moments of excellence, periods of exceptional competence and performance – times when people have felt most alive and energised. Examples of AI “applications” include (but are not limited to) productivity, innovation, strategy development, customer service, business process redesign, safety and quality, mergers, diversity, evaluation, organisation culture, management audits, leadership, and a host of other issues, problems, questions or opportunities in the organisation.

Appreciative Inquiry is both a:

1. **Process** (Definition, Discovery, Dream, Design, Delivery/Destiny) for engaging people in building the kinds of families, communities, organisations and world they want to live in; and
2. **Practical daily philosophy** (applying learning from what works and gives life is more effective and sustainable than learning from breakdowns and pathologies) that can guide our work with families, communities, and organisations.

Appreciative Inquiry as an inquiry-based change process begins with:

1. Agreeing on what we want to learn about (Definition); followed by
2. Participative inquiry into conditions which are present when the organisation is performing optimally – in human, ecological and economic terms (Discovery); that
3. Knowledge is then translated into the fabric of the organisation’s daily life (Design); and in recognition that all knowledge is evolutionary; the
4. Organisation continues to learn from that which is working and improvises based on those new learning’s (Delivery/ Destiny).

Appreciative Inquiry as a philosophy of change

- **Emphasises collaboration and participation of all voices in the system**
- **Approaches change as a journey, rather than an event**
- **Has a system orientation (Focus is on changing the organisation rather than the people)**
- **Values continuity along with innovation and transition management, and**
- **Most uniquely, builds on the “life-giving forces” present when a system is performing in human, economic and organisational terms.**

Source: AI for Organisation Change: A Workshop Resource Book, B. Mohr & J.M. Watkins

Appendix C: The Interview protocol:

An inquiry into meaningful policy and excellent relationships between people of different diversities

Best *personal* experience with someone who is different

Bermuda is a place where people from many diverse backgrounds reside and work. Residents are also known to travel, work and study abroad, meeting people from all different parts of the world. By exploring the best experiences each of us has had, we can create an atmosphere in which people of a variety of diversities live and work harmoniously together and feel that they are treated equally and fairly.

Think back to a time when you had an unusually good connection with someone who was very different from you. This was an experience outside of work. Tell me the story about that time, with a beginning, middle and end if possible. Give me as many details as possible.

When you think about the person you've just described, and the group of people this person represents, imagine that you and your closest friend (spouse) are talking. There may have been both good and bad things that came up for you, maybe before you even knew this person or the group of people they represent. Your friend has said to you, "Now, tell me what you really think". What would you say?

If you were making a comment to your closest friend (spouse) about this experience, what would you be saying? Nobody else would know that you said it?

Think of a time when you felt different and the difference was viewed very positively. Tell me the story of this experience? (optional)

Probes: Who was involved? What happened? How was it that you felt this experience was different and better than others? What were some of the contributing factors, internal or external that contributed to these feelings?

Best *working* experience with someone who is different

Part of developing a working environment in which employees are treated respectfully and fairly is to explore the best of *working* experiences each of us has had. These experiences have been described as touching, moving, or satisfying because they represented a "best moment" in connecting with someone.

Think back to a time when you had an exceptionally good *working* experience with someone who was different from you. Perhaps you have worked with someone of a different race, ethnicity, gender or culture. Tell me about this time and this very positive experience you had with this person who was different from you. What about the experience excited you and made you feel alive, involved, or excited? Describe the situation in detail.

If you had a magic wand and could take the best of that past experience to create the ideal working environment for people who have many differences, what three things would you wish for?

What is one small step, one small action which we might take as a group of employees that you think might help make your story about an ideal working environment likely to come true?

Best policies

Policies and decision-making practices seem to be most effective when employees feel that they been able to do their jobs well in respect to an organisational policy. One of the ways in which we can create effective and meaningful policy is to explore our best practices and policies. These experiences take into account the contributions and character we each bring to our work. The Bermuda Government's mission statement reads:

Bermuda Government Public Service Mission Statement

We are committed to providing accurate information and advice to Government to assist in the formulation of sound social and economic policies and enhance the welfare of the community. We pledge to be a motivated and accountable workforce that will deliver these services in an effective, efficient and equitable way. (Copy distributed to each participant)

Can you take a moment to read the statement again, creating a picture or vision in your mind about what this statement means to you? For example, the key words and what they mean to you working with other people on a team. Once you have that picture in your mind, think of a time when someone in this organisation made this vision real for you; come alive for you. They acted in a way that demonstrated the mission statement and their actions made you feel warm, connected or as some people have described, "proud". Can you tell me what came up for you when you reflected on the mission statement? Can you tell me who you thought of during this exercise and what happened?

Best and meaningful employee contributions to the workplace

Enhancing race relations and an appreciation for diversity so that everyone can be respected for their differences and treated fairly seems to be most successful when people get connected to each other. One way of facilitating that is to share with each other some things about we are as individuals.

Without being humble, what do you value most about who you are as a person working in this organisation?

What do you value most about the work that you do for this organisational community (the Bermuda Government) when you are at your best?

If you had three wishes for how we work together, as Bermuda's civil service, what would they be?

Given these wishes, what part of our work, or of how we think about our work, would have to change?

R280604

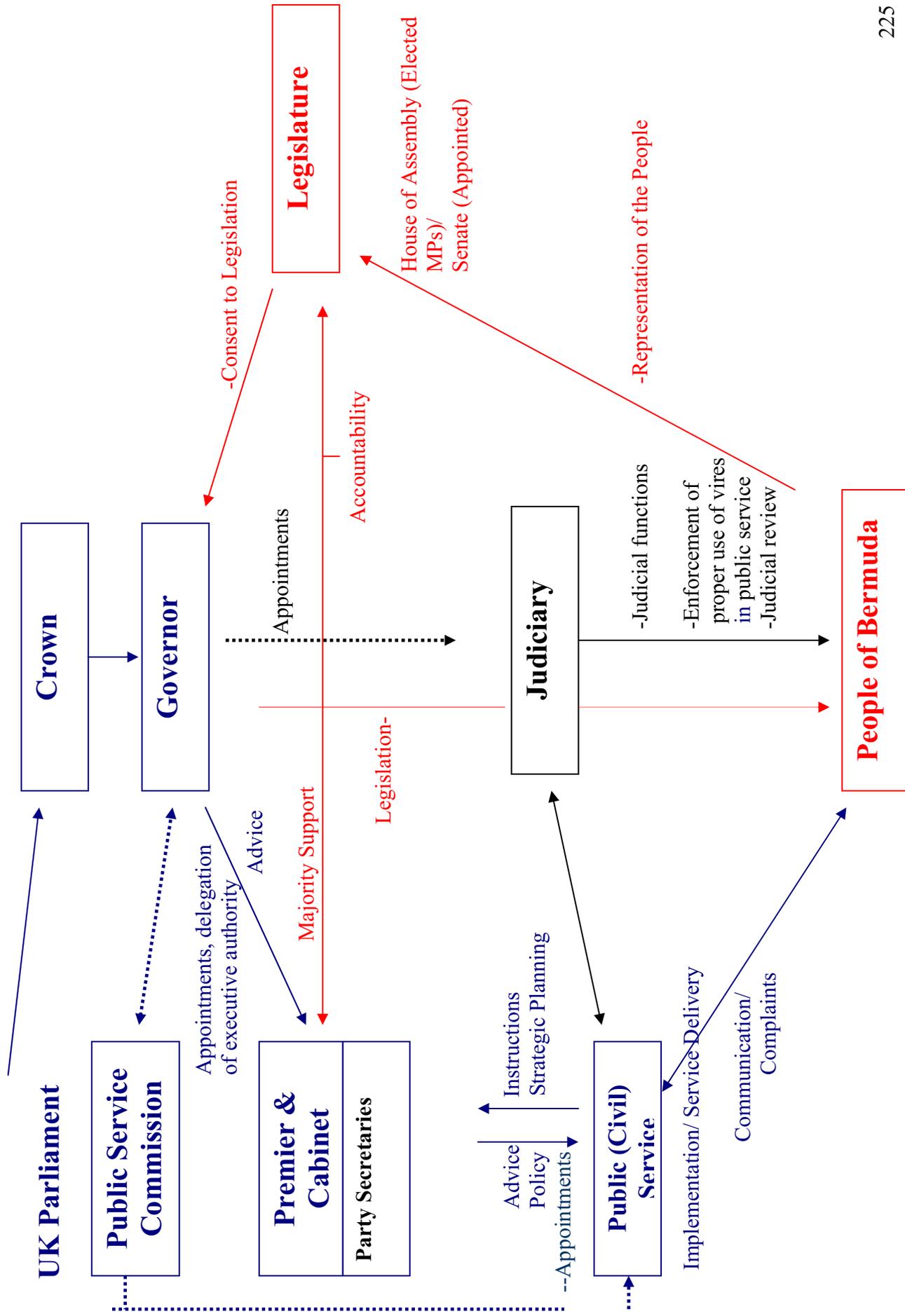
Bermuda Government Public Service Mission Statement

We are committed to providing accurate information and advice to Government to assist in the formulation of sound social and economic policies and enhance the welfare of the community.

We pledge to be a motivated and accountable workforce that will deliver these services in an effective, efficient and equitable way.

*Distributed to each interview participant

Appendix D: The Constitution: Key Elements





The Royal Gazette

Opinion

Tuesday, March 29, 2005

[Contact us](#)

Last modified: March 29, 2005 10:59AM

Politics and civil servants

Last week, Government announced the appointment of Milton Scott as Director of Labour in the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Mr. Scott was heralded by Minister Randy Horton as supremely qualified for the post. Not only had he been secretary general of the Bermuda Union of Teachers, he had been head of human resources at Stevedoring Services, giving him an unusual insight into both sides of the labour-employer relationship. So far, so good.

But Mr. Scott had also been Government Senate Leader and Minister of Education for a short period. This, Mr. Horton said, meant he also had an insight into Government's role in the tripartite relationship between Government, employers and employees.

Well, yes, that's true, too. What was not said was how Mr. Scott intends to ensure that he will uphold the impartiality of the Civil Service, which must be prepared to serve whichever political master happens to hold power in the Legislature.

This is not a principle that should be taken lightly. As 1998 showed, Bermudian voters will change the party in power, no matter how long they have been in office. If the UBP were to win the next election, would Mr. Scott be able to serve it as well as will presumably serve the current government? And would the UBP feel comfortable having Mr. Scott in a key post?

It is true that former civil servants have later represented both political parties. But there has never been a suggestion that they were impartial while in office. Indeed, Bermuda may be the only country in the world to have a Ministry in which the Minister and the Permanent Secretary are brothers – the Island's small size necessitates some conflicts of interest that would never be allowed elsewhere.

No one reasonably expects civil servants to have no political beliefs at all, but they are expected to leave them at home.

In 1998, senior civil servants in particular were justly proud of the fact that they handled the transition in government. It was done reasonably seamlessly, and that was surely due in part to the standards for impartiality that had long been set in the Civil Service.

It is true that a great many senior civil servants who were in place in 1998 are now long gone. In some cases, they chose to make the change, while in others, they were either cut out or could not adapt to a new set of masters; albeit often for personal, rather than political reasons.

Their replacements have, to an unprecedented degree, come from outside the ranks of the Civil Service. There is nothing wrong with that; indeed people with fresh ideas who are imbued with the demands for efficiency that the private sector demands can be valuable for a public service that could otherwise become rigidly bureaucratic, backed by the notion that public finances are a bottomless well.

But care needs to be taken to ensure that civil servants do not end up feeling that their own career ambitions are stifled, or that people get top jobs on the basis of who they know or because of past political service rather than on their merits.

In Mr. Scott's case, there is no suggestion that he will show bias. At Stevedoring

Services, he apparently showed neither fear nor favour to his fellow trade unionists on the docks and all of that suggests that he will be equally careful not to try to set or advance a particular political viewpoint in his new post.

But it does point up the need for a policy to handle former politicians who later enter the public service. At the very least, there should be a waiting period between the time the politician leaves public office (or seeks office as a candidate) and the time when they apply for a civil service post. And the Public Service Commission should take great care in these cases to ensure that no political influence has been exercised in the appointment.

Mr. Scott would probably meet both tests. He has been out of active politics since before the 2003 General Election and there has been no suggestion that his appointment has been politically motivated. Still, because Caesar's wife must not only be pure, but must be seen to be pure as well, it would be sensible to make sure the public knows that there has been no political influence in this case.

Other features:

- » [Print this article](#)
- » [Print this article with picture](#)

Tip a friend

Message:

Your name:

Your e-mail address:

To e-mail address:

For information contact newsdesk@royalgazette.bm
Copyright 20©01 The Royal Gazette Ltd.

Appendix F: A step on a methodological journey: AI Consultative Group Feedback

The Appreciative Inquiry Consultative group met on 4th December 2003 as an adjunct session to a foundation workshop on Appreciative Inquiry. The group was presented with the study's provocative proposition (Appendix G: A Provocative Proposition) and an explanation as to the aims of the research and dissertation.

After some discussion, the group questioned what "race" means and would mean to participants in the study. There was concern that when some people are asked to think about "race, they think about "racism" and their defenses are raised. They may then be more inclined to offer politically correct answers to the questions rather than ones that probe their innermost thoughts and feelings. One group member thought that as a white male, the pointed questions on race (1st set of draft questions as presented to the group) were good and challenging. Another participant submitted that the race construct is hard for her to accept because she was taught to think of only one race, "the human race".

The groups' collective wish was that I ask more general questions regarding differences amongst us, rather than predetermining race and sex categories. For example, questions could be posed as to what were a person's experiences when they encountered someone who was different. This type of questioning also satisfied a belief that people are not all that they appear to be and that it is too restrictive to put race, class and gender constructs into binary categories. There was also the feeling that a more general line of questioning might provide access to individual's innermost thoughts and values, self-talk and first-impressions.

Another wish was to see the generalist questions posed to select members of a macro group, such as a core group. The hope of the group was that questions on differences might yield the type of data sought for the inquiry, and if not, the participants would have at least had an opportunity to self-define the differences that are meaningful to them. It might mean that race, gender and class differences come secondary to a host of others. The group then proposed that from the macro-group feedback would determine whether the questions should be reframed. In reflecting on the feedback, I acknowledged the perspective that pre-selecting the constructs of which difference would be defined (race, class and gender) puts at risk the notion of subjectivity and co-created meaning. A useful exercise may be to use the constructs of race, class and gender, as outlined in my first set of draft questions, to analyse the data; determining whether these notions surface in participant responses.

As a consequence of considering the group feedback, I essentially drafted two sets of questions, the first of which specifically inquired into experiences where race, gender and social class differences may have factored into an interaction. These first questions are less appreciative in focus in that they were drafted with the intent to inquire without provoking change. They do not inquire about "best" experiences, but simply experiences generally as they relate to race, class and gender differences.

The second set of questions take into account the group feedback and are much more generalist in their approach to the inquiry. Participants are asked about difference and diversities rather than race, social class and gender as specific diversities. The questions also reflect the study's enhanced parameters on developing a strategy for improved work relations between people of multiple diversities. The components of this strategy have been included in the inquiry for two reasons: firstly, the results of the inquiry will inform how differences are perceived and treated in the organisation and may respond specifically to the overarching research question; and secondly, the inquiry itself will lend to the development of equal opportunity policy and strategy for improving relations between people of different races and diversity in the work environment. The latter addresses a specific need and request of the organisation "under" study to develop and adopt an equal opportunity statement, policy and strategy.

Appendix G: The study's initial provocative proposition:
**Decision-making practices and the reproduction of race, class & gendered relations in the
Bermuda Civil Service**

This dissertation propels inquiry in the areas of social constructionism, relational theory and appreciative inquiry, in organisational life. The Bermuda Government civil service provides an enriching backdrop to this study, for its Bermuda resident participants represent a range of diversities.

Organisational participants co-construct a working reality on the infinite basis of their experiences. Some of these experiences may be understood through a lens of post-colonialism, patriarchy, matriarchy, racism, sexism, ethnocentrism, equality of opportunity policy, organisational mission and vision and other theoretical constructs of human life.

What many of these constructs imply is that the issue and interplay of people's diverse identities is lost in the language and notions of best practices. Invariably, working relationships and decisions are guided and more reflective of people's fundamental beliefs about, for example, race, gender and social class, than of the guiding principles, the ethical and moral underpinnings, of the organisation.

This inquiry invites participants to reflect upon how their fundamental belief systems, as influenced by their experiences as, and with, members of different racial groups, genders and social class constructs for example, impact their working relationships and decision-making practices. The cross-disciplinary participants' "stories" on how aspects of identity, both their own and others, mediate between the organisation's fundamental philosophies and how people in the organisation relate, function and task on a daily basis. The participant's stories reflect not only their own identities, but of the individual in relation to other organisational participants within a co-constructed system. They give meaning to what is alive in all organisations.

