

**TOWARDS RE-IMAGINING THE ROLES OF CHANGE AGENTS  
FROM A CRITICAL COMPLEXITY PERSPECTIVE: AN  
EXPLORATORY ACTION RESEARCH APPROACH**

by

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## **Declaration**

I, Gideon Stephanus Cloete, declare that the entire body of work contained in this dissertation is my own, original work; that I am the sole author thereof (save to the extent explicitly otherwise stated), that reproduction and publication thereof by Stellenbosch University will not infringe any third party rights and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

**Gideon Stephanus Cloete**

December 2017

## **Dedication**

To my beautiful wife

Maria, my soul mate and my best friend. You supported me on so many levels, listened to my ideas on complexity, and kept me motivated through all the challenging phases. You married a PhD student and became my staunchest advocate. I want to acknowledge your great compassion and understanding for what I am trying to achieve and co-create with you. I am looking forward to our partnership of being Systems Change Curators wherever we might be involved. With all my love, I dedicate every sentence in the dissertation to you. May our differences bind us together, and may our identities co-create incommensurable meaning and transformative change with others.

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## Abstract

Research on the theoretical conceptualisations and research methods informing current change agency theory and practice in the field of Organisation Theory (OT) in general, and Organisational Change and Development (OCD) in particular, are deficient to engage with the inherently complex nature of business organisations. The dominant paradigm applied in organisational change interventions assumes that change happens through linear cause and effect approaches, which can be enhanced by technical skills, with the aim of maximising optimisation strategies. The theoretical and practical contributions by organisational scholars to important mainstream debates on alternative conceptualisations and methods to explore and re-think change agency have been limited.

The purpose of this dissertation is to cultivate and foster a re-think of the role of change agents in OCD interventions by employing a critical complexity lens to shift their current spiritual identity praxis towards co-creating alternative complexity-informed change agency praxis. The following framings are explored: new avenues for providing complexity-informed interpretations of change, organisational structure and function in general, but more specifically alternative change agency as informed by identity and spirituality in OCD interventions.

A critical complexity lens is adopted for exploring and re-thinking the interactional nature of both identity and spirituality of change agents. The study highlights these notions as possible entry points for reflecting on novel change agency praxis. It is argued that the notion of 'spiritual identity praxis' (ways of being-becoming) enables the co-exploration and co-creation of complexity-informed theoretical and methodological contributions to organisational change agency and mainstream debates on OCD.

The study explored whether OCD practitioners could reflect on their current spiritual identity praxis and what the implications were of re-thinking their current roles as change agents when employing critical complexity as a lens. Co-operative Inquiry (CI) was used, which is ideally suited to explore a participatory worldview for co-creating propositional, experiential, practical and presentational knowledge. With the aid of multiple qualitative methods, CI enabled the co-creation of a re-imagined spiritual identity praxis heuristics framework. Collaborating with six OCD practitioners, a co-created community of practice was established which reflected over a period of eighteen months, on processes of: (i) engagement with ideas of complexity thinking and its influence on change agents; (ii) spiritual identity and the co-operative inquiry process in contributing to a deeper reflection on their perspectives as change agents; (iii) spiritual identity praxis in framing the roles of change agents in change interventions; and (iv) authentic co-operation and collaboration during the co-operative inquiry process.

The research findings confirm the importance of: (i) embracing complexity thinking as change agents; (ii) navigating ambiguity and incongruence of spiritual identity; (iii) becoming aware of the

relational constitutedness of spiritual identity praxis; and (iv) the utility of critical complexity integrated with CI in co-creating resilient heuristics through authentic collaboration and co-operation, which fosters complexity-informed spiritual identity praxis heuristics. The study contributes to an extended understanding of change agency praxis, provides a framework for re-imagined complexity-informed being-becoming praxis in change agency, and offers non-linear pathways to distil iterative principles and reflective signposts for complexity-informed OCD praxis.

**Keywords:** Action Research, Change Agent, Change Agency Praxis, Change Agency Roles, Change Management, Complexity Theory and Thinking, Co-operative Inquiry, Critical Complexity, Identity, Organisational Change and Development, Spirituality, Spiritual Identity Praxis.

## Opsomming

Die inherente aard van besigheidsorganisasies is kompleks. Navorsing wat die huidige verstaan voorhou met betrekking tot die teoretiese konseptualiserings, asook navorsingsmetodes wat gebruik word om die hedendaagse teorie en praktyk van die veranderingsagent in die velde van Organisasie Teorie (OT) in die algemeen, en Organisasoriese Verandering en Ontwikkeling (OVO) in besonder, te belig, is onvoldoende om met die kompleksiteit van besigheidsorganisasies in gesprek te tree. Die dominante paradigma wat in OVO intervensies toegepas word, gaan van die veronderstelling uit dat verandering teweeg gebring word deur liniêre oorsaak-gevolg benaderinge met die hulp van verbetering in tegniese vaardighede met die doel om optimaliseringstrategieë te maksimaliseer. Die teoretiese en praktiese bydraes deur organisatoriese navorsers tot die belangrike hoofstroom debatte oor alternatiewe konseptualiserings en metodieke om die veranderingsagent te herbeskou en veranderingsagentwees te verken en heroorweeg, is beperk.

Die doel van hierdie dissertasie is die kweking en bevordering van 'n heroorweging van die rol van veranderingsagente en veranderingsagentwees in OVO intervensies. Daar word gebruik gemaak van 'n kritiese kompleksiteitslens waardeur 'n verskuiwing teweeg gebring word in die rol van die veranderingsagent, naamlik, 'n beweging vanaf die huidige spirituele identiteitspraksis na die mede-skepping van 'n alternatiewe kompleksiteit-ingeligte praksis van die veranderingsagent. Die volgende raamwerke word verkennend ondersoek: nuwe weë vir die voorsiening van kompleksiteit-ingeligte interpretasies van verandering, organisasie struktuur en funksie in die algemeen, maar in besonder die vorming van 'n alternatiewe veranderingsagentwees vanuit die bydrae wat identiteit en spiritualiteit in OVO intervensies maak.

'n Kritiese kompleksiteitslens word ingespan met die oog op die verkenning en herbeskouing van die interaksionele aard van beide die identiteit en spiritualiteit van veranderingsagente. Die studie belig hierdie twee begrippe as moontlike vertrekpunte vir die herbeskouing oor 'n nuwe veranderingsagentwees praksis. Daar word geargumenteer dat die begrip 'spirituele identiteitspraksis' (wesend-wordend) die mede-verkenning en –skepping van kompleksiteit-ingeligte teoretiese en metodologiese bydraes tot die organisatoriese veranderingsagentwees, asook hoofstroom debatte oor OVO, moontlik maak.

Die studie ondersoek die mate waartoe OVO praktisyns oor hulle huidige spirituele identiteitspraksis kon reflekteer, asook wat die implikasies daarvan was vir die herbeskouing van hulle huidige rolle as veranderingsagente deur die kritiese kompleksiteitslens. Die aksienavorsing metodiek van Koöperatiewe Onderzoek (KO) is gebruik. Dié proses is ideaal geskik om 'n deelnemende wêreldbeeld te verken deur die mede-skepping van proposisionele-, praktiese-, ervarings-, en oordragskennis. Die proses van KO het, met die hulp van verskeie kwalitatiewe metodes, die mede-skepping moontlik gemaak van 'n herbeskoude spirituele identiteitspraksis heuristiese raamwerk. In samewerking met ses OVO praktisyns is 'n mede-geskepte OVO praktyksgemeenskap tot stand

gebring wat oor 'n periode van agtien maande heen reflekteer het oor die volgende prosesse: (i) omarming van kompleksiteitsdenke en die invloed daarvan op veranderingsagente; (ii) spirituele identiteit en die proses van koöperatiewe ondersoek as bydrae tot dieper nadenke oor veranderingsagent perspektiewe; (iii) spirituele identiteitspraxis as vormingsproses vir die rolle van die veranderingsagente in veranderingsintervensies; en (iv) outentieke mede- en samewerking gedurende die KO prosesse.

Die bevindinge van die navorsing bevestig die belangrikheid van: (i) die omarming van kompleksiteitsdenke as veranderingsagente; (ii) navigasie van dubbelsinnigheid en inkongruensie van spirituele identiteit; (iii) 'n bewustheid van die verhoudingsbegrontheid van spirituele identiteitspraxis; en (iv) die nut van kritiese kompleksiteit geïntegreer met KO in die mede-skepping van veerkragtige heuristieke deur outentieke same- en medewerking, wat kompleksiteit-ingeligte spirituele identiteitspraxis heuristieke bevorder. Die studie maak 'n bydrae tot 'n uitgebreide verstaan van veranderingsagentwees praxis; voorsien 'n herbeskoude raamwerk vir 'n kompleksiteit-ingeligte 'wesend-wordend praxis' in die veranderingsagent; en bied nie-lineêre benaderings aan, om iteratiewe beginsels en reflektiewe wegwysers vir kompleksiteit-ingeligte OVO praxis te distilleer.

**Sleutelwoorde:** Aksienavorsing, Veranderingsagent, Veranderingsagentwees praxis, Veranderingsagentwees rolle, Veranderingsbestuur, Kompleksiteitsteorie en Denke, Koöperatiewe Onderzoek, Kritiese Kompleksiteit, Identiteit, Organisatorieseverandering en Ontwikkeling, Spiritualiteit, Spirituele Identiteitspraxis.



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## List of acronyms and abbreviations

AA	Alcoholics Anonymous
AL	Action Learning
CSC	Centre for Studies in Complexity
CST	Centre for Complex Systems in Transition
CoP	Community of Practice
CI	Co-operative Inquiry
CSI	Complex Spiritual Identity
DDD	Dominant Disciplinary Discourse
GST	General Systems Theory
IT	Information Technology
MBA	Master of Business Administration
MS Word	Microsoft Word
OB	Organisational Behaviour
OCD	Organisational Change and Development
OCDCoP	Organisational Change and Development Community of Practice
OD	Organisational Development
OI	Organisational Identity
OT	Organisation Theory
PAR	Participatory Action Research
PDF	Portable Document Format
SABPP	South African Board for People Practices
SAODN	South African Organisational Development Network
SCC	Systems Change Curator
SI	Spiritual Identity
SIS	Special Inquiry Skills
ToC	Theory of Change
US	University of Stellenbosch
USA	United States of America
USB	University of Stellenbosch Business School
USB-DESC	USB Departmental Ethics Screening Committee

## CHAPTER 1

# CONTEXTUALISING THE STUDY

---

*To exist is to change, to change is to mature, to mature is to go on creating oneself endlessly (Henri Bergson).*

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

This study seeks to explore and re-imagine how the underlying implicit experiences, beliefs, worldviews, knowledge and practices of change practitioners in the Western Cape Province of South Africa, assisted them in finding an inner stance or positioning and offered them an alternative approach to engage with change initiatives. The study scrutinised the phenomena that give rise to the adoption of ways of being and thinking that eventually lead to ways of doing, which influences Organisational Change and Development (OCD) practitioner practice. An action research approach was employed, with experimental use of Co-operative Inquiry (CI), to explore how the OCD practitioners critically reflected and shared their perceptions, intentions and ways of thinking ('inner arc of experience')<sup>1</sup> informing their identity and spirituality related to their lived experiences ('outer arc of experience')<sup>2</sup>.

As a somewhat aside, I would like to mention that drawing on the principles and procedures of CI as an action research approach, I discovered and acknowledge the difficulty of exploring the inner arc of experience with change practitioners, and therefore want to emphasise the exploratory nature of the research. Experimenting with CI to explore the inner arc of experience is notoriously difficult and some scholars are of the view that CI is better suited to explore the outer arc of experience or practice. Although this might be the case with CI, I drew on Heron (1998, 2001, 2006) who has applied CI to explore the inner arc of experience with others (transpersonal co-operative inquiry or co-operative inquiry as a methodology for spiritual inquiry).

The chapter begins with an overview of the study's context. Following this is a discussion of the research problem, research questions, aim and objectives of the study. Next, a discussion of the scope and demarcation, followed by definitions of key concepts and terminology, the research approach, and the study's anticipated contributions are provided. Finally, the rationale and significance of the study, as well as my personal interest in the research, are indicated.

## 1.2 CONTEXT

In the new geological era of the Anthropocene, humans are reckoned to be the most significant drivers of earth systems change (Crutzen, 2002; Steffen *et al.*, 2011). This contemporary human era outrivals geological forces and is marked by massive patterns of production, consumption and population growth that are unsustainable (Steffen *et al.*, 2006). The Anthropocene points to a significant shift in humanity's impact on the planet on a global scale with local and regional effects for socio-ecological systems services on which humans depend (Biggs, 2015). Scholars agree that this distinct shift has occurred since the onset of the industrial era in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and can be

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<sup>1</sup> Please see Chapter 5; Section 5.3.1.

<sup>2</sup> Please see Chapter 5; Section 5.3.1.

distinguished particularly from the 1950's onwards (Fulton, 2016; Smith & Zeder, 2013; Steffen *et al.*, 2015).

In an effort to address global sustainability threats and to set an agenda for change, the United Nations launched seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) as an updated approach to the Millennium Development Goals (MDG's) (UN General Assembly, 2015; United Nations, 2016). The Anthropocene challenges, combined with the United Nations' call for transforming the world by 2030, confront organisations with serious implications, especially current approaches to continue conducting 'business as usual' (Hayman, 2016). At the same time, the fourth industrial revolution envisages a rapidly changing workplace with monumental challenges and implications for global industries and interconnectedness to political, social, economic and ecological systems (Schwab, 2016). The unintended consequences of major drivers of change present a fundamental re-organisation of the meaning of work for businesses, use of scarce resources, response to the impact of climate change, and geopolitical volatility (Gill, 2015). These challenges are compounded by data released by the World Economic Forum estimating that by 2020, the top five job skills required in the workplace will be: (i) complex problem solving; (ii) critical thinking; (iii) creativity; (iv) people management; and (v) co-ordinating with others (Zahidi & Leopold, 2016). It is important to note that since the focus is currently more on technical skills these top skills are not considered crucial to the marketplace today. In fact, historian and futurist scholars have indicated the dangers of current socio-political and economic inequalities coupled with rapid advances in technology such as artificial intelligence and bio-engineering. They argue that these advances can lead to a "useless class" of workers and the decimation of entire industries (Frey, 2014; Harari, 2016). Consequently, despite the success of the technological development, economic expediency and great advances in modern science, humans and organisations are still confronted with social-ecological, political and economic problems on a grand scale (Newman, 2006; Steffen *et al.*, 2006; Steffen *et al.*, 2015). While the total material wealth of humanity has been enhanced significantly over the past century, humanity now faces a scarcity of critical resources, ecosystem degradation and disintegration of the planet's capability to absorb waste (Spangenberg, 2010).

The effect of human beings on nature is not only occurring at a planetary level as demonstrated by the Anthropocene, and the impending threats as posed by the fourth industrial revolution. The interconnected disposition of social-ecological and socio-economic problems is becoming a defining challenge of the 21st century. Globalisation has highlighted current crises and challenges faced by business organisations. Global crises may be summarised as the interlinked effects of: the financial crisis, the climate change crisis, the crisis of values and norms and beliefs in cultures, the crisis of governability, and the crisis of consciousness development (Bouckaert & Zsolnai, 2012; Castells, 2005; Colander *et al.*, 2009; Gill, 2015; Neal, 2013; Smith, 2010; Stoner & Wankel, 2012). A growing number of business leaders and change agents is becoming aware that organisations need to be

fundamentally re-organised in order to become ecologically sustainable, ethically congruent, and morally mindful (Barber, 2011; Shani, Woodman, & Pasmore, 2011; Tsoukas & Chia, 2011).

All of the above suggest that radical change will be required to steer the impact of human behaviour and the role of organisations towards resilient, transformative and sustainable pathways to address global crises, goals and challenges (Senge, 2008). More particularly, in the light of the preceding, the influence of current management and organisation theories on organisational behaviour, change and the path to development should, as Alvesson *et al.*, (2012) and Ghoshal (2005) point out, be critically reviewed.

### **1.3 THE RESEARCH PROBLEM**

In presenting the research problem addressed in the study, I first discuss important underlining assumptions of traditional organisation theory informing change agency after which I outline its limitations. Secondly, I outline the need for an alternative complexity-informed perspective on change agency. Finally, attempting to address the current shortcomings of the traditional paradigm, I present an alternative framing of identity, spirituality and change agency.

A dominant assumption that informs the field of organisation theory, is the supposition that change agents are defined as rational, purposeful and intentional drivers of change management processes (Caldwell, 2006; Tsoukas & Chia, 2011; Tsoukas & Knudsen, 2005). Although the issues, controversies and debates regarding the change agent in OCD are pervasive (Poole & Van de Ven, 2004; Small, 2004; Tsoukas & Chia, 2011), and despite the fact that change management processes informed by dominant change theories show high failure rates, efforts to explore and develop alternative theories, practices and drivers of change practice are limited (Case, Hopfl, & Letiche, 2012; Letiche, Lissack, & Schultz, 2011; Thompson & Bevan, 2013). Instead of being relevant and producing resilient change management practices, these theories have been translated into practitioner tools and methods that in many instances are at odds with the realities of change practice and challenges faced by OCD practitioners (Hager, Lee, & Reich, 2012a; Todnem By, 2005). The dominant approach to overcome such obstacles is to develop better skills, competencies and knowledge which could empower change agents and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of change interventions (Cameron & Green, 2015). The underlying assumption here can be traced back to mainstream modernist organisation theory claiming that rational purposeful actors can intentionally convey skills, competencies and knowledge through objectified cognitive truisms provided these are communicated in an orderly and structured fashion (Chia, 2005; Donaldson, 1996). This positivistic-functionalist organisation theory holds that the change agent is capable of diagnosing the cause of organisational problems since instability is due to deviations from certain linear cause-and-effect rules or behaviour (Juarrero, 2011). Moreover, it assumes that as soon as the change actor spot the cause of the underlying mechanistic causal relations, it will bring the organisation and other actors back to stability and the required equilibrium, i.e. the optimal functional state of organisations and its actors (Chia, 2005; Tsoukas & Chia, 2011).

Let us now turn to limitations inherent in the traditional perspectives of change agency.

The field of management and organisation theory that deals with human-organisational behavioural change is generally known as 'Organisational Change and Development' (OCD) (Shani, Woodman, & Pasmore, 2011; Viljoen, 2015). In OCD a planned process to change management is followed by applying methods that were mainly developed in the field of Behavioural Science (Cummings & Worley, 2014).

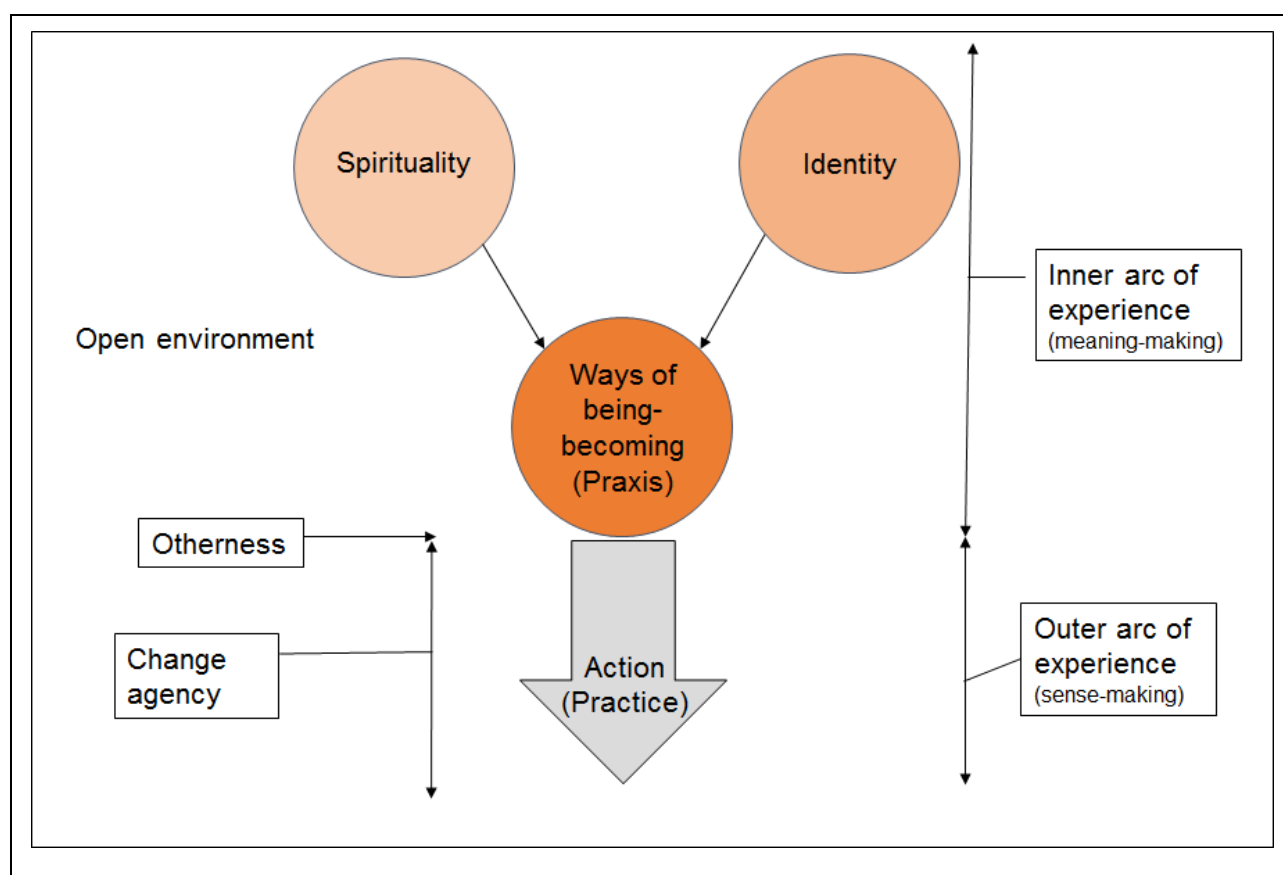
Recently, many OCD scholars and practitioners have started recognising the limitations of rigid change management programs that focus on individual and organisational change interventions (Cameron & Green, 2015; Cummings & Worley, 2014). It is estimated that around 50 to 70 percent of all change interventions fail (Beer & Nohria, 2000; Burke, 2011). Pasmore (2011) writes that in its approximate 70 years of existence, the field continues to be plagued by the challenge of finding comprehensive solutions to sustainable organisational change. An overwhelming number of planned change efforts has not succeeded in achieving what was envisioned (Andersen, 2015) resulting in a substantial number of publications exploring the role of the 'human factor' in change interventions in various settings (Dievernich, Tokarski, & Gong, 2015). Some examples include: (i) why and what leads to the resistance to change interventions (Kegan & Lahey, 2009); (ii) the role of leadership in change management processes (Leonard, 2013b); (iii) the role of coaching in the change process (Hawkins, 2014); (iv) how an awareness of necessary change through various modalities can be created (Rothwell, Stravros, & Sullivan, 2015); (v) exploring participatory methods for conducting change interventions (Senge, Scharmer, & Winslow, 2013); and (vi) creating favourable conditions for change interventions (Jones & Brazzel, 2014).

OCD research and practice are marked by a particular view of how change is brought about, which relies on the assumption that this can only happen through planned design processes, and strict monitoring and evaluation assessments (Burnes, 2013). Jansson (2013) points to research conducted on rigid planning OCD approaches and found that the dominant change process inadvertently resulted in the increase of employee stress levels (Dahl, 2011), the disruption of ongoing operations (Pache & Santos, 2010), and a conscious high risk of engaging with the unknown future of the organisation (Jian, 2011). This consequently has opened up questions relating to the relevance and rationale of rigid planning approaches to effect organisational change (Burnes, 2004), assumptions underlying change agency, and the role of the change agent (Chia, Holt, & Yuan, 2013).

It is of paramount importance for both scholars and practitioners to demonstrate improving organisational change practices. One way of engaging with the question of how OCD could not only be more effective but also more sustainable and resilient is to re-examine the underlying assumptions of 'change agency', 'change agent' and 'organisational change' (Caldwell, 2012; Jansson, 2013). Another way is to examine the implicit beliefs, worldviews and actions of change agency (Argyris, Putnam, & Smith, 1985; Senge, 1990). Addressing these implies questioning foundational assumptions underlying organisation theory, which inform OCD and change agency.

More particularly, one needs to look at the traditional view that large-scale change interventions can be achieved when change agents (including OCD practitioners) apply ‘best practices’ through advanced technical skills, the latest scientific knowledge and experience, and well-developed competencies (Cameron & Green, 2015; Cummings & Worley, 2014). Also, it is important to consider reasons raised when interventions fail and the required change is not achieved, and particularly, regarding the specific change agent’s application of skills, knowledge or competencies, or the change participants’ (organisation’s) willingness or openness to the change approach or process (Burnes, 2013).

While focusing on improving technical skills, cognitive knowledge and competencies remain important in improving efficiency and effectiveness of OCD practice interventions, one needs to note that this excludes the important, underlying inner arc of experience in change agency. Improving change agents’ abilities through skills, knowledge of competencies is not enough, as it is limited to the practice of the change agency involved in change interventions as depicted in Figure 1.1.



**Figure 1.1: Traditional Understanding of Change Agency**

Source: Author

I believe the interaction of the phenomena underlying implicit beliefs, experiences, worldviews, knowledge and practices informing identity and spirituality are major components (even ‘drivers of

change') that modify more than practice, and that change agent praxis — the ways of being-becoming praxis giving rise to practice<sup>3</sup>.

Traditional mainstream views of change agency focus on the outer arc of experience, i.e. the improvement of practice or action (individual and organisational behaviour), and neglect the inner arc of experience, i.e. the exploration of the ways of being-becoming praxis, which in turn, are informed by identity and spirituality. (Figure 1.1). As Kreiner and Sheep (2009) point out that although spirituality and identity are important as interactional dynamic informing concepts of change agency, these concepts have received limited scholarly attention. Further, as Schwandt (2007) emphasises, this dynamic implies more than merely OCD practice. In fact, praxis implies a mode of being and becoming revealing intention, meaning and practical wisdom in the inner arc of experience. Therefore, when studying the interactive nature and dynamics of spirituality and identity, scholars employ a more user-friendly concept namely, 'spiritual identity' (Roehlkepartain, Benson, & Scales, 2011; Sheep & Foreman, 2012).

From a traditional perspective, identity and spirituality are regarded as isolated ways of being-becoming praxis. As Chia (2005) and Driscoll and Wiebe (2007) point out, these concepts, therefore, have little value in informing or transforming individual-organisational skills, knowledge or competencies. In addition, because of its atomistic thinking<sup>4</sup> and inherent Newtonian worldview,<sup>5</sup> this traditional orientation excludes the inner arc of experience (spiritual identity praxis) of change agency.

Scholars and practitioners are increasingly questioning assumptions underlying organisation and planned OCD practice interventions, and in particular, re-evaluating the role of both the change agent and change agent practice in change interventions (Bushe & Marshak, 2015). They seem to realise that there is (i) a critical need for alternative ways of thinking about change agency in organisations (Boulton, Allen, & Bowman, 2015), and (ii) that ways of being and doing in current social and organisational change and innovation practices need to be re-invented (Bradford & Burke, 2005).

Richardson (2005) explains that while organisations recognise the need to manage the complexity marking the changing socio-economic contexts in which they are required to operate and thrive, they fail to reflect on the actual assumptions and drivers that perpetuate the status quo. Lawrence (2015) writes that in managing organisational challenges resulting from the volatile, uncertain and changing business landscapes, alternative views of change, and transformational processes are becoming increasingly important. This is due to the widespread concern that present-day businesses are

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<sup>3</sup> This distinction will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 2, section 2.5.

<sup>4</sup> Atomistic thinking can be summarised as a type of thinking that emphasises the parts by reducing wholes into parts. Please see Chapter 3.

<sup>5</sup> The Newtonian worldview is discussed extensively in Chapter 3; Section 3.2.4. In general the Newtonian worldview or paradigm can be described as a "flattened three-dimensional abstraction of a dynamically emerging four-dimensional universe" (Chapman, 2016: 127).



neither adaptive to the changing environment (Douglas & Wykowski, 2010) nor agile in terms of organisational structures to cope with the various global challenges that impact local contexts (Wipfler & Vorbach, 2015).

A growing body of scholars is exploring the implications of the challenge of complexity with reference to organisational change and development (Bushe & Marshak, 2016; Mowles, Stacey, & Griffin, 2008; Stacey, 2001). As Boulton, Allen, and Bowman (2015) indicate the incommensurable, ambiguous and oblique nature of the complex dynamics constituting modern organisations has opened up a new set of challenges for OCD scholars and practitioners. These have led them to reflect critically on core foundational assumptions that constitute and inform change agent and OCD practices (Chapman, 2016).

OCD practitioners are embedded in a globally interconnected world, where they can no longer isolate problems related to individuals, groups, companies or countries into neatly fragmented demarcated parts that can be controlled in a rational and orderly fashion (Stacey, 2010). As change agents, they have to acknowledge the problem of complexity<sup>6</sup> and the implications thereof for change processes.

Humans and organisations are complex adaptive systems and therefore need to be understood through the “paradigm<sup>7</sup> of complexity” (Morin, 2008: 51). In the current period of multiple transitions, change practitioners have tended to seek out absolute foundations, certainty, simplifications and a framework that will make sense of the world through reducing peoples’ feelings of anxiety and vulnerability (Zimmerman, 2008). This current pervasive approach viewing organisational change and practice as simple, predictable, and unambiguous is informed by what Morin (2008: 39) calls the “paradigm of simplification”. Similarly, Cilliers and Preiser (2010) explain that this reductionist approach and its associated dualistic thinking drastically reduce the complexity inherent in understanding change. It is, therefore, my contention that this approach informs the notion of change agents and OCD practitioners’ understanding of change and transformation.

The high rate of failure in change interventions relates to the inability of change agents to critically reflect upon their ways of thinking being-becoming and doing (Stevenson, 2012b). Therefore, change practitioners need to critically examine whether they are equipped to deal with the complexities of the human condition (Jackson, 2013).

Dominant theories guiding current OCD practice are linked to the Cartesian-Newtonian worldview which subscribes to mechanistic-materialistic assumptions of reality which, in turn, imply linear

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<sup>6</sup> The problem of complexity is explained by Cilliers (2000b: 28) by arguing: “In order to model a system precisely, we therefore have to model each and every interaction in the system, each and every interaction with the environment...In short, we will have to model life, the universe and everything. There is no practical way of doing this.”

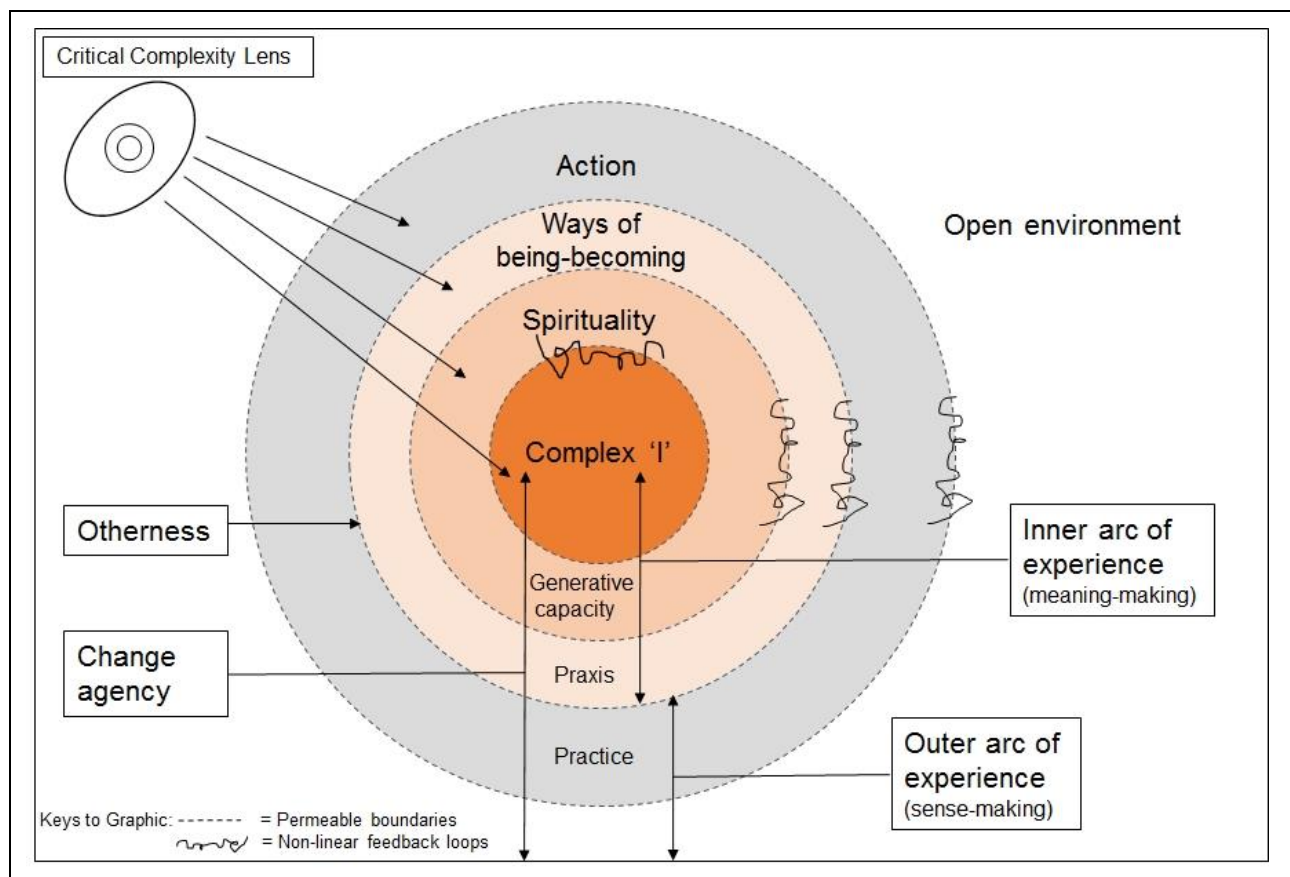
<sup>7</sup> I follow Morin’s (1992a: 352) definition of “a paradigm being defined here as the set of fundamental relations of association and/or opposition among a restricted number of master notions-relations that command or control all thoughts, discourses, and theories”.

causality and a schism between subject and object (MacIntosh *et al.*, 2013). This atomistic approach can be appropriately applied to certain simple problems in a controlled or closed environment. However, faced with global complex problems, dominant OCD theories and practices are limited to facilitating change in organisational systems (Chapman, 2016). The thinking inherent in this approach becomes inappropriate and leads to the dehumanisation of OCD practitioner practice and spiritual identity praxis (Gull, 2013). Also, since this line of thinking is premised on a split between subject and object (Juarrero, 2002), resulting in various forms of disintegration in OCD practitioner thinking, being-becoming praxis and practice (Rajagopalan & Midgley, 2015). Moreover, in this Newtonian approach, matter is divorced from spirit through a mechanistic-materialistic approach (Bhaskar, 2008). In terms of change agent practice and spiritual identity praxis, consultants often act according to a disconnected and reduced understanding of their own identity and spirituality. The disconnection relates to incoherent and incongruent ways of thinking, being and doing which reveals a theory-practice gap in their very own OCD practice and their accompanying spiritual identity praxis (Burnes & Jackson, 2011).

Rothwell, Stravros, and Sullivan (2015) believe that OCD practitioners should be equipped to deal with the ever-increasing volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity (VUCA) of the contemporary world. The pertinent question here is whether OCD makes provision for these present-day world features when they consider approaches to: (i) provide insight regarding the ability of current change theories related to practitioner practice that can rapidly inform innovation and development pathways, (ii) understand how current drivers of change relate to the complexity of interconnected and interlocking systems, and (iii) develop complexity-informed knowledge taking into account the underlying complex reality and equipping OCD practitioners for developing new ways of thinking, models and praxis heuristics for navigating present-day world.

Morin (2007) argues that there are two approaches to the study of complexity science or theory, namely: the restricted view, and the general view. He explains the mainstream restrictive view avoids the fundamental problem of complexity, which is epistemological, cognitive and paradigmatic because it recognises complexity, but by decomplexifying it (Morin, 2007). The general view of complexity, or as termed by Woermann (2016: 2) "philosophical complexity", includes an ontological, epistemological and ethical reconceptualisation of complexity, by arguing for a post-reductionist understanding of reality, knowledge and the concurrent normative implications for such a conceptualisation (Cilliers, 1998; Cilliers & Preiser, 2016; Woermann, 2016). Philosophical complexity has normative implications for being human, and in following Cilliers (2016), I argue that a critical complexity perspective in the understanding of complexity is both ontological and epistemological, and therefore has implications not only for the way knowledge is organised; but also importantly for what it means to be human beings — resulting in a normative turn in the philosophy of complexity (Woermann, 2016). Audouin, *et al.*, (2013) argue that the conflicting positions in understanding complexity theory reveal the difficulties in resolving the problem of reductionism in

unambiguous terms. Following Cilliers (2005), they see this problem as the central dilemma in the study of complexity. Cilliers (2005: 261) articulates it as an inescapable "performative tension" within complexity. Therefore, critical complexity introduces a self-reflexive kind of reductionism that maintains a self-critical understanding in the study of complexity (Preiser, 2012). The contribution of the critical complexity approach lies in the double movement it fosters in ways of thinking, thereby enabling the possibilities of disarming various animosities formed by opposing paradigms, for example, reductionism versus holism, without uniting them into a grand unifying truth (Audouin *et al.*, 2013). Critical complexity presents an alternative relational paradigm and has implications for ways of thinking, being-becoming and doing (Cilliers & Preiser, 2016; Woermann, 2016). The problem of complexity demands that new patterns of thought should emerge that will inform and transform our experience, our thinking and our actions (Preiser, 2014).



**Figure 1.2: Proposed Critical Complexity Lens of Change Agency**

Source: Author

Figure 1.2. illustrates a critical complexity lens on spiritual identity praxis in change agency. This alternative approach to identity, spirituality and change agency explores how a deeper engagement with spiritual identity praxis, (the inner arc of experience) — from a critical complexity perspective — could foster a broader conceptual starting point from where OCD practice (the outer arc of experience) can be informed in order to re-imagine change agency.

In my view, a fundamental re-thinking of the role of change agents implies applying a critical complexity lens (Cilliers & Preiser, 2016) to a complex understanding of human identity (De Villiers-Botha & Cilliers, 2010) and spirituality (Boulton & Allen, 2007). This critical complexity-informed perspective includes an understanding that does not view identity and spirituality as mutually exclusive concepts, or as isolated from each other, but rather acknowledges their interrelatedness.

Moreover, such a critical complexity-informed re-thinking of spiritual identity introduces an alternative conceptualisation of spiritual identity praxis and its re-thinking of the role of the change agent in OCD initiatives. A re-imagination of the role of the change agent as a 'curator of change' has significant implications for how change interventions are conceptualised and executed. More importantly, it prioritises ways of being-becoming praxis above technical skills, cognitive knowledge and instrumental competencies as the key determining factor for navigating uncertain complex realities in change initiatives.

A deeper understanding of complex systems that underlie spiritual identity praxis would comprise new forms of knowledge (extended understanding) that are able to equip change agents with alternative ways of being-becoming praxis that in turn enable dialogic practices in OCD initiatives (Bushe & Marshak, 2015).

This also means that ways of being-becoming praxis (supported by new methods, tools and techniques) should be explored in order to cultivate more resilient change practitioners in lieu of the inherent embeddedness and experience of being human in complex systems (Bushe & Marshak, 2009).

Based on the preceding, I formulated the following research problem:

*Knowledge currently available in the field of Organisational Change and Development (OCD) regarding spiritual identity praxis or revealing ways of being-becoming and how to inform change agents roles from a critical complexity-informed perspective is currently lacking.*

#### **1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

In order to understand current Organisational Change and Development practitioner spiritual identity praxis and to re-think its change agent role, the study addressed two main research questions:

- (i) *How does critical complexity shift the idea of spiritual identity praxis and what might that suggest for the way change agents approach their role in change interventions?*
- (ii) *Can an action research inquiry process over time provide evidence of how change practitioners shift their spiritual identity praxis when employing complexity thinking?*

#### **1.5 AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

Since the purpose of the study was to theoretically explore and empirically study how OCD theory may be linked with OCD practitioner practice when employing a critical complexity perspective, it was imperative to find the most appropriate research approach. More particularly, a research

approach was required that would accommodate an emancipatory methodological agenda embedded in complexity thinking (Alhadeff-Jones, 2013; Heron & Lahood, 2008; Heron & Reason, 2001). An action research approach which drew on the principles and processes of co-operative inquiry was utilised as research method since it entails a participatory worldview, makes provision for extended ways of knowing and is undergirded with complexity-informed principles (Heron & Reason, 2008; Hetherington, 2013; Reason & Goodwin, 1999).

The overarching aim of the study was:

*To cultivate and foster a re-think of the role of change agents in Organisational Change and Development (OCD) interventions by employing a critical complexity lens to shift their current spiritual identity praxis towards co-creating alternative complexity-informed change agency praxis.*

The key objectives were:

- (i) *To explore how current and/or traditional conceptual understandings of organisation theory, organisational change and development literature, identity theory and spirituality inform current change agent praxis; and to highlight the limitations of these traditional understandings of change agents in OCD; and to suggest how complexity thinking and a critical complexity lens can inform alternative perspectives for understanding these concepts.*
- (ii) *To re-imagine the role of the change agent in OCD through an exploration of the process of becoming aware of a critical complexity-informed perspective as an alternative to current being-becoming praxis.*
- (iii) *To co-facilitate an exploratory action research approach by drawing on the principles and procedures of co-operative inquiry in order to co-create a spiritual identity praxis heuristics framework for change agents from a critical complexity-informed perspective.*

## **1.6 SCOPE AND DEMARCATION**

A research approach describing how change interventions may be better technically executed or offering another change manual about practice was not the purpose of this study. Rather, by following Dievernich *et al.* (2015), I opted for a research approach that could critically explore the underlying dynamics which may offer pathways to re-think how to better **'be'** in change initiatives. Thus, a shift from ways of doing change to ways of being-becoming in change interventions. Phrased differently, a research approach examining what embodied being-becoming praxis implies was necessary and not one that would merely indicate another way of approaching change or improving efficiency and effectiveness through newly acquired skills, knowledge or competencies. More fundamentally, the research was about alternative ways of *being and becoming in the reality of a complex world (complexity as an inherent nature of reality, and its implications for being human)*, thus unravelling the role of the change agent in change initiatives. In terms of my understanding of



complexity, I adopted the general view — philosophical complexity (Woermann, 2016), and not the restricted view, hence the need to “complexify” (Tsoukas, 2016: 1) explorations of OCD practice and praxis.

Therefore, this study examined an expanded understanding of the change agent by shifting the focus to a deeper reflection on the question of “who I am as a person and what kind of a person I can be?” instead of “how I can fix and instigate change?” In short: it was about ways of being and becoming in change processes resulting in a qualitatively different approach to change praxis.

The study’s scope was change practitioners’ own processes (ways of thinking about their being, becoming and doing in the inner arc of experience) informed by their identity and spirituality from a complexity perspective. As already alluded to, the research was concerned with the inner arc of experience (identity, spirituality and ways of being-becoming praxis) in relation to a reflection on outer arc of experience (ways of doing or action in OCD practice). Consequently, the study did not strive to change organisations or OCD practice directly but instead aimed at revealing the dynamics underlying OCD practitioner praxis, i.e. processes of inner-being-becoming praxis. Being interested in unveiling the inner arc of experience in ways of being-becoming praxis the study probed the possible re-imagination of specific contextual change agent roles in re-thinking change agency in OCD interventions. Further, the study focused on practitioners’ own experiences of their identity and spirituality reflecting their current change praxis and strove to compare these with their reflections on OCD practice. This was done by contemplating previous praxis or imagining alternative future praxis regarding their engagement with organisational environments during change interventions. Finally, the co-exploratory group inquiry was preoccupied with re-thinking practitioners’ own being-becoming praxis and their role as change agents therein.

## 1.7 DEFINING KEY CONCEPTS AND TERMINOLOGY

Various concepts including change agent, Organisational Change and Development practitioners, identity, practice or praxis, spirituality, spiritual identity, change agency, sense-making, meaning making and complexity are found in various study fields of study, and therefore it is necessary to describe how these were used in this study.

- *Change Agents and OCD practitioners.*

A change agent can be described as “a person who facilitates change by intervening in groups and organisations” (Rothwell, Stavros, & Sullivan, 2015: 40). As a broad term, change agents signify persons who work in a multitude of roles, positions and professions, are referred to by various labels such as change practitioners, change leaders, change managers, change makers, change professionals, change consultants, social entrepreneurs, change innovators, industrial psychologists, human resource professionals, and coaches.

A similar concept to change agents is OCD practitioners. OCD practitioners is a general term more closely associated with change agents subscribing to the field of OCD studies (Viljoen,

2015). In addition, OCD practitioners apply the theory, models and practices of Organisational Change and Development and refer to the person involved in interventions required to change a process, system or other persons, or develop conceptual frameworks improving the organisation in specified or unspecified domains of functioning.

- Identity.

In the study, identity refers to studying the human subject in terms of “who am I?” and “who is the other?” Identity denotes an experience of the personal self in relation to what is different (the other). In this study, Cilliers and Preiser’s (2010) description of identity is followed. They explain: “It is built around the insight that our identity as individuals, or groups of individuals, is not an essential characteristic, it is a dynamic property which is constituted relationally. It emerges through the interaction of difference” (2010: vii).

- Change Agency.

Caldwell (2006: 10) describes the traditional definition of change agency:

as the capacity of internal or external human actors within organizations, individually or in groups, to consciously choose to use their knowledge, skills, power, expertise or reflexivity to sponsor, initiate, enact, direct, manage or implement a specific change idea, process, initiative, project or complete programme of change which impacts directly or indirectly on the efficiency or effectiveness, values or culture of an organization and the behaviour or actions of its members.

Since this description is inadequate and limited in assuming “rationalist notions of intentional agency which situate action and meaning within essentially individualist concepts of rationality, expertise, autonomy and reflexivity” (Caldwell, 2006: 10), I opted for an emergent, decentred, embodied and synthetic conceptualisation of change agency, which bridges relational networks of creative human action in both the inner arc (praxis) and outer arc (practice) of experience.

- Spirituality.

Because of the multi-dimensionality of the concept (Grassie, 2010; Nelson, 2009) scholars and practitioners remain undecided on comprehensive definitions of spirituality. While impossible to disjoin spirituality from its connotations with religion, the study did not explore its religious dimension. A workable approach to the study of spirituality in organisations provided by Bouckaert (2010: 18) points to the notion of “profane spirituality because it relates to the quest for meaning in everyday life, the existential meaning of being born, work, entrepreneurship, conflicts, love, care, being ill, getting old, dying etcetera.” Grounded in everyday life experiences profane spirituality does not look for a sacral order outside of the ordinary, nor does it protest against the established order. In the study, spirituality was re-framed through the lens of critical complexity<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> Please see Chapter 4.

- Spiritual identity.

Spirituality has traditionally been viewed as a component in the formation of identity. I do not reserve spiritual identity as a certain domain or separate aspect of the self that should be studied directly in terms of atomistic descriptions or fragmented, essentialist versions thereof. Re-framed through the lens of critical complexity spiritual identity referred in the study to the being-becoming processes of dynamic relating in the inner and outer arc of experience. Viewed this way, it is about how humans are constituted by standing in the tensions and contextual experience of the complexity and rupturing of the world, i.e. ways of being-becoming praxis.

- Practice and Praxis.

Praxis is not merely practice in terms of practicalities such as skill, technique (the how question). In the study, it was seen as an overarching concept denoting the intention of actions as related to meaning and destiny; a distinct mode of being connected with appropriate action and practical wisdom (*phronesis*) derived from contemplation. As Schwandt (2007) writes, praxis reveals intentionality and the deep-seated meaning that drive peoples' skills and technique in action or their practice. Thus, praxis refers to the inner arc of experience, where practice relates to the outer arc of experience (see Figure 1.2).

- Complexity.

Complexity refers to the nature of reality and its impact on knowing and acting, bridging the need for reduction and disjunction of models, by embracing characteristic features such as uncertainty, ambiguity, radical openness, contextuality, non-linearity, self-organisation, and emergence. Complexity according to this philosophical understanding is neither anti-reductionistic nor anti-holistic, but rather both post-reductionistic and post-holistic (Cilliers & Preiser, 2016; Woermann, 2016). Therefore in the study complexity was seen as a bridging relational paradigm implying a normative and ethical approach to living and being-in-the-world, which, in turn, suggested ways of thinking, being-becoming and doing that were simultaneously both critical and self-reflexive of its inner and outer arcs of experience in the world (Cilliers & Preiser, 2016; Woermann, 2016).

- Inner and outer arc of experience.

Marshall (2001) describes two different self-reflective perspectives, which provides a means to explore and question ready-made assumptions regarding agency. The inner arc of experience entails the intentions, beliefs, values, assumptions, patterns of thought, and embodied meaning-making processes regarding our way of 'being-in-the-world' that leads to action. The outer arc of experience entails how people sense their environment, its affects, how things are maintained or change, and processes of making sense of the actions involved in relation to events or situations. Although it is helpful to distinguish between the so-called arcs of attention or experience, it is also necessary to mention that one should not literally interpret experiences as either internal or external. My contention is that all experiences simultaneously influence both the inner and outer arc of experience. However, for the purposes



of the study, I provide the distinction to enable exploring specifically the inner dimensions of change agency.

## 1.8 RESEARCH APPROACH

The intention of the research was to be of value to the research participants, colleagues, the wider profession of OCD and society, but also to provide an avenue to develop myself. In action research terms this means engaging in first, second and third person research modes (Torbert 2001: 150). These imply self-inquiry (first person), inquiry with co-researchers (second person), and inquiry within the wider world (third person) (Heron 1996; Reason & Bradbury 2001:xxv; Torbert 2001: 251-257).

Reason (2003) regards co-operative inquiry as a form of action research, which emphasises first-person research/practice in the context of supportive and critical second-person relationships while having the potential to reach out toward third-person practice. Since action research and the processes and principles of CI is compatible with the premises of complexity theory (Reason & Goodwin, 1999) I chose it as a vehicle to develop alternative perspectives to understand spiritual identity praxis. In Heron's (2006: 37–38) words co-operative inquiry resembles spiritual or transpersonal inquiry (Heron, 2001) and is well suited to explore the inner arc of experience since:

spiritual inquiry is about opening to and acting with spirit... [it] is performative, a form of action research, by each of us individually and groups of us co-operatively. By participating in spirit in the fullness of our embodied situation, we co-create with it our realisation of it. As we meet spirit, we shape it as it shapes our shaping of it.

Co-operative inquiry is also ideally suited to explore complex alternative ways of thinking, being, and doing regarding change agents roles and change agency praxis of OCD practitioners (Csillag, 2013; Baldwin, 2001).

Approved by the University's Departmental Ethics Screening Committee, I co-explored OCD spiritual identity praxis and their role as change agents from a critical complexity perspective, with a group of six change practitioners (second person inquiry). The participants were all interested in exploring and developing their personal change agency – from a complexity perspective – and how it related to their identity and spirituality in change interventions.

The study offered the opportunity to re-imagine a complexity-informed interpretation of the role of the change agent and implications for their change praxis (Swantz, Reason, & Bradbury, 2008). Informed by a critical complexity approach, and embarking on a participatory approach with OCD practitioners the opportunity was offered to them to reflect on their current change agency praxis. Also, this implied establishing a community of practice (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002).

While mainly focused on the second person inquiry with the research participants the study also included first-person inquiry accounts (my own reflections and participants' personal reflections) and third person inquiry accounts (my view of the impact on the wider world) of the research process.

## 1.9 ANTICIPATED CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY

While various contributions were anticipated, I believed the study would generate alternative insights and perspectives of spiritual identity praxis and the role of the change agent in the context of OCD. Here I expected theoretical, methodological, and practical contributions.

**Theory.** The study would contribute to the field of organisation theory, organisational change and development, identity theory and spirituality by mapping out the limitations of traditional approaches informing current change agent praxis and suggesting how complexity thinking and a critical complexity lens can inform alternative perspectives to these concepts.

**Methodology.** I believed the study would contribute to action research and co-operative inquiry methodology by illustrating how a critical complexity-informed approach studying OCD practitioners' spiritual identity praxis and their role in change agency may be executed.

**Praxis.** I saw a two-pronged value-add, namely: (i) contributing to OCD practice approaches by providing an exploratory CI approach exploring spiritual identity praxis with OCD practitioners, and (ii) contributing to change agency praxis by providing a critical complexity-informed spiritual identity praxis heuristics framework, suggesting an alternative framing for the role of change agents in OCD initiatives.

## 1.10 RATIONALE AND SIGNIFICANCE

Many problems in traditional OCD interventions result from change agents who are ill-prepared to deal with the complexity of change (Karakas, 2009). Also, despite attempts to introduce new theories of change, and alternative paradigms (Holman, Devane, & Cady, 2007), traditional OCD theory seems to reinforce out-dated forms of thinking and action. Further, it appears as if espoused theories of change are not congruent with the theories in use informing current change practitioner praxis (Argyris, 2008).

The current mode of thinking and doing perpetuates a 'paradigm of simplification' (Morin, 2008) and contributes to the incongruence between OCD practice and praxis. OCD practitioners seem, despite the introduction of complexity theory, to give lip service to new concepts and ideas embedded in complexity theory and thinking, and therefore struggle to fully understand the implications, application and impact of this relational paradigm on their OCD practice (Stevenson, 2012a). This has resulted in a stagnation of knowledge and practice in OCD and reveals the inability of practitioners to critically reflect on both their practice and praxis, reinforcing the limited levels of self-awareness of their change agency (Stevenson, 2012b). The incoherence and incongruence in spiritual identity praxis reveal a breakdown in a relational understanding of integrity and authenticity because of a reductionist understanding of identity and spirituality (Maciariello, 2010). The change roadmap does not relate to the actual realities of change territory. Also, there seems to be a qualitative dimension to change agency praxis in OCD initiatives that remain unaccounted. Hence, the need for exploring spiritual identity praxis which can offer alternative pathways of thinking, being-

becoming and doing in OCD. Such an approach will be more aware of the limitations of the inner arc of experience related to thinking, being-becoming and doing; and therefore more attuned to self-reflexive modes of being-becoming.

**The rationale for the study** originated from my desire to explore an alternative approach to being-becoming praxis and one interrelated with identity and spirituality from a critical complexity lens. This is linked to my wish to re-frame or re-imagine the role of change agents in OCD. By applying a critical complexity perspective, I wanted to explore how traditional approaches to OT, OCD, identity and spirituality influence thinking, being-becoming and doing (change agency) in OCD interventions. There is a lack of knowledge as to how to explore critical complexity-informed change agency, which includes both inner and outer arcs of experience in OCD. I believe that an increased understanding of complexity-based forms of knowing will improve change agency praxis, bridge the theory-practice gap, and offer research methods that could facilitate a co-created spiritual identity praxis heuristics. Such an approach will enable a deeper understanding of spiritual identity praxis and a co-creation of alternative modes of being (being-becoming praxis) which will re-imagine the role of change agents from a critical complexity-informed lens. Engaging this new set of complex challenges in the change agency of OCD practitioners, the study examined spiritual identity praxis and reflected on the interaction of the inner arc of experience with the outer arc of experience (OCD practice).

**The significance of the study** lies in the alternative approach it offered to capture, explore and describe the inner arc of experience in spiritual identity praxis and to re-think the role of change agents, which may offer a movement towards alternative sustainable and resilient change agency. Applying a critical complexity perspective has the potential to increase the relevancy of OCD theory and improvement of practice by inquiring into the often-neglected inner arc of experience of change agency praxis. At the same time, an increased awareness of current limitations to spiritual identity praxis offers the possibility to cultivate congruent and coherent OCD practitioner change agency, which, in turn, is aligned to approaches more appropriate to address current global challenges of the Anthropocene, the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's), and the job skills shortages experienced in the workplace. Connecting OCD practitioners' own identity and spirituality praxis to that of the organisational change approach represents an important step in bridging the current limitations in reductive and disjunctive understandings to the change agent in organisations. Developing alternative perspectives and ways of thinking is not enough. Change agents need to radically reconstruct ways of being-becoming (spiritual identity praxis) integrated into a practical knowing of how to act in the face of complexity. Chia (2005: 123) describes comprehensive types of knowledge that managers require as:

the ability to understand the origins and limitations of our own habits of thought; to remain concretely sensitive to local societal attitudes and aspirations; to detect deeply unconscious cultural idiosyncrasies; to be able to track emergent technological trends and their consequences; to understand shifting political

affiliations and public perceptions; to grasp the prevalent social moods, inclinations, and capacities: these are all highly prized facets of the effective postmodern business manager and policy-maker.

Developing comprehensive generative capacities, abilities and competencies of the inner arc of experience equips change agents with an alternative view of change agency praxis from a critical complexity-informed perspective. Such a re-framing is qualitatively different from current OCD practitioner praxis since it implies that OCD practitioners may critically explore their own conceptions of identity and spirituality, which has traditionally been omitted in change agency research (Kreiner & Sheep, 2009). Re-connecting spiritual identity praxis (the inner arc of experience) with OCD practice (the outer arc of experience) in change agency seeks to overcome fixed systems of identity, meaning, purpose, belief and experience in change agency (Case, Hopfl, & Letiche, 2012). Re-connecting in this way is crucial to open up alternative pathways to resilient, sustainable change agency, which may re-imagine the role of change agents in complex OCD processes.

Finally, the significance of the study lies in co-creating critical complexity-informed iterative principles, reflective signposts and integrative movements in determining the congruence and awareness of complexity thinking habits of mind or understanding of identity and spirituality. It provided the opportunity to apply critical complexity-informed reflective signposts to a co-created co-operative inquiry re-imagined spiritual identity praxis heuristics framework. Further, applying critical complexity to change agents in OCD initiatives offers the opportunity to OCD practitioners to explore what critical awareness and congruence regarding their inner and outer arcs of experience in change agency entail. This, in turn, implies facilitating or developing greater awareness of ingrained patterns of thought, narratives, beliefs and experiences, which currently inform practitioners' change agency practice and praxis in the context of OCD.

### **1.11 PERSONAL INTEREST**

I have been interested in developing alternative ways of thinking about current approaches to OCD practice since 2006. The combination of previous workplace experiences combined with my own desire to find and create meaningful ways of being in the workplace inspired me to embark on the research. My awareness and realisation of the need for alternative approaches were born through my experience of working as a change consultant, coach and change leader in projects which I was assigned to implement the ISO 9000 Quality Business Management System<sup>9</sup> (Hoyle, 1996). Through the implementation of this system – which involved failures and successes – I realised the various shortcomings in my own approach to change implementation. Also, I realised what influence theories of change have on change implementation programmes, how organisations are affected and how implementing a planned approach to change resulted in various challenges. This became particularly

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<sup>9</sup> The International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO), “develop voluntary, consensus-based, market relevant International Standards that support innovation and provide solutions to global challenges [and] provide guidance and tools for companies and organizations who want to ensure that their products and services consistently meet customer’s requirements, and that quality is consistently improved” (ISO (2016)).

apparent when it was mandated from top management without employee buy-in or participation. The experience and engagement with change practices resulted in my desire to create approaches that are not only theoretical but had practical value for people working with change in organisations.

During my Master's degree in Clinical Pastoral Psychology (an interdisciplinary degree between practical theology, psychology and psychiatry), I became aware of a completely new world of academic thinking. It was also the first time I attended lectures as I had studied through the University of South Africa (a long-distance learning institution) until postgraduate level. I realised my interest in new ways of thinking about reality, knowledge and key new developments in philosophy (critical realism) inspired me to explore alternative avenues of thinking. My history of working as change practitioner helped me connect new ways of thinking about life and work to the realities of everyday workplace experiences and challenges. In that, sense I found practical approaches to research such as action research very attractive. The Master's degree gave me new insights in how I could think about ways of being-becoming, and the dynamic interplay between identity and spirituality in the role of psychological therapy and of interpreting these ways of being-becoming in a much broader and more holistic perspective, i.e. a systems thinking approach. It also offered me ideas on how I could investigate incommensurable concepts like identity, spirituality and change processes connected to the existential realities of change agents and everyday work-life.

After completing the Master's degree, I started practising as change consultant and executive coach in small to medium organisations. I applied various change modalities and made use of my discoveries during degree training. I also started working on my doctoral proposal and decided to apply to the University of Stellenbosch Business School (USB). What attracted me to USB was its PhD research philosophy: "To develop employable knowledge underpinned by theory and practice, PhD students conduct action research on real-world problems and develop personal and transferable skills which can be used in a range of applied situations" (USB, 2016). It was specifically the connection between practical employable knowledge and conducting action research that attracted me to this doctoral programme.

My original proposal concerned interest in the role of spirituality in personal and organisational change, but in the process of consulting, I realised that the concept of identity was interchangeably connected to spirituality. I felt that the spiritual self, which reveals people's experience of their deepest values, beliefs, immanent ways of being and transcendent ways of doing, was deeply interconnected to their personal identity: the self as a relational being. This realisation facilitated an engagement with other change practitioners, consultants and academics. I emailed international scholars in the area of my research topics and approached them as possible PhD supervisors. Eventually, I found some scholars who understood what I was trying to do. During this time, I also approached Professor Paul Cilliers (complexity philosopher at University of Stellenbosch) because complexity theory and its implications for understanding change really interested me. Professor Cilliers was so kind to allow me to sit in during his Honours module on 'Complexity theory, thinking

and implications for ethics'. Unfortunately, he passed away four weeks into the start of the module. After his death, I started taking part in weekly research colloquiums of the Centre for Studies in Complexity. My interest in developing new ways of thinking about change with practitioners was deeply influenced by these experiences and the articles we read and co-explored. I understood from these discussions and the initial literature review of my PhD proposal that the emerging field of complexity and management was of interest to me. In addition to the new way of thinking that I pursued, I realised that I had become encapsulated in the complexity approach or complexity thinking. Linking complexity thinking to alternative approaches to change in organisations and exploring the role and interrelatedness of spirituality and identity in the workplace emerged as the focus for my topic of inquiry.

In addition, working part-time as research assignment co-ordinator of the MBA programme at USB allowed me insight into the institutional challenges inherent in large organisations like universities. I was tasked to put a system in place for managing research assignment coordination between supervisors and students. Managing this change process in co-operation with other academics provided fertile ground for strengthening my interest in large-scale change processes and the role of behavioural change in people management.

This snapshot of my personal interest in exploring and re-thinking organisational change practitioners' change agency from a complexity perspective practice will suffice.<sup>10</sup>

## 1.12 THE STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION

In this chapter (**Chapter 1**) I provided an overview of the study's context, discussed its research problem, research question, aims and objectives, outlined the scope and demarcation, defined key concepts and terminology used in the study, research approach employed, sketched the study's anticipated contributions, and outlined the rationale and significance of the study as well as my personal interest.

**Chapter 2** provides an overview of traditional conceptualisations of the change agent by exploring four fields of study, namely: (i) organisations theory, (ii) organisational change and development, (iii) identity theory, and (iv) spirituality. In each exploration, I seek to point out how the traditional understanding and resulting conceptualisations of the change agent in these fields of study have affected change agency and informed change agent practice and praxis. First, I explore the meta-paradigmatic influences and dominant disciplinary discourse regarding the traditional understanding of organisation and change in organisations. I argue how the underlying modernist and functionalist assumptions in organisation theory has contributed to traditional perspectives of the change agent. Second, I outline the field of Organisational Change and Development and discuss the meta-paradigmatic influences and dominant disciplinary discourses and how these relate to current

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<sup>10</sup> A reflexive account of the entire doctoral research journey is offered in Chapter 8. I also provide a photo gallery with details of the significant moments and experiences during the study in Appendix J.



theories of change and models of change practice. Third, I provide an overview of traditional views of change agents and distinguish between change agent practice and praxis. Fourth, I critically discuss traditional perspectives of individual and organisational identity and point to humanistic and narrative traditions, which informed by post-structuralist and postmodern theory present an alternative dialogic narrative view of the self. Fifth, I introduce traditional views on individual and organisational spirituality and spiritual identity in organisations. Finally, I present the limitations of traditional perspectives and their impact on change agents.

In **Chapter 3**, I introduce the notion of complexity and provide a brief overview of the systems approach and the rise of complexity theory. I elucidate philosophical complexity based on the work of Woermann (2013, 2016), as the distinguishing feature of a generalised approach to complexity, rather than the restricted view of complexity, which seeks to decomplexify. In order to explicate the notion of philosophical complexity, I contrast the complexity-based paradigm and complexity thinking to the Newtonian-based worldview and atomistic thinking. I outline features of complex systems, discuss and distinguish between common misconceptions in complexity theory, thinking and practice. Finally, I describe what is meant by ‘critical complexity’ (Cilliers, 2016) and the normative turn in philosophical complexity and the associated double movement. The double bind of critical complexity relates to ways of being critical in thinking, being and doing; while simultaneously maintaining a self-reflexive position in relating to complex phenomena. Critical complexity thus subscribes to a post-reductionist agenda in scientific theory formation and implies a commitment to a certain critical stance that is qualitatively different to other types of being-becoming, because it embraces the inherent incommensurability and indeterminacy of being human (Cilliers & Preiser, 2010).

In **Chapter 4**, I re-frame the notion of the change agent through the critical complexity lens and offer a complexity-informed understanding of the change agent. First, I reconceptualise the notion of identity through the lens of critical complexity by exploring what an alternative understanding of identity could entail by applying Woermann’s (2013: 34–40) eight features of complex systems to De Villiers-Botha and Cilliers’ (2010) notion of complex ‘I’. Second, I outline four iterative principles for a critical complexity-informed understanding of change agents.

In **Chapter 5**, I integrate the notion of complex ‘I’ with spiritual identity praxis in order to conceptualise a movement towards a post-reductionist spiritually inclusive notion of the change agent. First, I apply a critical complexity-informed perspective to spirituality in order to re-frame the concept for exploring a complexity-informed change agency. Second, I discuss the reasons why a critical complexity-informed understanding of spiritual identity praxis is more appropriately termed as being-becoming praxis. Third, I re-imagine the change agent from this broadened (spiritually inclusive) critical complexity-informed perspective as Systems Change Curators, and offer alternative change agency praxis, with reflective signposts, and integrative movements in ways of being-becoming praxis.

In **Chapter 6**, I introduce co-operative inquiry as an appropriate qualitative action research methodology through which to explore spiritual identity praxis with OCD practitioners. I explicate the participatory worldview and its research paradigm and how it connects to the process of developing more reflective spiritual identity praxis with OCD practitioners. I discuss the particularities of executing the research and how a co-operative inquiry is conducted, setting up the inquiry group, and the various phases, stages and cycles of action and reflection. In addition, I outline the generation of data, analysis, validity procedures and special skills required. Finally, I emphasise ethical considerations in participatory approaches to inquiry.

**Chapter 7** deals with conducting the 18-month exploratory co-operative inquiry process with a group of six OCD practitioners into their spiritual identity praxis and roles as change agents. First, I discuss the process, which includes the planning, key constituents, initiation, launching and embarking of the research cycles that set up the launching and focus of the inquiry. Second, I outline the enactment of the 5 research cycles and 10 workshops with the key themes, moments, challenges and discoveries explored and developed in the OCDCoP.

**Chapter 8** provides the key research findings obtained through the action research group inquiry process with six OCD practitioners. I discuss the findings with details that evidence, support and explain each finding according to the research questions by presenting the four key findings of the collaborative process.

**Chapter 9** focusses on assessing the study. First, I review the study according to the research questions by devising two interpretive categories, which assess the reflect-reframe-reflect co-operative inquiry process of OCDCoP spiritual identity praxis. Second, I evaluate the research findings in terms of CI validity procedures. Finally, I synthesise the findings and assess the validity of the forms of knowing and the co-developed spiritual identity praxis.

**Chapter 10** describes my personal reflections and learnings. I offer first, second, and third person reflections as well as key insights I gained from the research. In addition, I reflect on the execution of the study, the OCDCoP research cycles, and the theoretical development. Finally, I present what I learnt as a researcher, and in particular with regard to dissertation writing.

In the final chapter, **Chapter 11**, I present a synopsis of the findings in terms of the original research question, and their relation to achieving the research aim and objectives. Secondly, I offer key conclusions I drew from the findings. Thirdly, I outline the contributions of the research and its key implications for scholars and practitioners. Fourthly, I discuss the limitations of the study. Finally, I offer recommendations to scholars and practitioners and conclude with some final reflections.



## CHAPTER 2

# TRADITIONAL UNDERSTANDING OF THE CHANGE AGENT

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*We do not see things as they are, we see things as we are (Richard Rohr).*

## 2.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I present an overview of the traditional understanding of the change agent and change agent praxis as offered in the Organisation Theory (OT), Organisational Change and Development (OCD) theory, identity and spirituality literature. While I can obviously not discuss all the literature here, I demonstrate the limitations of mainstream and/or traditional views in these fields, indicate their impact on understanding the role of the change agent, spiritual identity praxis, and change agency.

The limitations of current mainstream OT, OCD, identity theory and spirituality literature reveal that conceptual frameworks and their underlying epistemologies fail to address the challenges change agents are faced with currently. Current change agent models and programs are ill-equipped to develop alternative change agent praxis that can appropriately adapt, contextualise and actualise alternative roles for change agents grounded in a deeper understanding of spiritual identity praxis.

This chapter not only highlights the important implications of uncovering the limitations of atomistic thinking as personified in positivism<sup>11</sup> but also seeks to extend the discussion beyond reductionist or foundational approaches to the change agent. In order to enable an in-depth discussion, I explore different framings<sup>12</sup> of the change agent that has informed current perspectives in theory formation. I start with OT since it represents the general field of study of the management sciences. Next, in order to understand how the change agent is linked to change and change agency, I introduce OCD theory as an applied field of organisation theory. To further elucidate the philosophical groundings that led to the development of change agent conceptual frameworks informed by OT and OCD theory I include current views of identity. More specifically, I examine more recent discussions and critiques of traditional views of identity and suggest an alternative narrative view of the self developed in postmodernist approaches of humanistic psychology. Concurrently, I highlight discussions in organisational identity theory which has informed change agency. Finally, since I believe that spirituality (both individual and organisational) is important in understanding traditional change agent frameworks, I discuss it as well as the salient field of workplace spirituality. Spirituality serves as the emergent, harmonising, integrative or self-organisatory aspect of people's lives that deals with awareness of systems of belief, embodied experience and appropriate action, or ways of being-becoming, thinking and doing. As with the other notions introduced in this chapter, it seems that

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<sup>11</sup> Schwandt (2007) points out that positivism points to a philosophy of strict empiricism maintaining that the only genuine or legitimate knowledge claims are those founded directly through experience: (i) either capable of verification, (ii) statements are only meaningful and of any value when they take the form of analytic statements of mathematics, and (iii) logic and beliefs are only justifiable when they rest on noninferential self-evident observations.

<sup>12</sup> A key element in this dissertation is to re-interpret and unpack traditional understandings of concepts and to redefine them. For that purpose the term 'framing' is used to indicate alternative conceptualisations, perspectives, views and frameworks.

traditional approaches to spirituality and spiritual identity may be dominated by reductionist and foundationalist approaches to change agency.

## **2.2 EXPLORING THE ORGANISATION: TRADITIONAL CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS**

In this section, I outline long-standing conventional conceptual and theoretical perspectives of organisations and how current dominant paradigms inform organisation theory. I introduce organisation theory, as it is the preeminent study field in the management sciences informing change agency as well as the change agent.