Fundamental premises

It is human nature to reflect upon, interact and work from our understandings, experiences and beliefs about people. We acquire these beliefs from many sources, our life experiences, our families, our communities, religion, daily interactions and anticipation of daily interactions. What we believe about others, influences how we relate, and the decisions we make in concert with others. Beliefs may be an underlying factor in many organisational processes, such as interpersonal and intra-personal relationships and decision-making practices. The underlying presence of beliefs about diversities means that people may think about them, act from within an understanding of their beliefs about themselves and others, but it is not usually overtly expressed as part of the co-created organisational world. Beliefs about race, may be stated, but may also be transmitted through practice (decisions that are taken) or through a tone of interaction.

An appreciative framework suggests that to probe the influence of race, gender and social class relations in the workplace, inquiry is directed at respondents' experiences or connections with someone who is different from them. There are options as to whether the differences or diversities (i.e. race, social class, and gender) should be delineated in the questioning, or whether respondents are encouraged to construct their own understandings of diversity. Further, if we want to expand an understanding of meaningful workplace relations, how race, gender and social class diversities, often considered the most prominent on a scale of diversity hierarchy, are experienced and perceived would be an important direction for inquiry. These perceptions influence equality of opportunity policy and strategy, and are fundamental, but must also be understood from within a context of other mediating diversities, such as ethnicity, religion, sexuality, disability, or political opinion.

Appendix H: Pre-constructionist interview guide

I hope to gain a better understanding of how social workers construct their relationships with clients. How they interpret the clients' situations may lead to an understanding of why certain family situations have the outcomes that they do. Is bias reproduced- if so, how? Do social workers define key terms in the same way- risk, clients, and success? Do they have the same job expectations? How do they interpret/understand their jobs and roles? How do they view clients? What do they believe about the nature of our clients? What do they believe about the system within which we work? How are clients' lives constructed by social workers? How do social workers view clients and how does this impact the relationship between the two?

I will be asking you to envision specific cases as you respond to the following questions. They can be cases that challenged you, that are typical or that intrigued you in some way. As well, they may simply be cases that you have dealt with that you feel best help you respond to the questions. I am interested in your story, in how you came to be in this work and how you find it. How do you experience working with the people that you work with.

The job and job expectations- Beliefs

Who is responsible for change within the worker/client relationship (originally this question was 'the helping' relationship but I felt it was too leading to say "helping").

Looking back at when you first started working, what were some of the beliefs/expectations you had about the work, the clients- about what you were going to be doing? What did you expect from the job? How did these expectations fit with the reality?

Over the course of your work in this system, have your beliefs changed? How?

The job and job expectations- Realities

What is your experience of being a worker? What does your work involve?

What are the goals of your jobs?

How would you rate your success with these goals?

What helps these goals? What interferes?

Who receives intervention?

Take me through a case...

What was a dilemma that you faced that did not resolve itself well?

Decision-making- Interventions

How are commonly used terms defined by workers- risk, clients, success?

What sorts of interventive measures are taken with your clients?

What happens, or how do you react, if a client refuses to participate in interventions?

What sorts of decisions are made in the job? How do you arrive at these decisions? What are the factors that you consider when making these decisions?

What would be success in a case? What are some factors that lend to success or failure in a case?

What are some difficulties you experienced in making a decision about your clients? What was a dilemma you had that did not resolve itself well?

Describe a case that went well? What happened in that case?

Perception of clients- Who is the client

In your opinion, who receives intervention? Directly? Indirectly?

Who do you consider your clients?

What do you believe to be the primary problem concerning clients receiving direct or indirect intervention? Problems for/ with the clients with whom you work?

How did you arrive at these beliefs?

What would have to happen to rectify the problem? In an ideal setting, with limitless resources, what would have to happen to improve the clients' situation?

Perception of self as worker

If I were to ask you to describe yourself with key adjectives, in regards to things like gender, class and race, what would you say?

Are there any other key aspects of yourself that you feel relate to how you practice?

When you think of your life and life experiences, how do you think they have come to bear on how you practice?

How did you come to be a child welfare worker?

Policies and Procedures

To improve service to the client you have identified, what would have had to happen? From your perspective? From the agency's perspective- if different? From the client's perspective?

Are you familiar with the youth protection mandate? What is your understanding of this mandate?

How do you see yourself in regards to fulfilling the youth protection mandate?

What do you believe to be the agency's perspective towards practice/ clients...?

Practice

What is the day-to-day work like for you?

What is your experience in being a worker? (feelings for clients, feelings in general)

Can you describe any other changes in any area of your work that would have to happen in order to improve the life situations of clients?

Is there something that you feel the clients should be doing differently to facilitate child welfare services getting out of their lives?

What factors impact you work with clients?

What are some things you consider when making decisions about your clients and case orientation?

Have you experienced a dilemma or difficulty you experienced in offering service while applying the legal mandate? Describe it?

Appendix I: Constructionist (AI-enhanced) Interview Protocol: version 1
Meaningful workplace relationships and equality of opportunity policy

The construction of race

1. *One of the diversities that seem prevalent to many is that of race. When we speak of race being a factor in organisational relations, we are speaking to how your race, in whatever ways you construct it for yourself, and that of others, has had meaning for people within this organisation.*

When you think of your working experience with the Bermuda government, can you tell me of a time when you came to an understanding of what “race” means to you as a participant in this organisation?

When you reflect upon your working experience with the Bermuda government, can you think of a time that gave you an understanding of what people in the organisation believe about race? Can you tell me a story about how you came to this understanding about what race (your own, others) means to the organisation?

Looking at your working experience here, can you recall a time when you felt that race was an influence in a process? Who was involved? What happened?

Can you tell me of a time when you went through a process where you felt that race was an issue, and that the outcome of that process was a contradiction (different) from what you believe to be the fundamental ideals of the organisation? What type of a process was this (personal exchange, a decision that was being taken, i.e. a hiring process)? Who was involved? What happened?

As you reflect upon that story, what would you have changed about the outcome, if you could?

The construction of gender

2. *Beliefs about men and women have been popularised by discussions on roles, characteristics, management styles, abilities and power. Gender contributes to a fundamental value system to which communities ascribe. These beliefs about men and women are a part of organisational life, sometimes openly discussed, and sometimes not. Beliefs about men and women, may be stated, but may also be transmitted through practice (decisions that are taken) or through a tone of interaction.*

When you think of your working experience with the Bermuda government, can you tell me of a time when you came to an understanding of what being a man or woman means to you as a participant in this organisation?

When you reflect upon your working experience with the Bermuda government, can you think of a time that gave you an understanding of what people in the organisation believe about men and/or women? Can you tell me a story about how you came to this understanding about what gender (your own, others) means to the organisation?

Looking at your working experience here, can you recall a time when you felt that gender was an influence in a process? Who was involved? What happened?

Can you tell me of a time when you went through a process where you felt that gender was an issue, and that the outcome of that process was a contradiction (different) from what you believe to be the fundamental ideals of the organisation? What type of a process was this (personal exchange, a decision that was being taken, i.e. a hiring process)? Who was involved? What happened?

As you reflect upon that story, what would you have changed about the outcome, if you could?

The construction of class

3. A person's social class has anecdotally described as something that people can determine by looking at someone. Often, the idea of social class is not only related to how much money a person has, but also to a life experience of people who "have", versus, those who "have not". Social class has been linked to people's values, how they speak, where they live, who they associate with, what type of interactions they will have with the community and community services, and in which way people may participate in organisations. Organisational participation can include a variety of roles, from service user to employee to Board member. Beliefs about class standing and class structures can influence how organisational participants relate to each other. Beliefs about class or socio-economic status, may be stated, but may also be transmitted through practice (decisions that are taken) or through a tone of interaction.

When you think of your working experience with the Bermuda government, can you tell me of a time when you came to an understanding of what "class" means to you as a participant in this organisation?

When you reflect upon your working experience with the Bermuda government, can you think of a time that gave you an understanding of what people in the organisation believe about class and how people of different classes fit into the organisation? Can you tell me the story about how you came to this understanding about what class structures or identity (your own, others) means to the organisation?

Looking at your working experience here, can you recall a time when you felt that class was an influence in a process? Who was involved? What happened?

Can you tell me of a time when you went through a process where you felt that class was an issue, and that the outcome of that process was a contradiction (different) from what you believe to be the fundamental ideals of the organisation? What type of a process was this (personal exchange, a decision that was being taken, i.e. a hiring process)? Who was involved? What happened?

As you reflect upon that story, what would you have changed about the outcome, if you could?

Appendix J: Constructionist (AI-enhanced) Interview Protocol version2
*An inquiry into meaningful policy and excellent working relationships between people of
different diversities*

Best personal experience with someone who is different

Bermuda is a place where people from many diverse backgrounds reside and work. Residents are also known to travel, work and study abroad, meeting people from all different parts of the world. By exploring the best experiences each of us has had, we can create an atmosphere in which people of a variety of diversities live and work harmoniously together and feel that they are treated equally and fairly.

Think back to a time when you had an unusually good connection with someone who was very different from you. This was an experience outside of work. Tell me the story about that time, with a beginning, middle and end if possible. Give me as many details as possible.

When you think about the person you've just described, and the group of people this person represents, imagine that you and your closest friend (spouse) are talking. There may have been both good and bad things that came up for you, maybe before you even knew this person or the group of people they represent. Your friend has said to you, "Now, tell me what you really think". What would you say?

If you were making a comment to your closest friend (spouse) about this experience, what would you be saying? Nobody else would know that you said it?

Think of a time when you felt different and the difference was viewed very positively. Tell me the story of this experience? (Optional)

Probes: Who was involved? What happened? How was it that you felt this experience was different and better than others? What were some of the contributing factors, internal or external that contributed to these feelings?

Best working experience with someone who is different

Part of developing a working environment in which employees are treated respectfully and fairly is to explore the best of *working* experiences each of us has had. These experiences have been described as touching, moving, or satisfying because they represented a "best moment" in connecting with someone.

Think back to a time when you had an exceptionally good *working* experience with someone who was different from you. Perhaps you have worked with someone of a different race, ethnicity, gender or culture. Tell me about this time and this very positive experience you had with this person who was different from you. What about the experience excited you and made you feel alive, involved, excited. Describe the situation in detail.

If you had a magic wand and could take the best of that past experience to create the ideal working environment for people who have many differences, what three things would you wish for?

What is one small step, one small action which we might take as a group of employees that you think might help make your story about an ideal working environment likely to come true?

Best policies

Policies and decision-making practices seem to be most effective when employees feel that they been able to do their jobs well in respect to an organisational policy. One of the ways in which we can create effective and meaningful policy is to explore our best practices and policies. These experiences take into account the contributions and character we each bring to our work.

In your role as a service provider to the public or to your colleagues what do you recall as the time when you offered the best service or took a decision that represented the very best of practice within your field?

We have been told that effective policies help make an aspect of our jobs go really well or very smoothly. Can you reflect on an unusually sound policy in the organisation, which you think is very effective? Tell me of your experience with this most effective policy.

Probes: How did you come to use it or be involved with it? What aspects made the policy so effective?

Best and meaningful employee contributions to the workplace

Enhancing race relations and an appreciation for diversity so that everyone can be respected for their differences and treated fairly seems to be most successful when people get connected to each other. One way of facilitating that is to share with each other some things about we are as individuals.

Without being humble, what do you value most about who you are as a person working in this organisation?

What do you value most about the work that you do for this organisational community (the Bermuda Government) when you are at your best?

If you had three wishes for this organisation, as Bermuda's largest employer, what would they be?

R160604

Appendix K: Towards a new training experience

Towards a new training experience: e-mail communications on establishing the parameters of a dialogue-based workshop

The following communications⁵⁷ tell the story behind the planning of a workshop for law enforcement officers. The example is provided as a means of demonstrating the importance of including as many participants 'in the conversation' as is possible. The story also highlights how doing so requires concerted effort. The communication also highlights how it is possible to begin to incorporate appreciative inquiry perspectives into ones day-to-day work:

From myself to the supervisor:

Dear Madam,

Here are what we call the 'facilitator notes' for the Wednesday and Thursday sessions. The participants would not actually see these but it represents the approach we would be taking. We, as facilitators, will use these notes to introduce the topic and training.

Over the weekend, I gave it some thought and I am beginning to believe that the "problem" is still a little unclear. Therefore, we may digress quite significantly from this "topic" [of tackling the negative racial remarks and slurs] with the hope of doing something more *exploratory* [Researcher's note: this term introduces the notion of *appreciative inquiry*].

If you have any ideas about the best approach, please advise us--as well, and more importantly, we would *appreciate your input* [Researcher's note: the supervisor is asked for feedback and the feedback is indicated as welcomed] during the sessions. As the "team leader" you are most likely to know what the issues are and how they are experienced by your team. We are approaching these sessions as more of a facilitated dialogue than any sort of "sensitivity" training- which is quite different in content and process.

From the supervisor to her manager and copied to me (as facilitator/ researcher):

Dear Madams,

Please find attached the recommended facilitated dialogue Mrs. Virgil is suggesting for the training this week. I agree in part that the training should be "customer service" based; I do not agree that it be centered on foreigners/guest workers [a training proposal, Appendix L, incorporated many aspects of appreciative inquiry proposed that the training focus on people's best experiences with people who are different]. These sessions should be geared toward the normal CURE training on "sensitivity".

Your thoughts would be greatly appreciated.

⁵⁷ These communications have been edited to preserve the identity of the participants. Participants were advised that some of the process and the outcomes of their participation would be recorded and potentially published in aggregate form. They were assured that no documentation would reveal their identities. The permission and notification that excerpts from the training process would be used was also included on the participants' feedback and evaluation forms.

From the manager's supervisor to the Head of Department and copied to me (as facilitator/ researcher):

Dear Madam Director,

Please see the attached draft outline of the upcoming CURE sessions. Mrs. Virgil requested feedback and I have included comments by myself and the team supervisor following:

I agree with and support Mrs. Virgil's approach of *initiating a dialogue* [Researcher's note: *the premise of dialogue has been presented and acknowledged here*] rather than delivering a sensitivity session and the aspect of customer service certainly does fall within the scope of the purpose for the dialogue. I have concerns with the focus being placed on the "... history of tensions between foreigners/guest workers and locals." This was not the issue which gave rise to requesting CURE facilitate the sessions and I am not aware of this relationship being a particular problem within the [law enforcement] environment at the [deleted]. We wish to address appropriate and respectful interaction with both our colleagues and our clients. By singling out one group of people (foreigners/guest workers) the dialogue may take the wrong direction from the outset.

The topic of an officer's authority and the way that it influences their behaviour should form part of these discussions but we are also in the process of working with Mrs. Jones from [Personnel Services] on the content of specific Customer Service training. *A frank and open dialogue on how individuals would like to be treated and the type of behaviour which is 'unacceptable'* [Researcher's note: *an appreciative perspective would see this phrase re-framed during the course of communications*] should promote an understanding of the importance of maintaining a professional demeanor. Reference to our Mission Statement should reinforce to all staff that it is not just rhetoric but the standards they will be held to:

"Our mission is to promote compliance with Bermuda's [deleted] laws through quality service and responsible enforcement, thereby contributing to the economic and social stability of our community. ...In carrying out our mandate we will; adhere to high standards of integrity and professionalism; and treat the public and each other with respect." [Researcher's note: *The mention of the department's mission indicates the importance the Department Head's place on its premises*]

Please advise if you have any comments and we will forward our feedback to Mrs. Virgil. Thank you.

From the Director to the Manager,

I support your comments. However, I am somewhat confused I was under the impression that we were doing sensitivity training. The matter arose as a result of the report submitted by [Officer Jacks] and the unprofessional behaviour being displayed by staff toward one another. Additionally we had concerns regarding the alleged manner in which officers were treating customers (unwarranted remarks/questioning). While I agree that there are various nationalities [we serve], I have not been advised of any issues concerning foreign workers - is there something that I should know about?

I suggest that we proceed as previously agreed i.e. deal with the racial comments, customer complaints regarding officer's comments and provide the officers with some tools for dealing with their peers and the passengers more professionally [Researcher's note: this framing of the problem indicates the Director's perspective on training- essentially a more problem-focused model. Future communications from the trainer should re-direct this focus].

Regards,

The Director

From myself to the Manager, copied to the Director and later, the supervisor:

I have received the feedback and have some questions/ comments for clarification.

From our perspective, this is not CURE's sensitivity training as we know it, and have done in the past, as that training is a full-day minimum. As well, this session is very issue focused; in a way that sensitivity training is not.

It is true, we were initially asked to deal with the racial comment from one officer to another. But when I spoke to [the supervisor], she felt that that the issue was being dealt with fairly satisfactorily by the two officers concerned and that probing it would fuel another and unwarranted conflict. So we agreed that we (CURE) would focus on the customer service issue and how customers would want to be treated. If this switch is a problem, please let us know-- but we had agreed to let that conflict lie and focus on the customer service aspect of diversity.