### **2.2.1 Organisation Theory**

Organisation Theory (OT) is a science aiming at generating knowledge with the explicit aim of being of direct utility to an identifiable body of organisational practitioners (Tsoukas & Knudsen, 2005). This practitioner based science has been concerned with the study of formal organisations since Weber (1947). Organisation, as a construct, should not be understood in a general sense i.e. the generic phenomenon of patterned interaction; but rather seen and approached from the perspective of how coordinated interaction is authoritatively achieved within formal organisations (Tsoukas & Knudsen, 2005).

According to Starbuck (144), Simon's (1952) "envisaged 'organization theory' entails a broad category that includes scientific management, industrial engineering, industrial psychology, the psychology of small groups, human resources management and strategy." Offering a more recent definition, Cunliffe (2008: 3) states:

OT is a range of theories and models that attempt to explain how organizations function and relate to the environment. The driving force behind OT is the idea that if we understand this, then we can design organizations in such a way that they operate: (i) efficiently – utilizing their resources in a cost-effective way; (ii) effectively – achieving their goals; and (iii) responsibly – in a way that respects the community, society and the environment.

Cunliffe (2008) points out that one needs to differentiate between OT and Organisational Behaviour (OB). Firstly, OT focuses on organisations whereas OB's concern is people in organisations; secondly, it takes a macro organisational perspective whereas OB looks at more micro behavioural processes, and thirdly, it is concerned with structures, systems and processes, compared to OB which is interested in perceptions and behaviour of individuals and groups.

It is important to note that, although Cunliffe (2008) follows the demarcation between OB and OT found in North America, I adopt the broader notion of OT as described by Tsoukas and Knudsen: "an academic field specialising in the study of organisational phenomena (both micro and macro)" (2005: 2). Also, I use OT as a synonym for Organisation Studies.

## 2.2.2 Dominant Meta-paradigmatic Frameworks in OT

A review of current theories that inform the body of knowledge of OT reveals, as Tsoukas and Knudsen (2005: 2) explain: "all the major epistemological debates that have played out in the social sciences have also been reflected in the developments in OT." Burrell and Morgan's *Sociological Paradigms and Organisational Analysis* published in 1979, undoubtedly kick-started serious epistemological debates (Tsoukas & Knudsen, 2005). Based on the Kuhnian definition of 'paradigm' and the notion of 'radical change') they (Burrell & Morgan 1979) have identified the following four major paradigms that informed OT theory: (i) the functionalist, (ii) the interpretive, (iii) the radical humanist, and (iv) the radical structuralist paradigms. Willmott (1993: 681), in Goles and Hirscheim (2000), highlights that by bringing to light "a growing dissatisfaction with the dominant, functionalist orthodoxy" one of the most significant contributions of Burrell and Morgan's analysis was to legitimise (or at least provide the impetus for) alternative approaches to organisations. Nevertheless, dominant positivistic and functionalist approaches have prevailed and continued to inform change agency. As the functionalist approach remains mainstream, it contributes to the conceptualisation of the traditional understanding of the change agent. Next, I discuss the meta-paradigmatic<sup>13</sup> assumptions that have been foundational to organisational theory formation and practice.

Chia (2005) outlines six meta-theoretical assumptions that underlie the epistemological framework of modern OT (positivistic and functionalist approaches):

### (i) Objectivity

Chia (2005) argues that although one might acknowledge that organisations are 'human products' resulting from processes of habituation, they are nevertheless 'experienced as an objective reality' (Berger & Luckmann, 1966: 77). In this view, organisations are seen as concrete social entities with fixed locations, clear identities, and describable attitudes. Further, an organisation exists relatively independently of the individual actors associated with it providing an appropriate object of analysis.

### (ii) Self-identity

Many organisation theorists hold that organisations possess identifiable characteristics, including purposefulness and direction (Donaldson, 1996), stability and configuration (Mintzberg, 1979), culture and values (Rokeach, 1968; Schein, 1996), and goals and functions (Child, 1984; Daft, 2012; Perrow, 1967) that are "often believed to be visible, comparable, and/or measurable in the research process" (Chia, 2005: 119). In this view, the identity and distinctiveness of an organisation are not believed to be relationally derived but regarded as having its own unique configuration. Also, organisations are widely conceived as open but bounded systems (Scott, 1992) interacting with the environment. Chia (2005) explains that systems, whether open or closed, have clearly-defined forms

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<sup>13</sup> A meta-paradigm is "the most general statement of a discipline and functions as a framework in which the more restricted structures of conceptual models develop" (Miller-Keane Encyclopedia, 2003).

and boundaries. From this perspective, organisations are relatively stable and endure through time so that their identity and attributes can be established clearly (Albert & Whetten, 1985). The modern view of self-identity of organisations holds that their "survival and growth are linked to internal adaptability, the efficacy of sense-making processes, their capacity for learning, the extent of structural alignments achieved, and their capacity for innovation and renewal" (Chia, 2005: 119). In short, the organisation is approached as a concrete and relatively autonomous social entity with humanised capacities.

(iii) Individual intentionality

Individual intentionality relates to how organisational theorists hold fast onto the primacy and autonomy of individual actors as a point of departure in the formation of theory (Weick, 1969); Silverman, 1971; Sandelands & Drazin, 1989), thereby emphasising the atomised view of individual action — which remains unquestioned (Chia, 2005). Individual action is thus seen as deliberate, conscious and purposeful. Moreover, in this view, there is an excessive focus on the organisation as a larger unit, while at the same time minimising connection with the individual meanings, intentions and sense-making which could reveal fresh insights into organisational life.

(iv) Local causality

Active intervention is deemed the primary route to actualise change in organisations, either internally through wilful actors, or externally through agents of change (Miller & Friesen, 1980b; Van de Ven & Garud, 1987). In modern OT, *local tightly coupled causality* is presupposed. The archetypal understanding of this form of causality relates to the linking of disparate objects or events in space-time as an explanatory tool. The foundational understanding of local causality is associated with Aristotle's four types of causes<sup>14</sup> namely: (i) the formal, (ii) the material, (iii) the efficient, and (iv) the final cause. Chia (2005) believes that the Humean conception of causality is based on: "whenever two otherwise unrelated events follow each other in a way such that a consistent pattern of relationship appears to exist, then the antecedent event is deemed to be the efficient cause of the succeeding event" (p.121). Chia argues this framing could have influenced Hume and consequently the modern conceptions of causality implied in OT. Thus, for Chia (2005) modernistic OT follows the classical sciences and the positivistic tradition which has only emphasised Aristotle's efficient cause and either ignored or downplayed the other four causes. Chia (2005) maintains that this is because of the idea that efficient cause "accentuates the active interventional role of the agent of change and gives it a more tightly coupled relationship with its effect. By overemphasising agency and choice, it

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<sup>14</sup> The four types of causes can be explained as follows: (i) the material cause is the actual physical properties or makeup of an object or thing, (ii) the formal cause is the structure or design of a being or what makes it one thing rather than another, (iii) efficient cause is the thing or agent which actually brings something about or the actual force that brings something into being, and (iv) the final cause is the ultimate purpose for being or that for the sake of which a thing is done — the end (Müller-Merbach (2005).

exaggerates the sense of mastery and control in our world of affairs" (p. 121). This is also called the tightly coupled causality assumed in the modernist explanatory schema.

(v) Homoeostatic change

As equilibrium is assumed to be the natural state of organisations, change is seen as something exceptional (March & Simon, 1961) which momentarily upsets the balance of an otherwise stable organised state because systems are regarded as inherently stable. Change implies enforcing some kind of intervening force from an internal or external source. Chia (2005) points to environmental pressures or internal agency as the impetus for change in organisations. Following Lewin (1951), Miller and Friesen (1980a), Pettigrew (1987) and Van de Ven and Poole's (1995) perspective of change, Chia (2005: 122) states: "undermining stasis, overcoming inertia, and unsettling equilibrium provides the *modus operandi* for successful organizational change and transformation initiatives." This conceptualisation of organisation and, therefore change, presumes (i) external intervention, and (ii) the need for active, visible actors. The notions of change and intervention are defined by a vocabulary that reinforces assumptions that forms part of such overt and purposive intervention. Examples of words shaping the vocabulary are repositioning, diversification, re-engineering, culture change, mergers, takeovers, acquisitions, strategic alliances. Hence, ultimately, change is not regarded as immanent in organisational processes within the modernistic view of OT (Chia, 2005), but rather as a result or response to external interventions or effects.

(vi) Linguistic adequacy

The epistemological foundation that legitimises modern knowledge and informs its premise (mechanistic-materialistic view of reality and knowledge) is the idea that words are adequate for expressing thought, and specifically, that conscious thought entails proper knowing which can suitably be expressed through language (Chia, 2005). An example is the popular notion of knowledge management (Drucker, 1993; Nonaka & Nishiguchi, 2001) which is based on the assumption that knowledge itself becomes very much like a product or commodity that can be accumulated, stored and 'transferred' in the form of unique word configurations called theory. One feature of the modernism assumes that the world is logical, and therefore a proper grasp of language, and proper knowing, becomes a linguistic matter and not one of sensation or experience. Or as summarised by Chia (2005: 122): "A theory within this logical design [is] thus seen as a coherent system of language expressions woven together in an identifiable pattern that purportedly mirrors the going-ons in the real world."

These metaphysical assumptions shape much of the research agenda of organisation theorists and thus "form an interlocking web of values and beliefs that support and justify the modern project of OT" (Chia, 2005: 122). The assumptions also reveal the mainstream conceptual understanding of

the theory of change<sup>15</sup> (ToC) of modern OT that continues to support and dominate the disciplinary discourse.

I next explore the implications of these assumptions and their impact on the understanding of change agents (Table 2.1).

### 2.2.3 The Traditional Change Agent Conceptual Framework

- ***Assumption 1: Objectivity and the change agent***

A conceptual framing that assumes that organisations are objective, independent and individual actors influences the way in which change agents frame and view their role as consultants. Based on such an essentialist understanding of the organisation follows the supposition that the change agent can affect measurable change due to the fixed location and identity of the organisation that is completely discernible (Caldwell, 2006). This positivist view links well with the key diagnostic methodology change agents adopt when assessing organisational problems (Bushe, 2009).

- ***Assumption 2: Self-identity and the change agent***

The notion of self-identity is linked to the premise that organisational identity is an autonomous feature of an organisation that it can be defined as being intentional, purposeful, stable and enduring. Thus, to affect change, change agents need to assist organisations to manage the disruptiveness of change and to create a new state of equilibrium in which self-identity can flourish (Donaldson, 1996, 2005). This view has led change agents believing that change is an abnormal condition and that organisations, therefore, need to learn how to adjust to these periods of instability and disequilibrium (Mingers, 2006).

- ***Assumption 3: Individual intentionality and the change agent***

The assumption of individual intentionality is premised on an overemphasis on individual agency and deliberate, purposeful and conscious action. Thus, individual intentions in an organisation are reduced to a collective version of organisational intentionality, which ignores individual meanings, intentions and sense-making (Caldwell, 2006). From this perspective, the role of the change agent is to address the large-scale purpose of the organisation by determining a collective mission and vision statement in order to align individual actors' purpose and meaning to coincide with that of the identity of the organisation (Holman, 2010).

- ***Assumption 4: Local causality and the change agent***

The assumption of local causality in OT relates to the belief that change agents can willfully control the causes of problems because they are identifiable by means of consistent observable patterns arising from the system. Since causes are local, the change agent should facilitate the process of

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<sup>15</sup> Theory of Change (ToC) refers to the reasons behind decisions to intervene in society or organisations in a specific way aimed at problem resolution or improvement, and help ensure that specific interventions add value to the status quo in organisations (Cloete & Auriacombe, 2015).



teaching actors to see the patterns. It is believed that this will allow them to regularly control arising problems (Donaldson, 1996, 2005). Accordingly, causality is reduced to deterministic agency approaches which overemphasise and simplify controlling causes that arise in organisations (Tsoukas & Knudsen, 2005).

- **Assumption 5: Homeostatic change and the change agent**

The assumption of homeostatic change in OT points to change agents, internal or external to the organisation, to maintain homeostasis in order to achieve optimal equilibrium. Thus, the role of the change agent in interventions is to determine what has upset the balance, that is, those parts of the organisation that disturb the homeostatic change required (Caldwell, 2006). It is believed that normality will prevail when change agents and actors bring about changes that will overcome that which undermines equilibrium (Donaldson, 1996, 2005).

- **Assumption 6: Linguistic adequacy and the change agent**

The assumption of linguistic adequacy in OT highlights the dilemma of a positivistic understanding of language. Language is understood to be a logical purveyor of knowledge because it accurately presents the realities of our world (Donaldson, 1996, 2005). Accordingly, language is reduced to a commodified understanding of knowledge, which change agents can use to create a unified framework for deciphering information regarding the change processes required (Case *et al*, 2012). Therefore, the change agent is compelled to make use of adequate language in order to create a logical network of information that can assist actors to change their actions and thoughts (Tsoukas & Knudsen, 2005).

**Table 2.1: Traditional conceptual framing of the change agent according to the six meta-theoretical assumptions of modern OT**

<b>Meta-theoretical assumption in modern OT</b>	<b>Impact on the understanding of change agents</b>
Objectivity	Change agents can affect measurable change due to the fixed location and identity of the organisation that is completely discernible by means of a diagnostic methodology that can determine organisational problems.
Self-Identity	The change agent is an autonomous, intentional, purposeful actor with a stable and enduring identity. Change is an abnormal condition and therefore change agents needs to manage its disruptiveness of change in organisations in order to create a new state of equilibrium in which self-identity can flourish. The change agent's task is to teach organisations how to adjust to these short periods of instability and disequilibrium.
Individual Intentionality	The change agent is an individual, deliberate, purposeful actor. Consequently, agents can address, affect and determine the purpose of the organisation through facilitating an alignment procedure with the collective mission and vision statements of the organisation. Alignment takes place when individual actors connect their purpose



	and meaning to coincide with that of the identity of the organisation.
Local Causality	Change agents in organisations can willfully control the causes of problems because they are identifiable due to consistent observable patterns that arise from the system. As the causes are local, the role of the change agent is to facilitate the process of teaching actors to see the consistent observable patterns. This will allow them to regularly control and master the problems that arise through diagnostic methodologies that can pinpoint problems.
Homeostatic Change	Change agents accomplish the desired change through maintenance of homeostasis to achieve optimal internal or external equilibrium to the organisation. Change interventions should determine what has upset the balance and find the parts of the organisation that disturb the internal or external equilibrium required. Normality prevails when change agents and actors contribute to the necessary changes that will overcome the inertia and that which undermines the stasis.
Linguistic Adequacy	Change agents view language as the logical purveyor of knowledge because it accurately presents the realities of the world. With language, change agents can use knowledge to create a common understanding and unified framework for deciphering information regarding required change processes.

Source: Author as derived from Chia (2005)

Having outlined the dominant meta-paradigmatic influences in OT, and how the assumptions have influenced the perceived role of change agents in organisations, I now explore the traditional understanding of organisational change and development.

## **2.3 EXPLORING ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE AND DEVELOPMENT: TRADITIONAL CONCEPTUAL FRAMINGS**

In this section, I outline the field of organisational change and development, as well as the dominant meta-paradigmatic frameworks that influence the definitions of current theories of change, that underlie change models and change practitioner practice.

### **2.3.1 Organisational Change and Development: Definitions and Epistemology**

Cummings and Worley (2014) distinguish between Organisational Development, Change Management, and Organisational Change in the context of transformational processes in business management. These differences correspond to the respective foci found in the respective fields. For them (Cummings & Worley 2014), as study field, Change Management, points to the narrowest focus of values relating to cost, quality, and schedule. Although there are similarities to OD, for example, both address the effective implementation of planned change, the major difference lies in underlying value orientations. Where OD's behaviour science foundation supports values such as human potential, participation and development, in addition to performance and competitive advantage, its

distinguishing feature is its concern with the transfer of knowledge and skill ensuring the system manages change. OD is more focused on managing the transfer of knowledge and skills in order to build organisation capability, goal achievement and problem-solving. Organisational Change, in turn, is applied to any kind of change including technological and managerial innovations, organisational decline, or the evolution of a system over time. Thus, OD is more deliberate in its attempt to change the organisation in a particular direction, that is, to improve problem-solving, responsiveness, quality of work life and effectiveness.

Despite critics, over the years OD remains the major approach to theorising the notion of change in organisations globally (Burnes & Cooke, 2012). Although there may be confusion regarding its origins, nature, purpose and durability, scholars argue that OD should be seen as a continuously evolving body of theory and practice capable of incorporating and developing new ideas, perspectives and approaches (Burnes, 2013; Dent, 2002; Rees, 2011).

Within the field of OCD, numerous definitions are found. Viljoen (2015: 2) argues that most conceptualisations are similar in that they agree that OD deals with the following:

- The optimisation of the individual, the group and the organisation – thus the organisation as a whole;
- The optimisation of organisational climate, health and effectiveness;
- How interventions bring about changes in organisations to make them more effective;
- How interventions form part of the scope of practice;
- How strategy forms part of the scope and field of study, but also of culture, climate and people optimisation;
- Continuous improvement issues and matters concerning the sustainability of organisations.

Despite various scholars treating Organisational Change and Organisational Development separately, I follow Viljoen (2015) arguing that a division of disciplines is not useful because of the linkage of Organisational Change and OD. Building on her (Viljoen's (2015: 3) argument, I pursue what she calls "an elaborative definition" of OCD focused on the following features:

- Not optimising individuals, groups and organisations only, but societies too;
- Opportunities to impact on business performance, return on investment and ultimately business sustainability through playing an active role in mergers and acquisitions, and radical organisational change such as technological changes and globalisation;
- The optimisation of a multi-cultural workforce;
- The "doing and being" in organisations – the strategic formulation, facilitation and translation as well as the value and behavioural components of the organisation;
- An integration of socio-technical management and socio-psychological management traditions;

- Interventions happening on individual, group, organisational and societal levels in various forms;
- Creating shared understanding, significance in transformational efforts, alignment and ultimately inclusivity;
- Dealing with leadership as mandated from the top, and
- Concern with the unleashing of individual and collective voices and therefore rising levels of consciousness.

### 2.3.2 Dominant Meta-paradigmatic Frameworks in OCD Practice

As seen in the search for academic rigour and practical relevance (Burnes, 2013) Organisational Change and Development has consistently been plagued by a bi-polar nature. Two driving forces have remained the mainstay of debate since Kurt Lewin, the founding father of OD, famously stated: "There is nothing so practical as a good theory" (Lewin, 1944: 169). However, more recently OCD is going through a process of repurposing that has the potential to reconnect the synergistic link between scholars and practitioners; knowledge and practice, that has troubled it throughout its conceptual development (Leonard, 2013b).

The challenge for OCD to be an evolving body of theory being both rigorous and relevant is now greater than ever. Its ability to adapt to increasingly complex and uncertain technological, economic, political and cultural challenges is seen as the vital factor regarding the rigour-relevance debate in OCD orthopraxy<sup>16</sup>. The world is changing fast and organisations are situated in the midst of unprecedented uncertainty and chaos<sup>17</sup>. The question is whether organisations are conceptualised and constituted to withstand the speed of change and the complexity of their environment. Organisational scholars argue that it will take nothing short of a management revolution to change the status quo for organisations to re-think their roles as possible change agents (Denning, 2013; Hamel, 2008; McAfee *et al.*, 2012; Senge, 2011).

The organisational change field is also plagued by oppositional theories of change. Leonard (2013a), in a wide-ranging discussion of current framings and practices of organisational change, gives an overview of the issues that continue to influence scholars, researchers and practitioners. Leonard (2013a) highlights five themes (controversies, issues and debates) marking dominant concepts and assumptions in OCD theory:

(i) Organisations as object or agent of change?

Leonard (2013a) indicates that the way change is experienced differs depending on whether one is on the receiving (object of change) or giving (change agent) side of change. He explains

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<sup>16</sup> Where orthodoxy refers to the authorised or generally accepted theory, doctrine or practice, orthopraxy entails correct conduct both in the domains of theory and ethics. Thus orthopraxy relates to the integration of theory and ethics for correct practice (Berling, 1987).

<sup>17</sup> Please see Chapter 1.

that if you are the object of change, you might want to resist it, and if you are the change agent, designing change process and interventions might be more challenging than generally conceived.

(ii) Adaptation versus selection – do organisations really change?

Organisations recognise the need for change depending on whether they regard themselves being able to adapt or developing a rational plan that can accomplish the change and required implementation skills. This is normally done by following a process of voluntary change, or by deliberate selection which relates to a process following a rational, reactive and reflective approach contingent upon taking various factors into consideration. Such considerations lead to the organisation taking "deliberate, piecemeal, gradual changes of strategy and/or structure to achieve functional equilibrium in reaction to change in contingencies" (Demers, 2007: 7).

(iii) Top-down versus bottom-up change

Top-down approaches to change are solely mandated by the top leadership of the organisation (as in strategic management), whereas bottom-up change starts with grassroots co-operation and collaboration among local stakeholders. Planned change typically follows the top-down route in consultation with key stakeholders where strategic goals and outcomes remain in the hands of top leadership. The little research available on bottom-up change is typically associated with various action research approaches.

(iv) Methodology of inquiry: dynamic versus descriptive models

Leonard (2013a) distinguishes between models that describe co-occurring change efforts (dynamic) and models that describe organisations that have already changed (descriptive). Models that describe organisations in the process of change are referred to as dynamic models because they reflect the developing actions, reflections and conclusions in the learning process.

(v) The four basic models of change

Using Poole and Van de Ven (2004), there are, according to Leonard (2013a: 244), four lenses through which one can view organisational change:

(a) Teleological model or the purpose-driven perspective highlights the typical OD practice model following Lewinian thinking (1951) and Kolb (1984), based on "a cycle of goal-formulation, implementation, evaluation, and action- or goal-modification based upon what is learned or what is desired by the organisation or social system";

(b) Life cycle model. As the name implies, view the organisation in terms of stages of birth to death and include start-up, growth, harvest or maturity, decline, life crisis, and renewal or death;

(c) Evolution or evolutionary models following the Darwinian (1859) framework including natural variation, selection of most able or fit, and maintaining these in future generations. According to Leonard (2013a) this popular approach follows the 'best-practice' model

regarding organisational decision making and is therefore driven by the competition for scarce resources in the process;

(d) The dialectic model adopts Hegelian ideas of change where the conflict between organisations and social systems develop and produce a synthesis for an alternative model, which can, in turn, be confronted by newer approaches. Schumpeter's (1942) work in which confrontation and conflict provide the energy for inevitable change and progress to be measured in terms of survival, is associated with this view of change.

The preceding polarities point to the challenges change agents encounter in designing and implementing interventions. However, the meta-paradigmatic conceptualisations of OCD practice assume that change agents, because of dual views of the nature of change, are confronted with either-or decisions. Due to the search for a one-size-fits-all approach when change agents consider models of change, their choice does not necessarily match the contextuality of the change required. The search for an overarching universal approach has resulted in various classifications and attributes of change, and thus, organisational change practices. Maes and Van Hootegem (2011: 195–205) offer a good description of these types and attributes of change (Table 2.2):

**Table 2.2: Types and characteristics of organisational change**

Type of change	Description
Incremental change	A step-by-step change in the organisation through the accumulation of small changes with the goal of realigning the organisation's current ways of doing something without bringing about radical changes in the organisation's hierarchical structure or culture. This process is characterised by individual parts of an organisation dealing incrementally and separately with one problem and one goal at the time. The rationale relates to the refinement, specialisation, development of staff members, reinforcement of engagement and confidence, clarification of the different roles, etc. It thus focuses on individual components of the organisation, which contribute to the realisation, maintenance and congruity between the actual components and strategy.
Revolutionary change	Characterised by a new beginning that occurs suddenly without warning and involves a major shift in the internal power structure of the organisation, which includes changes in dominant coalitions. It is realised through frame-breaking change and is implemented rapidly. It is also closely linked and often equated with transformation. Revolutionary change is a process of change, whereas transformation is more related to the content of the change – a wholesale upheaval that transforms the deep structure of the organisation and a breakdown of the system into disorganised parts.
Discontinuous Change	Change that involves some degree of behavioural shift is referred to as discontinuous change. It happens occasionally in episodes in times of divergence when organisations move away from conditions of equilibrium (punctuated equilibrium). It is characterised by a combination of inertia and discontinuous change where there is alternation between long periods of stable infrastructure, which permit only incremental adaptations, and brief periods of revolutionary upheaval.
Continuous change	Characterised by a gradual adaptation of the internal logic to the changing external conditions whereby change occurs in a smooth, constant, and uninterrupted flow of events. It is embedded in organisational processes with

	<p>the rationale being closely linked to how the environment in which organisations operate is changing rapidly, radically, and unpredictably. Organisations therefore need to change constantly to remain aligned with the environment. This is achieved by loose structures with close interactions and the necessary freedom of actors to explore new prospects while adopting a large variety of experiments. The small adoptions that emerge from improvisation because of failures or successes lead to learning and links to open-ended, fluid ways of thinking, thereby being minimally exposed to specific shocks. This facilitates continuous development in new projects. This view aligns with complexity theories, which see organisations as systems that are in constant flux and change as a fundamental feature of organisations.</p>
Planned Change	<p>Characterised by conscious and deliberate actions to improve the functioning of an organisation. The rationale is linked to the notion that there is a logical and rational way to solve problems, therefore clear objectives for change can be determined and scheduled to be executed in a systematic way. It follows an iterative process of diagnosis, action, and assessment with the idea of describing how to direct and control change. It typically involves an external or internal change agent that seeks to intentionally and determinedly create conditions and situations that facilitate change when something deviates from the existing processes. This is done by change agents who initiate a series of actions or interventions by themselves or with other people with the intention of achieving a particular result.</p>
Emergent Change	<p>Characterised by continuous, dynamic and contested processes that emerge in an unpredictable and unplanned fashion. Emergent change relates to the way in which systems reveal emergent properties and therefore novel behaviour and which is not built-in, pre-specified, or predictable, but produced at any point in the system. Due to the inherent emergent properties of the system, changes arise in various forms due to a series of permanent adaptations, changes, and improvements through the process of self-organisation. Emergent change can only arise by means of action and cannot be foreseen or planned and changes to a system occur when people re-accomplish routines by dealing with contingencies, breakdowns, and other opportunities in everyday work.</p>
Transformational Change	<p>Characterised by creation of a new context, a new area of possibilities that did not exist before, thereby altering the overall pattern of organisational activity, the domains that are important to organisational survival, organisational culture, strategy, structure, power distributions, and control. The focus of this type of change is more holistic and on changing the organisation as an entity, rather than on smaller groups or departments. The processes are realised when not only the strategy and the structure change, but also the culture of the organisation. It is a radical change in behaviour, which includes a shift of paradigm, mental pattern, or other values and convictions. Transformational change affects the organisational mission and strategy because it challenges and questions both the existing way of thinking and acting and the established structures and patterns.</p>

Source: Adapted from Maes and Van Hootehem, 2013:195-208

In my opinion, this classification of types of change highlights the differences in the paradigmatic landscape regarding change agency. Incremental, revolutionary, discontinuous and planned change may be associated with modernistic interpretations of change and the notion of the rational, deterministic change agent (as in the machine model or worldview). Other types of change like continuous, emergent and transformational change, can be associated with views of change that are more fluid and where the intention is to find holistic approaches to change. Also, there is an appreciation for the emergent and adaptive nature of change.



In order to facilitate these types of change require that change agents not only have the knowledge, skills and competency but also, an alternative approach to change (new mindset) that will open up new ways of being-becoming<sup>18</sup>, or alternative change agent praxis.

A more general view of types of change is provided by Viljoen (2015) who, building on Linda Ackerman's (1997) distinctions of change put the different types of change into three categories (Table 2.3):

**Table 2.3: Types of change**

Types of change	Characteristics
Developmental	The change may either be planned or emergent; it is incremental (or first-order change). The focus of the change is for the correction of existing aspects of an organisation (such as skills or processes).
Transitional	Seeks to achieve a known, desired state that is different from the existing state. It is episodic and planned (second-order change) or radical.
Transformational	Is radical (second-order change). It requires a shift in the assumptions of the organisation and its members. The transformation may result in an organisation that differs significantly in terms of structure, processes, culture and strategy from what it was before.

Source: Adapted from Viljoen, 2015:33

Viljoen's (2015) types of change present a description of change that can assist change agents to assess what type of roles are required to fulfil change initiatives.

OCD practitioners apply an array of change philosophies, models and frameworks in their toolkit in various business realities at appropriate moments in time (Viljoen, 2015). Different transformational efforts demand different enablement or change management initiatives.

Viljoen-Terblanche (2008: 30) has documented various approaches in OCD and change practice models<sup>19</sup>. These approaches and models show the diversity of theories of change in the field. Viljoen (2015) argues that a holistic and continuous approach to organisational strategy and strategic planning is required to drive support for successful execution strategies. However, the underlying assumptions and beliefs driving culture and the execution of successful strategies are dependent upon the change in organisational culture. Therefore, understanding the theories and drivers of change requires that different levels of the organisation, group and individuals need to be explored.

Despite the ever-changing field and developing theories of change, and change efforts of organisations, the interventions have not resulted in sustainable approaches bringing about change that fosters resilience and result in alternative change agency (Moore *et al.*, 2014).

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<sup>18</sup> A detailed discussion of new ways of being-becoming or alternative change agent praxis is provided in Chapter 4.

<sup>19</sup> Please see Appendix R: Table A1.2. and Table A1.3.

The preceding overview of current controversies and debates regarding organisational change, types of change, and theories of OCD practice models highlights the need for an exploration of alternative theories of change. One pathway may be to explore different modes of change agency praxis through of process of re-imagining the role of change agents in OCD and embracing the inherent complexity in facilitating change.

Cloete and Auriacombe (2015: 80) describe the nature of Theories of Change (ToC) as: "alternative or competing sets of logical sequences of linked theoretical and practical assumptions, and explanations about the reasons why a specific intervention in society is necessary, and why such policy, programme or project should be successful (should achieve its outcomes)". Vogel (2012) explains the relevancy of a ToC by pointing to the numerous beliefs, assumptions and hypotheses regarding the way humans, organisations, political and ecosystems work. The role of ToC is to help articulate the many underlying assumptions of change in a change initiative or programme. Van Es, Guijt and Vogel (2015) describe ToC as a thinking and action approach to navigating the complexity of social change whereby one develops a way of looking at the world that fosters capabilities like critical questioning, dealing with uncertainties, and acknowledging diverse perspectives. Viewed this way, a ToC involves an ongoing process of analysis and reflection as well as an action-learning cycle. Despite a multiplicity of ToC in OCD, practitioners are not necessarily equipped to alter their default modes of being (ways of being-becoming) in order to facilitate new pathways to change that can open possibilities for alternative change agency praxis.

Currently, practitioners apply either a particular model or an eclectic mix of approaches. In addition, they do not use a uniform model or a universal approach in their interventions. Therefore, in my opinion, there is not a generic description of change agent practice which reveals more than techniques, skills and competencies in OCD practice. Thus, there is a need to explore alternative modes of being in change (re-imagined role of change agents) that open up new pathways to sustainable change interventions.

Despite the challenges, a non-uniform change agent practice poses, there are positive signs emerging in OCD. By incorporating new ideas through some of the approaches to change mentioned above (Boje & Baskin, 2011; Burnes, 2009) the field is going through a process of renewal. Many scholars are reinterpreting the work of Kurt Lewin. Therefore, OCD should rather be seen as a continuously-evolving body of theory and practice capable of incorporating and developing new ideas, perspectives, and approaches and of discarding old ones as circumstances change (Dent, 2002; Oswick, 2013).

There also seems to be a deficiency in how dominant questions and underlying assumptions underscored by current change practice imperatives are explored (Burnes, 2013). However, the field continues to lack fresh thinking that questions the underlying assumptions regarding change and its processes (Burnes, 2013). Much of the field continues to be overshadowed by practitioners who follow OCD as the planned development, improvement, and reinforcement of strategies, structures,



and processes that lead to organisational effectiveness through the system-wide application and transfer of behavioural science knowledge (Cummings & Worley, 2014). It is believed that if changes in strategy are aimed at the entire system the effectiveness and productivity of the organisation will improve since its structure and processes will be addressed (McMillan, 2008). This mechanistic approach assumes that improvement of the operational effectiveness of the organisation can be achieved through deliberate planned approaches and strategies to change (Burnes, 2005).

However, change does not happen easily, and the success of such initiatives has long been criticised due to its high failure rate, sometimes 80 percent or above (Burnes, 2005; Burnes & Jackson, 2011). What is less obvious is that management, economics and OCD gain legitimacy from theories in the natural sciences; Newtonian machine thinking leading to a plan-do-review method for management (Boulton, Allen, & Bowman, 2015), thermodynamics leading to a 'free market' approach for economists (Juarrero, 2011), and Darwin's gradualist model of evolution that created the incrementalist and punctuated equilibrium models to change (Gould, 1989; Gersick, 1991) leading to the planned change approach.

But why do these approaches fail when logic indicates it should prevail? The answer lies in the fundamental assumption of OT, and more particularly, in OCD theory and practice subscribing to the idea that a certain level of predictability and order exists. This assumption grounded in Newtonian science underlining scientific management encourages simplifications that are useful in ordered circumstances (Snowden & Boone, 2007) but become redundant in a complex globalised and rapidly changing world.

In OCD, the validity of attributing Newtonian science and atomistic-informed theories to the social world has long been questioned (Burnes & Cooke, 2012). In my opinion, the Newtonian and atomistic approaches have contributed to the failure of change approaches, the lack of depth in effecting sustainable change. It also relates to the limited insights currently available on an extended understanding of change agency and alternative ways of being in change initiatives. I believe that since the world is becoming increasingly complex, turbulent and global, we need to seek new paradigms and perspectives that can open up pathways to sustainable change interventions.

The rapid change in global economic markets, business management and community environments have reinforced the uncertainties we have to deal with (Zimmerman, 2008). One would expect practitioners and change managers to seek novel ways of thinking that would enhance their ability to adapt to challenges. I am not referring to change in response to an external challenge that threatens group survival (e.g., business environmental change), but to change affecting people's ability to improve and grow as individuals, as teams and as an organisation. As Gull (2013) argues change agents should seek the benefits of new mental models or alternative perspectives, allowing their teams to align with effective new principles beyond traditional mechanistic approaches to problem-solving. The expectation is that change leaders and practitioners will generally seek a new

understanding in working or embracing complexity and change in a more ecological, organic and interconnected manner (Letiche, Lissack, & Schultz, 2011)

Having outlined the dominant meta-paradigmatic influences in OCD models and approaches and their impact on change agents, I now turn to limitations in change agent praxis.

## **2.4 THE CHANGE AGENT: TRADITIONAL FRAMEWORKS**

The classic axiom of the Greek philosopher Heraclitus namely: "there is nothing permanent but change" holds especially true for people working with change in current organisations. Making sense of a globalised world that is undergoing radical, rapid and constant change due to the interconnected nature of societies, economies, industries, marketplaces and the environment form part of change agents' tasks (Cameron & Green, 2015).

A change agent can be described as "a person who facilitates change by intervening in groups and organisations" (Rothwell, Stavros, & Sullivan, 2015: 40). Change agents signify persons who work in a multitude of roles, positions and professions and referred to by various names such as change practitioners, change leaders, change managers, change makers, change professionals, change consultants, social entrepreneurs, change innovators, industrial psychologists, human resource professionals, and coaches.

Change agents have differing roles, responsibilities and functions at different levels of business environments. Randall (2004) pointing to Davenport (1993: 173) identifies their various undertakings and roles as (i) the advocate who proposes change, (ii) the sponsor who legitimises it, (iii) targets undergoing it, (iv) agents who implement it, and (v) the process owner – typically the most senior target.

Another view of change agents roles is presented by Block (2011: 22–27) in his popular book *Flawless Consulting*. He refers to three roles change agents typically play: (i) the expert - due to a lack of knowledge or capability the company makes use of an external expert who takes up a directive role in addressing the change required; (ii) the extra pair of hands - external help is sought to handle the lack of capacity by directing the person to take up a compliant role in taking care of the problem; (iii) collaborative role - a person that has experience and expertise and collaborates with people within the system to facilitate the process of change.

Caldwell (2003,140) using the significant roles of initiating, managing or implementing change proposes the following fourfold classification of change agents: (i) leadership – leaders or senior executives at the very top of the organisation who foresee, initiate or sponsor strategic change of a far-reaching or transformational nature, (ii) management – middle level managers and functional specialists who adapt, carry forward or build support for strategic change within business units or key functions, (iii) consultants, external or internal, operating at a strategic, operational, task or process level within an organisation, providing advice, expertise, project management, change programme coordination, or process skills in facilitating change, and (iv) teams that may operate at

a strategic, operational, task, or process level within an organisation and who may include managers, functional specialists and employees at all levels, as well as internal and external consultants. Cameron and Green (2015) argue for a possible fifth model (a meta-model) that follows a more holistic approach, where the taking up of role responsibility covers all possible stakeholders involved across the organisational system as a whole.

It is important to note that Stummer and Zuchi's (2010) research indicates that, although a variety of change roles and responsibilities are taken up by change agents, there is no common understanding of roles. The way organisations approach change largely depends on how they understand change themselves, and how they envisage change agents as a remedy to manage the required change initiative or intervention (Argyris, Putnam, & Smith, 1985; Schein & Gallos, 2006).

In general, change agents need to address organisations' need to resolve the difference between actual circumstances and the desired state (Gilley, 2001). The current understanding of the context in which this tension between the actual circumstances and the desired state is perceived assists decision-makers to form their approach in order to bridge the divide. Also, change agents are believed to be rational decision-makers who can make logical and objective assessments of the situation and context. It is also assumed that they should take a well-reasoned course of action that is explainable to others, which is free of contradictions and that could satisfy a number of preconceived qualifications or rules (Argyris, 2004; Krausz, 2004). Consequently, change is seen as a process that happens through deliberate, conscious and purposeful action (Tsoukas & Chia, 2011).

According to this general and dominant view of the rational purposeful change agent, change agency and change agent praxis have been deeply influenced by our understanding of identity — how we view ourselves. Bushe (2009) explains that change agents are advised in contemporary textbooks of OCD, that a diagnosis is required before any course of action can be taken. He argues with Marshak (2010) that the dominance of diagnostic practice with change agents is built upon four key scientific movements in understanding change:

- (i) The mechanical metaphor of the 1900s, which assumed change could be re-engineered because human organisations could be viewed in machine-like terms with deterministic ideas centring on such organisations as closed systems. When human-organisations are viewed as machines, change agents are expected to fix the broken parts of the machine or to re-engineer those parts that cannot be fixed.
- (ii) The biological metaphor starting in the 1960s assuming that people could approach, human-organisations as open systems or living beings in a move against the mechanistic approach. Diagnostic intentions remaining since change agents believed that they could prescribe the correct diagnosis for the necessary change if they could grasp all the interdependencies, processes, varying impacts and co-evolutionary results in making sense of the environment.
- (iii) The interpretive metaphor building upon ideas associated with social construction, meaning making, organisational culture and the role of language, conversation and discourse. This reinterpretation of organisations as meaning-making systems in which human organisations are actively involved in the social construction and reconstruction of their reality meant that change implied having new

conversations by re-framing and re-naming and re-authoring the linguistic use of ourselves in relation to others (Marshak, 2010).

- (iv) The complexity metaphor originating in the 1990s when scholars argued that change could no longer be generally conceived of as something that was planned, developmental, linear, and episodic (Marshak, 2010), but rather had to be seen as complex, non-linear, emergent and in flux.

Despite the prevalence of the metaphors practitioners of change in organisations persist with the diagnostic approach to change interventions in their practice and apply what Marshak (2010: 6) calls "the start-stop models of planned change: unfreeze-movement-refreeze" approach. This is a clear indication of the overriding machine view of the world in change agent practice. According to Boschetti (2011: 134) the continuation of the discourse on change agents relates to how analysis of rationality is inherited from neoclassical economics "to which agents acting rationally (that is having full knowledge of a problem and employing that knowledge to take decisions which are economically optimal for themselves) under certain circumstances can reach a configuration which is also globally optimal".

Due to continuous changes in their working environment, demanding more facilitative and educational approaches to assist the system on identifying alternative ways of practice and co-operation (Rothwell, Stavros, & Sullivan, 2015) the rationalised definition of the change agents' role and tasks are shifting. Moreover, this shift relates to how people within the system need to learn how to adjust and align to the ever-increasing rate of change (Rothwell *et al.*, 2015). For them, change agents are no longer seen as external to the system, since should this be the case, no transference of skills would be required resulting in the high rate of failed change interventions reported; over 70 percent of change initiatives fail (Burke, 2011; Cinite, Duxbury, & Higgins, 2009).

In my opinion, this high rate of failure brings to light the influence of the rationalised purposeful change agent that underlies current change agency praxis; and therefore the need to explore an alternative change agency in change interventions. *The problem concerns the fundamental assumptions actors hold when involved in change efforts and how these perceptions contribute to current change agent practice and praxis.*

## 2.5 THE PRACTICE OR PRAXIS OF CHANGE AGENTS (PRACTITIONERS)

An important distinction in understanding organisational change relates to the difference between change agent practice and praxis. *Practice* refers to "embodied, materially mediated arrays of human activity centrally organised around shared practical understanding" (Schatzki, 2002: 2), or "knowledgeable action, as embodied and materially mediated doings and sayings, as relational, as evolved in historical and social contexts and power relations, and as emergent" (Hager, Lee, & Reich, 2012b: 8). *Practice* thus refers to the everyday human activity of the practitioner (Schwandt, 2007).

*Praxis*, in turn, according to Schwandt (2007: 241), refers to a particular form of human activity that means something different from our common usage of the word practice. As a type of human engagement, praxis is embedded within a tradition of communally shared values that remain vitally

connected to people's life experience. It entails a distinct mode of practical knowledge or wisdom (*phronesis*) that is neither cognitive, nor technical in nature, but rather bound up with the kind of person that one is, and is becoming — a kind of practical-moral knowledge that derives from contemplation and reveals intention. "It demands an intellectual and moral disposition toward right living and the pursuit of the human good and hence a different form of reasoning and knowledge" (Schwandt, 2007: 242). Thus, practice refers to the practicalities such as skill, technique (the how question) while praxis entails the intention of actions as related to meaning and destiny, i.e. praxis reveals intentionality, our mode of being-becoming and the deep-seated meaning that drive our skills and technique in action (practice).

With this distinction in mind, descriptions of change agents in business settings often entail OCD practitioners who give assistance to organisations through processes and application of OCD expertise (Jones & Brazzel, 2014: 117). OCD practice signifies any or all of the following: "to do frequently or by force of habit; to use knowledge and skill in a profession or occupation; to adhere to a set of beliefs or ideals; to do repeatedly to become proficient; and to drill in order to give proficiency" (Rothwell *et al.*, 2009: 6).

The various practices of how to engage with change continue to evolve and become more complex and demanding than ever before due to the frequently transforming labour markets that shift workplace requirements (Billett, Harteis, & Gruber, 2014). Change agent practice is described according to knowledge and skills required in the light of the growing diversity of change interventions and the complexity involved.

Cummings and Worley (2014: 49) outline OCD practitioner skills and knowledge according to the foundational and core competencies required. These competencies include organisational behaviour, individual psychology, group dynamics, management and organisation theory and research methods/statistics, comparative cultural perspectives, and functional knowledge of the business. In addition, they include organisational design, organisational research, and systems dynamics, history of OCD, and theories and models of change. Finally, they outline the skills required by OCD practitioners to manage the consulting process, analysis and diagnosis, designing of appropriate interventions, facilitation, process consultation, developing client capability, and evaluating organisation change.

Cameron and Green (2015) point to various scholars' models of the change consulting processes. Broad descriptions follow more or less those relating to a process which includes: entry, contracting, diagnosing, implementing and evaluating (Lacey, 1995). An updated stage process consulting model, provided by Cummings and Worley (2009) include: entry and contracting, diagnosing organisations, diagnosing groups, collecting and analysing diagnostic information, feeding back diagnostic information, designing interventions, leading and managing change, evaluating and institutionalising OD interventions.

Cameron and Green (2015) describe the necessary skills, knowledge and behaviours applicable to OCD practice at each stage, namely: interpersonal, analytic, personal, project management. However, what is sorely missed in the foundational - core knowledge competencies and skills are the intangible aspects of being an OCD practitioner, i.e. the change agents' praxis beyond traditional knowledge and skills that reflect the quality of being human or their ways of being-becoming<sup>20</sup>.

Rothwell *et al.* (2009) explain that the effort to describe skills, knowledge and competencies required by change agents for the successful intervention in change initiatives, emphasises the need for developing the proficiency of OCD practitioners. An interesting debate regarding the development of practice in change processes revolves around the role of project managers and change managers. According to Crawford and Nahmias (2010), both project managers and change managers can be seen as people applying the competencies and skills of change agents. The challenge for change managers is to address the volume of behavioural and organisational change competencies requiring higher levels of interpersonal skills, astuteness and sensitivity, while project managers apply rational, direct and candid skills.

Apart from the differences between project managers and change managers, change agents also are challenged by what can be called the 'practice gap' (competency, knowledge and skills) in OCD interventions. Despite the well-defined and developed descriptions of OCD practitioner competencies, knowledge and skills they are required to master in the so-called 'outer arc of experience'; the practice gap remains a continuing concern. However, the unexplored terrain of the inner arc of experience of change agent praxis in initiatives may address this concern because it deals with the ways of being-becoming that represent more than just their competency, knowledge and skills<sup>21</sup> regarding practice.

This gap is highlighted by Jansson (2013), who argues that research about organisational change are mostly on topics like change processes, leadership, change execution, change reception, change discourse or paradoxes. What is missing is the role of change practices and their underlying assumptions, which are seldom questioned. Jansson's (2013: 1004) contention is that although the "change literature provides convincing explanations to the challenges practitioners face with complex change processes and proposes well justified methods to overcome them, discourse on change practices has a tone of universality over particularity", with *universality* referring to what is 'commonly applied' and *particularity* referring to what is 'locally applied'. She points to Foucault's (1988) critique of universalist (commonly applied) assumptions, discourse and practice and their implications for organisational change practice and fundamentalist positions. Building on Foucault's (1988) critique of universalist assumptions and renewed interest in Bourdieu's (1990) practice theory explaining the prominent role of discourse in practice, Jansson (2013) develops an alternative organisational

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<sup>20</sup> This is explained in more detail in Chapter 4.

<sup>21</sup> This argument is elaborated on in Chapter 4.



change practice model that highlights the importance of particularities over the universality of generic organisational change models. Jansson (2013: 1013) challenges the taken-for-granted practices in organisational change by identifying the following key assumptions: (i) organisational change practices are universal in nature, (ii) change resistance is about resisting the planned changes, and (iii) change practitioners act upon their organisational hierarchy groupings.

In my opinion, following Jansson (2013), I argue that attempts by organisational change scholars in defining and improving organisational change practice, although helpful, remain trapped in atomistic thinking since they continue to apply the idea of universal practices (the machine model) as "best practices". By following the universalist approach OCD practitioners ignore particularities and therefore (i) undermine the contextual factors, and (ii) dismiss the "rhetorics or contextually dominating discursive norms" (Jansson, 2013: 1009). Instead, generic organisational change focuses on (i) communicative reasons for change — a discourse centred change management, (ii) knowledge management — the promotion of strategy and planning drove change initiation, and (iii) consensus seeking — the promotion of striving towards consensus whilst admitting the challenges (Jansson, 2013). This boils down to the importance of realising how various particularities, granularities and contextuality in social contexts reveal the complexities of organisational change. The importance of realising the particular in social contexts point to a movement away from the universalising tendencies in organisational change theories, and the development of universalist knowledge, skills and competency frameworks for practitioners. This entails critically exploring alternatives to adhering to the machine model as evidenced in the Newtonian worldview<sup>22</sup> for successful and effective organisational change. Thus, the intention of this study is to explore alternatives that go beyond the machine model in order to reframe the way we perceive change agents and change agency in OCD interventions.

In my view, the movement to the particular suggests the development and re-imagination of the role of organisational change practitioner praxis, rather than developing idealist technical and cognitive knowledge, skills and competency frameworks. This argument is supported by research indicating that OCD change initiatives are crucial to change required in organisations (Cummings & Worley, 2014), as well as the theory-practice gap indicating the need for an entirely different kind of knowledge including new ways of thinking, being, becoming and doing. OCD practitioners play a significant role in how change and development in organisations are facilitated, yet many organisations seem incapable of transforming at the required rate of change to remain innovative (Burnes, 2013). Hence, despite OCD practitioners' change initiatives, the improvement of competency frameworks and organisational investments<sup>23</sup> (the cognitive and technical aspects) in

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<sup>22</sup> Please see Chapter 3.

<sup>23</sup> Specific practical examples of the perpetuation of OCD practice informed by utilitarian and instrumental approaches to change initiatives, improvement programmes, competency frameworks and organisational change investments can be found in the works of Gull (2013), Burnes (2013), Boje *et al.*, (2011), Jansson



programmes; endemic problems persist and organisations seem to carry on attempting to fix organisational behaviour (Rafferty, Jimmieson, & Restubog, 2013).

*This thus opens up the discussion about more than simply improving OCD practitioner practice by improving the knowledge, competency or skills (outer arc of inquiry) described earlier. Rather, I intend to point to research dealing with the quality of people's ways of being-becoming related to the inner arc of inquiry in the change initiative<sup>24</sup> and how these inner dimensions of the change agent reveal intentionality, meaning making and practical wisdom. Such a sensitivity for particularities of the complex inner-world of change agents have implications for the role of the OCD practitioner beyond change agent practices.*

As stated<sup>25</sup>, the intention of this study is to explore an alternative perspective of the change agent role by understanding current praxis, as well as revealing change agency, that is, the inner arc of inquiry of the change agent which reveals intentionality, meaning-making and practical wisdom which is connected to a mode of being and becoming in the world. This inner arc of inquiry is typically related to inner dimensions of being human and encapsulated by key concepts like identity, spirituality, worldviews, values, beliefs and lived experiential-embodied forms change agency. In this regard, identity is an important concept for understanding the change agency practice and praxis of OCD practitioners because it reveals the interconnectedness of these sources of meaning and experience (Castells, 2011).

In order to explore the underlying dimensions for the strong focus on knowledge, competency and skills in change agent practice, I next explore how traditional individual and organisational identity theory has informed dominant paradigms in change agent practice and praxis. I also present a critique of these traditional identity theories and its relation to the dilemmas as outlined above regarding the role of change agents in change initiatives.

## **2.6 TRADITIONAL UNDERSTANDINGS OF IDENTITY**

I first discuss traditional views of personal and organisational identity after which I outline current critique and challenges to these views.

### **2.6.1 Traditional Views of Identity**

The problem of identity (questions pertaining to the question “who I am?”) is relevant to change agents because of the reality of change (that which is different). Change helps one realising that things are not always the same. Change makes one question the idea that life is constant and/or static (Juarrero, 2002). Juarrero (2002) explains that we are confronted with identity questions as soon as we realise the interconnectedness of how things seem to differ from what we perceive as

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(2013), Bushe and Marshak (2009, 2015, 2016). Also see Appendix R for approaches and models to OCD which underscore this argument.

<sup>24</sup> Please see Chapter 4.

<sup>25</sup> Please see Chapter 1.

similar. The problem of identity reveals the value of realising the difference in contrast to what is the same (Cilliers, 2011a).

It is important to note how science generally has dealt with these questions. Philosophy has a long history of studying the human subject and more specifically the notion of 'identity' (or understanding the self). De Villiers-Botha and Cilliers (2010) explain that various theories attempt to describe and determine accurate descriptions of questions that we may have to ourselves and the other. They believe questions such as the following are important: Who and what am I? Who and what are human beings? Where do I end and where does the world begin? Differing positions are taken from various points of view on how to approach the human subject, questions on the self, I, human and personal identity (Schwartz, Luyckx, & Vignoles, 2011).

As a construct identity can be problematic because it can be explored through many disciplinary traditions such as psychology, sociology, history, anthropology, theology, philosophy, political science and linguistics (Bond & Seneque, 2012). Moreover,

Identity is arguably more fundamental to the conception of humanity than any other notion...Therefore, it should come as no surprise to find that the concept of identity...also is central to the conceptualisation of one of the most complex and fascinating of human creations, the work organisation (Gioia, 1998: 17).

The machine model in the Newtonian worldview and resulting atomistic thinking have imputed identity with certain intrinsic qualities. According to Juarrero (2002: 96), these are:

- Identity viewed as a "thing", the essence of which is independent of its environment and/or its history and therefore remains disaffected.
- Identity viewed as a "thing" implies that how we view the world comprises "isolated, immutable, and static things".
- Identity's defining or essential characteristics are intrinsic to any substance; therefore it can be understood fully by probing its internal relations by means of deduction.

The impact of the resulting Newtonian worldview on the traditional conceptualisation of identity was the pervading belief that identity is an objective 'thing' or a 'given' because of its substance, and therefore capable of existing independently due to its intrinsic unchanging properties (Juarrero, 2002).

De Villiers-Botha and Cilliers (2010) argue that this Enlightenment conception of identity resulted in the belief of the irreducible, rational agent, who can be thought of as fixed, continuous and indivisible. Accordingly, they argue, the assumption is that the agent can make rational assessments of any given situation, take their own needs and desires and the available options into account, and act in a well-judged manner to achieve optimal outcomes. Within this framework of the self, it is assumed that something is out of order with the agent's judgement and assessment of the situation when the actions of the agent seem to end up as less than optimal – that is, the agent not acting rationally.

Not only is this rational understanding of the agent problematic, but as De Villiers-Botha and Cilliers (2010) point out, with reference to the work of Freud (1961), there are elements, other than the 'rational self-interest driving agent' that drives people's decision making and actions. They (De Villiers-Botha & Cilliers, 2010) argue that Freud's (1973) work helped to expand the understanding of the self by indicating that it is also driven by 'irrational' factors. These include unconscious processes, desires, aggression or sexual impulses, and dreams related to people's ego states that impact on their behavioural responses. This is evident in marketing as a form of manipulation of unconscious desires, for example, people's sexual desires to purchase material goods.

The *Handbook of Identity Theory and Research* makes a case for an integrative view of identity and differentiates between various theories and research on identity by outlining the major perspectives currently under research in the field. These perspectives include views on:

- personal identity; social and group identity;
- the dynamics of identity regarding wellbeing, needs and motives;
- moral and spiritual domains of identity including spiritual identity;
- family, gender and sexual identity;
- economic and civil participative identities including organisational identity;
- ethnic and cultural identity; and
- national and continental identities (Vignoles, Schwartz, & Luyckx, 2011).

It is clear from this broad overview that while there is a multitude of perspectives on identity there is no coherent theory on identity or identities. As Vignoles *et al.* (2011) highlight certain debates that have their origins in diverse and contrasting theoretical and meta-theoretical traditions in the field remain highly contested. For them, existing identity approaches focus on one or more of three different aspects or 'levels' namely: (i) individual, (ii) relational, and (iii) collective identities. They explain that researchers typically distinguish between the different forms of identity, but may also approach identity by referring to different processes which are formed, maintained or changed with time. Apart from these identity aspects, Vignoles *et al.* (2011) note that persons also have material identities, since people associate material artefacts of their lives as part, not only of their social selves, but also of their individual selves, e.g. their house, car, clothes, or any personal belonging. Therefore, Vignoles *et al.* (2011) propose that the combination of the above-mentioned aspects of identity (individual, relational, collective), including material identities, may offer the basis for an integrated operational view of identity.

Although there is no coherent theory of identity, debates have resulted in themes that have been discussed widely, for example:

- Should a person be understood to have a singular, unitary identity or multiple identities?

- Is there overlap between the way we understand identity and self; or is there a differentiation between the construct 'self' and identity? In other words, should there be differentiation in the way the self and identity are viewed, e.g., is our self-esteem part of the larger concept of identity?
- Should identity be viewed mainly as a personal, a relational, or a collective phenomenon?
- Should identity be viewed as relatively stable, or as fluid and constantly changing?
- Should identity be viewed as discovered, personally constructed, or socially constructed?
- Should identity be researched using quantitative or qualitative methods? (Vignoles et al. (2011).

There is value in these questions since they indicate the assumptions that continue to underlie traditional identity theory and thinking. Following Cilliers (2010a), I believe these questions posed in traditional identity theory formation point to the continuation of the view that there are general principles to which apparent contingent behaviours can be reduced. The persistence of this view of deriving general principles from identity theory research remains prevalent. The need to delineate general principles manifests because it allows researchers to model essential behaviours of the system accurately, and not be sidelined by various contingencies. As Cilliers (2010a) following Bauman (1992), points out, the hope of finding such internal regularities is typical of modernist interpretations of the self and how identity is formed. He maintains that modernism, governed by this strategy and ideal, has strived to discover "universal, ahistorical and non-contingent principles which would describe complex systems accurately and thus allow for prediction and control" (Cilliers, 2010a: 3).

However, the strategy and ideals of modernism guided by these principles encounter the problem of diversity (Cilliers, 2010a). He explains that diversity not only complicates our understanding but also interferes with how we want to go about things effectively. Moreover, diversity challenges us with the unexpected, or that which just shows up; it pressures us to take into account all the variety, the various factors of things, which can be too many to assimilate. For Cilliers (2010a) seeing diversity in this way is ill-advised and raises many concerns - diversity in terms of a complexity-based understanding is not a problem to be solved, but its key ingredient lies in the co-creation of any interesting behaviour.

The traditional perspective on identity has had a major influence on how we perceive change agents, organisations, our world, and ourselves. It has permeated the theoretical building blocks of organisation theory and its application to understandings of organisational identity and thus the role of change agents in change interventions. In the face of the rapidly changing complex world, it is now clearer than ever that this way of understanding self, and thus change agency, is out-dated. Therefore, I propose that the modernist search for an integrative view and universally applicable

theory or theories on identity under-girded by the Newtonian worldview and atomistic thinking should be abandoned.

### 2.6.2 Traditional Views of Organisational Identity

The burgeoning domain of Organisational Identity theory ("who we are as an organisation"), represents a continuation of polarisation in identity theory formation. Since Albert and Whetten's (1985) seminal work on organisational identity, there has been increasing interest in and the importance of the development of the construct. This has been accompanied by a vigorous focus on collective, and in particular organisational 'selves' and their implications for theory and practice (He & Brown, 2013). Albert and Whetten (1985) originally defined conceptions on OI as those aspects of an organisation, members perceive as central, enduring, and distinctive. This perspective is called the enduring identity position after the belief that identity is stable and durable over long periods of time (Albert & Whetten, 1985) – an assumption asserting the supremacy of environmental and inertial influences and thought of as deterministic (Gioia & Thomas, 1996). However, believing that human agency and the role of choice accounts for how actors interpret and act upon change, allows for identity to be also viewed as dynamic and capable of changing over shorter durations of time (Gioia & Thomas, 1996). The assumption of this position is that it is unlikely that organisational identity can be enduring in the face of environmental challenges, but instead displays a dynamic set of processes (Gioia, 1998). The question arises as to whether these theoretical positions are a continuation of atomistic thinking in organisations.

An alternative conceptualisation views OI as relational and dynamic, formed through interactions, associations, and conversations (Hatch & Schultz, 2002):

[O]rganisational identity is not an aggregation of perceptions of an organisation resting in peoples' heads, it is a dynamic set of processes by which an organisation's self is continuously socially constructed from the interchange between internal and external definitions of the organisation offered by all organisational stakeholders. (Hatch & Schultz, 2002: 1004)

There has been a continual shift in OI understanding from a more fixed conceptualisation to a more fluid contextual point of view. Thus, the movement in academic theorising is away from stable, fragmented selves that need to be controlled and managed to a process perspective in which identity is an ongoing development and construction that has an openness to the multiplicity of narratives revealed in the process of emergence (Schultz *et al.*, 2012b). Chia's (1996) dialectic between organisational being and becoming presents a process perspective where organisational identity is considered to be ever emerging from ongoing processes of enacting "how we are becoming" rather than from defining "who we are" as an organisation. This shift in OI perspective reveals how identity construction is situated in history, time and space (Schultz *et al.*, 2012a). Accordingly, Schultz *et al.* (2012a) explains that this reveals how the various categorisations that constitute identity and their meanings are not fixed but change over time, in different contexts, and as a result of the ongoing use of language.

In light of the preceding, I argue that the fixed conceptualisation of personal identity and organisational identity have long held sway in terms of the way change agents perceived and developed their role identity in change interventions. The theories of change and action have shifted with the introduction of less fixed versions of personal and organisational identity, but have not yet successfully succeeded to transcend the whole-part description in individual identity and organisational identity. The movements toward a more multifaceted and multiple perspectival view of identity as more fluid and open to processes of emergence is welcomed. The acknowledgement of the dialectic as in the work of Chia (1996) and Schultz *et al.* (2012) breathes new life into the singular-multiple, fixed-fluidity debates as outlined by Vignoles *et al.* (2011). However, considering an alternative understanding of individual and organisational identity that bridges the divide has not been achieved. The role of the change agent and understanding of identity continue to influence the dualities contained in this Newtonian and atomistic conceptualisation.

### 2.6.3 Critique of Traditional Identity Theory

When reflecting on organisations, and how we think and enact learning, change and development in them, we need to re-evaluate our implicit assumptions about the most important aspect of any organisation theory: the theory of self or identity and its implications for change agents and their identity development. Following De Villiers-Botha and Cilliers (2010), I argue that any organisation theory under-girded by an 'idealised notion of the self' is doomed to failure because:

- (i) it continues to fall into the trap of Cartesian dualism as grounded in atomistic thinking,
- (ii) the premises of modernity hold onto a contingent belief that there is no inherent order in the world and order must, therefore, be imposed on the chaotic natural world,
- (iii) an existential view of self, rejects any universal human essence or nature because it presupposes a subject with a universal ability to determine itself and its existence, and therefore essentially is certain that the world is "out there", external to, and independent of the world "in here",
- (iv) the analytical view presents overlapping positions, which both rely on foundationalist theories of knowledge that privilege present experience — the "I" as object of direct knowledge while external objects can only be known indirectly.

This summarised critique on traditional identity theory succinctly highlights the central argument throughout the study. Based on the limitations of traditional framings, this study proposes that a provisional complexity-informed and post-reductionistic understanding of identity<sup>26</sup> could pose an alternative interpretation. I argue that the study warrants an initial exploration and reframing of identity and spirituality, which attempts to go beyond the reaches of traditional identity theory. Such a post-reductionist description of identity opens up possibilities for reinterpreting the role of the change agent in change interventions.

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<sup>26</sup> Please see Chapter 4.



Having outlined the critique to various philosophical and psychological notions of traditional identity theory, I now, present some developments that have sought to find alternative descriptions of the self or identity. Such a school of thought can be found in humanistic psychology (Schneider, Pierson, & Bugental, 2014).

#### **2.6.4 Alternative Perspectives on Identity**

In the wake of the dominant modernist discourse on identity theory and understandings of the self, the founders of humanistic psychology (Allport, 1937; Baldwin, 1916; James, 1890; Maslow, 1954; May, 1958; Mead, 1934; Rogers, 1951) had a significant influence on identity theory through reintroducing the self into conversations in psychology and its applied forms in organisational psychology. The reintroduction of the self meant that the re-interpretation allowed the self to become a foundational concept in the humanistic movement. Polkinghorne (2014: 82) explains that the founders led in an alternative view of the self that included the "inherent possibilities of human existence and of the process through which positive changes occurred in their psychotherapeutic work with clients". The founders of humanistic psychology differentiated the self from the Freudian psychoanalytic ego and similar Cartesian-like notions of the self, as a type of mental and material substance, with the sole function of input-output-like actions regarding information and its relay to initiate bodily actions to affect the environment (Polkinghorne, 2014).

The founders reconceptualised the self in the following ways:

- The self should be understood as a tendency rather than a thing (Allport, 1955).
- The self is distinguishable from understandings that people have about the self (self-concept) and the actual self (Rogers, 1951). Rogers (1959) held that people act according to their perception of reality, and not according to some absolute reality.
- This conceptual scheme of the self not only makes visible and gives meaning to experiences of self, others and the world; but also inhibits and impedes other experiences and the actual self's force or growth and actualisation of positive possibilities (Polkinghorne, 2014).
- The process of becoming aware of the division between the experienced self and the self-concept frees people to give attention to the submerged voices of their divided selves - coming to awareness of the real self or a "sense of being" (May, 1958: 43).
- The process of becoming aware of the unmediated experience of the self serves to correct a person's understanding of selfhood (Rogers, 1961). According to Rogers (1961), this reformational experience of the self-concept exemplifies the self's basic tendency to fully self-actualise the possibilities that are inherent in being human.
- The process of accurately depicting the self according to the experience and understanding of the self-concept is referred to as congruent selfhood. An inaccurate portrayal of the self-concept is referred to as being incongruent (Rogers, 1961).



- The objective of human existence is to fully actualise the potential inherent in one's humanness (Maslow, 1954). According to Maslow (1954), the process of self-actualisation presents how a person grows to the ideal. He explained that achieving this goal means to gain access to the inherent force that impels growth to full humanness, thus to allow the self-concept to become present and grow into full awareness (Maslow, 1968).
- Self-actualising meant a movement towards being authentically human – a full actualisation of the inherent potential in humans; rather than the achievement thereof (Maslow, 1968).
- By being human is meant a process on the way, a dynamic interaction of experiences of the self in terms of past, current and future which includes movements towards, or the realisation of regression of movements, to reach full potential (May 1958). May (1958) held that being human should rather not be interpreted as a static substance, but rather a process of being something or becoming.

In their description of a psychologically healthy functioning person, founders viewed the movement towards authenticity as the development of concepts about the self that could most truthfully reflect a person's tendency to actualise their human potential. That which drive people to actualise are the needs for acceptance, social conformity and the need to produce a self-concept that does not distort and hide aspects of their true selves (Schneider, Pierson, & Bugental, 2014). The founders held that concepts about the self drive people's actions and interactions. Thus, when incongruent with their real selves, they are directed according to the distortions of their self-concepts. This leads to an inability to self-actualise. However, when people are congruent with their self-concepts they are able to free themselves from distortions and allow their human potential to manifest freely. The process and movement towards self-congruence, and thus self-actualising behaviour, characterises a psychologically healthy functioning person.

The discussions on the notion of the self was disputed with the dawn of post-structuralist and postmodern perspectives that critiqued the assumptions of modernist positions. The discussions on identity and the self as framed by the founders of humanistic psychology were challenged and extended to include contemporary views of the self. Influential in the re-framing of humanistic psychology of the self was Neisser's self-knowledge (Neisser, 1988), Lakoff's philosophy of the flesh (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999), Gendlin's experiencing (Gendlin, 1962), and Ricoeur's narrative conception of the self (Ricoeur, 1984).

A re-framed contemporary view of the self in terms of humanistic psychology includes the following: The self should not be seen as a special part of a person, but rather as the whole person considered from a particular point of view (a disposition affecting the whole person). Thus, the self is the self-actualising tendency (developmental inclination), and cannot be reduced to a central core or innermost version of the self. Moreover, the experience of the self should be seen as a contribution to different forms of self-specifying information (various aspects of personality and personhood that

individuals would identify as their own). Neisser (1988) identifies aspects of self: the ecological self, the interpersonal self, the extended self, the private self, and the conceptual self. The ecological and interpersonal self are directly perceived, not mediated through conceptual frameworks; by which the remaining three types of self and its information are available only through reflective thinking about one's self (Neisser, 1988).

The self should be viewed as inherently embodied and having a tendency toward growth and maturity present in all living things (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). This is because Lakoff and Johnson (1999) locate the experience of self below the level of conscious awareness. The conceptual order that humans make is based on basic-level bodily experiences that metaphorically extend to supply structural models of higher level experiences (Polkinghorne, 2014). The movement away from the disembodied view of the self (as metaphoric computer model) where the organisation of our experiences follow the natural world order.

Additionally, to this view, humanistic psychologists argue that the experience of self is an ongoing process of speech and action whereby our interaction with life situations and bodily felt meanings shape our experience of situations (Gendlin, 1962). However, speech and action are partial expressions of the intricate multiplicity of experiencing; because experiencing has a more complex disposition than the ability of language to convey the full extent of interaction (Gendlin, 1997). The concepts and formations of language cannot fully portray the intricacies of felt meaning, because "felt meaning is not an inner representation of outside objects; instead, it consists of people's responsive interplay with the situated thickness in which they live" (Polkinghorne, 2014: 93). In this sense, the self should be seen as "complexly interwoven within a person's experiencing of the situational interactions that exist between the person and the world, others, and the self" (Polkinghorne, 2014: 93).

Moreover, a narrative conception of the self in terms of Ricoeur (1984; Ricoeur, 1992) proposes that the realm of human experience is incommensurable with descriptions of the structure and conceptual network of a language. Ricoeur (1992) explicates that the intricacies, complexity and way in which lived experience is structured do not mirror or describe the totality of meanings as present in literal meanings and structures of language. A narrative conception of the self, therefore, best describes the self as process or activity of change which is guided by the inherent self-actualising disposition and potential (Polkinghorne, 2014). This is because of a human being as activity or process of human becoming is least distorted in terms of narrative or story compared to paradigmatic concepts. Polkinghorne (2014: 94) explains that "paradigmatic concepts, which are able to present something only as an instance of a category (i.e., as an instantiation of a type or form), cannot display the self as the process it essentially is". Narrative as the production of coherent discourse of the self should be seen as a difference of type, not form (Polkinghorne, 2014). In the process of narrative configuration, the self, self-organises happenings and actions into coherent wholes by means of emplotment (Ricoeur, 1984).

According to Polkinghorne (2014), the narrative configuration of the self as described by Ricoeur (1992) moves through three stages: (i) the pre-understanding reflective view that presents the integration of our pre-linguistic felt sense of human action – a pre-narrative understanding and quality of our primordial experiences of self and other – and our prefigured experiences, whether unintentional or intentional, effects of our actions and happenings with understandings that we gain from the perspective of hindsight, (ii) the narrative composition or structuring stage presenting the integration of configuring experienced lived actions into meaningful wholes, order and a coherent narrative by means of non-linear structuring which also includes the movement to an inherent, but at the same time not yet accomplished, unified identity, in our pre-narrative existence, and (iii) the new action stage consists of novel actions that came into being from the new lived understanding of who we are as a result of the previous stage's alternative narrative composition.

New actions also relate back as it feeds back to additional components of our pre-linguistic lived experience. This circular process of narrative configuration should be seen as continual revisions of a person's life narrative (Ricoeur, 1992). For Ricoeur, the self becomes manifest in a person's actions as a person evolves his/her life stories. The narrative is integrated with the experienced inherent potential in terms of the humanistic notion of self-actualising and Ricoeur's (1992) formulation of the relational narrative configuration (Polkinghorne, 2014). Therefore, the self should thus be viewed as an embodied tendency, becoming that which is inherently intended for authentic human existence (Polkinghorne, 2014).

In exploring identity from the humanistic psychology perspective, I argue that a narrative description of the self provides a plethora of valuable insights into the lived experiences, processes and activity of identity change and inherent self-actualisation. Although these narrative descriptions can never be fully represented by means of language (Ricoeur, 1984). Additionally, exploring a narrative configuration of self in terms of Ricoeur (1984) enables the exploration and reframing process of identity as it moves through various complexly interwoven phases of a pre-narrative understanding, to initial narrative compositions and structures and alternative narrative compositions. These compositions provide new action and lived understandings of the self.