However, this issue of customer treatment and respect gives rise to an area where there needs to be some *acknowledgement of how personal experiences play into work lives*. [Researcher's note: redirection to consider inclusion of participants' voices on this aspect of service delivery]. The issue is not with regard to collegial relationships but with what stereotypes and prejudices the officers carry with them as they do their work [Researcher's note: emphasis on participants' stories influencing their work]. For example, the reason why an officer might make untoward remarks or ask certain questions of a [customer] might very well be related to a bias, prejudice or stereotype that person carries with them as "baggage" for want of a better word- the experiences that they have had and perceptions they carry about certain [customers]...

For clarification, the reference to "guest workers" was in respect to the types of people who [you service] -- it was not a reference to the hiring practices and staff complement of AB WORKS.

However, if it is that unclear and raises so many alarms, we will steer clear and just leave it at "[customers] representing all types of differences" [Researcher's note: highlight diverse identities]. In the end, most of the human relations aspects of government work are about respecting each other and striving for consensus on perceptions [Researcher's note: reflection on appreciative aspects of relationships and service delivery].

I will be off tomorrow and will be coming straight to the session on Wednesday. If there are any more concerns, please let me know, as this feedback is very helpful. The last thing we want to happen is to create more conflict, but we are

hoping that your Officers will be willing to engage in a dialogue that is enlightening, solution-focused and challenging from within [*Researcher's note: appreciative emphasis*].

At one point, as indicated in the communications, I realised that because the supervisor had forwarded my initial e-mail and comments upwards, to the higher managers, I had started a conversation with them as well- or exclusively with them, to be more precise. It was and would have continued to be very easy to continue the conversation with the upper management, forgetting to keep the supervisor in the “loop”. This sort of process and communication would have been out of keeping with the appreciative principle of wholes, where I would want a wide range of participants in the conversation. I rectified this problem, by forwarding all of the communications to the supervisor, with whom I had started the initial discussions. I felt that this process and additional step was very much in keeping with the idea of having all participants stay in the “conversation”. In fact, the supervisor noted and appreciated the communication: she later indicated she has been overlooked and left out in previous times. The last communication seemed to clear up the concerns and it was agreed that the training would continue.

Appendix L: AB Works Facilitated Dialogue Training Proposal and Feedback

Introduction

CURE was invited to your teams to engage in a dialogue about your work and its people. In a previous session, members of the department told us that customer service is really important to them and that race and diversity issues are not separate from excellent customer service. This rang true for us with an added element. That element is the issue of power and authority.

The issue of authority and power is an important one. Officers have power and authority over people- the right to go into people's most private spaces. This right is granted to Officers for no other reason than it has been vested through employment. Yet, when COs do their jobs, they can not simply "turn off" who they are as people. We bring into our jobs our personal experiences, our happiness, our sadness, our anger about life events. We also bring into it, our perspectives about people- how they are different from us- better off, worse off, more powerful, less powerful, linked to oppression or that they remind us of what we or our families don't have.

Bermuda has a distinct history of tensions between foreigners (tourists and guest workers) and locals. This history ties into all sorts of issues of the "have" and "have-nots" and of the differences in experience for blacks and whites. Every organisation has a culture which is unique in some way and reflects the countries culture.

CURE was asked to meet with your teams on the issue of being Officers, the power you have and how the power is used with people who come from different places, and are guests to the Island. We ask you to reflect on how Officers offers their services with respect to diversity. Is there a difference in treatment and whether it is possible to aspire for "best customer service" or "best customer treatment" in the face of our personal experiences?

From this backdrop, we engaged in a dialogue on this particular type of authority and your views on how your team offers its services. We asked you to speak as unique individuals- about your own ideas and experiences- rather than as representatives of AB WORKS.

The perspectives the two groups of team members shared were generous and genuine, leading new discoveries and understandings about what each brings to the job.

Initial inquiry

12. What is your personal relationship, or personal history with this issue? (What has been your experience or your approach to this work?)
13. Please tell us more about your particular beliefs and perspectives on this issue? (Do you have a perspective on the treatment of visiting and guest working foreigners? What is your perspective on the type of service your team should be offering?)
14. Many people we've talked to, with similar job experiences, have told us that within their experience with this issue they find some gray areas, some dilemmas about their own beliefs or even some conflict... Do you experience any pockets of uncertainty or lesser certainty, any concerns, value conflicts, or mixed feelings that you may have and wish to share?

Follow-up questions:

15. What needs to happen from your perspective?
16. From your perspective, how close are you to offering this best service?
17. What offering can you personally make to help this happen going forward?

Perspectives of AB Works Team Members

Initial Thoughts and comments on the topic of inquiry

1. Over the years, the role of an Officer has developed to become a critical “first point of contact” for visitors to the Island
2. Some visitors are surprised to be received and questioned by Black people in authority and respond with disdain, contempt or challenging behaviors.
3. Professional and informed, Officers remain committed to enforcing the law, which sometimes mean coping with, and suppressing, very real feelings of anger and resentment, stemming from being disregarded, disrespected or challenged.
4. Officers have a job to do and will do it professionally, regardless of the attitude that people “come to the table with”.
5. The colour (of passengers) is not so much an issue, it is their culture. Americans have one attitude, the British have another; and the Canadians have yet another. There seems to be an increasing number of Asians arriving on the Island, and they too have their different attitudes and perceptions.
6. With the racial and cultural diversity Bermuda sees now, the work is more of a challenge-linguistically and culturally. The stereotypes are not as consistent with past beliefs as once before.
7. As well, “it is your own fleas that bite the hardest” and Bermudians themselves, can give Officers a hard time- wanting a break, feeling like there is a class difference between the Officer and themselves, as passengers.
8. The colour (of Officers) is very important in the organisation. Some feel that promotions, transfers and other benefits are granted not only because of an affinity for one’s colour, but by gender preferences and “cliques”.
9. “This job will make or break you- you have to find a way to balance things”

Concerns

1. Sometimes the power of the uniform can be taken too far and there is a generational difference in how that power is perceived and used. It used to be that you (Officers) earned a stripe and through time, you came to know exactly what that meant and it was valuable- now, it is simply given to you along with power.
2. Knowing when to “back-off”, take a break or seek some assistance from a colleague is part of the difficult task of working with people (both passengers and colleagues) - it comes with experience, but is very much related to who each Officer is as a person. “It can be a struggle that takes all of your personal coping skills not to use the power”. “You need to be able to let things go and to be one person at work and another at home”.

3. Balancing the belief that people coming to Bermuda need to respect the country's customs and people while recognising that some people don't and won't- but yet need to receive excellent customer service, is a challenge.
4. It seems that females are "more prepared" in terms of applying and getting jobs in the organisation. It used to be that it was enough to have a high school diploma, common sense and street smarts. But now, with the upgraded degree requirements, need for excellent interview and presentation skills, black males may be missing out on the opportunities.
5. "We are damned if we do, and damned if we don't". If we don't command respect for the laws we are supposed to uphold, and apply them as we are required to do, we won't get it". But, some people want special treatment or feel that they are receiving "special" treatment.
6. That white Officers seem to do their time at the Airport and then transfer (whether they ask for it or not) to the Hamilton office where they can do "normal" hours. Some Black Officers, who have similar needs that could be alleviated by working "normal" hours, have not had the opportunity or even known about opportunities available at the Hamilton Office. Another concern is that some believe that employment opportunities have been "created" in Hamilton, which sees the ratios of Whites to Blacks (with Whites being predominant in Hamilton) in the Hamilton office being much higher than at the airport.
7. There needs to be a better link between the Department and other Departments- acknowledgement of the Officers' authority and abilities to assess situations, and have a means of feeding the information to other Government Departments. For example, sometimes it is obvious that a contract worker has come to the Island is under-qualified according to the ad that was place din the paper. Officers sometimes make these connections between "theory and practice". Some times Officers are asked to use a double-standard for access to the Island; and people who should be stopped and deported, are allowed into the country by making a phone call to a person in power.

Wishes

1. Senior Officers command the respect of the more junior Officers, for the knowledge and experience they bring to the job. However, Junior Officers wish for praise or acknowledgement for when they do their job well- for they feel critiques of their tasks are readily forthcoming.
2. For more communication from the "top down" on promotional opportunities, commendations and "all-around" happenings.
3. For more male Officers to become part of the Airport teams.
4. To have people from Officers from different levels of the organisation sit on the hiring panels of potential team members; and to make sure that a good mix of people are on the hiring committees.
5. To have the public become more informed about what the organisation does and why; to have a promotional/ public relations campaign that will educate the public on the mandate and requirements of travelers. "I wish for us to have our own Public Relations person to do both national and international information sharing".

6. For people to be more willing to listen so that we can have honest communication going both ways”.
7. To bring back the employee merit awards and make sure that the nomination process is well-communicated and accessible to everyone- so that every one knows about it and gets a chance to be considered.
8. Those trainees whom come out of the training are more prepared for what it is really like to do the job. Perhaps we could include more Officer’s personal stories and experiences in the orientation phase of training.
9. Those passengers whom end up facing the full extent of the law better understand that this happens as a consequence of their own actions. This would happen through more public relations activities.
10. We will all recognise the humanity in each other and in the people we serve.

Commitments and Encouragements

1. “One can catch more bees with honey than with vinegar and so I keep trying to use the honey” I hope others will too”
2. “When I approach a team member because I am concerned about how they have handled a situation, I want to be able to say, “you are right, but you are wrong” and that they can hear that and not be hurt, angry or offended”.
3. “Take people as you find them- and work with them”.
4. “Everyday, something is going to happen to tick you off, but I want to let go of the little things”. “Take people one-on-one, each day, everyday- yes, they will disrespect us sometimes, but it is not everyone or all the time”.
5. “To model encouragement even if it does not always come from the “top””.
6. “Kill them with kindness” and tell them to “have a great day”
7. “To continue to use the experiences and skills of Officers who have them”.
8. “Use power respectfully and you will know that you are doing your job to the best of your ability”.

This workshop piloted a new approach to race relations training. At some point, members of our staff may be publishing aspects of our work. All identifiers of participants are removed from any publications. If you have any questions, concerns or wishes to ensure that your contributions are not published, please contact us at CURE.

Great stories, wonderful offerings and thank you for your time.

Appendix M: Dialogic Training Exercise Outline with Narrative and Appreciative Focus

An Officer's Conversation
“Exploring the best of relationships that form the law enforcement community”
1-Day (7-hour) Workshop Training

MORNING SESSION

9:00- 9:15 *Introductory remarks*

- ✚ History of CURE's work with the organisation
- ✚ Housekeeping

9:15- 9:35 *Participant Introductions*

- ✚ Name
- ✚ “In a word” describe how you feel at this time...
- ✚ Years with the Service

9:35- 9:40 *Workshop purpose- objectives* (5 minutes)

- ✚ The concern for relational well-being and security: Our perceptions of how race issues influence the work (schedule 1)
- ✚ To appreciate and learn about the experiences, strengths, hopes and resources your colleagues bring to this organisation
- ✚ To share the most powerful stories and discover the forces and factors that give life to our work in service to the community

9:40- 9:50 *Getting Started: Lecturette on Diversity*

- ✚ Assimilation
- ✚ Acculturation
- ✚ Multiculturalism
- ✚ Layers of Diversity
- ✚ Diversity defined
- ✚ The seven pillars of diversity

9:50- 10:40 *Diversity Poll*

- ✚ Participants list what they consider to be the three most important diversities
- ✚ How have these diversities had meaning or taken meaning for them- as Civilians/ Officers?

10:40- 11:15 *Understanding my own diversity- Part 1*

- ✚ Participants complete 1st page of questionnaire and share responses w/ group

11:15- 11:30 *BREAK*

11:30- 11:55 *Understanding my own diversity- Part 2*

- ✚ Participants interview each other using the 2nd page of the questionnaire
- ✚ The partners report back to the group
- ✚ Facilitator's close exercise with comments on how diversity shapes peoples lives.

11:55- 12:05 Brief History on the Shaping of Bermuda in the post-emancipation years

- ✚ How has this history had an impact on participant's lives?

12:05- 12:30 Group Activity- Definitions of Key Terms-

- ✚ In small groups, participants define the following terms

Racial prejudice- To prejudge, hold assumptions, opinions, and stereotypes without informed knowledge, thought or reason- likely to be sustained in the face of contrary evidence

Racial discrimination- Generally referred to as the conscious act of differential treatment

Racism- Not simply the act, but incorporates thoughts and can be conscious or unconscious

Institutional racism- A system of procedures/ patterns/ policies that maintain the well-being of one group over another.

- ✚ In large groups, share and discuss the definitions/ share stories of when this has occurred or when it could have, and did not.

12:30-12:40 Teachpiece: 'Messages from the past': stereotypes, prejudice and bias and other "isms

12:40- 12:50 Exercise on Blacks/Whites, males and females, Bermudians and non-Bermudians

- ✚ Stereotypical thoughts about the 'other' groups
- ✚ Discussion- stereotypes are inevitable and all around- the difference is in the relationships...

Thoughts for lunchtime break

- ✚ How courageous are we willing to be to improve our relationships, workplace and society?

12:50- 1:45 LUNCH

AFTERNOON SESSION

1:45- 2:25 Video: 30 minute Blue-Eyed- Jane Elliot's Diversity Training Exercise

2:25- 2:45 Discussion

What did she do to create prejudice?

What moments in the video did you really connect with? What had meaning for you?

Jane Elliot continually stresses that participants follow the rules or leave the exercise. Organisations also have ‘rules of the game’, many of which are not written or even spoken. These can include rules about who is expected to speak or stay quiet in staff meetings or how to get invited to the after-hours events where the important information is shared. Or, how to get promoted...?

What are some of the unwritten rules in your organisation?

The point is made in the video that our society judges people against norms that some people cannot or choose not to conform to because they compromise who people are. A norm is a standard or “the way things are done around here”. Like unwritten laws, some people may be unaware of the criteria by which they are judged. This happens when hiring or promotion criteria are based on information or experiences to which not everyone has equal access or cultural characteristics that not all groups share.

What are some norms in your organisation? For example, are talkative people considered “smarter” or are single people considered a better “fit” than people with families?

2:45-3:00 BREAK

3:00- 3:10 Facilitator Lecturette:

- ✚ Introduction to “the concern for relational well-being and security”: Perceptions of how race issues influence the work (see Lecturette sheet)

Agreements and expectations- Ground rules fir dialogues (10 minutes)

- ✚ Respectful, empathetic and empathic contributions are most welcome
- ✚ The personal experience is valid; no one’s experience is more truthful than another’s
- ✚ Questions are for clarification; comments are for support; concern is for the person
- ✚ We speak only from our personal experience, and not of another’s
- ✚ Confidentiality is respected
- ✚ Empathy, commitment and caring are appreciative qualities that benefit this process

Approach and premises of the 1st part of the workshop (5 minutes)

- ✚ Dialogue leads to better understanding
- ✚ The goal is to increase understanding, build better relationships rather than conversion
- ✚ Sharing personal stories is an intimate and risky exercise but can ward off disconnection

3:10- 3:45 Dyad processes and the conversation (1 hour)-

Participants use the protocol to tell their stories of ‘the self’ in relation to others

- ✚ The Inquiry Exercise (Interview dyads)- 15 MINUTES PER PERSON

3:45- 4:15 The Discovery Exercise (debrief): Develop themes in small group process (1 hour)

See Discovery action sheet- Participants share parts of interview with the small group, i.e.

- ✚ What were some of the most compelling elements of the stories that came out of this interview?
- ✚ What of the person’s story made you think differently about the relationships you have with other members of the organisation?
- ✚ What were 1-3 themes that stood out most for you during the interview?

4:15- 4:30 Small group reports- Story sharing

- ✚ Each group reviews their lists
- ✚ Create a brainstormed list of the high points/ life giving forces/ ideas that grabbed you
- ✚ Prioritise the list by identifying 3-5 themes for your group for each heading:
 - 1) Life-giving forces
 - 2) Hopes for future interactions
 - 3) Skills, resources, experiences and other assets present in the organisation's community which can be used to help us best interact with people of different races
- ✚ Write those on three separate flip charts to report back to the large group.
- ✚ Reform large group and "report-out"

Do the next exercise if time allows- If not, MOVE to "Commitments" for last 25 min. of session

Large group consensus on 3 images (Time allowing)

- 1) Each group shares their lists and commonalities and differences are noted
- 2) Provide participants with nine "stickers" (3 of each color) per person
- 3) Each person places a sticker on their "wishes for more exploration" of each major theme (there can be multiple themes from the three flip charts from each group)
- 4) The topics with the most number of stickers become the themes for discussion

Small group action on major themes

- 1) Discuss the theme related to the groups choice (those topics that the "sticker" exercise produced)
- 2) Create an image of this theme- draw, act, sing...
- 3) Offer a 3-5 minute refreshment break during this task

Creative presentation of discussion highlights from small group discussions to entire group

Large group to small group consensus

- ✚ What gives life to the best of our community's relationships- craft statements on highlights in new small groups

4:35-4:50 Commitments: Large group process and summary

The Dream Activity:

- ✚ [What gives life to the best of our community's relationships- craft statements, verbally, on highlights from small groups making comparisons, noting similarities (**Ask this question if time has been limited and there has been no large group consensus activity**)]
- ✚ Looking toward the future, what is the Department being called to become?
- ✚ What one small thing might we do which could have a big impact in moving us forward.
- ✚ What small thing might we do which could have a big impact in moving us forward?
- ✚ Witnessing the commitment... (Facilitator's record participant's statements).