*My argument here is that one can gain important insights of what underlies change agency praxis in exploring the various understandings change agents might hold consciously or unconsciously, believe or experience about their identity, i.e. that which reveals intention, purpose, meaning and experience.* Identity informs various aspects of our self like an eco-logical self, interpersonal self, extended self, private self, and the conceptual self (Neisser 1988). Therefore, identity can inform the role of the change agent in change interventions. For example, the identity of change agents informs various aspects of the self, such as their role identity, interpersonal identity, moral identity, spiritual identity and organisational identity. The recognition of various aspects of the self or different identities does not mean the self is fragmented in terms of an atomistic notion or essentialist self which consists of a bundle of other identities.

Since it provides a basis for understanding the emergent, non-linear, contextualised, episodic and self-organising developmental nature of identity which departs from traditional descriptions of identity it is important to gain a deeper conceptualisation of the narrative self or identity (beyond atomistic descriptions). It is particularly important to explore and reframe change agency, the role of change agents and the inherent self-actualising tendencies involved in change agency praxis<sup>27</sup>, including pre-narrative, initial narrative and lived experiences of self in change interventions. Understanding, exploring and reframing identity, is important for OCD practitioners because it creates pathways for change agents to critically reflect on their self-configurations: their ways of being-becoming, their worldviews, beliefs, values, deeply felt experience and situatedness in the world in terms of the other (Boulton, 2015; Chapman, 2016). This will enable a shift in change interventions because an alternative lived experience of identity brings to awareness the underlying notions of self as embodied in change agent roles (Audouin, Preiser *et al*, 2013). Also, it reveals change agency praxis because it tells us more about intentionality, structures of belief and meaning, and lived experiences — that might be deeply ingrained or open to re-authoring of their relational narrative configurations (Woermann, 2016).

Having outlined traditional identity theory and alternative humanistic psychology views of the self, I now turn to the notion of spirituality. Spirituality is important for re-thinking the change agent because it not only reveals deeply situated systems of belief, meaning, purpose, and intentionality but also is connected to lived experience, right action and an ethos and ethics of living with change and complexity.

## **2.7 TRADITIONAL UNDERSTANDINGS OF SPIRITUALITY**

In this section, I discuss the traditional views of individual and organisational spirituality and outline current critique and challenges to these views.

### **2.7.1 Traditional Views of Spirituality**

It is inevitable in discussions on spirituality to also consider the relationship between the concepts spirituality and religion. Dent, Higgins and Wharff (2005) have argued for the development of conceptual boundaries as a necessary step for any meaningful discourse in the field of faith, religion and spirituality at work. Phipps and Benefiel (2013: 34–36) have identified several juxtapositions in scholarly work on spirituality and religion in the workplace. These juxtapositions view spirituality and religion as: (i) mutually exclusive (Cavanagh, 1999; Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003; Mitroff & Denton, 1999); (ii) overlapping (Hicks, 2003); (iii) synonymous (Mohamed, Hassan, & Wisnieski, 2001); (iv) religion as a subset of spirituality (Dent, Higgins, & Wharff, 2005; Fry, 2003); (v) a subset of religion (Hill *et al.*, 2000; Lynn, Naughton, & VanderVeen, 2009); and (vi) contextually determined (Zinnbauer

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<sup>27</sup> I explain the relevance of self-actualising tendencies and change agency praxis to spiritual identity in Chapter 4; Section 4.2 and 4.3. Again, I note that praxis is not merely practice like technical or cognitive skills but points to a mode of being that reveals the quality of intentionality, meaning and experience.

*et al.*, 1997). The juxtapositions point to the complexity of clearly distinguishing between the two concepts and finding ways to gain more clarity between the relationship of spirituality and religion. The various positions by scholars indicate valid concerns and the need for adopting an attitude of understanding and respect may well be important for future research (Phipps & Benefiel, 2013).

Gergen (2009b: 368) explains that the term religion is derived from the Latin verb *religare*, which means “to tie together, to bind fast”. An original understanding of religion relates to conveying proper piety through binding oneself to God (Grassie, 2010). Emile Durkheim (1964) defines religion as “a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden...beliefs and practices which unite in one single moral community called a church all those who adhere to them” (Allan, 2005: 112–116). For Durkheim (1964) religion is a form of custom that socialises individuals into a larger community and which provides an obligation to that individual to live by that society’s rules. A more recent interpretation of the term points to the designation in “bounded belief systems and set of practices, as in the religions of the Greeks, Romans, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Chinese, and others” (Grassie, 2010: 19). Nelson (2009: 3) provides another traditional interpretation of the term which refers to “all aspects of the human relationship to the Divine or transcendent<sup>28</sup> — that which is greater than us” and points to “the source and goal of all human life and value” (Meissner, 1987: 119). He also argues that a contemporary understanding by scholars see religion as activities and a way of life that reveal distinctive emotions, habits, practices, virtues, purposes, desires, passions and commitments with distinctive beliefs and ways of thinking recognisable through living together and a language for discussion (Nelson, 2009: 3). Thus according to Nelson (2009) religion does not only pertain to the transcendent (out there), but also to the immanent in our bodily life, experiences and practices (right action in current realities).

Given the complexity and diversity involved in descriptions of religion and the various scientific approaches to the phenomena from disciplines like philosophy, psychology, sociology, anthropology and theology; finding an all-encompassing definition that most scholars concur with remains elusive (Grassie, 2010). However, scholars argue that there are some recognisable characteristics of religion that might be useful for determining whether it pertains to “religion family resemblances” (Audi, 2000; de Muckadell, 2014). For Audi (2000: 34–35), the family of resemblances can be organised according to nine features and accordingly adherents to religion are: (i) likely to believe in supernatural being(s); (ii) distinguish sacred from profane; (iii) practise ritual; (iv) follows a divinely sanctioned moral code; (v) experience a sense of awe and mystery associated with the sacred; (vi) pray; (vii) share with other adherents a belief in their mutual significant place in the universe; (viii) a mode of life based on that belief; and (ix) a form of social organisation bound together by all the

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<sup>28</sup> The tendency to concentrate on belief in divinities excludes certain traditions such as the atheistic strands of Buddhism, Confucianism and Daoism (Zinnbauer *et al.* (1997).

preceding elements. Audi (2000) argues that when more than five of the characteristics<sup>29</sup> are present one can identify the formation as resembling religion.

It is my contention that most of the efforts to define religion has come from Judeo-Christian scholars and mainly includes Western perspectives to the exclusion of Eastern perspectives on religion (Smith, 1982). However, recently faith, religion and workplace spirituality scholars have engaged in a more integrated approach and included Eastern and Western perspectives, which have extended the discussions (Bouckaert & Zsolnai, 2011; Nandram & Borden, 2010; Zsolnai, 2011, 2014). Despite more integration, these authors remain trapped in the complexity of describing faith, religion and spirituality in terms of their definitions.

In my view, it is more beneficial to view religion on a spectrum or continuum of faith, religion and spirituality. From a certain perspective, religion might be synonymous with spirituality on the one end of the spectrum, and on the other end, it might be very distinct from each other. Philosophy of religion scholars has argued that the complexity inherent in the formation of faith, religion and spirituality from various different sources and cultural influences within contextualised worldviews make the concept of religion akin to an interpretation that can be theistic, non-theistic or atheistic.

Thus on this spectrum or continuum in any specific faith, religious or spiritual tradition, i.e. in each of the major world religions Buddhism, Christianity, Daoism, Hinduism, Islam or Judaism one can find theistic, non-theistic or atheistic understandings and interpretations, experiences and ways of living (Charlesworth, 2013; Ward, 2008). Most notably the mystics in each of the religions mentioned have taken a more nuanced approach to faith, religion and spirituality (Bauerschmidt, 2004; Cloete, 2011) and; from my point of view, the mystics in many instances convey a post-foundationalist and thus complexity-informed (Loubser, 2013) understanding of spirituality.

The historian Yuval Harari (2014a; 2016) argues that religion should not solely be understood according to traditional theistic descriptions. He defines religion as “a set of human norms and values which are based on a belief in a super-human order” (Harari, 2014b: 1). For Harari (2014b) religion is synonymous with ideology whether the super-human order is divine or not, as it serves the same historical function. According to this understanding, he argues that we can see the rise of Google and other technological developments on a mass-scale — the staunch faith in technology and that it can save humankind — as a techno-religion. Harari (2014b) explains that for example, socialism was the first techno-religion because it coupled technology with ideology on a mass-scale and created a momentous movement that spread across the globe i.e. the rise of communist nations most notably like the Soviet empire in Russia, China and North Korea. This understanding of religion resonates with van Huysteen (1999; 2006) who has argued against foundationalist<sup>30</sup> ontologies and

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<sup>29</sup> Similar characteristics have been devised by De Botton (2012).

<sup>30</sup> Foundationalist ontologies and epistemologies are centrally concerned with the discovery of ‘foundations’ of reality and knowledge by means of reliance on sensory evidence from our external world (Charlesworth (2013). Loubser (2013) explains that foundationalist or modern epistemologies have brought about positivism,



epistemologies that inform human beings and suggested a post-foundationalist understanding of religion. Furthermore, Harari (2014b) argues that various other ideologies can be viewed as religions or at least as quasi-religions like communism, liberalism, scientism and more recently the rise of dataism — as in Big Data (also known as data religion). Hicks (2003) has argued that religious beliefs still feature strongly in the lives of employees, but Woodhead, Davie and Heelas (2003) hold that there is a growing view within the sociology of religion that ‘religion’ is being supplanted by new heterogeneous forms of ‘spirituality’.

*I, therefore, argue that beyond traditional theistic descriptions of religion lie a re-interpreted understanding of the role of religion and its powerful force in shaping change agents in organisational contexts (Grassie, 2010; Hicks, 2003). My view is that, although religion plays a powerful role in shaping change agents, the intention of this study is not to explore the religious dimensions and discourse or questions relating to theistic, non-theistic or a-religious understandings. Rather, the study explores and reframes current spiritual identity praxis in order to re-imagine the role of change agents in OCD. This of course does not remove the possibility of it being informed by religious frameworks.*

As with religion, the definition of spirituality is complex, diverse and elusive. The term derives from the Latin *spiritus* and the Latin verb root *spirare* which literally means “to breathe” (Grassie, 2010). To breathe thus relates to being surrounded by a pervasive, intimate, necessary, invisible divine reality. Although this being a Western connotation, similar concepts are found in the Hindu word *prana* and the Chinese concept of *chi* — of which the concept energy is analogous. Another similarity can be found in the Jewish sacred name for God in Hebrew, *YHWH*, which might be understood as the sound of human breath — an inhalation “*YH*” and an exhalation “*WH*”. Similarly, Muslim mystics claim that the name *Al-lah* should be understood as inhalation and exhalation of breath. Thus, when speaking the word spirituality, is to affirm that “there is an all-encompassing realm, an invisible reality that somehow transcends and sustains human life, consciousness, and values, indeed the entire universe” (Grassie, 2010: 19).

A basic definition preferred by theologians and practitioners is spirituality viewed as the living reality of religion as experienced by an adherent of the tradition (Nelson, 2009). Cavanagh *et al.* (2004) explain that spirituality, firstly, involves a worldview — a perspective on the world and a place for human life within it. Secondly, spirituality assumes a path — a set of practices that nurture and express the worldview in one's life. Spirituality for them thus involves some deliberate ways to cultivate and show forth the meaning that a person or community affirms. Thirdly, they hold that spirituality includes both a worldview and a practice. Spirituality should thus not be equated with certain practices such as meditation, going to church, cultivation of silence, or retreat. Worldview

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objectivism, rationalism and fundamentalism and are most recognisable in the works of Descartes, Kant, Husserl, Carnap and Habermas.



and practice thus influence each other. This means that a worldview, whether or not intellectually sophisticated, shapes people's existence in practical ways and is intentionally manifested and nurtured through specific practices (Cavanagh *et al.*, 2004). However, there are various caveats in these definitions given above and scholars remain undecided on comprehensive definitions of spirituality, especially those that focus on one-dimensional aspect to the exclusion of the multi-dimensionality of spirituality (Grassie, 2010; Nelson, 2009).

In one of the most extensive studies on spirituality, Waaijman (2002), distinguishes between three basic forms of spirituality. The first and most recognisable form is found in the "schools of spirituality" that are represented in monasteries, mosques, temples and religious communities. These schools reveal models of spiritual life, which are mediated by rituals, texts, doctrines and various other practices. The second form, according to Waaijman (2002), is the spiritual protest movements that challenge the established order and are highly critical of prevailing culture and society — for instance, Miller (2003) has identified the workplace spirituality phenomenon as a movement. The third form of spirituality characterised by Waaijman (2002) is called lay spirituality or "primordial spirituality". In a similar vein Bouckaert (2010: 18) prefers the term "profane spirituality because it relates to the quest for meaning in everyday life, the existential meaning of being born, work, entrepreneurship, conflicts, love, care, being ill, getting old, dying etc." 'Profane spirituality' is grounded in everyday life and does not look for a sacral order outside of the ordinary, nor is it protesting against the established order. Rather, the aim of 'profane spirituality' is to inspire our day-to-day profane life (Bouckaert, 2010). The aim of the notion 'profane spirituality,' is to link spirituality, to the existential realities of everyday life. Following Bouckaert (2010), I suggest that any notion of spirituality that is not connected to the hard realities we face in society, humanity, business, organisations and the global crises today; will be meaningless and fall short of producing sustainable resources for change or transformation in current OCD practice.

As with religion, spirituality "is a broad term encompassing multiple domains of meaning that may differ among various cultural, national, and religious groups" (Nelson, 2009: 8). Another similarity to attempting to describe religion relates to the use of the term spirituality to denote:

the experiential and personal side of our relationship to the transcendent or sacred...[but it also] takes us beyond ordinary daily experience and has a transforming effect on our lives and relationships. It is not just about being and experience, it is also about doing (Nelson, 2009: 8).

Spirituality is no longer exclusively located in the domain of traditional religious discourse, and today goes beyond the traditional boundaries of religious debate whether theistic, non-theistic or atheistic (Giordan, Swatos, & William, 2011; Rollins, 2013, 2014). For Bouckaert and Zsolnai (2011: 7) spirituality also serves as a suitable platform for: (i) interreligious dialogue beyond the clash of religions and cultures; (ii) a public and vulnerable good which requires an appropriate form of public management; (iii) a profane good that does not remove the spiritual to a separate level but integrates it as a component of political, social, economic, and scientific activities; (iv) an experience-based

good that is accessible to each human being reflecting on his or her inner experiences of life; and (v) as a source of inspiration in the human and social quest for meaning. *I believe this approach has value for change agent praxis in the management of organisational spirituality in OCD.*

Building on Roof's (1999: 35) four themes that encompass spirituality, I believe a comprehensive understanding of the concept may include the following: (i) a source of values and ultimate meaning or purpose beyond the self, including a sense of mystery, self-transcendence and self-immanence; (ii) a way of understanding; (iii) inner awareness; and (iv) personal integration (Maslow, 1954; Tillich, 2011). These aspects are particularly important because they serve as "an integrative and harmonizing function that involves (a) our inner unity and (b) our relationship and connectedness with others and to a broader reality that powers our ability to be transcendent" (Nelson, 2009: 8). Thus, the fact that we are spiritual human beings is not an isolated aspect of ourselves from the nature or characteristics that we have (our identity); but is an inseparable and intertwined part of all we are and do, i.e. our spirituality and identity serve as the integrative and integrating dimensions of being human (Benner, 2012; Polkinghorne, 2014; Wilber, 2007).

### **2.7.2 Traditional Views of Organisational Spirituality**

Berger and Luckmann (1991) argue that the values and meanings of work carry over into all areas of life. For them, the classical work-private-life split is a myth. It is a schism we are keen to hold dear, to maintain a certain structure or boundary that is rooted in the duality of high modernism captured by the Cartesian matter-mind divide (Berger & Luckmann, 1991). The rationalisation that work is intrinsically meant for material gain has reduced the meaning of work to its most simplistic understanding and premises (Tsoukas, 2016).

A re-conceptualisation of spirituality means that we need to acknowledge that work is integrally connected (continually in relation) to our key values, beliefs or assumptions about the realities of life and how we enact it (Geertz, 1988). We find work meaningful when we connect our deeply held values, meanings and concepts of self/selves to what we do in the workplace (Rosso, Dekas, & Wrzesniewski, 2010). It is in this inter-relation of who I am to what I do, that we find some framework for making sense and making meaning of interconnection in the broader framework of that which makes us feel: (i) we belong (to something greater than our self/selves); (ii) we feel it makes a great deal of sense (it has deep value to all that stands in relation); and (iii) that it reflects a sense of who we are (it reveals this is me or we – our identity/ies) (De Villiers-Botha & Cilliers, 2010).

Case, Hopfl, and Letiche (2012) argue that for work to be effectively realised requires behaviour that is congruent with shared patterns of belief. They describe beliefs as shared values, assumptions and commitments, which need to be assumed for collective action in the workplace to be (reasonably) successful. Although the reality and importance of religious beliefs in the workplace cannot be denied, various new spiritualities and hybrids of traditional religious affiliation are emerging and finding expression in the workplace (Casey, 2004; Heelas, 2009). Indeed, there has been

exponential growth and interest in faith, religion and spirituality in the workplace (Neal, 2013; Tischler, 1999).

The growing interest in workplace spirituality is also due to subjective factors in organisational settings, such as individuals' quest for higher purpose, personal meaning and transcendent values (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2010). It also includes the desire of people to integrate their personal life values with their professional lives; e.g. an increasing number of people are finding that their pursuit of material acquisitions leaves them unfulfilled (Cavanagh *et al.*, 2004). Case *et al.* (2012) argue that scholars should remember that the study of belief systems and the role of faith in the workplace have a long history and cannot be disconnected from the current focus on spirituality or spiritualities in the workplace.

The study of spirituality in the workplace is of course not new. The earliest forms of collective work as organisations can be seen in religious institutions and later in its influence on government (De Blot, 2006). We stand on the shoulders of giants when we engage with the study of beliefs in organisations. In fact, it was foundational to the social theorising of Max Weber, Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim and Sigmund Freud – the architects of modern social science research. Even with Adam Smith, we seem to forget that he first wrote *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* before *The Wealth of Nations*. In *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, he explicates his beliefs and values in terms of his view on moral philosophy and appropriates it to the religious context of the day. Thus, the founding fathers of social and organisational scientific research have been concerned with this topic for centuries.

My idea is to connect the lineage of thinking and how it continues to affect our spirituality in terms of OCD interventions. Case *et al.* (2012) aptly explains that the problem with much of the contemporary literature on religion and spirituality in the workplace is the narrow utilitarian and instrumental intent it is concerned with, thereby directly commodifying the notions of religion and spirituality. I suggest that OCD practitioners must reflect on all the current realities of business and society with careful attention so that they can develop a new form of consciousness that is reflected in the quality of their spiritualities of life and work (Sheep, 2006). This is a precondition if we are to develop a mature, resilient and wise attitude that can help us to search for other ways – different pathways from the ones we currently tread in OCD initiatives (Cavanagh & Bandsuch, 2002). If spirituality fails to disclose its unique qualities to OCD practitioners, the changes in organisations will remain fixed on mere impersonal and instrumental concerns of productivity and efficiency (Case, Hopfl, & Letiche, 2012).

Spirituality has not traditionally been included in historical models of management, organisational change and development. The myth of rationality in the historical models of management has assumed that the well-run organisation eliminated feelings. From the late nineteenth century during the rise of scientific management until very recently, the protocol of the world of work was to keep a damper on emotions as driven by the mechanistic model of the industrial revolution (Sundstrom, De Meuse, & Futrell, 1990). Concern about employee's inner life likewise had no role in the perfectly

rational model (Witzel & Warner, 2015). Just as we have now come to realise that the study of emotions improves our understanding of organisational behaviour (Goleman, 2006), an awareness of spirituality can help us to better understand employee behaviour in the twenty-first century (Robbins, Campbell, & Judge, 2010).

Working people have always had inner lives. So why has the search for meaning and purposefulness recently surfaced in organisations? (Nandram & Borden, 2010). Nandram and Borden (2010) argue that humankind suffers more and more because of the increase in the complexity and pace of modern life and, as a result, is being cut off from what is essential and meaningful to them. Contemporary lifestyles – single-parent families, geographic mobility, the temporary nature of jobs, new technologies that create distance between people – highlight the lack of community that many people experience and increase the need for involvement and connection (Neal, 2013).

Job demands have made the workplace dominant in many people's lives, yet they continue to question the meaning of work (Okonkwo, 2012). Wilber (2007) points to the beginning of a major reintegration of the outer and inner life in the past ten years. One of the last bastions of this integration is in the workplace. There is increasing evidence, however, that something significant is happening in organisations (Bell, Cullen, & Taylor, 2012; Mitroff & Denton, 1999).

Formalised religion has not worked for many people, and they continue to look for anchors to replace the lack of faith and to fill the growing feelings of emptiness (Lynn, Naughton, & VanderVeen, 2011). Several social scientists claim that the rise of the culture of contemporary spirituality is a pivotal part of the gradual but profound change taking place in the Western worldview, both reflecting the larger cultural development, as well as giving shape and direction to it (Miller & Ewest, 2013). There is a demand for more inclusive and collaborative models of value creation that produce meaning as much as profits in business (Zohar & Marshall, 2004). Leading organisational scholars argue that business will have to move beyond conventional concepts of corporate social responsibility and address the more fundamental questions at stake at the heart of the enterprise (Case, Hopfl, & Letiche, 2012; Porter & Kramer, 2011).

At the grassroots level, organisational practitioners need practical guidance to help them (i) to decide whether they should consider the spiritual needs of their employees, and (ii) if they do, to decide how to go about doing this (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2010).

Despite an urgency and awareness of the possible contribution of the spiritual dimension to business, key decision makers have struggled to offer assistance to their organisations in practical, meaningful ways (Tsoukas, 2016). They are often overwhelmed by the continual decay in societal values on the one hand and, on the other hand, the continual demand to perform and improve all levels of business (Biberman & Tischler, 2008).

*In my view, the spiritual question in an organisational context is whether our belief systems, deeply felt experience and right action can be connected to existential realities in the workplace in a*

*meaningful way. It also probes into the question of whether such an understanding of spirituality aligns to a complex understanding of identity. Exploring congruency between identity and spirituality would create the necessary alternative framing that promotes human dignity and the common good, i.e. alternative change agent praxis.*

Eisler and Montuori (2003) present two opposing views of presenting and applying spirituality. They explain spirituality in terms of “a partnership or dominator model of beliefs, structures, and relationships” (Eisler & Montuori, 2003: 46). For them, in the dominator view, spirituality is disconnected from daily life and therefore enables people to disengage from the happenstances of life. This model of spirituality may assist individuals to “cope with the chronic injustices and miseries that are inherent in a dominator model of relations, thereby reinforcing the beliefs, structures and relationships of dominance driven by fear, and the maintenance of inflicting pain on others” (Eisler & Montuori, 2003: 46). However, the dominator model does not bring about fundamental change. Rather than the continuation of the dominator model of spirituality, Eisler and Montuori (2003) suggest a model of spirituality that is appropriate to the realities of daily life. They refer to this as the partnership model because the emphasis is not so much on the transcendent, but also on the immanent, thereby enabling a spirituality<sup>31</sup> that informs the realities of life with compassion and empathy. I, therefore, argue that the partnership model or relational and participatory approaches to the understanding of organisational spirituality are a viable pathway for further development of spiritually informed approaches to OCD.

### **2.7.3 Traditional Views of Spiritual Identity in Organisations**

Researchers, as well as practitioners, have demonstrated a considerable interest in identity development, and positive personal identities have been associated with numerous positive mental health outcomes (Cameron, Quinn, & Dutton, 2003). However, major theories of identity development have neglected the salience of spiritual identity, even though the early work of William James placed this as a central component of personality (James, 1890). Poll and Smith (2003) review four major theories of identity development (cognitive, psychodynamic, systems, and narrative). They suggest spiritual identity parallels to these theories from which they present a tentative model of spiritual identity development and outline its implications for therapy. They state: “Although our analysis may provide useful insights into the construct of spiritual identity, this work represents a tentative conceptualization of spiritual identity that should be studied directly” and continue with “additional work might include an initial series of studies employing qualitative methods” (2003: 140).

Another study on spiritual identity identified an emerging central theme: identity is a struggle and not a given, and multiple perspectives of self in the development of identity is experienced as a positive

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<sup>31</sup> Also, see the works of John Heron (1998, 2006) that build an advanced model of spirituality called participatory spirituality.

embodied value (McPhillips, Mudge, & Johnston, 2007). In a psychosocial exploration of spiritual identity, Kiesling *et al.* (2006) analyse and rate the role-related spiritual identity dimensions of role salience and flexibility. They categorise individuals as spiritually foreclosed, achieved, or in moratorium based on their motivational, affective, self-evaluative, and behavioural investments in spiritually defined roles and their reflectiveness about and behavioural changes in role-related spiritual identity. They indicate similarities and differences within and between spiritual identity status groups and suggest a variety of ways that spiritual identity provides a sense of continuity, as well as a domain for adult developmental change.

Kiesling and Sorell (2009) explain that identity theorists have often assessed spiritual identity as one of many components of a person's ego identity from the assumption that spirituality structures the self and promotes outcomes consonant with other domains of identity. In their article, they explore the mechanisms of spiritual identity development and summarise that "The investigation suggests that the motivations for developing a spiritual sense of self are legion – inclusive of and yet potentially more comprehensive and integrating than exploration and commitment in other domains" (Kiesling & Sorell, 2009: 269). They suggest that, rather than being critical in the investigation of spiritual identity, it helps to distinguish the mechanisms and contexts that promote, and that prohibit, various patterns of spiritual identity formation. Kreiner and Sheep (2009) argue that spiritual identity is the first work tactic in the life process of identity development at work. They explain that spiritual identity in the context of the workplace can play a pivotal role in enabling an individual to link the workplace to his or her broader identity growth goals and opportunities.

What is clear from the approaches to spiritual identity, outlined above, is that spiritual identity is a component or subset of spirituality, and thereby reduced to a category that can be studied directly in terms of the atomistic thinking and the Newtonian worldview. I have indicated the importance of studying spiritual identity from an alternative perspective, but the major challenge remains to determine from which perspective the concept is being approached. Therefore, it is imperative to understand the ontological and epistemological departure points and assumptions, which underlie the study of spiritual identity. When one takes into account traditional approaches, which reduce spirituality to a subset of identity or vice versa as in atomistic thinking, it broadens insight into spiritual identity. In addition, this opens a re-thinking of spiritual identity with has implications for change agents. *Therefore, I do not look at spiritual identity as a certain domain or separate aspect of self that should be studied directly in terms of atomistic descriptions or a fragmented version of identity. Rather I explore the inherent relationality and intertwined dynamics from an alternative perspective.*

## **2.8 LIMITATIONS OF CURRENT UNDERSTANDING OF THE CHANGE AGENT**

Beneath the seeming stability of our organised social life lies the restless uncertainty and unpredictability of change. The world is not in homeostasis and neither are organisations (Tsoukas, 2016). Therefore, our best thought-out plans are often thwarted or often fail because organisation and change intrinsically are opposing and not complementary forces (Tsoukas & Chia, 2011).



Change is invariable, unpredictable, disorganised and makes one feel vulnerable; where "through organisation, we come to acquire our structure of relations, individual identities, codes of behaviour, habits of thought, social preferences, and our ideals and aspirations" (Chia, 2005: 132). I believe change agents are ill-equipped to deal with this dual dance of structure and fluidity inherent in organisations as exemplified by traditional OT. A new way of thinking that can encapsulate a multitude of perspective and propel alternative ways of being is imperative for new OT to evolve. For Chia (2005: 132), "what is significantly overlooked in much of conventional OT, therefore, is a rigorous and critical reflection on the underlying social, cultural, and historical forces shaping the way we see, think, and act within the institutionalised and organised structures of the modern world." In the study, I, therefore, argue that the practitioners of change need to re-think theories of change and action that impact on their change agency praxis and the various roles they facilitate in OCD initiatives, which can inform this restricted and restrictive view of OT as a socio-economic-administrative discipline.

Having outlined the limitations of traditional OT, I next present the limitations of OCD change agent practice and praxis.

### **2.8.1 Change Agent Practice and Praxis**

Senge (1990: 89), in his influential book *The fifth discipline*, argues "A new understanding of organisational change has emerged. It is not top-down or bottom-up, but participative at all levels – aligned through a common understanding of a system". Current views on the role of change agents in organisational change have not fully realised a systems understanding. The complexity of problems and the need to develop change agents to cope with the demands of rapid change require practitioners of change to (i) let go of their routines of creating surety and comfort for the participants in change; (ii) let go of their tight prescriptions of planned change approaches with specific targets in mind; and (iii) demand new configurations of practices which require expertise of an alternative quality of relations to the system (Edwards, 2010).

I argue that the key roles that change agents traditionally fulfil in OCD are built upon the Newtonian conception of individuals with personal capacities, intentionality and rationalist agency (Caldwell, 2006). Edwards (2010), who describes the relational turn in expertise as a key development in theory formation, argues for an alternative conception of practitioner practice. This view of human action and development arises through negotiations between the personal and social worlds and resists fixed or reducible forms of description that diminishes the quality or strength of relations knowing (Edwards, 2010). For Edwards (2010), a rationalist view of agency is limiting as it does not take into account the relational nature of expertise as a social construction of relations between practice and the practitioner.

Therefore, I propose that change practitioners that continue to approach change as an irregular form of intervention that requires adjustment towards equilibrium will perpetuate the statistics that show



change interventions as mostly ineffective. Change should no longer be viewed as static or entirely fluid, rather it is best revealed in complex dynamics. Therefore change agents need to re-think not only their competency, knowledge and skills but especially their modes of being-becoming (drivers of change) that reveal their theories of change and theories of action (practitioner practice and praxis). An entire critical exploration is required from an alternative perspective that can more accurately portray the reality of change and the non-dual ways of thinking about change. Change agents also need to change their ways of thinking, being and doing. This is because the rationalist model of change agency developed and applied in modern OT and OCD permeates current change agent praxis. More knowledge, competency frameworks and skills analysis are not required. What I argue for is a re-thinking of the incommensurable or intangible dimensions of human agency in change agency praxis, i.e. our ways of being-becoming that will possibly give insights into alternative pathways for modes of being that can open up the theory-practice divide and connect, integrate re-purpose and finally re-imagine the change agent and their roles in change interventions.

In order to actualise practitioner change, practitioners need to acquire new ways of thinking, being and doing that Edgar Schein has called "helping" (Schein, 1999). Vesso (2015) argues that change practitioners first need to change themselves before they can help their teams to cope with change. In other words, an exploration into whether practitioners embody the change they want to see in their clients. *This study is interested in the qualities that are more than just cognitive knowledge, technical skills or certain competencies. Although these capacities are important aspects that can equip change agents in change interventions I would like to explore other uncharted territories that might also be central to change processes. In my opinion, these qualities are best represented in our ways of being-becoming — which are not reducible to mere knowledge, skills or competencies. These modes of being-becoming relate to the praxis of the change agent.*

The high rate of failure of organisational change initiatives and the continued focus on building capacity to counter these failures by improving OCD knowledge, skills and competencies place the spotlight on the limitations of current theories, models and practices that inform the change agent as a practitioner. Reducing the improvement of the praxis of change agents to improvements in their practice is misleading because ways of being-becoming that reveal intentionality and a mode of being is more than just our ways of doing. The current failures in theory and practice call for a re-imagination of the role of the change agent away from the idea as a rational, decisive and deterministic executor of top-down change. The role of the change agent in organisational change requires a re-interpretation of how OCD change practitioners obtain insight into their own mental models, metaphors and the methods they use and apply consciously or unconsciously. Current approaches that try to develop competency, knowledge and skills frameworks assume that practitioners when they master these frameworks, will have the necessary attitude and aptitude to deal with complex and dynamic change. I believe this is a limiting perspective, in that change agency should not only be reduced to cognitive, technical or other instrumental objectives. The role of the

change agent does not only include deterministic efforts to affect change by means of the correct theory of change, tools and skills. My concern is that competency, knowledge and skills frameworks will not necessarily improve change agent praxis beyond technical and cognitive frameworks, as they do not deal with the underlying assumption of the rational, decisive and deterministic executor of top-down change.

Therefore, I believe that in order to explore and reframe the role of the change agent, OCD requires a departure from the Newtonian worldview and atomistic assumptions that dis-joints and fragments the relations between interconnected wholes and parts (Morin, 2008). Thus, the competency, knowledge and skills of OCD practitioners should not be reduced to the ultimate criteria for interpreting the efficiency of change agency. Modes of being embodying theories of change and change agency praxis that reveal the multi-dimensional qualities of identity and spirituality should rather be included. Also, a re-conceptualisation of OCD practitioner identity and how it relates to spirituality regarding change practices, change praxis and ability to perceive and act on various forms of change (Nayak & Chia, 2011), is required.

Although many of the re-framed notions of the self (in terms of humanistic psychology) have allowed for an alternative discourse on identity theory and its developments, major challenges remain. The challenge of developing an all-encompassing view of identity that captures all the intricacies of the self in terms of modernistic and/or post-modernistic theoretical discourses is found in the problem of complexity. A complexity perspective does not propose solutions but presents the fundamental problem of reality, in particular as it concerns identity (Cilliers & Preiser, 2016; Morin, 2008). The implication for formation of theory in terms of traditional theories of change and change agency has often forced change agents and researchers to only focus on one level of the change process: individual or organisational – the consequence of Cartesian dualism. The various approaches to identity theory remain within the confines of atomistic descriptions of the self and therefore warrant an alternative description of identity (Chapman, 2016).

The limitations of current attempts to define spirituality have had an impact on growing the body of knowledge regarding spiritual identity praxis. Similarly, the literature on organisational spirituality and spiritual identity have debated the issue of measurement in detail (Phipps & Benefiel, 2013). In my view, this is due to foundationalist understandings of the concepts and atomistic assumptions of reality, knowledge and practice. The major impact of foundationalist approaches to spirituality has resulted in instrumental and utilitarian practices of spirituality and spiritual identity praxis in organisations. Therefore, I next, first, discuss the need to go beyond definitions in organisational spirituality. Second, I argue for a movement beyond the measurement of any form of spirituality. Finally, I describe the limitations of instrumental and utilitarian approaches to spirituality and the need to go beyond such interpretations to a more authentic and post-foundationalist approach to spirituality and spiritual identity praxis.

## 2.8.2 Beyond Definitions

A question that has deserved much attention thus far in the study of organisational spirituality<sup>32</sup> centres on its definition and measurement. Benefiel (2003b: 367) presents the burning questions in the field as follows: (i) How should spirituality be defined? (ii) How should spirituality in organisations be defined? (iii) What research methods are most appropriate for this work – quantitative, qualitative, or a combination of the two? (iv) Is it appropriate to measure spirituality in quantifiable units? (v) Are new research methods needed, methods outside the boundaries of mainstream management scholarship?

The literature answering Benefiel (2003b) has not been able to offer extensive and definite answers. Markow and Klenke (2005), for example, determined that there are more than 70 definitions of spirituality at work. There are indeed many possible ways to define such a complex and diverse term as spirituality at work. In a discussion on definitions of organisational spirituality, Hicks (2003) identifies eight broad themes to workplace spirituality definitions, ranging from those centred around core moral values to those that produce various states of self-consciousness or connection. Giacalone and Jurkiewicz (2010) offer a ten-dimensional typology of the definitions found in workplace spirituality literature. They (2010: 13) define organisational spirituality as:

...aspects of the workplace – either in the individual, the group, or the organisation that promote individual feelings of satisfaction through transcendence...the process of work that facilitate employee's sense of being connected to a nonphysical force beyond themselves that provides feelings of completeness and joy.

Cavanagh *et al.* (2004) explain that within the ambiguity of spirituality, the root, 'spirit', refers not only to the relation with the Sacred or Transcendent but also to the human capacity to transcend immediate circumstances and search for meaning in life. They argue "to be spiritual is to exercise this capacity and affirm some over-all meaning, whether it includes belief in the transcendent reality or not. Spirituality is then the deliberate endeavour to live out this meaning in one's existence" (Cavanagh *et al.*, 2004: 119).

In other words, it uncovers the manner in which we find meaning (belief and experience of the transcendent) and deliberately attempts to reveal an over-arching meaning within the happenstances of life. The intentional endeavour to live out an over-all meaning can be conceptualised as a spirituality that is connected to a specific worldview and a specific path in which such a worldview is actualised (Cavanagh *et al.*, 2004). This is a helpful assertion in the study of spirituality in that when we speak of 'a spirituality', we must realise there is no such thing as a generic spirituality. Although there might be some common factors to all spiritualities, they can only be very general and abstract (Heelas, 2009). As such, the claim that spiritualities include a worldview and a

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<sup>32</sup> Also commonly referred to as workplace spirituality by Giacalone and Jurkiewicz (2010) or business spirituality by Nandram and Borden (2010).

path says nothing about either the worldview or the path. Spirituality is not generalisable or an all-encompassing concept.

It is perhaps inevitable that the construct of workplace spirituality remains an abstraction because "any one of these terms or clusters of terms is philosophically and theologically complicated and contested" (Hicks, 2003: 55). Neal (2013) explains that the different understandings of spirituality at work contained in the research to date were produced because the contributors approached the discipline from distinct paradigms. Furthermore, the inherent ambiguity in defining the term spirituality is simply compounded when it is manifested in the workplace. The discourse of spirituality and the discourse of organisational science simply use languages that are foreign to the other; the latter requires definition and measurement whereas the former sees such techniques as trivialising. Thus, there is not a widely accepted definition of the discipline within the domain of organisational spirituality (Ashforth & Pratt, 2003; Neal, 2013). This, to some extent, can be accountable for the phenomenon of organisational spirituality. The vastness of the field is underlined in that both scholars and practitioners with different cultural and theoretical backgrounds representing various disciplines and theoretical approaches engage in the widespread discussion on workplace spirituality (Gotsis & Kortezi, 2008).

### **2.8.2 Beyond Measurement**

Another widely discussed topic in the literature on organisational spirituality is concerned with the role of spiritual intelligence. In a broadened approach to human well-being, Zohar and Marshall's (2000) popular work on spiritual intelligence has integrated and extended the role of cognitive intelligence and emotional intelligence in organisations to include spiritual intelligence. From this view, spiritual intelligence is seen to be an advanced stage or level of personal development (Wigglesworth, 2006). However, Smith and Rayment (2007: 222) wonder "whether it is ever possible to establish concrete evidence when considering something as complex and intangible as spirit". As Benefiel (2003b: 384) argues:

[I]f spirituality is ultimately about non-materialistic concerns, is it appropriate to focus on the material gains to be reaped by integrating spirituality into organisational life? Is not in this way spirituality divested of its deeper essence? Is not it trivialised? Is not it just treated as a means to attain organisational profit and not as an end in itself? Is not the real meaning of spirituality lost?

The notion of spiritual intelligence likens to reductionistic explanations that seek to find the core or essence of the human spirit by dissecting the dimensions into parts that can explain spirituality. Draper (2011: 11), for instance, explains: "spiritual intelligence is for all of us because it forms part of our total intelligence, our whole being". The dominant Newtonian worldview and atomistic thinking in the literature on spirituality are clear in the way the description depicts the whole of being human in different parts (e.g. spiritual, emotional, and cognitive). This tendency is highlighted by how research was done in the field is predominantly approached by means of quantitative research

methodologies that attempt to measure spirituality and describe its role in organisational efficiency (Kinjerski & Skrypnek, 2004; Kinjerski & Skrypnek, 2006). Lund Dean, Forniciari and McGee (2003) argue that research methods need to move beyond simply positivistic or post-positivistic methodologies and rather integrate newer scientific paradigms that include the greater use of qualitative methods in the study of workplace spirituality.

### **2.8.2 Beyond Instrumentality and Utilitarianism**

In a critical assessment of organisational spirituality, Driscoll and Wiebe (2007) argue that, for the most part, mainstream academic scholarship has overlooked alternative narratives and critical perspectives in the area of workplace spirituality. Some scholars, however, have criticised a results-oriented and technical approach to workplace spirituality (Bell & Taylor, 2004).

According to Ellul, Wilkinson, & Merton (1964), what purports to humanise under the positivist technical imperative, in many instances actually dehumanises. This is not intentional, but rather in response to a society that is ruled by technique. Human relations are, therefore, "restricted to the technical demands of their vocational roles" (1964: 354). In other words, people are first seen as objects used to serve the end of increased productivity. "Man is doubtless made more compatible by techniques of human relations, but these techniques are wholly oriented toward compelling man to submit to forced labour" (Ellul, Wilkinson, & Merton, 1964: 354).

The evidence of technique infiltrating the domain of organisational spirituality is quite obvious in popular spirituality and business literature and practice. Take, for example, the work by Patricia Aburdene titled *Megatrends 2010: The rise of conscious capitalism* (2005). The following excerpts exemplify a technical approach to spirituality in business: "Why wouldn't business, which is ever the patron saint of the practical, embrace any technique – mundane, spiritual or Martian – that generates results?" (2005: 117) and "Spirit will drive performance and shareholder value" (2005: 193). Other evidence of the technical imperative in this domain is found in the development of concepts such as spiritual quotient, spiritual intelligence, spiritual capital, soul branding (Draper, 2011; Zohar & Marshall, 2004).

Instrumental and superficial spirituality is reductionistic in that it sees human beings as instrumental ends; "human resources or capital" to be managed to improve productivity (Cunningham, 2003) – for instance, some critical scholars see organisational spirituality as an ideological attempt to capture the power of religion for the purposes of supporting capitalist interests (Bell, 2008). The instrumental or technical approach to spirituality sees human beings as productive units first and spiritual beings second, or, as Ellul suggested, technique is the end rather than the means (Ellul, Wilkinson, & Merton, 1964)

According to Bouckaert (2010), spirituality without a communal aspect is disconnected from the idea of social change, and most religions would critique the idea of spirituality being seen primarily as an instrumental good. Material gain, which drives the pursuit of individualistic success in this world, is

irreconcilable with spiritual gain, which represents a loss of goods and ultimately of the egoic-self (Bouckaert, 2010). The corporate demand for subordinating creativity, insight, energy, and relationships to the profit bottom line conflicts with the spiritual demand to release creativity, insight, energy, and relationships in service to humanity and the divine (Bouckaert & Zsolnai, 2012).

The idea, concept, or theory of managing people in ways that build and sustain values and their spirit may seem to be just good common sense. However, when this idea or intention is confronted with what is actually going on in many workplaces and interacts with conventional wisdom about management practices, there are enormous discontinuities between reality and what is desirable (Pfeffer, 2010).

There is a fundamental contradiction between the purpose of authentic spirituality and the purpose of technical spirituality (Driscoll & Wiebe, 2007). Issues such as distributive justice and ecological sustainability are not seen as primary to the technical spiritualist, so there is no need to emphasise concerns about the moral structures of politics or economy. How much of the current workplace spirituality movement is being driven by technicism and scientism? Should search for meaning in life be linked to organisational productivity? Spirituality is not a technique that an organisation must learn, but rather involves a fundamentally different approach to management, change and developmental purpose for an organisation.

Driscoll and Wiebe (2007) explain that authentic spirituality in the workplace has to fundamentally question accepted models of economic growth as the relationships between current global economic structures and systems and issues of environmental degradation and work-life imbalance become more obvious. They argue authentic spirituality at work may mean accepting lower profits in some instances because of integrating spiritual values into the workplace. Authentic spirituality at work involves making the world a better place and not just one's workplace a better place to work, and definitely not just soothing workers' psyches. It transforms organisations rather than simply using spirituality as an instrumental and superficial tool to increase productivity. Authentic spirituality in business rather means that profit is not a purpose but a goal of corporations and tough questions have to be tackled; for example, who does this business really benefit – shareholders, other stakeholders, people in developing countries, the world's ecology, future generations, etc.?

Zhuravleva and Jones (2006) hold that there is promise in the idea of integrating spirituality, work, and learning, but only when spiritual development becomes an end in itself and the process of spiritual development is not results-oriented in the workplace. Although there are examples of authentic spirituality in business today, one cannot be convinced that the corporate behemoth has changed its colours.

Rothwell and Sullivan (2005) argue that the human spirit has increasingly become the focus of OCD as it connects the hearts and minds of employees with something of energising and redeeming value in their work experience. In this regard spirituality in the workplace has to awaken to this call and



realise there is no single point of departure that is common to all these answers (Benefiel, 2003a). Rather, the meaning and role of organisational spirituality should be directed at a new mode of living and of acting, by a new perception of reality and a new experience of being and becoming. Such an endeavour should emerge from a collective and participatory path. This new paradigm that is emerging is characterised by re-connection, re-enchantment and re-imagination with being human in an embodiment of nature and points to compassion (Boff, 2008). That is why the exploration of spiritual identity praxis is important for contributing new frameworks to re-thinking the change agent in OCD.

## **2.9 SUMMARY**

In this chapter, I synthesised the literature on Organisation Theory that relates to the underlying atomistic assumptions and foundations that have contributed to the dominant understanding of the rational, purposeful, and deterministic change agent. I linked the dominant disciplinary discourse of traditional OT with current OCD approaches and how they influence Theories of Change (ToC), models of practice, and change agency praxis. I distinguished between OCD practices and change praxis. I emphasised that in this study change praxis is more than just technical or cognitive skills or competency, but point to intentionality, practical wisdom and alternative modes of being. Current models of OCD practice and ToC are dominated by atomistic assertions and assumptions. The shortcomings of these frameworks regarding change agents and their interrelated effect on the practice of practitioners are limiting. Therefore, the role of the change agents requires a critical re-think that will enable the cultivation of resilient and sustainable alternative forms of change praxis beyond cognitive knowledge, technical skills and competencies. This implies an extended understanding of change agency that in turn fosters organisational communities of change, which are more adaptive, open and responsive to the complexity in change initiatives.

I introduced the notion of identity for exploring change agents' inner arc of experience because it reveals important insights regarding the dynamics underlying change agency praxis. The traditional understanding of identity as applied to change agents in OCD is informed from an atomistic perspective, which is reductive and limits understandings to binaries, such as being either fixed or fluid. Therefore, the notion of identity requires an alternative description to explore change agent praxis. Alternative perspectives, such as the narrative view of the self is concerned with non-instrumental and non-essentialist descriptions that make way for narrative configurations of identity. I argued for the necessary exploration and re-framing of post-reductionist understandings of identity because it would create pathways for change agents to critically reflect on their ways of being-becoming.

Finally, in order to re-think the change agent, I introduced the notion of spirituality. In order to unearth the value of spirituality for informing change agency, I argued for a post-foundationalist understanding of spirituality, which seeks to go beyond the current foundationalist and atomistic preoccupation with definition, measurement, instrumentalism and utilitarianism. I argued that such a



re-thinking of spirituality would entail a re-imagination of the change agent beyond current concerns with competency, knowledge and skills (ways of doing). I argued for an exploration and re-thinking of the role of the change agent which means an exploration of spiritual identity praxis (ways of being-becoming) for alternative approaches to the facilitation of OCD. Such an approach would disrupt the solely technical, mechanistic-materialistic interventions in OCD that promote standardisation, conformity, and instrumentalisation of change in organisations.

CHAPTER 3

**CRITICAL COMPLEXITY: AN  
ALTERNATIVE RELATIONAL  
PARADIGM**

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*If things were simple, word would have gotten around (Derrida, 1988: 119).*

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter provides an overview of a complexity-based paradigm that provides an alternative framing for understanding real-world problems. Complexity-based approaches reveal the limitations of traditional framings that are mostly informed by assumptions that correlate to a Newtonian or positivist framing of the world. The complexity-based paradigm is contrasted with the worldview of the mainstream Newtonian framing, by means of a discussion on the relational nature of complex phenomena, as characterised by complexity thinking and the features of complex systems. I make important conceptual distinctions in order to address general misconceptions in the field of study.

The main purpose of the chapter is to explain why a complexity-based paradigm could serve as a distinct ontological and epistemological scientific approach for understanding organisations, OCD and the change maker. I argue that the Stellenbosch school of thought of philosophical complexity (developed by Paul Cilliers, Minka Woermann, Rika Preiser and others) presents a distinct approach that draws on the implications what it means to be human in a complex world. From the conceptual development of philosophical complexity and the praxis of complexity thinking, the Stellenbosch school of thought has argued for the need of critical complexity-based ontologies, epistemologies and ethics. Finally, I conclude why I opt for critical complexity and its concomitant thinking as a more feasible approach for framing and re-imagining the change agent and exploring spiritual identity praxis. Devoting a chapter to the critical complexity perspective is also important since it is applied in the present study to re-imagine change agents as well as to explore their spiritual identity praxis in the context of OCD.

### **3.2 ELUCIDATING A COMPLEXITY-BASED PARADIGM AS ALTERNATIVE FRAMING**

In this section, I introduce a complexity-based paradigm, complexity thinking, important conceptual distinctions in complexity literature and, the notion of critical complexity.

#### **3.2.1 Extending the Systems Approach**

The limitations of logical empiricism, often simply called positivism, as exposed by, for example, Habermas (1984) and Giddens (1984), challenge us to re-think the assumptions that inform mainstream scientific paradigms and methodologies (as in classical science). In his influential book, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Thomas Kuhn (1970) argued that, while continuous progress is indeed characteristic of long periods of "normal science", these periods are interrupted by periods of "revolutionary science" in which not only a scientific theory but also the entire conceptual framework in which it is embedded undergoes radical change. Kuhn (1970) described this radical underlying change in a framework by means of the concept of the scientific paradigm. According to Kuhn's (1970) original definition, a paradigm was defined as a constellation of achievements – concepts, values, techniques, etc. – shared by a scientific community and used by that community to define legitimate problems and solutions. He explained that changes in these paradigms occur in

discontinuous revolutionary breaks called "paradigm shifts" (Kuhn, 1970). Capra and Luisi (2014) point out that Kuhn's work had a huge impact on philosophy of science, as well as the social sciences, in that his definition not only included concepts or techniques but also values. Kuhn made it clear that values are not peripheral to science, or their applications to technology. In fact, for Kuhn (1970), values constituted the very basis and driving force behind the scientific endeavour.

This revelation came into sharp contrast with the previous centuries' ideas on science, in that values were separated from facts – as in atomistic thinking (Bhaskar, 2008). Due to this deeply held paradigm, scientists tended to believe that scientific facts are independent of what we do, and therefore independent of our values. Kuhn's work exposed this fallacy and actually revealed how scientific facts, in reality, emerge out of an entire constellation of human perceptions, values and actions (out of a paradigm), from which separation is impossible (Kuhn, 1970).

The intention to integrate various schools of thought and link them to the complex systems paradigm is within keeping of recent developments and various scientific changes that have taken place in a range of scientific fields (Kuhn, 1970). The change from a Newtonian to the complex systems paradigm has begun (Capra & Luisi, 2014). Scholars refer to this revolution as the paradigm of complexity (Morin, 1974); (Morin, 2008) or the complexity turn (Byrne, 2002); (Urry, 2005); (Blaikie, 2007).

### **3.2.2 Philosophical Complexity and Complexity Theory**

One of the key defining characteristics of the world at present is its complexity. Human existence has always been complex, but people are experiencing complexity in a new way different to other societies before our time. Morin (2008) refers to the Latin *complexus*, or 'that which is woven together'. That which is woven together cannot be torn apart without losing the overall pattern, the connection, the inter-relationships, the interactions, the emergent properties.

The development of a complexity-based paradigm has seen a growing engagement with its concepts across a wide range of fields (Byrne, 2005; Capra, 1996; Cilliers & Nicolescu, 2012; Urry, 2003; Wells, 2013). Despite this growing interest in complexity, I have to caution that there is no standard account of theoretical complexity development, and that includes no unified definition of the theory (Chu, Strand, & Fjelland, 2003). Preiser (2012) explains that the concepts of complexity rather form part of a scientific amalgam, or rhetorical hybrid (Thrift, 1999); because of some observable shared characteristics, and a recognisable vocabulary that can be described as a complexity thinking approach (Cilliers, 2000a). The notion of 'complexity' is currently subject to a number of interpretations (Rasch, 1991; Chu, Strand, & Fjelland, 2003; Alhadeff-Jones, 2008).

Woermann (2016) differentiates between philosophical complexity and complexity science by explaining that both deal with complexity theory and thus refer to many different approaches and understandings in the study of complex systems. Although philosophical complexity deals with complexity theory, its focus is different from complexity science. Woermann (2016) thus contrasts

philosophical complexity with the scientific understanding of complexity. Within the theoretical spectrum of complexity science, Morin (2007) distinguishes between restricted complexity (also referred to as 'hard complexity') and general complexity (also known as 'soft complexity'). Restricted complexity is most recognisable through the scientific theory formation as developed by the Santa Fe Institute<sup>33</sup>. Restricted complexity refers to systems that can be considered complex because they are presented empirically in a multiplicity of interrelated processes, interdependent and retroactively associated, but remain within the epistemology of classical science. Restricted complexity, according to this view, has made important advances in formalisation and modelling systems mainly through computerised and mathematical approaches. However, restricted complexity avoids the fundamental problem of complexity, which is epistemological, cognitive and paradigmatic. This view recognises complexity, but by decomplexifying it (Morin, 2007). General complexity, on the other hand, requires an epistemological re-conceptualisation. For Morin (2007), general complexity is more interested in how knowledge itself is organised. He sees general complexity as being opposed to reductionist notions as typified by classical science. Morin (2007: 10) argues: "Since a paradigm of simplification controls classical science, by imposing a principle of reduction and a principle of disjunction to any knowledge, there should be a paradigm of complexity that would impose a principle of distinction and a principle of conjunction." Morin (2007) holds that general complexity requires an epistemological re-conceptualisation. Woermann (2016: 2) argues that "the hallmark of this approach is that it seeks to explain the world as inherently complex...[and] thus constitutes a particular view of ontology, rather than a theory of causation". The development of philosophy of complexity as pioneered by Morin (2007) and further developed by Cilliers (2016) has given rise to the notion 'critical complexity' and the Stellenbosch school of thought. This study follows the general complexity school of thought that maintains a philosophical approach to understanding complexity and applies a critical complexity perspective to study.

### **3.2.3 The Complexity-based Paradigm and Complexity Thinking**

The complexity turn is a major development in the social sciences with the uptake and appropriation of complexity theory (Capra & Luisi, 2014) in the epistemologies of the social sciences. The acknowledgement of complexity is now a salient topic in scientific enquiry, and perhaps it is an idea that is appropriate for the current crises and challenges on the global agenda (Wells, 2013). It is also seen as providing a way of transcending the outdated divisions between the physical and social sciences (Urry, 2003; Cilliers & Nicolescu, 2012). According to Capra and Luisi (2014), ideas around complex systems can be traced back to early in the twentieth century when systems thinking were applied to living systems. The importance of its role can be seen in science, scholarship, policy-making and activism (Wells, 2013).

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<sup>33</sup> The Santa Fe Institute is the premier institute for the scientific study of complex systems. They are located in New Mexico, USA.

Chapman (2016) explains that the history of Western science can be considered as a contest between ideological discourses about what can be viewed as the 'true' nature of reality, and who can dominate and control the landscape of knowledge claims. She demonstrates that Newtonian perspective dominates the current ideological discourse and perspectives. With regards to re-imagining the change agent in the context of OCD, I find Chapman's (2016) explanation of the juxtaposition of competing paradigms into a complexity-based ontology, to be an important departure point for this thesis. The complexity-based ontology which Chapman (2016) refers to is supported by Wells' (2013) argument that complexity is a profound characteristic of reality and therefore of all systems. This is in contrast with the Newtonian atomistic position, which describes most natural phenomena as objects that can be isolated and analysed in terms of their constituent parts, in order to render objective and universal knowledge, based on measurements made from empirical observations.

Morin<sup>34</sup> (2008) makes it clear that the paradigm of simplification (disjunction and reduction) dominates our ways of thinking, being and doing today and it has become clear that a multitude of reactions is being mounted against this stronghold. The paradigm of simplification evolves by the principles of disjunction, reduction, and abstraction. In this dis-jointing process, Morin (2008) explains, the 'thinking subject' and the 'thing being thought' of get separated and divided. This paradigm – a simplification – informs our world and our philosophies of life. It is embedded in our world; we cannot escape the paradigm and therefore it is what Morin terms 'blind intelligence' (Morin, 2008: 4). Morin (2008: 4) explains:

Simple thought unifies abstractly, cancelling out diversity. Or, on the contrary, it posits diversity without conceiving of unity. In this way, we arrive at blind intelligence. Blind intelligence destroys unities and totalities. It isolates all objects from their environment. It cannot conceive of the inseparable link between the observer and the observed. Key realities are disintegrated. They slip through the cracks between disciplines.

In contrast, the difficulty with complex thought is that it deals with and confronts messes or, as Morin (2008: 6) calls it, "the infinite play of inter-retroactions". The tools for this exploration, however, elaborate in its conceptual make-up, requires principles for this new lens to focus. The challenge in presenting this lens is that we can only begin to perceive what this new paradigm of complexity might hold and allow it to emerge. It is not something we can pluck out of the air, or get from somewhere outside ourselves. Morin (2008: 51) states: "the paradigm of complexity will come from the collection of new conceptions, new visions, new discoveries, and new reflections that will align and come together". Complexity thinking demands an association of antagonistic concepts. A type of thinking that enables the juxtapositioning of concepts, which typically stand against one another and are

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<sup>34</sup> For Morin (2008) complexity is epistemological with implications for how we organise knowledge, where for Chapman (2016) complexity is ontological with implications for how we see reality and knowledge.

catalogued and isolated in separate compartments (as in Newtonian worldview and atomistic thinking).

### 3.2.4 Contrasting Worldviews: Towards Post-reductionism

In this section, I propose that the complexity-based paradigm provides a more appropriate alternative framing to the Newtonian paradigm. According to Chapman (2016), the complexity-based ontology holds that there is no external substantial reality<sup>35</sup>; that reality emerges as an active relational process. This relational conceptualisation relates to the process by which “the patterns of relationship are dynamically emerging from nested sub-patterns of relationships, in circular feedback processes of upwards and downward causation, occurring simultaneously across and within system dimensions/levels and between system dimensions/levels” (Chapman, 2016: 127). From a complexity-based understanding, all things eventually are connected via this web of relationships. Therefore, Chapman (2016) argues, the universe is a whole, but of an entirely different type or conceptualisation; it is whole in terms of relationship, and not in terms of mechanistic-materialistic substance. Rather, that which appears substantial or isolated is due to the perspective from which it is observed, thus applying atomistic thinking (the paradigm of simplification (Morin, 2008)) by the separation of substance via illusions on a spatial and temporal scale (Chapman, 2016). Accordingly, Chapman (2016: 127) describes the Newtonian view of reality as a “flattened three-dimensional abstraction of a dynamically emerging four-dimensional universe”. A detailed comparison between the mainstream Newtonian paradigm and the proposed complexity-based paradigm as presented by Chapman (2016: 128–131) is provided in Table 3.1<sup>36</sup>.

**Table 3.1: Contrasting the Newtonian paradigm with the proposed complexity-based paradigm**

Mainstream Newtonian paradigm	Complexity-based paradigm
Reality is material and atomic	Reality consists of immaterial, dynamic and nested patterns of relationship which form an interconnected whole. Patterns, which are persistent in time and space relative to the observer, appear substantial.
There is an objective reality that is separate from the observer.	Because reality is, an interconnected whole, absolute objectivity is not possible. Entities that appear to be isolated on one scale/dimension are connected at others. Reality is subjective and observer dependent.
The arrow of time is reversible. All processes are deterministic and theoretically reversible.	The arrow of time is irreversible. Open systems spontaneously become irreducibly complex over time, and closed systems become irreversibly disordered.

<sup>35</sup> Chapman (2016) and Morin (2008) differ on this position of reality. For Morin (2008:11) there is not this certainty about ‘no external substantial reality’, and he remains open to the interconnectedness and interplay of reality by stating: “Reality is therefore as much in the connection (relationship) as in the distinction between the open system and its environment.”

<sup>36</sup> I suggest studying Chapman (2016: 128–131) directly for a detailed discussion on the contrasting paradigms.



Most natural systems behave linearly and predictably – small changes create small effects, and big changes create big effects.	Most natural systems behave non-linearly because they are coupled through feedback. Small changes can create big effects through positive feedback and sensitivity to initial conditions, and big changes can have little effect due to negative feedback.
Atomic reality reconfigures as the result of cause and effect – change is the result of external disturbance.	Reality is constantly emerging/being created through self-organisation. Change is internal, the result of perpetual self-creation.
Reality is reducible – wholes are equal to the sum of their parts.	Reality is irreducible. Wholes are greater than the sum of their parts. Self-organising systems spontaneously create higher order patterns that are qualitatively different from and therefore cannot be explained by the properties of their parts.
Reality is the product of upward causality; therefore, there can be no true novelty.	Reality is the product of upward and downward causation (circular) causality via self-organisation. Through emergence, each moment paradoxically has the capacity for infinite novelty while being simultaneously constrained by its spatial and temporal couplings.
History determines the future. The future is deterministic and predictable.	History constrains rather than determines the future. The future is uncertain, and predictability is probabilistic and scale dependent.
Chaos is equivalent to entropy; it is a measure of system's randomness and disorder.	Chaos signals deep, underlying system order that appears as disorder because of the scale of observation. Chaos indicates the system is being observed at the point where it is vacillating between qualitatively different dimensions/logical levels.
Instability/chaos in ordered systems is caused by external disturbances.	Chaos is intrinsically embedded in order and vice versa. Chaos and order are co-extant and scale dependent.
Space and time are separate and absolute entities- they are the backdrop/container for the material universe and the immutable laws that govern it.	Space and time are unified in the fourth dimension as spacetime. Spacetime is not an absolute entity or backdrop to the universe. It is the scope of an emerging, self-organising universe. Laws of the universe are actually large-scale coherent patterns of the universe's self-creation.
Order, complexity, novelty evolve divergently as the result of natural selection.	Order, complexity, and novelty emerge spontaneously through self-organisation, i.e. convergence of systems through coupling. Natural selection squashes new order rather than creates it.
External reality is knowable. It is revealed to our senses and us through objective observation.	Reality is specified through our active participation. The reality we see is not the world, but a world we bring forth with others.

Source: Chapman (2016: 128-131)

In terms of the argument, and to illustrate the contrasting worldviews in a more succinct manner I next describe the schism between the Newtonian paradigm and the complexity-based paradigm. The Newtonian worldview underscored by atomistic thinking has at its foundation the notion of reductionism. The 'pillars' on which the Newtonian paradigm is built can be identified as follows (Preiser, 2013):

- **Mechanistic**

The mechanistic notion of this pillar holds that the universe is completely reducible to mechanical principles. According to this view, all phenomena can be explained entirely through the motion of matter by physical laws that can calculate and predict the motion and collision of matter e.g. natural wholes are like complicated machines.

- **Materialist**  
The materialist notion of this pillar holds that all phenomena (physical, biological, social, mental) are ultimately constituted of matter. According to this logic, if you continue long enough, you will end up with the smallest possible parts, the atoms.
- **Universalist**  
The universalist notion of this pillar continues from the same premise by applying the logic that subscribes to the idea that all laws are applicable everywhere, at all times, over all scales. With the underlying assumption of as in nature, so in life.
- **Deterministic**  
The deterministic assumption underlying the Newtonian worldview holds that since everything is made of atoms, the behaviour of any system can be predicted perfectly if you know the initial positions and the velocity of all its atoms and how atoms interact. This can clearly be seen in the notion of linear causality.

Consequently, the notion of reductionism maintains that all properties of an object can be understood by explaining the individual behaviour of its smallest constituent (Preiser, 2013). The assumption in this habit of thought is that *the whole is equal to the sum of the parts*.

The implication of the Newtonian worldview built on reductionism is that it creates: (i) a clear distinction between object and subject, (ii) it assumes that models and theories capture reality in neutral and objective ways with high correlation, (iii) that the largest models that attempt to capture reality are possible, and (iv) that these models can be used to calculate, predict, and control the phenomena at stake (Preiser, 2013).

The complexity-based paradigm is a post-reductionist approach to the Newtonian worldview and atomistic thinking. Thus, the complexity approach is built upon the foundation of a connectionist or relational worldview (Cilliers, 1998), and is interdependent regarding the following key notions (Preiser, 2013):

- **Organisation**  
The notion of organisation and systemic properties presents an alternative habit of thought where the whole is more *and* less the sum of the parts (Morin, 2008). Therefore, the universe is not engineered in terms of a clockwork, robotics or mechanics; but rather comprises adaptive, self-organising agents that are not homogeneous.
- **Emergence**  
Complex organisation phenomena arise spontaneously from emergent properties (Juarrero & Rubino, 2008). These properties of the whole cannot be reduced to the properties of the constituent parts. Thus, there is danger in analysing parts without consideration of the whole, because it destroys the emergent properties as the parts are changed and taken apart.
- **Contextuality**

Because rules change as knowledge is generated, contextuality is of great importance. Contextuality is manifested through the fact that elements play multiple roles, fulfilling several functions across the boundaries of systems (Chu, Strand, & Fjelland, 2003).

- **Nonlinearity**

The notion refers to the behaviour in which the system may respond in different ways to the same input depending on their state or context. Thus, the constituent parts of a system act in non-linear ways in which their outcomes are not predictable (Cilliers, 1998). Due to the nonlinearity and unpredictability of the system, small changes can create large effects, and large causes can create small effects. Even small effects can become causes, and therefore predictions should be forfeited for anticipation and propensities.

Having outlined the key notions that underlie the mainstream Newtonian paradigm and by contrasting it to the complexity-based paradigm, I have attempted to illustrate how limiting the Newtonian worldview is, and why the complexity-based worldview is a more complete alternative when scholars study living systems. I next describe the key features of complex systems in order to give a sense of how the dynamics in complex systems are different to the Newtonian worldview.

### **3.2.5 A Synopsis of the Features of Complex Systems**

My intention is not to discuss in detail all of the concepts that explain the features of complex systems in this section. I rather draw on the features and apply them to identity, spirituality and change agents in OCD<sup>37</sup>. However, it is important to mention here that Cilliers (1998; 2016) and Morin (1992b; 2008) envisioned complex systems to open up new realities, i.e. alternative ontological and epistemological conceptualisations with important implications for how people live as human beings in the face of complexity, and how knowledge is organised. Woermann (2013: 34–40) describes eight features<sup>38</sup> of complex systems as characterised by the following notions:

- (i) complex systems are not complicated systems,
- (ii) complex systems are characterised by richly interconnected components,
- (iii) the component parts of complex systems have a double-identity,
- (iv) upward and downward causation give rise to complex structures,
- (v) complex systems are non-additive,
- (vi) complex systems exhibit self-organising and emergent behaviour,
- (vii) complex systems are structured, and
- (viii) complex systems are open and bounded systems.

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<sup>37</sup> Please see Chapter 4.

<sup>38</sup> The features of complex systems can be linked to a very large body of scholars that have studied complex systems. Prominent scholars to note here are Von Bertalanffy (1968), Prigogine (1984, 1987), Maturana and Varela (1980), and Ashby (1947).

I discuss these features in more detail when I apply them to identity, spirituality and the role of the change agent in OCD interventions<sup>39</sup>.

Although the features of complex systems help distinguish complexity in terms of its characteristics, its application regarding ways of thinking and doing have not always been distinguished according to philosophical complexity (general complexity). Complexity theory is better known and associated with restricted complexity, which prioritises computerised and mathematical modelling of complex systems. Due to the resulting misconceptions in the field of research, I now present key distinguishing concepts by highlighting the difference between holism and complexity thinking, and complex and complicated systems.

### **3.2.6 Distinguishing between Holism and Complexity Thinking**

Holism and holistic thinking have become popular concepts in change management circles. However, the concept is relatively old and was first used by Smuts (1926 [1999]). Although the systems view of life and the promotion of the holistic perspective have gained great momentum, especially in the management sciences, it is important to note that systems thinking equated as holism is now challenged by complex systems scholars (Cilliers & Preiser, 2010). Edgar Morin (1992a) cautions that we should first attempt to master the concept of system. According to Morin (1992a: 371), "though general systems theory revealed the generality of systems, this generality is not, by itself, sufficient to determine the epistemological significance of the notion of system in all its conceptual complexity". Morin draws conceptual boundaries by distinguishing between how the concept of system is understood in terms of general systems theory. For Morin (1992a) the concept of system in terms of general systems theory does not constitute a paradigmatic principle; rather, the principle invoked is that of holism. Holism for Morin (1992a) attempts explanation at the level of totality, in opposition to the reductionist paradigm that seeks explanation at the level of elementary components. According to Morin, "holism" follows the same simplifying principle as reductionism to which complexity thinking is opposed. In other words, holism remains trapped in the paradigm of simplification by continuing to follow the simplifying principle of and reduction to, the whole. Morin (1992a: 372) argues that "systems theory thus suffers from a fundamental defect: it tends to fall repeatedly into the reductive, simplificatory, mutilating, and manipulative ruts from which it was supposed to have freed itself (and us along with it)". Complexity thinking does not fixate on either the whole or the parts but demands an association and dynamic dialogic movement between the whole and the parts - bringing together of antagonistic concepts. Complexity thinking thus enables the unification of the whole and the parts, yet also preserves the dynamic interrelation in doing so. Complexity thinking presents a movement away from making opposites stand against one another

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<sup>39</sup> Please see Chapter 4; Section 4.4.1.

and reducing the distinguishable particulars to catalogued, isolated and separated compartments (as in Newtonian worldview and atomistic thinking).

### 3.2.7 Distinguishing between Complicated and Complex Systems

Woermann (2013) points to Cilliers (1998) who describes the difference between complicated and complex systems. For Cilliers, the main difference is that a complicated system is solvable in principle. This is because although initially, such systems seem complex due to a large number of components, interactions and sophistication; the characteristic feature is that with sufficient information and resources the dynamics of complicated systems can be fully understood. In contrast, complex systems are not reducible to simple solutions by dividing the different components into isolation i.e. the notion of wicked problems in probing and muddling through complex systems.

Poli (2013), takes the argument further when distinguishing between complicated and complex social systems. He argues that decision makers usually struggle to differentiate between complex systems and mistake them for simply complicated ones. The reasoning behind this understanding relates to the demands that consultants receive from many of the decision makers to find long-term solutions regarding the solving of problems. In Poli's (2013) view consultants are thus asked to address complex problems as if they are complicated ones and thus clash with contemporary science that has shown that the claim to 'solve' (complex) problems is often disconnected to the inherent reality and complexity of problems.

Poli (2013) explains:

Many contemporary problems are made worse by trading one type of problem for the other, because the problems arising from what makes a system complicated can eventually be solved, while those arising from what makes a system complex can at best be transformed or modified, but not solved once and forever.

Poli, therefore, follows Meadows' (2002) argument that, instead of attempting to get rid of problems with the idea of finally solving them, we rather need to 'learn to dance' with them. In fact, Poli (2013) argues that, instead of assuming most modern systems are complicated, the evidence, as demonstrated by Bhaskar (1998), is that they should be seen as complex and that the exception to the rule is complicated systems.

Thus, when distinguishing between complex and complicated systems, Poli (2013: 143) describes the difference between the systems as a "difference of type, not a difference of degree". He explains that complex systems are not remarkably more complicated than a general complicated system. Rather, Poli (2013), like Cilliers (1998), holds that a complex system is a different type of system entirely to a complicated system, because of the non-reductionist position underlying complex systems. Cilliers (2000b) refers to this as the problem of incompressibility; the notion that we cannot make simple models of complex systems because it would demand us to model a system as complex as the system itself. In conclusion, the difference between complicated and complex systems is in

how one can simulate complicated systems, but when one attempts to do the same with complex systems, the whole gets essentially and systematically lost (Allen, 2011; Poli, 2013). Although the effort to distinguish complicated systems from complex systems is a helpful conceptual framing, the distinction is not entirely unproblematic but remains useful in the study of complexity (Woernamm, 2013).

### 3.2.8 Critical Complexity

The study of complex phenomena from a generalised notion of complexity supports a post-reductionist approach and enables us to re-think the role of critique in complexity theory (Preiser, 2012). Audouin, *et al.*, (2013) argue that the conflicting positions in understanding complexity theory reveal the difficulties of resolving the problem of reductionism in unambiguous terms. Similar to Cilliers (2005), they see this problem as the central dilemma in the study of complexity. Cilliers (2005: 261) articulates this dilemma as an inescapable "performative tension" within complexity. Therefore, Audouin, *et al.*, (2013: 12) explain that "this performative tension results from the fact that a rigorous understanding of complexity is one that denies both total holism and total reductionism simultaneously; while still acknowledging that any description of a complex system necessarily performs some reduction of reality". The problem of reductionism in complexity thinking thus necessitates a critical position in order to be aware of the reductionist strategies employed despite the awareness of the complexities or interconnectedness of phenomena. Such a critical position in the study of complex phenomena implies a post-reductionist approach. It is therefore not anti-reductionistic but rather seeks to both transcend and include such strategies (Audouin *et al.*, 2013). Critical complexity thus becomes the central insight as formulated by Cilliers and Preiser (2010), and this is because "critical complexity follows the logic of reductionism, with a simultaneous awareness of the choices made in reducing the system" (Audouin *et al.*, 2013: 12). For Cilliers (2011b), complexity thinking is primarily concerned with presenting new ways of understanding reality and what it means to be human. It also rejects traditional science-based notions of how we come to know what we know and apply it to universal knowledge, experimental control, determinism and a linear logic of causal explanation (Blaikie, 2007).

It is this generalised notion of complexity – which maintains a *critical* position – that underlies the notion of critical complexity. In this regard, I argue that for Morin (2008) complexity is epistemological with implications for how we organise knowledge, where for Chapman (2016) complexity is ontological with implications for how we see reality, although she includes the importance of its impact on knowledge. Similar to Cilliers (2016), I argue critical complexity holds that the understanding of complexity is both ontological and epistemological. It, therefore, has implications not only for the way we organise knowledge; but also important for how we are human beings. Thus, the ethical implications of both the ontological and epistemological realities of complexity have given rise to the normative turn in the philosophy of complexity (Woermann, 2016).



Accordingly, critical complexity introduces a self-reflexive kind of reductionism that maintains a self-critical understanding in the study of complexity (Preiser, 2012). The contribution of the approach is revealed in the double movement it fosters in our way of thinking, thereby enabling the possibilities of disarming various animosities formed by opposing paradigms, for example, reductionism versus holism, without uniting them into a grand unifying truth (Audouin *et al.*, 2013). According to Cilliers and Preiser (2010), the main implication of critical complexity for scientific practice is that it compels the scientist to acknowledge the need for reduction while making the strategies for such reductionism transparent. This is the whole-part organisation of knowledge as espoused by Morin (2007). It is this generalised notion, termed as critical complexity, which I apply as a lens for exploring and reframing the role of the change agent and spiritual identity praxis.

I would like to demote the application of restricted complexity to our humanness and the way scholars and practitioners organise knowledge regarding being human in organisations. These include any other reductionist strategies as it decomplexifies our realities – thereby avoiding the fundamental problem of complexity which is epistemological, cognitive and paradigmatic (Cilliers & Preiser, 2010). But, critical complexity also allows us to introduce a normative turn in the formation of complexity theory because it reveals the inevitability of an ethical position when dealing with complexity (Preiser, Cilliers, & Human, 2013). Preiser, Cilliers and Human (2013: 269) thus explain,

... since we cannot have complete knowledge of complex things we cannot 'calculate' their behaviour in any deterministic way. We have to interpret and evaluate. Our decisions always involve an element of choice that cannot be justified objectively. What is more, no matter how careful our actions are considered, they may turn out to have been a mistake. Thus, acknowledging that values and choice are involved does not provide any guarantee that good will come of what we do.

Moreover, by adopting a critical complexity approach to generating knowledge, we are sensitised to make visible the radical perpetual ethical choices we have to make in the light of our complex realities. As Preiser (2012) argues, we cannot just deal with complexity on an epistemological level (as found in the restricted complexity school), where we try to control and calculate phenomena or models or how it impacts on or affects social, political or economic institutions (Preiser, 2014). Rather for Preiser (2014), critical complexity is ultimately about the embeddedness of people's lived experience of complexity in the world, and therefore recognising their way of being in the world is inherently affected. Critical complexity challenges us to reconsider our traditional theoretical and conceptual strategies. In this sense, critical complexity introduces an existential and ethical turn in the field of complexity thinking (Kunneman, 2010; Preiser, 2014) as illustrated in the work of Cilliers (2010; 2016) – the pioneer of the normative turn – and others that have explored the implications for ethical issues in complexity thinking (Preiser, 2014; Woermann, 2012).

A critical complexity approach necessitates a paradigm shift from the Newtonian model dominated by science, to an inclusive conceptualisation of complexity by moving beyond the reductionist/holism schism (Audouin *et al.*, 2013). It coerces us to embrace the inherent uncertainties and vulnerabilities



of our models, thereby compelling us to a critical and self-reflexive awareness of our situatedness in the world. If we fail to acknowledge the complexities of peoples' world and continue to apply the paradigm of simplification to our models of reality, we not only are destroying the world but, more importantly, are destroying our humanity (Preiser, 2014). This kind of self-mutilation and blind intelligence – as in the words of Morin (2008) are easily perpetuated due to the blind spots inherent in the narrow models of reality found in the Newtonian worldview or atomistic thinking. The over-reliance on simplified models that fragment society, economics and even scientific understanding is under-girded by the assumption of a "linear, one dimensional, machine-like, self-centred and heartless view of reality" (Preiser, 2014: 4).

The implications of critical complexity to science are:

- Critical complexity offers a post-reductionist scientific approach that necessitates alternative ways of being, doing and knowing in the light of our complex realities (Allen, 2011).
- Critical complexity thinking requires a shift in paradigm from the dominant traditional theoretical and conceptual strategies (the Newtonian model of science) to an ethical and existential approach to scientific theory formation.
- Critical complexity thinking brings to awareness overly rapid reductionist or grand unifying holistic approaches in our thought strategies by making them transparent (acknowledging their limitations, errors and blind spots).
- Critical complexity implies a new type of knowledge that is self-reflexive, and at the same time remains critical of our thought strategies, by embracing the condition of complexity: the inherent embeddedness of our lived experience of complexity (uncertainty, ambiguity, volatility, nonlinearity, vulnerability) (Preiser, 2012).

Therefore, the interest of this study is to extend and critically apply a critical complexity approach, by following the line of thought pursued by Cilliers and Preiser (2010) and Cilliers (2016), with the goal of exploring what Preiser (2014: 4) calls our "way-of-being-in-the-world". I believe that this would assist change agents to explore an alternative framing of their spiritual identity praxis and roles as OCD practitioners.

In this regard, following Preiser (2012), the key contributions of applying critical complexity are:

- Critical complexity has the ability to suggest alternatives to binary thinking approaches as formed through opposing paradigms, for example, reductionism versus holism, fixed identity versus fluid identity, linear change versus non-linear change.
- Critical complexity suggests a type of thinking that values tensions (the relationships and interconnections between the whole and the parts). This non-dual approach to thinking enables a viable route for grappling with tensions without falling into the trap of attempting to loosen the tensions by endeavouring to unite them on macro levels of scale. Rather it sidesteps this reductionist trap and its binary-thinking modes.

- Critical complexity presents an avenue of inquiry that re-establishes the quality of being in the world. It emphasises a re-discovery of our connectedness with nature and how we are shaped as human beings in this dynamic relation to the whole and the parts.
- Critical complexity suggests that our models reflect the reality of complexity and invites us to continually re-visit these models in a new light in order to re-vision new futures.
- Critical complexity challenges our mechanistic-materialistic assumptions of reality and attempts to bridge our tendency to apply universalistic-deterministic ways of thinking about ways of knowing.

### **3.3 SUMMARY**

In this chapter, I argued that the complexity-based paradigm offers a more appropriate alternative framing to real-world problems than the Newtonian paradigm because it subscribes to a post-reductionist understanding of ontology (which views reality as inherently complex) and therefore a necessary re-conceptualisation and organisation of epistemology is required. Because complexity is inherent to the world, it is irreducible and therefore the strategies applied like disjunction and reduction leads to unintended ethical consequences when dealing with complex phenomena. Philosophical complexity deals with complex ontology and epistemology and suggests critical complexity to present a normative turn with a critical and self-reflexive mode of relating to complex phenomena.

CHAPTER 4

**TOWARDS A COMPLEX  
UNDERSTANDING OF THE  
CHANGE AGENT**

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*The identity or “meaning” of an organisation is not pre-given or complete. It develops and transforms as a result of the play of differences which constitutes it (Cilliers, 2010a: 7).*

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this chapter is to apply a critical complexity lens by means of a conceptual reconfiguration of the notion ‘identity’ in order to develop a critical complexity-informed framing of the change agent. An exploration of a critical complexity perspective on the notion of identity is important for change agents because it generates access to awareness of embodied experiences, mindsets, worldviews that reveals movements to growth and maturity (Lackoff & Johnson, 1980, 1999; Polkinghorne, 2014). Consequently, I intend to explore the implications of such a framing of identity in order to re-imagine the currently limited understandings of the change agent.

In order to actualise this, I discuss the implications of applying the assumptions of critical complexity to the notion of identity by highlighting how traditional views of identity fall short of exposing the complex nature of identity. I then present a conceptual re-framing of identity by adapting De Villiers-Botha and Cilliers’ (2010) notion of the ‘complex I’. Re-conceptualised in terms of a critical complexity perspective, the implications of the “complex I” are then extrapolated to form four iterative principles for a critical complexity-informed understanding of change agents.

#### **4.2 CRITICAL COMPLEXITY-INFORMED FRAMING OF IDENTITY: TOWARDS AN ALTERNATIVE FRAMING OF IDENTITY**

Identity, as viewed from a post-reductionistic understanding, moves beyond simplistic atomistic descriptions, which reinforce essentialist notions of the self. It also attempts to bring forth descriptions that support humanist and narrative descriptions of the self but seeks to transcend the ongoing dualities contained therein. A more complexity-based interpretation of ‘identity’ is also found in the work of Ricoeur (1992) and his notion of the ‘narrative self’ which acknowledges the intricacies, interwoven nature and relational dynamics of the self. Yet, Ricoeur (1984, 1992) does not explicitly apply a critical complexity lens to identity.

The critique of traditional identity theory and alternative humanistic psychology views of the self<sup>40</sup> suggests the need for an alternative approach to studying and defining the notion of identity. Consequently, I provide an provisional relational framing of identity from a critical complexity perspective by highlighting and then adapting De Villiers-Botha and Cilliers’ (2010) notion of the complex ‘I’, who state that “[b]y making use of complexity theory, it will be argued that the self has to be understood relationally in a system of differences”. This relational understanding contrasts the reductive, disjunctive and isolationist divides prominent in mainstream identity theory.

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<sup>40</sup> Please see Chapter 2.6 and 2.8.4.

In order to provide such a provisional relational framing, I next apply the critical complexity lens to the notion of identity.

The notion of the complex 'I' is an elaboration of Cilliers' work on the notion of 'diversity' that re-informs his definition of identity. In his development of diversity, Cilliers (2010a) draws on post-structural theories to inform a definition of 'diversity' that coincides with the characteristics of complex systems. He argues that a post-structural conceptualisation entails relationships of *differences* 'between all the signs in the system' (Cilliers, 2010a: 4). Contrary to atomistic understandings, sameness does not generate meaning; rather, in complex systems, "the richness of the system is a function of the differences it contains" (Cilliers, 2010a: 4). Accordingly, Cilliers (2010a) explains that complex systems are characteristic of non-linear interactions with a large number of constituents which are not inevitably complex in themselves. He argues that the emergent properties are the result of these interactions, and contain the higher order properties of the system.

Cilliers (2010a: 5) states that "for something to be recognisable as being that something, it must be possible to differentiate it from something else." This is contrary to the traditional understanding of identity as understood in terms of sameness which should rather be understood to be an absence of difference. Moreover, Cilliers (2010a) explains that meaning should be understood in terms of the play of differences and the result of distinctions; because the more differences there are, the more distinctions can be made. In short, he points out that in complex systems meaningful relationships develop through relationships of difference, not through opposition. For meaning to emerge, some form of similarity must already be there (in the system). This perspective does not lead to a fixed understanding of meaning, or that meaning can be exhausted in a myriad of ways. Cilliers (2010a: 13) states: "The element of identity inaugurates the play of difference on the one hand, while on the other, it is the result of that very process"; and postulates that a further refinement is due in the "law of meaning" and, "without constrained difference and repeatable identity, there can be no meaning".

Based on the foregoing explanation of identity and meaning, De Villiers-Botha and Cilliers (2010) developed a complex systems perspective of identity or the notion of the self which they termed "complex 'I'". This description is conceptualised by Cilliers' (2000b) foundational characterisation of complex systems which is applied and then juxtaposed to the notion of identity in order to reframe the concept. However, in the recent pioneering work of Woermann (2010a; 2010b; 2012; 2013; 2016), she builds on Cilliers' (1998) characterisation of complexity<sup>41</sup>. Her application of a critical complexity framing to the fields of business ethics and corporate social responsibility is relevant for this study because it provides insights on how to interpret critical complexity. Woermann (2013) generally regarded as a prominent scholar in applying the critical complexity lens in management

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<sup>41</sup> For more detail, see chapter one in Cilliers (1998).

sciences, is the only scholar I know that have applied this lens to the notion of identity in organisations ('corporate identity' in her words).

My intention is to provide a characterisation of the framing of complex 'I' by combining De Villiers-Botha and Cilliers' (2010) description with Woermann's (2013: 34–40) updated eight features of complex systems<sup>42</sup>. Where De Villiers-Botha and Cilliers' (2010) initial perspective on complex 'I' provides a more detailed explanation of how the different characteristics of complex systems manifest themselves in the self, I update this characterisation by using Woermann's (2013) features of complex systems. This will enable a reading of complex 'I' that will coincide with the critical complexity lens. The reorganised features of complex systems (Woermann, 2013) provide a framework for repackaging the notion of the complex 'I' through a critical complexity lens (Cilliers & Preiser, 2010; 2016).

However, at this point, I need to offer a few caveats. Woermann (2013: 34) points to Luhmann (1995) who argues that all models are limited because they "neither... reflect the complete reality of its object, nor... exhaust all the possibilities of knowing its object" (Luhmann, 1995: xlvii). Woermann also refers to Allen (2000) who explains that while attempting to gather systemic knowledge about objects, the very objects are impossible to untie from each other due to the inherent complexity. Another aspect which Woermann (2013: 34) addresses is the contextually-defined nature of complex systems "any attempt at defining the general characteristics of complex systems should merely be an indication of the type of considerations one should keep in mind when studying these systems, rather than constitute a detailed description of a particular system

*It is with the above considerations in mind that I want to propose a critical complexity informed understanding to the notion of the complex 'I' (De Villiers-Botha & Cilliers, 2010) by discussing and framing it according to Woermann's (2013: 34–40) eight features of complex systems to expand and deepen the implications for understanding identity:*

(i) The complex 'I' is not a complicated system.

The traditional views of identity<sup>43</sup> assume that with sufficient information and resources we can fully understand the dynamics of identity. In terms of the distinction between complex and complicated systems<sup>44</sup> the traditional view of identity subscribes to the notion of complicated systems, where the presupposition is that identity may have a large number of components, but in essence, the problem of identity can be understood and therefore is solvable (Cilliers, 1998). In contrast, the complex nature of living systems due to the dynamic self-organising relationships and feedback loops that exist between components give rise to systemic structures (Woermann, 2013).

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<sup>42</sup> The original framework regarding the characteristics of complex systems in relation to identity was developed by Cilliers (1998; 2000b).

<sup>43</sup> Please see Chapter 2.6.1.

<sup>44</sup> Please see Chapter 3.2.7.

These structures are inherently complex due to their organising processes. Additionally, the problem of incompressibility in complex systems attests to the notion that we cannot develop simple models for complex systems because it would demand us to model a system as complex as the system itself (Cilliers, 2000b). Applied to the complex 'I', only certain aspects can be understood within afforded time, providing how the complex 'I' as system is modelled. Hence, the complex 'I' is not compressible and cannot be reduced to a complicated system or simplistic understanding of identity.

(ii) The complex 'I' is characterised by richly interconnected components.

The self is constituted in a system of differences, and therefore a large number of elements comprise the notion of self. According to Cilliers (2000b), this should not be understood in a deterministic way, but rather that it is difficult to identify all the components and then to order them into a coherent whole, thereby providing an exact description of the complex system (in this case the self). Due to the rich interactions and how all the components are merged together, the self cannot be seen as a singular thing, but rather as the element in the system that is influenced reciprocally by all the other elements in the systems of self.

By following Cilliers' (1998) explanation of complex systems, the system of self is the result of these nonlinear, dynamic interrelations between component parts. A complexity-based understanding of identity "[needs] to account for both the systemic identity of component parts and the complex nature of interrelations between both the component parts and between the component parts and the system as a whole" (Woermann, 2013: 36). De Villiers-Botha and Cilliers (2010) argue that the self cannot be meaningful in isolation, but rather is constituted by its relationships to others and the world. Therefore the complex 'I' is irreducibly interconnected and continuously in relation to incommensurable components (people and things in the systems of self).

(iii) The component parts of the complex 'I' have a double-identity.

The double-identity of the self is constituted of both the diversity and unity principle (Morin, 1992a; Woermann, 2013). The diversity principle relates to how the identities of the system's components cannot be reduced to the whole because each component maintains its own unique individual identity. At the same time, the coupling of components brings about a common identity (which relates to the unity principle), thereby constituting the conjoined citizenship in a system of self.

The diversity-unity principle is of importance in complexity thinking about identity because it highlights the dilemmas arising when either the diversity principle is over-accentuated through



the homogenisation of the self (as in holism), or when the unity principle is trapped in reductive thinking on identity (as in reductionism), which promotes a disjointed version of the self that is devoid of the sense of unity. Therefore the self cannot be in isolation (a separate self), as it would have no meaning, due to the dynamic nature of the self, which is constituted through its relationships with others and the world (De Villiers-Botha & Cilliers, 2010).

(iv) Upward and downward causation give rise to complex structures of the complex 'I'.

A complexity-based understanding of identity seeks to undermine the principle of reductionism with a whole-part principle which describes the whole and the part as mutually interactive (Morin, 2008). Thus, the interactive process between component parts that takes place on a local level is both competitive and co-operative (Cilliers, 1998; Woermann, 2013). This process "whereby a system develops a complex structure from fairly unstructured beginnings" is known as self-organisation (Cilliers, 1998: 89). Morin (2008: 49) refers to the upward and downward causation that gives rise to these mutually interactive processes as "organisational recursion"; and explains that "the products and the effects are at the same time causes and producers of what produces them".

This simultaneous recursive process — applied to the notion of identity — can be seen in how we are involved in creating, engaging and challenging our ways of doing (practices), while the ways of doing at the same time impacts on our own ways of being-becoming praxis (identity formation and conformation). This gives rise to the idea that "some influences have a profound effect on the self; others may pass without so much as a ripple" (De Villiers-Botha & Cilliers, 2010: 35). The causality of the influences on the self can therefore not be determined linearly, because of the multi-dimensional aspects such as the size, context and history all impacting in various ways which means that certain happenings can, for instance, profoundly affect the self, while other influences may register as irrelevant. Thus, the influence of something can be determined by the immensity of that which causes it. The context and history, and how they relate to conditionality and predisposition of the complex 'I', also impact on the outcomes of the self.

(v) The complex 'I' is non-additive or emergent.

The complex interrelations between the component parts of the self and the system as a whole behave in ways that cannot be determined by analysing individual components of the system (De Villiers-Botha & Cilliers, 2010). In terms of Morin's (1992a) three systemic characteristics this means that: (i) the whole of our complex 'I' is greater than the sum of the parts of the self.

This is because the systemic attributes of the whole do not amount to the whole when reduced, but rather are the outcome of interconnections between the parts; (ii) the whole of the complex

'I' is also less than the sum of its parts, because some of the qualities of the parts are inhibited under the constraints due to how the system is organised; (iii) the whole of the complex 'I' is also greater than the whole of the complex 'I'. This is as a result of the dynamic way in which self-organisation gives rise to local phenomena which are dependent on the base, with the interactions of the whole at the same time superseding the base through systemic emergence (De Villiers-Botha & Cilliers, 2010; Woermann, 2013).

Therefore, the self only responds to influences available locally in the immediate environment in your spatial and temporal locations which in turn influences your thinking about yourself (De Villiers-Botha & Cilliers, 2010). Another way phrase this is by way of example. We, for instance, are locally connected to fellow human beings in our communities, yet at the same time, we have several connections to human beings through global interactions (globalisation) that broaden the local sense of the self to a global sense of multiple selves. In this description, one could say our identities are 'glocal' (simultaneously local, and global) selves. In terms of the complex 'I', we are always more than the whole of our identity/ies, but at the same time contingent upon immediate encounters in our spatial and temporal environments.

(vi) The complex 'I' exhibits self-organising and emergent behaviour.

To understand the self in terms of self-organisation means the structure of self "can evolve without the intervention of an external designer or the presence of some centralised form of internal control" (Cilliers, 1998: 89). Self-organisation is explained by Cilliers (1998: 90) as "a property of complex systems which enables them to develop or change structure spontaneously and adaptively in order to cope with, or manipulate, their environment" and therefore "a process whereby a system can develop a complex structure from fairly unstructured beginnings" (Cilliers, 1998: 12). Apart from being a precondition for emergence, self-organisation allows structure for meaning through the spontaneous interaction of elements in the system, while at the same time the structure of the self is always changing and adapting in response to changes in its environment (Cilliers, 1998). In the process of self-organisation the complex 'I' develops through the structural and temporal dimensions of emergence. By interacting with the world we ascribe meaning to it, but at the same time through our participation, we also change it — whether with or without control of it (De Villiers-Botha & Cilliers, 2010).

This voluntary, yet involuntary affect of our participatory change can be described according to the simultaneous interconnectivity as a result of the feedback loops of the self. This, in turn, contributes to the creation of the identity of the components and the self as a whole; which, in turn, facilitates the process of emergence. The way in which the whole and the parts of the complex 'I' interact allows continuity and transformation (emergent behaviour) (Woermann,

2010b). The emergence of the self should not be viewed just as a product of interactions that take place locally, but rather can be viewed as an "organised and organising whole [which] feeds back to produce the components" of the self (Woermann, 2010b: 170).

In this regard, Woermann (2010b) follows Morin's (2008) description which explains the temporal and structural process of identity emergence. The emergent process is explained by how the components in their interactions both produce the system, which also produces the components that produce it (Morin, 2008). This iterative nature of identity is due to the fact that we are able to recognise distinctions as distinctions. This implies that some element of sameness must be present in the system itself (Cilliers, 2010a). Cilliers (2010a) also maintains that the manifestation of our ability to discern sameness and recognise distinctions between components is due to the interconnectivity between the components of the system.

Emergent behaviour becomes possible through these interconnectivities which are dynamic in nature, and which allows the emergence of the system of self in the process of self-organisation. Emergence leads to the development of identity at both the level of the whole and the parts of self (due to the interconnection of feedback loops) (De Villiers-Botha & Cilliers, 2010). The feedback loops, in turn, contribute to the system of self to present behaviour that further constrains the components of the system (Woermann, 2013). Woermann (2010b) thus concludes that the identity of the system and the components are coterminous because of the emergence.

(vii) The complex 'I' is structured.

The interaction of the components of the self develops with time into dynamic structures which emerge through the process of self-organisation (Woermann, 2013). Applied to identity, these structures of self are not flat (as with homogeneous or chaotic systems) (Woermann, 2013), but are dynamic due to emergence. In terms of the emergent behaviour of the self, identity formation is a recursive process because of how "the interconnectivities between components create systemic structures and constraints, so too feedback loops allow for the system itself to constrain the behaviour of the parts by means of framing identity within a larger context" (Woermann, 2010b: 170).

In terms of critical complexity, the structure of complex 'I' is essential to the systemic development of the self, as the structure is foundational to the internal mechanisms developed by the system of self to receive, encode, transform and store information, while simultaneously enabling it to react to information by producing various forms of outcome on the other (Cilliers, 1998: 89). However, the unique ways in which the system of self is perceived depends on the nature of the systemic structures. Cilliers (2001) explains that structures can be differentiated

between durable and volatile (ephemeral). This characterisation can explain why identity is perceived by some as fixed and others as fluid, whereas both conceptions, in fact, are at the same time affecting that structures are bounded by the various constraints between the whole and the parts. Due to the radical openness of living systems (Woermann, 2013), it is impossible to determine the exact boundaries of the self in relation to the other or the world (De Villiers-Botha & Cilliers, 2010). This is because our identities develop over the course of time within a network of relationships with other identities. In this sense, human identity development as an emerging identity is not only a historical identity, but also very much shaped by its context (De Villiers-Botha & Cilliers, 2010). Therefore, any reduction of the self, for instance, to solely the mind or to cultural or organisational formations, is overly simplistic and limiting.

(viii) The complex 'I' are open and bounded systems.

A complex understanding of identity acknowledges that the self is an open system one that is intelligible to its environment (De Villiers-Botha & Cilliers, 2010; Woermann, 2013), and therefore can never be in a state of equilibrium (De Villiers-Botha & Cilliers, 2010). Woermann (2013) explains that it is challenging to study open systems because of them being both intimate and foreign to their environment. She points to Morin (2008) who describes the dynamic of how we are both part of the system and remain exterior to it in our study of it; creating a system-environment distinction in attempting to model objects. When one applies this to identity, the radical openness of the self exemplifies the difficulty to conceive the self without creating system-environment distinctions, i.e. it is impossible to be aware of your whole self or all the aspects of the self at once (De Villiers-Botha & Cilliers, 2010).

The role of the environment is appropriated according to the extent of the interaction with the self and that of the boundary between the system and its environment (Morin, 2008). Pointing to Morin (1992), Woermann (2013: 39) argues "that the boundary between a system and its environment should be treated both as a real, physical category, and a mental category or ideal model". She further, explains that boundaries should be understood as both function of the activity of the system itself, and at the same time as a product of that which describes it. She concludes by explaining that we should not see boundaries of systems as described according to the boundary model of what we have demarcated. Rather, it should be seen as Cilliers (2001: 141) remarked: "as something that constitutes that which is bounded". Therefore, it is limiting to reduce your understanding of yourself to any of your conscious "desires, needs, communications, fears and expectations" or "your complete history as a series of distinct events that chronologically make up your personal narrative" (De Villiers-Botha & Cilliers, 2010): 35). A complex understanding reveals our limited to grasp the extent to which we have access to our conscious parts of the self, and therefore that a complete understanding

of the self is unknowable or not available to our consciousness (De Villiers-Botha & Cilliers, 2010).

The preceding characteristics present an alternative view of identity from a critical complexity perspective. This conceptualisation of identity offers deeper insights into how one could develop new conceptual framings of the notion of change agents. Before exploring some specific alternative framings, it is important to understand the *process of identity formation* from a critical complexity-informed perspective.

Woermann (2010b: 169–176) describes the process of identity formation as relationally constituted in the following ways:

- as a result of bounded differences and interconnectivities (bounded relations to that which is different and the same).
- through the process of creating boundaries by framing differences in terms of distinctions.
- by boundaries which both shape identity as activity and simultaneously can also be described as a product of the system.
- through constrained or bounded differences and these are a necessary condition for meaning.
- through elements of sameness that interact to create distinctions and comparisons though recognisable identity structures so that components can connect in meaningful ways.
- not only through connections or interactions (the processes of recognising differences through interconnectivity) but also through the iterable identity (addressable) of components and subsystems.
- from the system's capacity to create identity of components through interconnectivities between components, and at the same time, through the process of emergence facilitating the identity of the system as a whole.
- through non-linear interconnectivity of the components of the system, thereby creating dynamic structures and patterns of continuity and transformation.
- recursive temporal (organising) and structural (organised) processes of identity emergence through the interactions of components of the system that produce the system, which in turn produces the components that produced it — an organised and organising whole that feeds back to produce the components.

These descriptions of the process of identity formation from a complexity perspective are important and should be explored in terms of its implications for change agency. Due to limitations of space, I only draw on some descriptions here, which serves in offering a way to interpret the participants in the current study regarding their awareness of a complexity perspective on identity formation.

### 4.3 FOUR ITERATIVE PRINCIPLES FOR INFORMING A CRITICAL COMPLEXITY-INFORMED FRAMING OF CHANGE AGENTS

From the preceding discussion on a critical complexity-informed framing of identity and identity formation, I derive four iterative principles, which could inform a complexity-based understanding of change agents. These four iterative principles are premised on a relational understanding of identity<sup>45</sup> are:

(i) Embracing complexity thinking

When thinking about change agents and the organisations they work in, an alternative logic to the commonly used binary approaches should be applied. Change agents should instead apply non-dual ("both/and") modes of thought when reflecting on identity formation processes and change agency praxis. This realisation includes the capacity to reflect on the necessary openness to variation and diversity for creative, co-evolutionary and emergent change, i.e. a movement away from cause-effect thinking which reduces problems to independent parts that views change as a succession of deterministic interventions. This principle entails having the ability to reflect and cognitively integrate the inter-related, messy, and complex nature of reality inherent in change processes, while at the same time realising that as change agents, change practitioners have several inter-related irreducible worldview and identities that should be understood in terms of a network of relations.

Becoming conscious of this non-dual way of thinking implies being engaged with the radical perception of the inner arc of experience in relation to the outer arc of experience and action. Inner engagement relates to being present or presencing<sup>46</sup> (Senge *et al.*, 2005; Scharmer, 2009) by means of gaining entry into the inner experience through empathy, harmonic resonance, and attunement by participating in the encounter with self, other and the world at large, while at the same time maintaining awareness, or prehension of evolving patterns of engagement in change agent praxis and practice. This both/and approach to perception requires a radical openness to the meaning inherent in the evolving patterns of engagement with self, others and the system as a whole. It also includes a simultaneous managing of conceptual labels through processes of mirroring and modelling the perceptions which are embedded in the process of relating, i.e. holding lightly the immediate stereotypes, images and understanding which inform primary immediate and imaginal meaning.

Another way of describing complexity thinking in change agents has to do with the capacity to do conceptual re-visioning of the perception of their inner and outer arcs of experience and

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<sup>45</sup> Please see Chapter 4.2.1.

<sup>46</sup> According to Otto Scharmer (2009), presencing means liberating one's perception from the 'prison' of the past and then letting it operate from the field of the future.

action, by creatively remaining open to the relationality of the context. It also means being aware of the alternatives which may be concealed in reframing the assumptions inherent in the conceptual context and the conjoined perspectives.

(ii) Navigating ambiguity and incongruence

This principle requires change agents to become aware of the antagonisms governing their modes of thinking, being-becoming and doing and relates to navigating the incongruence, incoherence, inauthenticity, and a lack of integrity between action and reflection.

Important here is navigating the internal ambiguity and incongruence during times of stability and instability despite the non-linear, non-incremental quality often experienced in change processes. This entails being aware of and reflecting on the intentions, motivations, beliefs, sense of purpose and underlying values that inform worldviews as embodied in experience and action. Simultaneously, navigating ambiguity and incongruence also relates to becoming aware of the lack of congruence, coherence, authenticity and integrity in the different facets of experience and action and therefore self-correcting accordingly to achieve a dynamic balance, harmony and acting with irony despite the antagonisms.

Navigating ambiguity and incongruence is a necessary condition for change agents to embrace in themselves (inner arc of experience) and to facilitate in change processes (outer arc of experience) as it provides simultaneous enablement and constraining of qualitative differences (structure and fluidity). It also highlights the ability of change agents to deal with the paradoxical nature of complex systems in that they need to facilitate, determine and co-define boundaries, while at the same time remaining radically open to the (im)possibility of conceiving, modelling or co-designing such boundaries within organisational systems. Change agents that learn how to navigate ambiguity and incongruence in a radically open way allow for the formation of structure, meaning and emergence in the relational networks of the organisation. Therefore, change agents need to understand the importance of the notion of navigating ambiguity and incongruence through processes of iterability and interconnectivity amongst organisational members.

(iii) Awareness of relational constitutedness

This principle entails change agents to reflect on and foster awareness of how phenomena are relationally constituted, i.e. an awareness of the underlying organisational mechanisms (whether with self, other or system) that cause certain behaviour, structures and events to come about and be what they are. Relations have ontological status. This implies "I am both a 'we' and a 'they'; an 'inside' and an 'outside'" (Woermann, 2013: 174). Thus, change agents



and organisations are never reducible to individuals or groups; neither are they insiders or outsiders to the change process.

A further implication entails becoming aware of the underlying relational character in identity formation, which occurs via behavioural responses and communicative acts, and therefore both formal and informal processes are at play. This, therefore, leaves the ideas of clear distinctions and boundaries between "I", "we" and "they" unfounded (Woermann, 2013: 174). Change agents are relationally constituted and cannot be viewed as isolated, objective, rational and deterministic change actors.

The interconnected nature of relations between change agents and organisational members implies difference, not only of type but also of quality. Qualitative differences between change agents ("I"), organisations ("we") and organisational members ("they") allow for characteristic conflict, power differentials and patterns of inclusion and exclusion in relationships. The cumulative effect of these relationships comprises simultaneously enabling and constraining, formal and informal, co-operative and competitive processes. The "we" identity, and therefore the organisational identity, emerges through the co-operation and competition of individuals who differentiate themselves through processes of relating (the use of language) to achieve coherent patterns (shared goals) and thereby achieving a sense of purpose (being-together) through the process of emergence.

Organisational identity formation happens by means of narrative processes of relating (storytelling, myths) iterated themes and by co-creating the future and perpetually reconstructing the past, change agents have to reveal the organisational system's ability to conciliate differences and dissent (diversity), whilst maintaining its functional unity of purpose or sense of identity — which Painter-Morland (2008) calls normative congruence according to Woermann (2013). Change agents co-create normative congruence through the iterability of the narratives they hear and tell themselves and each other by means of interconnected processes of relating, i.e. facilitating relational constitutedness. Fostering normative congruence requires the facilitation of differences and dissent in the inner and outer arcs of their experiences or relating. Change agents should not interpret organisational identity as equal to individual identity; but rather as constituting interconnected individuals who are dynamically differentiated over local contexts and who contribute to the diversity that is required for the survival of the organisation.

Change agents facilitate organisational identity (relational constitutedness) through the communicative act of language. This helps them to determine the sense of structure or boundedness within an organisation, thereby, in turn, allowing communities of practice to

develop through the interactive web of relations by communicating distinctions in and between praxis and practices.

Organisational identity is determined by change agents being open to the possibility of action or inaction through assessing their boundaries. Organisational identity is constituted through language. Therefore interactions in and between change agents and various communities of practice are characterised by continuous power relations. These power relations later present incoherent forms of iterative themes and patterns of narrative.

It is change agents' task to assess the iterative themes and patterns of narrative in order to determine the quality of relational constitutedness or the lack thereof in the inner or outer arc of experience within the complex organisational systems at play.

(iv) Resilient heuristics

Resilience in terms of both change agent identity and organisational identity relates to the constraining abilities of individuals that are retroactively interconnected to patterns and themes of narrative. Weak normative congruency reinforces incongruent narratives and results in negative feedback loops throughout the organisational system.

Change agent identity and organisational identity resilience are cultivated through making sense of and attaching meaning to the quality of normative congruence within individual components and organisational systems as a whole, that is, embracing complexity thinking, navigating ambiguity and incongruence, and awareness of relational constitutedness. The capacity of the change agent, organisational members, and the organisation to adapt to changing work practices in complex and temporal interactions between stakeholders and structures, results in change agent identity resilience and organisational identity resilience. Therefore, change agents can foster resilience by facilitating the complex 'I' in a qualitative and meaningful way in organisations.

In terms of complex 'I', this implies the capacity to co-create resilient heuristics which adapt to and emerge from navigating contextually appropriate ways of thinking, being-becoming and doing in inner and outer arcs of experience and action. Change agents develop resilient heuristics by embracing and fostering the capacity to employ complexity thinking, navigating ambiguity and incongruence, and awareness of their relationally constituted nature. By acting upon these resilient retroactive and self-reflexive heuristics, they can facilitate transformative processes of evolving engagement in their encounter with self, other and the whole system.

The notion of transformation should be interpreted in terms of the dynamic non-linear interactions between various competing and co-operating stakeholders taking place through a web of feedback loops. This has the effect of surprising and/or novel forms of relating in the organisational system as a whole. Since transformations cannot be predicted in advance, it makes it, impossible for change agents to comprehend where the identity constraints of organisations and their members lie. Also, because change agents cannot envisage transformation they need to act with modesty towards their engagement with the transformative process.

The preceding principles present a critical complexity-informed understanding of change agents and their roles in fostering organisational identity. Moreover, compared to traditional approaches, it provides an alternative framing of change agents to individual and organisational identity. It also suggests a re-think of the traditional understanding of change agents as informed by current organisation theory, OCD and change agents' roles. This re-framing opens up the possibilities for also re-framing current foundationalist conceptualisations of individual and organisational spirituality.

#### **4.4 SUMMARY**

In this chapter, I argued that the complexity-based paradigm opens up the question of how humans should act in the face of the realities of complexity. Critical complexity as envisioned by Cilliers (2016) and built upon by Preiser (2012) and Woermann (2010a) holds specific implications for identity and change agency. I explained how critical complexity has informed identity theory, and challenges current notions of the self and envisions the complex 'I' as a provisional ethical and relational position in being human in a complex world. Taking the implications of the complex 'I' into account, I applied it to determine four iterative principles for understanding change agents, whereby I suggested the implications for re-imagining the role of change agents in change interventions.

CHAPTER 5

TOWARDS A COMPLEX  
UNDERSTANDING OF  
SPIRITUAL IDENTITY PRACTIS:  
RE-IMAGINING THE CHANGE  
AGENT

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*The purpose of inquiry is not so much an attempt to converge at a single point called Truth, but that the process of enquiry is a matter of continually reweaving webs of beliefs to produce new and novel insights into the human condition*  
(Chia, 1996: 15).

## **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this chapter is to apply a critical complexity lens by means of a conceptual reconfiguration of the notion 'spirituality'. Also, I intend to explore the implications of such a framing for re-imagining the currently limited understandings of the change agent and a possible alternative spiritual identity praxis. This requires a re-think of the way in which scholars and practitioners use knowledge in scientific inquiries as applied to spirituality.

Critical complexity as a conceptual exploratory framework (or mode of inquiry) holds key insights for understanding spirituality. This is not only because the concepts mutually inform each other (Sheep & Foreman, 2012), but more importantly since it presents a provisional post-reductionist and post-foundationalist view of spirituality highlighting inter-relatedness and complementarity with the complex 'I'. Subsequently, I explore what an initial understanding of a critical complexity-informed spiritual identity praxis might entail and what is meant by alternative ways of 'being-becoming praxis'. I suggest reflective signposts and integrative movements pertaining to a re-imagined critical complexity-informed change agent and being-becoming praxis (also referred to as spiritual identity praxis by the research participants) and the possible re-imagination of the role of the change agent with OCD practitioners.

From this alternative framework of spiritual identity praxis, I apply the notion and its possible implications in order to re-imagine the role of the change agent in OCD. Finally, I propose that a re-imagination of change agents is most appropriately conceptualised by employing the term 'Systems Change Curators' (SCC) from the ensuing critical complexity lens.

## **5.2 INTEGRATING COMPLEX 'I' WITH SPIRITUAL IDENTITY PRACTICE: TOWARDS A POST-REDUCTIONIST SPIRITUALLY INCLUSIVE NOTION OF THE CHANGE AGENT.**

The argument of the study thus far has been that the mechanistic-materialistic model of change practice and praxis has dominated current change agency. This view is grounded in Newtonian science underlining scientific management, which encourages simplifications and subscribes to the idea that a certain level of predictability and order exists in the world. This view is useful in ordered circumstances but becomes redundant in a complex globalised and rapidly changing world. Change agents are believed to be rational decision-makers who can make logical and objective assessments of situations and contexts. It is also assumed that they should take a well-reasoned course of action that is explainable to others, which is free of contradictions and that could satisfy a number of preconceived qualifications or rules. Consequently, change is seen as a process that happens through deliberate, conscious and purposeful action.

This study departs from the argument that the Newtonian and atomistic approaches have contributed to the failure of change approaches because they do not take account of the inherently complex nature of change. In this view change agency is limited to a mechanistic, materialistic, universalist and deterministic understanding, which prioritises change agency practice. This study highlights the argument that making a distinction between change agent practice and praxis in understanding OCD, provides a generative position from where to launch change interventions. The notion of 'praxis' entails a distinct mode of practical knowledge or wisdom (*phronesis*) that is neither cognitive, nor technical in nature, but rather defined and displayed by the kind of person that one is, and is becoming. It discloses a kind of practical-moral knowledge that derives from contemplation and modes of critical self-reflection from where the intention to act is born. Praxis reveals intentionality, our mode of being-becoming and the deep-seated meaning that drive our skills and techniques in action (practice). Therefore, this study draws on the argument that it is insufficient to only focus change interventions on the development of skills, knowledge and behavioural competencies of change agents (outer arc of inquiry). What is absent in this foundational view of change agency, is the praxis aspects of being an OCD practitioner, i.e. the change agents' praxis beyond traditional knowledge and skills that reflect the quality of being human or their ways of being-becoming in a complex world (inner arc of inquiry). Hence, I claim that the quality of change agents' ways of being-becoming related to the inner arc of inquiry in the change initiative has not been explored from a complexity perspective. How these inner dimensions of the change agent reveal intentionality, meaning making and practical wisdom can contribute to an extended or re-imagined view of the change agent. Such a sensitivity for particularities of the complex inner-world of change agents have implications for the role of the OCD practitioner prior to considering change agent practices.

My concern is that competency, knowledge and skills frameworks will not necessarily improve change agent praxis beyond technical and cognitive improvements, as they do not deal with the underlying assumption of the rational, decisive and deterministic executor of top-down change and underlying praxis dimensions of change actors. I would argue instead that a more complexity-based argument is required to re-think and re-imagine the role of the change agent that allows for a complex understanding of human agency and the various implications they might include for change agency. Alternative ways of being-becoming might include implications for the roles change agents take up in change interventions.

Next, I provide a critical complexity-informed discussion pertaining to spirituality and spiritual identity praxis.

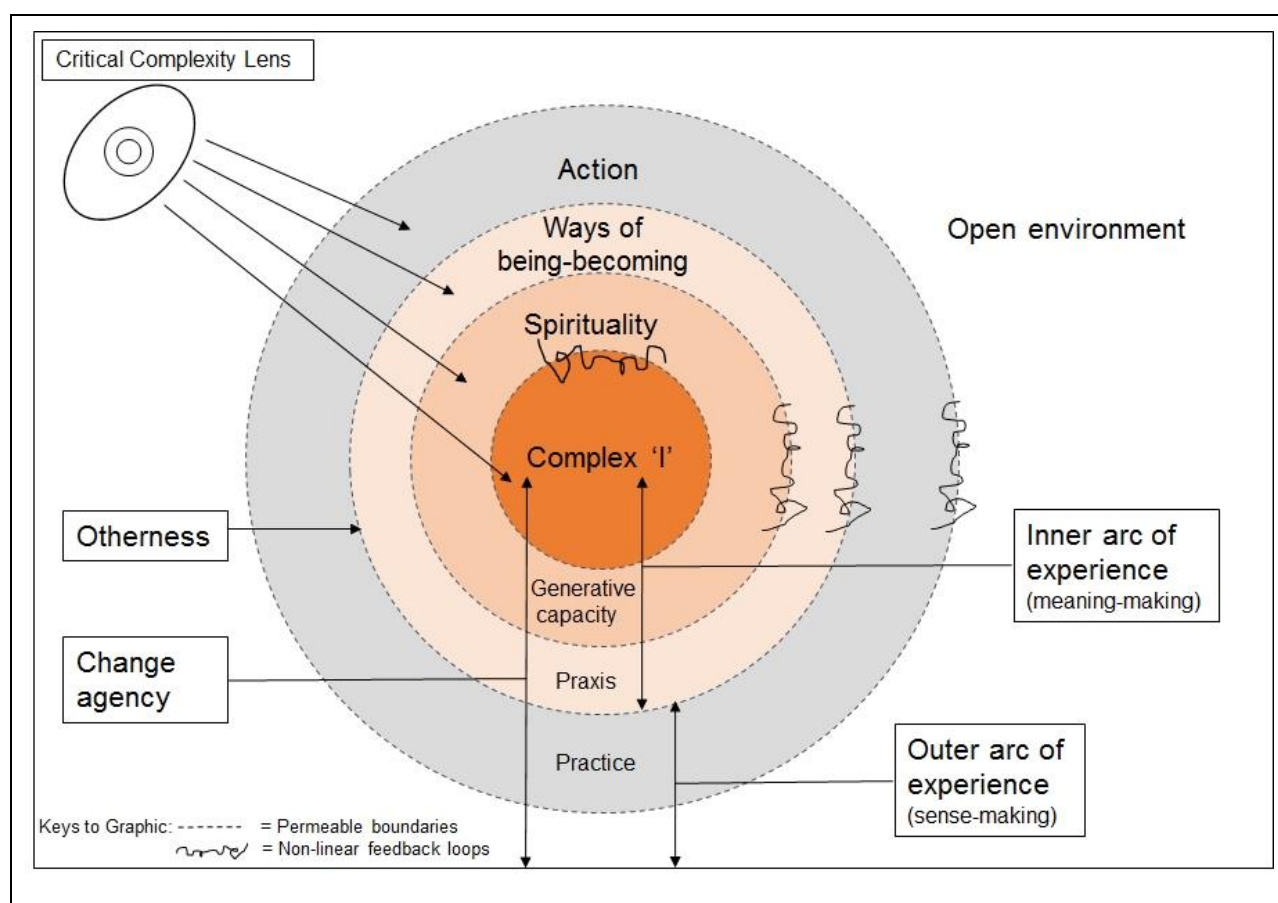
### **5.3 TOWARDS AN ALTERNATIVE UNDERSTANDING OF WAYS OF BEING-BECOMING PRAXIS**

In this section, I explore the implications of a critical complexity-informed lens for the concepts spirituality, spiritual identity praxis, and consequently, for re-imagining the change agent. Bearing the dynamics and demands of critical complexity in mind, I do not attempt to present a framework or

substantial definition or theory regarding a critical complexity-informed spirituality. A detailed discussion of a critical complexity-informed spirituality is omitted here, as it constitutes a separate research project. What I do however present is the implications for applying a critical complexity framing to the understanding of spirituality in relation to the complex 'I'.

### 5.3.1 Applying a Critical Complexity Framing to the Concept of Spirituality

The critical complexity lens enables us to acknowledge that the notion of identity cannot be disconnected and isolated from the notion of spirituality when thinking about how personhood is formed. The notions of identity and spirituality should not be seen as separate phenomenon. Accordingly, spirituality entails the resilient generative capacity to embrace the tensions of complex 'I'; while simultaneously also implying the integrative force which organises human personhood within the evolving patterns of engagement with self, others and the system as a whole. As I explain below, a critical complexity-informed lens of complex 'I' and the concurrent re-framing of the concept of 'spirituality' holds possibilities for re-framing ways of what, I call 'being-becoming praxis', for change agents. Figure 4.1 is an attempt to illustrate the dynamics and dimensions involved in a critical complexity-informed framing of complex 'I', spirituality and ways of being-becoming praxis.



**Figure 5.1: A critical complexity-informed framing of complex 'I', spirituality and ways of being-becoming**

Source: Author



A critical complexity approach to spirituality challenges pervading frameworks for understanding the notion of spirituality, which traditionally have drawn on, for example; dogmatism, empiricism, holism, instrumentalism, utilitarianism and analytical rationality as found in various foundationalist descriptions of the concept (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2010; Case *et al.*, 2012; Heelas, 2009; Driscoll & Wiebe, 2007; Zhuravleva & Jones, 2006).

Critical complexity implies a post-reductionistic and post-foundationalist understanding of spirituality that seeks to go beyond atomistic thinking and mechanistic-materialistic interpretations of individual and/or organisational spirituality.

A valuable contribution has been made by Boulton and Allen (2007) who argue that a complexity thinking perspective provides a new basis for our understanding of spirituality. They suggest that such a perspective may introduce the following suppositions: (i) the paradox of the individual in the context of interconnectivity, (ii) a movement beyond the quest for an end design (final answers on the existence of life, consciousness or God), (iii) the search for uncovering and questioning implicit beliefs that become moral issues (the making conscious of our beliefs), and (iv) a new agency of thinking (the exploration of complex thought in the realm of spirituality).

This perspective on spirituality addresses important considerations for re-interpreting the concept. It implies a re-thinking of traditional notions of spirituality<sup>47</sup> and is valuable because it serves as a platform for further integrating these understandings from a critical complexity perspective. As I already explained<sup>48</sup>, complexity thinking is a natural outflow of the complexity-based paradigm. However, it goes beyond applying complexity thinking to fields of study and topics of research since it suggests a normative turn in the study of complexity (Cilliers & Preiser, 2010, 2016). The notion of critical complexity is not only interested in the re-organisation of knowledge (epistemology) or how humans think, but is also concerned with the nature of reality (ontology) or how human beings probe into the ethical implications of being human; that is, what this means in terms of the lived experience in a complex universe.

In light of Preiser's (2012) key implications and contributions of critical complexity<sup>49</sup>, I believe a critical complexity understanding of spirituality should focus on:

- (i) introducing alternatives to current binary thinking models in theories of spirituality by valuing the tensions (e.g. transcendence-immanence, One-Many) and thereby guiding new types of thinking that are inherently relational,

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<sup>47</sup> Please see Chapter 2.7 and 2.8.5.

<sup>48</sup> Please see Chapter 3.

<sup>49</sup> Please see Chapter 3: Section 3.2.8.

- (ii) re-establishing alternative ways of being and becoming by re-purposing nature as a source of meaning and orientation in an embodied eco-spirituality,<sup>50</sup> thereby facilitating the re-discovery of humans' connectedness with nature, the other, and all systems they co-participate in,
- (iii) critiquing and revisiting human spirituality/ies in order to reflect the reality of complexity by re-framing previous or current belief systems, experiences, practices or knowledge that do not model, reveal or embody the ethos and ethics of the dynamics of critical complexity-based ontology, epistemology, and praxis, and
- (iv) reflecting on new forms of spirituality and futures in a self-reflexive manner, whilst continually remaining critical of those that do not authentically and congruently present a provisional spiritual ethics of change agency relating to a complex spiritual ethics of human becoming.

In my view, a complexity thinking perspective applied to spirituality should thus move beyond the binary polarities of traditional notions of spirituality. In addition, a critical complexity-informed spirituality could acknowledge the economy of difference built into the universe. Also, spirituality from this perspective holds lightly the idea that there is indeterminacy in the heart of the universe. Therefore, critical complexity-informed spirituality enables navigating the uncertainty, ambiguity and vulnerability of being human in a complex world, while at the same time realising the temporality and need for structure in which humans co-participate.

Critical complexity-informed spirituality enables reflection and engagement with the human and lived experience of complexity. It enables us to reflect on from where to consider our immaterial place in the world, that is, how we are constituted relationally. Moreover, it represents the force-field of tensions in which conscious and unconscious selves are called to sense and probe identity and how humans are situated towards others, as well as their mental paradigms and views of reality. In addition, it allows us to adopt a stance towards that which both ruptures and harmonises 'what is' (the present, the not yet, the invisible) and embraces a form of openness to the rupturing-harmonising experience (the complete-incompleteness and emergent nature of the universe). I believe that a critical complexity-informed spirituality has a generative capacity providing people with the ability to be profoundly open to sense and engage with the complexity of the human condition. This implies, providing people with the ability to be open towards a radical commitment to difference and the contextuality contained in the world. Finally, a critical complexity-informed perspective implies a commitment to the continual reconstruction of ideas on change, transformation and a re-creation of these notions and at the same time, through engagement with all the antagonisms contained in the human experience, an awareness of and openness towards the evolutionary potential of the present, the not yet, and the invisible.

Therefore, to be spiritual from a critical complexity-informed perspective means to navigate the tension of the lived experience of critical complex 'I' (relational self) between the inner and outer arc

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<sup>50</sup> Please note the importance of deep ecology in offering a normative critique of human activity and institutions, and seeks a fundamental change in the dominant worldview and social structure of modernity (Naess and Rothenberg (1990)).

of experience of the material and immaterial worlds (see Figure 5.1). This navigation includes an openness to surprise and realisation of new worlds that are possible, despite the rupturing and harmonising of the present complex world. This implies surrendering oneself (critical complex 'I') to the complex systems of the present (economic, political, social, ecological) with the idea that new worlds can be opened up, but at the same time giving oneself over (radical openness) to the reconstruction of these very new worlds. Moreover, this suggests constantly giving oneself up and over to the process of re-creation, development and transformation, rather than merely accepting the idea that the universe is what it is (everything that happens just happens), that is, falling into the cogs of the clockwork universe.

Flowing from the above, spirituality relates to experiences, awareness, relations and processes that are in excess of that which can be measured by the senses or advanced technology, although endeavours towards modelling should despite limitations never be ceased (Cilliers, 1998). Spirituality provides the means by which we navigate these tensions in an unobjectified, contextualised and self-critical manner. Also, it offers the ability to embrace the embodied and embedded uncertainty, ambiguity and vulnerability of the human condition, in its relation to what Bhaskar (2008) calls the real, the actual, and the empirical dimensions of reality. Whilst spirituality represents the generative force that integrates the rupturing and harmonising into a congruent whole, it, at the same time, holds lightly that which seems complete.

This critical complexity-informed interpretation of spirituality allows an exploratory stance towards the unknown without clinging onto new foundations that reduces the complexity of reality. It becomes the stance, aptitude and attitude one takes up by means of falling into the vulnerability of being exposed to the tensions at play in the midst of existential day-to-day realities. It has to do with the qualitative stance of breathing through the lived experience of uncertainty, ambiguity, and vulnerability in its dynamic tension with structures of power, control and the search for certainty. It helps us navigating pathways to explore post-foundationalist understandings of spirituality amidst the tension between immaterial dimensions of the world and the material lived experience of being human. Finally, it provides the generative capacity or ability to be in the tension of binaries and suggests an openness for what the creative tension brings forth, i.e. the way in which complex 'I' make visible the self-organisation, emergence, non-linear interactions and contextuality of networks of relations of the 'I', the 'we' and the 'they' which informs being-becoming.

### **5.3.2 Towards Alternative Ways of Being-becoming Praxis**

A critical complexity-informed spirituality invites the change agent to embrace new ways of being-becoming. While I have, in an effort to describe ways of being-becoming proposed spiritual identity praxis<sup>51</sup>, I feel, viewed from a critical complexity-informed lens, it is necessary to revisit this here. In

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<sup>51</sup> Please see Chapters 1 and 2.

light of the tendency to interpret spiritual identity praxis as three separate phenomena, I rather use 'being-becoming praxis' from here on end.

Being-becoming praxis<sup>52</sup> relates to how we are constituted by standing in the tensions and contextual experience of the rupturing and harmonising of the world. It entails how we judge, perceive, interpret, and portray the interaction between the inner and outer arc of experience (see Figure 5.1). It also interactively relates to alternative praxis (not merely technical or practical skills, but practical wisdom revealing intentionality in ways of doing informed by a complex way of being-becoming). Being-becoming praxis implies a transgressive new ethos and aesthetics of living in a complex world.

A new way of being-becoming could be portrayed in this radical stance of openness to the rupturing and harmonising of the complex world in its embedded and embodied relational praxis. Therefore, being-becoming praxis implies a constant giving up of oneself to both the process of reconstruction of new worlds and the re-creation, development and transformation of new emerging ones. Embracing the incommensurability and indeterminacy in the universe being-becoming praxis implies a commitment to a certain critical stance that is qualitatively different to other types of being-becoming. Being-becoming praxis entails the intertwined and interlinked post-reductionist way of interpreting the immaterial within the material lived experience of the relational self. Thus, it is interested in indeterminacy and incommensurability of the world; embracing and enacting the idea of a non-totalising universe, one that has built in antagonisms, i.e. the lived reality of the inner arc in relation to the outer arc of experience in its embodied-embedded nature. As such, being-becoming praxis makes visible this critical complexity-informed praxis in its engagement with action in its greater embedded environments.

The inter-related nature of identity (critical complex 'I') and spirituality provides a basis (alternative way of being-becoming) for re-imagining the change agents' role, and how she/he conceives their change agency to bring about change. The critical complex 'I' provides a base for a complex understanding of ways of being-becoming.

In this context being-becoming praxis seeks a non-dual mode of thinking that is no longer 'either-or', but 'both-and'. It implies a reconnection of the relational self with this kind of relational spirituality<sup>53</sup> that seeks the promotion of human flourishing. Also, it implies a disengagement with foundationalist and reductionist systems of relating, which dehumanise human agency. Change agents embracing critical complexity-informed ways of being-becoming praxis move beyond linear causal assumptions of change processes and discontinue the application of mechanistic-materialistic interpretations of

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<sup>52</sup> Praxis is not merely practice; it refers to the practicalities such as skill, technique and cognitive knowledge. Praxis implies the intention of actions as related to meaning and destiny, i.e. praxis reveals intentionality, our mode of being-becoming, the deep-seated meaning and practical wisdom in the inner arc of experience that drive our skills, knowledge and technique in action (practice) Schwandt (2007).

<sup>53</sup> Relational spirituality is synonymous with critical complexity-informed spirituality as discussed in Section 5.3.1.

the self, others and wider systemic networks. However, more than simply providing an alternative to atomistic thinking and the Newtonian-based paradigm, engaging critical complexity allows change agents to embrace and embody an alternative praxis, i.e. a different way of being-becoming. This relational way of being-becoming in the world acknowledges that whenever we choose a position, the position we take is provisional — as in Cilliers' (2016) ethics of provisionality — because of the complex 'I' and critical complexity-informed spirituality i.e. ways of being-becoming praxis.

Critical complexity implies that understanding ways of being-becoming praxis should follow principles which are in principle revisable (Cilliers, 2011b). This is in line with Cilliers' (2010b) provisional imperative in terms of ethics as a result of complexity. Hence, critical complexity strengthens our being-becoming praxis through a continual re-visioning of what is essentially meaningful with regard to our lived material embodied experience of both material and immaterial worlds. A critical complexity point of view challenges the current status quo of our being-becoming praxis, i.e. how we make meaning of that which we believe, experience, know and enact with, in the context of uncertainty, ambiguity and vulnerability of the human condition. Thus, being-becoming praxis implies an understanding of meaning-making holding that a certain economy of differences is involved in the process of generating meaning (Cilliers, 2010a).

Critical complexity-informed being-becoming praxis actively pursues a meaningful economy of differences (Cilliers & Preiser, 2010) in order to create the environment for constrained differences — which in turn, allow for meaningful change, development and transformation, i.e. an alternative portrayal of complex 'I' and critical complexity-informed spirituality in the domain of meaning-making praxis.

At this point, it is important to point out that no description of being-becoming praxis can simply reinforce that which is current in change agency praxis. As Cilliers (2011b: 37) explains: "we should not be coerced, frightened or shamed into a state where we relinquish being transgressively critical". He explains that we have to remember that our actions are legitimised by current structures of power. Therefore, it is in the nature of these structures to maintain conditions, which provide them with a platform from which to operate. However, Cilliers (2011b) emphasises a double movement in that we have to act beyond the limits determined by the status quo. He argues that the transgression itself should be provisional in the sense that it would have to be transgressed again. In order to keep the double movement alive, a critical position has to be ironical (Cilliers, 2011b). In terms of the being-becoming praxis, this means that change agents that take up this navigational stance will inadvertently demonstrate transgressively critical ways of being-becoming.

Following Cilliers' (2011b) argument, I propose that a critical-complexity-informed being-becoming praxis should maintain neither the current state of affairs in OCD and change agent praxis nor any state resulting from change agents' transformation attempts. This is because there is no justification for an objective description of critical complexity-informed ways of being-becoming praxis. When we take up the position of being-becoming, we cannot take the position of others, or our own positions,

as the final measure of anything. Therefore, acting from this position entails the realisation that our ways of being-becoming praxis do not make visible the entire spectrum of complexities involved in our inner arc of experience nor in our actions i.e. change agency. This is why Cilliers (2011b) suggests we have to think and act with some compassion towards ourselves and others due to the unexpected irony our actions might bring forth.

This does not mean that change agents should avoid judgements or actions, it just means that when they do so, they should act in ways that make visible the relational constitutedness, generative capacity and positionality of critical complexity-informed spirituality. This allows for an alternative agency (new ways of being-becoming) from a deep sense of humility because this type of change agency is provisional regarding our actions and judgments, i.e. a perpetual scrutiny of our ways of being-becoming praxis. If change agents do not act from a deep sense of humility, they might take a certain position too seriously, and become overly confident in their change agency, which consequently might lead to introducing new dogma (Cilliers, 2001b). Therefore, critical complexity-informed ways of being-becoming praxis are at the same time critical of its networks of relations and self-reflexive of the meaning-making frameworks change agents apply in OCD.

Similar to Cilliers' (2011b) notion of critical complexity entailing a double-bind between self-criticality and self-reflexivity is Heron's (2006: 13) critical subjectivity and critical inter-subjectivity, a form of "vigilant discrimination that monitors what is going on in the light of critical standards and keeps it free of emotional distortion". Being-becoming praxis in organisations could promote authenticity, coherence, and integrity within organisational identity/ies and spirituality/ies formation whilst at the same time, maintaining a critical revisable stance towards actions and a radical openness to emergent new values, actions, worldviews and ethics, i.e. a critical inter-subjectivity.

Critical complexity-informed ways of being-becoming praxis open pathways for the re-imagination of how to deal with complex change processes in the sense that we cannot calculate what will or should happen which then urges us to take creative leaps so as to anticipate change (Cilliers & Preiser, 2010; Woermann, 2013). Also, critical complexity-informed ways of being-becoming praxis actively re-imagines the emerging future by fostering alternative creative activities, including interesting aesthetical diversions that open up the possibility of imagining better, more sustainable futures. In line with Cilliers (2011b), making being-becoming praxis visible requires a critical stance which is simultaneously provisional, transgressive, ironical and creative. This should be seen as challenging and liberating, implying an alternative agency, which is radically open to emerging futures.

It is important to keep in mind that acknowledging change agency's embeddedness in complexity, and implying a critical stance should not be seen as highlighting a number of practical problems, but rather pointing out that we are confronted with questions about how the human spirit is constituted and interacts. Therefore, change agents should not first fix *wicked problems* in order to become better human beings. Rather, they first become better human beings as part of the emerging change process in addressing wicked problems. This implies ways of being-becoming praxis that embody



an alternative to current change agency praxis, which goes beyond instrumental, utilitarian, mechanistic and materialistic approaches that dehumanise and reduce human relationality. Rational change actors striving towards a homeostatic system cannot solve wicked problems in a linear, deterministic, rationalised manner. A fundamental shift in being human is required, one which particularly entails a critical complexity-informed understanding of spirituality. Such a being-becoming praxis goes beyond mere technical skills, one-dimensional knowledge or technocratic competency. Such alternative change agency highlights the need for ways of being-becoming praxis in change agents that are simultaneously transgressive, self-reflexive and critical of the inner and outer arcs of experience.

Rohr's (2006) remark that change agents should not think themselves into new ways of doing but should rather live themselves into new ways of thinking through an alternative re-positioning (being-becoming praxis) that relates to the inner arc of experience is an important one. I explain subsequently<sup>54</sup> that an action research approach with critical complexity-informed principles and processes of co-operative inquiry offers a pathway to explore spirituality and ways of being-becoming praxis in change agency.

#### **5.4 TOWARDS RE-IMAGINING THE CHANGE AGENT**

In this section, I discuss what a complex understanding of being-becoming praxis means and outline its implications when re-imagining the role of change agents in OCD.

Critical complexity-informed being-becoming praxis re-imagines change as a particular form of emergence. Viewed this way, change represents a destabilising factor in organisations that constantly adjusts economic, social and technological boundaries. Because of its perpetual nature change threatens individual and organisational identity necessitating constant transformations with a participatory vision of steering the systemic shifts in individual and organisational underpinnings, that is, mental models, management routines, and resource flows (Westley *et al.*, 2013). An alternative description of complexity-informed being-becoming praxis requires a different response, which will not only probe and sense problems at hand but also offer a qualitatively alternative change agency. This implies realising change agents cannot predict or programme pre-planned responses to apply to or fix current systemic issues of complex change processes. The dynamics of self-organisation and emergent properties of complex systems makes such an approach to change redundant.

As suggested by Snowden and Boone (2007), change agents should go beyond emergent practice seeking contextually appropriate responses to change based on forming practice heuristics. A participatory social curation praxis that could facilitate qualitatively different and meaningful responses that might include spiritual identity praxis like compassionate disruption (Holman, 2010),

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<sup>54</sup> Please see Chapter 6.



and special inquiry skills<sup>55</sup> (Heron, 1996) should be examined. Special inquiry skills include being present, imaginal openness, bracketing, reframing dynamic congruence, emotional competence, non-attachment, and meta-intentionality and seeking out being and becoming that embraces the uniqueness of complexity.

I believe that in order to improve their change agency praxis OCD practitioners need to tacitly unearth, develop and become competent in forms of social and systems change. More importantly, these forms of social and systems change suggest a metamorphoses of human becoming in complex OCD praxis that bring about a qualitatively different mode of relating. Such re-imagined critical complexity-informed being-becoming modalities have the potential to address current shortcomings and limitations in OCD approaches and support the development challenges of organisations in the Anthropocene, which highlight the urgency for a more complete alternative change agency praxis.

#### **5.4.1 Re-imagining the Role of the Change Agent in OCD as Systems Change Curators**

To enable a more explicit description of what I mean by alternative critical complexity-informed ways of being-becoming praxis for change agency praxis, I describe current meaning-making frameworks that allow practitioners to gain ubiquitous insights into contextually appropriate action in complex systems. In terms of change agents, this means that a critical complexity-informed being-becoming praxis means an acknowledgement of the temporality of knowledge, insights and approaches to OCD praxis.

Bushe and Marshak (2015: 44) explain that the classical approach to OCD follows a “single planned change” approach, while typically dealing with a plurality of forces that can drive the organisation in infinite directions. This expands when dealing with the complexity of larger organisations. Snowden and Boone (2007) suggest that a more appropriate approach, when dealing with complex phenomena, is to allow for complex emergent practice, because it takes into account the characteristics of complexity, e.g. self-organisation, emergence, non-linearity and contextuality. Therefore, in my view, a more complete alternative to the ‘single planned change’ approach should contain a movement beyond its current assumptions which assume cause-and-effect, relationships to be clear, apparent or discoverable. Dettmer (2011: 14) explains: “[I]n the complex domain, the knowledge of experts may be of limited value, and the effectiveness of cause-and-effect analysis is likely to be marginalised, or of short duration.” In addition, the “the image of change as a unitary sequence of strategic analysis, visioning, and implementation seems like an oversimplification or very limited view” (Bushe & Marshak, 2015: 44). Therefore, I argue that in dealing with complex OCD requires more than just a more complete alternative theory of change agency, it requires an alternative critical complexity-informed being-becoming praxis. This does not to imply that any form

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<sup>55</sup> For a detailed discussion of the special inquiry skills see 6.5.5: *Data Analysis, Validity Procedures and Evaluation*.

of expert knowledge will not be valuable, but that its limitations will be exposed due to the unpredictability of complex or chaotic systems in organisational change initiatives.

For change agents, the implications are serious and therefore require a critical re-think. Now, with a complexity-based understanding of change in organisations, change agents are confronted with finding more than just new forms of practice that can deal with the challenges inherent in complex systems; but, and more importantly, need to think and enact alternative change agency praxis from an entirely new way of being-becoming praxis.

I suggest that a complexity-based approach to OCD requires an alternative change agency praxis. Some examples of such a change agency praxis could include:

- The acceptance that there are no right answers or silver bullets to solve problems and awareness that approaches to solving problems should rather be small, targeted and multi-pronged with a safe-to-fail mentality.
- Reworked approaches to change could follow some of the ideas in action research, but repurposing it entirely from a complexity-based perspective e.g. the iterative cycles of action and reflection.
- An entirely new way of being-becoming as practitioners of OCD, i.e. that being a 'change maker' is improbable because one person with expert knowledge cannot make change. It is entirely misleading, and change practitioners should rather seek to facilitate or co-create change — which is inherently a part of the system — and be able to model this new way of being-becoming and doing in the face of complexity.
- Change co-creators could re-think the ways in which they have developed their thinking, being, becoming and doing by processes of critical self-reflection on their change agency praxis in communities of practice.

Exploring the formation of spirituality and the critical complexity-based notion of identity — complex 'I' from a critical complexity perspective and the associated being-becoming praxis — demands a process of critical engaging alternative ways of being-becoming praxis in change agents. I now offer some reflective signposts that might be included in discerning this formative process and experience for change agents. Some reflective signposts might include:

- Becoming aware that your perspective on your identity is not the whole picture, i.e. your understanding of your identity might not be so complete, but actually, represents a reduced version of the reality thereof.
- The process of becoming aware and then admitting to the false stories (narrative incongruence) you tell yourself, others, the wider systems you engage in, and becoming radically aware of the stories of your identity and the quality of your spirituality.

- Becoming aware of the quality of your spirituality by connecting it to your ability to embrace all the paradoxes and tensions within your identity/ies and its relations with others, and wider systems of engagement (political, social, economic, ecological).
- Developing a recognition of your continued participation in the incongruities and incoherencies while at the same time acknowledging your movements to integrity and wholeness — respect for paradox in being, becoming and doing. The paradox is that we cannot escape our brokenness or the inherent incomplete universe.

From the signposts above the following integrative movements are assembled that might be discernible in the narrative themes and patterns of change agents who embody critical complexity-informed being-becoming praxis. The movements might include:

- The movement from blind perspectivism to awareness of a critical self-reflexive and transgressive diverse spirituality/ies.
- The movement from suppression of narrative incongruences to a process of becoming aware of incoherent narratives that are perpetuated.
- The movement from generalised fixed identity and spirituality to contextualised situational awareness of relational embeddedness in the fragmentation of an interconnected world.
- The movement from situational blindness of contextual ways of being-becoming to the contextual openness of perpetual critical reflexivity and reviseability of critical complexity-informed being-becoming praxis.
- The movement from either/or thinking to embracing integrative non-dual thinking i.e. the embracing of ways of being-becoming that perceive the paradoxical, uncertain, ambiguous and vulnerable nature of being human.
- The movement from fragmentation to critical co-participation in the paradox of being-becoming praxis and the dynamic lived experience of embracing binary tensions.

In the context of change agents, being-becoming praxis implies a critical reflexive stance and radical openness to the inner arc of experience and its influence on the outer arc of experience of change agency (see Figure 4.1). Thus a change agent that takes up a radically open position towards being human in a complex world, gives over to a different type or way of being-becoming, i.e. embracing of complex 'I' and the generative and integrative capacity of spirituality. It is not just a different degree of being-becoming change agency by improving technical skills, competencies or knowledge about living in a complex world.