Examples of commitments

- ❖ Consider someone in this room from whom you feel distant but with whom it matters that things go better?
- ❖ How can you be responsible for bringing that person closer to you?
- ❖ When you return to your job as an Officer, what can you do to make the relationship go better? To enhance it?

4:50- 5:00 CLOSE-OUT

 In a word, “how do you feel” or “last comments”.

THE BERMUDA [X] SERVICE⁵⁸

*The concern for relational well-being and security:
Perceptions of how race issues influence law enforcement work*

Introductory remarks

We have discussed some issues related to diversity and law enforcement. In a previous session, we have heard Officers talk about how law enforcement is particularly challenging because race and diversity issues are not separate, and can not be separated from how power and authority is used on the job. The issue of authority and power is an important one; one that many Officers say that they have dealt with or had to think about very carefully.

As Officers, you have power and authority over people- the right to go into people’s most private spaces. This right is granted to you for no other reason than it has been vested to you through employment.

Yet, when we do our jobs, we can not simply “turn off” who we are as people. We bring into our jobs our personal experiences, our happiness, our sadness, our anger about life events. We also bring into it, our perspectives about people- how they are different from us- better off, worse off, more powerful, less powerful, linked to oppression or that they remind us of what we or our families don’t have.

Bermuda has a distinct history of tensions between foreigners/ guest workers and locals. This history ties into all sorts of issues of the “have” and “have-nots” and of the differences in experience for blacks and whites. Every organisation has a culture which is unique in some way and reflects the countries culture.

We’ve been asked to meet with you, to do training, essentially because in the end, the issue of being Officers, the power you have and how the power is used with people who come from different places, and are guests to the Island is important.

We ask you to reflect on how the Service offers their services with respect to diversity. Is there a difference in treatment and whether it is possible to aspire for “best law enforcement practice” or

⁵⁸ Name of Department or organisation edited for anonymity.

“best treatment of offenders” or “best treatment of our colleagues” in the face of our personal experiences?

From this backdrop, we would like to engage in a dialogue on this particular type of authority and your views on how your team offers its protective services. We ask you to speak as unique individuals- about your own ideas and experiences- rather than as representatives of the Service. We thought we might start this discussion by having you pose some questions to each.

There are some “ground rules” and some premises from which we do this exercise and these are:

- ✚ Respectful, empathetic and empathic contributions are most welcome
 - ✚ The personal experience is valid; no one’s experience is more truthful than another’s
 - ✚ Questions are for clarification; comments are for support; concern is for the person
 - ✚ We speak only from our personal experience, and not of another’s
 - ✚ Confidentiality is respected
 - ✚ Empathy, commitment and caring are appreciative qualities that benefit this process
 - ✚ Dialogue leads to better understanding
 - ✚ The goal is to increase understanding, build better relationships rather than conversion
 - ✚ Sharing personal stories is an intimate and risky exercise but can ward off disconnection.
-

The Inquiry Exercise

PART 1

- ❖ Tell a story about the best time that you had with someone of a different race. This person, or this experience, was as different or went as differently as you can imagine?
- ❖ Looking at your entire work/church/school/neighborhood organisational experience, recall a time when you felt most alive, most involved, or most excited about an exchange or relationship with this person?
- ❖ What made that experience so valuable? Who was involved? You are invited to tell this story. Describe the experience in detail.

PART 2

- ❖ What do you value most about:
 - 1) The force?
 - 2) Yourself?
 - 3) The work you do for the Service and the community?

PART 3

- ❖ What three wishes do you have for the Service with respect to diversity?

- ❖ What are your hopes on the outcome today? For your future with the Force?
-

Discovery Action sheet:
**Discovering the Positive Core of Law Enforcement
in a Diverse Community**

Purpose:

1. To welcome and learn about experiences, strengths, hopes and resources your colleagues bring to this organisation.
2. To share the most powerful stories and discover the forces and factors that give life to work in service to the community when they are at their best.

Guidelines:

1. a) Select a timekeeper, facilitator and reporter.
b) Review the rest of the steps to make sure everyone is clear on the task and the time frame.
2. Introduce your interview partner by sharing highlights from your interview. (Go around the table. Everyone gets introduced with the following information drawn from your partner's responses to the inquiry questions):
 - a. What was the most exciting story you heard from your partner? (Retell it)
 - b. What are your partner's strengths and important values
 - c. What else did your partner say in the interview that really resonated for you? What did they say that you really connected with?
 - d. What are your partners hopes on the outcome of today? For their future with the Force?
3. Listen for patterns and themes and "light-bulb" moments as others tell their stories.
4. As a group, complete three flip charts with the following headings:
 - a. Most compelling "life giving factors" from the "high point/ best stories" (i.e. What are the conditions that seem to be presented when we had these best experiences with a person of a different race- consider responses from Part 1 of Inquiry).
 - b. Skills, Resources, Experiences and other Assets present in the organisation's community – which can be used to help us best interact with people of different races (Consider responses from Part 2 of Inquiry).
 - c. Hopes for future interactions (Consider responses from Part 3 of Inquiry)
5. Prepare a three-minute report on the three flip charts.

Appendix N: Pay Scales

ACCOUNTANT GENERAL'S DEPARTMENT
BPSA SALARY SCALES - OCTOBER 1, 2003

PS STEP	1/10/2003 ANNUAL SALARY	MONTHLY SALARY	WEEKLY SALARY	DAILY RATE	HOURLY RATE	OVERTIME @ 1.5	OVERTIME @ 2.0
1	\$26,741.56	\$2,228.46	\$514.26	\$102.852	\$14.693	\$22.040	\$29.386
2	\$27,749.82	\$2,312.48	\$553.65	\$106.730	\$15.247	\$22.871	\$30.494
3	\$28,793.12	\$2,399.43	\$553.71	\$110.743	\$15.820	\$23.731	\$31.641
4	\$29,868.85	\$2,489.07	\$574.40	\$114.880	\$16.411	\$24.617	\$32.823
5	\$30,991.37	\$2,582.61	\$595.99	\$119.198	\$17.028	\$25.542	\$34.056
6	\$32,154.11	\$2,679.51	\$618.35	\$123.670	\$17.667	\$26.501	\$35.334
7	\$33,358.46	\$2,779.87	\$641.51	\$128.302	\$18.329	\$27.493	\$36.658
8	\$34,614.83	\$2,884.57	\$665.67	\$133.134	\$19.019	\$28.529	\$38.038
9	\$35,907.51	\$2,992.29	\$690.53	\$138.106	\$19.729	\$29.594	\$39.459
10	\$37,254.84	\$3,104.57	\$716.44	\$143.288	\$20.470	\$30.705	\$40.939
11	\$38,651.44	\$3,220.95	\$743.30	\$148.659	\$21.237	\$31.856	\$42.474
12	\$40,097.46	\$3,341.45	\$771.10	\$154.221	\$22.052	\$33.047	\$44.063
13	\$40,922.50	\$3,410.21	\$786.97	\$157.394	\$22.485	\$33.727	\$44.970
14	\$42,229.43	\$3,519.12	\$812.10	\$162.421	\$23.203	\$34.804	\$46.406
15	\$43,676.72	\$3,639.73	\$839.94	\$167.987	\$23.998	\$35.997	\$47.996
16	\$45,090.31	\$3,757.53	\$867.12	\$173.424	\$24.775	\$37.162	\$49.550
17	\$46,648.10	\$3,887.34	\$897.08	\$179.416	\$25.631	\$38.446	\$51.262
18	\$48,395.49	\$4,032.96	\$930.68	\$186.137	\$26.591	\$39.886	\$53.182
19	\$50,210.52	\$4,184.21	\$965.59	\$193.117	\$27.588	\$41.382	\$55.176
20	\$52,095.57	\$4,341.30	\$1,001.84	\$200.368	\$28.624	\$42.936	\$57.248
21	\$54,044.38	\$4,503.70	\$1,039.31	\$207.863	\$29.695	\$44.542	\$59.389
22	\$56,073.80	\$4,672.82	\$1,078.34	\$215.668	\$30.810	\$46.215	\$61.620
23	\$57,895.22	\$4,824.60	\$1,113.37	\$222.674	\$31.811	\$47.716	\$63.621
24	\$59,274.99	\$4,939.58	\$1,139.90	\$227.981	\$32.569		
25	\$61,242.04	\$5,103.50	\$1,177.73	\$235.546	\$33.649		
26	\$63,231.06	\$5,269.26	\$1,215.98	\$243.196	\$34.742		
27	\$65,525.51	\$5,460.46	\$1,260.11	\$252.021	\$36.003		
28	\$67,984.92	\$5,665.41	\$1,307.40	\$261.480	\$37.354		
29	\$70,530.07	\$5,877.51	\$1,356.35	\$271.269	\$38.753		
30	\$73,176.53	\$6,098.04	\$1,407.24	\$281.448	\$40.207		
31	\$75,916.56	\$6,326.38	\$1,459.93	\$291.987	\$41.712		
32	\$78,766.97	\$6,563.91	\$1,514.75	\$302.950	\$43.279		
33	\$81,184.90	\$6,765.41	\$1,561.25	\$312.250	\$44.607		
34	\$84,167.83	\$7,013.99	\$1,618.61	\$323.722	\$46.246		
35	\$87,114.43	\$7,259.54	\$1,675.28	\$335.055	\$47.865		
36	\$90,371.59	\$7,530.97	\$1,737.92	\$347.583	\$49.655		
37	\$93,757.23	\$7,813.10	\$1,803.02	\$360.605	\$51.515		
38	\$97,274.27	\$8,106.19	\$1,870.66	\$374.132	\$53.447		
39	\$100,917.15	\$8,409.76	\$1,940.71	\$388.143	\$55.449		
40	\$105,463.16	\$8,788.60	\$2,028.14	\$405.628	\$57.947		
41	\$110,205.17	\$9,183.76	\$2,119.33	\$423.866	\$60.552		
42	\$115,169.48	\$9,597.46	\$2,214.80	\$442.960	\$63.280		
43	\$120,349.42	\$10,029.12	\$2,314.41	\$462.882	\$66.126		
44	\$125,765.87	\$10,480.49	\$2,418.57	\$483.715	\$69.102		
45	\$131,427.70	\$10,952.31	\$2,527.46	\$505.491	\$72.213		
46	\$137,341.80	\$11,445.15	\$2,641.19	\$528.238	\$75.463		
47	\$143,516.87	\$11,959.74	\$2,759.94	\$551.988	\$78.855		
48	\$149,976.47	\$12,498.04	\$2,884.16	\$576.833	\$82.405		
49	\$156,729.81	\$13,060.82	\$3,014.03	\$602.807	\$86.115		
50	\$163,781.86	\$13,648.49	\$3,149.65	\$629.930	\$89.990		

[Signature]
Kensley Thomas, CPA
ACCOUNTANT GENERAL
November 2002

Basic
260 days per year
1820 hours per year
35 hours per week
5 days per week
7 hours per day

Monthly = Annual / 12
Weekly = hourly rate * 35
Daily rate = annual / 1820
OT 1.5 = hourly * 1.5
OT 2.0 = hourly * 2.0

Differences may arise due to rounding

Appendix O: Appreciative Interviews
INTRODUCING THE INTERVIEW

THE APPRECIATIVE INTERVIEW: Appreciative Interviews differ from traditional interviews in that the questions are simply guidelines that lead the person being interviewed to delve into the most creative, exciting, life-giving experiences that they have had in their life and work. It is not as important to answer every question as it is to tell a complete story, evoking the situation complete with details of what happened and the feelings involved. The goal is to help the person doing the interviewing experience as much as possible the situation being described. The interviewer's role is to LISTEN, occasionally prompting the interviewee to be more descriptive or to enlarge the story. **IT IS NOT A DIALOGUE.** This part of the process is a monologue by the person being interviewed.

CHARACTERISTICS OF AN APPRECIATIVE INTERVIEW

1. The Interview is based on an assumption of health and vitality. What you are seeking are incidents and examples of things at their best.
2. The connection between the Interviewer and the person being interviewed is through empathy. Questions are answered in a way that evokes the feelings in the listener.
3. Personal Excitement, Commitment, Care are qualities that are present when the interviewer and the person being interviewed are sharing stories of their personal peak experiences.
4. Intense Focus by the person listening to the stories leads to the experience of being fully heard and understood, a desirable effect from the close sharing that takes place.
5. Generative Questioning, Guiding make up the role of the Interviewer. The skill is to encourage and question without interrupting the storyteller.
6. Belief vs. Doubt is the proper stance. This is not a time for skepticism or for questions that imply a need for "proof" The trust **that** develops from simply listening with interest and acceptance is a **major positive affect of this** process.
7. Allow for Ambiguity, Generalisation and Dreams. These are stories being shared, not reporting of facts. Enjoy.

TIPS FOR CONDUCTING AN APPRECIATIVE INTERVIEW⁵⁹

I. **EXPLAINING APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY:** Like anything new, appreciative interviewing may seem awkward at the beginning. It may be equally awkward for the person you are interviewing. They, too, may be caught up in looking at the organisation as a problem-to-be-solved, and may not understand the rationale for this approach. Try saying something like this:

⁵⁹ AI for Organisation Change: A Workshop Resource Book by Bernard J Mohr and Jane Magruder Watkins.

Before we start, I would like to explain a little bit about what we are going to do because it may be a little different from what you are used to. This is going to be an “appreciative interview.” I am going to ask you questions about times when you see things working at their BEST. Many times, we try to ask questions about things that aren’t working well - the problems - so that we can fix them. In this case, we try to find out about things at their best - the successes - so that we can find out what works and find ways to infuse more of what works into the organisation’s performance. It is also like what we do with children or athletes when we affirm their smallest successes and triumphs so that they will hold a positive image of themselves and then envision even greater possibility. The end result of the interview will help us understand those “life-giving forces” which provide vitality and distinctive competence to your organisation. **Do you have any questions?**

2. START WITH SPECIFIC STORIES: Appreciative Inquiry seeks the “whole” of an image or idea rather than an opinion about or analysis of a situation. This is best done with stories that describe in detail what happened, who was there, how people felt and the part the person being interviewed played. Ask the person to: “Tell me a story about a time when you...” or “Tell me a story about a time when you experienced (the topic) at its best.” Probe deeply and intently, like an interested friend hanging on every detail. Ask, “Who did what WHEN; what were you thinking; THEN what did you do.” What you are trying **to do is get what they DID** (behavior) and what they THOUGHT or FELT while they were doing it.

3. GENERALISING ABOUT LIFE-GIVING FORCES: After you have heard their story, really probing it, go for the generalisations. “What is it about this organisation -- its structure, systems, processes, policies, staff, leaders, strategy -- that creates conditions where cooperation (for example) can flourish?” As a metaphor, think of your topic (i.e., cooperation) as a plant. What you are trying to do is find out about the kind of organisational soil, water, and sunlight conditions that nourish it. Sometimes people don’t know what you mean by organisational conditions, factors, or forces. Give examples: “Are jobs designed a certain way, for example, to foster cooperation? How does the culture or climate of the organisation foster cooperation?” And so on. Get them to think a bit abstractly about what is present in the organisation that really allowed them to have that peak experience.

4. WHAT TO DO WITH NEGATIVES: Sometimes, people work in places they don’t like. With an explanation like the one above, you can generally get them to identify things at their best. But people should not feel like they do not have permission to talk about things that need fixing. This can be handled in several different ways - - or some combination.

- **Postponing**: Say that you would like to make a note of what they have said and come back to it later. The question about what they would wish for the organisation in the future is a place to collect this “negative” data, and you can come back to your note about what they started to say then. Be sure to come back to it.
- **Listening**: If they have some real INTENSITY about what they want to say about problems, let them say it. If it is the major focus of their energy, you are not going to get any appreciative data until they get it out. This may mean muddling through quite a bit of organisational “manure”, and the biggest threat is that you will take it in and

lose your capacity to be appreciative. Keep a caring and affirmative spirit.

- **Redirecting:** If the person is not adamant about dealing with the negative, or if you have listened sufficiently to understand the negative issues they are raising, and they are now just into the drama of it, find a way to guide them back. “I think I understand a little bit about some of the problems you see (paraphrase a few of the ones you’ve heard), and now I would like to guide us back to looking at what is happening when things are working at their best. Can you think of a time, even the smallest moment, when you saw innovation (for example) at its best?” If they say it never happened where they work, find out if they have EVER had the experience of something working well in any organisation or work context ANYWHERE.