Such an alternative mode might be re-imagined through what Draimin (2016) calls “systems change curation”. Through the establishment of systems change communities of practice, Systems Change Curators (SCC) can engage with various social change entrepreneurs. SCC’s are also invariably social change curators, which differ from social entrepreneurs in that “a social entrepreneur is

someone who recognizes a social problem and uses entrepreneurial principles to organize, create, and manage an initiative to bring about social change” (Biggs *et al.*, 2010: 23).

System change curation is “a practice working to effect systemic change through a deeper understanding and commitment to engaging with root cause issues, ecosystems and culture” (Drainin, 2016). According to Drainin (2016), systems change curators : (i) are aware of the powerful role culture plays both in enabling change and in holding social problems in place through institutional resistance and outdated narratives; (ii) experiment with new leadership approaches and systems change processes; (iii) seek to deepen collaboration by working beyond organisational and sector silos to shift culture and achieve social impact; (iv) convene unusual and diverse partners to explore new possibilities; and (v) illuminate and integrate new strategies for deep and durable change that could lead to transformative change.

The Latin term *curare* expresses the meaning of being a curator. It relates to taking *care* from a position of experience by deeply caring for a system and being at the same time part of a system. It is different to change-makers who seek to enforce change. SCC's are more like caretakers – they have deep insight into the history of the systems, and therefore compassion with what to do in the present, and how to act in such a way that the future is interactively or indirectly shaped by action in the now. Where change making can easily be associated with one who controls or exerts individual agency, the term SCC is meant to describe a person who convenes, connects and catalyses co-operative action to work together differently, to bring about alternative transformative change in a complex system, to enable critical complexity-informed being-becoming praxis.

SCC's embody new ways of being-becoming praxis and represent the four iterative principles of critical complexity-informed change agents: (i) embracing complexity thinking, (ii) navigating ambiguity and incongruence, (iii) awareness of rationally constitutedness, and (iv) co-creating resilient heuristics. They embrace the critical complexity perspectives whole-heartedly by living according to the ethics of provisionality and the economy of difference. Also, they do not represent an attempt to create a more specialised version of OCD practitioners, but rather invites an entirely new way of being-becoming praxis in a complex world from complex 'I' and critical complexity-informed spirituality. SCC's suggest the idea of social entrepreneurs, but qualitatively extend it to include not only new forms of seeing and thinking but new ways of being-becoming (an alternative meaning-making ontology, epistemology, spiritual praxis and axiology). Thus, SCC's appreciate the ubiquity of complexity by recognising the limitations and frequent self-defeating consequences of direct interventions in OCD (Chia, 2011). SCC's present an entirely different type of being-becoming human — which is critical complexity informed — and simultaneously remains radically open to the rupturing and harmonising (reconstruction) of the world, while at the same time committing to a process of re-creation, co-creation, change and transformation of the emerging future.

The implications of indirect interventions which are non-intrusive, side step the natural resistance towards change in systems (Kegan & Lahey, 2009). Such an approach or strategy is embraced by

SCC's because their focus is no longer on their knowledge, skills or competency related to instrumental or mechanistic assumptions, but moves beyond it, by acknowledging the hidden propensity of things by applying an alternative attitude and aptitude to change agency praxis. Such an extended understanding of change agency is undergirded with humility, openness to the slowness in transitional and transformative change (Cilliers, 2006) and respectful of embodied ways of being-becoming praxis. In addition, it is made visible through critical complexity-informed complex 'I' and spirituality. In support of this assertion, I point to Chia (2011: 195) who explains:

"In thinking complexly, in accounting for any form of managerial success we must be mindful of unconscious, oblique and obscure causes that may affect the balance and potentiality of situations such that desirable outcomes ensue without anyone being particularly aware of how they have come to pass."

For a complete embodiment of critical complexity-informed complex 'I' and spirituality, SCC's integrate an alternative way of being-becoming praxis, which includes an alternative way of doing change. Doing change differently requires an acknowledgement of the temporality and situatedness of actions. Therefore, embracing and developing a critical complexity-informed being-becoming praxis heuristics. SCC's as re-imagined change agents interactively engage with a continual probing into what it means to be human, and what spirituality entails. SCC's require alternatively embodied modes of being-becoming praxis that are made visible in complexity thinking (Cilliers & Preiser, 2016), anticipatory thinking (Poli, 2010; Poli, Healy, & Kameas, 2010) and resilience thinking (Biggs, 2015; Folke *et al.*, 2010). SCC<sup>56</sup> holds promise for social and organisational innovation and change as an emerging role that requires investment, exploration and support.

## 5.5 SUMMARY

In this chapter, I argued that the inter-related nature of spirituality because of complex 'I' serves as a framing for exploring a critical complexity-informed understanding of spirituality and alternative being-becoming praxis, i.e. irreducible understanding of 'spiritual identity praxis'. I applied the complex 'I' and critical complexity to the notion of spiritual identity and re-interpreted being-becoming praxis accordingly. In order to re-imagine the role of the change agent in OCD, I developed an initial interpretation of being-becoming praxis and indicated its possible implications for change agents.

Critical complexity-informed being-becoming praxis suggests a re-imagination of systems change in organisations, society and the environment. In this regard, I suggested that being-becoming praxis as applied to change agents is most appropriately re-imagined as an alternative to current change agency praxis. The being-becoming praxis thus provides a re-think of mainstream and/or traditional

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<sup>56</sup> I discuss this in more detail in Chapter 9. In Chapter 7 and 8, I probed into alternative being-becoming praxis (spiritual identity praxis) with OCD practitioners, in order to explore and develop what can be called initial understandings of SCC.

instrumental, utilitarian, mechanistic and materialist assumptions of the change agent and therefore presents a new way of being-becoming which implies a critical complexity-informed way of doing.

I provided reflective signposts of what such a critical complexity-informed being-becoming praxis might entail, and offered the associated integrative movements that could be discernible in the narrative themes and patterns of change agents that embody its praxis. I accordingly suggested that the concept of Systems Change Curators (SCC) presents a re-imagined conceptualisation of the change agent. This inherently implies critical complexity-informed being-becoming praxis as the transgressive, integrative way of being-becoming — beyond the search for reductive technical skills, one-dimensional knowledge or linear casual informed competency.

SCC's present a re-imagination of change agents in complex OCD interventions by embodying the four iterative principles of critical complexity-informed change agents: (i) embracing complexity thinking, (ii) navigating ambiguity and incongruence, (iii) awareness of rationally constitutedness, and (iv) resilient heuristics.

## CHAPTER 6

# THE RESEARCH APPROACH: DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

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*The purpose of inquiry is not so much an attempt to converge at a single point called Truth, but that the process of enquiry is a matter of continually reweaving webs of beliefs to produce new and novel insights into the human condition*  
(Chia, 1996: 15).

## 6.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 5, I concluded with reflective signposts and integrative movements pertaining to a re-imagined critical complexity-informed change agent and being-becoming praxis. In this chapter, I present the research approach I used to co-explore being-becoming praxis (also referred to as spiritual identity praxis by the research participants) and the possible re-imagination of the role of the change agent with OCD practitioners.

This chapter offers the study's research approach, including its design and implementation. More specifically, I discuss (i) a complexity-based qualitative action research approach, (ii) co-operative inquiry's principles and procedures as research design and the initiating process of an Organisational Change and Development Community of Practice (OCDCoP), (iii) the methods employed to generate data — some of which were: group and personal research journal entries, observational data, field notes, collaborative workshop audio recordings and transcriptions; (iv) methods used to ensure the trustworthiness of the study; (v) ethical considerations, and (vi) the limitations of the study.

However, before I start with the discussion of these facets there are two points that need to be dealt with, namely the unit of analysis, and the 'pathways' or areas of action research.

Firstly, the unit of analysis entails the change agents. The level of analysis focuses on exploring and re-thinking their change agency in the inner arc of experience in relation to its interaction with the outer arc of experience in terms of group and personal reflection. The unit of analysis thus deals with an inquiry into the spiritual identity praxis from a critical complexity perspective and the implications for their role as change agents. As explained,<sup>57</sup> 'spiritual identity praxis' does not convey the most appropriate understanding when viewed through a critical complexity lens. Therefore, I prefer 'being-becoming praxis'. *Thus, the analysis focusses on OCD practitioners' ways of being-becoming praxis and interaction with their current understanding of spirituality and identity through a co-operative process of self-critical reflection by employing a critical complexity lens.*

Secondly, according to the action research scholars Heron (1999), Reason and Bradbury (2001: xxv), and Torbert (2001: 251–257) there are three approaches to action research, namely: first person inquiry (self-inquiry), second person inquiry (inquiry with co-researchers), third-person inquiry (inquiry within the wider world). I next discuss each of these three approaches.

(i) **First person inquiry.** In this form of inquiry, the researcher pays attention to his personal research approach, beliefs, values, assumptions, ways of thinking, motivation, feelings, thoughts, and changes during the study. Here, a research journal is particularly important. As Ellis (1995) points

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<sup>57</sup>Please see Chapter 5.

out, the aim of keeping a research journal is to document feelings, thoughts and interpretations as events occur. Schurink (2009) affirms that the journal serves as an audit trail, which is invaluable in assessing the trustworthiness of a qualitative research project. It is particularly important to maintain the journal in order to ensure that it serves as a vehicle for self-reflexivity. I made entries about decisions I took during the journey both as research instrument and as co-participant<sup>58</sup>. Moreover, Torbert and Taylor (2008: 241) indicate that when it comes to the reflection of a personal action inquiry process four territories of experience should be kept in mind. The first explores reflections of the outside world, the second keeps track of one's personal sensed behaviour and feelings, the third pertains to the realm of thought, while the fourth territory deals with the realm of vision, attention and intention<sup>59</sup>.

**(ii) Second person inquiry.** This type of inquiry can be described as “our ability to inquire face-to-face with others into issues of mutual concern” (Reason & Bradbury 2001: xxv), and “speaking and listening with others” (Torbert 2001: 251). Heron and Reason (2001) who write extensively about co-operative inquiry, regard CI as a particular discipline of second-person inquiry. In short: second person inquiry or practice addresses action researchers' collaborative inquiry and work with others on issues of mutual concern, through face-to-face dialogue, conversation and joint collaborative actions.

**(iii) Third person inquiry.** According to Reason and Bradbury (2001: xxvi) this inquiry: “aims to create a wider community of inquiry involving persons who, because they cannot be known to each other face-to-face (...), have an impersonal quality. Writing and other reporting of the process and outcomes of inquiries can also be an important form of third-person inquiry”. Also, for Reason (2003) co-operative inquiry as a form of action research emphasises first-person research/practice in the context of supportive and critical second-person relationships, and also has the potential to reach out toward third-person practice.

In this chapter, I mainly provide insight into the co-operative inquiry I used as a form of second person inquiry.

I next turn to complexity and participatory worldviews that informed the study's research design.

## 6.2 TOWARDS A COMPLEXITY-BASED QUALITATIVE RESEARCH APPROACH

Blaikie (2007) explains the impact of complexity theory on social research methodology in the postscript to his book *Approaches to Social Enquiry: Advancing Knowledge*. He points to the ‘complexity turn’ in science as a major development in scientific theory formation, which is seen by

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<sup>58</sup> Please see Chapter 10 for my first person action inquiry.

<sup>59</sup> I return to these territories of experience and reflections in Chapter 10 where I showcase the learning that took place on a personal, interpersonal and possibly transpersonal level.

scholars as presenting an alternative ontology (Byrne, 2002; Urry, 2005; Capra & Luisi, 2014). Dirksmeier and Helbrecht (2008: 65) point out:

...the 'complexity turn' is a reaction to the general observation in the social sciences that processes cannot be explained by simple cause/effect mechanisms. Therefore, the social sciences are compelled to develop new methods in order to deal successfully and productively with the complexity of the present time.

With the complexity turn, Hetherington (2013) explains complexity theories challenge the linear methodologies and views of causality suggesting that phenomena should be viewed in a non-reductionistic way. She also believes that complexity theories require a focus on interaction and therefore on contextual approaches. For complexity to become more than a "metaphorical apparatus" in social science, the actual tools of investigation that shape its frame of reference need to change themselves (Byrne, 2005: 96). Hetherington (2013) argues that when conducting research the research problem should also be informed by complexity theories and accompanying methodological choices<sup>60</sup>.

Since research methodology is inter-related with philosophical concepts such as ontology, epistemology and axiology, it is important to describe the inter-relatedness of methods and data, the complexity-based theoretical perspective informing the study, and the epistemological positioning of the complexity paradigm (Hetherington, 2013; Rogers *et al.*, 2013).

Organisations and their work contexts are characterised by complexity (Allen, Maguire, & McKelvey, 2011). Therefore, orchestrating research in organisational contexts requires matching research methods with the complexity inherent in organisations (Cilliers, 2000b). Accordingly, I set out to find an appropriate methodology that is undergirded by complexity theory, but at the same time allows for the emergence of practical outcomes, which could explore spiritual identity praxis in change agency and provide a re-think of the role of change agents in OCD.

To better understand the complexity of OCD, Garcia and Gluesing (2013) point at several examples of scholars applying qualitative methods in organisational change research. They argue:

as work contexts change and the complexity of large-scale organisation change increases, qualitative research methods provide an ideal approach to understanding these new work contexts; including considerations of complex multi-stakeholder organizing, how work practices and organizational structures and cultures evolve, and how organizations design and implement such changes to meet new challenges (Garcia & Gluesing, 2013: 424).

Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008: 4) concur:

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<sup>60</sup> This does not imply that other research approaches not explicitly employing complexity theories or complexity-informed theoretical frameworks are not sensitive to complexity. Yet it does point to the need for researchers to become aware of post-reductionist understandings of research methodology.

Qualitative business research gives a researcher an opportunity to focus on the complexity of business-related phenomena in their contexts. It produces new knowledge about how things work in real-life business contexts, why they work in a specific way, and how we can make sense of them in a way that they might be changed...Qualitative business research can also be used to provide a critical and reflexive view about the social world of business and its core processes.

As an alternative approach, qualitative research methods seek to "describe, decode, translate and otherwise come to terms with the meaning, not the frequency, of certain more or less naturally occurring phenomena in the social world" (van Maanen, 1983: 9). Qualitative approaches are appropriate when the goal of research is to understand a phenomenon from the point of view of the participants and its particular social and institutional context, as this information is largely lost when textual data are quantified (Kaplan *et al.*, 1994; Bryman & Bell, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

The philosophical progression and development of qualitative research assumptions were first outlined by Guba and Lincoln (1994) in the first edition of *The Handbook of Qualitative Research*. They proposed four basic inquiry paradigms: positivism, post-positivism, critical theory and constructivism. In the fourth revised edition of *The Handbook of Qualitative Research*, they revisited their original work on competing paradigms and included the inquiry paradigm and referred to the work done by Heron and Reason (1997) (Lincoln & Guba, 2011). Heron (1996; 2008) explains that co-operative inquiry rests on a related, but distinct, fifth inquiry paradigm, namely that of participative reality.

Action research, as a qualitative research approach, is characterised by the participatory inquiry paradigm (Armstrong & Banks, 2011) and aims at action that can bring about change in some community, organisation or programme, as well as research to increase researchers' and/or clients' understanding (Dick, 2011). Reason and Bradbury (2001: 1) write:

action research is a participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes...It seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and their communities.

But what is the relation between action research, the participatory paradigm and complexity? This is the subject of the next section.

### **6.3 ACTION RESEARCH, THE PARTICIPATORY PARADIGM, AND COMPLEXITY THEORY**

The starting proposition of action research philosophy is that the purpose of human inquiry is the enhancement of human flourishing, that is, persons as self-directing and sense-making agents located in democratic communities and organisations (Reason, 1998).

Change, improvement, shared understanding and transformative experience, are associated with action research (McNiff, 2013; Coghlan & Brannick, 2014). According to Herr and Anderson (2005: 4), action research is "a form of self-reflective problem solving, which enables practitioners to better

understand and solve pressing problems in social settings" and is, therefore, best conducted in collaboration with others who have a stake in the problem being investigated, hence the need for participation. What makes action research stand out from traditional social science research aiming for objective neutrality is the demand for some form of intervention (Herr & Anderson, 2005).

Typical action research interventions have four major phases: plan, act, observe and reflect (Zuber-Skerritt, 2002). In the process of moving through the cyclical path, at least one stage includes critical reflection of outcome and process (McNiff & Whitehead, 2000). Both confirming and disconfirming evidence are critically reflected on during various stages and processes of the research (Greenwood & Levin, 1998).

Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008: 193) write:

action research is thought to be especially suitable when the research question is related to describing an unfolding series of actions that are taking place over time in a certain group, organisation or other community. Also, if the research question is related to understanding the process of change, development or improvement of some actual problem, then, in order to learn from it, action research is an appropriate application for research.

Whereas quantitative-oriented case studies, for example, seek to first define the research questions and then require cases in order to generate an empirically based understanding (Dul & Hak, 2008; Yin, 2013), with action research the research design is done co-operatively and face-to-face in collaboration with stakeholders (Rogers *et al.*, 2013). Such activities are usually driven by personal commitments to human flourishing. Therefore, the various commitments of action research are informed by: "an intellectual orientation that is systemic or aware of inter-dependencies, emancipatory, critical and participatory. There is a wholeness about action research practice so that knowledge is always gained in and through action" (Reason & Bradbury, 2008: 11).

The kind of critical and emancipatory action that marks action research is characterised by the cyclical and reciprocal interaction between action and critical reflection:

Action research is true to its label. It pursues both action (change) and research (understanding) outcomes. It achieves change through its participative approach, often in conjunction with other change processes. The research is achieved by being responsive to the situation and by searching strenuously for disconfirming evidence...Action and research enhance each other (Dick, 2001: 21).

The cyclical nature of action research is elaborated upon by Raelin (2009) who refers to 'action modalities' found in various forms of action research, e.g. action science, developmental action inquiry, co-operative inquiry, appreciative inquiry and participatory action research (PAR). Together, the various modalities present a family of action research methodologies (Reason & Bradbury, 2008). Raelin (2009: 17) writes: "each modality subscribes to the view that planned engagement and collective reflection on experience can expand and even create knowledge while at the same time serving to improve practice". He offers ten points as a foundation for a conceptual unification of these modalities, namely:

- (i) entailing dialectic rather than didactic or classroom-based elements;
- (ii) developing contextualised and useful theory rather than testing de-contextualised and impartial theory;
- (iii) inviting learners to be active participants, leading often to change in the self and in the system in question;
- (iv) endorsing reflection-in-action rather than reflection-on-action;
- (v) emphasising meta-competence over competence;
- (vi) tending to facilitate learning rather than teaching it;
- (vii) espousing the development of double-loop learning (questioning, being able to change governing values) rather than merely offering single-loop learning (operational);
- (viii) welcoming the contribution to tacit knowledge and to learning;
- (ix) entailing practice-based learning outcomes over and above academic outcomes; and
- (x) tending to be comfortable with tentativeness rather than with certainty.

In opting for co-operative inquiry, I regarded the features and modalities of action research in general and co-operative inquiry specifically, as critical in cultivating and fostering a critical complexity thinking perspective regarding the research questions: *Can an action research inquiry process over time provide evidence of how change practitioners shift their spiritual identity praxis towards their change agency when employing complexity thinking?*

Since co-operative inquiry demands a radical reflection on the purpose of inquiry it requires careful and thorough reflection of the researcher's ontological and epistemological assumptions (Heron & Reason, 2006). Reason and Goodwin (1999: 281) argue that "social life in general, and organisations in particular, can well be seen as complex self-organising systems, and that drawing on complexity theory to explain them, while necessarily metaphorical, is epistemologically justifiable". In their article, Reason and Goodwin (1999) link six complexity theory principles to the practice of qualitative and participative forms of organisational research and argue that these lead toward new ways of thinking about the quality of a research endeavour. Although now slightly outdated,<sup>61</sup> the six principles, as outlined by Reason and Goodwin (1999: 286) are:

- Rich interconnections – complex systems are defined in terms of rich patterns of interconnections between diverse components.
- Iteration – complex systems arise through cycles of iteration in which patterns of activity and novel behaviour emerge.
- Emergence – complex systems are unpredictable because the order that arises from the characteristics of the interconnected components is only discernible through engaging the iterative cycles that emerge in the various dynamic relationships of the generating parts.

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<sup>61</sup> Please see Chapter 3; particularly, 3.2.5 for an updated characterisation of complex systems.



- Holism – complex systems are holistic as a consequence of the interactions between the component elements of the system and are not coded in or determined by the properties of a privileged set of components.
- Fluctuations – complex systems are non-linear and are presented in distinctive patterns that constantly change and emerge from chaos.
- Edge of chaos – complex systems occur in a dynamic space described as 'edge of chaos' environments in which the emergent processes are manifested in dynamic patterns of structures derived from the relationship between the parts of the system and whole that describe the dynamics of complex processes.

Cilliers (2002) points out that the qualities of complex systems challenge the notion that inherent and essential features of complex systems can be deduced through the lens of classical science. Due to the non-linear and interconnected nature of complex systems, one rather has to ask how to best relate or probe into these systems when immersed in their subtle and qualitative emergent order.

From a qualitative research perspective, one can infer that complex systems present certain qualities that require a more intuitive approach to enable sensing the rich interconnections, iterations and emergent order.<sup>62</sup> Such a qualitative understanding includes the role of the normative, and appropriateness or inappropriateness of beliefs and particular actions in relation to knowledge. According to Collier (1994), a science of emergent qualities involves a break with the positivist tradition separating facts and values and requiring re-establishment of a foundation for naturalistic ethics. Therefore, a standing-in-relation with the interconnected and interrelatedness of the systems is imperative in gaining understanding and experience of emergent qualities, rather than seeking some objective separateness. As Reason and Goodwin (1999: 291) explain:

Participation now enters as a fundamental ingredient in the human experience of any phenomenon, which arises out of the encounter between two real processes that are distinct but not separable: the human process of becoming and that of the 'other', whatever this may be to which the human is attending.

Reason and Goodwin's (1999) views are even more true for participative forms of action research where scholars/practitioners are not primarily interested in producing texts but in opening up the possibility of transformative action through first, second and third person practice (Gergen, 2009a; Reason & Torbert, 2001; Torbert *et al.*, 2010).

Since the merits of action research have been debated for almost four decades (Susman & Evered, 1978) I decided to follow Reason and Goodwin (1999) who argue that the principles of complexity theory can lead to a science of qualities in organisational and social research. The theoretical and methodological links between action research and complexity are well established. Phelps and Hase

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<sup>62</sup> Reason and Goodwin (1999) point out that this is not an original idea since a science of qualities was practised by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe in the late 18th and early 19th century but was seen as an aberration within the mainstream Newtonian science of the day.



(2002) for instance, show how complexity theory can provide a valuable underpinning for action research. Action research, in turn, provides a valid methodological approach to complexity research. Other scholars who have explored this connection include Sumara and Davis (1997), (2009); Hase and Kenyon (2007) and Westhues *et al.* (2008).

It was the parallels between the participatory worldview and the worldview espoused by complexity thinking that appealed to me. This brought me to link it to the methodology of co-operative inquiry that subscribes to a subjective-objective ontological conceptualisation and adopts an extended epistemology.

#### **6.4 THE FOCAL CONCERNS OF CO-OPERATIVE INQUIRY (CI)**

As part of the family of action research oriented methods, CI presents an approach to the re-enchantment of human inquiry (Heron, 1996). Heron and Reason (1981), the founding fathers of CI, explain that the aim of this form of inquiry is to establish a practice of persons situated in communities of inquiry — individuals within learning communities. Inquiry essentially entails a collaborative process which purpose is practical: contributing to the flourishing of individuals, the flourishing of human community (organisations), and the flourishing of the biosphere of which they are a part. According to this, an inquiry is much more than the professional activity of academics; it entails a central characteristic of a well-lived life (Reason, 1998).

Within the spectrum of action research approaches, Reason (2003) places co-operative inquiry as a form of action research, which emphasises first-person research/practice in the context of supportive and critical second-person relationships, and has the potential to reach out toward third-person practice. Moreover, co-operative inquiry differs from other action research methods in that it involves people who are invited to fully co-inquire in all operational decisions, that is, decisions about research content, focus, aims and objectives and outcomes. CI's most recognisable overlap with other action research methods includes the repeated cycles of planning, acting, observing, reflecting, re-planning (Zuber-Skerritt, 2011). While the emancipatory, collaborative and participatory links are clear, Heron (1996) argues that the main difference is that action research is focused on problem-solving in existing professional performance and related organisational structures. He explains that action research disregards theory building and the generative power of theory and is not as wide-ranging to include complete aspects of the human condition, i.e. it does not inherently subscribe to subjective-objective ontological or extended epistemological groundings. Interestingly, other forms of action research, different to co-operative inquiry, have not drawn from such an extended epistemology to study the full range of human sensibilities.

While CI overlaps with appreciative inquiry (Ludema & Fry, 2008), with participatory action research (Kindon, Pain, & Kesby, 2007) and with action science (Argyris, Putnam, & Smith, 1985), its distinctive characteristics lay with the democratisation of content: co-inquirers are involved in decisions regarding the aims and objectives of the research as well as the operational methods used

(Heron, 1996). The overlap is usually restricted to democratising the research content. Since the various action-orientated research methods are open to participation, it is rare to find a commitment to actively collaborate with regard to the intricacies of research initiation, research design, and research execution. In traditional research as Heron (1996) points out, the roles of researcher and subject are mutually exclusive, that is, the researcher only contributes to the thinking that goes into the project, while the subjects only take part in the action to be studied. In contrast, in co-operative inquiry these roles are replaced by a co-operative relationship of bilateral initiative and control, that is, all those involved work together as co-researchers and co-subjects.

Encompassing a wide-ranging method of inquiry, CI focuses on the exploration and creation of new knowledge in collective and collaborative settings. The process of knowledge creation necessitates that the group of inquirers neither attempt or confirm or disprove existing hypotheses; rather they inquire into deeper meaning and forms of knowing by becoming aware and open to alternatives in co-exploration.

Heron and Reason (2001: 179) summarise the defining features of co-operative inquiry as follows:

- All the subjects are fully involved as co-researchers in all research decisions - both in content and method -- taken in the reflection phases.
- There is intentional interplay between reflection and making sense on the one hand, and experience and action on the other.
- Explicit attention is given, through agreed procedures, to the validity of the inquiry and its findings. The primary procedure entails inquiry cycles, where the inquirers move several times between reflection and action.
- The involvement of radical epistemology requires wide-ranging methods to integrate experiential knowing through meeting and encounter, presentational knowing through the use of aesthetic, expressive forms, propositional knowing through words and concepts, and practical knowing-the 'how to' in exercising diverse skills -- intrapsychic, interpersonal, political, transpersonal, and so on. Through the use of inquiry cycles, these forms of knowing are brought to bear upon each other by enhancing their mutual congruence, both within each inquirer and the inquiring group as a whole.
- The extended epistemology requires alternative validity procedures which are supported by a range of special skills such as fine-tuned discrimination in perceiving, in acting and in remembering, bracketing off and reframing launching concepts and emotional competencies. These may include the ability to manage effectively anxiety stirred up by the inquiry process.
- The inquiry can be both informative about, and transformative of, any aspect of the human condition that is accessible to a transparent body-mind, that is, one that entails an open, unbounded awareness.

- Primacy is given to transformative inquiries that involve action, where people change their way of being and doing and relating in their world. This is grounded in the belief that practical knowing consummates three forms of knowing (propositional, presentational and experiential).
- The inquiry covers the full range of human capacities and sensibilities.

Let us now look at the philosophical foundations underlying co-operative inquiry. Heron (1996) describes the participatory paradigm as comprised of two wings: epistemic and political. Accordingly, the epistemic wing is concerned with "truth-values" and is formed by:

- A subjective-objective ontology
- An extended epistemology
- A methodology including various forms of validation with a specific interest in the congruence of practical, conceptual, imaginal and empathic forms of knowing among co-operative knowers. This, in turn, leads to the cultivation of skills that deepen these forms of knowing (Heron, 1996: 11).
- The political wing of the participative paradigm pertains to "being-values" – formed by an axiology – a theory of value, or what is intrinsically worthwhile.

Creswell's (2013) provides a useful tool to unpack the research paradigm underlying co-operative inquiry by offering the following philosophical framework namely: (i) the nature of reality (ontology); (ii) the researcher theory of knowledge (epistemology); (iii) the role of values in research (axiology); (iv) the language of the research (rhetoric); and (v) the methods used in the research process (methodology).

With regard to **ontology**, Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008) explain that this entails ideas about the existence of and the relationships between people, society and the world in general. Ontology seeks to provide a definitive and exhaustive classification of entities in all spheres of being and embraces all theories and methodological positions. Therefore, when referring to the ontological dimension of research, we have the social reality that is investigated in mind. However, people have different views regarding how social reality should be understood that tend to vary on a continuum ranging from an objective reality existing independently of human conception to the notion of multiple, subjective realities that are socially constructed (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008).

Co-operative inquiry presents a complementary approach to social reality by bridging both the positivistic and relativist worldviews by means of the participatory worldview. It bridges the positivistic worldview because objects are seen as separate and independent of human construing. It also bridges the relativist worldview, because all views are seen as nothing but constructions of the human mind and culture (Heron & Reason, 1997). This subjective-objective ontology asserts that there is a given cosmos, or a primordial reality, in which humans participate actively (Lincoln & Guba,

2011). Human intelligence (body, mind and spirit) are actively engaged in what Heron (1996: 11) refers to as a:

co-creative dance, so that what emerges as reality is the fruit of an interaction of the given cosmos and the way mind engages with it. We actively participate in the cosmos, and it is through this active participation that we meet what is Other: Worlds and people are what we meet, but the meeting is shaped by our own terms of reference.

Therefore, engagement with the world is transactional, interactive and connectionist: to touch, see or hear something or someone does not tell one either about oneself or about a being out there on its own. Rather, it tells one about a being in a state of interrelation and co-presence with other people. "Reality is thus subjective-objective: It is subjective because it is only known through the form the mind gives it; and it is objective because the mind interpenetrates the given cosmos which it shapes" (Heron, 1996: 11).

In turning to **the researcher's theory of knowledge (epistemology)**, it is helpful to take note of Eriksson and Kovalainen's (2008) epistemological questions related to philosophical issues regarding evidence of knowledge.

The participatory worldview of co-operative inquiry includes different ways of knowing. Since humans participate in and articulate the world in at least four interdependent ways: experiential, presentational, propositional and practical, Heron (1996) proposes extended epistemology. These forms can be seen as aspects of human sense- and meaning-making modalities through which people perceive their world and co-create their realities.

The participative worldview subscribes to a connectionist understanding of our being in the world. It dares us to move beyond dualistic preoccupations. In questioning dualistic thinking it is helpful to consider what Bateson (1972: 454) describes as an 'epistemological error'. This occurs when individuals are regarded as the basic unit of society reducing the whole of social reality to an atomistic rationalised individual. He suggests that this should rather be understood as the 'organism plus environment'. This notion arises out of a philosophy that embraces a pre-Newtonian view in which the subject is not seen as separate from the object. Bateson (1972) explains that Newton and Descartes stated that the modern 'scientific' attitude legitimates cutting off the mind from matter and body from soul and viewing 'man's' (sic) place in the world as separate from nature. It is a stance that sees 'mankind' as in dominion over nature, including our own errant unconscious thoughts.

If we, on the other hand, take a non-dualistic epistemology we can constantly question the way we live in the light of experience. We are therefore less likely to leave dualistic assumptions unexamined. Once we have accepted a non-dualist epistemology, ways of knowing are freed from their binds. This way of knowing helps us to challenge simple dualisms that can dominate atomistic thinking, because a dualistic epistemology leads to us projecting our thinking, difficult feelings and experiences on others, thus not having to own up to these experiences ourselves.

The broadened epistemological framework is complementary to the ways of knowing in positivist and relativist academia. Heron and Reason (2008: 367) argue that this radical emphasis moves ways of knowing beyond that which is "based primarily on abstract propositional knowledge and a narrow empiricism". They explain that this epistemology extends the theory of knowing to all natural ways humans come to knowing, that is, is becoming tacitly interwoven with all sorts of ways by which one perceives what one knows in everyday life. Also, knowing is congruent with the natural way of sense-making and perceptual awareness. Finally, knowledge moves beyond the strong emphasis on cognitive knowing and brings equality and embodiment through including three other areas of human knowing modalities in epistemology.

Heron (1996) offers four ways of knowing, namely: propositional knowing, experiential knowing, presentational knowing, and practical knowing. Let us take a closer look.

- (i) **Propositional knowing** involves knowing in conceptual terms: knowledge by description of some energy, entity, person, place, process or thing. Knowing is expressed in statements and theories that come with the mastery of concepts and classes that language bestows. Propositions themselves are carried by presentational forms – the sounds or visual shapes of the spoken or written word – and are ultimately grounded in our experiential articulation of the world.
- (ii) **Experiential knowing** implies a direct encounter in face-to-face meetings: feeling and imaging the presence of some energy, entity, person, place, process or thing. It involves knowing through participative, empathic resonance with a being, so that the knower, feel both attuned to it and distinct from it. It also entails the creative shaping of a world through imaging it, perceptually and in other ways. Experiential knowing thus articulates reality through inner resonance with what there is and entails the essential grounding of other forms of knowing.
- (iii) **Presentational knowing** emerges from and is grounded in experiential knowing. It clothes one's encounter with the world in the metaphors of aesthetic creation. Presentational knowing draws on expressive forms of imagery, using the symbols of graphic, plastic, musical, vocal and verbal art-forms, and is the way in which one first gives form to one's experience. These forms symbolise both one's felt attunement with the world and the primary meaning which it holds.
- (iv) **Practical knowing** involves knowing how to do something and is demonstrated in a skill or competence. It presupposes a conceptual grasp of principles and standards of practice, presentational elegance, and experiential grounding in the situation within which the action occurs. It fulfils the three prior forms of knowing, brings them to fruition in purposive deeds, and consummates them with its autonomous celebration of excellent accomplishment.

In co-operative inquiry, these inherent sense- and meaning-making ways of knowing is enacted intentionally. This intentional process is not only congruent with the full extent of how humans perceive and experience knowledge, but is more congruent with and therefore more valid in people's endeavours to know what reality entails.

The 'how do I know what I know?' is grounded in my experience thereof and my extended epistemology can be explained through this process. It is expressed through my images and stories — understood through theories that make sense to one and expressed through worthwhile practical

action. Heron and Reason (2008) term this a virtuous circle of knowing because skilled action leads to enriched encounter. This, in turn, opens knowing into the wider imaginal portrayal of the patterns of events, which leads to comprehensive conceptual models, and more developed practice and so on.

Important to note is that experiential knowledge cannot be reduced to either propositional or presentational knowledge. Heron (2008) argues that experiential knowledge is not an ungrounded metaphysical statement but is based on a radical phenomenology which can be tested through experiential inquiry; thus others, both sceptical and sympathetic, can inquire into the validity of this perspective.

The challenge lies in fully inhabiting these ways of knowing, and realising that the so-called extended epistemology presents knowers with a developmental challenge. Differently put, the challenge entails critical subjectivity which follows critical complexity arguments (Cilliers & Preiser, 2010). Critical subjectivity involves an awareness of the four ways of knowing, of how they are currently interacting, and of ways of changing the relations between them so that they articulate a reality that is unclouded by restrictive and ill-disciplined subjectivity. In other words, an openness to critically evaluate one's own deeply held belief in a self-reflexive manner, while at the same time allowing a non-dual mindset to take hold in the inner arc of one's experience.

Heron (1996) proposes that critical subjectivity means that one attends both to the grounding relations between the forms of knowing, as well as their consummating relations. He explains that critical subjectivity is a state of consciousness (toward which one can move through the disciplines of inquiry) different from either the naive subjectivity of 'primary process' awareness or the attempted objectivity of egoic 'secondary process' awareness. Heron and Reason (2008) explain that this implies that one does not suppress one's primary subjective experience, but accept one's experiential articulation of being in the world and, as such, is the ground of all-knowing. At the same time one accepts that, if naively exercised, this is open to all the distortions of those defensive processes by which people collude to limit their understanding.

According to Heron and Reason (2008), one attends to ways of knowing with a critical consciousness, by seeking to bring propositional knowing into aware relation with the other three forms of knowing. Such critical consciousness and processes of bringing propositional knowing into aware relation with the other forms of knowing assist in clarifying, refining and elevating it. Critical subjectivity thus allows for knowing to become more adequately grounded in the reality of knowing. In addition, when paying critical consciousness and attention to interrelated forms of knowing, people accept that their knowing is coming from a particular perspective, which enables them to become aware of that perspective. Critical subjectivity also enables awareness of the authentic value of the forms of knowing and of its restricting bias, thereby assisting people to articulate this awareness in their communications.



Critical subjectivity also entails a self-reflexive attention to the full range of human sensibilities and experience, i.e. the ground on which one is standing in the reality of the present. This is echoed in what Torbert calls "a reframing mind" which 'continually overcomes itself, divesting itself of its own presuppositions" (1987: 211). Bateson (1972) describes this as Learning III, in which the mind can choose its premises for understanding and action, can detach itself from all frameworks to peer into, and reflect, on its presuppositions. This is similar to Kegan's (1994) trans-paradigmatic fourth order consciousness.

Critical subjectivity extends to critical inter-subjectivity. Since personal knowing is always set within a context of linguist-cultural and experiential shared meaning, exercising a critical consciousness about one's knowing necessarily includes dialogue, feedback and exchange with others. This brings us to the methodology of co-operative inquiry (Heron & Reason, 2008).

It is useful at this point to first consider Creswell's (2013) third philosophical assumption namely the role of values in research, or **axiological choices**. Heron and Reason (1997) argue for one to fully define an inquiry paradigm you need to consider the axiological question, i.e. which is intrinsically worthwhile, or that aspect of the human condition concerned with value as an end in itself.

Whereas ontology, epistemology and methodology are all about the truth, axiology is about values of being; human states should be valued simply by virtue of what they are (Heron & Reason, 1997). This is a necessary complement to balance and make whole the concern of 'truth' questions. The first value question to be raised is about valuing knowledge itself. The basic question here is whether truth in propositional form is an end in itself and the only end. This tends to be the position of Western culture where intellectual excellence is regarded the highest end. If the Western perspective holds true, knowledge of such propositional truths would be the most worthwhile human purpose, could consequently, and ultimately legitimate all kinds of mayhem on the way to acquiring it.

A related point is the damaging modern tendency to educate the intellect by dissociating feeling, imagination and action from each other. This is typified by the narrow focus on propositional knowledge as the sole route to one-dimensional versions of truth. Heron and Reason argue (1997) that the participatory paradigm answers the axiological question in terms of human flourishing, conceived as an end in itself. One form of flourishing is practical knowing: knowing how to choose and act — hierarchically, co-operatively, and autonomously — to enhance personal and social fulfilment and that of the eco-networks people are embedded in. Such fulfilment is consummated in the very process of choosing and acting. Therefore, in the participatory paradigm, practical knowing is a primary end in itself. While there will always be a case for important inquiry projects that are informational and which result in propositional knowing, transformational projects are primary (Heron, 1996).

The axiological question can also be put in terms of the ultimate purpose of human inquiry since any ultimate purpose is an end-in-itself; a state of affairs that is intrinsically valuable (Heron & Reason,



1997). In the participative worldview the ontological account of reality as subjective-objective, as co-created with the given cosmos, cultivates the axiological question: for what purposes do we co-create reality? The answer is: to change the world (Fals-Borda & Rahman, 1991); or as Skolimowski (1994) points out, participation implies engagement which implies responsibility.

The participative worldview necessarily leads to an action orientation; not an impulsive one which, as Bateson (1972) describes, cuts through the circuits of the natural world, but a reflective action, a praxis, grounded in one's being in the world. Of course, experiential, presentational and propositional forms of knowing are also of value for their own sake: experiential knowing values one's presence in the world and one's encounter with other presences; presentational knowing asserts aesthetic values, and propositional knowing stresses the elegance of the intellectual.

However, all these forms of knowing are consummated in the practical: inquiry is one's action in the service of human flourishing (Heron & Reason, 1997). Knowing of the world is consummated as action in it and participatory research is thus essentially transformative. Reason (1993) suggests that a significant purpose of contemporary inquiry is to heal the split that characterises modern existence, and that such practice will have a sacred dimension:

To heal means to make whole: we can only understand our world as a whole if we are part of it; as soon as we attempt to stand outside, we divide and separate. In contrast, making whole necessarily implies participation: one characteristic of a participative worldview is that the individual person is restored to the circle of community and the human community to the context of the wider natural world. To make whole also means to make holy: another characteristic of a participatory worldview is that meaning and mystery are restored to human experience, so that the world is once again experienced as a sacred place (Reason, 1994: 10).

Consequently, practical knowledge means expressing living knowledge in practical service to peoples' lives (Reason, 1996). Active participation in community, which makes holy, is also a political process, honouring the right of people to have a say in forms of decision-making in every social context, which affects their flourishing. Most importantly, it is the right to be involved in the knowledge creation processes that affect people's lives. As Guba and Lincoln (1994: 113) point out, critical theory seeks a liberationist purpose in "the critique and transformation of social, political, economic, ethnic and gender structures that constrain and exploit humankind", and constructivist perspectives seek "understanding and reconstruction", with advocacy and activism key concepts. However, as Reason (1998: 25) states:

[T]here is a basic axiological difference. We would claim that within the participative worldview practical knowing is of central intrinsic value, whereas both constructivism and critical theory are concerned only with propositional knowing and its instrumental value in generating social emancipation. Furthermore, the purpose of inquiry is not only the relief of oppression.

As Skolimowski (1994) puts it, we need to find ways in which human presence can be celebrated again, we need to take the courage to imagine and reach for our fullest capabilities. It is argued that

humanity is "nature rendered self-conscious" (Bookchin, 1991: 313); that human beings are a part of the cosmos capable of self-awareness and self-reflection (Swimme, 1984). Heron and Reason (1997) hold that humans consummate such self-awareness as creative agents whose practical inquiry is a celebration of the flourishing of humanity and of the co-creating cosmos. This participation is part of a sacred science and an expression of the beauty and joy of active existence.

Let us now turn to Creswell's (2013) fourth paradigmatic choice: **the use of language in research — the rhetoric.**

Bloomberg and Volpe (2012) argue that, because the researcher is the main tool in qualitative research, first-person writing is encouraged. They point out that the unique style and narration of the researcher is an integral part of the study, and, as such, the first-person "I" is sometimes used. The reasoning here is that terms like "the author" or "the researcher" suggest distant or uninvolved. In qualitative research, it is no longer acceptable to be the omniscient, distant qualitative writer (Creswell, 2013).

Following the participatory worldview and extended epistemological framework, research includes short stories, photography, personal essays, fiction and literature, journal entries, and role-plays (Ellis, 2004). Sparkes (2002), for example, describes the following different styles of qualitative research writing:

- The *realist tale*, which generally entails scientific writing.
- *Confessional tales* representing the researcher's voice and concerns for what happens during actual fieldwork.
- *Auto-ethnographies* that rely on systematic sociological introspection and emotional recall which allow the researcher to relate stories regarding their own lived experiences; relating the personal to the cultural.
- *Poetic representation* in which interviews are written up as poems including the speakers' pauses, repetitions, alliterations, narrative strategies as well as rhythms.
- *Ethno-drama* transforming data into a theatrical script. This style's strength lies in its ability to capture lived experiences, as well as its ability to reach wider audiences and remain true to life.
- *Fictional representation* in which two types may be demarcated: *ethnographic fiction* in which the representation is fictional, but the data on which it is based, is factual, and creative fiction where the focus is on "crafting an engaging, evocative and informative story."

In the dissertation, I used untraditional, if not controversial, writing styles as well as more traditional modernist ones like *scientific*, *realist* and *confessional tales*. In addition, I included personal stories about lived experiences in Personal Reflections and Learning<sup>63</sup>.

When one considers Creswell's (2013) fifth assumption regarding **methods** it is clear that a wide range of qualitative and some quantitative methods are commonly used in participatory research (Armstrong & Banks, 2011). Building on the work of Kindon, Pain and Kesby (2007), Armstrong and Banks (2011) distinguish between participatory methods and creative participatory methods (See Table 6.1).

**Table 6.1: Participatory and Creative Participatory Methods**

<b>Participatory methods</b>	<b>Creative participatory methods</b>
Group work and discussion	Visualisation and high tech mapping (using paper and GIS)
Participant observation	Storytelling
Surveys	Role plays and theatre
Secondary data analysis	Diagramming and drawing
Learning by doing	Community art and media
Dialogue	Video
Interviewing	Photo-voice
Education camps	Website design
Exchange programmes	
Ranking and scoring	
Shared analysis, writing and presentations	
Political action and advocacy	
Transect walks	

Source: Adapted from Armstrong and Banks (2011: 20)

In co-operative inquiry, all the standard data generation approaches and methods found in qualitative research may be used with some reliance on quantitative methods that can contribute to the inquiry at hand. According to Heron (1996: 80), these can include:

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<sup>63</sup> Please see Chapter 8.

**Table 6.2: Co-operative Inquiry Data generation Methods**

descriptive notes	interview notes
conceptual maps	audio and video tapes
theory outlines	photos
journal entries of self or other	documents of self or other (letters, minutes, memos, records, reports)
observational data and feedback notes	physiological measures
questionnaires and rating scales filled in by self or other	

Source: Heron (1996:80)

Heron (1996: 80) concludes that "the primary purpose of data generation in co-operative inquiry is for each person to provide information about his or her own action and experience, to formulate data about oneself as a subject, not about someone else as a subject or 'informant'".

Apart from standard data collection methods, co-operative inquiry utilises presentational methods, which are included in presentational knowing, i.e. intuitive pattern knowing expressed in graphic, plastic, moving, musical and verbal art forms (See Table 6.2). According to Heron (1996: 81), these can include drawings, paintings, photos, film, sculptures, musical forms, choreography, ritual, thick multi-sensory descriptions, poetry, story, allegory, and drama. These are used as precursors to complement the more literal, prosaic and conceptual forms used in the research.

Finally, Heron (1996) justifies the use of radical memory as a critical part of CI. He explains that, because inquirers are also their own subjects, the way in which they record their perceptions and actions takes place retrospectively — minutes, hours or days after the event. Therefore, the primary form of recording involves memory. Here it is important to pay heed or give careful attention to what is going on in order to create the conditions for reliable moments of focal perception. Also, Heron (1996) distinguishes between paying heed in an ordinary or extraordinary way which will generate radical memory. Radical memory yields data for informative statements about an inquiry domain and data on transformative practice and serves as a core part of data generation methods in co-operative inquiry.

Having outlined the principles and procedures of co-operative inquiry as a research approach, let us now look at it from a research design perspective.

## **6.5 CO-OPERATIVE INQUIRY PROCEDURES AND PRINCIPLES**

Believing the principles and procedures of co-operative inquiry can optimally lead to a re-think of co-researchers' role as change agents and explore their spiritual identity praxis, I chose CI as design for my study. Fully resonating with its ethos and spirit I wanted to ensure that all decisions taken during the study were geared toward the co-researchers answering the research question: *Can an action research inquiry process over time provide evidence of how change practitioners shift their spiritual identity praxis towards their change agency when employing complexity thinking?*

My purpose as the initiating researcher was to join with and empower the co-researchers in exploring their spiritual identity praxis and current role as change agents based on a critical complexity-based understanding. This was to be accompanied by mutual disclosure and collective discourse in order to assure that authentic expression was evoked.

In Heron and Reason's (2001: 179) words CI entails:

a way of working with other people who have similar concerns and interests to yourself, in order to: understand your world, make sense of your life and develop new and creative ways of looking at things; learn how to act to change things you may want to change and find out how to do things better.

Heron (1996: 20) adds that both participants and researcher design, manage and draw conclusions from the inquiry, and undergo the experience and action that are being explored - because "this is not research on people, but research with people".

As the research philosophy of CI builds on a subjective-objective ontology and an extended epistemology, it is not strange, as Heron and Reason (2008) point out, that there is movement between four ways of knowing, during the inquiry cycles. These research phases are:

- The co-inquirers conceptually define a topic for their inquiry and devise a method for exploring it in action. Here propositional knowing entails knowing 'about' something intellectually. This is expressed in propositions and statements to assert facts about the world. Propositional knowing is essential, in naming in a well-rounded and grounded way, the basic features of people's being-in-a-world in order to empower effective action.
- The co-inquirers apply practical knowing, that is, knowing how-to-do and how to engage in some class of action or practice. Practical knowing is evident in the skills and competencies inquirers develop in knowing how to do co-operative inquiry, as well as, how to start informing or transforming the subject of the inquiry.
- The co-inquirers engage experientially with the domain of practice. Experiential knowing entails being present in a direct face-to-face encounter with a person, a place or with something. This form of knowledge also involves knowing through the immediacy of perceiving, through empathy and resonance. The outcome is the quality of the relationship in which it participates, including the quality of being of those in the relationship.
- The co-inquirers review action and experience, first by grasping patterns intuitively, second, appraising it conceptually, third, re-evaluating their initial inquiry topic through their actions, and finally, planning another modified phase of action in order to deepen knowledge. The review process requires presentational knowing and is made manifest in images which articulate experiential knowing, shaping what is inchoate into a communicable form. These presentations are expressed non-discursively through the visual arts, music, dance and movement, and discursively in poetry, drama and the continuously creative capacity of the human individual and social mind to tell stories.

These research phases continue for several cycles of inquiry so that the four ways of knowing become more comprehensively engaged in the topic and its domain of inquiry. The cyclical process assists in the forms of knowledge to become more congruent with each other, both within each inquirer and, with due allowance for individual perspectives, within the group as a whole.

Having outlined the essence of co-operative inquiry as research design, it is now in order to outline the key decision steps I took in executing it.

## **6.6 KEY DECISIONS TAKEN DURING THE ACTION RESEARCH PROCESS**

Many decisions were taken during the study, not all of which can be described here. Therefore, in what follows I outline only the key decision steps.

### **6.6.1 Sampling and Member Recruitment**

I used purposive sampling to select OCD practitioners. This form of sampling is used when the researcher wants to exemplify a case or some phenomena or process of interest, whilst being at the same time critical of the parameters of the population and making choices according to those parameters (Silverman, 2013). I employed purposive sampling in order to yield in-depth and information-rich data with people in which the process being studied would most likely occur (co-exploring spiritual identity praxis and the role of change agents in OCD) (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

Since selecting information-rich participants with specific selection criteria in large populations is a difficult endeavour, snowball sampling is often also employed to access individuals in networks of people who know likely information-rich people who may fit the set criteria (Silverman, 2013). Consequently, I applied snowball sampling to identify and locate individuals in the various OCD networks that actively practice OCD. This strategy helped me to spread my request to prospective participants via professional channels like the South African Organisational Development Network (SAODN) and the South African Board for People Practices (SABPP) to interested individuals.

The member recruitment and invitation of co-participants took place over five months. The selection criteria entailed:

- Participants had to be willing to spend approximately 4 - 8 hours every 6 - 8 weeks in the greater Cape Town for the research meetings (workshops).
- Participants had to be willing to apply the chosen research topic to workplace practice (internal/external).
- Participants had to agree to keep a research journal at least after each meeting and occasionally during the week.
- Participants had to be willing to participate in all group meetings except in the instance of life-threatening or traumatic events.
- Participants had to have a keen interest in complexity, spirituality and identity in the workplace.

- Participants had to have a keen interest in improving and developing their personal practice in a self-critical manner.
- Participants had to be willing to apply co-operative research methodology to their personal OCD practice.
- Participants had to be willing to take up a role regarding the three strands of empowerment<sup>64</sup> in the inquiry group.
- Participants had to agree to ground rules of the research as devised by the group (subject to change over time).

The final selection strategy I applied was convenience sampling. The selected participants had to be willing to spend time and money and to travel to venues in Cape Town where the study took place. After identifying fourteen individuals, I had initial meetings with them to determine who could commit to the specificity of the member recruitment criteria (Adams, Khan, & Raeside, 2014). The challenge was to find the best possible fit while keeping in mind that prospective participants had to take part in an in-depth and intense process. More practically, I had to determine who had the time, money and interest to honour their selection and willingness to commit to an eighteen-month research journey. During the meetings, the candidates and I were able to – agree on the feasibility of their participation. Eight OCD practitioners were willing to commit to the initiating meeting and sign the research agreement. Two eventually had to discontinue due to other personal commitments. Both left the OCDCoP during the second cycle of research between Workshops 4 and 5. The final group of co-participants were all OCD practitioners, and the group displayed a diverse demographic profile,<sup>65</sup> experience as OCD practitioners, education, gender, race and age.

Having outlined the sampling strategies and the way in which the co-participants were recruited, I next discuss my considerations and decisions as initiating researcher.

### **6.6.2 Considerations and Steps as Initiating Researcher**

Co-operative inquiry emphasises the significance of collaborative learning experiences. In Heron's (1996) model, each individual contributes to the inquiry process and is open to listening to, learn from, share with, and negotiate with others. Therefore, initiating the study, I had to:

- Ensure ample time and space for co-participants to present their data, to reflect on it, and to discuss it with the other participants;
- Ensure involvement of all participants in group discussion and opportunity for reflection with plentiful interludes ensuring that 'high contributors' do not dominate the proceedings and constrain the other participants,

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<sup>64</sup> Please see Chapter 7.2.3 for a description of the three strands of empowerment.

<sup>65</sup> For a detailed description of the co-researchers see Chapter 7; Section 7.2.2.



- Ensure opportunities for remembrance, that is, using storytelling and narratives as the first step in data presentation and as an ongoing dialectical interplay.
- Secure the presence of all members at our sessions. With the exception of two occasions, I managed to do so. Also, two different members could not take part in whole-day workshops. I made sure they were debriefed and I spent the time to update them on key moments and experiences. I also supplied copies of the voice recording of the sessions to them<sup>66</sup>.
- Ensure I situate myself well in the body of CI literature.

As the initiating researcher, I had no previous experience or knowledge of conducting a co-operative inquiry. My working experience before starting the inquiry included high-pressure business management roles; implementation of quality business management systems; the facilitation of psycho-spiritual formation and transformation in multi-cultural and inter-faith group contexts; mentoring and coaching in the area of organisational spirituality; entrepreneurial business development; and spiritually centred business consulting. These previous OCD experiences came in handy in honing my facilitation skills and the collaborative group work that was required. In addition, my training in counselling psychology and pastoral psychology gave me a unique advantage in understanding and facilitating the group inquiry process<sup>67</sup>.

While all the other members of the OCDCoP were experienced OCD practitioners, coaches and business consultants, they too did not have any prior experience of co-operative inquiry.

- ***Initiating and related Issues***

A range of practical issues has to be considered when embarking on any type of co-inquiry research many of which are related to 'personal relationships' which are fundamental to participatory research (McArdle & Reason, 2008). Issues and challenges such as negotiating access into 'communities', opening communicative space, and gaining trust and confidence often occur at the beginning of the research process (Armstrong & Banks, 2011; Wicks & Reason, 2009; McArdle, 2002). With regard to practical issues Wicks and Reason (2009: 244) point out:

Before we can engage in cycles of reflection and action ... we need to have the ability to establish relations with an appropriate grouping of people, which means we must either have some access to the communities we are concerned about, or we need to develop legitimacy and the capacity to convene that goes alongside it. If the research is building on an existing relationship/partnership then some of these initial practical issues may be less of a problem.

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<sup>66</sup> I believe I ensured that the collaboration strand was adhered to successfully which is obviously vital to CI.

<sup>67</sup> While all the other members of the OCDCoP were experienced OCD practitioners, coaches and business consultants they too did not have any prior experience of co-operative inquiry.

In general, one or two people who have enthusiasm for something they want to explore initiate co-inquiry research. Sometimes interest groups ranging from informal to professional groups initiate the research.

Initiating researchers have, from the outset, three closely interdependent and fundamental issues to consider (McArdle, 2002). Heron (1996: 63) calls them the three strands of empowerment, since as he argues "a co-operative inquiry is a community of value, and its value premises are its foundation". Due to the dominance of the Newtonian paradigm and atomistic thinking, research participants are not used to being allowed into a highly participative decision-making process at all significant levels of inquiry. Therefore, they need to be an empowerment to become fully-fledged co-researchers.

The three strands can be summarised as follows (Heron, 1996):

- (i) The cognitive strand: the initiation of group members into the methodology of the inquiry so that they can make it their own.
- (ii) The political strand: the emergence of participative decision making and authentic collaboration so that the inquiry becomes truly co-operative.
- (iii) The emotional strand: the creation of a climate in which emotional states can be identified, so that distress and tension aroused by the inquiry can be openly accepted and processed, or members can express joy and delight with each other freely.

Heron (1996:41), quoting Reason, warns, "tension around the issue of authentic collaboration is often a major issue for the initiating researchers" and suggests, "once they have done their work of initiation and education, [initiators] carry on as co-researchers, but of lesser rank than the main group". This relates to concerns regarding whether initiating researchers allow the group to co-create itself.

- ***Establishing a group***

Heron (1996) emphasises four ways in which groups can be established around the research interest or project, namely: (i) self-evidently formed groups, (ii) recruitment by invitation, (iii) face-to-face conversations, or (iv) invitational letters, emails or phone calls.

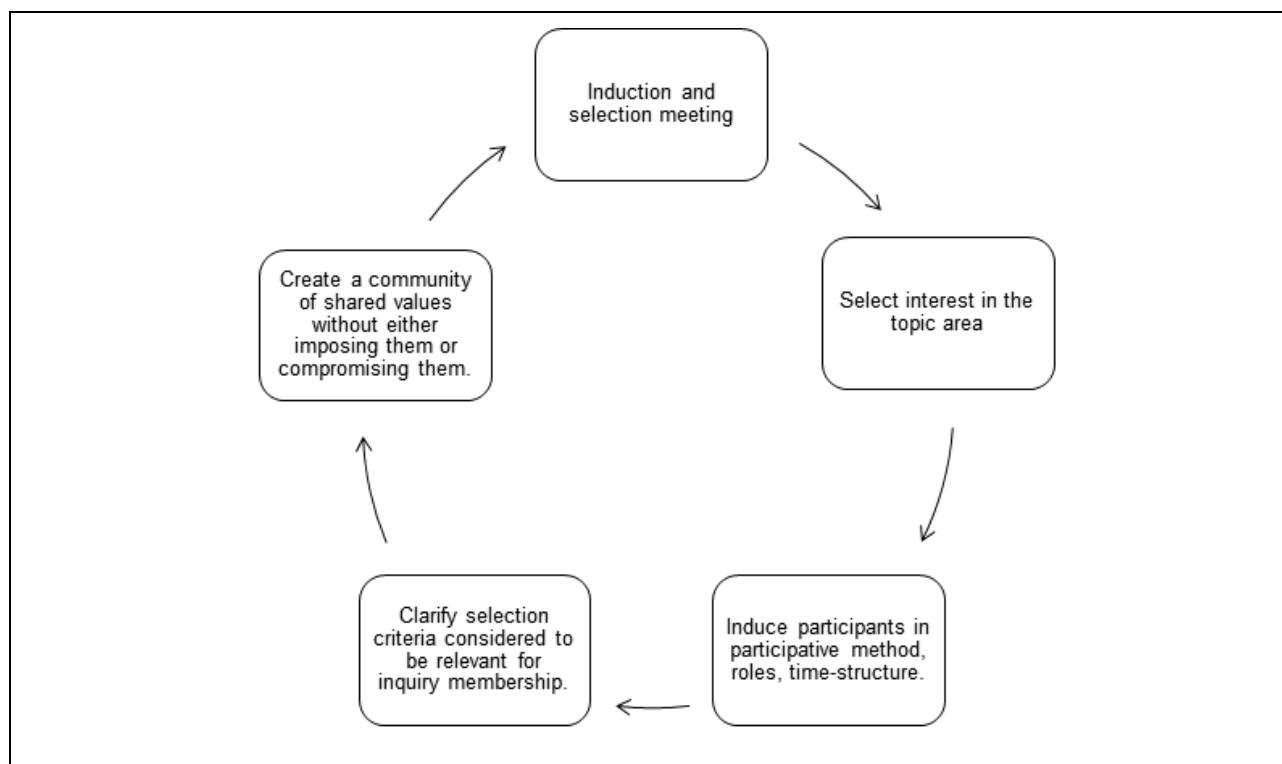
- ***Contracting***

The contracting phase during which members are empowered to define the enquiry agenda is a crucial part of the research process. Contracting is mostly done around the initiator's proposal that is communicated during the invitation to the enquiry. See Figure 6.1 outlining launching a co-operative inquiry group.

Reason (1999: 214) offers the following example of the agenda of the initiating meeting:

- Welcome and introductions: helping people feel at home.
- Introduction by initiators: what we are interested in researching.

- People discuss what they have heard informally in pairs, followed by questions and discussion.
- Introduction to the process of co-operative inquiry.
- Pair discussion followed by questions and discussion.
- Decision time: those wishing to join the group.
- Practical discussion: dates, times, financial and other commitments.



**Figure 6.1: Launching a co-operative inquiry group**

Source: My depiction of Heron's (1996:66) suggestions

### 6.6.3 Devising the overall inquiry plan

Following the contracting phase, which includes the signing of the ethical research and informed consent agreement,<sup>68</sup> the group agrees to a programme of meetings that would allow sufficient time to explore the cycles of action and reflection.

- **Researcher Roles**

An agreement is negotiated with participants as to the distribution of the roles and responsibilities. If the initiator is also the group facilitator, this should be made clear. The facilitator identifies other members with skills in group facilitation, inquiry facilitation, management of differences and working with distress. These roles should be assigned to them, and they should be encouraged to take up these roles. A decision is also made on taking up a fully democratic approach such as rotating leadership, or whether the group prefers one or two members, facilitating the group.

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<sup>68</sup> Please see appendix A for the example of the research agreement and informed consent document.

- **Ground rules**

The group may decide on ground rules that promote equality in all respects, e.g. contribution, confidentiality, participation and communication.

- **Key responsibilities**

As academic scholars often initiate the research interest, it is prudent to decide who the target audience of the various outcomes should be. It could be that the research may just be for the benefit of the members, or for some external parties.

As this is a doctoral research project, we decided that I as PhD candidate would take the responsibility of coordinating the complete project as well as writing the report.

In co-operative inquiry, the group normally agrees to what is contained in final collaborative reports and whether it is necessary for all members to agree with the final report before it may be sent out. In most cases, individuals participating in the research write their own versions of the research and the report is drafted by one or two members based on the group experience.

#### **6.6.4 Research Phases, Cycles and Stages**

As already pointed out, co-operative inquiry moves through phases of action and reflection. The major phases present the processes of becoming in the CI while the cycles run in conjunction with the four cognitive modes of inquiry (presentational, propositional, practical and experiential). Co-operative inquiry can thus be seen as cycling through four phases (Figure 6.2) of co-becoming and four stages of reflection and action – modes of knowing (Heron & Reason, 2008). Each cycle presents the phases and stages (Figure 6.3) of the research and can be summarised in four key phases and research stages (mini-cycles).

According to Heron (1996) the phases and stages in co-operative inquiry are as follows:

##### Phase 1 - Becoming Co-researchers

- Agree on the area of human activity.
- Agree on the focus of the inquiry.
- Develop a set of questions or propositions to investigate.
- Plan a method for exploring the focal idea in action through practical experience.
- Devise and agree on a set of procedures for gathering and recording data from this experience.

##### Phase 2 - Becoming Co-subjects

- Engage in actions on which they have agreed.
- Observe and record the process and outcomes of own and other's action and experience.
- Watch what is happening to gain a better understanding.
- Later start trying new forms of action.

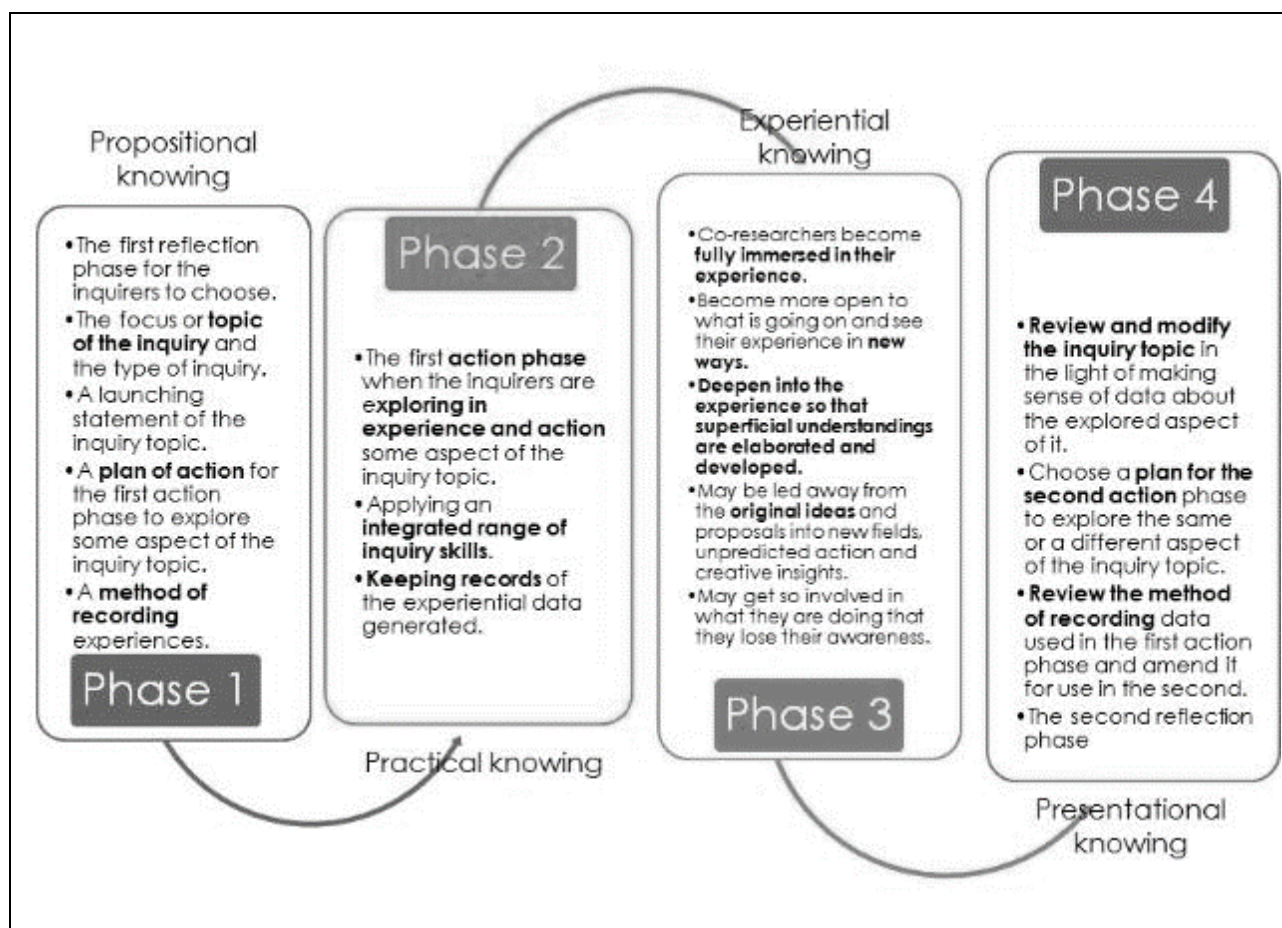


Figure 6.2: Co-operative Inquiry Research Phases

Source: My own depiction of Heron (1996:49)

#### Phase 3 - Becoming engaged

- Engaging with action and experience.
- Develop a degree of openness to what is going on.
- Free perceptions to see in a new way.
- Deepening into experience so that superficial understandings are elaborated and developed.
- May lead away from original ideas into new fields, unpredicted action and creative insights.

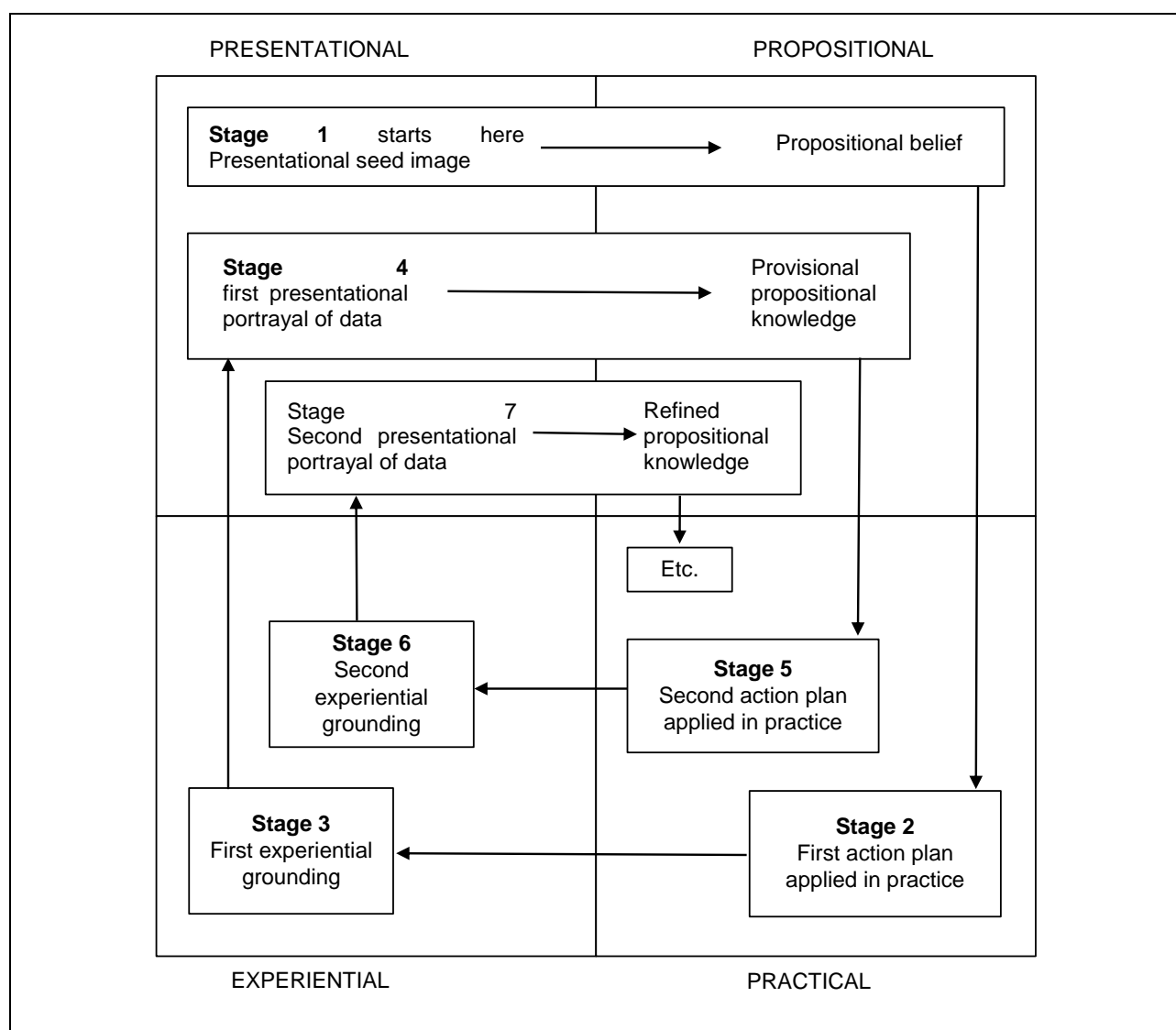
#### Phase 4 - Re-assemble to share

- Share in presentational and propositional forms – practical and experiential data.
- Reconsider original ideas in light of new practical and experiential data.
- Develop or reframe ideas or reject and pose new questions.
- May choose to focus on next cycle of action – focus on same or different aspects of the overall inquiry.
- May choose to amend or develop inquiry procedures – forms of action, ways of gathering data in the light of experience.