5. USING NEGATIVE DATA: Everything that people find wrong with an organisation represents an absence of something that they hold in their minds as an IDEAL image. What organisational processes, if present (rather than absent) might create the ideal organisation that the negatives imply. For example, if the interviewee says something like, “The communication in this organisation is terrible,” say to them, “When you say that the communication is terrible, it means that you have some image in your mind about what good communication would look like. Can you describe that for me?” In fact one could argue that there is no such thing as negative data. Every utterance is conditioned by affirmative images. If the interviewee cannot reframe into a positive image, use their negative information and **reframe it yourself into wish or visions statement.**

6. WATCH YOUR TIME: if the interview is generally planned to be an hour, you will need to make sure that as you are probing with fascination what they are saying, that you are also aware of the time, if you decide that you are learning so much that it is OK if you run over an hour, check it out with the person also. Best to pace your questions appropriately to the time you scheduled.

7. IT’S A CONVERSATION - BE YOURSELF AND HAVE FUN: Approach the interviewee as if the person you are interviewing is a very special person. Be humble. No matter how sophisticated you might be about the world of management, for this hour the interviewee is your teacher. Be yourself. Don’t try to get every question in the interview protocol exactly right. The protocol is a guide, not a questionnaire. This is a conversation to be enjoyed. Almost everyone likes to share knowledge and wisdom with people that genuinely want to learn, if you’ve got an affirmative spirit going in, mistakes in wording will not stop you from getting great data. As you hear fascinating and interesting stories, jot down a note or two as reminders. This is not data that will be “aggregated” so it is not necessary to write down every detail. It is more important to note key phrases and ideas.

8. A WORD ABOUT CONFIDENTIALITY: Tell the interviewees you will keep the information they provide and the conversation confidential. You will use the data, but it will be compiled into themes using data from this interview and others. No names will be associated with the overall summary or report. Stories and quotes from interviews may be used without a name associated with them.

Before you begin your interview - take a moment and quickly review these:

- Use the interview protocol as a guideline. Introduce the interview and ask the questions as if you were just sitting and talking with a co-worker. Strive to create an informal atmosphere.
- If interviewees want to think about their answers, please give them the option of thinking about it or rescheduling with you.
- Here are some possible questions to use to probe further:
 - Tell me more.
 - What was going on that caused you to feel that way?
 - What makes that important to you?
 - How did that affect you?
 - What was your contribution?
 - What was the organisation doing that helped you to do this?
 - What were other people doing that helped?
 - What **do you think was really** making it work? ~ How has it changed you?
- Let the interviewee tell his/her story, don't tell yours or give your opinion about their experiences.
- **Be genuinely curious** about their experiences, thoughts, and feelings.
- Some interviewees will take longer to think about their answers; allow for silence.
- If someone doesn't want to, or can't answer any of the interview questions, that's okay; let it go and go on to the next question and try and come back to the question you missed before the end of the interview.
- **Watch your time** - The interview is planned to be one hour. You will need to make sure that as you are probing with fascination what they are saying, that you are also aware of your time. If you run over, check it out with the person you are interviewing. Best bet is to pace your questions appropriately to the time you have scheduled.
- A word about confidentiality - Tell the interviewees you will keep the information they provide and the conversation confidential. You will use the data, but it will be compiled into themes using data from this interview and others. No names will be associated with the overall summary report.
- Taking notes - When asking questions, use the space after each question for notes. Note-taking can be tricky, but you will want to be able to read your notes after the interview is concluded.

Immediately after your interview - summarise your notes, using the summary sheet at the end of the interview packet.

TIPS FOR DEALING WITH NEGATIVES....⁶⁰

What to do with negatives - Sometimes people feel compelled to talk about what isn't working. With an explanation such as the one we are using below in our opening remarks, you can usually get them to identify times when they are at their best. People should not feel like they do not have permission to talk about things that need fixing. Depending on where the interviewee is, you can handle this in several ways:

⁶⁰ AI for Organisation Change: A. Workshop Resource Book by Bernard J Mohr and Jane Magruder Watkins 118

- **Postponing:** Tell them you will make a note of what they have said and come back to it later. Position yourself to return to this data when you approach the last questions which ask if you could change this organisation in any way you wish, what three things you would recommend. This is the place to capture this “negative” data. Return to your notes paraphrasing what they originally said and ask them to translate this feedback into organisational wishes for improvement. Be sure to come back to this data; it will sustain your credibility in the interview process.
- **Listening:** If they are intense about what they want to say about problems, let them say it. You are not going to get any appreciative data until they have an opportunity to express themselves. You must be empathetic, but remember that you cannot take on that person’s problems. Keep a caring and affirmative spirit.
- **Redirecting:** After a reasonable period of time, find a way to guide them back. “I think I understand a bit about some of the problems you see (paraphrase a few of the ones you’ve heard), but I would like to guide us back to looking at what is happening when things are working at their best. Can you think of a time, even the smallest moment, when you saw innovation (for example) at its best?” If they say it never happened where they work, find out if they have EVER had a worthwhile experience in any organisation or work environment ANYWHERE before you give up.
- **Using negative data -** All the stuff people find wrong with an organisation represents an absence of something they hold in their minds as an IDEAL image. What organisational processes, if present, might create the ideal organisation that the negatives imply? DATA is DATA - use it. But use it affirmatively. In fact, one could argue that there is no such thing as negative data. Bad data is good data in that we can learn from it.

And remember, it’s a conversation - be yourself and have fun - *if* you approach the interview like a piece of drudgery - you’ve lost before you’ve begun. You want to approach interviewees as if they are very special, valuing the best of who they are. Be yourself - don’t try to put on an expert role or act as though you’ve got to get every word in the interview exactly right. Be a learner - realise that people like to share their knowledge and wisdom with others who genuinely like to learn. If you’ve got an affirmative spirit going in, mistakes in wording will not stop you from getting great data. Finally, have FUN. You are getting to know someone new, and you are hearing some fascinating and important stories.

THE GENERIC INTERVIEW FORMAT: THE FOUR GENERIC QUESTIONS⁶¹

1. **BEST EXPERIENCE:** Tell me a story about the best times that you have had with your organisation. Looking at your entire experience, recall a time when you felt most alive, most involved, or most excited about your involvement. What made it an exciting experience? Who was involved? Describe the event in detail.

⁶¹ Al for Organisation Change: A Workshop Resource Book by Bernard J Mohr and Jane Magruder Watkins

2. **VALUES:** What are the things you value deeply; specifically, the things you value about yourself, your work, and your organisation:

(1) **YOURSELF:** Without being humble, what do you value most about yourself- as a human being, a friend, a parent, a citizen and so on?

(2) **YOUR WORK:** When you are feeling best about work, what do you value about it?

(3) **YOUR ORGANISATION:** What is it about your organisation that you value? What is the single most important thing that your organisation has contributed to your life?

3. **CORE VALUE:** What do you think is the core value of your organisation? What is it that, if it did not exist, would make your organisation totally different from what it currently is?

4. **THREE WISHES:** If you had three wishes for this organisation, what would they be?

CHARACTERISTICS OF GREAT AI QUESTIONS

Good Questions:

- Are stated in the affirmative.
- Build on the assumption that “the glass is half full.” (Rather than half empty!)
- Give a broad definition to the topic. They give room to “swim around”.
- Are presented as an invitation to tell stories.
- Value “what is.” They spark the appreciative imagination by helping the person locate experiences in the past or present that are worth valuing.
- Convey unconditional positive regard.
- Evoke essential values, aspirations and inspirations.

GATHERING INFORMATION THROUGH INTERVIEWS

Depending on the size and complexity of the systems you are working with, the Discovery phase task of gathering information may begin in either of two ways:

- I. In the case of a smaller contained system (e.g., a small team); the process will likely begin by doing paired interviews together in one location. The next step of identifying themes and/or topics generally happens in the same session. If the group gathered (a team for example) is using the AI process for its own work, they can proceed from identifying themes directly to the Dream and Design stages of the model.
2. In the case of larger more complex system (i.e., with multiple departments or levels), you have two major choices for the Discovery phase:
 - a. One possibility is to have the core group (the 5-20 person group representative by a diagonal slice described in the Definition phase) doing the interviews using the customised interview package or;

- b. Alternatively, you may choose to involve a much larger group with a process called the AI Summit (see Mohr & Magruder reference for further detail).

AFTER THE INTERVIEWS⁶²

After the interviews are complete, *locating the themes that appear in the stories* includes the work of:

- “mining” the data by looking for themes or life-giving forces in the interview data
- expanding the positive dialogue about these themes to people throughout the organisation.

This process, heliotropic in nature, encourages the organisation to turn toward images of its most life-giving forces and, through continuing dialogue, to assure that the future will be built on those themes and images. Of course since many people will have conducted the interviews — anywhere from 2 to 2000 in our experience — it is necessary to create a mechanism by which all that data can be absorbed and digested by people in the organisation. (Notice that we do not say, “analyze the data.”) The search here is not for the norm, the most mentioned idea, even the best idea. The process of absorbing and digesting data is one that allows people to take it all in and to react to the messages and meaning in ways that move the organisation in the direction of the combined positive energy of the members. It is more about creating synergy than about consensus.

The group working with the interview data can also range from 2 to 2000, or even more! Remembering the theory that we get more of what we focus on, it follows that the more people involved in sharing the stories, “mining” the data, and identifying the themes of life giving forces, the more the organisation will move in the direction of those themes. There are many ways of sharing and working with the data just as there are many choices in the earlier processes about who does the interviewing, who “collates” the data (if that is the decision) and who works with the data to pull out the themes/life-giving forces. Before we get into identifying the choices in data collation and data synthesis (i.e. making meaning of the data), let’s focus on the idea of themes and life giving forces, as well as ways to identify the themes and life-giving forces in the data.

In describing the interview process (i.e., *Inquiry Into Stories Of Life Giving Forces*) we argued that the very action of asking people to reflect on and tell stories about exceptional moments in the present or past of their organisation, and to identify how they hope things will be different in the future (the wish question) is a powerful intervention in and of itself which begins to move the system in directions that are positive and life-giving. We argued that it is the combination of positively focused inquiry, positively focused dialogue and the resultant influence on the collective imagination that propels forward movement. We now want to keep those conversations and that dynamic alive and extend them for the same reasons we asked the questions in the first place. However, it’s not just a process of talking about good things. Rather we need to work with the data in a way that continues the inherent value of conversations focused on life-giving forces while also developing the ground from which we can later build

⁶² AI for Organisation Change: A Workshop Resource Book by Bernard J Mohr and Jane Magruder Watkins

shared images, dreams, and visions of a preferred future.

LOCATING THE THEMES⁶³

Themes of life-giving forces can be found in the information gathered in the generic interviews as well as from the customised protocol interviews. In fact, one never knows where a life-giving force will come to the light of day! Themes are important “threads” from the inquiry data. They are short answers to the question, “What do we hear people describing in the interviews as the life giving forces in this organisation?” Locating the themes involves identifying and highlighting the life giving forces imbedded in the interview data. Identifying the themes and life-giving forces not only continues the “reality-creating conversations,” but also provides a link between the inquiry we have conducted into the past and the image of the preferred future we will create in the fourth core process. The themes become the basis for collectively imagining what the organisation would be like if the exceptional moments that we have uncovered in the interviews became the norm in the organisation.

Below are some additional examples of the kinds of themes — life-giving forces — that people identify from the interviews done in their organisations:

1. Themes from interviews with a group of collective socio-technical systems consultants on the interview query: “Tell me about a time when you felt most alive as a practitioner?”
 - Working with people’s core values
 - Putting integrity into practice
 - Recognising the ‘footprints’ of our work long after the steps have been
 - Being real and authentic
 - Designing organisations that create more humanity than they consume
2. Themes from interviews with a group of line managers in a social service agency telling stories about their working lives:
 - Doing Things Collectively:
 - Removing barriers to unity (e.g. Evaluation Process), internal collaboration
 - Ownership, support, commitment to common good
 - Commitment to appreciating each other.
 - Getting together, sharing information and socialising.
 - Transitioning from prosperity to austerity can lead to innovation and creativity.

There is no prescription for a theme. It is entirely up to the group to decide upon the life-giving forces of their own system. Often a discussion of themes found in the interview data will lead to conversations that uncover other themes that the group believes are equally important. The challenge for the AI facilitator is to let the group go where it needs to go with as little constraining structure as it is possible to have and still maintain enough order to get the work done. There are no right or wrong answers here; just answers that have meaning to the group itself

Following is an example of an exercise that you can use to help a group identify themes. This is

⁶³ AI for Organisation Change: A Workshop Resource Book by Bernard J Mohr and Jane Magruder Watkins

meant to be informational, not instructive, since there are as many ways to get at this process as there are organisations and consultants working with it.

THEME IDENTIFICATION EXERCISE⁶⁴

In a complex system intervention, the work preceding this step has likely been: (1) to identify a core group from the organisation; (2) to conduct an AI workshop that includes the theory of AI, the generic interview process, and the identification of topics for further study from the interview data; and (3) to conduct the interviews. A second workshop with the core group as a minimum and all of the people interviewed as a maximum is a good next step. The second workshop can focus on identifying themes (the subject of this third core process of AI) as well as on tasks that are covered in the next two chapters. For the purpose of illustrating a task statement and process for theme identification, we share with you a process that we often use.

Instructions for Theme Identification Exercise: (This same process works for topic identification from the generic interviews.)

CHOOSE A WORK GROUP: Take your interview partner and join two other interview pairs, forming a group of 6. (NOTE: We have used “small” groups of as many as 12 if the group is very large.)

IN YOUR GROUP:

- Choose someone to (1) Keep Time; (2) Scribe on the Chart; (3) Present your final Chart
- At your table, each person (briefly) shares one or two of the best stories told by their interview partner. After hearing each other’s stories, create a brainstormed list of the themes that were present in the stories -- about high points, life-giving forces, ideas that “grabbed” you -- ideas about what life is like when things are at their best.
- From your group’s “brainstormed” list, agree on and select 3 — 5 topics for your group and put them on a flip chart. Post the sheets. (NOTE: If you have several topics — i.e., strong leadership, congenial work environment, etc. — each covered by a separate question, you can use this exercise for each separate topic.)

THEMES: A theme is an idea or concept about what is present in the stories when people are reporting the times of greatest excitement, creativity and reward. For example, in many stories you may hear that when the topic covered by the question is at its best, people report “a feeling of success” or “clarity about purpose,” or “fun and excitement.” These phrases are “themes.” In your brainstormed list, include all of these kinds of phrases that people can identify. Then select 3 to 5 themes that the whole group feels are important and that you would all like to have in your ideal work environment and organisation.

PREPARE THE FOLLOWING CHART TO BE POSTED ON THE WALL:

(NOTE: It is very important at every step of an AI process to be inclusive and expansive. When people deal with data, the default setting in our culture is to become reductionist — to place

⁶⁴ Adapted from AI for Organisation Change: A Workshop Resource Book by Bernard J Mohr and Jane Magruder Watkins

things in priority order or to soft and try to combine ideas. For this exercise, we recommend that you say 3 to 5 as an approximate number of themes but make it clear to participants that you do not want them to be constrained by those numbers. Some number more or less will also be fine. The idea here is to capture those ideas that are most important to people. Once they have some number of themes on the chart. The chart is posted on the wall — ideally fairly close to each other so that they can all be seen easily — it is important not to give in to the inclination to put together similar themes or to combine charts in any way. Leave them exactly as they are. Once the following exercise is done, there are ways to note when similar themes have many dots which serves to emphasise the importance of those similar ideas.)

THEMES	
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

CREATING A SCATTER-GRAM:

- Each team answers any clarifying questions about the themes they have listed on the chart.
- Each person has X number of “dots.” Working alone, decide of all the themes on the wall, which are most important to you to be included in your dream of the future.
- You have **5** minutes to decide and place your dots. Please use each dot on a separate theme.

(NOTE: We generally give each person 3 or 4 of the colored “Avery dots.” You can also use markers and tell each person that they have X number of checks to be used, one by a theme. The scatter-gram is more vivid if you use all one color.)

MAKING SENSE OF THE SCATTER-GRAM: What do you notice about the charts? What themes are most important to this group?

(NOTE: At this point the group will often notice similar themes and remark on that. Try to reinforce the idea that every theme on the wall is important to at least one group in the room. The scatter-gram is to give a visual image of the whole group’s energy for certain themes. It is important not to count and put numbers by the dot clusters. Encourage people to see this as a visual of the group’s energy. We rarely put any order to the themes which allows the next step — Shared Images of a Preferred Future — to use all of the theme data as the basis for their images.)

Once again, let us reinforce that the AI approach for identifying themes is different from the traditional approach. Within an AT context, something can be a theme (i.e. a life-giving force) even if it is mentioned in only one story. This is different from the traditional approach, governed by scientific ideas about statistical validity, where something has to be mentioned a certain number of times before it can be called a theme.

Our focus in this process is identifying life-giving forces using a very different but inclusive set of criteria. In AI, if just one person in one interview identifies something that resonates, that strikes a chord with others in the system, then, it is most likely that it is a life-giving force for

that system. Of course we also consider something a life-giving force if it is mentioned by several people. This is a process for tapping into the intuitive emotional abilities of the group working with the data as they decide what, for them, is a life-giving force in the organisation. If it resonates with members of the client system, if people say, “YES, I know just what she means!” then it’s probably a good bet that this is a theme/life-giving force we should be paying attention to. Bear in mind that this process, like much of AI, is an organic and eminently dynamic process in which, if something is missed or misinterpreted at one point; it will almost certainly be identified or restated in a clearer way at another point.