In Stage 1, a group of co-researchers come together to explore an agreed area of human activity. They may be professionals who wish to inquire into a particular area of practice; couples or families who wish to explore new styles of living; people who wish to examine certain states of consciousness in depth; members of an organisation who want to research restructuring it; ill people who want to assess the impact of particular healing practices; and so on.

In the first part of this stage, the co-researchers agree on the focus of their inquiry and together develop a set of questions or propositions they wish to investigate. Then they plan a method for exploring this focal idea in action through practical experience. Finally, in this stage, they devise and agree on a set of procedures for gathering and recording data from this experience.

In Stage 2, the co-researchers, now also co-subjects, engage in agreed actions, observe and record the process, outcomes of their own, and each other's experience. In particular, they are careful to notice the subtleties of experience and to hold lightly the conceptual frame from which they started so that they are able to see how practice does and does not conform to their original ideas.



**Figure 6.3: Stages of Co-operative Inquiry Research**

Source: Adapted from Heron (1996:56)



Stage 3 in some ways is the touchstone of the method of inquiry. It is a stage in which the co-subjects become fully immersed in and engaged with their experience. Heron (1996) explains the participants may develop a degree of openness to what is going on to the extent that they become free of preconceptions and see things in a new way. They may also become so involved in the experience that superficial understandings are elaborated and developed. On the other hand, Heron (1996) foresees that co-subjects' experience may lead them away from the original ideas into new fields, unpredicted action and creative insights. Also, it is possible that they may become so involved in what they are doing that they lose awareness of being part of an inquiry group. There may be a practical crisis in which they may become enthralled and thus simply forget.

After an agreed period of action and reflection in Stages 2 and 3, the co-researchers may decide to proceed to Stage 4. During Stage 4, they re-assemble to share the experiential data from these stages and to consider their original ideas in the light of current experiences. According to Heron (1996), they may develop or re-frame these or reject them and pose new questions. He also maintains that they may choose to focus on the same or on different aspects of the overall inquiry for the next cycle of action. The group may also choose to amend or develop its inquiry procedures – forms of action, ways of gathering data – after consideration of their new experiences.

The cycles of action and reflection are then repeated several times, as depicted in Figure 5.3. These may include the following co-sense-making routines:

- the ideas and discoveries tentatively reached in early phases may be checked and developed;
- investigation of one aspect of the inquiry may be related to the exploration of other parts;
- new skills may be acquired and monitored;
- experiential competencies may be realised;
- the group itself can become more cohesive and self-critical, and more skilled in its work.

According to Heron (1996), the research moves through five to eight full cycles of perpetual reflection-action with varying patterns of divergence and convergence over several aspects of the inquiry topic. Heron (1996: 95) explains that the culmination of the research cycles is mutually agreed upon and suggests the following guidelines:

Three is a working minimum for the total number of inquiry cycles. Experience suggests that between five and eight full cycles of reflection and action give enough room for useful outcomes, without being too demanding on time and motivation. This would mean between six and nine reflection meetings, including one to open the first cycle and one to close the last.

### **6.6.5 Data Generation and Report**

Generating data in co-operative inquiry means following a post-positivistic approach in which co-inquirers are shaping their experience of a given reality (Heron, 1996). By keeping records of the experiential data the co-participants focus on their own experiences. Heron (1996: 80) states: “the



primary purpose of data generation in co-operative inquiry is for each person to provide information about his or her own action and experience and to formulate data about oneself as a subject". The most rigorous way of data generation is for co-researchers to ground the statements directly in their own experience, where such experience involves a deep kind of participative knowing. Of course, co-inquirers can also use data of a more traditional nature.

Heron (1996) explains that rigour is called for when studying the human condition, which is one of shared and dialogic embodiment. He argues that researchers cannot get outside, or try to get outside, the human condition in order to study it. They can only study it through their own embodiment, through the full range of their human sensibilities, in a relation of reciprocal participation and in dialogue with others similarly engaged. Therefore co-operative inquiry is an experiential, inter-subjective culture, using language (Heron & Reason, 2008). This means that the researchers share a non-linguistic understanding of their being in a world that is generated through empathic resonance with each other's lived experience. This also serves as a context for agreeing to the use of language.

As a co-operative inquiry project moves through various phases of action and reflection, the group has to choose data gathering methods. All the standard data gathering methods are used, including descriptive notes, conceptual maps, theory outlines, journal entries of self or other, observational data and feedback notes, questionnaires and rating scales filled in by self or other, interview notes, collaborative workshop notes, audio recordings, photos and documents of self or other (letters, minutes, memos, records, reports, WhatsApp group messages, and emails) (Creswell, 2013).

Heron (1996) points out that the extended epistemology, apart from the standard qualitative methods (including some quantitative methods like surveys and questionnaires), demands an extended set of data gathering methods that could include all human sensibilities. Therefore he includes two other forms of data generation: (i) presentational methods (drawings, paintings, photos, film, sculptures, musical forms, choreography, ritual, thick multi-sensory descriptions, poetry, story, allegory, and drama) that can complement the standard more literal forms of data gathering; and (ii) radical memory is the preeminent point in all forms of data gathering, with all other data collection forms regarded as secondary or retrospectively recorded perceptual data — which emphasises the use of co-researchers' direct and very own experiences and behaviour (Heron, 1996: 81). Accordingly, the primary purpose of data generation relates to each person providing information about his or her action and experience and to formulate data about oneself as subject, and not about someone else as an 'informant' (Heron, 1996).

The inquiry report can be seen as part of the final data generation process. The purpose of the report is to: (i) illuminate the process of inquiry; (ii) empower others politically; (iii) highlight outcomes that others can adopt; (iv) call for metamorphosed replication; (v) highlight relatedness or quite different further inquiries; and (vi) find various items that could be interesting and useful to others (Heron, 1996: 102).

Although I was the initiating researcher, it is important to highlight that the study entailed a co-operative process where the key steps, findings, discussions and interpretation represent the progression and work of the group of OCDCoP participants – the democratic co-generating process. In addition, it is important to keep in mind that the inquiry while key in terms of doctoral research and academic requirements is of secondary importance in co-operative inquiry. Heron (1996) explains that the report communicates something about the co-operative inquiry in the absence of the inquirers; it informs the reader of both its internal structure and process as well as its outcomes on paper but does not reveal the realities the co-researchers experienced. He is opposed to the idea that a proper outcome is a research report and states:

Whether the inquiry is informative and describes the inquirers' world, or transformative to do with practices that change their world, the proper outcome is not something on paper, but something within persons. Where people are their own instruments of inquiry into a topic using their own experience and undergo transformations of being, perception, thinking and behaviour in order to conduct it, then it is clear that the proper outcome is the transformed instrument. The instrument is the evidence is the outcome. Anything written down is secondary and subsidiary (Heron, 1996: 101)

Therefore, in this study, I present both the inquiry research report<sup>69</sup> and examples of the co-inquirers experiences.

#### **6.6.6 Data Analysis, Validity Procedures and Evaluation**

Data analysis in co-operative inquiry does not follow a linear process of analysing vast amounts of data generated and then analysing it in an after-the-fact manner. Rather, it entails a continual process that takes place from the first stages to the last phases and overall cycles of the inquiry.

Heron (1996) emphasises that data analysis in co-operative inquiry should not be interpreted in a post-positivistic way. As he indicates, CI inherently necessitates data analysis not being a once-off process, but rather a continuous one, moving through the various collaborative phases, stages and cycles of co-interpretation in an iterative way. Zuber-Skerritt (2011: 80) explains:

in action theory, participants themselves are the agents of development and change who through trial and error, and individual and group reflection on and in action, come to understand their social situation/dilemmas and to know the factors that influence success or failure in personal, professional and action leadership for organization and community development and change.

Pointing out that the goal is not to attempt to generate generalisable laws for multiple contexts, he demonstrates that it rather implies "to know, understand, improve or change a particular social situation or context and to advocate for the benefit of the people who are also the 'participants' (not 'subjects') in the inquiry and who are affected by the results and solutions" (Zuber-Skerritt, 2011: 80).

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<sup>69</sup> Please see Chapter 7, section 7.3.5.

In practice, this might follow the process of phases, cycles and stages. After the four stages of the first complete cycle, the inquiry continues through several more reflection-action-reflection cycles, the concluding reflection phase of one cycle being continuous with the launching reflection phase of the next. According to Heron (1996: 131),

The assumption of this kind of research cycling is that the research outcomes are well grounded if the topic of the inquiry, both in its parts and as a whole, is taken through as many cycles as possible by as many group members as possible, with as much individual diversity and collective unity of approach as possible.

The co-operative research cycling process is exactly where the emerging 'data analysis' takes place and contributes to the mature extended epistemological substance that is co-created by the participants (Heron & Reason, 2006). As co-researchers, the group decides when they are satisfied that a saturation point has been reached between the reflection on the data in the cycles and the action that does not bring significant new concerns to light (Heron & Reason, 2008).

Taking human experience seriously, CI is grounded in people who examine their own experience and action with careful consideration of others with similar concerns or interests. The challenge with people sharing experiences is that they can fool themselves about what they experience. In fact, various forms of bias can creep into the group's interpreting frameworks. This is why scientists traditionally reverted to trying to build 'professional', 'detached' and 'objective' knowledge of people. However, the myth of rationality, complete objectivity and ultimate truth has been shattered (Lyotard, 1984). Therefore, attempts of overcoming bias should not be concerned with becoming detached and objective in understanding experiences, because as researchers we know we can fool ourselves if we are not applying a critical stance towards all forms of knowing. Rather, it is necessary to find a way in which researchers can develop their attention so that they look critically at themselves – their way of being, their intuitions and imaginings, their beliefs and actions – and in this way improve the quality of their claims to four-fold knowing, that is, propositional, experiential, presentational and practical knowing (Heron & Reason, 2006: 150). Heron and Reason (2006: 151) refer to this critical stance as critical subjectivity,<sup>70</sup> which implies:

we don't have to throw away our personal, living knowledge in the search for objectivity, but are able to build on it and develop it. We can cultivate a high quality and valid individual perspective on what there is, in collaboration with others who are doing the same.

To ensure that people in co-inquiry do not 'fool themselves about their experience', Heron and Reason (2006) devised a special set of practical inquiry skills to help improve the quality of knowing or critical subjectivity. These Special Inquiry Skills (SIS) can be divided into two groups: the first relates to radical perception where the purpose is to be descriptive and explanatory in informative

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<sup>70</sup> In Chapter 3, I indicated the correlation between the notion of critical subjectivity and the corresponding post-reductionistic agenda of critical complexity.

inquiry domains; the second relates to radical practice where the purpose is to engage in some actions that seek change in transformative inquiries. The first group can be identified by the following skills:

- *Being present*: The ability to empathise, resonate and attune to other people involved in the research. The skills to participate in the inner experience of a mode of awareness of things. "It is indwelling the inward declaration made by the being of the other" (Heron, 1996: 58).
- *Imaginal openness*: This has to do with a receptivity of the meaning that is inherent in the entire process of shaping people and connected relation systems by perceptually imaging the other with sensory and non-sensory imagery. Also, it has to do with enactment and participation in how things appear and to intuitively sense their meaning. In Heron's (1996: 58) words: "The skill is about imaginal grasp, the intuition of pattern meaning."
- *Bracketing*: This means managing the conceptual labels and embedded models we ascribe to people and the world in the process of perceiving. The skill is about the ability to withhold classification systems and constructs we impose on our perceiving, and to allow us to be more open to its "inherent primary imaginal meaning".
- *Reframing*: This entails conceptual re-visioning and perceiving a world. This skill has to do with a suspension of constructs imposed on people's perceiving, but also with trying out alternative perceptions for their creative capacity to articulate. It involves openness to reframing people's assumptions about any conceptual context or perspective.

The second group of radical practice skills are:

- *Dynamic congruence*: This entails practical knowing and knowing how to act beyond competent action. It includes a conscious awareness of one's modes of being and acting that is congruent with one's bodily form and behaviour and simultaneously staying in line with strategic form and guiding norms. The purpose of dynamic congruence or the end culminates in the integration of one's underlying values, motives, external context and supporting beliefs; and of its actual outcomes. It is also about being aware of how one lacks this congruence in action and adjusting accordingly.
- *Emotional competence*: This involves the ability to identify and manage emotional states in various ways. It includes allowing oneself to act in a manner free from previous distorted reactions to current events that are driven by unprocessed distress from previous encounters. Emotional competence allows for limiting the influence of inappropriate patterns of behaviour that one has acquired through social conditioning.
- *Non-attachment*: This is the ability of not investing too much of one's identity and emotional security in the actions one is engaged in, whilst simultaneously remaining intentional and committed to the issue at hand. It relates to the knack of wearing "lightly and without fixation

the purpose, strategy, form of behaviour and motive...chosen as the form of the action" (Heron, 1996: 58).

- *Meta-intentionality*: This involves having in mind one or more alternative behaviours, and considering their possible relevance and applicability to the entire situation or contextualities experienced.

As the inquiry group is initiated into the three strands of empowerment (emotional, political, methodological), the disciplines inherent in mastering SIS are developed (Heron, 1996). These skills are perfected and fine-tuned as "the inquiry group adopts the range of validity procedures intended to free the various forms of knowing involved in the inquiry process from the distortion of uncritical subjectivity" (Heron & Reason, 2001: 184).

For the purposes of the study, I differentiated between 'co-operative inquiry validity' (Heron, 1996) and traditional or more dominant validity criteria used in qualitative and action research assessments.

In quantitative research, validity is defined as the ability of the data to accurately represent objective reality (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Most qualitative researchers would refute the very idea of a correctly representable objective reality, and would instead focus on subjective realities that are co-constructed between people (Gergen & Gergen, 2008). In traditional qualitative research, the notion of validity is defined in terms of quality, goodness and trustworthiness. Internal validity is related to credibility (member checks and triangulation) while external validity is viewed in terms of transferability, dependability and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). However, validity is a contentious matter and currently, there are no agreed general criteria of what quality and goodness in qualitative research imply (Tracy, 2010). Despite the contentious debates, an important distinction can be made between the dominant validity criteria as espoused by empirical positivism — which continues to hamper action research approaches — and post-reductionist approaches to action research. To illustrate the radical difference between the aims of empirical positivism and participatory action inquiry I use Reason and Torbert (2001: 7) who argue:

Whereas empirical positivism aims at universalisable, valid certainty in reflection about particular pre-designated questions, participatory action inquiry aims at timely, voluntary, mutual, validity-testing, transformative action at all moments of living.

In action research, Bradbury and Reason (2001) broaden the discussion on validity concerns by suggesting that the field should not seek to provide a new totalising or essentialist account of validity criteria, rather:

We reassure the reader that no action research project can address all issues equally and that choices must be made about what is important in the emergent and messy work of each action research project" (Bradbury & Reason, 2001: 454).

They also emphasise the importance of recognising the uniqueness and the contextuality of the particular study and provide a basis for critical questions. They argue that inquiries of quality and validity should include the encouragement and debate of the following questions:

Is the action research: (i) explicit in developing a praxis of relational-participation? (ii) guided by reflexive concern for practical outcomes? (iii) inclusive of a plurality of knowing? - ensuring conceptual-theoretical integrity? - embracing ways of knowing beyond the intellect? - intentionally choosing appropriate research methods? (iv) worthy of the term significant? and (v) emerging towards a new and enduring infrastructure? (Bradbury & Reason, 2001: 454).

Co-operative inquiry follows the general view of qualitative and action research by answering these questions through its own validity procedures, yet seeks to broaden it in distinct aspects. It is broadened in terms of its subjective-objective ontology and extended epistemology. The implications of the expanded approach to action research validity result in an alternative assessment of validity and quality criteria. Heron (1996) argues that the findings of co-operative inquiry are valid if they are scientifically sound, well-grounded and have been reached by an unbiased method (adequate warrant) as presented in the four forms of knowing (practical, propositional, presentational and experiential). Experiential knowing is the basic grounding form, and inherent to experiential knowing is lived experience, which is a tacit shared concept of primary meaning (Heron, 1996). For Heron (1996: 163): "Valid knowledge, whether experiential, presentational, propositional or practical, is knowledge whose form of expression is true, in the sense that it articulates reality". Heron (1996) argues that any form of truth-values and its connection to being-values should be perceived in terms of the ontological thesis that reality is subjective-objective. Heron (1996: 164) explains that:

A claim to knowledge is valid, and the expression of it is true if it articulates a subjective-objective reality. And what makes a subjective-objective reality a reality, I suggest, is a congruence between the four ways of knowing, the four forms of knower-known: the experiential knowing of what is present, the presentational knowing of imaginal patterns, the propositional knowing of conceptual constructs, and the practical knowing of skills and competencies.

I approached CI by including critical complexity-based co-operative inquiry knowledge. Here, one must assess how knowledge is defined from a co-operative inquiry approach and as such, apply different validity criteria. By critical complexity-based co-operative inquiry knowledge I mean taking into account "how practice is set within the context of a fourfold epistemology" (Heron, 1996: 164). Complexity-based knowledge is dynamic, contextual and takes into account the situatedness of the knowledge in the environment (Cilliers, 1998). Critical complexity is of the view that there are always ethical implications in complexity thinking:

The failure to acknowledge the complexity of a certain situation is not merely a technical error, it is also an ethical one. We cannot make purely objective and final claims about our complex world. We have to make choices and thus we cannot escape the normative or ethical domain...Normative issues are intertwined with our very understanding of complexity (Cilliers, 2005: 259–264).



In the light of expanding traditional assessments of action research, I could not use concepts that are typically used as assessment criteria. The process of co-operative inquiry does not fit into the traditional structure of traditional action research assessments. The ultimate intent of CI is transformative knowledge with the primacy of the practical, whilst inquiries can also be informative by proving well-grounded propositional knowledge. Heron (1996: 164) explains that practice is embedded within the context of the fourfold epistemology:

For experiential knowing, reality is a presence or presences with which we empathically attune and whose forms we enact and shape through unrestricted perceiving (Varela, Thompson, & Rosch, 1993). It is lived experience of the mutual co-determination of person and world. For presentational knowing, reality is significant form and pattern, in perceptual and other imaging, that interconnects analogically and metaphorically in a whole network of other significant forms and patterns. For propositional knowing, reality is the combined sense and reference of concepts. For practical knowing, reality is excellent practice and its effects. Each of these is a component of a subjective-objective reality.

Interpreted from a co-operative inquiry perspective, validity would be established by ensuring that the co-researchers remained critical of their own personal integrity, authenticity and congruence during the whole process. In this study it was done through regular journal reflections and applying the special inquiry skills, thus ensuring that the findings were supported by the literature and the paradigmatic assumptions underlying CI.

Based on the arguments above, Heron and Reason (2006: 184) offer a post-reductionist description of validity procedures to improve the quality of knowing and action. These procedures were applied to the OCDCoP group and myself:

- *Research cycling*: Heron (1996) explains that this assumption can only be very partially realised by any one inquiry group working amidst the exigencies and limitations of everyday human existence. Positively, research cycling – with its two-way impact between reflection and action – refines, clarifies, extends and deepens the focus of the inquiry, whether informative or transformative. Negatively, such cycling checks, corrects, amends, and deletes what the inquirers find ill-grounded in the way they have been framing or practising the focus.
- *Divergence and Convergence*: Research cycling can be convergent, in which case the co-researchers look at the same issue several times, maybe looking each time in more detail; or it can be divergent, with co-researchers deciding to look at different issues in successive cycles.
- *Balance of Action and Reflection*: According to Heron and Reason (2006), each inquiry group needs to find its own balance between action and reflection, and, in the reflection phase, between presentational and propositional ways of making sense. This means finding an appropriate balance between these two phases, so that there is neither too much reflection on too little experience nor too little reflection on too much experience. Too much time in reflection is just armchair theorising; too much time in action is mere activism.



- *Challenging uncritical subjectivity or challenging consensus collusion*: The co-researchers can authorise any inquirer at any time to adopt the role of devil's advocate formally in order to question the group about whether one of several forms of collusion which may include: (i) not noticing, or not mentioning aspects of experience that show up the limitations of a conceptual model or programme of action; (ii) unaware fixation on false assumptions implicit in guiding ideas or action plans; (iii) unaware projections distorting the inquiry process; and (iv) lack of rigour in the inquiry method and in applying validity procedures (Heron & Reason, 2001: 185).
- *Balance between chaos and order*: When a group is well on the way and explores various avenues of thought and experience, confusion, uncertainty, ambiguity, disorder, and tension can set in. The group may feel as if there is chaos. Co-operative inquiry is also about intuitive discovery, happenstance and synchronicity; some form of orderly organisation of that which gives meaning and makes sense. It is sometimes about throwing all caution to the winds in a wild exploration. Successful groups in the application of CI find a balance between chaos and order. If the group is innovative and adventurous, they may be open to ambiguity, disorder and tensions. To enable the balancing process it is useful to allow for the interdependence of chaos and order and to adopt an attitude which tolerates phases which may be messy.
- *Managing unaware projections and distress*: The group creates a regular space for "surfacing and processing repressed templates of past emotional trauma, which may get unwarily projected out, distorting thought, perception and action within the inquiry" (Heron & Reason, 2006: 61). It decides on procedures for managing distress, which may be particularly important if the research involves divulging information about personal lives and experiences. Co-operative inquiry can be an upsetting business. If the co-researchers are really willing to examine their lives and their experience in depth and in detail, it is likely that they will uncover things they have avoided and aspects of their lives about which they feel uncomfortable.
- *Authentic collaboration*: This does not mean that everyone has to have exactly the same role: it may be that one person in the group has more knowledge of a subject, another knows more about the method of inquiry, and yet another may really help the group to learn together. It does mean, though, that specialist knowledge is used in the service of the group. This highlights the importance of the three strands of empowerment by which the initiating researcher empowers the co-participants to become fully-fledged co-researchers, especially with regard to methodology. Also, it assists the co-researchers to internalise and make the inquiry method their own and allowing them peer footing with the initiating researcher. Finally, authentic collaboration also means engaging fully in every action and reflection phase by being fully expressive, fully heard, and influential in decision making. Thus allowing all group members to interact with peers.
- *Developing critical attention*: Co-researchers need to develop the ability to look at their experience with affectionate curiosity, with the intention of understanding it better.

Apart from Heron and Reason's (2006: 184) post-reductionist description of validity procedures for the quality of knowing and action, I also include the seven quality choicepoints for good action research as described by Bradbury-Huang (2010: 102-103) in Table 6.3.

**Table 6.3: Seven Quality Choicepoints of Action Research**

1. Articulation of objectives.	The extent to which the objectives and the choices are clear.
2. Partnership and participation.	The extent to and means by which participative values and concern for the relational component of work is maintained. By the extent of participation, we are referring to a continuum from consultation with stakeholders to stakeholders as full co-researchers.
3. Contribution to theory/practice.	The extent to which the work builds on (creates explicit links with) or contributes to a wider body of practice knowledge and or theory.
4. Methods and process.	The extent to which the action research process and related methods are clearly articulated and/or illustrated. Statistics are often best accompanied by an analysis of data that includes the voices of participants in the research. It is important to "show" and not just "tell" about processes.
5. Actionability.	The extent to which the work provides useful ideas that guide action in response to need.
6. Reflexivity.	The extent to which self-location as a change agent is acknowledged. By self-location we mean that participants take a personal, involved and self-critical stance as reflected in clarity about their role, clarity about the context in which learning takes place, and clarity about what led to their involvement in this research.
7. Sustainability.	The extent to which the insights developed are significant in content and process. By significant we mean having meaning and relevance beyond their immediate context in support of the flourishing of persons and wider communities. Clarifying the infrastructure that can support ongoing maintenance of the work is key.

Source: Bradbury-Huang (2010:102-103)

These seven quality choicepoints provide a framework for bridging the specific validity procedures of CI with markers to assess what trustworthy, transferable, dependable and confirmable 'good' action research might look like.

Having described the initiating approach, practical issues, as well as data generation, analysis, and evaluation and issues regarding validity and the procedures to ensure good action research, I next turn to the collaborative data capture and storage procedures we used.

### 6.6.7 Data Capture and Storage

Different strategies are available to ensure the capturing of rich, detailed soft data, including the use of audio and video recordings, field notes and documents (Schurink, 2011). Field notes refer to the "written account of what the researcher heard, saw, experienced, and thought in the course of collecting and reflecting on the data in a qualitative study" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007: 119). Some investigators like to dot down notes in addition to audio recordings of the sessions. Another – the least desirable – way to record data from an interview is to write down as much as can be remembered as soon after the interview as possible. Ideally, researchers should compile notes of their reflections immediately after having concluded an interview, since these might contain important insights gained during the interview, of the informant as well as self-reflexive researcher thoughts of the researcher and so on. Post-interview notes allow the investigator to monitor the data collection process as well as starting the data analysis.

I made use of a digital voice recorder to tape workshop meetings and one-on-one interviews. In addition, I created memos in which I reflected on my experiences which included data files, master files with unedited field notes, voice-recording transcriptions and photos. I also regularly recorded personal experiences and personal milestones. The chronological reflections of my personal experiences, key activities and decisions I took during the study, as well as the e-mails between my supervisors and myself proved invaluable in compiling my research journey<sup>71</sup>.

- **Field Notes**

In contemporary qualitative inquiry, it is necessary to compile field notes of one's experiences when conducting research (Etherington, 2004). Taking field notes is the first step in data analysis (Schurink, 2009). Compiling field notes is very helpful to link particular occurrences, for example, by recording words, expressions, interactions, social interactions with people, events, other occurrences, and values and norms of particular groups of people (Schurink, (2011).

In co-operative inquiry, this process is not only conducted by the initiating researcher but also by co-participants. The OCDCoP as co-researchers together discovers and determine which linkages are important in selecting further theoretical incidents, persons, behaviours, etc., and in establishing and verifying evolving ideas, themes and typologies (Heron & Reason, 2006).

The audio recordings I made were with the permission of the participants. I used my smartphone, which has a built-in voice recorder and which were synchronised with a cloud service (Dropbox and Google Drive) for the back-up of the audio recordings. For the longer sessions (day workshops) and after gatherings, I used a voice-recording device, which immediately downloaded the data files onto a backup hard drive.

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<sup>71</sup> Please see Chapter 10.

Field notes were written during and directly after the workshops. Following Shank (2006), these included:

- *Observational notes* which contain the details of what happened during the interview; including the date, time and setting. For example, during interviews, the words and tone of voice of the participant can be recorded on a voice recorder, but the body language – full of meaning – needs to be noted by the interviewer to be added for analysis.
- *Theoretical notes*: The researcher reads through the data, reflects on what was said and writes down thoughts on the meaning of what was discussed in the interview.
- *Methodological notes*: These serve as reminders to the researcher of specific steps to be taken at specific times.
- *Analytical memos*: These are more abstract summaries compiled by the researcher at the end of a session or day and include his or her emotional reaction to the interview; impressions of specific moments; and ideas that may have come to mind.

Finally, I utilised photos,<sup>72</sup> unsolicited documents and a research journal (diary) which greatly assisted me in recalling particular experiences.

The research journal served as an audit trail that is invaluable in assessing the trustworthiness of a qualitative research project (Schurink, 2009). Similarly, Heron (1996) describes journal entries as an important part of the data generation process. Alhadeff-Jones (2013), explains the importance of an interpretation tool for accessing the relationships between the author, its object of study and the system of ideas in complexity-based research approaches, by pointing to Maxwell's (2012: 27) notion of the "Researcher Identity Memo" which goal is:

To help you examine your goals, experiences, assumptions, feelings, and values as they relate to your research, and to discover what resources and potential concerns your identity and experience may create. What prior connections (social and intellectual) do you have to the topics, people, or settings? What assumptions are you making, consciously or unconsciously, about these? What do you want to accomplish or learn by doing this study?

Next, I discuss specific issues of research ethics pertaining to CI.

## **6.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS IN CO-OPERATIVE INQUIRY**

Coghlan and Brydon-Miller (2015) outline various ethical challenges related to first, second and third person inquiries. For them, first person inquiry's ethical challenges are linked to intellectual, moral and affective dimensions.

Since doctoral research involves all three dimensions it is important to talk about the 'what' and 'why', when pursuing the 'good', 'caring about what we judge to be valuable', and 'what we pursue'. Careful

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<sup>72</sup> Please see Appendix J.

attention was given to all these dimensions by means of the journaling process, which captured my personal, and the participants' collective self-reflexive process during the research journey.

Ethical challenges in second person practice are grounded in the nature of the participatory relationship and building a shared sense of what is valuable and worth doing (axiology). Coghlan and Brydon-Miller (2015) explain that it is more fruitful to engage with others on what is common, i.e. one's own first-person operations of knowing, valuing and doing, rather than focusing on debating other person's opposing positions or possible definitive answers. For them co-inquiry into what is experienced, how we understood what is experienced, and how we made value judgements, provide a fruitful second person application of the first person focus. Focusing on one's own direct experiences provide a foundation for engaging with participatory ethics, which entails a commitment to act for the good of others. It also requires a deep commitment to working together to address issues of importance.

Third person inquiry or practice aims at creating communities of inquiry, involving people beyond the direct second-person action (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2015). Therefore, Coghlan and Brydon-Miller (2015) articulate the importance of how people come to value and identify the good, how they weigh options in making concrete choices, and how they decide on what action to take in order to perform a valuable third person contribution to the field of action research. The articulation of these operations facilitates transparency and quality of action research.

- ***Principles, dilemmas and the call for 'participatory ethics'***

Manzo and Brightbill (2007) discuss a list of principles and dilemmas that need consideration when institutions and participatory researchers have differing conceptions of ethics. Ethical issues raised when considering intellectual property rights are also outlined and the conception of 'participatory ethics' developed by Manzo and Brightbill (2007) is offered as a possible solution to institutional obstacles. It is interesting to note that the literature on co-operative inquiry does not discuss ethical issues per se, as the whole approach is articulated in terms of equality and power sharing.

Armstrong and Banks (2011) offer a set of 'principles' for participatory research as derived from some of the literature in this field, which takes the form of quite specific prescriptions:

- Make sure that the relevant persons, committees and authorities have been consulted, and that the principles guiding the work are accepted in advance by all.
- All participants must be allowed to influence the work, and the wishes of those who do not wish to participate must be respected.
- The development of the work must remain visible and open to suggestions from others.
- Permission must be obtained before making observations or examining documents produced for other purposes.
- Descriptions of others' work and points of view must be negotiated with those concerned before being published.

- The researchers must accept responsibility for maintaining confidentiality.
- Decisions made about the direction of the research and the probable outcomes are collective.
- Researchers are explicit about the nature of the research process from the beginning, including all personal biases and interests.
- There is equal access to information generated by the process for all participants.
- The core research team must create a process that maximises the opportunities for the involvement of all participants.

Engaging in participatory research raises critical issues with regard to research ethics (Herr & Anderson, 2005), yet participatory research ethics approaches are very often beyond the scope of institutional guidelines (Manzo & Brightbill, 2007). Co-operative inquiry involves degrees of participation and presupposes a commitment to a set of values that more traditional research does not necessarily embrace (Armstrong & Banks, 2011). As Manzo and Brightbill (2007:33) argue: "the unique and complex characteristics of participatory work raise ethical questions and practical challenges not typically encountered when working within more traditional research paradigms". The particularities in ethical challenges that arise in co-inquiry research create contextual dilemmas for participatory research. However, Manzo and Brightbill's (2007: 33) list of typical challenges may assist researchers in becoming aware of these aspects: (i) participant anonymity cannot be guaranteed in community group work focused on local change; (ii) giving participants a voice, risks revealing their survival strategies to those who oppress them; (iii) projects can engage ordinary people in potentially controversial social action; (iv) shared control over the research creates ethical conundrums that emerge throughout the process and are not easily predicted at the outset.

Although these ethical issues are applicable to the various strands of 'co-inquiry' research, the problem relates to the way that adherence to these principles is interpreted and enforced through a rather inflexible set of institutional rules (Armstrong & Banks, 2011). In order to address the inflexibility of institutional rules and to incorporate their set of principles pertaining to research ethics, Manzo and Brightbill (2007) call for a movement 'towards a participatory ethics' which would include: (i) representation by recognising the participants' ability to represent themselves; (ii) accountability, which involves the complementary process by which, in addition to institutional review boards, participants themselves decide whether the research is ethically sound; (iii) social responsiveness, which results in a fluid understanding of the research approach because of the changes in the needs and situations of the persons or groups involved (therefore a phased approach in ethical review procedures is recommended to ethical review boards); (iv) agency, which is reframed to include each and every person's right to voice a contribution and requires mutual respect from both participants and the researchers; and (v) reflexivity, which points to the need to adjust the current notions of the possibility to predict or anticipate possible ethical dilemmas.

However, according to Armstrong and Banks (2011) what is required is to see ethics in participatory research as flexible and to have the possibility of being adjusted in a process-orientated way. Table 6.3 presented by Armstrong and Banks (2011) highlights some of the differences between and challenges of ethical conceptions raised by institutional and participatory research.

**Table 6.4: Institutional and participatory conceptions of research ethics**

<b>Ethical issue</b>	<b>Institutions</b>	<b>Participatory research projects</b>
<b>Interest</b>	Self interest	Collective well-being
<b>Primary concern</b>	Legal and economic	Exploitation dangers
<b>Knowledge</b>	Commodity/product (top-down ethics?)	Social justice/social purpose (bottom-up ethics?)
<b>Framework</b>	Expect ethical framework and issues to be predicted and dealt with in advance	Involves negotiation over time and iterative working
<b>Consent and anonymity</b>	Expected part of traditional research	Evans and Harris (2004) argue against confidentiality where (i) indigenous communities want to be named; (ii) have a moral right to be recognised as a source of information; (iii) have a right to accrue benefits from research.

Source: Adapted from Armstrong and Banks (2011: 25).

Finally, of particular importance is the realisation that ethically responsible research depends on the integrity of the individual researcher and his or her values (Schurink, 2009). Co-operative inquiry inherently demands an alternative moral code which becomes the best defence against unethical behaviour; honesty and openness are particularly important to collaborative research approaches (Heron, 1996). Therefore, following Schurink (2009), I explicated my purpose with the research to the co-participants (see for example the research agreement<sup>73</sup>) to the best of my ability and I subscribed to the ethical code of conduct adhering to the USB and USB Departmental Ethics Screening Committee (DESC) ethical clearance guiding principles for research.

## 6.8 SUMMARY

In this chapter, I provided a detailed description of the study's research approach. More particularly I discussed (i) three pathways of action research; (ii) my reasons for employing co-operative inquiry as research approach; (iii) the ontological, epistemological and axiological underpinnings of co-operative inquiry and its interrelatedness with critical complexity; (iv) the relationship between the participatory worldview of co-operative inquiry and principles of complexity theory; (v) particularities of CI as research design; (vi) sampling strategies utilised in selecting OCD practitioners; (vii) how

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<sup>73</sup> Please see Appendix A.



the study was initiated and how practical aspects were addressed; (viii) the research cycles, phases and stages of co-operative inquiry that enabled the exploration of OCD practitioners' spiritual identity praxis and the re-thinking of their role as change agents; (ix) data generation and analysis, validity procedures, capturing and storage; and (x) ethical considerations related to co-operative inquiry.

CHAPTER 7

**CONDUCTING THE GROUP  
INQUIRY PROCESS**

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*Nor is wisdom only concerned with universals: to be wise, one must also be familiar with the particular, since wisdom has to do with action, and the sphere of action is constituted by particulars*

*(Aristotle, 2002:1141b15).*

## 7.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I present group inquiry process. More particularly, I offer an insider's view of the group work process (second person inquiry), and individual and group reflections (first person inquiry) of the co-participants' and my experiences. The first person inquiry of our reflections on the research journey and inquiry questions are highlighted in grey box excerpts. To illustrate how the process unfolded, I use verbatim excerpts from our experiences and reflections during the various collaborative processes. The Co-operative Inquiry (CI) process pertains to the Organisational Change and Development Community of Practice (OCDCoP) inquiry workshops<sup>74</sup>.

Also, the material presented in the chapter provides: (i) an outline of initiating the co-operative inquiry process; (ii) the five research cycles which describe the inquiry process including the ten workshops; and (iii) a presentation of the group inquiry final report as displayed in the spiritual identity praxis heuristics framework which is embedded in the four ways of knowing<sup>75</sup> (experiential, presentational, propositional and practical).

Describing a co-operative inquiry process poses a challenge because of its emerging and interconnected cycles, phases and stages that develop in a non-linear fashion. Heron (1996: 102) rightly points out that there is no single proper way to write up CI and adds that if there were, it would have been "offensive to its ethos". Nevertheless, he offers a "highly Apollonian list of what [he] would find of great interest, although [he] would be astonished, if not dismayed, to discover all of it in any one report" (Heron, 1996: 102). For him, an Apollonian inquiry takes a more rational, linear, systematic, controlling and explicit approach to the process of cycling between reflection and action. This is the opposite of a Dionysian inquiry, which takes a more imaginal, expressive, spiralling, diffuse, impromptu and tacit approach to the interplay between making sense of actions and reflections. In the Dionysian inquiry, group members share improvisatory, imaginative ways of making sense of what went on in the previous action phase. Thus, compared to Dionysian approaches, an Apollonian inquiry is more rigid. Nevertheless, inquiry reports can (i) illuminate the process of inquiry for others, (ii) empower them politically; (iii) offer outcomes which others can adopt; (iv) call for a metamorphosed replication of the research process, or for related but quite different further inquiries; and may (v) include experiential descriptions that may be interesting and useful (Heron, 1996: 102).

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<sup>74</sup> I use the term workshops to refer to the reflection meetings that were held as part of the inquiry process, while meeting refers to the co-operative inquiry workshops of the OCDCoP.

<sup>75</sup> The presentation of the propositional knowing includes the final collaborative inquiry report which main component is the OCDCoP's re-imagined spiritual identity praxis heuristics framework.

As the co-operative inquiry was a first of its kind not only at USB but also in South Africa, I followed Heron's descriptions<sup>76</sup> (in a very literal manner) of what should be included in inquiry reports in writing up the group inquiry processes. However, I also borrowed from the works of McArdle (2002; 2008). He writes extensively on establishing co-operative inquiry groups and the role of communities of practice in professional development (McArdle & Ackland, 2007), as well as the role of action research in organisational development (McArdle & Reason, 2008). Finally, I engaged with work conducted at the Centre for Action Research in Professional Practice (CARPP) at the University of Bath under the tutelage of Professor Peter Reason. The doctoral theses at CARPP which applied co-operative inquiry that was of particular interest were the following: (i) Ryde (2005), who explored white racial identity; (ii) Boulton (2012), who studied the role of narrative and the complexity turn in science; and (iii) Cooney's (2006) co-operative inquiry, which explored spiritual identity at Saybrook University in California, USA.

Next, I provide an overview of the key constituents in initiating and establishing the OCDCoP, which includes the project planning, participant recruitment and induction meeting (first workshop).

## **7.2 OVERVIEW OF KEY CONSTITUENTS OF THE PROJECT**

### **7.2.1 Research sites and timeline**

The physical locations of the workshops were arranged in the larger Cape Town area of South Africa, between the Winelands district of Stellenbosch and the southern suburbs of the Mother City. The locations differed according to the wide-ranging workplace environments in which the participants as OCD practitioners were working at the time.

The venues were determined by the group's requirements and the members' physical location. The meetings were normally held in a comfortable home or conference venue that facilitated a reflective atmosphere. Most venues were rented according to the need for reflection, where participants could spend time in natural surroundings. The venues allowed for silent reflection when it was required to contemplate some key group or personal questions.

The research evolved through five complete research cycles, which included several stages and phases from August 2013 to September 2015. We met every four to eight weeks as we moved between the action and reflection stages (Figure 7.1).

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<sup>76</sup> Please see Appendix Q.

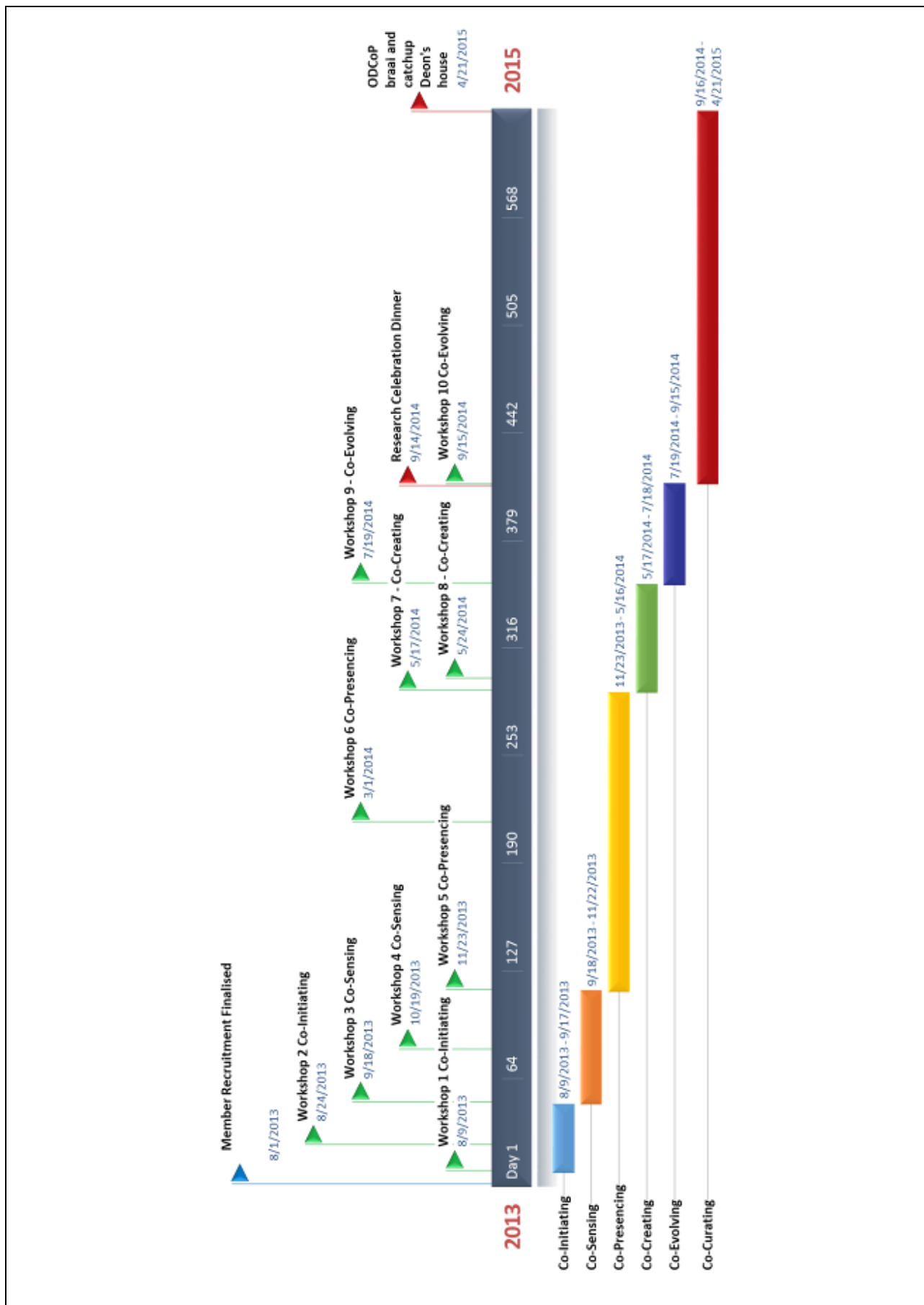


Figure 7.1: Overview of the timeline of the research project

Source: Author

## 7.2.2 The research participants

The invitation to take part in the co-operative inquiry took place over a period of six months. At the same time, I developed the initial contracting framework, sharpened my skills in facilitating the process, and held meetings with potential participants.<sup>77</sup> The following illustrates important plans and decisions: (i) an email titled: “Research participation update” including the initial invitation for personal meetings with the participants<sup>78</sup>; (ii) an email outlining the final arrangements called “Research participation latest - New dates for start-up workshop the updates”<sup>79</sup>; and (iii) the final email entitled: “Start-up workshop 9 August Stellenbosch” with details and the invitation to the first meeting that took place on 9 August 2013<sup>80</sup>.

As I pointed out, I originally invited fourteen prospective participants of which the following eight individuals became co-researchers. They worked as consultants, practitioners or coaches of OCD change processes in organisations, which ranged from large corporate companies, small to medium enterprises and single-owned businesses. Their key socio-demographic features are portrayed in Table 7.1 and Table 7.2.

**Table 7.1: Socio-demographic particulars of co-researchers**

Participant	Occupation	Education	Race	Gender	Age	Role
Janet	OCD practitioner	B.Sc. Nursing	Caucasian	Female	51	Co-researcher
Deon	OCD practitioner	M.Th. Pastoral Psychology	Caucasian	Male	34	Initiating researcher
Rudi	Leadership Coach and Executive Consultant	PhD in Leadership Studies	Caucasian	Male	56	Co-researcher
Vonnie	OCD practitioner	MA Industrial Psychologist	Caucasian	Male	57	Co-researcher
Johann	Organisational Coach and Consultant	PhD in Theology	Caucasian	Male	52	Co-researcher
Dave	Organisational Coach and Consultant	B.Eng. (Engineering)	Caucasian	Male	58	Co-researcher

<sup>77</sup> Please see Chapter 6.

<sup>78</sup> Please see Appendix B.

<sup>79</sup> Please see Appendix C.

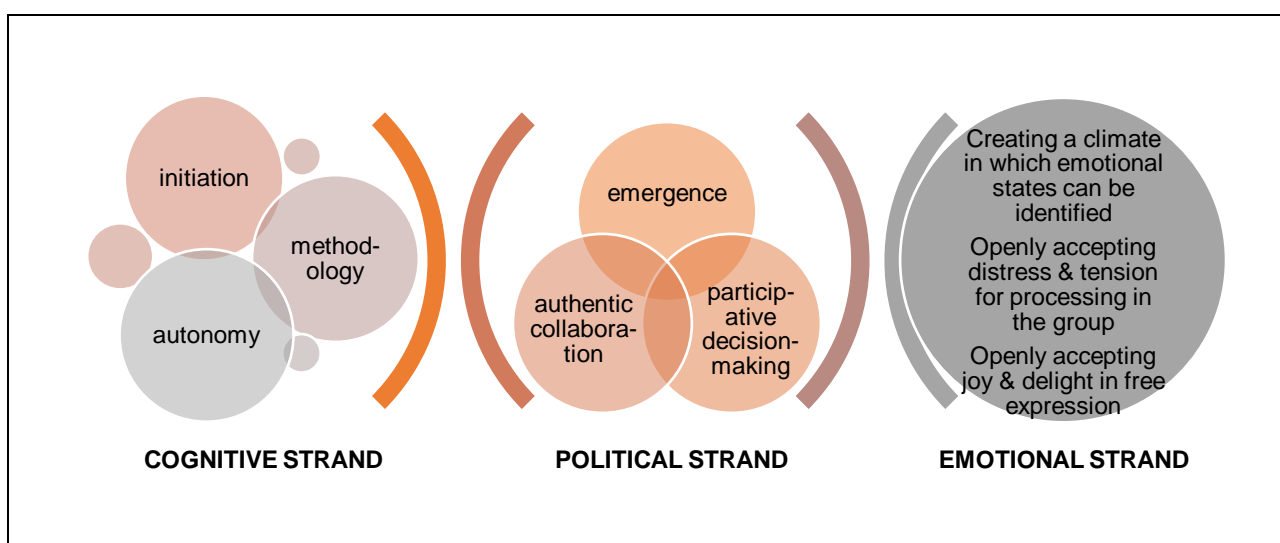
<sup>80</sup> Please see Appendix D.

**Table 7.2: Socio-demographic particulars of co-researchers who discontinued the research between Workshop 4 & 5**

Participant	Occupation	Education	Race	Gender	Age	Role
Lucille	OCD practitioner	MA Development Studies	Caucasian	Female	38	Co-researcher
Stan	HR & OD practitioner	MA Commerce	Caucasian	Male	49	Co-researcher

### 7.2.3 Establishing the OCDCoP

The first step in initiating the research was to organise a workshop to establish an OCDCoP. In order to explore spiritual identity and to re-think the role of the OCD practitioner, I made provision for continual reflection and action processes. The main purpose of the initiating meeting was to create ‘buy-in’ on several levels pertaining to the collaborative formation of a group with the focus on applying a complexity perspective to their roles as change agents concerning how their understanding of identity and spirituality praxis informed their consulting practice. From a CI perspective, the contracting implied applying what Heron (1996) calls the collaborative strands of empowerment that could contribute to fully-fledged co-operative and collaborative participation in developing alternative OCD practitioner praxis (Figure 7.2).



**Figure 7.2: The Three Strands of Empowerment**

Source: Adapted from Heron (1996: 62)

I provided a “Doing Co-operative Inquiry in a Nutshell” booklet and key academic articles regarding the research methodology to orientate the co-researchers. In addition, I used time slots during several of the workshops to initiate the co-participants in the processes and procedures of action research and co-operative inquiry methodology. I also created a shared Dropbox folder in which I stored key reading material regarding (i) co-operative inquiry and action research; (ii) complexity theory, thinking and critical complexity; (iii) organisational change and development; and (iv) identity



and spirituality literature. With these initiatives, I hoped to create a democratic space for the co-participants to become autonomous in making decisions regarding the cognitive strand.

During the initial stages, the group requested that I continue to take the lead in facilitating the cognitive strand of empowerment, but as the group inquiry progressed, more participants also took up this role. The political and emotional strands required that participants take up specific facilitation roles to ensure: (i) the emergence of the inquiry process through action and reflection and periods of chaos and order; (ii) the authentic collaboration of all members at all times, allowing everyone an equal opportunity to listen and speak in a truly democratic manner; and (iii) the facilitation of times during which co-participants could vent their emotional states like anger, frustration or distress in an open and transparent manner, whilst also acknowledging moments of enjoyment, freedom and delight of the relational experiences.

The facilitation of the three strands of empowerment allowed co-participants to become fully-fledged collaborative partners in exploring the research questions.

Next, I describe the key decisions taken regarding group design and decision-making of the group inquiry process.

### **7.3 EMBARKING ON THE RESEARCH CYCLES**

#### **7.3.1 Notes on facilitating the group design**

According to Heron (1996), several considerations are involved when deciding on the design of a co-operative inquiry group. Emphasising various kinds of co-operative inquiry groups, he makes it clear that there is no systematic or fixed way to design the group. This offered various options for designing the envisaged ODCoP. More specifically in taking the initiative, I exposed the group to the following options from which we took ideas and suggestions:

- *Internally initiated.* Decisions regarding the position of the initiator of the envisaged practice were the first to be taken. Initiator/s can be internal or external to the group. When internal they are members of the same culture or field as the other participants, but when external they are not members of the culture "doing" the inquiry (Heron, 1996). In my case, as initiator, I chose to implement an internally initiated inquiry. This was because I was internal to the focus of inquiry of the group as a fellow OCD practitioner, and was personally engaged in the culture and practice of Organisational Change and Development, which meant that I could be a full co-subject.
- *Full-form.* Since everyone in the group was fully involved as both co-researcher and co-subject and grasped and internalised the method, the research entailed a full-form inquiry. Full-form inquiries signify that all participants are fully involved both as initiators and as co-participants in the research on the topic of inquiry. I recognised areas in which I was partially involved as a full-time doctoral candidate and part-time OCD practitioner. All other participants were full-time OCD practitioners. Since everyone besides me (the initiating

researcher and doctoral student) was fully involved as co-researchers and co-participants, my involvement with the design was partial. The difference is that partial form inquiries require external initiatives from initiating researchers that assist in facilitating the research process but do not get fully involved as co-participants. This was not the case in my role; I wanted to be fully involved both as initiator and co-researcher.

- *Same role.* A same role inquiry is one in which co-inquirers all have the same role (we all were OCD practitioners) and were researching aspects of our practice within our roles. The other roles in which co-researchers can engage are reciprocal (co-inquirers interact intensively within a role of equal status, e.g. spouse or partner); counterpart (co-inquirers include other members that stand in proximity of the inquiry topic (e.g. both doctors and nurses); and mixed roles (different kinds of practitioners exploring similarities and differences in their several modalities of practice (e.g. all kinds of change agents).
- *Outside/Inside.* Another area of consideration regarding the group design relates to the decision whether the action phases are focused on the inside or the outside of the inquiry. We questioned whether the chosen actions would occur in the same physical location, say in a workshop or meeting (i.e. inside), for the whole group. We decided on an outside inquiry with the focus on what happens in group members' working and/or personal lives. That is, group members took activities outside to their respective worlds. Our project represented an outside inquiry but in a varied format, since the group came together for the reflection phases to share data, make sense of it and revise its thinking, and then planned the next action phase. It was varied in that elements and periods of the inquiry were internal (or inside) group processes and followed a format where workshops were held during the action phases to allow exploration during gatherings. Sometimes there were individual activities, or we worked in dyads or small groups to perform some action phase.
- *Closed boundary.* We decided on a closed boundary project as we concerned ourselves entirely with what was going on within the group (our inner worldviews, values, experiences and beliefs). Our exploration was about the OCD practitioner spiritual identity praxis, i.e. the inner formation processes of our inner arc of experience; and did not include, as part of the inquiry, our own organisational change praxis or that of the organisations as focus of the inquiry (the outer arch of our experiences). Although as practitioners we were engaged with OCD work, our main concern was with our own experiences of interaction about our spiritual identity praxis in relation to how we think about change processes in relation to organisations, companies or individuals. So, in a certain sense, our group had open boundaries, because we included our interaction with other actors as part of the action phases of the inquiry. However, we decided against including data and feedback from others (the organisations or individuals we engaged with). In this sense, our inquiry was closed to the perspectives and experiences of organisations and their members. We were more interested in how we, as OCD practitioners, could explore our own spiritual identity

praxis and how this could assist us in re-thinking our role as change agents in change initiatives from a critical complexity perspective. We, therefore, closed the boundaries with regard to data and feedback from those who were not co-researchers. As co-researchers, we reflected on our own spiritual identity engagement (ways of being-becoming) and the roles we take up in various forms of the change interventions and were interested in re-thinking our own thinking and doing behind those roles we take up in our actions.

- *Apollonian/Dionysian*. Since we agreed upon a structure or strategy and followed it explicitly we kept to an Apollonian structure. This served two purposes: (i) it assisted in the dissemination of learning tools to further co-operative leadership, and (ii) it facilitated documentation and presentations. However, it must be pointed out that during certain periods the group was less organised and more inclined to go with the flow (Dionysian structure). Heron (1996) explains that knowing when to let go of structure and guidelines and allow whatever is emerging to emerge is truly an art.

We also decided that some group members would take up roles in managing the structure and others would allow flow or emergence. Heron (1996: 47) points out:

An excess of the Apollonian tendency to make everything controlled and explicit, and the inquiry will lose depth, range and richness, will over focus and miss the point. An excess of the Dionysian propensity to allow for improvisation, creative spontaneity, synchronicity, situational responsiveness and tacit diffusion, and the inquiry will lose its focus and cease to be an inquiry.

**Reflection on the Apollonian structure (Research journal reflection - 26 November 2013)**

*As this was my first attempt at conducting co-operative inquiry I decided with the group's support to follow an Apollonian structure. In fact, I think this was what most of the group members wanted. A highly structured approach (maybe because of their comfortability with the Newtonian worldview?). Maybe one reason the group demanded structure and wanted to know where this was going was that the group was mainly an older generation of practitioners which might have been more comfortable with order than flow and chaos. The one or two other members that preferred a Dionysian approach were more comfortable in their personalities with the unknown or it could be that they were also more exposed to complexity theory than the other participants.*

- *Informational/Transformational*. This was one of the fundamental decisions we had to take regarding the culture in the group. We wanted the co-research to be more than just descriptive of some domain of experience, and thus informative and explanatory. In addition, we wanted to explore how we could improve our change agency praxis in the light of our spiritual identity praxis. We were interested in re-thinking the role of OCD practitioners and exploring how our change agency could possibly be transformed. Heron (1996) explains that in transformative inquiry the actions within a domain are one's primary intent and the information one generates about that domain is a secondary offshoot. We did not want the research to be merely descriptive and explanatory, with its primary outcomes

propositions and/or aesthetic presentations concerning the nature of the domain. This was because in such informative enquiries the skills involved in generating the descriptive data are secondary outcomes. Therefore, in my view, based both on experience and philosophical reflection (Heron, 1996; Rajagopalan & Midgley, 2015) if one's primary intent is practical and transformative within a domain, one will get richer descriptions of the domain than if one pursues descriptions directly. As Heron (1996: 183) points out: "practical knowing consummates the other three forms of knowing and brings them to their fullness". Our initial decision was to follow a transformational inquiry, but as the research progressed we realised that it was more informational about the object of inquiry (our inner arc of experience), but at the same time revealed limited aspects that could be described as transformational about our change agency praxis in reflection of our outer arc of experience. It was a combination of both. By this, I mean an exploration that could be informative about our spiritual identity praxis and have implications which were transformative to the focus of the inquiry. Transformative in the sense that the practitioners through their spiritual identity praxis exploration could re-imagine and re-think their role as change agents, which would result in alternative ways of being and becoming in change initiatives (alternative change agency praxis). However, the transformational aspect is limited to the re-thinking and re-imagining of the inner arc of experience and does not reach organisational aspects of transformation, because the focus of the inquiry relates to the inner arc of experience in reflection of the outer arc of experience of the OCD practitioners. It does not attempt direct organisational transformation.

Heron (1996: 68) describes several options of collaborative group decision-making options:

- Unanimity (where all participants are in agreement)
- A percentage majority vote, such as seventy-five percent
- A simple majority vote, that is, any percentage majority above fifty.
- Consensus: where the minority realises it has been heard, understood and still does not reach agreement, it yields to the majority.
- An elected leader negotiates with people to integrate his or her proposals with theirs, then seeks assent by consensus or gathering the sense.
- An elected leader follows his or her own light after hearing everyone's preferences and proposals.
- Before any decision is taken, each person states out loud their personal preference before participating in any group choice.
- An elected leader follows his or her own light after collecting of relevant information only.

We decided during the second workshop to follow the **consensus co-decision-making model**.

## 7.4 THE RESEARCH CYCLES

In the following section, I present a comprehensive overview of the complete co-operative inquiry process, which includes a detailed discussion on what happened during the ten workshops of the collaborative group inquiry. I followed Heron (1996: 95) who explains that “experience suggests that between five and eight full cycles of reflection and action give enough room for useful outcomes, without being too demanding on time and motivation”. He contends that approximately six to nine reflection meetings, including one to open the first cycle and one to close the last, should be sufficient to achieve the inquiry’s outcomes. Hence, I followed these guidelines and planned ten workshops, which was loosely structured into five research cycles<sup>81, 82</sup>.

### 7.4.1 Research Cycle 1: Workshops 1-3

Cycle 1 consisted of (i) the initiating workshop as described in the previous section, (ii) the second workshop during which the launching statement and other outstanding matters regarding the co-design and launch of the participatory inquiry were attended to, and (iii) the third reflection meeting (Workshop 3), which included the first experiential grounding of the launching statement and research question.

#### ***Workshop 1 - Induction Meeting***

During the first workshop, I outlined the research proposal I presented at USB. I also explained current shortcomings with regard to understanding change approaches and shared some scholarly discussions on identity and spirituality in the workplace. I felt it was important that the prospective co-researchers grasp that the proposed project implied new ideas, approaches and ultimately new behavioural responses (Figure 6.3). I hoped that the ideas I offered would set the scene for some initial discussion and would at the same time create the opportunity for participants to speak about their own sources of knowledge. This, Heron (1996) describes as doing research *with* participants; it is important to engage them in terms of their own forms of knowing — their extended epistemologies.

All the invited members of the ODCoP arrived at the retreat venue, Christian Brothers Conference Centre in the suburb of Paradyskloof in Stellenbosch on 9 August 2013. We gathered in a boardroom overlooking a dam surrounded by old oak trees.

I opened the meeting, welcomed everyone and gave a short overview of the day’s programme and some practical arrangements. Each member introduced herself or himself briefly and explained why

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<sup>81</sup> Please see Appendix H and I for a chronological illustration with a complete overview of all our workshops and inquiry cycles.

<sup>82</sup> Please see Appendix K for an overview of how the inquiry questions developed as we progressed through the cycles.

they decided to join the group inquiry. Having settled in, I introduced the broad topic of inquiry in order for the group to become involved in co-formulating a collaborative launching statement.

After the introductions, in paired discussions, we shared what stood out for us and we provided feedback to the group on the most important themes we had identified. The following summary illustrates the nature of our initial discussions:

Vonnie: *What jumped out for me was, this whole thing of unity and diversity and that it is actually part of the same system, while we are so alike, so similar, we are also so different at the same time. I think if you overemphasise one of those two conditions, you are in trouble. So it is important that we have to be aware of how similar we are in terms of what we need from life and what we want to do with life.*

Dave: *Johann came up with a thought that I thought was quite nicely linked up with this idea of unity and diversity. If his wife was exactly the same as he was, would there be unity? And, you almost need that diversity in a marriage relationship to complement each other, to get that unity. I thought that was a fascinating insight.*

Johann: *But also if you look at the body; every part is different, and every part needs each other, therefore this body is one...So diversity is necessary to complement the other parts. So it can be fitted into one. But yet, mankind is different to that, because we are fundamentally the same. There are fundamental needs and ways that we function in, so it is easier for us to experience the sameness and the oneness, and yet the fact that we are different makes it possible for us to connect and to stick.*

Vonnie: *I wonder if madness is not when you are fundamentalistic; when you just have one way of looking at something.*

Lucille: *Spiral Dynamics Integral would say, it depends on your level of consciousness whether that is madness or not madness. But I was thinking while you guys were talking, which is not what we were talking about. Maybe madness is when unity is derived from parts that don't fit together.*

Johann: *And just to the multidimensional nature of human beings, and yes the more playful part...But I think in our own humanness there is also a diversity. If we don't see the different aspects we don't allow ourselves to live out our own diversity. Because I am also a diverse being...If we don't allow ourselves to be fully ourselves, I think we are limiting ourselves to be fully human, and maybe that's madness.*

Dave: *I was quite intrigued by the similarities to Ken Robinson's talk on education. And it is such a powerful thing about that we are so incredibly diverse, but the education system treats us as if we are all the same.*

Deon: *As the study progresses we will be going deeper and going back. Understanding the history, but not getting lost there. As human beings, we need to understand our own growth path, and really accept it as well, and not just immediately reject it and say we want something different. As you all know in personal mastery it is accepting the past, and also not running away from it as well.*

Rudi: *I like the idea of the human condition, it is just an interesting thought. In my own mind to think: What is the state of the human condition at the moment and the human condition as such? ... I think that humans don't realise we are living on a planet of duality. You will always have duality. It's always this good or bad insanity. And not many people realise that the challenge to my mind is to be aware of that and to master that duality, and find the balance in the middle. In all the disciplines psychology, theology and others they made a huge*

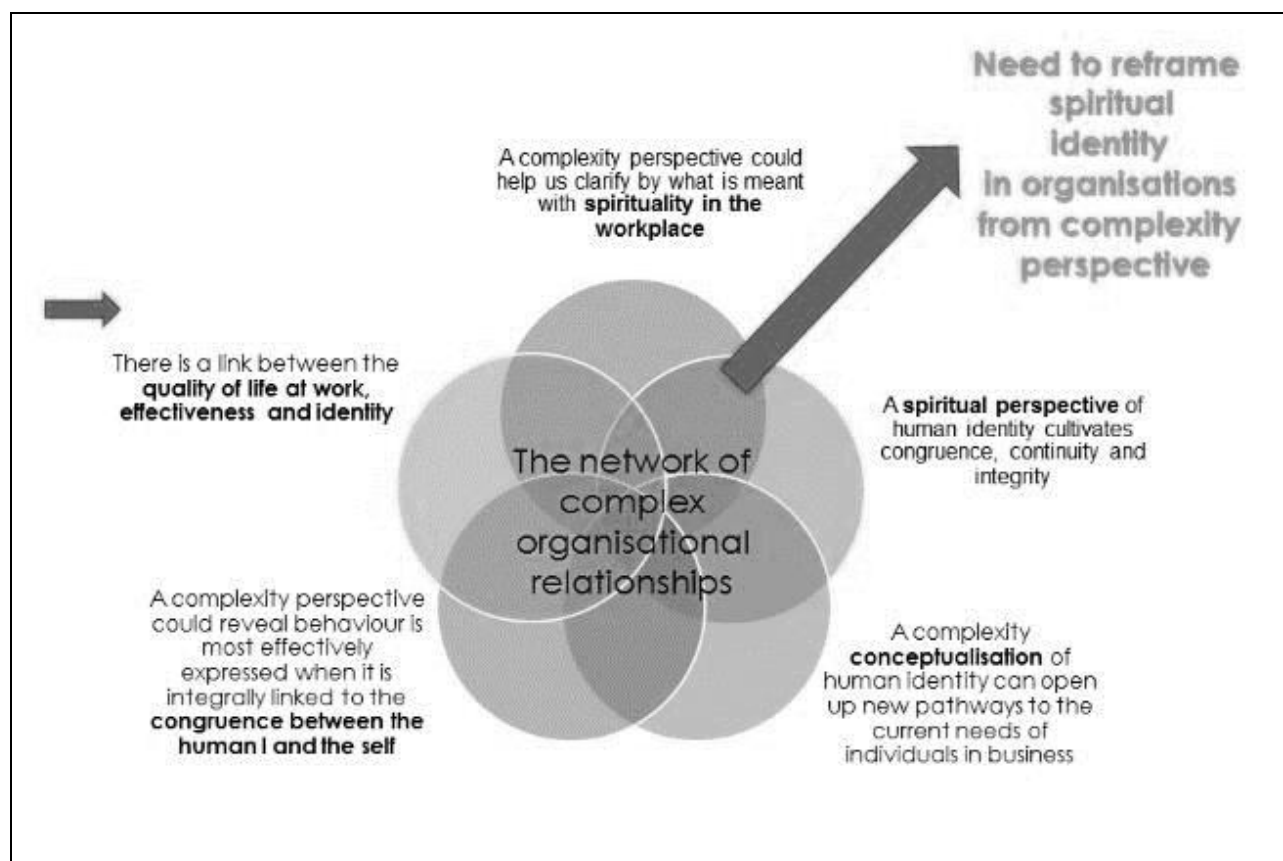


case for identifying the dark side. The not so good side and steer you away from that, creating in the process a lot of havoc, instead of helping people to get to a level of awareness. And that is absolutely part of me - that which Jung called the shadow side... And not running away from that, but embracing that and managing that. So it is about this whole ongoing process of discovering who you are really. And that's the journey. So it's enlightenment in terms of who you are. If you know who you are, you will amongst others realise, I am not separate from you. And this whole thing is getting solved. But we are being driven by this individualist kind of thing, it's just me and my little world, and we got disconnected from the rest.

#### **My reflections on the initial discussions during workshop 1:**

*It was interesting for me to see how the group started grappling with the importance of diversity in complex systems understanding and how it relates to identity. Another aspect that was encouraging to see was how some of the group members became aware of the dualities (and overcoming the binaries) in our ways of thinking, the importance of interconnectedness and how these influence our ways of being.*

After the discussion, I gave a broad overview of my initial understanding of complexity, spirituality, and identity in terms of my research proposal (Figure 7.3) before embarking on the group process. This was intended to form part of the broader discussion related to my initial meetings (during the planning phase) with participants who resonated with these ideas and therefore indicated that they would like to explore them further. Moreover, I decided to use these initial ideas to stimulate their thought processes and to facilitate rich dialogue within the process of developing a shared research focus.



**Figure 7.3: My original idea of the research problem (9 August 2013)**



Source: The Author

As I gave an outline of the above, I suggested to the group that we work within our previously agreed arrangements (during personal individual meetings) concerning the broad topics of complexity, spirituality and identity as described in the research proposal. We agreed and discussed the following clarifying theoretical questions contained in the proposal to assist us in developing our launching statement:

- What is the current reality of individuals and organisations regarding basic existential realities in the workplace?
- How does one determine the identity of a complex system?
- What is the current reality of individuals and organisations regarding basic existential realities in the workplace?
- How can a system be interconnected with all the other systems, derive part of its identity from them, and still remain unique?
- Are we equipped to deal with the current complexities of the human condition in the workplace?
- How should we approach and conceive of "complex identity"?
- Is there a "need to reframe spiritual identity in organisations from a complexity perspective" and what would the possible title of a launching statement be?

**Reflections on workshop 1: My thoughts on the discussions regarding the initial theoretical questions from the proposal**

*I really enjoyed our opening session and the discussion that came out of the theoretical research questions. I liked how some group members had an intuitive feel for some of the ideas of spirituality and complexity. Others struggled and related spirituality with religion while others related complexity with simplistic understandings or narrow versions of what it meant. I guess this was to be expected and I am looking forward to exploring the concepts of identity, spirituality and complexity with the group.*

We also discussed the process of inquiry, by highlighting the three strands of empowerment (cognitive, political, and emotional), key aspects of co-operative methodology and started moving into the practical issues of joining the group.

Much of the time at the first workshop was spent familiarising ourselves with each other and the topic of inquiry. I stressed the importance of the three strands of empowerment to the group, i.e. creating an equal space for democratic discussions and relating. In addition, I accentuated the importance of a shift in one's mindset from one's traditional ideas of research being top-down and urged the participants to become fully-fledged co-researchers with me. Also, I presented the different types of group formation in co-operative inquiry from the various options Heron (1996) provides and advised that the group should reflect on group formation before the next meeting.

After a break, we discussed the details of joining the group and the research agreement<sup>83</sup>. I requested the participants to reflect upon the agreement and to take the physical document to sign it, and hand it back or email it to me. At this point, Vonnie wanted to know whether it was necessary to be present at all the meetings. I replied that it was essential except for illness or some other major unforeseen personal crisis (Heron, 1996). I added that everyday work commitments of any kind should not be considered an adequate reason for not attending. Vonnie suggested that if a person declined on an already agreed upon date, it was the responsibility of that person to reschedule a meeting that was reasonably suitable to all – within the agreed upon research goals and objectives.

To maintain the focus of the inquiry and the main purpose for working together I created a Dropbox folder, which could be consulted to update ourselves with the main themes and events of the group. We agreed that I would be responsible for the Dropbox as well as for the agendas and minutes of all our meetings<sup>84</sup>. The minutes had various purposes and served well as a reference to revise the content of the meeting and to reflect on our discussions, the progress and overall feedback regarding the research questions, aim and objectives. I uploaded it to the Dropbox after each workshop and throughout the research cycles. I believe it facilitated the cultivation of a culture of critical reflection.

Returning to the first workshop, we discussed the participant joining criteria and the ground rules of the group, but failed to finalise all the decisions regarding participation requirements. We ran out of time because we had spent substantial time getting to know each other, discussing the topics of inquiry, and getting to grips with the demands of the co-operative process. Therefore, we could not finalise the contract and informed consent. In addition, we ran out of time to conclude the meeting as some people had to rush off because of other commitments. This is as McArdle (2002) points out, typical of initial co-working group experiences.

We looked at possible dates for the next workshop during which the launching proposal needed to be finalised. We decided that everyone should read through the shared reading materials, research agreement and group design decisions. This, they could do whilst contemplating the decisions we would have to make during the next workshop. We also decided that, for the action phase, we should reflect on our first workshop and could do this by means of a journal entry.

The positives of the first workshop were that there was a general openness to the three strands of empowerment, the co-operative inquiry methodology and a general commitment to the broad topic of inquiry.

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<sup>83</sup> Please see Appendix A.

<sup>84</sup> Please see Appendix F.