EXPANDING THE DIALOGUE:

Bearing in mind that AI is rooted in the theory that we create our future realities through our current conversations, the task of pulling themes from the interview data is a marvelous opportunity to engage more people in conversations that focus on the things that give life to the organisation. The group chosen to “mine” the data and select the themes can be any configuration that the AI consultant and the organisation co-create. Typical choices in our experience are:

- The external or internal consultant to the process, and/or,
- Members of the interview team, and/or,
- Members of the senior guidance group (if there is one) and/or
- All or some significant subset of the all the folks that were interviewed.
- Various combinations of the above

In the traditional model of OD consulting, the data is almost always collated and often analyzed by the consultant and fed back into the organisation as a report. Remembering the theory that the observer always impacts and changes that which is observed, it follows that in an AI process the consultant would never be the one to analyze the data. Given that clients are used to and comfortable with certain kinds of processes, it may be a bit of a stretch to talk yourself out of the job of analyzing the data. We **STRONGLY** recommend that you avoid doing data analysis since you will, by that act, have theoretically moved yourself and the system out of an AI process. The minimum participation in “mining” the data is the original core group. From there, add as many people as you can talk the client into. Since we work from the belief that the future is created through dialogue, it makes a great deal of sense to get as many people involved as possible in this stage. If you are successful in having all or some significant subset of all the folks that were interviewed as part of the group that searches for themes in the data, then you will need to design a process for a large group of people.

Appendix P: Interview Consent Form & Face Sheet

The relational realisation of practice in policy

I have asked you to participate in an interview for a study I am doing on the experience of employees working for a government agency. The people who will be participants in this study work, or have worked, for the Bermuda Government. I will be attempting to identify and understand relationships and how they influence the working lives of government employees. This project began in 2000, although its focus changed from child and family service work to workplace relationships and diversity in the civil service as a whole. Since that time, I have been reviewing the literature on governance and governmentality, organisational development and culture, and social constructionism.

I am very interested in talking to employees who hold a variety of positions in Bermuda's civil service. I am likely to discuss some aspects of diversity as well as general employment experiences. I am interested in you, a relationship that has had significance to you and your perspective on a policy issue. I plan to use these interviews towards my doctorate thesis at Taos/Tilburg University.

This project requires me to get your consent to be interviewed. In return for your agreeing to be interviewed, I must promise to protect your privacy. I may be talking about my understanding of your experiences with my professors who are supervising my work, and aspects of your story may be published in the future. All the information provided will be treated as anonymous. Your real name will never be used, and any details of your story will be changed so that other people will not recognise you. I will be summarising the information I capture in this interview with data from other interviews.

In order to make sure that I get your story right, I will be recording our interview. These records will be completely private. While we are talking, if you do not want to answer any questions, you may refuse. You may also stop the recording process at any time. The interview takes approximately 45 minutes.

I am confident that your contribution will enrich my work and I appreciate your participation.

I understand this consent form and agree to this interview.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

If you would like a copy of this interview when I am done, so that you can make changes or additions, please include your address so I mail it to you.

Address if required:



INTERVIEW FACE SHEET

Interview #: _____

Gender (circle one): M F

Race/ Cultural identification (optional): _____

Employment Level: Executive Management _____

Senior Management _____

Middle Management _____

Non-managerial Professional/Technical _____

Non-professional _____

BPSA Salary Scale Range: PS _____ to _____

Position title: _____

Professional title (i.e. social worker, psychologist, criminologist): _____

Department/ Ministry: _____

Major Division of Activity (circle those that apply):

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Finance and Business | Administration/ Support |
| Health | Works/ Construction |
| Engineering | Human Affairs/ Rights/ Advocacy |
| Transport | Immigration |
| Business Services | Manufacturing |
| Sport and Recreation | Policy/ Management/ Development |
| Civil Aviation | Architecture |
| Human Resource Management | Tourism |
| Statistics | Education/ Health/ Social Work |
| Law | Planning/ Land |
| Community Services /Social Affairs | Information Technology/ Telecommunications |

Other: _____ Explanation (if required): _____

Number (#) of years worked within a civil service setting(s): _____

Level of education (circle one): High school or equivalent Undergraduate
 College Graduate or more
 Trade or specialist program

Specialisation: _____

Type of degree/ diploma obtained (if applicable): _____

Age (Optional): _____

Notes/ Other: _____

Appendix Q: Introductory Remarks: The relational realisation of practice in policy

Research Contextualisation

My 12 years of working with a government environment allowed me a rich and varied experience in organisational practice. I have worked in several areas of government: child welfare, human rights and race relations, and have experienced several distinctively different work orientations to the work. In my capacity as a worker in the family preservation division of service, I was struck by the readiness of some workers to get intensively involved with families; look for all possible strengths in families and sometimes take calculated risks in keeping families together. In fact, I had a hard time adjusting to the differences in orientation which ranged from being problem-focused versus solution-focused, multi versus single disciplinary, client-centred versus family-centred, system versus individual treatments, or family reunification versus long-term alternative care. I found myself advocating for the reunification of what were considered long-term placement situations and getting some negative feedback. At the same time, I was also being cautious in my family preservation work, reluctantly taking “risks” in sending children home for fear that the situation would break down.

Functioning as a part-time worker in both community services and family preservation, in either youth protection capacity, the statutory framework was always present, be they legislation, policy or best practice ideals. Youth protection laws, which delineate risk to children and outline child welfare intervention, always functioned centrally in decision-making. What I began to struggle with was whether social workers, despite their best efforts, were reproducing race, class and gender relations in everyday practice. We would say that we are supportive of families and our intervention process might have demonstrated this, but when a family situation broke down, front-line workers seemed to seek explanations for the problems that blamed mothers, problematised mother-headed families and let fathers abdicate responsibility.

As a manager, I found myself similarly struggling with what seemed to be ideals for practice that were not being realised on a daily basis. When I was first introduced to the principles of youth protection practice, which embody child welfare, health and social service policy, and the organisational missions and mandates, I had already been working for three years. Yet, I never received formal job training. I remember being surprised at how supportive, solution-focused and positive the policies were. In some respects, these statutes were contrary to what I would often see occurring at the practice, decision-making, reporting and levels of intervention. I think it was at that time that I began to consciously acknowledge then, that my work is less a reflection of the agency’s policies and mandates and more indicative of my attitudes, beliefs, perceptions and experience of the work. My interventions were and are also a reflection of the attitudes and beliefs of my colleagues, supervisors and the agency’s principles and mandates. These ‘constructed messages’ helped me, as an employee; formulate an idea of what is acceptable practice. As importantly, these attitudes and beliefs dictated my orientations towards practice, my interventions and decisions.

Moving from Canada to Bermuda meant a change in University programs and a shift in orientation: from feminist and social learning theories to social constructionist theories. Continuing this research through the social constructionist paradigm has meant reevaluating these interventionist and decision-making experiences through a relational lens. What I once

constructed as values, attitudes and belief systems, now present themselves as narratives, reflective of multiple and situated relationships. The appreciative aspects of the research have seen the formation of interview questions, which probe best relational experiences and practice. Organisational practice is now constructed through the voices of the participants, no one voice more relevant than any other, but each leaving its own impressions on workplace traditions; interactions, policies, practices and their realisation. In particular, social constructionist theory adequately responds to my challenge of making other paradigms ‘fit’ with the discussion at hand. More detail on these ideas is presented in the body of the research paper, which will be available upon request at its completion.

This study asks participants to explore a relationship they have had with someone different from themselves, to consider the relational attributes they bring to the workplace and to reflect upon best policies functioning in the organisation. The participants’ responses are brought to bear on the following research questions:

Is it possible to more closely align a myriad of narratives- relational interactions (the communications on experiences of the people who give life to policy), organisational culture (the dynamics of practice influenced by relational interactions), policy (the workplace objectives as stated by the organisational missions and procedures) and best practice (organisational ideals that aspire to a set of international standards)?

How will such movement influence practice and to what extent are privileged narratives reflected in what is considered “best practice”?

Myra Virgil
June 2004

Appendix R: Research Involving Bermuda Government Employees

Information on Processes

Title: The relational realisation of practice in policy: privileged narrative in the civil service collective

Researcher: Myra Virgil, C/O The Commission for Unity and Racial Equality

Status: PhD. Candidate, Organisational behavior & Psychology, Taos/ Tilburg University

Advisor: Dr. Mary Gergen

Description of Research Topic: See 'Research Contextualisation'

Participants: Cross-section of present and former civil service employees

Method of recruitment: Voluntary; by referral

Method of data collection: Completion of interview face sheet; face-to-face interviews

Participant Risk and Confidentiality

There are no risks to participants. Participants' anonymity and confidentiality will be preserved and maintained. The study does not involve deception of participants. All participants are debriefed as to the interests, context and goals of the study. Informed consent will be documented via written consent form. Participants are informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time.

Use of Confidential Materials

Only documentation, material and information on the organisation under study that has been made available to employees will be used in this study. All data will be treated in a sensitive and professional way.

Relevance of Study

Policies, practice, and the relational experience of civil service workers have implications for training, intervention, program and organisational development. The study goals are to:

- Explore the narratives of civil service work and to consider their alignment with the professional and organisational standards, policies of practice and missions;
- Develop a discourse that includes an orientation to intervention that adequately combines the organisational principles with realities of civil service work;
- Substantiate the need for agencies to systematically, consistently and in an ongoing way train and educate civil service employees;
- Explore the "situatedness" of public service worker "talk" with regard to diversity;
- Contribute to a discourse on intervention that aligns narratives of principle with the realities described by civil service employees;
- Contribute to a growing body of literature on race relations policy;
- Substantiate the need for agencies to systematically inform and seek feedback from their employees through narrative, encouraging reflective practice and reflective practitioners;
- Explore and expand the application of appreciative inquiry to research paradigms;
- Advocate for the application of international "best practice" standards through a critical and exploratory analysis of what "best" practice can be; and
- Demonstrate the applications of social constructionism in the articulation of the interpersonal relationships between racial beings.

The relational realisation of practice in policy: Privileged narrative in the Civil Service professional

RESEARCH SUMMARY

This dissertation propels inquiry in the areas of social constructionism, relational theory and appreciative inquiry, in organisational life. The Bermuda Government civil service provides an enriching backdrop to this study, for its Bermuda resident participants represent a range of diversities.

Organisational participants co-construct a working reality on the infinite basis of their relational experiences. Some of these relationships may be understood through a lens of post-colonialism, patriarchy, matriarchy, racism, sexism, ethnocentrism, equality of opportunity policy, organisational mission and vision and other theoretical constructs of human life. The relational aspects of experience are given life through dialogue; the day to day interpersonal exchanges that construct reality.

What may be a reality is that the issue and interplay of people's diverse narratives is lost in the language and notions of best practices. Invariably, working relationships and thus, the operational organisational culture are guided and more reflective of people's fundamental relational experiences with people of different races, genders and social class origins, than of the guiding policies and principles, the ethical and moral underpinnings, of the organisation.

This inquiry invites participants to reflect upon how their best relationships, as influenced by their experiences as, and with, members of different racial groups, genders and social class constructs impact the working culture and policy objectives. The cross-disciplinary participants' "stories" on how relational aspects of identity, both their own and others, mediate between the organisation's fundamental philosophies and how people in the organisation relate, function and task on a daily basis. The participant's stories reflect their own identities, as well as those of the individual in relation to other organisational participants within the co-constructed system factors that are alive in all organisations.

Fundamental premises

It is human nature to reflect upon, interact and work from our relationships, experiences and beliefs about people. We acquire these beliefs from many sources, our life experiences, our families, our communities, religion, daily interactions and anticipation of daily interactions experienced through relationships. What we believe about others, influences how we relate, and the decisions we make in concert with others. Beliefs may be an underlying factor in many organisational processes, such as interpersonal and intra-personal relationships and decision-making practices. The underlying presence of beliefs about diversities means that people may think about them, act from within an understanding of their beliefs about themselves and others, but it is not usually overtly expressed as part of the co-created organisational world. Relational experiences about race, may be stated, but may also be transmitted more subtly through practice or through a tone of interaction.

An appreciative framework suggests that to probe the influence of race, gender and social class relations in the workplace, inquiry is directed at respondents' experiences or connections with someone who is different from them. There are options as to whether the differences or diversities (i.e. race, social class, and gender) should be delineated in the questioning, or whether respondents are encouraged to construct their own understandings of diversity. This study opts for the later following consultation on the interview questions. Further, if one wants to expand an understanding of meaningful workplace relations, how race, gender and social class diversities, often considered the most prominent on a scale of diversity hierarchy, are experienced and perceived would be an important direction for inquiry. These perceptions influence equality of opportunity policy and strategy, and are fundamental, but must also be understood from within a context of other mediating diversities, such as ethnicity, religion, sexuality, disability, or political opinion.

Appendix S: Letter of Introduction from Taos Institute/ Tilburg University

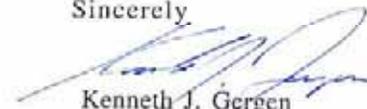
THE TAOS INSTITUTE

July 1, 2004

To whom it may concern:

This is to certify that Myra Virgil is a student in good standing in the PhD program offered jointly by Tilburg University (Netherlands) and the Taos Institute. We anticipate that she will complete her dissertation by the spring of 2006. I will be happy to answer any and all questions concerning the program or Myra's participation in particular.

Sincerely



Kenneth J. Gergen
Mustin Professor of Psychology
Swarthmore College

Affiliate Professor
Tilburg University

President
The Taos Institute

Director: Kenneth J. Gergen
Executive Director: Dawn Dole

www.taosinstitute.net
taosinstitute@modex.com

Appendix T: Civil Service Values

The following values, definitions and behaviours comprise the Code of Conduct of the Bermuda Leadership Forum. As members of this organisation, we hold these values dear and endeavour to conduct ourselves at all times in their spirit.

Values	Definitions (what these values mean to us)	Behaviours ("We will...")
COMPASSION	<p>Embracing empathy; Having heart; Hearing the other side; Moving toward solution without blaming or condemning; Demonstrating care and showing interest.</p>	<p>Listen, reflect, and offer feed-back; Listen with our heart when another is troubled; Lend a hand when someone is troubled; Forgive easily and quickly; Share the load.</p>
FAIRNESS	<p>Being unbiased; Giving the benefit of the doubt; Acting with integrity, and with loyalty, honour, respect and reliability; Applying the Golden Rule: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you; Applying the Platinum Rule: Do unto others as they would have you do unto them.</p>	<p>Look, listen, pay attention to detail, question, reflect and give direction; Challenge and question; Adhere to the Golden Rule and the Platinum Rule; Behave in a way that results in a person feeling fairly treated by us.</p>
COMMITMENT	<p>Matching intent with action; Staying with the task until it is completed.</p>	<p>Attend all meetings — arrive on time; Do the things we say we will do; Write or telephone ahead of time if we cannot attend; Take part; Speak to the subject; Look, listen, pay attention to detail; question and reflect; Apologize easily and quickly; Provide resources, such as money, food, and people.</p>

EMPOWERMENT	<p>Embracing education; Self-determination and nurturing; Assisting others to become the best they can be; Developing the quality of the home team AND the competition; Freely sharing information, knowledge, skills, insights and feelings with others.</p>	<p>Be a mentor, sharing information, knowledge, skills, insights and feelings with others; Validate, by giving due respect; acknowledging the process and presenter; Be willing to release control; Celebrate the contributions of others; Give voice to the qualities within others.</p>
Values	Definitions (what these values mean to us)	Behaviours ("We will...")
RESPONSIBILITY	<p>Recognising a need or thing to be done and doing it — to completion; Following through with pledges – implied, stated or expected; Being present and sharing the load; Accepting and meeting obligations; Living up to one's word.</p>	<p>Say what needs to be said; Do what needs to be done.</p>
INTEGRITY	<p>Embracing courage; Trusting; Having the strength and courage to stand for truth; Walking with honour of self and others; Loyalty; Recognizing and honoring responsibility in self and others.</p>	<p>Think, speak and act with progressively greater honesty – always towards the 'pure truth.'</p>
RESPECT	<p>Honoring and uplifting others' being and contributions; Honoring self first; Being pleasant; Nurturing positively.</p>	<p>Listen attentively, without being defensive, without interrupting; Speak with kindness, thoughtfulness and encouragement, without being offensive; Disagree honestly, without being disagreeable.</p>
INCLUSIVENESS	<p>Providing an environment for others to contribute without fear or doubt; Seeking and enhancing mutual understanding.</p>	<p>Welcome contributions of others without fear or retribution; Seek others' involvement.</p>

<p>VISION</p>	<p>Being innovative and original; Seeing the consequences of actions; Being able and willing to share one's creativity with others; Working with the future in mind.</p>	<p>Embody experiences of the past, resources and realities of the present, and share the possibilities of the future.</p>
<p>EFFICIENCY</p>	<p>Being precise and concise in speech and presentation; Utilising others; Consciously making the best use of all resources; Achieving goals and actions effectively; Listening and speaking efficiently to achieve efficient results.</p>	<p>Make the most of our resources –our time, material, energy, people and money; Avoid speaking repetitively; Listen attentively; Aspire to be precise and concise in our speech and presentation.</p>
<p>CITIZENSHIP</p>	<p>Claiming ownership of our code of conduct; Accepting, protecting and defending this code of conduct and the ensuing rights and privileges; Accepting, valuing and honoring membership in one's community.</p>	<p>Promote, accept and protect this code of conduct and its ensuing rights and privileges; Accept and honour membership in one's community.</p>

Appendix U: Article on Rewarding Employees

THE BERMUDA SUN

BUSINESS

JUNE 15, 2005 ■ 17

Awards for workers get better as they get personal

BY CAROL KLEIMAN
Chicago Tribune

Not so long ago, workers were happy if their employers were generous enough to recognize hard work — and the need for



CAROL KLEIMAN
KRT columnist

help in balancing their personal lives — with discounts on merchandise, a weekend getaway, gift certificates and other personal services.

Recognition and support in this traditional way still are highly valued by employees, but recently, awards have become more individualized.

And not surprisingly, employers have raised the ante on the re-

warding themselves.

Employees prefer to choose from a variety of awards rather than receive a preselected item.

MARITZ POLL

"The field of (employee) rewards and concierge services is changing to reflect the desire of workers to experience life and not just to buy or to get things," said Janet Kraus, chief executive offi-

cer of Circles, a marketing company based. "We're seeing a surge in companies that also offer their employees individualized options — including ones that celebrate success in a personal way."

A Maritz Poll survey of 1,202 U.S. workers indicates that 73 per cent of respondents prefer to choose from a variety of awards rather than receive "preselected" items.

Kraus' company specializes in what the CEO calls "experiential" offers, ones that "create memorable moments for workers. They strengthen the bond with the employee."

That means employees might receive awards or opt to use personal services that sound "traditional" but are not.

Today the customary "dinner

for two" might be prepared by a private chef in your own home; "dinner at a restaurant of your choice" could include champagne, butlers and chefs serving you; a "weekend getaway" these days might be at a castle with 100 rooms; "tickets to a sporting event" could include dinner, being chauffeured to the game, box seats and meeting a sports announcer or player.

Employee recognition and services have come a long way from getting the day off or a gold watch. Kraus, who founded her company in 1997 with Kathy Sherbrooke, president, says that "from the beginning, we offered this kind of service to businesses for employees and for their clients, starting with such things as maid service for a year.

"In the late 1990s, when there was a shortage of labour and people were strapped for time, being able to provide employees things to enjoy with the time they did have drove the shift to personalized rewards."

During the recent recession acknowledging outstanding performance with unusual opportunities continued because "losing your best employees is awful — and very expensive."

Employers understand that "investments in these kinds of moments are priceless relative to the costs of rehiring and training," she said. ■

CAROL KLEIMAN is the author of *Winning the Job Game: The New Rules for Finding and Keeping the Job You Want*. Send e-mail to ckleiman@tribune.com.

Appendix V: Article on Relationships

■ LIFE SKILLS / What we can learn from Florida

Beanda Ann, June 15, 2005

More relationship skills training is needed

In our community discussions about the escalating problems of violence and other antisocial behaviour, one recurring aspect emerges. Not enough attention and effort in being put in building, maintaining and repairing relationships.



STUART HAYWARD
Sun columnist

From nursery school to parliament, we humans are engaged in relationships, one-to-one, one-to-many, group-to-group. Think beyond typical family life relationships of boy-girl, man-woman, adult child, to include teacher-student, teacher-teacher, teacher-administrator relationships; and business owner/manager-business staff/worker relationships; and even neighbour-to-neighbour, telephone calls and sharing road use with others. We would all be better off, individually and as a community, if these and other relationships worked better. It would seem common sense, then, to make sure that every one of us acquires the skills of relationship building and maintenance, and conflict resolution. Although they weren't labeled as such, historically these fundamentals were inculcated in children primarily through family, school and church, assisted by the police and the rules of business and government. These days, those agencies of socialisation no longer function in the same way or with the same effect. The general result is that many of our relationships, from the mundane to the vital, aren't as healthy as they could be. Some are downright ill. It may be small comfort that this phenomenon isn't limited to Bermuda. In the US, several states have not-

ed a similar set of socialisation problems and have funded studies and even initiated legislation to provide for their youth some of the training that used to take place in the home. At the Center for Marriage and Family at Florida State University, for example, research confirms that the breakdown in families (particularly divorce) burdens the society with social and financial costs, wreaks havoc on the health of the adults involved and inflicts disorders of conduct and self-concept on the children. The US states have focused mostly on ways to prevent divorce, either through making the process more difficult or more lengthy; or by offering pre- and post-marriage training. Florida, for example, enacted in 1996 a Mar-

riage Preparation and Preservation Act that includes the following wording:
■ An inability to cope with stress from both internal and external sources leads to significantly higher incidents of domestic violence, child abuse, absenteeism, medical costs, learning and social deficiencies, and divorce.
■ Relationship skills can be learned.
■ Once learned, relationship skills can facilitate communication between parties to a marriage and assist couples in avoiding conflict.
■ Once relationship skills are learned, they are generalized to parenting, the workplace, schools, neighborhoods, and civic relationships.
■ By reducing conflict and increasing communication, stressors can be diminished and coping can be facilitated.

ship skills can facilitate communication between parties to a marriage and assist couples in avoiding conflict.
■ Once relationship skills are learned, they are generalized to parenting, the workplace, schools, neighborhoods, and civic relationships.
■ By reducing conflict and increasing communication, stressors can be diminished and coping can be facilitated.

When effective coping exists, domestic violence, child abuse, and divorce and its effect on children, such as absenteeism, medical costs, and learning and social deficiencies, are diminished.
■ The state has a compelling interest in educating its citizens with regard to marriage and, if contemplated, the effects of divorce.
■ Lake Florida, most of the state interventions focus on marriage and parenting skills and are consequently not begun until children are close to leaving high school.
■ However, I am convinced we need an intervention that starts earlier and spreads a wider net. We'd do better to begin relationship and conflict resolution training at the elementary school level and in families

with pre-school children. We have already had success with a peer mediation scheme piloted in several schools by Sheelagh Cooper through the Coalition for the Protection of Children. Martha Diamond of the Family Learning Centre has been working to improve social skills within "families in crisis". These are complementary efforts that could well be linked and should definitely be expanded.
Every child will need good relationship skills, no matter what kind or how many personal relationships they form, or what jobs they will have. At every level of society, we need to learn to get along better. Providing relationship-building skills to all our children at an early age is the key ■

Every child will need good relationship skills, no matter what kind or how many personal relationships they form, or what jobs they will have. At every level of society, we need to learn to get along better. Providing relationship-building skills to all our children at an early age is the key ■

Bermuda Botanical Society
Annual General Meeting
Wednesday, 29th June 2005

Visitors' Centre, Botanical Gardens
Doors open: 6:30pm
Meeting starts: 7:00pm

The Meeting will also incorporate a **Special General Meeting** tabling some changes to the Constitution of the Society. The slate of Executives and the proposed changes to the Constitution will be posted in the Visitors' Centre. Nominations are being accepted.

George Peterich will give a slide presentation on **"A Botanical Excursion to Mt. Stanley, Uganda"**

Light refreshments
New members welcome




THERE'S A NAME FOR THIS KIND OF WELCOME.

We've made quite a name for ourselves by regularly giving our guests more than they bargained for. More space, comfort, amenities - plus all the hospitality you only get from an Irish family-owned and operated hotel. For guaranteed best rates, visit fitzpatrickhotels.com

Fitzpatrick
MANCHESTER • DUBLIN • CORK

Irish Hospitality With An American Accent
1-800-367-7701

REFERENCES

- Au, C. (1994). The status of theory and knowledge development in social welfare administration. Administration in Social Work, Vol. 18(3), 27-55.
- Acker, J. (1987). "Gendering organisational theory", 248-260 in C. Mills & Tancred, The Racial Contract, Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Anderson, H., Cooperrider, D., Gergen, K., Gergen, M., McNamee, S., & Whitney, D. (2001). The Appreciative Organisation. Chagrin Falls, Ohio: Taos Institute Publication.
- Andreasen, Robin O. (2000). Race: Biological reality or social construct. Philosophy of Science, 67(3), 653-657.
- Appiah, K. A. (1996). Race, culture, identity: misunderstood connections. In K. A. Appiah and A. Guttman (eds.), Colour Consciousness: The Political Morality of Race, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Ashford, Susan J., O'Neill, Regina M., Lawrence, K. A. (2001). Moves that matter: issue selling and organisational change. Academy of Management Journal, 44(4), 22-24.
- Barrett, F. J., Thomas, G.F., & Hocevar, S.P. (1995). The central role of discourse in large-scale change: a social construction perspective. Journal of Applied Behavioral Science, 31(3), 352-372.
- Barrett, M. (1992) 'Words and things: Materialism and method in contemporary feminist analysis' in M. Barrett and A. Phillips (eds.) Destabilizing Theory: Contemporary Feminist Debates. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Barry, A., Osborne, T., & Rose, N. (eds.) (1996) Foucault and Political Reason: Liberalism, Neoliberalism and Rationalities of Government. London: University College Press.
- Barry, Peter. (1995). Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory. Oxford: Manchester University Press.
- Batshaw Youth & Family Centres. (1996). BYFC Principles of Intervention. Montreal, Quebec.
- Bem, S. L. (1993). The lenses of gender: Transforming the debate on sexuality inequality. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Berger, Peter L. & Luckman, T. (1966). The social construction of reality: A treatise on sociology of knowledge. Garden City, NJ: Doubleday.

- Biever, Joan, De Las Fuentes, Cashion, Lisa, & Franklin, Cynthia. (1998). The social construction of gender: a comparison of feminist and postmodern approaches. Counseling Psychology Quarterly, 11(2), 163-180.
- Billing, M. (1985). Prejudice, categorization, and particularization: From a perceptual to a rhetorical approach. European Journal of Social Psychology, 15, 79-103.
- Blanchard, F. A., Lilly, T., & Vaughn, L. A. (1991). Reducing the expression of racial prejudice. Psychological Science, 2, 101-105.
- Bohan, Janis S. (1997). Regarding Gender: Essentialism, Constructionism, and Feminist Psychology in Mary M. Gergen and Sara N. Davis (eds.) Toward a New psychology of gender, NY, New York: Routledge.
- Brodrib, S. (1992). Nothing Mat(t)ers: A Feminist Critique of Postmodernism. Melbourne: Spinnifex.
- Brown, C. (1994). Feminist postmodernism and the challenge of diversity. In A. Chambon and A. Irving (Eds.), Postmodernism and Social Work (33-45). Toronto, ON: Canadian Scholars Press.
- Bruner, J. (1990). Acts of Meaning. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Burchell, G., Gordon, C. & Miller, P. (eds) (1991). The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality. Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf.
- Burchall, L. (2004). How strong racial undercurrents are being re-routed. The Bermuda Sun, March 3, 2004, 8.
- Burr, Vivian (1995). An introduction to social constructionism. London, New York: Routledge.
- Bushe, G. R. (1995). Advances in appreciative inquiry as an organisation development intervention. Organisation Development Journal, 13(3), 14-22.
- Bushe, G.R., & Pitman, T. (1991). Appreciative process: A method for transformational change. Organisation Development Practitioner, 23(3), 1-4.
- Callahan, M. (1993). The Administrative and Practice Context: Perspectives from the Front Line. In B. Wharf (Ed.), Rethinking Child Welfare in Canada (pp. 64-97). Toronto, Ontario: McClelland & Stewart Inc.
- Canadian Association of Social Workers. (1995). Standards of Practice in Social Work. Canada.
- Chia, R. (2000). Discourse analysis as organisational analysis. Organisation, 7, 513-518.

- Choo, Chun Wei. (1998). The Knowing Organisation. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Civil Service College (2003). Senior Management Development Program: Materials, London, UK: Centre for Management and Policy Studies.
- Clayton, C. (1993). [Review of 'Real and imagined women: gender, culture and post colonialism']. In R. S. Rajan (Ed.). London: Routledge.
- Commission for Racial Equality in Scotland (2000). Equal Opportunities and Private Sector Employment in Scotland: A summary of research into equal opportunities policies and practice. Edinburgh, Scotland: www.cre.gov.uk
- Cooperrider, D.L., Barrett, F., & Srivastva, S. (1995). Social construction and appreciative inquiry: A journey in organisational theory. In D. Hosking, P. Dachler, & K. Gergen (eds.), Management and organisation: Relational alternatives to individualism (pp. 157-200). Aldershot, UK: Avebury Press.
- Cooperrider, D.L. (1996). Resources for getting appreciative inquiry started: An example OD Proposal. Organisation Development Practitioner, 28(1 & 2), 23-33.
- Cooperrider, D. & Whitney, D. (2003). A Positive Revolution in Change: Appreciative Inquiry [on-line]. 1-30. <http://www.appreciativeinquiry.cwru.edu/uploads/whatisai.pdf>
- Cox, William (2003). Advantages of a colony. The Royal Gazette Bermuda, December 3, 2003, 3.
- Crosby, F., Bromley, S., & Saxe, L. (1980). Recent unobtrusive studies of Black and White discrimination and prejudice: A literature review. Psychological Bulletin, 56, 5-18.
- Crossley, M. L. (2003). Formulating narrative psychology: the limitations of contemporary social constructionism. Narrative Inquiry, 13 (2), 287-300.
- Daly, M. Transcript from BBC's 'Secret Policeman' Documentary. (2003). Retrieved from <http://www.news.bbc.co.uk>.
- Darby, Phillip (ed.) (1997). At the edge of international relations: postcolonialism, gender and dependency. London: Pinter.
- Davies, C. (2000). Care and transformation of professionalism. In C. Davies, I. Finlay and A. Bulman (Eds.). Changing Practice in Health and Social Care. London: Sage.
- Denzin, N.K. and Lincoln, Y.S. (Eds.) (1994). Handbook of qualitative research. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Drexler, Allan, Sibbet, David, & Forrester, Russell. (2003). The team performance model. NTL Institute and University Associates. Virginia: Grove Consultants International
- Devine, P. (2003). A modern perspective on the classic American dilemma. Psychological Inquiry, Vol. 14, No. 3 & 4, 244-250.
- Devine, P., Plant, E. A., Amodio, D. M., Harmon-Jones, E., & Vance, S. L. (2002). The regulation of explicit and implicit race bias: the role of motivations to respond without prejudice. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 82 (5), 835-848.
- Devine, P. & Plant, E. A. (2001). Responses to other-imposed pro-black pressure: Acceptance or backlash. Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 37, 486-501.
- Dutton, J. E. & Dukerich, Janet M. (1994). Keeping an eye on the mirror: Image and identity in organisational adaptation. Academy of Management Journal, 34(3), 517-554.
- Eichler, M. (1986). The Relationship between Sexist, Non-sexist, Woman-centred and Feminist Research in the Social Sciences. In T. McCormack (Ed.), Studies in Communication III. JAI Press, Inc.
- Ely, Robin J. (1995). The power in demography: women's social constructions of gender identity at work. Academy of Management Journal, 38(3), 1-2.
- Ewert, M. (2001). The social construction of difference and inequality: race, class, gender and... . Teaching Sociology, 29(1), 120.
- Fairclough, Norman. (2003). Analysing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research. London: Routledge.
- Featherstone, B. & Fawcett, B. (1995). Oh No! Not More Isms: Feminism, postmodernism, poststructuralism and social work education. Social Work Education, 14(3), 25-43.
- Finlay, M. (1989). Post-modernizing psychoanalysis/ psychoanalyzing postmodernity: reontologising the subject in discourse. Free Associations, 16, 43-80.
- Fitzgerald, Stephen P., Murrell, Kenneth L., & Miller, Monty G. (2003). Appreciative inquiry: accentuating the positive. Business Strategy Review, 14(1), 5.
- Fook, J., Ryan, M., & Hawkins, L. (2000). Professional expertise: Practice, theory and education for working in uncertainty. London: Whiting and Birch.
- Foucault, M. (1977a) Discipline and Punish, London, Allen Lane.
- Foucault, M. (1977b) The Archaeology of Knowledge, London, Tavestock.

Foucault, M. (1978) 'Politics and the study of discourse', Ideology and Consciousness, Spring, 3, 7-26.

Foucault, M. (1986) 'Space, knowledge and power' in P. Rainbow (ed.) The Foucault Reader, Harmondsworth, Penguin.

Foucault, M. (1991) 'Governmentality', in Burchell, G., Gordon, C. & Miller, P. (eds) (1991). The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality. Hemel, Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

Franklin, Margery B. (1997). Making Sense: Interviewing and Narrative Representation in Mary M. Gergen and Sara N. Davis (eds.) Toward a New psychology of gender, NY, New York: Routledge.