## Reflections on workshop 1 continue

### Inquiry questions explored with regard to the research proposal

What is the current reality of individuals and organisations regarding basic existential realities in the workplace? How does one determine the identity of a complex system? What is the current reality of individuals and organisations regarding basic existential realities in the workplace? How can a system be interconnected with all other systems, derive part of its identity from them, and remain unique? Are we equipped to deal with the current complexities of the human condition in the workplace? How should we approach and conceive of "complex identity"? Is there a "need to reframe spiritual identity in organisations from a complexity perspective" and what would the possible title of a launching statement be?

### My Post-Group Reflections

*I was very pleased that the group was comfortable with the research proposal questions. I was afraid that what I worked on might not match the group's interests and that their explorations might include different kinds of questions. I also realised that the group was not so comfortable with highly theoretical language and wanted to use more accessible language. We did not have time to discuss each question I proposed in detail, but it was a good way to sense whether we could find an agreement for co-operation. I also really wanted the group's buy-in on the research project as it was going to be a long journey and I had to make sure everyone was fully interested and committed to joining the co-exploration.*

*We discussed the notion of spirituality and mentioned how it can be interpreted in many ways; that there is no one right way, the need to acknowledge different perspectives, and our need to discuss it in more depth. Other group members mentioned that they need to read up more about complexity theory. I was comfortable with the fact that not everyone had exposure to complexity theory or thinking, but were open to learning more about it.*

### Post-Group Reflections (Journal reflections)

*Stan: I thoroughly enjoyed the session and loved the one quote which I have taken to heart shared in a 'wow aha moment' by Janet: 'it is what it is and it isn't what it isn't'. It isn't an either/or statement but and/and statement! It is evident that the members of the group were there because they wanted to be there and have a common passion. The session was well prepared by Deon and I really enjoyed the pre-readings. They were well chosen and clear. I thoroughly enjoyed the session.*

*Vonnie: I was quite intrigued about the methodology of co-researching and the learning community that will develop because of this journey together...The three strands of participation, as well as the co-operative inquiry methodology I feel, will inform my work as an OD practitioner substantially.*

*Janet: The topic is brave and relevant and I am looking forward to deeper exploration. The articles Deon sent us to review prior to the meeting were well-selected and I enjoyed the Karakas<sup>85</sup> article which was rich and very practical. I appreciate the addition of the word, "transdisciplinarity" into my vocabulary since it is a concept of which I often speak.*

*Rudi: I found myself to be very excited about the prospect to immerse into some meaningful academic stuff.*

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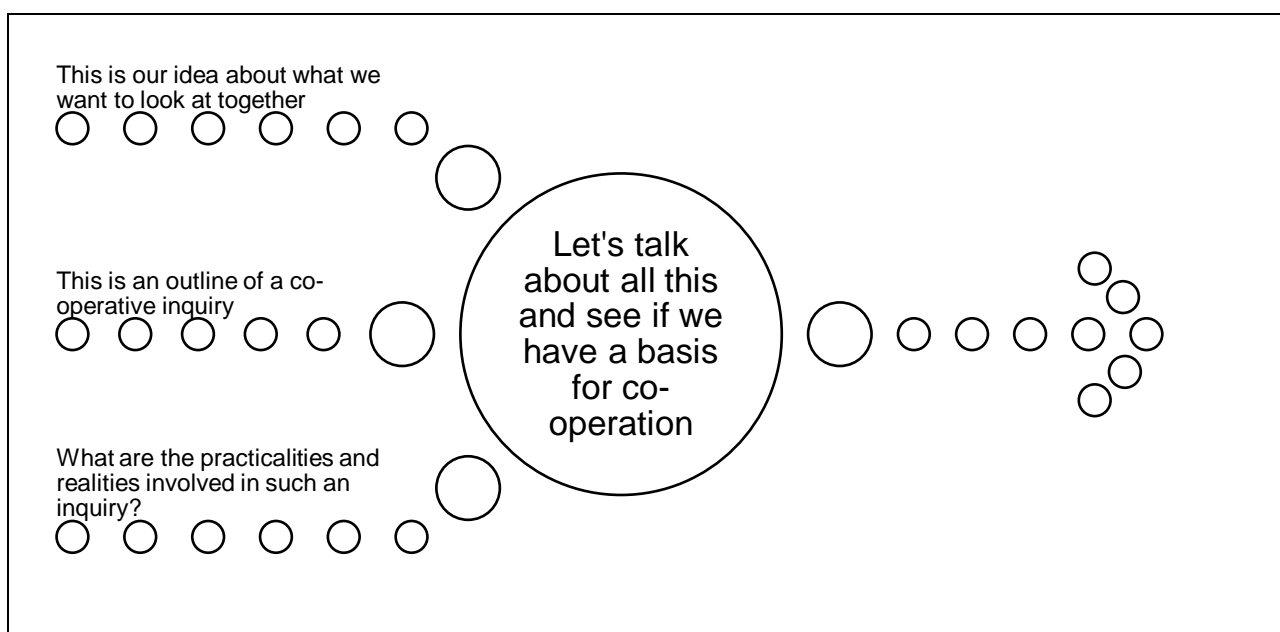
<sup>85</sup> I uploaded the article on *New paradigms in Organisational Development in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* by Karakas (2009) to our shared Dropbox for the participants' perusal.

Johann: *The topic is relevant, and I personally long to guide people on their own spiritual journeys. It is a very interesting way of doing research. I might benefit as well. Interesting group. I hope we will hear each other and make progress in a positive way.*

Vonnie: *I was impressed by the challenging way in which the group participated and anticipate a wonderful learning curve. I felt the conversations were at times all over the place and was looking for some kind of structure to ensure that we move into a direction. I also felt that we are learning vocabulary amongst ourselves and that we should be careful that we don't try to outwit one another with our own knowledge.*

## Workshop 2 – Launching Statement

The second workshop was held in the southern suburb of Rondebosch, Cape Town, on Saturday 24 August 2013. The venue is called Little Stream and is set in a serene environment in an old farmhouse building overlooking a forest with a little stream running through it. The main aim of this workshop was to co-explore the topic of inquiry and to process our ideas (as illustrated in Figure 7.4) in order to shape them into a coherent co-generated launching focus and statement of the inquiry.



**Figure 7.4: Critical questions in developing a research opening statement**

Source: Adapted from Heron (1996: 39)

Starting to attend to the outstanding items on the agenda of the first workshop as agreed, I gave a short introduction, after which we reflected on our experiences. The initial sharing round opened up the key discussions of the morning. I re-emphasised the three strands of empowerment and asked members to take up particular roles like timekeeping, equal “air-time” (speaking time) and expression of emotional states to facilitate the process. As Heron (1996) emphasises, this is necessary to facilitate movement towards full co-participation and becoming co-subjects at all levels of inquiry. Consequently, Vonnie was appointed for timekeeping.

During the feedback, members wanted to get going with the research. Here, Janet advised: *“We are already busy with the research, just be open to process”*.

The group also discussed some ideas on and approaches to understanding spiritual identity. I made it clear that the study was not about categorising and framing concepts in terms of typical levels of description. Doing so would imply fragmenting the topic into measurable parts in line with a paradigm of simplification, and reducing what we are researching. I emphasised that we rather had to include all relevant dimensions into our research question and/or statement.

Some themes that emerged during the group discussion were:

- Lucille emphasised the need for paradox in questions of identity and spirituality and suggested the work of Wilber (2007) regarding dealing with issues of consciousness and other developmental approaches in his Integral AQUAL framework.
- The importance of applying both/and thinking to understand identity and spirituality was highlighted by Rudi.
- The group agreed with Johann, who explained questions on identity or ‘who am I?’ are interrelated with our spiritual sense of self and are important for the study.
- Stan brought up the question of Maslow’s (1954) hierarchy of needs by asking if we can say questions on spirituality are important for people in general or business when their needs might be more occupied with more basic needs, and not with self-actualisation.
- Vonnie suggested that we need to ask whether people are open to spirituality in the workplace and explained the possibility of looking into the works of Torbert (1991; 2008) and Loevinger (1976).

In an attempt to model the facilitation roles, I critically reflected on the group processes and the feedback. I stressed the need for participation; participants having to find their own voice on issues and having to trust their own experiences.

After the round of reflection and reviewing our methodology, we worked towards co-creating the focus of the inquiry and launching statement. I suggested the group breaking up into pairs with the task to explore our understanding of what was meant by spiritual identity in Organisational Change and Development practice. After sharing the resultant ideas, I asked everyone to reflect on what they had heard and to ponder the following questions for ten minutes of quiet reflection in the garden:

- What is this group about for you?
- What is the topic of enquiry for you or the problem you experience about this in the workplace?
- What is it that you heard or experienced?
- What is spirituality about for you and how does it link with identity?

I then facilitated the discussion by collating the reflections of the pair discussions after the time of personal reflection. I emphasised that there was no single right way of phrasing or approaching the

research statement or question and suggested that we should be more open to a fluid and less linear approach.

The following excerpts from the co-participants' comments with regard to the topic of inquiry helped to shape the group's initial launching statement:

Janet: *From my perspective, I used personhood which for me is an alternative to identity. I have five elements – which are not as limited as that, which are interactive all the time: physical, social, emotional intellectual and spiritual personhood. Although they are egalitarian in many respects, there is a little bit of a...it's not a hierarchy, but it's a progression. So normally I draw this in the form of an iceberg. So I talk about what is above the water, which is our behaviour. That may be either physical or social. It may be the others as well, but it often manifests in those domains, which is underpinned by the emotional, intellectual and spiritual. And for me, spirituality is what sits at the root. I use the word belief, but I don't think it is only about belief. Stan felt very strongly that spirituality (is) almost a separation between things like values, worth, and purpose and a belief in a higher power. For him, that is the core of what spirituality is. Which leads me to explore ... the notion of power... But it comes down to the fundamental things of...is there a belief in something that's Higher?*

Stan: *We probably are going to have to explore the concepts first...not to find a definitive answer, but in order to come up with actually this is what we are looking at. So, for example, the question can be if capitalism is spiritual. Because it is a belief in money, is it then a spirituality, it might be, but I don't know?*

Vonnie: *Dave and I spoke about how this is going to influence our work; getting an understanding of the dynamics and processes? There is a contribution we can make to the South African society – I hope we can walk out of this in a year or so with some processes and an understanding of the dynamics which we need to go as practitioners and create change in these societal problems and can go and influence and make a change in these societal questions we face here in SA. We also talked about culture. Culture is the end result of a value system expressed in behaviour (Taylor, 2005). And what we often find in companies is the difference between our value statements and our behaviour. Cultures are values in action. So they are informed by our spirituality which informs the culture.*

Dave: *What kind of a shift are we talking about ... in organisations; changing the culture in organisations, or are we looking at something more transformative?*

Johann: *We ended up with a topic statement which connects with what you had. Our topic statement was: Exploring and reframing spiritual identity in organisations as complex systems in order to develop OCD praxis. The first part of the statement you have something more informational, and (in) the second part more transformational. Although already in this you will have lots of transformational aspects while exploring and reframing it. At the end of the day you want tools to change the world for organisations, but also to make money with. So that's very, very practical. In this you have to be especially very clear about, you know, what is spirituality? How does it work and some other dimensions like identity. What is identity, what is spiritual identity? And so on, while you explore this, these are the kind of things you must make sure of if you don't have that you can't move on to the rest. And this is where complexity theory comes in. You know, this is already so complex, but organisations are also complex systems. So this might be a big challenge, and the biggest challenge is to move beyond it into praxis.*



Lucille: *For me, the fundamental starting point is always myself. I want to do this because I have questions on my spiritual identity. What is my spiritual identity? How does my spiritual identity influence my OCD practice and the organisations I work in? I have big questions around spiritual identity that for me are not completely knowable, but are starting in ways to become more knowable and important.*

Me: *I am doing this research because I am really interested in my own spiritual journey and how it relates to organisational development and change. I am interested in who I am as a spiritual being. I have had a lot of fixed ideas around it, and still, have a lot of those which I don't want to lose, and continue to cling onto because I feel it is fundamental to who I am. But there's also this part of me that asks questions and is saying well, there are a lot of things I don't understand, there are a lot of ways we interpret the world that is not so set anymore. So for me, how I experience spirituality is very much connected to my own vulnerabilities and my own suffering; my own history. My own history of how I grew up in a home and environment where life was like this or that, and (where) I was either rejected or accepted and made to feel welcome. And having experienced those emotions and those things and relating that to what you can call a kind of God-image. Then understanding that projection of my own inner world unto that God-image... and understanding that. I feel that you can only know spirituality as deeply as you know yourself.*

Johann: *Is the other way around also true?*

Me: *Yes, I think so, the other way is also true if you had to say you can only know yourself as deeply as you know spirituality, but I think a good starting point is the self. I think if you stay far from yourself and you just try and explore spirituality, it can become a very theoretical type of thing. I have heard a nice quotation by someone: 'God comes to you as your life'. For me, that was a way to understand spirituality. The way I experience spirituality is very much connected to everyday basic things...it also gives a sense of who am I as a spiritual self. And for me moving away from the externalisation of power of which Janet was mentioning. The ideas about power we have. And a lot of what we understand today is still connected to an external all-knowing powerful force out there, a structured hierarchical system of understanding. Not that it is wrong, it is helpful to certain people, but we also have to look at the beyond. For me, it boils down to the not knowing. We can say spirituality is more situated in the not knowing, but then there is also this knowing part.*

Stan: *But also it is sometimes that sense of knowing and the proof of knowing that you can't measure, there is a sense of knowing that something is there.*

Me: *Yes, Stan, but we must just be careful of this Newtonian idea that by means of measurement we will be able to capture spirituality and give it names and describe it fully. But there is definitely also this paradox between not knowing and knowing. Or knowing intuitively.*

After the group feedback, we looked at possible research outcomes and developed a basic plan of action. However, only having provided time until lunch to work through all the items, including the creation of recording methods for the action phase, and with sharing and collating experiences taking up a substantial amount of time, we could not fully explore how to go about developing the plan. While I felt frustrated that we could not cover all the points on the agenda, I believed we had done some really meaningful work in co-creating our launching statement.



The launching statement combining the group's input, that was proposed by Johann and Rudi and read: "Exploring and re-framing: (i) Spiritual identity (spirituality/identity / spiritual-identity) in (ii) complex organisational systems in order to develop (iii) OCD praxis". Heron (1996) points out that a launching statement is often broadly framed in order to embrace as many aspects as possible of the inquiry's focus. This seemed to be the case with ours and we all agreed that it was a valuable and good starting point.

#### **Reflections on workshop 2: My thoughts on the discussions regarding the launching statement**

*We co-created the launching statement! What a wonderful experience. It was a really draining, yet an exhilarating experience facilitating the different moments and sensing when to discuss what, and to what extent. I felt I was maybe taking too much responsibility in facilitating the group process and not allowing for self-organisation within the group. On the other hand, the group looked at me to take the leading role. When we decided to divide into pairs to work on the statement, it seemed to have helped with group emergence and focus. I was satisfied with the day except how we struggled to manage the time and take up facilitation roles.*

The key themes that emerged from the meeting were: (i) frustration voiced in the group to get going with the research, and (ii) the need for some strategic direction regarding what exactly we wanted to achieve with understanding spirituality, identity and Organisational Change and Development praxis.

Some examples regarding the frustration with regard to group processes included:

Dave: *The research topic is becoming a bit clearer. I enjoyed interacting with Vonnie and seeing his perspective on spirituality. Frustrated that we again spent a large part of the workshop on process issues, rather than to dig into our research.*

Rudi: *We spend a lot of time on the theory and the groundwork which is understandable, but I look forward to more group participation and discussion.*

The need of the group for strategic direction is demonstrated by:

Janet: *I am loving the interactions with the rest of the research team. The debate is healthy and intellectually stimulating. I am comfortable with the process and curious to see how it unfolds. I am aware that some of the members of the group are a little frustrated with the early exploration and seem to want more direction. I think all of us are feeling the need for some strategic direction – more clarity regarding the goals for each meeting. I would like to assist with group facilitation. This discomfort probably points to elements of our personal and group spiritual identities – interesting questions...Is it possible to form a group spiritual identity? Is this a relevant factor in the workplace?*

Lucille: *The impatience of the group to get into the inquiry is very evident. As we settle deeper and deeper into the process and form ourselves as a group, things will become easier and also more challenging (challenging in a good way).*

We decided to make use of the action plan as derived from the launching statement, which we converted into the main group inquiry question, which was: **What is my spiritual identity in my OCD praxis, and the organisations I work in?**

In order to explore and reframe the launching statement we unpacked the main group inquiry question in the following three sub-questions: (i) What does my spiritual identity imply; (ii) What does it mean in my OCD praxis, and (iii) What does it mean in the organisations I work in?

Several suggestions made by group members concerned key concepts like awakening, awareness, evolving (evolution) and emergence of your spiritual self (identity) and those of others in organisations. These discussions related to these concepts were encouraging as it contains elements of complexity thinking by linking the concept of emergence with spiritual identity. It also shows that group members were starting to be critically reflexive about their mindsets and its relation to their OCD praxis.

The method of recording the experiential data that was chosen was journaling as a critical form of reflection on the group's experiences (Heron, 1996). Some examples of these reflections can be found in the excerpts below.

### **Reflections on workshop 2 continue**

#### **Inquiry question explored:**

What is my spiritual identity in my OCD praxis, and the organisations I work in?

#### **Post-Group Reflections (Journal reflections)**

Group's perspectives on inquiry question or launching statement:

Rudi: *I like the way we formulated the topic and I believe in terms of the process we are on track.*

Lucille: *These are important to me [the inquiry questions] because I am trying to find ways of both/and expression of my spiritual identity in the ordinary course of each day. Integrating into the moment rather than separating spiritual and other identities in the time/space of my existence and practice.*

Dave: *The topic is great and I reckon if we can get going on the journey, we should be fine.*

Stan: *I am feeling let's just get on with it already. Am glad we did get to agree on the research topic/question.*

Johann: *We are making progress and the topic is much clearer now.*

Some reflections on the group's experience and process:

Lucille: *The process is still in its infancy and we have yet to really challenge each other. If anything, what surprised me was how easy it was to delineate the research statement as a group. We seem to be on the same page without much effort and I am very keen to see what will emerge once we hit the more diverse spaces. I have already been asking*

*myself questions about my own spiritual practices. The concept of identity still feels quite abstract. This is surprising given how much of my practice is about psychodynamic structures.*

*Stan: I am very happy with the group interaction. Would suggest that we perhaps do more work in pairs as some (incl. me) may dominate discussions and do not want it to be that way or for others to perhaps feel that is the case. Journaling not my best practice but see the need for it.*

*Johann: We are busy sorting ourselves out, defining roles and finding a methodology that will ensure progress. Hopefully, I can find ways to use it in my everyday consulting and coaching practices.*

### **Workshop 3**

Workshop 3 took place at Dave's house in Pinelands, Cape Town, on Wednesday, 18 September 2013 between 17:30 and 20:30. We started the meeting with the ritual<sup>86</sup> of lighting a candle in remembrance of Janet's father who had recently passed away, and in recognition of Stan's Jewish holiday.

I gave a short overview of where we were with regard to methodological empowerment and stressed the importance of the four ways of knowing and taking up co-facilitation roles.

This was the first experiential grounding in which the co-researchers shared their experiences of the first phase of action and therefore the aim of the meeting was to ground these experiences in a way that would allow the group to get a deep sense of each other's reality. In order to further explore our research question: "What is my spiritual identity in my OCD praxis, and the organisations I work in?" Janet suggested that we divide into pairs. During this exercise, we discussed the following questions to elaborate on the main group inquiry question and to relate it to our real world current experiences: (i) what was my spiritual identity like as experienced during the last few weeks? (ii) Is there a common theme? And (iii) what do I struggle with in living from my spiritual self in the workplace (authenticity, ethics)?

The discussions revealed that we were unsure about the research focus during this stage and what exactly we wanted to achieve. In the process, the group asked: "Who are we and what has formed our spiritual identity?" Questions on quality of being, authenticity, and a sense of purpose within ourselves and in organisations arose. We explored what our personal spirituality might be like, and how we experienced it in our personal journey and workplace experiences. It was clear from the exercise that some members were unsure how our spirituality was informed by our upbringing and cultural and religious experiences and wanted to explore this in more detail. In essence, this was exactly what Heron (1996) envisioned – asking critical questions from deep experiential realities through a balanced integration of humanity. The following excerpts from the group demonstrated this:

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<sup>86</sup> Please see Appendix N.

Vonnie: *I was quite stimulated by the question we handled regarding our personal identity. I heard myself saying that I will describe my spiritual identity as a driving force wanting to care for the universe and not destructing it. It motivates me to make a difference in this world and to be an instrument in improving reality as I see it. I think I became quite philosophical and steered away from religious content.*

Lucille: *The story behind the story is that some of the turning points in the development and expression of my spiritual identity have been reactive. It doesn't feel circumstantially dependent yet circumstances dictated confrontation and reaction. Maturing from inherited position to anti-position to position. I still carry a lot of anger towards religion as a part of my spiritual identity although this is much less so than before and yet shame sits behind that. Being authentic has been more difficult for me in my work persona than it has been in my poet persona. Poetry performance is on stage and yet that feels easy to access authenticity compared to working with groups and individuals. More hidden there. The dialectic between the sacred and profane. Individual and community. Mountain time and everyday time. Death and life.*

Dave: *I was really touched by how deeply Janet and Stan shared regarding their respective spiritual journeys – for Janet it was her dad's passing and for Stan it was his celebration of Sukkot (Feast of Booths). Both were prepared to be vulnerable regarding these life experiences. This set the 'vulnerable and spiritual' tone for what was to follow. When we started sharing our spiritual journeys and realities there was more of a sense of openness to the inquiry space. For me, spirituality was a journey of searching for love, warmth and acceptance. It was not just a belief in belief systems, but a sense of knowing – a real experience and practical knowing.*

Sharing the experiences created a vibrant discussion. Various differences and similarities started to surface and the group was struggling to stay focused on spiritual identity. Religious debates crept in and I steered the discussion away from being stuck on differences of opinion; I suggested we rather focus on our personal deeply felt experiences and inherent knowledge.

Some other experiences shared regarding the group inquiry process:

Rudi: *The reading material is valuable. We should not ignore that the process of co-operative inquiry in itself is valuable. I feel that at this moment there is not a lack of information, but a lack of application. Maybe we are lacking authenticity and wisdom at this stage?*

Vonnie: *It was hard to attend to the journals and reading. I think we need to get beyond the conceptual into the practical.*

Lucille: *For me the invitation to be adaptive quicker in process, being present, mindful, open to change is important. I think we needed to pay attention regarding the inquiry process because 'I'm in it, but on the 'we' maybe we are not in it.*

Janet: *If it's not here (in the heart) it's never going to happen and highlighted the importance of authenticity... It wasn't something fancy like marketing, or selling.*

Me: *It's about the quality of our being functions when we are talking about spirituality and our spiritual identity. The research process challenges our authenticity, adaptiveness and openness to critical self-reflection... We also need structure in the inquiry process in order for us to get going, but the challenge is to master the methodology, and doing research, but also engaging with research demands with rigour.*

Many group members gave feedback on what was keeping them busy and the questions that preoccupied the group since the previous workshop. Some of the group members were experiencing personal problems.

Procedural issues regarding the meeting and decisions taken were:

- Although we had great discussions, we could again not complete everything in time; we needed to get someone who could help with timekeeping.
- We were not staying on the topic of discussion as effectively as we could; we required group climate facilitators and group action facilitators.
- We discussed the need for trying new forms of action and recording them.
- We realised that we needed to get to know each others' spiritual selves to enhance the group process.

**My reflections on the initial group processes:**

*Looking back at what happened in Workshop 2 and 3, I now realise the impact of my initial strong focus on getting the group process right. My emphasis was on making sure the group embraced the processes and procedures of co-operative inquiry methodology. This also aligned with what was expected in my view of initiating the co-participants into becoming autonomous in applying the methodology in the group processes and discussions in order to ensure the efficacy of our time spent together exploring the inquiry topic. However, I think this might have caused some group members to feel frustrated with getting to know this way of working together as co-researchers. At the same time, I feel it was of importance to ensure that the group could embrace the cognitive strand to its fullest extent. Taking this into consideration I think it could also have benefited the group if I was more relaxed on initiating the co-participants into the methodology.*

Regarding the phase of action, we developed a new action convergent plan. We chose to explore the first part of the launching statement. For this phase, the main question was: "What is my spiritual identity?" In answering this, the group developed the following questions that could stimulate the exploration in more detail: "What is the story behind the story that I tell easily?" or "What is the story that I have not yet told about my spiritual identity?"

We also devised the following sub-questions for the next action phase:

- How did this come about?
- What is the story behind the story of how my personal spiritual identity came about?
- How do you handle people's responses to this question of what my spiritual identity is?
- What is the thinking behind my thinking about my spiritual identity towards myself/others?
- How do you actually respond to other people's responses to this question?
- What is the doing behind my doing regarding my spiritual identity towards myself/others?

**My reflections on the group discussions:**

*It was encouraging that the group felt it necessary to explore the main group inquiry question in more detail by developing sub-questions that could highlight and deepen the inquiry. To me, this indicated that the group took responsibility and showed elements of self-organisation and emergence in the group process. This showed early indications that the group became open to some aspects of embracing complexity thinking.*

We co-created data recording methods for the practical experiences of the action phase. This was done by means of (i) keeping a journal for significant experiences related to the focal idea including pictures, poems, theory and conferences attended by sharing it in Dropbox; (ii) using fillable PDF forms for journal entries; (iii) creating a WhatsApp group in which we could ask questions and share moments on our cell phones; and (v) using email and voice recordings.

**Reflections on workshop 3****Inquiry question explored:**

What is my spiritual identity in my OCD practice, and the organisations I work in?

**Post-Group Reflections (Journal reflections)**

Group's perspectives on the inquiry question:

*Vonnie: I would like to explore my religious orientation a bit more - try to answer what exactly my spiritual identity is - I think this process only started within myself and need to be dealt with much further and deeper. My concern is that I will not continue with this journey and it will again be a surface exercise.*

*Johann: It was great talking about something so difficult to pinpoint such as identity. My personal slogan on my email signature is: your identity is your destiny. In other words: if you know who you are, you can figure out which journey to take. The sharing of our personal journeys between me and Janet was very affirming and uplifting to me. To discover how background, historical events and encounters, symbolism and daily practices have an effect on our spirituality and identity was energising and illuminating.*

*Dave: Defining my personal spiritual identity given the need for raised self-awareness and growth - and beginning by telling the story and maybe the story behind the story. I am thinking about other's questions regarding this issue.*

*Janet: It is difficult for me to distinguish between practical knowing and experiential knowing. Practical knowing is more about my own actions and experiential knowing is more about the things which happen to me. But I experience and assimilate both - my actions become part of my experience. My spiritual journey has been shaped by my experiences of life. My practical and experiential knowing emerges as I live increasingly aware and observant of my being and unbeing of my knowing and unknowing, of my presence and absence. Yet, much of my practical and experiential knowing are assimilated unconsciously and emerges unexpectedly and inexplicably.*

Group's perspective on group experience and process:

*Vonnie: I experienced the group as quite diverse, but safe and I am quite comfortable expressing myself freely in the group. I sensed a relaxed and more authentic way of relating to one another. I find Lucille - with whom I paired up with as stimulating and fresh in her thinking and at the same time also respectful in what she heard me sharing with her.*



Rudi: *I enjoyed the evening and sharing our stories was special. Judging from the feedback, I am very excited to see how the process will unfold. There is clearly enough diversity in the group to provide rich data. I sense that the group is starting to gel and that we are getting the hang of things.*

#### **Further inquiry questions developed to explore the main research question**

- What is my spiritual identity? What is the story behind the story that I tell easily? What is the story that I have not yet told about my spiritual identity? How did this come about? How do you handle people's responses to this question of what my spiritual identity is?
- What is the thinking behind my thinking about my spiritual identity towards myself/others? How do you actually respond to other people's responses to this question?
- What is the doing behind my doing regarding my spiritual identity towards myself/others?

Having concluded workshop 3 signalled the completion of stage 1, 2 and 3 and paved the way to more in-depth questions (action plan) that enhanced our explorations in spiritual identity praxis. At this point, I witnessed our growing interest in exploring spiritual identity and our roles as change agents. The initial rounds of sharing about spirituality and the way we construed our identity assisted in developing a foundation for critical reflection. Let us now turn to research cycle 2.

#### **7.4.2 Research Cycle 2: Workshops 4-5**

Cycle 2 can be characterised as the first presentational portrayal of the experiential data and collaboratively working towards the first provisional knowledge of the inquiry. This required developing an action plan that could be applied by reflecting on our practice. Connecting provisional knowledge with an action plan followed an increase in differences within the group in response to presentations of their first provisional knowledge. Janet called this the “storming phase”, which refers to Tuckman’s (2010) phases of group dynamics in which the differences in the group are voiced and frustrations with fellow participants become apparent.

##### ***Workshop 4***

Workshop 4 was held in the Winelands district close to Stellenbosch in a conference venue called Onze Rust on Saturday 19 October from 09:00 until 13:00. I opened by explaining Stan’s absence and informing me via email that he wanted to withdraw from the group. The group was upset and Janet and Dave volunteered to try to convince him to reconsider.

Lucille facilitated the ritual by burning African Sage (a type of incense) as a symbolic gesture of our situatedness in the current moment and opening up our spirit. We identified the group process facilitators for the day and Lucille suggested that we also appoint the group ritual and facilitators for the next meeting.

I facilitated a feedback round on the readings and journaling experiences to establish the group’s agreeability with the current group participation arrangements. Some responses were:



Lucille: *I think we are over structuring the journaling format. I also think we are over structuring the group processes and then converging prematurely after our actions in the group. We first need to get a mandate according to the group's needs to work collectively.*

Johann: *I am happy with the structure. I feel I can connect to the process, and that the whole process is inviting us to become more involved. I don't have any issues with the journal structure. I'm more of a pragmatist and I am more interested to see how I can use this stuff in my work.*

Janet: *I did not really get to the reading and just scanned through it this morning.*

Dave: *I have been in a major rush since our last meeting. I really think we should develop our ideas that happen here so that it can be taken back to our work.*

We contemplated alternative options regarding the journaling process and how to enable members to take up responsibility for reading. We decided that during meetings to start with the inquiry and to talk about theory and methodological issues which are not key and which take up time afterwards.

The opening discussion was also used to clarify what we would like or dislike about the inquiry for the day. Lucille and Janet pointed out that we were about to enter the storming phase. I stressed that for us to effectively mediate this difficult period each of us had to take up our facilitating roles and co-inquire. The following emerged during the discussion:

- Safety and inclusion.
- How to handle differences and disagreement.
- The need for authentic collaboration between individuals to facilitate support of each other in the group.
- The possibility of having an accountability check regarding journaling and reading of materials.
- The need for emotional competence and requests for openness (ownership of emotions); interpersonal tension.
- An awareness of consensus collusion (agreement without critical engagement that leads to bias) and lack of rigour (agreement without allowing for disagreement and debate — critical subjectivity).
- Suggestions regarding group processes and reflections.
- An awareness of distinctions between interpersonal distress while maintaining the need for a healthy sense of chaos (dealing with the unknown), disorder and confusion required for the emergence of a new order or structure in terms of complexity theory.
- Becoming open to our habits of mind that either reveals atomistic thinking or complexity thinking.
- Taking up the devil's advocate role and the idea of ritual dissent in deconstructing forms of knowing and experiences.

Janet facilitated the session on further exploring the practical research questions we developed after workshop 3 during the action phase. Many participants did not get around to uploading their responses in time for the workshop. I requested that the group upload their answers to the research questions to a pre-designed document containing all the questions already formatted. In order to ensure that everyone had a chance to share their experiential portrayal of their experiential data, Janet suggested that we write down the questions, and then discuss our answers in pairs.

We decided that our action plan for the day would be conducted in the group to ensure collaborative understanding. We also felt that we should continue the discussion initiated in Workshop 3 regarding exploring in more depth what our spiritual identity is.

The group then spent time reading each other's responses and what others had written regarding the questions. After sharing, Rudi suggested we collate all the 'presentational portrayals of data' that were written down on the flip chart paper into MS Word documents so that we can review and reflect upon it.

We also decided that the next action plan should further reflect upon the things we had shared and revisit our presentational and experiential sharing in real-world contexts. I completed the individual responses and sent them via the shared Dropbox folder. We decided that we should continue the discussion regarding our spiritual identity, personal story, thinking, doing, and what these meant to us as group and individuals.

This form of sharing the first presentational portrayal of a group's experiential grounding about the action phase followed Heron's (1996) four cognitive modes and stages of the inquiry cycle in that we used storytelling, narrative writing and metaphoric sharing. This stimulated the unfolding of our spiritual identity.

I entered the collated responses into MS Word documents with the updated reviews from the participants and uploaded it onto Dropbox. A summary of the responses are:

### **What is the story behind the story of how my personal spiritual identity came about?**

Rudi: *My whole life changed in a single moment when I was reminded that 'we are not human beings having a spiritual journey, but spiritual beings having a human experience' (Teilhard de Chardin, 1976). That was an epiphany for me. Before that 'awakening' my spiritual identity probably could best be described as a 'saved-by-Christ on the-cross-sinner' or to use church jargon: a redeemed Christian. Interestingly I can never recall a moment in my life that I repented and thus became a reborn Christian. I grew up in the Christian faith and my studies in theology just re-enforced the dogmas underlying the faith which I carried forward in my ministry.*

Vonnie: *My spiritual identity was mainly shaped by a tradition of Christianity and the practices that go with it. I was made to believe that nothing else is good enough – it is only Christ that will bring 'salvation', you should work hard against all 'sin' and all else is 'evil'. Even... denominations other than the Dutch Reformed Church was not fully the truth. A strong exclusivity and dividing kind of religion. I never really questioned the 'truth' and was actually a strong defender of what we believed in.*

Lucille: *I am wondering how much of what I experience is mine in the stand-alone, individual sense. Is some of this actually a continuation of a fractal of ancestral patterns? My family has a history of placing themselves outside of a norm, rejecting the status quo. On reflection, it feels as if my spiritual identity is being formed reactively, based on my reaction to circumstances rather than through a sense of proactive choice or moving towards a choice. My story is strongly informed by my mother's influence in my life and her death. Therapy and resolution.*

Johann: *I realised that the fear of God can be overcome by His grace. His grace for me is enough. I realised that running to achieve something is not as important as being naked before God. To live from a source of life. To live from deepening relationship. Pain of ambition. Being versus billable hours, being versus doing. Conscious experience of precious life is wow!*

Dave: *Growing up with an absent father and a disruptive childhood informed my spiritual identity. The first time I felt that I found family was when I found that God was adequate and loving and full of acceptance. I could get rid of feelings of shame and helped me in processes of forgiveness towards myself and others.*

Janet: *My spiritual identity is part of my whole identity – and core to it. My ability to question is key to the development of my spiritual identity. Spiritual identity has a link to character. It determines motive/drive – this goes back to the notion of our choice of 'kings' - what will rule over or govern us. Whether we believe in God as a deity / Creator or not, we are all governed by the 'kings' we choose. Whilst we inherently have choices (free will), especially with respect to what we believe, these choices may/ may not reflect 'Truth'. The tree outside the window is there whether I choose to believe it or not. Our spiritual identity is constantly re-shaped as we are confronted with new 'Truth'. My perception of 'Truth' and interpretation of it is constantly shifting. Is there an absolute – a spiritual constant? If there is then whether I choose to believe IT is or not, IT is.*

Me: *My spiritual identity is informed by my Christian eclectic upbringing. My experience of spiritual identity relates to my unconscious belief and experience that I have to work hard to attain the attention of 'God' to be open, to listen, hear and see me. I also see my spiritual identity in ways I project my needs, expectations and role identity and their influences onto the image I have of 'God'. I have wondered if it relates to my experience of having a father with a hearing disability and him wearing a hearing aid. I seem to be driven by questions of how I can find love (identity), value and worth in life and on the other hand how I can show love, give value and provide a sense of worth to others that bring about change in their lives.*

### **What is the thinking behind my thinking about your spiritual identity towards others and myself?**

Rudi: *My thinking behind my thinking and spirituality is that it is not about thinking but knowing. I am not because I think (Descartes, 1954), I am because I know. How does one explain that you know that you know? Is it a full circle thing? I don't know, but I do know who I am and I also do know I am more than who I know I am and that is okay. I gladly surrender to the misterium tremendum...the mystical, the ever-evolving mystery of new possibilities that are way beyond my knowing. My knowing comes when I arrive at a certain point and then I know.*

Vonnie: *A spiritual identity that is exclusive and divides cannot be connected to the Source. I struggled more and more with the exclusive and dividing nature of my beliefs. It separated me from other people and there was often a high level of ignorance in it. So God for me became the Source of all creations and he made a creation which is at its healthiest and functional when it is balanced, integrated and whole. If my worshipping of him creates a divide then I am getting in my way of following him. Am I following God or am I following the tradition and interpretations of a religion?*

Lucille: *What makes a ritual or expression of spiritual identity authentic in relation to me and the collective? (That irritates me. Why this obsession with authenticity?). Where is the space where my spiritual expression is authentic for me and collective? Have I paid too much attention to my individual expression of spiritual identity? Is there space for the collective? Why does the notion of collective spiritual expression (communion) feel so scary to me? I can see collective spiritual expression in a family context as being powerful but in community? Is this really true for me? Am I really scared off by the notion of being in community? I am not sure. What are my constraints around my picture of what is sacred? What am I excluding? Where if the profane is actually sacred and the sacred actually profane? Are constraints maybe useful?*

Johann: *How do I live a life of real meaning? Without meaning why exist? What is life? What is death? Assumption what is meaningful? When I contribute to others? But this is not true? What is my contribution to others and God? At 51 I realise that life on earth will end...Do you really believe in life after death? How I think about this determines how I live. But I don't think about that often. How I think about God influences how I think about myself and vice versa. My picture of God has grown and evolved: from an almighty, holy, far away God to a closer, intimate and loving father.*

Dave: *I see myself as a 'born again' believer in Jesus Christ – although I am not a member of any church organisation nor do I attend any of them. I am living the new commandment – 'Love others as I have loved you' by first living loved (resting and not having to perform in any way) and then as I experience that love (experiential knowledge), express that through my stories (presentational), sharing with others this amazing truth and then living it out with others (practical).*

Janet: *My worldview is unashamedly Judeo-Christian. It saddens me deeply that the church so often poorly reflects what we claim to believe, I think that one of the reasons is that too many people who call themselves Christians have a "form of Godliness" but they have a second-hand faith. They know what others have told them about God but they don't KNOW Him. I don't claim to know Him fully. No one ever can but I have attempted to build a first-hand intimate relationship and I hope it sometimes shows. The more I know the more I know I do not know. My hunger to know is deeper than ever and I am so grateful that it will never be fully satisfied – the wonder of a life-long adventure. What more could I want?*

Me: *My thinking about my spiritual identity is built upon my beliefs, assumptions, and interpretations of what reality is. If my reality is beyond myself, out there in the doing of the workplace, then my thinking will be informed by that reality. If my reality in my thinking is: 'it' is out there: money, food, safety, love and I need to get it here. Where is here? My mind or thinking? My belief is that here or reality is spirit. My challenge is that I have two beliefs: (i) reality as spirit, and (ii) reality out there. There is a split in myself, or is there? My belief is more and more informed by the ideas in complexity thinking and a relational understanding of what spiritual identity might mean.*

## **What is the doing behind the doing regarding my spiritual identity towards myself and others?**

Rudi: *I'm not doing spirituality; I am spiritual. There are no specific areas that I am spiritual and others that I am not. I am involved in every moment of every day and take full responsibility for every action and reaction and that requires being consciously mindful and to have moment to moment awareness. The beauty of spirituality as I see it is that this does not mean being perfect or striving towards perfection. It is about being authentic; knowing when I acted foreign or contrary to my true identity as a divine spiritual being.*

Vonnie: *Being aware of your intentions and attending to your intentions (mindfulness). My intention is that my doing should be driven by a conscious process and an awareness of what I attend to. If I make myself guilty of creating or seeing some people as having the full truth and others as not having it – just because of how their religious tradition shaped their practices – then I am following a dualistic perspective which separates people. For me, my doing should consistently be in line with virtues such as authentic, open-minded, non-judgemental and being able to hold paradoxes.*

Lucille: *Searching is doing. Confusing finding and keeping at the level of doing. Am I searching with the aim to find a moment or peak experience or am I searching for a habitual spiritual expression, something to keep and ritualise at the level of every day.*

Johann: *I sometimes question myself: Am I serving God and others just to make me feel good or is it really for them? I guess it is both. But the less I think about myself, the easier I feel I can 'flow' into who I am. The more I try to focus on myself, the more difficult it is to be myself. So, every now and then I try to anchor myself in who I am. And then I try to live accordingly. Every now and then, however, my old uncertainties of who I am and of how okay I am, are triggered. Then I normally try to find the way back to my anchors, so that I can fly and flow again.*

Janet: *Faith without works is dead. Right now I am building those resources to change the world.*

Dave: *There are several themes: My work has seen a shift from technical to management to people development – a fascinating journey to be sure and certainly informed by my spiritual identity. I have tried to incorporate all four ways of knowing into my leadership training with a large measure of success and a few knocks along the way – but overall lots of fun. I am fascinated by change or developmental processes – from Kotter (1996), the Bible, Sunter (2007), Erik Erikson (1998), Hudson's (1999) life cycle and others.*

Me: *Seeking safety by forming alliances with (i) God – not always listening; (ii) Self – I chastise myself or ignore myself; (iii) others – I fight them in my mind or verbally which makes me feel better; (iv) work – get distracted, stressed, with feelings of not doing enough. This leads to wilfulness (external sources to manufacture spiritual identity), not in contact or relation with willingness (embracing spirit, embracing immanence of the already). I overcome this when I return to a self-organising position when I say to myself 'I don't become who I hope to become according to the ideal image of some parts of myself, rather I become that which I am already in the whole of my being', or 'my ways of doing does not tell the entire story of my spiritual identity' (the seed already has everything required to become a full-grown tree).*

## **What does this all mean regarding my spiritual identity, or the 'so what?' question?**



- Rudi: *Knowing your spiritual identity is crucial. Integral theory (Wilber, 2000) illustrates so clearly why we get lost in translation. It is because we 'live' on different dimensions or states of consciousness. I experience that on a daily basis in my work. Each different state and stage of faith requires a different language. To me it is key to get an understanding of my clients' take on spirituality since consciously or unconsciously that is influencing their behaviour and determines their worldview.*
- Vonnie: *It means for me that my identity has shifted from a dualistic and exclusive one to a paradoxical and inclusive one. It also means that I still will practise it while using the metaphors and content given to me by the Christian religion, but that new meaning will be given to it. I will see that act of God and the way he intervenes in this world in more ways than only as it is described in the Bible or in church. The personification of God should be revisited, I believe. God and Jesus are more than a person and when I personify Him I am minimising Him to fit my logical and limited mind.*
- Lucille: *Over time my search for meaning and identity, with apologies to Frankl (1959), have been intense and very important to me. It still is but the heat is turned down. Is this because I am more settled in my skin than before or is there a form of spiritual procrastination and laziness in the form of the excuse of ambiguity that is emerging for me? I was surprised at the word laziness coming into this reflection as much as it did. Is part of my spiritual identity about giving myself a hard time for not being more disciplined about spiritual practices, about not having more meaning, more clarity regarding community and communion? This sense of identity ambiguity, of in-between-ness, is not new – I have written poems about in between, about searching as far back as when I was 15, yet the extent to what ambiguity permeates my sense of self feels fresh and new.*
- Dave: *There seem to be several ways of thinking (or knowing) about this for me and (there are) still many questions: The meaning of SI; is this only accessible to those who have a spiritual link to a greater power or to those who have experienced it? I think spiritual identity and authenticity go hand in hand. If one claims any kind of SI, then I think the question should be whether I am 'showing up' in accordance with that SI (presentational expression). How to define it for ourselves and others? (propositional). It also is all about fruit. Is there any point in having SI if there is no point? Is there any benefit to others or humanity in general? (practical).*
- Janet: *I am God's workmanship created for good works. I am blessed to be a blessing. I am immeasurably grateful for all I have received and choose to be a gift in response. I choose to serve my Creator for all my days and to trust Him with the outcomes.*
- Me: *My spiritual identity is not shaped, manufactured or formed outside myself somewhere. It just is... But how do I connect with the deeper awareness of the spirit of who I am? Maybe by changing how I look at the deeper self 'I' in a new way. Allowing uncertainty or fears of nothingness and being lost (dying). And maybe I have excluded some ways of knowing. Em-'bodi'-ment, re-'mind'ing, re-'soul'ing, re-'spirit'ing. All ways of knowing include the presentational (soul) the propositional (mind) the practical (body) and experiential (spirit).*

## Reflections on workshop 4

### Research questions explored

What is the story behind the story of how my personal spiritual identity came about? What is the thinking behind your thinking about your spiritual identity towards yourself and others? What is the doing behind your doing regarding my spiritual identity towards yourself and others? What does this all mean regarding your spiritual identity? So what?

### Post-Group Reflections (Journal reflections)

Group's reflections:

*Johann: We are definitely slowly but certainly making progress. My constant drivenness made me feel impatient in the beginning of the workshop. I was in a group with Lucille and really learned a lot; it was really a spiritual experience for me. She shared her life story (regarding) religion and spirituality, and also some of her pain and frustrations as she journeyed through life. It caused me to ask serious questions about my own beliefs and spirituality. I also realised more than before that identity and spirituality are fluid, flexible, and forever changing functions of human existence - even changing on the same day. However, there might be an inner core of oneself that is relatively stable. In my discussions with Lucille, I reflected on my journey and the story behind that - what a discovery that your family history and your ancestors, as well as your culture and life experiences, can have such a huge influence!*

*Janet: The challenge of (the) co-operative process, especially with a group of leaders, is figuring out who will lead when. It is interesting to observe what happens. I am concerned that in our feedback to Deon we are quick to tell him what we don't like but struggle to find ways to offer our concrete contributions and structure suggestions. I sense that he is inviting us to make concrete offers to lead. As a Christian who tries to live by God's grace and the power of his presence and love, I can grow in my understanding that reality seems very different to others because of their spirituality and spiritual identity.*

*Vonnie: It is quite clear that the topic of spiritual identity is quite a challenge for me and some of the questions stimulated some deep and serious thinking about my story about spirituality. What emerged for me is how easily I am slipping into dualisms and attempts to create simple answers for something that has so much depth, dimensions and perspectives. As I was trying to put my thoughts into words I became aware of the limitations of language to truly express what my spiritual identity is. The words that I felt was a good enough attempt and came closer to capture it. These were words such as grace, respect for other, and more inclusive views; being open for something to emerge that you don't have control over and to stand in awe at times to see how God takes you to experiences, which was not thought out by yourself. Thinking about the story behind the story took me to the awareness which Richard Rohr puts so brilliantly when he says: 'It is good to remember that a part of you has always loved God'. A part of you has always said yes. There is a part of you that is love itself, and that is what we must fall into; it is already there. Once you move your identity to that level of deep inner contentment, you will realise you are drawing upon a life that is much larger than your own and from a deeper abundance.*

*Dave: I now believe we have greater clarity around what is expected in terms of defining our spiritual identity: our collective humanity - sharing what went well and what didn't go well for each of us. A general discomfort for most of us (was) the structured requirements of journaling. (I have) admiration for Janet's gift in terms of process and supporting Deon. I really enjoyed sharing my stories with Janet and Deon and hearing theirs - realising there is incredible value in our respective narratives. I wish we had more time to hear all of them from the heart.*

*Rudi: As a group, we are settling in quite nicely and Janet's suggestion on working in pairs saved the day. I am fascinated by the different views on spirituality that is emerging. I look forward to seeing what we are going to come up with in the end. There is to my mind a real danger that we can discuss and deal with spirituality in an abstract theoretical*



*manner. There is enough of that. We need 'lived' research. We should use every opportunity - even our 'check-in' time - to consciously apply spirituality to the different life events that happened to the group members. Topics that emerged was: death, anniversaries, work stress, financial challenges. We fail to 'mine' those in an effort to find the gold.*

Sharing the presentational data in the form of storytelling holds true for co-operative inquiry. According to Heron (1996: 89), "group members can simply share their stories of what went on in the last action phase, as a precursor to more general discussion of underlying themes and issues".

In terms of the group process, the workshop was a momentum-shifting experience and I felt that the various differences and struggles we engaged in allowed a dynamic openness and connection to the inquiry questions. Sharing in groups our felt spiritual identity after writing it down created a visceral experience. Having jotted down on paper our most private intimate experiences of that which is sacred, meaningful and often without words to describe it was hard. Generally, sharing stories about our spiritual identity formation is not often discussed in the open, and I think it was a personal and liberatory experience to share with others in small groups to most members. It created an openness and space of trust after a tough morning session of digging into methodology and process issues.

With reference to the group inquiry question, I felt that we made significant progress in digging into the question regarding what the group's spiritual identity is or means. By exploring the historical development and cultural influences we co-created valuable insights into each other's worldviews and frames of understanding the notion of spiritual identity. I think it was valuable in exploring not only the history but also our current ways of thinking, doing and being that underlies our experiences and beliefs of spiritual identity. For some group members, it was easier to integrate some understanding of a complexity thinking perspective on their spiritual identity praxis. This became apparent where group members explored the dualities of their inner experience and either/or perspectives on self and spirituality, whereas I felt that others remained occupied with religious descriptions.

With this in mind, I organised another workshop.

### **Workshop 5**

The theme of the workshop was to re-assemble and to share our forms of knowing. The meeting took place at Christian Brothers Conference Venue, in Paradyskloof, Stellenbosch on Saturday 23 November 2013 from 09:00 to 17:00.

According to Heron (1996: 74), the goal during phase 4 of the participatory process is to: (i) review the focus of the inquiry to modify, reframe and to revise the overall launching statement, (ii) to decide the actions to take for the new phase of action and to decide whether actions should be convergent or divergent, and (iii) review the ways of recording data.

Janet and Dave convinced Stan to re-join the group and everyone was happy to have him back. I ensured that he was updated and asked him to work through everyone's post-workshop reflections and the co-generated documents in Dropbox. I also supplied him with the voice recording of the previous workshop.

Dave opened the meeting with a group ritual in the form of an ice-breaker 'gotcha', which symbolised the capture of new ideas and the letting go of old ideas simultaneously. He asked us to share three common interests, of which we had no prior knowledge, with another person in paired discussions. We had to ask: (i) what was the best moment in OCD practice when you felt alive? and (ii) What is the biggest challenge or learning opportunity you would like to address or gain during this group practice? After sharing, we reported our experiences in the pairs to the group. Sharing of commonalities and differences gave us a sense of connection. Dave's exercise was helpful to create a climate for collaboration and co-exploration regarding the focal concerns of the inquiry question.

After this, I read Henri Nouwen's poem (2013)<sup>87</sup> that seemed to me to be a good summary of where we were at this stage. I wanted to remind the group of the purpose and intention of the group inquiry and why we chose this direction of inquiry as a group. Finally, I gave a short overview of the focus of the research up to this stage:

Me: *For me what is at stake with the research is to really understand what we mean [when we talk] about 'the human condition which all humans share' in the workplace. When we are working as facilitators of change, I believe, we can only do this if we understand change in ourselves, and acknowledge a deep understanding of our own condition. This is what I believe can make a difference in the workplace. We should help people realise, and become aware of their own condition, of their human spirit, and facilitate that change in that spirit if necessary. We all have certain beliefs, and these beliefs are not right and wrong, but they are built in certain ways of thinking. The research is really about getting into these beliefs, or mindsets, which are built on deeply felt experiences, and how these inform our OCD praxis with regards to change interventions in practice.*

I made sure that everyone knew what their facilitator roles were, and asked them to take responsibility for co-facilitating the process.

Rudi responded by saying: *"I am going to take up my facilitator role now and just stress the importance of the words we are using. The fact that we are delving into this complexity theory thing does not mean we have to become complex".*

This was followed by a discussion on the Newtonian-based paradigm and its influence on our thinking and doing in comparison to the alternative complexity-based paradigm. Here are some excerpts, which shows how we were grappling with these concepts and its application to the co-operative inquiry method and research question:

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<sup>87</sup> Please see Appendix G.

Rudi: *Be very careful, the words are difficult, it's challenging... This is an interesting process. If [we] can get to a place that we can say, we are just here now. We are studying complexity and we can see this is also complex, but let us rather see this as an exciting time and space to be in, and things will evolve as they evolve. What comes out we don't know or what we are going to write up eventually. Perhaps this is what creates the unease in the group. Somebody is pointing to the North direction, and saying...that is not relevant. We are not sure if we are going to end West and that might also be good. (In a ) sort of Newtonian sense... this kind of thing now needs to get directed. Many times and this is now theory stuff, many times you only plug the theory into the practice. And that is what I want to suggest. To not let us be led by the theory. Perhaps we get mid next year to a place where we say: 'You know what interesting places we ended up landing'. And...with this, the theory is just as valid.*

Me: *My intention is not to complexify anything unnecessarily, (but) to make sure that you are co-researchers because I have a responsibility and the three strands [will] continue to be important. The Newtonian approach to research and working together has been very hierarchal and leave us with this sense to wait for a leader to take responsibility for direction. You as OCD practitioners might have witnessed this. But, in co-operative inquiry things are emergent, and not necessarily so structured, although we have an agenda. This is something different, I don't want to pull you along in this kind of thing as [if] you are waiting for the leader.*

Stan: *I think you are certainly hearing a voice that says we are not comfortable with...multiple leaders without knowing where everything is going, without a direction. Because then we are just wasting time and having a discussion about fresh air. I think we need to define, I hear Newtonian, and I understand exactly the paradox, but I don't believe it's (one) anymore. I think you can deal with these things in a reasonably structured manner, and still achieve what needs to be done. But when we make something complex, that's overly complex, and I think then we get lost in complexity. And then I say, wow, what are we doing with regards to this?*

Me: *Stan, I am not going to respond to what you are saying, I totally disagree. I want to finish what I was saying. I think there is an initiation of you as co-researchers necessary into the methodology so that you become autonomous on how to apply the theory of complexity and methodology of co-operative inquiry in this space.*

After this discussion, I felt it was necessary to dig a bit deeper into how complexity thinking was linked to the action research approach and how it was informing our understanding of spiritual identity praxis and OCD. I shared with the group how our supposedly good management theories and ideas strengthen the bad change practices which we are critiquing as related to one of the articles that were suggested as reading for the workshop (Ghoshal, 2005). I argued this is precisely the divergence between knowledge produced by following the Newtonian-based paradigm and the common experience of practitioners that theory is irrelevant to their practice. I explained how the paradigm of simplification dominates our thinking and doing. The change management thinking is also dominated by disjoining and reducing things to its most basic materialist conceptions and mechanistic features of change. With Newtonian thinking, an attempt is made to reduce uncertainty, to get things clear, to be able to be in control, in order to feel safe and secure by knowing what is

going on. But with the complexity-based paradigm, there are many things that are uncontrollable. Therefore acknowledging our humanity as spiritual beings means embracing the complex nature of reality within ourselves and taking up the capacity to navigate the complexity. Humans can no longer be certain about life and everything in a mechanistic manner. There is a lot of uncertainty, and grounding ourselves in our spirit allows us to embrace the reality embedded in a complex world. I explained that as change agents we are sometimes reluctant to contemplate the underlying choices we make because we are afraid it will show us the failures in our beliefs and practices, which will expose our intentions. I argued that it is for this reason that I am suggesting we look at the underlying choices we make as change agents and explore our inner arc of experience by reflecting on our change practice. I explained that this is why I am willing to explore my own underlying choices regarding my spiritual identity in my OCD practice, and I expressed the hope that the participants were willing to explore their own underlying choices they make regarding spiritual identity praxis as well.

I suggested the complexity-based paradigm enables a new way of doing business and doing life. Therefore, change agents require a new way of thinking, and importantly a new way of being. The Newtonian way of thinking is not going to help us concerning alternative ways of being. This is why; I chose co-operative inquiry because it is a new way of working with questions, an alternative methodology, which allows for a complexity-informed empowerment on a political, emotional and cognitive level of inquiry. At the same time, it also extends the ways of knowing with an additional inclusion of practical, experiential and presentational forms of knowing to the standard propositional knowing in inquiries. In this approach, everybody has the opportunity to be equipped in a democratic space with equality. This type of inquiry allows for the inherent uncertainty in inquiries and seeks authentic collaboration and participative decision-making. I expressed my desire for the group to take the co-operative inquiry approach to heart and to take up their roles in this empowered and broadened research approach.

After my overview of how complexity thinking is connected to co-operative inquiry, and how it is necessary for us to apply complexity thinking in the research, everyone was given the opportunity to share their thinking and emotional states. Group responses were:

Stan: *I am frustrated. I feel a lot of what we are doing is stuff that we did 20 or 30 years ago. I feel that looking at meanings and meanings behind meanings is not what I am looking for. And I don't want you (Deon) to see this as a personal conflict issue. But some of the things the members of the group might be looking for [are] not what I am looking for. And I am not judging but some of what you are saying referring to the Newtonian style is that we need to change ourselves in order to understand how we impact on organisations etc. etc. I have been doing this for 48 years. It is a thing that I do every day. It is something that I am aware of. I am very comfortable with who I am. I have no doubt I will be impacted through this process and I will change slightly through (it) but I am not going into (it) to change myself in order to affect my practice and OD behaviour...I need to make this very clear. I feel very strongly if your departure point is that we need to change our way of who we are and what we think etc. in order to change practice*

*in what we do in a general statement, I agree 100% for people who need to do this. I don't feel I need to do this. Right or wrong, I don't feel that. I don't care if some people think I do, and some think I don't because that's who I am. I feel I add value where I go; my clients feel I do.*

Rudi: *Thank you, Stan. If I can just comment...this is a brilliant example in terms of getting this discussion going between exactly the difference between postmodernistic and modernistic research you are kind of denoting. If we have to define spirituality there is enough literature we can get that and that is typical modernistic research. We are still building on that definition. So Stan, if you can just wear the hat of joining the group, not as an AA meeting and to get you to stop drinking, but as a co-researcher finding the answers.*

Stan: *I have to do that, but all that I am saying is that we don't have to recreate wheels and spend ten months of the year doing exactly that when we can have a fifteen-minute discussion and say do we agree and it might change as we go about it. But if you don't peg something down and define something you are not going to get there. I spent from three o'clock this morning pegging down my own definitions.*

After Stan had voiced his frustrations and position on what he wanted out of the research, Rudi made it clear that everyone was welcome to voice their feelings.

Janet responded:

*From my perspective, we need to be careful of either-or. I think we need to be careful not to chuck Newtonian thinking completely out of the door. But, for what we are doing here, we have chosen a frame. And the frame is co-operative inquiry. And co-operative inquiry is very different from what we are used to. I think we have all been wrestling with this. We have been invited to come and experiment with a different way of thinking and that really came down to me yesterday. This tiny little fact that we don't have a research question, but we have a launching statement and start at a place and we take the next step. And I think what Deon has been trying to tell us all along is that we need to collectively decide what our next step is going to be. It is my responsibility to add my voice. Once the voices have been heard and understood I must go with it. Some of our frustrations have possibly arisen from the fact that we haven't always exercised our voices. One example is the journaling. We are struggling to do it every week. That is the nature of this complexity exercise. We try it, if it doesn't work we need to come up with another experiment. And one last thing, Deon the one thing we need to clarify is your role. Because we are all expecting a certain role from you, and at the moment you are not in that box. You are not in the role that we are expecting and that needs to shift.*

Rudi: *That's true, and I think it's safe in this group to say, Deon, you need not get defensive, you don't need to feel you have got to defend whatever you are doing and sort of keep to the process. That is fine, and we will get where we need to get to. There is no need for animosity or me against you kind of thing. If you find yourself going into a defensive kind of mode, don't do that, it is not necessary!*

The rest of the morning's session was spent on getting other feedback also from those who had not yet expressed their feelings regarding their position to the study.

Lucille felt:

*Ambivalent towards this process, as [this is how she felt] towards most things in life currently.*

Johann said:

*I hope I can learn more about this research about spirituality and change to enable me to be more effective in getting to what I need to do when I work with OD processes...In the end, I want to walk out of here (just like in the case study in the co-operative inquiry reading) with some practical model I can use to go to with clients and work with them in helping them with their organisational problems.*

Rudi added:

*Just another comment regarding the process. We are not the same person we were when we started this process. We are ever changing, we are ever learning; this is exactly the methodology. Don't think that if we haven't found the definition of spirituality, we haven't done any work; we have done a huge lot of work since we started. In my mind, we all shifted.*

Johann:

*So the frustration is part of the growth process.*

Hereafter Rudi, Stan, Vonnie, Dave and I continued:

Rudi: *Exactly that, you have to be able to live with that frustration. Newtonian is ... 'I need to know what and where we want to get to' and this is not (what we intend here). This is a consciousness thing. The moment we are put in this uncertain position, we revert back to what we know, that's why we keep wanting to assert some structure in place and this is 1, 2, 3 and this is how we operate. It is quite scary to travel life without those.*

Stan: *Does anybody disagree with that, no, but we also live in a Newtonian world. So I think we need to do both. I just think we need to define it in a certain way.*

Vonnie: *I feel [as] if I ... am not giving enough; I feel that I need to do more. I feel that the little I am giving is actually stretching me in terms of all my other responsibilities, so then the feeling of guilt I am experiencing is telling me that I really need to consider if this is where I need to be at the moment. On the other hand, I really feel this is an important journey for me now, to be exploring what is my spiritual identity. It has a lot of personal meaning for me. Also because I feel spirituality is an important part of my story. And it is also really great to be part of the stimulating conversations and environment, and I always feel that it was very valuable to have been part of this when I leave. Stan ... I was sad when you wanted to leave, and I will be very sad if you want to leave (again). Sad is maybe not the word, but it will be a loss for me if any of you drop out of the research, because I am learning so much from you.*

Dave: *It is great to be part of this. Is it true that it is the first time that someone is doing something like this in the country?*

Me: *John Heron said he has never heard of someone doing it here in South Africa.*

Dave: *Then it is even greater to be part of this and to feel that we are pioneers in doing this. It gives me, even more, motivation to do this. We are on a mission. It is fascinating that we need to connect every time. Journaling remains to be a pain, and I feel we are being put in a box with this. One other thing is, maybe we can invite all our family members so that they can meet each other?*

Rudi: *I will stick with the metaphor of us becoming a symphony. Please just don't invite your family members now, because I can tell you we are playing kak [shit] now, and we sound terrible. So let us eventually*



*invite them for the final concert. In terms of my own feelings, I had a huge lot of frustrations with the process until I realised I am back in my old Newtonian way of going about. I do agree we do tend to feel a bit sorry for ourselves. I would love to be in my garden today and can think of zillion things I would rather be busy with. And then I take it a level up, and I think you know what, on a high level we all opted to be part of this and there's a reason. I suppose it is not about what I am going to get out of this, but it is what I am contributing. If we are really serious about making a contribution, then I suppose that is what PhDs is all about, adding to the pool of knowledge. This just so happens that it is Deon now doing this, and I think I have already had a lot of taking away value from this exercise. Not getting to the answer, but the process. I wouldn't have met you guys if this [hadn't] happened...So we have to redefine our investment in this and quiet the voices from our families saying: 'What are you doing there? We can't actually answer what we are doing, but can only say, well we are talking and we are actually fighting half of the time about nonsense and we have nothing to show. This is a symphony, and we are practising and practising towards saying to them well this is my spiritual identity in the workplace and this is how I am doing it in my OD practice. So I am sort of okay.*

The workshop offered valuable insights and realisations:

- Different points of view regarding the research focus, progress and process were acknowledged. Some group members started appreciating how difference informs identity and how a diversity is a necessary condition for richer perspectives on how we view spirituality and identity. At the same time, it was also revealed how stuck many of the participants were regarding deeply felt experience of spirituality in contrast with the asserting their beliefs and dogma, or the need to find definitive answers to certain concepts we were exploring. This initiated the group to become more open to the idea of uncertainty, which is an important concept in complexity thinking.
- The valuable comment regarding my role and defensive response to criticism of the process. I realised that I had to let go of my ideas of how the process should evolve and rather ensure that everyone takes responsibility for the emergent nature of the co-operative inquiry. By defending the use of complexity I was obstructing the differences required for emergence and self-organisation to take place. This created a shift in my thinking in that my attempt to facilitate a complexity understanding in others was undermined by a lack of self-reflexivity in terms of implementing the co-operative inquiry approach. This helped me to communicate more effectively and to let go of the need to convince others of my version of complexity thinking or CI. This meant I was required to more effectively navigate and facilitate dealing with ambiguity and incongruence.
- The need for greater openness to uncertainty and vulnerability due to shifting from dualistic thinking to both/and thinking was starting to be acknowledged by more group members. This showed that the group was also becoming more aware of how the Newtonian worldview was pervasive in many areas of their thinking and was a source that informed their understanding about spiritual identity, change processes and the research approach.



- The metaphor of a symphony or orchestra in developing our skills towards the final ‘concert’ (completing the group inquiry) resonated very well with the group as suggested by Rudi. This enabled the group to acknowledge the meaningful use of CI as research approach, which meant building our special inquiry skills, i.e. critical self-reflection on our spiritual identity and its relation to our OCD praxis.
- Acknowledging that taking part in the research is very strenuous and entailed great personal sacrifice, but that the quest for practice improvement and the need to better understand how spirituality and identity inform change are both important and keeps the group motivated to endure the inquiry.
- Contemplating why the participants struggle to find time to engage in deep reflection regarding their spiritual identity outside of the group inquiry context. This was also linked to ideas how the journaling could be made more user-friendly and to commit to doing it in a timely manner.
- Sharing our reflections regarding the Dave Snowden (2007) lecture on complexity theory, which most of us attended, and how we could use the *Cynefin* framework<sup>88</sup> (Lucille) to add insights on complexity thinking to the artefacts folder (presentational knowing).

After lunch, we had the opportunity to answer and expand on: (i) common themes<sup>89</sup> or the golden thread of the most significant influences on how our spiritual identity came about; (ii) how the reflection helped us make sense and deepened our experience beyond (superficial understandings), and (iii) how these experiences connect with our work experiences (realities) and the study. It was a riveting session<sup>90</sup>.

The key activities of the meeting were to share in presentational and propositional forms – practical and experiential data on personal spiritual identity journeys and to reconsider our original ideas in light of new practical and experiential data – e.g. expressing different frustrations and appreciations of the research process.

What arose from the discussions were the following insights:

- The group acknowledged the need for a greater openness to uncertainty and vulnerability due to the default movement to dualistic thinking (the Newtonian worldview) regarding how we see spirituality, identity and change.
- A collaborative identification of the following group themes emerged from the discussions of the significant influences on our spiritual identity formation and reflections on our work experiences. These themes were: (i) the need for authenticity and understanding what is meant with spiritual beings having a physical experience, (ii) the power of choice, unconditional love and acceptance in thinking about our spiritual identity, (iii) dualistic thinking, the role of paradox,

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<sup>88</sup> See Chapter 9; Section 9.3.

<sup>89</sup> Please see Appendix O for the complete list.

<sup>90</sup> Please see the personal and groups reflections at the end of this section.

authenticity and acceptance in spiritual identity formation, (iv) reflection on the fear of rejection, inferiority and failure as drivers of intentionality and integration or organisation of the self in spiritual identity formation, (vi) the role of redemptive potential and defining moments in self-awareness in spiritual identity, and (vii) the role of fostering uniqueness, curiosity and creativity in raising awareness in spiritual identity formation and its connection with forgiveness, liberation and purpose.

The themes or golden thread, although relatively diverse for most members revealed that we were engaging with the inquiry topic in a deeper way and that some elements of complexity thinking like both/and thinking and the need for emergence and self-organisation in group processes were starting to take hold. At the same time, the themes also revealed a certain ‘stuckness’ in some group members who found it difficult to convey their spiritual identity praxis in non-dogmatic or religious language. For me, this accentuated my own need to become radically open or aware of certain aspects that I might be closing off or was unconsciously steering away from in the group exploration process.

The action plan derived from Workshop 5 (the discussion during this workshop) was formed around the need to reframe our ideas on spiritual identity. Therefore, it was decided that each person should pose their new questions after having reflected on the key themes or golden thread the group shared. The idea was to explore the most significant influences on how each participant’s spiritual identity came about (a divergent action phase) and the implications thereof for their OCD practice. Each co-researcher was tasked to devise his/her new action phase research question and to choose an appropriate data recording method. The questions the participants’ devised were:

- *Dave: How do I ‘live’ and convey truth and power in the complex organisations I work in and remain vulnerable and authentic - holding that truth lightly with non-attachment and meta-intentionality? [for he who only has a hammer, every problem becomes a nail....]*
- *Janet: What significance do the concepts of choice, redemptive potential and defining moments have in spirituality? How do they impact on my use of self as an instrument? How do they manifest and impact on organisational health and effectiveness? How might they be consciously harnessed to increase organisational health and effectiveness?*
- *Vonnie: How congruent and authentic am I when working with high-end level of executives? How overriding is my need to be accepted and does it influence my authenticity?*
- *Johann: Am I really authentic - being who I am? And how can I help others to be more authentic, open, aware and honest about their spiritual identity?*
- *Rudi: What are the consequences in coaching when a client believes he/she is a mere human being and not, in essence, a spiritual being? Also, in what way are they influenced by a specific image they hold of God?*
- *Me: How congruent am I in the ways of being-becoming that demonstrates authenticity despite unconscious feelings of rejection, inferiority or failure that might be motivating my actions?*

## Reflections on workshop 5

### Research questions explored

Tell us more about the key themes or the golden thread of the most significant influences on how your spiritual identity came about; Tell us more about how the reflection helped you make sense and deepened your experience beyond (superficial understandings), and how do these experiences connect with your work experiences (realities) and the research?