Frankenburg, R. (1993). White women, race matters: The social construction of Whiteness. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Gavey, Nicola (1997). Feminist Poststructuralism and discourse analysis in Mary M. Gergen and Sara N. Davis (eds.) Toward a New psychology of gender, NY, New York: Routledge.

Gergen, K. J. (2001). Psychological science in a postmodern context. American Psychologist, 56, 803-813.

Gergen, K. (1999). An invitation to social construction. Thousand Oaks, CA, London: Sage Publications.

Gergen, K. (1998). Narrative, moral identity and historical consciousness: a social constructionist account. J. Straub (ed.). Identitat und historisches Bewusstsein. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.

Gergen, K. (1998). Constructionist dialogues and the vicissitudes of the political. I. Velody (ed.). The politics of social construction. London: Sage.

Gergen, K. (1997). Social theory in context (draft). In J. Greenwood (ed.). The Mark of the Social. New York: Rowman and Littlefield.

Gergen, K. (1996). Social psychology as social construction: emerging vision. In C. McGarty and A. Haslam (eds.). The message of social psychology: perspectives on mind in society. Oxford: Blackwell.

Gergen, K. (1994). Realities and relationships: Soundings in social construction. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Gergen, K. (1985). The social constructionist movement in modern psychology. American Psychologist, 40, 266-275.

Gergen, K. (1982). Towards transformation in social knowledge. New York: Springer-Verlag.

Gergen, K. & Gergen, M. (2004). Social Construction: Entering the Dialogue. Chagrin Falls, Ohio: Taos Institute Publications.

Gergen, K., McNamee, S., & Barrett, F. (2001). Toward a vocabulary of transformative dialogue. International Journal of Public Administration, 24, 697-707.

Gergen, M., & Gergen, K. (2003). Social construction: A reader. London: Sage Publications.

Gergen, M., & Davis, S. N. (2003). Dialogic pedagogy: Developing narrative research perspectives through conversation. In R. Josselson, A. Lieblich, & D. McAdams (Eds.). Up Close and Personal: The teaching and learning of narrative research. Washington, DC: APA Publications.

Gergen, M. M. (1988). Toward a feminist metatheory and methodological social sciences. In M. Gergen (Ed.). Feminist thought and the structure of knowledge. New York: New York University Press.

Gergen, Mary M. & Davis, Sara N. (Eds.) (1997). Toward a New Psychology of Gender. New York, New York: Routledge.

Glenn, E.N. (1994). Social constructions of mothering: A thematic overview. Ch. 1 in Mothering: Ideology, experience and agency. E. Nakano Glenn, G. Chang and L. Rennie Forcey. New York: Routledge.

Goldstein, H. (1994). Ethnography, critical inquiry and social work practice. In E. Sherman & W.J. Reid (eds.). Qualitative Research in Social Work. New York: Columbia University Press, 42-51.

Goldstein, H. (1992). 'If social work hasn't made progress as a science, might it be an art?' Families in Society, 73, (1), 48-55.

Golembiewski, Robert T. (1995). Social constructionism and such like. Organisational Development and Change, Winter, 11-14. Retrieved from <http://www.aom.pace.edu/odc/newletters/win95>.

Gonzalez, Mark (2002). The constitutionalisation of racism: the Hirabayashi and Korematsu decisions. Race & Class, Vol. 42 (3), 91-100.

Good, G. E., Dell, D. M., & Mintz, L. B. (1991). Male role and gender role conflict: Relations to help seeking in men. Journal of Counseling Psychology, 36, 295-300.

- Gordon, C. (1986) 'Questions, ethos, event: Foucault on Kant and Enlightenment', Economy and Society, 15(1), 71-87
- Gordon, C. (1991). 'Government rationality: An introduction' in Burchell, G., Gordon, C. & Miller, P. (eds). The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality. Hemel Hempstead, Harvester Wheatsheaf.
- Gordon, L. (1988). Heroes of their own lives. The politics and history of family violence. Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
- Gould, Carol C. (2004). Globalizing democracy and human rights. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Gould, Carol C. (2000). Racism and democracy reconsidered. Social Identities, 6(4) 425-439.
- Grandy, Oscar H. (2001). Racial identity, media use and the social construction of risk among African Americans. Journal of Black Studies, May, 31 (5), p. 600.
- Gray, B., Bougon, M. G., & Donnellon, A. (1985). Organisations as constructions and deconstructions of meaning. Journal of management, Vol. 11, No. 2, 83-98.
- Greeley, A. (2003). Social constructionism with a vengeance. Society, Vol. March/April, p. 40.
- Green, Z. & Stiers, M.J. (2002). Multiculturalism and group therapy in the United States: a social constructionist perspective. Group, 26 (3), 233-246.
- Guerin, B. (1992). Behavior analysis and the social construction of knowledge. American Psychologist, November, Vol. 47, 11, 1423-1432.
- Hanofin, J. (2004). Rules of thumb for awareness agents. OD Practitioner, 36(4), 24-28.
- Harding, S. (1987). Introduction: Is There a Feminist Method. In S. Harding (Ed.), Feminism and Methodology: Social Science Issues (pp. 1-14). IN: Indiana University Press.
- Hardy, Cynthia. Scaling up and bearing down in discourse analysis: questions regarding textual agencies and their context. Organisation, 11, (3), 415-425. London
- Harlow, E. & Hearn, J. (1995). "Cultural Constructions: Contrasting Theories of Organisational Culture and Gender Construction", Gender, Work and Organisation, 2, 4, p. 180-191.
- Hartman, A. (1992). In search of subjugated knowledge. Social Work, November 1992, 37, 6, 483-484.

- Haugen, Rolf (1986). Adapting to rapid change. In M. R. Weisbord (Ed.), *Discovering Common Ground* (54-93). Norway: Work Research Institute.
- Healy, K. (1998). Participation and child protection: The importance of context. *British Journal of Social Work*, 28, 897-914.
- Helms, J. E., Jernigan, M., & Mascher, J. (2005). The meaning of race in psychology and how to change it: a methodological perspective. *American Psychologist*, 60 (1), 27-36.
- Henriques, J., Holloway, W., Urwin, C., Venn, C., & Walkerdine, V. (1984). Changing the subject: psychology, social relations and subjectivity. London: Methuen.
- Howard, Judith A. (2000). Social psychology of identities. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 26(1), 367-368.
- Jackson, S. (1992). The amazing deconstructing woman. *Trouble and Strife*, 25, 1-3.
- Jacque, Martin (2003). The global hierarchy of race. *The Guardian (UK)*, September 20, 2003.
- Johnson, Cathryn (1994). Gender, legitimate authority, and leader-subordinate conversations. *American Sociological Review*, 59, 122-135.
- Jones, L. (1994). Direct service worker' attitudes toward employment, unemployment and client's problems. *Journal of Social Service Research*, 19 (1/2), 161-177
- Kios, T. (1998). Self-construction and the formation of human values: truth, language and desire. Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group.
- Kobayashi, Audrey. (2003). GPC ten years on: is self-reflexivity enough? *Gender, Place & Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography*, Vol. 10 (4), 345.
- Krane, J. (1994). The transformation of women into mother protectors: an examination of child protection practices into cases of child sexual abuse. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, McGill University, School of Social Work, Montreal, Quebec.
- Kvale, S. (1996). The 1,000-Page Question. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 2(3), 275-284.
- Kvale, S. (1995). The social construction of validity. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 1(1), 19-40.
- Kvale, S. (1994). 10 standard objections to qualitative research interviews. *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology*, 25 (2), 147-173.
- Larwood, L., Falbe, C., Kriger, M. P., & Miesing, P. (1995). Structure and meaning of organisational vision. *Academy of Management Journal*, June, 38, 3, 740-769.

Lieblich, A. & Josselson, R. (Eds) (1995). Interpreting experience: the narrative study of lives. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Lindlof, T. R. (1995). Qualitative communication research methods. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Lyotard, J.L. (1984). The postmodern condition: A report on knowledge. In G. Trans Bennington and B. Massumi (Eds.). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

McNamee, S. & Gergen, Kenneth J. (Eds) (1998). Relational responsibility: Resources for sustainable dialogue. Sage Publications: California, USA.

McNamee, S. (1994). Research as relationally situated activity: Ethical implications. Journal of Feminist Therapy, 6 (3), 69-83.

McPhail, Mark Lawrence (1994). The politics of complicity: second thoughts about the social construction of racial equality. Quarterly Journal of Speech, Aug., 80(3), 343-381.

Meyer, C. (1983). The Power to Define Problems. Social Work, 28, 2, 99.

Mitchell, Mary (2004, June 3). Cosby gave it to us straight—and it's a valuable lesson. Chicago Tribune. Chicago, IL.

Mohr, Bernard J., & Watkins, Jane M. (2003). AI for organisational change: A workshop resource book, 44-48

Moradi, B. & Yoder, J. D. (2001). Demonstrating social constructionism in psychology courses: the “Who Am I?” exercise. Teaching of Psychology, Jul, 28(3), 201.

Mumby, D. (1998). Communication and power in organisations: discourse, ideology and domination. Norwood, NJ: Ablex

Nuccio, K. E. & Sands, R. G. (1996). Taking exception. Social Work, 41(4), 431.

O'Hara, Laura Shue & Meyer, Marcy. (2004). Keeping it real: the self-directed focus group as alternative method for studying the discursive construction of prejudice. Journal of Intergroup Relations, 31, 2, 25-54.

Omi, M. & Winant, H. (1994). Racial formation in the United States: from the 1960's to the 1990's. New York: Routledge.

Page, Clarence (2004, May 30). What Bill Cosby meant to say. Chicago Tribune. Chicago, IL.

Palmer, Phyllis. (1995). Book Notes: The social construction of whiteness. American Studies Review, 33(1), 145-147.

- Parton, N. (2003). Rethinking professional practice: the contributions of social constructionism and the feminist 'ethics of care'. British Journal of Social Work, 33, 1-16.
- Parton, N. (2000). 'Some thoughts on the relationship between theory and practice in and for social work'. British Journal of Social Work, 30, (4), 449-464.
- Parton, N. (1998). Risk, Advanced Liberalism and child welfare: The Need to Rediscover Uncertainty and Ambiguity. British Journal of Social Work, 28, 5-27.
- Parton, N. (1994). Problematics of government: Postmodernity and social work. British Journal of Social Work, 24.
- Pepitone, J.S. (1995). Future Training: A roadmap for restructuring the training function. Dallas, TX: Advantage Learning Press.
- Perreault, Jeanne. (1995). Book Reviews: White Women, Race Matters. Canadian Review of American Studies, 25(3). Retrieved September 17, 2004, from EBSCOHost database.
- Phillips, Nelson, & Hardy, Cynthia. (2002). Discourse Analysis: Investigating Processes of Social Construction. London: Sage Publications.
- Pilalis, J. (1986). The integration of theory and practice: a reexamination of a paradoxical expectation. British Journal of Social Work, 16, 179-196.
- Plant, E. A., & Devine, P. G. (2001). Beyond compliance with nonprejudiced social pressure: Acceptance or backlash? Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 37, 486-501.
- Porras, J. I. (1991). Organisation development and transformation. Annual Review of Psychology, 42, 51-78.
- Potter, J. & Wetherell, M. (1987). Discourse and social psychology attitudes and behavior. London: Sage.
- Pope-Davis, D.B., Liu, W. M. (1998). The social construction of race: implications for counseling psychology. Counseling Psychology Quarterly, 11(2), 151-161.
- Pride, Richard A. (1999). Redefining the problem of racial inequality. Political Communication, Apr-Jun, 16(2), 147.
- Rajan, Rajeswari Sunder (1993). Real and imagined women: gender, culture and postcolonialism. London: Routledge, 1993.
- Rajchman, J. (1995). The Identity in Question. New York: Routledge.

- Reinharz, S. (2000). The American dream in black and white: The Clarence Thomas hearings. The American Political Science Review, 94 (1), 189-190.
- Ridgeway, Cecilia. (1991). The social construction of status value: gender and other nominal characteristics. Social Forces, Dec., 70(2), 367-378.
- Robinson, Eugene. (2005, June 20). (White) damsels in distress. Royal Gazette Bermuda, p. 4.
- Robinson, Tracy L. (1999). The intersections of dominant discourses across race, gender, and other identities. Journal of Counseling & Development, Vol. 77(1), 73-79.
- Rodkin, Philip C. (1993). The psychological reality of social constructions. Ethnic and Racial Studies, 16(4), 633-656.
- Sands, R.G., & Nucci, K. (1992). Postmodern feminist theory and social work. Social Work, 37(6), 489-94.
- Sarbin, Theodore & Kitsuse, John (Eds.) (1994). Constructing the Social. London: Sage.
- Sawicki, J. (1991). Disciplining Foucault: Feminism, power and the body. London: Routledge.
- Schilling-Estes, N. (2004). Constructing ethnicity in interaction. Journal of Sociolinguistics, 8 (2), 163-195.
- Schon, D. (1983). The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action. New York: Basic Books.
- Sherwood, Marika (2001). Race, empire and education: teaching racism. Race and Class, Vol. 42(3), 1-28.
- Schwandt, T.R. (1990). Paths to inquiry in social disciplines: Scientific, constructionist, and critical theory methodologies. In Giba (Ed.). The paradigm dialogue. p. 258-76. Newbury Park, California: Sage.
- Shotter (1994). Making sense on the boundaries: On moving between philosophy and psychotherapy. Paper presented at the Royal Institute of Philosophy, London, January 7, 1994.
- Shotter, J. (1993a). Conversational Realities: An advantaged view of various intricacies of social construction in everyday life. London: Sage.
- Shotter, J. (1993b). Conversational Realities: Constructing Life Through Language. London: Sage.

Simon, S. M. (2001). Bermudian Literature: A theory. An evaluation of the social laws that govern the belated attention given to literature produced in the British Colony, Bermuda. The University of Kent at Canterbury: Theses.

Smedley, A., & Smedley, B. (2005). Race as biology is fiction, racism as a social problem is real. American Psychologist, 60(1), 16-26.

Smith, Dorothy (1987). The everyday world as problematic: A feminist sociology. Boston: Northeastern.

Smith, Jennifer, JP, MP (2000). The political scene in Bermuda: A paper delivered at the 12th Commonwealth Parliamentary Seminar 14-22 October.

Smith, Kenwyn K. & Gergen, M. (1995). The case of group sado-masochism: A dialogue on relational theory. In D. Hosking, H. P. Dachler & K. Gergen (Eds.) Management and organisation: Relational alternatives to individualism. Aldershot, England: Avebury Press, pp. 104-124.

Somerville, Peter & Bengtsson, Bo (2001). Beyond realism and constructionism: Whither theory? Paper presented at Housing Studies Association conference on 'Housing Imaginations: New concepts, new theories, new researchers'. Cardiff.

Speaking from Experience (Anonymous submission) (2003, December 10). Destroyed families. The Royal Gazette Bermuda, p. 4.

Stewart, Robert (2005, June 21). The lottery economy. Royal Gazette Bermuda, p. 4

Swan, John (2004, January 2). Unrepentant Sir John elaborates on his new vision for Bermuda. The Royal Gazette Bermuda; Retrieved from www.theroyalgazette.com.

Swan, K. (2003, November 24). Swan hits out at use of race card. The Royal Gazette Bermuda, p. 9.

Valentich, M. (1986). Feminism and Social Work Practice. In F. Turner (Ed.). Social work treatment: interlocking theoretical approaches (pp.564-589). NY: The Free Press.

Wasow, M. (1992). What are we doing to ourselves? Social Work, November, 37, 6, 485-487.

Walker, Edward W. (1995). Britain's Self-Governing Territories and the status of Bermuda: A model for Chechnya? Panorama, Vol. 2, 22-38.

Ware, Vron. (1996). Island racism: gender, place and white power. Feminist Review, 54, 65-86.

Whitney, D., & Cooperrider, D. (1998). The appreciative inquiry summit: Overview and applications. Employment Relations Today, Summer, 17-28.

Whitney, D., & Schau, C. (1998). Appreciative inquiry: An innovative process for organisation change. Employment Relations Today, (Spring), 11-21.

Whitney, D., & Trosten-Bloom, A. (2003). The power of appreciative inquiry: a practical guide to positive change. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.

Whitney, D. & Trosten-Bloom, A. (2001). A journey towards positive change. Cleveland, Ohio: Lakeshore Publishers.

Wrzesniewski, A., Dutton, J. E. (2001). Crafting a job: Revisioning employees as active crafter of their work. Academy of Management Review, 26(2), 179-201.

Yee, A. H., Fairchild, H. H., Weizman, F., & Wyatt, G. E. (1993). Addressing psychology's problem with race. American Psychologist, 48, 1132-1140.

Zuill, John (2004, May 3). Racism is the real issue. Royal Gazette Bermuda, p. 6.

Zuill, John (2004, June 24). How race divides us. Royal Gazette Bermuda, p. 4.