### Post-Group Reflections (Journal reflections)

Group's reflections:

*Dave: I enjoyed introducing the "gotcha" icebreaker and the common interests exercise. It seemed to bring a healthy relational rapport in the group. There are much healing and therapy in sharing one's deeper story to an appreciative audience - which is what I experienced. I liked the idea that this OCDCoP group is the first attempt in South Africa. This gives it a "pioneering" feel to it which for me is highly motivating. Rudi mentioned the 'kak' music coming from the orchestra up to now, and then the day produced some beautiful music - partly due to his "conducting" role. I appreciated his facilitating role – it had a really cohesive quality to it. A greater appreciation for the sacrifice of some of the members for being part of this OCDCoP. Each story was special and revealed something of the uniqueness of our individual spirituality, what drives us, what affects us and, therefore, influences our OD practice.*

*Janet: The last workshop was a rich time of exploration and listening. I was impressed by how the group pushed through the difficulties we were experiencing to get to a place where each person seemed to feel that they had been heard and that the time together was adding value to them. It was really great to hear everyone's stories and interesting to note how each of us highlighted the fact that we had encountered challenges and the roles that these had played in forming our identities. I particularly enjoyed the informal conversations which happened over lunchtime and the curious and provocative questions which stimulated them. It is exciting to experience a real sense of openness to listen to each other, to hear other perspectives and to simply "get" where other people are at. The exercise where we highlighted the themes, which had emerged, was fascinating. It was particularly interesting to see how many themes emerged and on reflection afterwards, which themes were present which did not emerge. The danger in such an exercise is that we often default to our stereotypes, clichés and assumptions. It was interesting that we focused largely on 'positive' themes and that more 'negative' themes were ignored.*

*Rudi: What emerged for me was a sense of cohesion amongst the group but also a healthy respect for our differences. A theme that emerged that really made me sad was the damage/hurt done by the church/organised religion and the unsettling thought that I was part of that institution which seems obviously unaware of the damage they are doing with their dogmatic driven, often loveless and judgmental approach. It took me a long time to forgive myself for being a perpetrator and found solace in the fact that I simply could not see that I cannot see. It made me realize what Jesus meant when he said: 'Father forgive them, for they know not what they do'. What is clearly also emerging amongst the group is a better understanding of the methodology. The fact that we often mention the Newtonian approach indicates an awareness of this, which is useful.*

*Lucille: The workshop was the first time we spent a full day together and the time worked really well. What emerged for me has to do with both the research process and the content. It really starts feeling differently in the group when we step into the space as co-researchers. The question of spiritual identity is linked to the stories of our past and our ancestors. Therefore working with spiritual identity in the workplace is bringing worlds closer - the world of the public and the world of the private. This is territory that people who do keep them apart may be keeping separate for a reason*

*and therefore needs to be done with care and within a context of what is appropriate. The process is coming together more and more. We are starting to move into the transition towards the next phase of the research where we take our research questions into our world of work. Our challenge is going to be to wake up into 2014 with our own divergent research questions clearly formulated and with energy to explore. I really feel very positive about what happened last weekend. The feeling of us as a group taking collective ownership was good. Not always easy but very good.*

*Vonnie: One common theme that became clearer as we all shared our stories behind our stories, was the role that tradition played in evolution of our spiritual identities. It was interesting to notice the different levels of inquiring amongst us on our spiritual identity and could this also be a function of tradition? I am curious to know to what extent our inquiries are stimulated by influences of our time or is it such an individualistic process as we made it out to be. Is there not also a collective inquiry happening in our social systems which influence our individual inquiries. The awareness of uncertainty, complexity and paradoxes surely influenced our inquiries into our spiritual identities and there is a collective story emerging, which is influencing our individual stories. Our stories emphasised our disappointments and disillusionment with organised religion and our inquiries are striving towards correcting the 'sins' of religion. But organised religion is surely not the only system to be blamed for the dualistic, fundamentalistic worldviews that existed and is still existing in our society. What became again quite clear is that our spiritual identity is a forever-evolving process and needs to be exposed to inquiry in order to be purified from dualism and fundamentalism because we all are always at risk, even when we are not religious at all, to be dualistic and fundamentalistic in our worldviews.*

Research cycle 2 presented our collaborative experience of sharing the first presentational portrayal of the experiential data and collaboratively working towards the first provisional knowledge of the inquiry. This was easier said than done! Workshop 4 and 5 entailed defining meetings and presented key moments in terms of the overall project. First, the participants started taking responsibility regarding their facilitation roles and made the inquiry a more collaborative or participatory space. Second, theoretical understandings grew not only of the method but also in terms of complexity theory and thinking about spiritual identity, i.e. the importance of both  $\backslash$ and thinking. Most importantly, group members not only started to share their own beliefs of spiritual identity but also started asking significant questions about their experiences and how it can be interpreted beyond dualistic conceptions of spirituality and identity (a move toward thinking in terms of complexity). Thirdly, concerning the inquiry questions, we progressed in delving deeper into the main inquiry question, namely: "What is my spiritual identity in my OCD practice and the organisations I work in?" We developed and reframed the main inquiry question to allow us to explore various domains of our experiential, presentational and provisional propositional knowledge. In my own reflection on what changed, I could see how I was becoming more open to others' ways of seeing spiritual identity. Because it is such a deeply personal concept or experience to talk about, I believe the process of sharing our initial ideas in a group format in workshop 4, and later individually to the whole group in workshop 5, was crucial in enabling me to enter others' worlds without having to feel I had to embrace that which makes me uncomfortable. This was a big step for me, because although I was aware of how some of my beliefs might be fixed, I became gradually more comfortable with exploring some parts of my thinking and experiences which allowed me access to parts of myself which I have not explored before in terms of spirituality and how it informs much of who I am.

Next, we turn to research cycle 3.

### **7.4.3 Research Cycle 3: Workshops 6-7**

Research cycle 3 entails the divergent action plan on spiritual identity praxis of Organisational Change and Development practitioners developed in Workshop 5; that is, the second action plan applied in practice. This represented stage 5 of the inquiry followed onto the second experiential grounding (Workshop 7), which was stage 6 of the research (See Figure 5.3).

#### ***Workshop 6***

We were not able to secure a date for a meeting following the workshop at the end of November in 2013, until Saturday, 1 March 2014. As I could not secure one of our regular meeting venues, I reserved the University of Stellenbosch library's boardroom. The meeting was scheduled from 09:00 to 17:00 as we had much to discuss. I asked that we all meet at Jan Marais Nature Reserve close to the boardroom for our group ritual before we started the reflection meeting in earnest. I explained Stan's reasons for deciding to finally withdraw from the Organisational Change and Development Community of Practice. The group had heard from Stan and his withdrawal was seen as a great loss.

Rudi facilitated the group ritual. He asked each person to find something in nature that could symbolise his or her experience since we last met. Everyone shared something meaningful about their own journey and stressed their busy schedules.

Lucille joined the group one hour late as she came from a training session in Johannesburg. She explained that she was very tired and that her son was very ill. She indicated her need to withdraw from the study due to various other commitments taking too great a toll on her and her family. After a short gathering, we moved to the boardroom. The group suggested that Lucille leave at lunchtime after having facilitated the enneagram.<sup>91</sup>

I chose to employ the Enneagram as it linked well with the study as an awareness generating or sense-making and meaning-making framework. I asked Lucille to explain the role of the Enneagram and how it was meant to enhance our focus on the research topic regarding spiritual identity praxis and our roles as Organisational Change and Development practitioners (which in many instances relate to intentionality and motivation behind our behaviour in change processes). After a brief introduction, she explained how the enneagram linked to our intentionality and how we resonated with particular motivations more than with others. I believe the enneagram gave us insights into our spiritual development and identity formation, and how we use motivational forces to make sense of

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<sup>91</sup> According to Integrative Enneagram Solutions: "The enneagram is a useful guide on the journey to self-development, relationship building, conflict resolution and improvement of team dynamics" (Cloete and Greeff (2014: 1). Please see Appendix L.

our spirituality, those of others, and especially our workplace spirituality and understanding of change - our theories of change.

I linked the Enneagram with our current focus by providing an overview of the co-research progress we had made and a general overview of the importance of theory (complexity thinking in relation to Newtonian thinking).

We had to move to different locations a few times and lost some time. Consequently, we did not get to the focus of the day, namely exploring our experiences of the action plan formulated after Workshop 5. However, we discussed the impact of the "system of ideas" or the theoretical framework of workplace spirituality, and its link to identity theory.

I gave an overview of the key theoretical assumptions behind the research and how each member had a chance to discuss this and to gain understanding, especially of complexity, identity and spirituality. As we discussed real business experiences and their practicalities we agreed to make them part of our next journaling practice. We also committed to complete the previous journal action plan.

The enneagram discussion initiated the sharing of presentational and propositional forms of knowing, that is, practical and experiential data. We used our beliefs and knowledge to deepen our story about spiritual identity by asking: (i) How do my defences affect the way I practise Organisational Development? (ii) How does my motivation impact on the way I see business? And (iii) How does my motivation affect the way I see OCD?

The session on motivational forces and the enneagram gave excellent momentum to the quality of our being together despite the various disruptions and discomfort experienced due to the air conditioner not working. The participants' accounts are:

Janet: *It was interesting to observe the impact of the environmental issues on our ability to be fully present.*

*The group was highly distracted by the discomfort we were feeling in the venue and I did not feel that we ever got fully centred. The day felt disjointed and incohesive. I did, however particularly enjoy Rudi's opening exercise which caused me to reflect on how elusive my dreams sometimes seem and yet how real they are. It was a pity that Deon had to rush through the explanation of Newtonian vs Complexity thinking. We were all losing focus. I am aware that I need to think through the implication and application of this thinking to a greater extent.*

Dave: *Following Rudi's invitation to find a symbol in the gardens, I reflected on how very much I am learning – partly in the OCDCoP process, but also in the projects I am engaged in. In the enneagram session, several insights came through – the longing for an unconstrained life, and dissonance along the influence lines – and for me the dissonance between different aspects of my personality...Also, I was able to appreciate the others far more, after seeing how their styles described their personalities and preferences. The fact that we do not discard the Newtonian way in favour of the complexity view, but hold both views and frames simultaneously when considering a specific situation. I saw the parallels between the shift from Newtonian to Complexity with my journey from the technical focus in engineering*



*to the people focus on leadership and OCD. This is also seen in the shift from certainty to uncertainty. The new area of 'being functions', or in coaching terms – how we show up. Culture as a behavioural expression of our identity. Arbinger institute – quality of our being – quality of relationships – and so on. Peter Block's comments about us as consultants being models of the solutions we are marketing. The question came up of how to convey complex realities to our clients, when we want to show them solutions, and how to get them to work. We need to understand our own journey of increased awareness to take those clients on a similar journey and then their teams or organisations on a similar journey.*

*Johann: The enneagram discovery helped me a lot...Doing what I am doing now (OD consultancy) is far more in line with my type and inner sense of drive and calling.*

*Rudi: Despite the appalling conditions of our meeting place I had some real aha experiences during the workshop with regards to my own spiritual journey. The interpretations Lucille provided on the enneagram applied to my specific number made me understand exactly why it became intolerable for me within the confines of organised religion. I was surprised by my emotional reaction to being really upset when Lucille pointed out that we possibly create God to our image and not the other way around... Point is it is exactly this image of God that guides our lives and most probably filters through into our OD practices. Awareness of this fact is surely key!*

*Vonnie: A very insightful experience using the Enneagram to create an awareness of what intentions are driving my actions and behaviours. The results obtained confirmed my current strong attention being given to my intentions and my commitment to investigate and 'purifying my motives' when responding to the world I am living in. I also got a deeper understanding of why I am often experienced as a person who has an intentionality in my work and when I show up in my relationships. I am quite attuned to my inner feelings and saw it so clearly in a retreat I recently facilitated. This enables me to access my vulnerability easily and to disclose it to others without much prompting.*

Reviewing the data also revealed how the co-researchers were experiencing the process and progress of the co-operative inquiry. The following represent the participants' feedback:

*Janet: It is sad that Lucille and Stan left the group. I am frustrated that none of us seems to have got fully engaged with what we are doing - myself included.*

*Johann: I find the process difficult, and although the subject matter interests me, I feel frustrated at times and quite often don't look forward to spending a whole weekend-day. But every time I feel enriched, stimulated and encouraged. I can also see that my OD praxis and practice is at a point where I will have to make some reconsiderations about my approach.*

*Rudi: It is a pity that Stan and Lucille due to their own circumstances had to withdraw. All members of the group are making such valuable contributions and I find the process fascinating and highly informative. The fact that Deon keeps us on track academically in terms of the process is great. I think probably the whole group feels we are letting him down by not 'doing our homework'. Fact is, we are all trying our level best to give the best we can. Our practices or careers come first and should be our first priority and we should let the guilt go.*

*Vonnie: My experience of the group is quite positive. The process I am still very unsure of; it still feels as if we are lacking structure and that we are often drowning in the complexity and uncertainty. I am aware of the fact that complexity and uncertainty is the name of the game but I am questioning the way in which*



*our conversations and language is contributing to us not really understanding one another always which lead to impasses and a passive response to the action research required. I am also intrigued by the separation or dualism I experience between the reflection workshops and the action stage of the process. This is something Deon asked us about in the past week and this is something to explore further.*

Since we were running out of time, we could not co-create a new action plan for the next action phase. We agreed that we would continue to explore the research questions posed in Workshop 5 (How did your spiritual identity come about and what are the implications thereof for your OCD practice?) and adjust them to our current experiences. The action phase after Workshop 6 thus continued with the divergent theme of the last few workshops. Each co-researcher was responsible for devising his or her own research action plan and method of recording the data until our next reflection workshop.

In general, the consensus in the group was that we could each focus on different aspects of our overall inquiry according to how our ideas had changed during the next cycle of action. This included a shift in our focus to immediate workplace realities for the application of our action plan — an explorative reflection about our current change practice as informed by our spiritual identity praxis. We would also amend or develop inquiry procedures – forms of action, ways of gathering data – in the light of our experience.

Heron (1996) describes divergent action phases as a necessary process to allow development of critical attention and to grow in awareness, in our case, spiritual identity praxis and the roles we have as OCD practitioners. The process typically follows a pattern of inquirers going off and each doing something different, finding out different things, or trying out different practices. Each member of the group may look at a different part, or at a different sub-whole, or at the whole, in terms of different assumptions (Heron, 1996).

In order to facilitate the divergent action phase, co-researchers could develop their own action plan. Therefore, I created a template<sup>92</sup> in the shared Dropbox, which had the following questions:

- What is the question you are asking related to your own spiritual identity in the workplace or organisation/s you work in?
- How are you going to explore the topic by applying the special inquiry skills (Being present, Imaginal openness, Bracketing, Reframing, Dynamic congruence, Emotional competence, Non-attachment, Meta-intentionality)?
- How are you going to keep records of the experiential data generated (Descriptive notes, conceptual maps, theory outlines, journal entries of self or other, observational data and feedback notes, interview notes, audio and video tapes, photos, documents of self or other –

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<sup>92</sup> Please see Appendix M.

letters, minutes, memos, records, reports). Each person was to provide information about his or her own action and experience.

The development of the action plan was tasked for early in next week to enable us to explore the action plan in time for workshop 7.

## **Reflections on workshop 6**

### **Inquiry question explored**

What does the Enneagram bring to my story about my spiritual identity? How did your spiritual identity come about and what are the implications thereof for your OCD practice?

### **Post-Group Reflection (Journal reflections)**

Group member reflection:

*Johann: I think my explorations here might lead to a re-purpose of Camino [my consultancy firm]. I realised again that our spiritual identities are a major factor - both corporately and individually, as well as interactively (between organisations and individually). I also realised how much I (and most people in our field) are dominated by Newtonian thinking, especially by the principle of cause and effect. Although it definitely still has value, we can work towards the point where we integrate more complexity thinking in our approach. In that way, we will not create impossible expectations and also render a better service.*

Although workshop 6 was a bit of a disappointment in terms of physical discomfort and disruptions, some good insights were gained and a deeper understanding of our spiritual identity was fostered through the enneagram and our discussion on complexity theory. First, we became aware of more than just personality types through the Enneagram. Second, it gave us a unique perspective on our spiritual identity through which we interpreted our worlds, how this influenced our relationships and how we typically acted according to these core intentions or drivers. In answering the question of what the enneagram brought to our stories about our spiritual identity, the group was unanimous in the importance of understanding our deepest fears, uncertainties and motivations. Third, the enneagram opened up the discussion on awareness making processes and how we can only see that which our eyes are willing to see. Cultivating processes that open our consciousness to new horizons of self and spirit seemed to be connected to processes of unlearning and reconnection. Finally, we could discuss the implications of complexity theory, thinking and critical complexity and deeper understanding of what we meant by the terms and the various concepts like self-organisation, emergence, non-linearity and contextuality. This immediately brought to life new questions and possible avenues for exploring spiritual identity praxis and our roles as change agents.

In terms of answering the inquiry question, the group grew in their awareness of how they interpreted the notion of spiritual identity since they explored the implications of the enneagram on their ways of thinking, being and doing. Some members also gained valuable insights on the influence of the

Newtonian worldview on their understanding of spiritual identity praxis and the need to shift to a more complexity-informed understanding in relation to how it influences their change practice. Other members were more concerned with the influence of Newtonian thinking on their spiritual identity praxis and had an elementary understanding of the role of complexity thinking in respect of their personal inquiry. Apart from understanding the historical development of spiritual identity, the group also started connecting it to their current OCD practice and the notions of intentionality, authenticity and congruence came to the fore. This was a positive development for me, in that it indicated the growing awareness in the group in general and that a more direct and fuller understanding of complexity thinking and its perspective on spiritual identity was starting to emerge in some members.

Next, I describe what discoveries and experiences that were made during the next workshop.

### ***Workshop 7***

The second experiential grounding of the co-inquiry took place at the Christian Brothers Conference Venue in Stellenbosch on 17 May 2014, from 09:00 to 17:00. The meeting was opened by Janet doing the group ritual and sharing exercise. She facilitated different forms of engagement in relationships and how it influences our perspectives.

After the coffee break and group ritual, I initiated the discussion by inviting comments on our expectations for the meeting. Each co-researcher gave feedback concerning their specific interests and research questions regarding the action plan they created and how it informed their explorations. Although many different aspects were raised, various common themes emerged. These seemed to align with the goal of the day, namely to explore our practical and experiential encounters of action phases.

The reflections on the explorations of the action plan and different forms of knowing were presented by means of case studies that were particularly perplexing or of interest to the participants in their personal journeys as OCD practitioners. Each co-researcher was given a 30-minute time slot in which he or she presented the context and details of his or her OCD intervention. The first 10 minutes were used to present the case and another 10 minutes for questions and comments. After this, there was a group discussion on the learning from the case in light of the research questions we were considering.

The main goal of Workshop 7 was to re-assemble after the phase of explorations and to share the group's specific reflection on their OCD practice experiences. The following case study presentations by Dave, Vonnie and Johann, Janet and Rudi each respectively, illustrate the co-researchers' sense of presentational and propositional knowing. The presentations also represent their insights in reflection on their spiritual identity praxis in their OCD initiatives. We started with Dave's presentation.

Dave presented a case study on a township<sup>93</sup> school, which runs change and coaching initiatives to assist with leadership problems and improve teacher capabilities. The leadership coaching work he did was at a government school in a formerly disadvantaged area in Cape Town. He gave details about the context of the school (e.g. gang violence and shootings in the community), the staff (e.g. an autocratic headmaster and bishop in the church, and prominent political figure with leadership roles). He explained the process he followed and the change model he used [a combination of Kotter (1996) and Mintzberg (1979), with some practical techniques by Brené Brown (2012) regarding the role of vulnerability in leadership formation]. He described his own struggles and how his spiritual identity played into the situation and how it assisted him in facilitating change processes in the school (with the headmaster in particular). He also reflected on how he could possibly sense the headmasters' spiritual identity and facilitate some form of meaning making or change in the school's problems and difficult management issues with the staff (teachers).

The reactions to what Dave shared as well as his response were:

Dave: *I recognised about a month ago I can't fix this using normal stuff, Newtonian or whatever you want to call this. It's complex, and that's been a helpful thing. So my own being in a sense is to relax. So when I arrived at the school for a workshop yesterday I had to make sure that they had a ball, I had a lovely game...they were slumping in the chairs, one was sick. But I just relaxed... You've got to work with his identity. Make him aware of his false sense of self. He is just serving his ego.*

Vonnie: *As facilitators, we must be very aware of our own voices, then there is a big chance that we might put our clients in a position that they might just close down and remain stuck... How do the models we use influence our judgement of the situations and the contexts that we try and facilitate change in?*

Rudi: *Work with the metaphors the client uses. We should not judge, but we notice the aspects that are incongruent or inappropriate to the spiritual identity or ways of being the client portrays.*

The second case study presentation was by Vonnie and Johann, who worked together on a change management project. The metaphor they used to describe the problem was "the mechanical engineering or lifelessness in an environmental organisation". They gave a detailed written report of the process they facilitated and coached with the organisation over a six months period. They used the Theory U presencing model of Otto Scharmer (2009) and focused on a 'Listening Journey' by shadowing the participants. Vonnie and Johann were the third consultancy that was approached to intervene after the other change initiatives had failed dismally. Part of the learning journey was about building trust and listening to all the voices in the organisation. After spending much time listening to the voices of judgement, cynicism and fear, they were able to facilitate a new regime between the staff and the leadership. What was of interest to the group was how the political, social and psychological demands on the OCD practitioners influenced the context and the leadership team

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<sup>93</sup> A township is a suburb or city inhabited by predominantly black Africans and characterised by low-income earners. Townships can mainly be attributed to occupation and housing legislation that was enacted in apartheid South Africa.

demands. Also, of particular importance was the personal journey of both practitioners and their own journey of understanding when to listen, and when to act on the specific needs and requirements of the leadership and the staff.

Janet presented a case study of her experiences working on a project with a leadership team. She explained her difficult role in working on a creative change solution with directors of an institute and described the processes and hardships she experienced in her co-working capacities. It made her reflect on her OCD practitioner identity, and how to act when leaders demand cause-and-effect, mechanistic and linear responses and actions. It also gave her insights on what it means when OCD practitioners do not have a shared vision and follows ingrained Newtonian thinking-orientated practices.

*Janet: Don't cast your pearls to the swines or become a 'prostitute' by selling your change programs, against your will just for the paycheck, although you know the Newtonian silver bullet they are looking for is not achievable. Even more so when you present your alternative, but are then humiliated from a Newtonian reductionist argument perspective. Newtonian thinkers that would like change are not really interested in sustainable approaches and enacting change processes that expose the fundamental assumptions of their own change practice.*

The insights she shared evoked the following responses:

*Me: How do we take care of our own wounds in the space of others' brokenness when we are facilitating change? Or more so, how do I maintain a healthy inner world whilst creating a space of trust for a change and facilitation process? What also emerged for me from your case study was the question of self-care as OCD practitioners.*

*Rudi: What is at stake here is our own self-congruence versus the client's needs.*

*Vonnie: When do we get corrupted when we try to facilitate in the Newtonian world? Are we supposed to survive or thrive? Is it possible to survive while I thrive? Where do you position yourself as an OCD practitioner? What does consultancy firms do in dry and busy periods with this in mind?*

Rudi presented a case study of coaching two directors with major conflict issues amongst themselves. He presented an example of what a spiritual being having a human experience as OCD practitioner entails. He shared examples through metaphors or offered critical questions regarding spiritual identity praxis in OCD. For example:

- Who are you, when you are not this role that you are performing now in this organisation?
- Make sure you know what you are extremely good at.
- Remember that you are working with seeds that are dormant in the change process.
- Ask the clients: 'What is the one big problem that you want to solve in this life?' to help you to get a gauge of their authenticity and intentions.
- Ask the clients: 'What is the one thing in this world that gives you the most meaning?'
- Ask the clients: 'What prevents you from being and living a purposeful life now?'

- I think we need to learn how to move from personal skills to the interpersonal and professional spaces of engagement. If you can't lead yourself you can't lead other people.
- It's not finding the 'true you' through adding new things, but rather the task is chipping away at the things that are not you. The unlearning is the becoming.

The reactions to what Rudi shared as well as his response were:

Dave: *We could ask what do you think you did in your interaction with the clients to lead them to that awakened realisation of their own authentic self.*

Rudi: *We need to try all the angles until we have that opening where the client opens up to their creative side in themselves to find the resources to respond to their own challenges. This is often done by connecting them to successes they have had earlier in their lives. Leading them to that yearning of connecting to their true authentic self beyond the distractions that came in the way until this point in time.*

Vonnie: *When do we introduce spiritual language into the conversation, or do we wait for the client to introduce it?*

Rudi: *Being upfront about our own spiritual orientation is a good route. Sometimes one can do 'spirituality light' when you sense where your client is at, and then you work on the level they are. Therefore, it is best right from the onset to gather where your clients are spiritually. You pick it up by their language, their reference points, their values that they hold or the tales that they tell and narratives they employ. Through this, I know exactly. Then in coaching, I ask how is that serving you? The key, however, is to stay authentic about my spiritual identity.*

Dave: *One can also ask for example in a questionnaire at the start of your consulting whether your clients have any spiritual beliefs.*

Rudi: *The notion of God and your client's perspectives on that reveal their God-images are also hugely important.*

Vonnie: *I think we should be careful to not impose our spiritual identity on our clients, while at the same time staying congruent to our authentic spiritual identity.*

Dave: *Connecting to the dormant seeds in our clients, discovering where it would be best to water the dry ground for flowers to start growing.*

Johann: *When we restrict ourselves to connecting to certain identities in such a fixed way, we restrict ourselves to a part of ourselves without being open to all the other parts of ourselves. In terms of our coaching, we need to lead people out of their reduced versions of how they understand themselves and connect them to a much larger picture of their identities, which are organised by their spiritual identity.*

Me: *As soon as we describe ourselves only in terms of our role identities in the workplace, we become disconnected from all the larger parts and relations in the entire system of our identity.*

Rudi: *A question I normally ask is: who are you when you are not you - when you are in this fixed role you are in now? When the person really connects with this, they reconnect to a lost part of themselves, which they have not visited in a long time.*



Vonnie: *This question of who are you when you are not in this current role position opens up the awareness of how disconnected people are to their authentic self. Another great question you could ask is: what is the one problem you would like to solve that will really give you meaning?*

Following the presentations, we sat together for some time trying to connect themes to various domains of OCD practice and the general questions practitioners might find of use in our exploration. We kept on developing common themes with the premise in mind that we cannot facilitate change in others if we have not personally undergone a similar or more in-depth change in our own change practices in view of our spiritual identity praxis.

As I looked back at the initial inquiry themes that we shared in research cycle 1, I sensed a more grounded and experiential exploration in terms of how we were approaching the inquiry questions and answers, which in many cases just led to more in-depth questions. These themes could be seen as the role of paradox in spirituality, importance of both/and thinking, interconnectedness of spiritual identity, the openness or awareness to spirituality and the role of consciousness in identity formation. Comparing these experiences to the initial explorations and themes, it was self-evident that we were now sharing a different belief and knowledge framework and that the landscape of inquiry had shifted. A clear indication of the shift became apparent in the reflection of our initial superficial explorations regarding spiritual identity praxis as OCD practitioners. We realised the themes had now shifted by the example of the type of questions that we were asking<sup>94</sup> about our ways of being-becoming and the quality and role thereof in the context of our change initiatives. The shift could also be recognised in the concern with authenticity, congruency, connectedness and openness because of the questions we asked earlier on in the inquiry about paradox, non-duality, non-linearity and contextually appropriate descriptions. These new questions reflected the way we became aware of and open to our inner arc of experience and the content, quality and depth of experience of our spiritual identity praxis.

We co-developed the themes that stood out from the shared case studies and converted them into questions that augmented the original launching statement or main group inquiry question. The questions linked to the various domains of spiritual identity praxis and how they influenced OCD practitioners' roles added depth to the exploration.

From our discussions, there were three themes or key questions that required further exploration:

- (i) Spiritual identity praxis: How would you describe your journey to discovering your authentic self (identity)? Have you found your authentic self? How far are you on this journey? What does it look like? How do you discover or become aware of it?
- (ii) Spiritual identity praxis connected to the role of change agents: How do you facilitate spiritual identity in others (individuals and organisations)? How do you use metaphors in your OCD

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<sup>94</sup> Please see Reflections on workshop 7.



- regarding spiritual identity, e.g. like chipping away at that which is not you (Leonardo looking at the David statue)? How do you facilitate unlearning that which is not you / incongruent/inauthentic or inappropriate in your spiritual identity praxis as OCD practitioner?
- (iii) Spiritual identity praxis in organisations: How do you move from who you are to changing the system? What role does identity formation play in your OCD approach? If you subscribe to a complex view of the self, is spirituality (the spiritual whole and part of self) not already included in the dynamic concept of identity?

We spent the last moments of the day reflecting on the process and completing a journal entry on our experiences.

The action plan we co-created for the next action phase became the basis for further co-sharing and critical discussions on the themes and research questions we discovered. These were explored at the meeting, which was held a week later.

## **Reflections on workshop 7**

### **Inquiry questions explored**

Divergent action plan questions after workshop 6:

*Dave: How do I 'live' and convey truth and power in the complex organisations I work in and remain vulnerable and authentic - holding that truth lightly with non-attachment and meta-intentionality? [For he who only has a hammer, every problem becomes a nail....]*

*Janet: What significance do the concepts of choice, redemptive potential and defining moments have in spirituality? How do these concepts impact on my use of self as instrument? How do these concepts manifest and impact on organisational health and effectiveness? How might they be consciously harnessed to increase organisational health and effectiveness?*

*Vonnie: How congruent and authentic am I when working with your high-end level of executives. How overriding is my need to be accepted and does, it influence my authenticity?*

*Johann: Am I really authentic - being who I am? And how can I help others to be more authentic, open, aware and honest about their spiritual identity?*

*Rudi: What are the consequences in coaching when a client believes he/she is a mere human being and not, in essence, a spiritual being? Also in what way are they influenced by a specific image they hold of God?*

*Me: How congruent am I in my ways of being-becoming that demonstrates authenticity despite unconscious feelings of rejection, inferiority or failure that might be motivating my actions?*

### **Post-Group Reflections (Journal reflections)**

Group member reflections:

*Rudi: What emerged clearly for me was how central the notion of identity formation is throughout our lives and particularly the importance of the necessity to be aware of this in the kind of work we do. Referring to oneself as being spiritual is in itself an identity that drives certain behaviour. To me, my true spiritual identity is inseparable from what*

*can be called my Higher Self / Authentic Self. My Higher Self is always aligned with universal principles like love, peace, harmony, joy, versus the ego self that operates from a place of fear, anger, guilt, disrespect etc.*

*Janet: Fantastic. Really great day today. I feel as if we are getting somewhere concrete. I am becoming deeply appreciative of each member of the group. I am torn between wanting to diverge more & stay unconstrained and wanting to bring things to some kind of order which will provide a framework for practice. The four critical questions I am now asking is: What is spirituality? Why does it matter? What difference does it make when I practice with spiritual awareness? How do I become a more spiritually-directed facilitator? We've wobbled a bit. Our path up this mountain is very slow and we are doing a lot of unnecessary and irrelevant meandering. But we are gathering so much useful knowledge and insight as we wander the rich and rewarding journey. I am aware that this is one of the themes of my own spirituality. I always have a sense of expectation and I always want to take good to great. I don't feel as if we have scratched the surface of the topic of spirituality. Nor do I personally feel as if we are ready to converge. It actually feels as if we have just got momentum and truly entered an action phase and that it would be a pity to stop now that we are moving.*

*Dave: Another very engaging and rich time of learning. Rudi's rich metaphors were especially helpful in exploring identity: glass elevator - different perspectives, brokenness, shadows, wholeness, paradoxes, wife being pregnant - trust the process, expectations vs hope, using context to identify appropriate metaphor, patient not being well - seeing another doctor, prostituting oneself - when denying one's true self. Metaphors are also stories, which I love in tapping into one's deeper self. Each OCD practice experience shared had so much learning. Appreciative questions emerged for me as one of the key 'discovery mechanisms' in exploring our core identity to ever greater depths. I recorded these in a separate listing. I noticed myself being too quick to come to conclusions as to what was 'wrong' and how I could fix things in some of the issues shared - part of my core 2 motivation of the Enneagram. This raised self-awareness of my core motivation was helpful and going forward will be something to explore in my way of being. I really liked the 'awareness of change appetite' at each stage of the process - a need to sense people's readiness and understanding before proceeding.*

This workshop concluded research cycle 3 or stage 6<sup>95</sup>, which included the second action plan and experiential grounding applied in practice. This cycle portrayed a marked development in the inquiry focus, which delved deeper into what spiritual identity praxis meant. It revealed how inquiry questions had developed and how various unconscious dynamics such as lived experience, intentions, and motivations behind actions, values and worldviews were explored in more depth. Cycle 3 also disclosed the progression of awareness from initial less personal explorations of spiritual identity (sharing from a more objective impersonal stance), to one of personal engagement with being real, authentic and sharing the quality of the experiential character of our ways of being-becoming.

A growing awareness of my spiritual identity praxis was revealed in how I experienced a markedly different way of being able to let go of my ideas regarding the outcome and content of the inquiry discussions. I also discovered how becoming authentic did not necessarily mean to act solely according to that which felt authentic, but rather that I had to engage with the process involved in my inner-world discussions or conversations. In addition, I had to listen carefully to my gentle, but critical

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<sup>95</sup> Please see Figure 6.3.

voice regarding dealing with the uncertainty and ambiguity of facilitating the research process and staying congruent with my spiritual identity. I managed to let go of the fear that demanded a commitment to creating structures and processes, which would hopefully facilitate certainty. I also had to unlearn enforcing my ideas of co-inquiry, spirituality, complexity and identity by being mindful and self-reflexive of my own fixed, mechanistic, either/or ways of taking up the role as facilitator. The small moments of insights and experiences were slowly starting to fill the tension of uncertainty with comfortability in the situation and interactions. I learnt to let go and realise that I could not control the inquiry and steer it in the direction I hoped for. I learnt to fall slowly into a new emergent adaptation or solidarity with what is (a presencing) of what it meant to engage with the dynamics of change.

From the group's perspective, I was encouraged to see moments of self-insight but also felt disheartened to observe others drifting away with a search for stability and a need to stay in control. The questions we were asking through sharing lived experiences gave a fresh dimension of awareness and context to the landscape of the inquiry. This is reflected in the themes of research cycles 1 and 2. Finally, it was enlightening to see participants sharing case studies related to their spiritual identity praxis processes as well as their insights regarding their change agent roles. I felt the group learnt from each other's experiences of spiritual identity praxis and gained alternative perspectives of being change agents.

#### **Reflection on informational or transformational research designs**

*I realised that we might not be able to reach our goal of completely achieving a transformational research project. Although there were some aspects of transformation in our discoveries regarding our spiritual identity praxis, looking back now, I have a clearer understanding as to the extent it was complexity-informed. It gave me insights into how it impacted on how we view our beliefs, values, worldviews and experiences. I think in the remaining workshops we will not be able to fully develop our alternative or transformative OCD praxis because we will have limited time to explore our findings in our consulting practice. I think the research might only be informational about our experiences regarding spiritual identity praxis since we might fall short of fully describing how this has impacted our OCD praxis. Maybe it will still inform us on what it means to be a change agent now that we have deeply reflected on our inner arc of experiences with insights from complexity thinking about change (Research Journal - 18 May 2014).*

#### **7.4.4 Research Cycle 4: Workshops 8-9**

During this research cycle, the interplay between the four forms of belief was metamorphosed through the mutual interactions between group members into the four forms of knowing<sup>96</sup>. According to Heron (1996), the dialectical movement between the four forms of belief and knowing in the research cycles gains critical momentum by the second presentational portrayal of data (Stage 7). This was where the experiential forms of knowing were critically reflected upon in terms of the

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<sup>96</sup> Please see Chapter 6; Section 6.3.

previously shared practical and propositional beliefs. According to Heron (1996), the outcome of this interaction results in refined propositional knowledge (Stage 8 - as portrayed in Figure 5.3).

### **Workshop 8**

This workshop was held at the Christian Brothers Conference Venue in Stellenbosch on Saturday 24 May 2014, a week after Workshop 7. Dave opened the meeting with a group ritual exercise illustrating our ability to do two things simultaneously. It helped us to realise how difficult it is to synchronise our togetherness and at the same time develop our own style of thinking. He also did an exercise on finding the interesting differences and commonalities among one another in general, and particularly on what our hopes were for the day's workshop. This was done in pair discussions and we gave group feedback afterwards.

First, we reviewed our journey and the various research questions we explored. Second, we revisited the important discoveries we made with regard to our co-created knowledge to date. Third, we re-framed the main research question as follows: **How does an emergent spiritual identity praxis with heightened awareness impact on our roles as OCD practitioners?** Finally, we shared our practical and experiential encounters, by using some examples from our workplace practice.

A difficult discussion centred on what direction we should take for the remainder of the day. The workshop was about developing an appropriate method for co-exploring our answers. We adopted a specific focus on how our spiritual identity praxis informs or could transform our roles as OCD practitioners. As this was critical in working towards exploring the role of the change agent, I felt it necessary to critically engage the group (playing devil's advocate) and challenging them on the methodology. Therefore, I questioned how we were going to apply critical complexity theory in this part of the inquiry. The group expressed frustration with getting stuck with some of our original ideas and therefore we reframed some ideas and rejected others. For example:

*Dave: I was hoping that the ice-breaker and questions would assist in creating the rich container, but it didn't seem to have the desired effect. We quickly dived into debate about questions and what to do. On the one hand, it was good to grapple in the mud, on the other hand, it seemed we were not acting out of our 'higher' spiritual identity natures. Rudi made a suggestion which I think got drowned out (sorry Rudi) - to share our week and how spiritual identity impacted on it or was actively engaged. This might have been better and certainly in line with the concept of what we should be journaling about! Deon's comment on "compassionate disruption" as one of his hopes was great - certainly something to explore more, but on the day it seemed more about agenda disruption!*

*Janet: It was interesting for me to see how long it took us to craft a question which would enable us to identify the 'common themes' and I did not feel that in the end, we had actually done that. We were a bit all over the place.*

*Rudi: The variety of personalities and our different spiritual identities become clearer as we go along, which is great, but it is also challenging at the same time. It is so frustrating that we always spend a huge*

*amount of time figuring out where we are and what we should do next before we at last start doing 'research' which in its essence is about involving every participant and get them to share their thoughts and life experience.*

The remainder of the day was spent with Rudi co-facilitating the group by doing informal interviews (like a journalist) as a role-play to elucidate more in-depth discussion on how we consider our original ideas. Also, we explored how these were informed in the light of the practical ideas and experience of spiritual identity praxis in our working life and roles as OCD practitioners. Heron (1996: 90) explains that making use of various forms of presentational knowing and methods in the second presentational portrayal of data is pertinent as it symbolises the data and contributes to an “expressive, evocative-descriptive and metaphorical effect”. By employing role-play, Rudi assisted the group inquiry process by eliciting spiritual identity praxis and demonstrated how this opened up our understanding of change practitioner roles. This dramatic presentation assisted in eliciting the workplace realities and lived experiences of how we enacted upon our spiritual identity and fulfilled a particular role in deliberate change contexts.

As co-researchers, we worked towards co-exploring and discovering group patterns and valuable metaphors that could help us find an alternative vocabulary we deem necessary in talking about intangible dimensions of spiritual identity praxis. We started formulating such vocabulary as early as Workshop 6. We used it in order to build new language for complexity-informed approaches to spiritual identity praxis and change agent roles. During the collective meaning-making process of Rudi's role-play, new adaptations emerged. This changed the thinking and acting paradigms of our Organisational Change and Development Community of Practice. This is central to Heron's (1996) model of co-operative inquiry; knowing through participation creates change in the lived experience of all those involved in the inquiry.

I now describe the questions Rudi put to us during the role-play and offer a summarised version of each co-researcher's response.

- **How do you see spirituality or would you describe your own spirituality?**

Vonnie: *My spirituality is the best part of me, and I experience it through intimacy, love, connectedness, authenticity and congruence. It is characterised by times of reflective, quiet, grounded moments, moments of seeing myself as an important part of the universe and a vehicle to express understanding and connectedness.*

Janet: *I believe spirituality is an element of everybody's personhood – we are physical, social, emotional, intellectual and spiritual beings - every person is a spiritual being, the boundaries between these five elements are not entirely clear. I see spirituality as encompassing everything such as our beliefs, including subsets such as our expectations, our God concepts, etc. If there was any kind of hierarchy, spirituality is what underpins everything else, but it is expressed in every other area. What we recognise is the outworking of the spirit in our intellect or behaviour. Spirituality is at the heart of everything, nothing*

*is not spiritual. There's a spirituality in our thinking, emotions and behaviour – even when someone is drunk, even in what happened at Marikana.*

*Johann: Every human being is a body that we exist in and connects with the world, you have a mind that wants to think, learn and develop. We all have a heart dimension that wants to feel and connect with the world, the emotional dimension, that inter and intrapersonal aspect. And then we have our spirit that is the much deeper part of me (in all of us) seeking for meaning, purpose, and asking deeper questions about life which stands in awe of the universe that I am part of. That something that is so much more, and asks questions about where do I fit in. For me, spirituality concerns the values that I stand for, my principles. As I grow in my awareness of who I am, and what life is all about, and my principles become clearer the easier it becomes to be congruent. As we grow in our spirituality we grow in awareness and consciousness, as I work with people I see that growth in awareness, consciousness, something becomes more sharpened, clearer, the bigger picture.*

*Dave: We are spirit/soul/body – our heart is the centre of our being, our spirit resides in our heart (not just our physical heart, that's a partial view) and our gut. There's a split or disconnect between our spirit and our behaviour, our spirit is already good and our behaviour needs to conform to our spirit. Spirituality is an expression of our spirit, which is created by God. He breathed life into clay – which is more than giving us our breath but implies giving us our spirit. Being aware of the clash between evil and good, searching for honesty and the dissonance in your own being in your specific situation, will make you aware of your spirit. God is father.*

*Me: Spirituality for me is about how I and others understand how we are connected to each other, the world and everything else. How we are interwoven, how we see our interwovenness, how we see that there is something that is bigger than ourselves, that is also part of something that we are sharing. That we have something more than the eye can see with us. Spirituality is then really about the things that are not only beautiful but also things that are ugly. Spirituality for me is not only about love, but also about hurt, pain and rejection. A lot of spirituality is formed and necessary and most clearly revealed from the negative pole of life, in things like rejection, vulnerability, and the search for being loved. Spirituality for me then can be experienced and emerges in this tension of that which is despicable and that which is beautiful. Spirituality is not only revealed in human beings but through the cosmos. Spirituality for me is also an essential characteristic of being human, and at the time a continuous thing (it just is) and at the same time there is a growing part. Spirituality is the way human beings experience and expresses themselves most deeply, whether they are aware of it or not.*

*Rudi: We live in a spiritual world where life (ruach) is in everything. Because language does not convey the complete experience, I like to use metaphors. One metaphor for spirituality is that we are all fish in the ocean of spirituality. There are different species of fish with different awareness to the fact that they are swimming in the ocean of spirituality, there are levels of darkness and light, but in the end, they are all spiritual. You are just there in spirit.*

- **How is spiritual identity different from the other identities you have?**

*Vonnie: The difference lies between when I am ego-driven, self-centered, materialistic and defensive. This is when I do not act according to my spiritual identity, when I am critical of myself, my body-image or*



*experience guilt. When I start to see the beauty in myself and others then I feel more in line with my spiritual identity.*

*Janet: Spiritual identity is not fixed, it is emergent, constantly shifting. I believe we are fundamentally spiritual and in a sense that is fixed, it doesn't change, but we can become more aware of our spirituality and it is constantly growing, expanding. It can shift, through experiences, reflections, awareness, incongruence. Spirituality can be effective/ineffective, the essence is the same, but the way it shows is unique in our spiritual identity. It is complex, constantly shifting.*

*Johann: Spirit is the part of us that can connect to God, some of us will some chose not to. Some choose to have a relationship with God, your spirit enables you to connect to God. Everyone has a spirit, but not everyone uses that to connect to God, to a personal God. It concerns questions of what gives life meaning, what makes life worthwhile, what gives fulfilment. What is my purpose for being here? I answer a lot of those questions in a relationship with God, I spend a lot of time with Him, not only devotional time, talking to Him about life, about facilitating a process. I feel deeply meaningful as if I have significance; great purpose can make a great contribution, can connect and enjoy God in relationships.*

*Dave: I see my spiritual identity in terms of if I am loved. I really sense love, I sense love from God. I am living loved. I love to express that love, as I received a lot, and love to others. I also experience the love of God through others.*

*Me: My spiritual identity is distinguished most clearly from other parts of myself in that my spiritual identity is the place where I can live from, where I can experience love and intimacy without the fear of rejection, worthlessness or failure.*

*Rudi: I see it different to other people in that for most people the ocean is out there and they see it as if they need to be added to the ocean. But for me, spiritual identity is a given because the ocean already exists. My spiritual identity testifies to how there is a spark of God in everything. God is outside what we can think. The thing is we are being spiritual whether we are aware of it or not, the question is whether you are awake. When you are not awakened, you will struggle with the connectedness. I will know you are awake when you know who you are.*

### • Why do you see spiritual identity in this way?

*Vonnie: I believe that every person is equally important to God. My God image is informed by a God that smiles and is happy. God created a world where people are valued and is loved and this is informed by some aspects of my religious tradition.*

*Janet: I believe character does reflect our spirituality. So my God concept, my relationship with God will have an impact on my character. My God concept, my image of God is impacted in this way because I believe in an absolute being (I don't believe in God as male or female, I believe God is God). In many aspects, I prefer the word creator above the word God. I also believe inherent in every human being is worship. I believe all of us worship something and therefore choose what will govern our lives, and rule our decision making.*

*Johann: Some people prefer not to connect to a personal God, but our spirit is not aware that it is not connected to God, if there is no personal God, there is no relationship. Christians are living in God's general grace, not on the same level, as they grow in awareness of God they want to be more like God in a respectful manner.*



Dave: *I view spiritual identity as emerging; it is more a discovery process as we mature, our core nature does not change but grows. I can work on accepting the emergence process, work in partnership with God's "vision", without some kind of revelation people perish; it is not something one can explain through logic.*

Me: *I see myself as loved and beautiful, but I also realise that there are parts of myself that do not reveal this process of living from who I am already in my spiritual identity. That what I observe which reveals something that is not exactly connected to my experience of reality, or reflecting that becomes a critical concern. The way I deal with this is by connecting to my experience of love and intimacy and then critically looking to the areas where I am not revealing this spiritual identity, which is much more than which can be presented in my behaviour or inner conversations towards myself.*

Rudi: *I am spirit, and spirit is in me. My spirit carries my spirituality. God is in all of this, in everything, God is the author of spirituality, God is part of my being. My spirituality is not something rational. I talk from the heart space by means of a sense of knowing.*

- **Complete the sentence: I am...**

Vonnie: *I am a human being in this world, this place, this time with a definite purpose; and I am seeking every day how I can express it.*

Janet: *I am being redeemed into my full potential or purpose. I am redeemed, but I am being redeemed as growth and challenges are moving me towards my redemptive potential. I am being redeemed to my new intended identity, and God also works for me to achieve this purpose. The choices I make can be either effective or ineffective to achieve this.*

Johann: *I am so many things...difficult to answer. I am a child of God, in a personal relationship, living in His grace and seeking His purpose.*

Dave: *I am loved*

Deon: *I am already loved, beautiful and accepted despite my inability to always reveal this in my various relationships. I am being-becoming.*

Rudi: *I am a spiritual being having a human experience. My true essence is love and beauty.*

- **Did you find questions about your spirituality and identity a bit daunting?**

Vonnie: *No, there is definitely some growth that has happened over time. I used to think more dualistic about this.*

Janet: *Yes, very daunting, but glad I did it.*

Johann: *Yes, I don't reflect enough about spirituality.*

Dave: *It was energising – a sense of being threatened but honoured at the same time.*

Me: *No, apart from finding the language to express myself.*

Rudi: *No, I became whole when I realised I am not flawed, I am awake now I am in essence a spiritual being having a human experience.*

Having completed the role-play session, we started devising the next action phase, which included reframing and revising the research question to (i) How do higher levels of awareness (spiritual identity) and expression impact on your OCD praxis? (the quality of my role functions and feedback

regarding my behavioural responses and performance) and, (ii) what does it reveal about myself? (the quality of my norms, values, belief systems, worldviews and paradigms).

We decided to explore the co-created spiritual identity praxis heuristics we had started formulating from the sharing of the case studies. We included our shared personal narratives during the role-play. Rudi suggested that we try to be more focused throughout the co-inquiry and co-facilitation and to grow into the responsibilities of taking up the facilitation roles. The co-developed action plan explored our newly formulated research question and we then reflected and compared it to our co-created spiritual identity praxis heuristics.

After a discussion on how to enact our phase of action, we decided on the following steps: (i) studying the co-created framework for spiritual identity praxis for OCD practitioners (adjust, edit, or re-word); (ii) applying the framework to workplace encounters and experiences when engaging with clients; (iii) reflecting on meaningful or insightful experiences you had with clients in the light of the heuristics and add to/subtract from the co-constructed framework of heuristics; (iv) providing a report or list (some sort of reflection) of real-life workplace examples (clients worked with) of heuristics that may be helpful or detrimental to the cause of the workshop; and (v) bringing something tangible that exemplifies your experience and reflection on it (e.g. descriptive notes, conceptual maps, theory outlines, journal entries of self or other, observational data and feedback notes, questionnaires and rating scales filled in by self or other, interview notes, audio and video tapes, photos, documents of self or other - letters, minutes, memos, records, reports) to Workshop 9.

In order to explore the first draft of the co-created spiritual identity praxis heuristics, I sent the first version of what was called: "*Co-created heuristics to guide action and learning as individual or organisational change facilitators (OD practitioners)*" to the co-researchers and shared it in the Dropbox. These were the initial shared co-created forms of knowing that we tried to portray in a meaningful manner for our personal and professional development, but which also could benefit other practitioners. It contained the various reflections on actions in real-life engagements in our spiritual identity praxis in relation to our roles as change agents. I attempted to capture the key heuristics or insider knowledge (four forms of knowing) that could resonate well with the case studies or real-life examples that were shared during the inside action phase. Then I developed the notes I took into various contextual domains to enable a re-thinking of spiritual identity praxis in OCD practitioner interventions.

Dave emailed a new arrangement of the heuristics:

*I see there are two levels of consciousness in our conversations with clients – observing self and observing the client (one can add context, but that would be momentary). And there are stages in that journey of discovery in OD conversations/coaching. And so I wondered if we could combine and possibly reframe the heuristics and questions from the previous workshop into those two streams as a tool in praxis.*

I sent the following email response:

*I encourage all of us to build on what Dave has put forward and to each explore our own versions of how we perceive our spiritual identity and roles connected to OCD praxis.*

## **Reflections on workshop 8**

### **Inquiry questions explored**

Amended main group inquiry question: How does an emergent spiritual identity with heightened awareness impact on our roles as OCD practitioners?

Sub-questions to answer the main question: How do you see spirituality or would you describe your own spirituality? How is spiritual identity different from the other identities you have? Why do you see spiritual identity in this way? Complete the sentence: I am... When do you feel that you are not connected to your spiritual identity? Do you think you came across as certain or uncertain about your spiritual identity? Did you find questions about your spirituality and identity a bit daunting?

### **Post-Group Reflections (Journal reflections)**

Group member reflections after the workshop:

*Dave: The interview role-play worked well and I enjoyed expressing my thoughts on spiritual identity (SI) and my own SI. I felt at times my ego rising a bit - so would like to reflect on that a bit more. I especially loved the deeper questions that were being asked. E.g.: Vonnie asking of Deon – What is your deepest spiritual expression, and how does your ego affect your spiritual expression. I liked Rudi's comment about leaving our thumbprint, soul-print and spirit-print wherever we engage. Collecting and identifying the heuristics were interesting – navigating our way without being Newtonian since I think that principles by definition are cause and effect. The best part of all was sharing our practices. Vonnie's chessboard metaphor was so useful and so too the discussion about how we show up in facilitation - the need to be vulnerable without drama.*

*Janet: I thought that Rudi's interviewing process went well and I found it enriching listening to everyone's perspectives. It was useful being able to probe each one's answers and I certainly learned from each person. The stories in the afternoon were also enlightening and in each case, I felt that I was adding to my toolkit of knowledge. Each person in the group is adding value in a different way. I so appreciate Deon's guidance regarding the models and frameworks and his depth of perception. Dave's compassion and human focus is inspiring. I find it easy to relate to Johann's spirituality and his ability to articulate certain concepts is very helpful. I appreciate his willingness to challenge each of us. Rudi brings colour and depth to our conversation and his facilitation is very helpful. I have come to deeply value Vonnie's depth of experience, integrity and wisdom. Maria's [Deon's wife] joyful spirit and wonderful food have added a new dimension to the last two workshops and it has been lovely to have her around.*

*Rudi: It was quite interesting to note how we all grappled to be eloquent on the topic of spirituality and one's own spiritual identity when being put on the spot since these concepts should be integrated as part of our being. I also find it interesting that it seems as if our spiritual identity is not first and foremost uppermost in our minds in a work situation. We all have our 'hammers' (tools/methods/guru`s) and then everything looks like nails which raise questions on whether our spiritual identity plays the leading role in our lives. We need to explore this in depth given the topic of the research.*

*Johann: It was so great to see everyone. We are starting to feel like a family and are becoming more real to each other. We ended the previous Saturday on a real high note and for the first time, I really felt things are falling into place, although we did not fully illustrate in our case studies how spiritual identity and OCD praxis come together.*

The second presentational portrayal of our spiritual identity praxis was portrayed by Rudi's role-play and by interviewing us in terms of how we would respond to in-depth questions regarding our spiritual identity praxis. It led to stimulating discussions and questions regarding what this means for our roles as change agents.

We made progress in answering the group inquiry question through the shift exploring spiritual identity praxis in terms of our roles as OCD practitioners. This was an important step in contextualising the reframing process. Some members realised how a growing awareness was necessary for reframing spiritual identity praxis while others remained steadfast in holding on to what they knew, without serious critical engagement with their mind-sets. The 'stuckness' of the group in finding ways to critically explore and reframe spiritual identity highlighted the lack of knowledge in dealing with this kind of topic. This became evident in the shortage of critical reflection and awareness regarding facilitating change processes. Although we had no concrete answers of exactly what spiritual identity praxis implies, we realised that this emergent understanding through the co-operative process gave us crucial insights assisting us in exploring what it meant in the domain of OCD practice. Some members were comfortable with this, while others felt we were just starting to dig deeper into spiritual identity praxis as a group. The practical reality was that we were running out of time and had to deal with the second part of the question regarding our role as change agents in OCD interventions. However, I felt that the co-creation of the initial spiritual identity praxis heuristics was a clear sign that the group was starting to apply important aspects of complexity thinking. This was evident in how they realised the importance of ways of being and doing in terms of the context or environment at play, i.e. creating heuristics. Another encouraging sign was the openness to explore the relationality and interconnected nature of things in change processes and how this linked to their understanding of spirituality and identity. A clear shift during this workshop was how the group realised that spiritual identity praxis could not be seen as three separate entities, but was in our minds (from a complexity-informed understanding) relationally constituted and could not be interpreted in reductionist terms. The awareness of moving to a post-reductionist position in their thinking with regards to certain important aspects of the inquiry topic was beneficial to the group inquiry experience.

With these thoughts, I organised the next workshop.

### ***Workshop 9***

We met at the Onze Rust Conference Venue from 09:00 to 17:00 on 19 July 2014. We started with Johann facilitating the group ritual with the zoom exercise – a mindfulness exercise that helped the group focus on their own journeys. It created a reflective space or mode of being that helped us to connect to different ways of presence. Also, it facilitated recognising and appreciating our ability in vision, seeing, perceiving, hearing, listening, connecting and the gift of movement through our psychical bodily abilities.

Vonnie was absent because of family responsibilities and we decided to reflect on the phase of action items he had shared via email<sup>97</sup>. Working from the insights and practical real-life story he provided, we started building on the initial spiritual identity praxis heuristics.

We spent most of the day assembling all the forms of knowing regarding our spiritual identity praxis heuristics. We shared this according to the information gathered from the action phase work and the co-created research questions from Workshop 8.

The main themes that were discussed were:

- The way we use models or frameworks should not be implemented in a linear way and should rather be matched to the context and specific requirements of the organisational system that requires some change initiative (a non-linear approach).
- We should realise that models that are developed in certain contexts do not necessarily work or fit into the political and cultural contexts of a specific problem or challenge (the contextuality of knowledge in change initiatives).
- We are not change makers, but really only change instigators or participators or facilitators of change at best (the emergent and self-organising nature of change).
- We should consider the role of our own egos or predispositions and becoming aware of how it influences the change facilitation process. Vonnie shared a quote by Joseph Jaworski (2011: 38): "When you open your soul and you bring your whole heart into the room, it changes the structure of the room" (the awareness of our relationality and interconnectedness through critical self-engagement and self-reflexivity).
- Moving from an ego to an eco-perspective requires letting go of feelings of frustration, hopelessness and anger, and allowing yourself to be seen as a part of the eco-system and moving away from the original idea of being the change maker. This includes a more inclusive approach and a shared strategy of listening to all the voices in the eco-system (an emergent way of being-becoming).
- The use of metaphors and heuristics in change processes allows for a creative re-authoring of narratives which opens up pathways for alternative behaviour and ways of being (discovery of contextuality appropriate post-reductionist knowledge).

The remainder of the day was spent on more reflecting on the spiritual identity praxis heuristics. We re-confirmed that the value of the research lies in co-creating a framework from our own spiritual identity praxis for other practitioners. Further development of the spiritual identity praxis for OCD practitioners was important because the heuristics could equip them with alternative ways of being-becoming. This could provide a pathway towards re-imagining their roles as change agents in complex change processes. We had consensus that such a heuristic's framework should not be

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<sup>97</sup> Please see Appendix P.

used as a handbook or step-by-step guide for practitioners. Neither should it serve as a troubleshooting guide used when practitioners were in doubt or when things were going wrong. Rather we envisioned the framework as a model for living; a way of being-becoming derived from a complexity-informed perspective for providing insights into how change systems might look like.

This explorative framework provided us with an initial reflective frame of reference to further explore our spiritual identity praxis and its implications for our role as change agents. The aim of the framework was not only to model how acting in congruence with a complexity-informed spiritual identity praxis could look like, but more importantly, to create ways to imagine an entirely different change agency praxis in OCD practice.

Such a new and imagined change agency could then enable alternative ways of being-becoming according to the complexity-informed perspective of spiritual identity praxis in order to act with meaning, integrity and coherence. However, for the group to further develop the change agency praxis it would mean they would have to explore in more depth the implications of critical complexity and the complex 'I' (identity) for spiritual identity praxis. While we were running out of time but nevertheless felt that the emerging heuristics were already re-shaping our understanding of our roles as change agents because of the emergent reframing process of complexity-informed spiritual identity praxis.

The action phase preceding the next workshop included the task of continually exploring the question of how this framework reflects on our personal journeys and the OCDCoP group's realities. Thus, we decided that all participants should reflect on the entire process looking at all their journal entries.

The final phase of action thus included the following: (i) writing a final collaborative report, that is, the story of individual participant's and the group's journey, and (ii) finalising the spiritual identity praxis heuristics for OCD practitioners.

The goals set for each participant as for the collaborative report were:

- To reflect on one's overall co-participation in the research project;
- To weave in the significant patterns, themes, golden threads that contributed most to one's possible information and transformation or one's way of being (spiritual identity) in relation to one's ways of knowing (propositional, practical, experiential, presentational) and connect the story to the group's journey from Workshops 1 to 9;
- To answer the following questions: How did you experience the overall research journey? How did you experience the co-participatory worldview and the three strands of empowerment? How did you experience the way in which you could/could not take up co-facilitator roles? How did you experience the way you progressed through various questions of the research in relation to the topic on spiritual identity? How did you experience the way we moved through cycles of action and reflection? How did you experience the use and application of the special inquiry skills? How did you experience the process of transformation of personal being through



the engagement with the focus and process of the inquiry? How did you experience the use of imaginal symbols, significant patterns, metaphors, poetry, etc. throughout the inquiry? How did you experience your encounter with the various forms of propositional knowledge that we shared (reading articles, emails, quotes), that we co-explored or that you self-explored, and in which way was it informative regarding the process of inquiry?

- To write a summary of your experiences of the group journey by reflecting on the significant experiences, patterns and themes that stood out for you in our being and doing together, by asking yourself: Have I experienced any shift in my spiritual identity? Has this process moved my focus from a specific approach (mechanistic-materialistic worldview, tools or approaches) to the quality of my way of being or beingness (groundedness) in spiritual identity (critical complexity thinking) in critically re-thinking my role as change agent? How did I experience the methodology? How has this process influenced my daily OCD praxis?;
- To review and/or revise the spiritual identity praxis heuristics framework by printing the framework in a statement and question format and reviewing and revising it by writing and drawing whatever you wish to it.
- To subtract anything and synthesise the framework in relation to your experience of what you know spiritual identity praxis in OCD initiatives could be, and how it could possibly reframe your role as change agent.

The goal was to develop a practical workable framework that tries to explain a complexity-informed perspective of spiritual identity praxis heuristics (although we knew that language and frameworks fall short). This could also be presented with more fluid effect as in a flowchart rather than being hierarchical or structured.

## **Reflections on workshop 9**

### **Inquiry questions explored**

How do higher levels of awareness (spiritual identity) and expression impact on your OCD praxis? (the quality of my role functions and feedback regarding my behavioural responses and performance) What does it reveal about myself? (The quality of my norms, values, belief systems, worldviews and paradigms). How do you apply your spiritual identity praxis to OCD practice encounters and experiences, and what are the implications for our spiritual identity praxis heuristics?

### **Post-Group Reflections (Journal reflections)**

Group member reflection after the workshop:

*Dave: I found this to be one of the best workshops so far. There seemed to be no struggle for contribution - it just flowed. There were rich case studies shared from which much was gleaned, in terms of our state of being, our practice and heuristics that were relevant to our spiritual identity in our OD praxis. Amazingly, Vonnie's case study got us going*



*in a way that was very contemplative. Maybe Vonnie not being there was good for us - we could really grapple with what he had told us and reflect really deeply. I have so much to reflect on from the workshop.*

Workshop 9 entailed the refining of our propositional knowledge regarding spiritual identity praxis to the impact it has in change agent contexts. Our saturated lived experiences regarding our spiritual identity praxis in the context of our role as OCD practitioners were questioned and explored from a complexity-informed perspective. We started challenging our change theories in terms of the need for congruency with our spiritual identity and the integrative process required and necessary adjustments to be made in our role as change agents. This was influenced by reflecting on Vonnie's facilitation of a change process in a company. The implication of critical complexity in this instance was related to how we were able to relate the importance of attempting to model by means of a framework what spiritual identity praxis means and could look like for OCD practitioners. We realised that the implications for a post-reductionistic approach to address contextual issues required developing appropriate responses to model spiritual identity praxis. This meant developing heuristics that could give by means of short refined propositional knowledge some insight into the ways of being-becoming (spiritual identity praxis) in the various contexts of change processes and the domains change inevitably address.

We started to reframe the whole idea of change makers but realised from a critical complexity perspective that change agents are mere change instigators, participants or facilitators of change at best. The shift from change agency informed by the Newtonian rationalised deterministic actor meant a reframing to something that challenged our role identity because of the way we were interpreting and reflecting on our spiritual identity praxis. For a congruent and integrative spiritual identity praxis in OCD, we were challenged by the idea that change could be controlled, managed or somehow organised according to clever techniques or skills. The reframing led us in the direction of a qualitatively different way of interpreting the role of the change actor: from the position of spiritual identity praxis presenting an alternative shift in ways of being-becoming to the context of deliberate change interventions. From a spiritual identity perspective, this meant a shift from the various role identities that normally informs the default approach to change programmes enabling the reintegration of spiritual identity as a major mode of being in the change process. Differently poised, this implied a creative re-authoring of what we envisioned by change agency, now informed by a spiritual identity praxis framework providing more insight that could become complexity-informed as we continued to embrace our emerging spiritual identity praxis.

#### **7.4.5 Research Cycle 5: Workshop 10**

This Cycle represents the final reflection upon the entire CI process. Heron (1996) writes that final phases of reflection in an Apollonian inquiry conclude with one major reflection. The aim, therefore, is to draw all the informative and/or possible transformative forms of knowledge together. The task

of co-researchers during this stage is to be “involved in reviewing, distilling, collating and refining the cumulative data from all the cycles” (Heron, 1996: 98). This cycle is the final action plan applied in practice that could lead to a final experiential grounding, presentational insights and increasingly refined knowledge.

### **Workshop 10**

Our final workshop took place on Monday 15 September 2014 at the Christian Brothers Conference Venue. I facilitated the group ritual by doing a mindfulness exercise and a short review of our entire journey. We had decided on spending our time on the two main goals. Firstly, in finalising our co-created framework we wanted to review spiritual identity praxis heuristics and their impact on our role as change agents. Secondly, we wanted each co-researcher to share something from their experience of the entire journey in any way they preferred.

The following actions were taken in reviewing and revising the spiritual identity praxis heuristics framework for OCD practitioners:

- We reviewed whether we could agree on the framework as co-created up until this point.
- We revised the different domains of spiritual identity praxis for OCD practitioners and stressed the importance of self-care or inner-forming phase of spiritual identity praxis.
- We revised the wording of the spiritual identity praxis heuristics framework and discussed when to apply the different heuristics in the context of OCD practice and the appropriateness thereof for different domains of engagement and spaces of encounter.
- We divided into pairs and reviewed the framework, and reworked many of the forms of knowing which had been applied as inherent in the framework. This allowed for ease of use and was a true reflection of the group’s forms of knowing in reflection and action.
- After the pair discussions, we shared the reworked heuristics with the group to help confirm whether it connected with the other co-researchers.

These activities confirmed the validity of our experiences and forms of knowing by identifying similarities and differences regarding our spiritual identity praxis heuristics and forming meaningful patterns amongst the similarities and differences (Heron, 1996).

We spent the second part of the day sharing the story of our collaborative research journey. All co-participants shared something of their forms of knowing and experiences. The final presentation of the overall experience of the inquiry was structured according to the following research questions<sup>98</sup>:

- How did you experience the overall research journey?

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<sup>98</sup> Chapter 8 provides answers to the final presentation questions.

- How did you experience the methodology and the participatory worldview connected to the three strands of empowerment?
- How did you experience the way you could or could not take up co-facilitator roles?
- How did you experience the way you moved through various questions of the research in relation to the topic on spiritual identity praxis?
- How did you experience your process of transformation of personal being through the engagement with the focus and process of the inquiry?
- How did you experience your encounter with the various propositional knowledge we shared (reading articles, emails, quotes) we co-explore or you self-explored, and in what way was it informative to the inquiry process?
- Have you experienced any shift in your spiritual identity?
- How has this process influenced your daily OCD practice?

The final group inquiry report was compiled according to what the co-researchers shared regarding the questions stated above (which included the spiritual identity praxis heuristics framework) and offered a meaningful way to end the inquiry. Listening to each person providing an overview of the co-inquiry process and how experienced answering the group inquiry question was encouraging, but at the same time a sombre moment because we had shared deeply personal experiences and learnt a great deal from one another.

## **7.5 THE CO-CREATED SPIRITUAL IDENTITY PRACTIS HEURISTICS FRAMEWORK**

This framework pertains to the final report, which entails self-reflexive information gained by the ODCoP in co-exploring various ways of being-becoming relating to spiritual identity praxis. Heron (1996) states that a CI with informative outcomes should primarily consist of propositional reports supported by presentational outcomes. Thus, the propositional nature of outcomes should be reflected in reports relating to reflection on practice. Propositional outcomes are directly about the domain of inquiry and entail:

- (i) Descriptions of the domain in terms of its phenomenal categories, basic patterns, modes of awareness and grounding explanations in terms of higher-order connecting patterns as presented in terms of ontological significance, that is, the kinds of being involved and their relations. This description is presented below in the re-imagined spiritual identity praxis heuristics framework.
- (ii) Evaluative accounts regarding the adequacy, quality, validity, groundedness, trustworthiness, or whatever other term of evaluation the co-researchers chose to use.
- (iii) Explaining the domain in terms of more elaborate typologies, theoretical constructs and ontological paradigms, which include forms of thinking (higher-order forms of thought).

In detailing the report according to the three outcomes regarding descriptions of the domain of inquiry, I present the first aspect as contained in the co-created spiritual identity praxis heuristics

framework (Table 7.3). As mentioned above, I address the second aspect (evaluative accounts regarding the validity) in Chapter 9. The third part of the report relating to the domain of inquiry as interpreted from critical complexity (a higher-order form of thought) is also contained in Chapter 9 in the discussion on the reflective signposts in critical complexity-informed understanding of spiritual identity praxis. This third aspect of the report is discussed by offering an account of the key themes and patterns that emerged during the research cycles in terms of the critical complexity lens.<sup>99</sup>

Having dealt with the contents of the final collaborative report, I next turn to the first outcome of the propositional report by presenting the description of the phenomenal categories, basic patterns, modes of awareness and grounding explanations which had ontological significance in exploring spiritual identity praxis and the role of change agents as co-created by the OCDCoP.

Table 7.3 illustrates the framework for the co-created spiritual identity praxis of change agents in OCD contexts. The re-imagined framework is a contextually appropriate propositional re-thinking, i.e. heuristics for interpreting the spaces of encounter in terms of the different spheres and networks of relations in which OCD practitioners enact their spiritual identity praxis (horizontal dimension – Figure 7.5). These spheres of relational networks are:

- (i) **Self-awareness**, the space where OCD practitioners relate to the relational networks of self or the inner dimensions of spiritual identity (inner arc of experience);
- (ii) **other-awareness**, which links to the OCD practitioner's interaction with change participants spiritual identity (outer arc of experience); and
- (iii) **system-awareness**, which connects to their engagement with the entire system's spiritual identity, or from a CI perspective, the holistic gaze (inner and outer arc of experience).

At the same time, the OCD practitioners were constantly moving between spheres of change that evolve in terms of their patterns of engagement within their relational networks (the vertical dimension – Figure 7.6). The spaces of encounter in combination with the evolving patterns of engagement can be envisioned by the dynamics of encounter and engagement in spiritual identity praxis change agency (Figure 7.7). At the same time, it also involves the four forms of knowing (Figure 7.8). The spheres of engagement that reveal the non-linearity and contextuality of the OCD practitioner change agency are:

- (i) **self-engagement**: relating to the inner-forming process of becoming aware of quality and a state of inner self – beingness;
- (ii) **entering engagement**: relating to first interactions with the 'other' resulting in a process of connecting, mirroring, probing and understanding — clarifying needs, expectations and roles functions within the spaces of encounter which is important at this level of engagement;

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<sup>99</sup> Please see Chapter 3; Section 3.2.8 and Chapter 6; Section 6.3

- (iii) **explorative engagement**: linked to processes of co-emergence, co-sense-making, or co-maturing — growing in participants' understanding of their own complexity-informed spiritual identity praxis in the spaces of encounter;
- (iv) **deep-engagement**: revealing the initial processes involved in a mutually transformative process of fundamental re-organisation with the self, other or system — the authentic self-regenerating and re-producing which transforms one's thinking, being and doing;
- (v) **whole-engagement**: representing a movement towards a meta-transformation with meta-outcomes, e.g. a regime shift, re-generating, or re-purposing of entirely new paradigms resulting from new ways of thinking, being, becoming and doing permeating all previous ways of thinking, being, becoming or doing.

**Table 7.3: Co-created Spiritual identity praxis framework for OCD practitioners**

Spaces of encounter in OCD practitioner praxis				
	<b>Dynamics and dimensions of spiritual identity praxis in OCD practitioners</b>	<b>Self-awareness facilitator-self space</b>	<b>Other awareness facilitator-client space</b>	<b>System awareness facilitator-organisation space</b>
Evolving patterns of engagement in OCD practitioner praxis	<b>Self-engagement (Inner-forming)</b>	Becoming aware of quality and state of inner self (beingness)	Becoming aware of quality and state of others' inner self (beingness)	Becoming aware of quality and state of systems' inner self (beingness)
	<b>Entering Engagement (Connecting-Mirroring-Probing-Understanding)</b>	Clarifying your needs, expectations and roles	Clarifying our mutual needs, expectations and roles	Clarifying the system needs, expectations and roles
	<b>Explorative Engagement (Co-Emerging-Sensing-Maturing)</b>	Growing in your understanding of your own spiritual identity praxis	Growing in the mutual understanding of other's spiritual identity praxis	Growing in the mutual understanding of the systems' spiritual identity praxis
	<b>Deep Engagement (Mutually transforming)</b>	Authentic self-partnering that transforms (re-purpose/re-generates your being and doing)	Authentic partnering that transforms (re-purpose/re-generates the other's being and doing)	Authentic partnering that transforms (re-purpose/re-generates the systems' being and doing)
	<b>Whole Engagement (Meta-transforming)</b>	The whole 'self' transformed and transforming (self-re-generating, re-producing)	The whole other transformed and transforming (self-re-generating, re-producing)	The whole system transformed and transforming (self-re-generating, re-producing)

Source: The Author

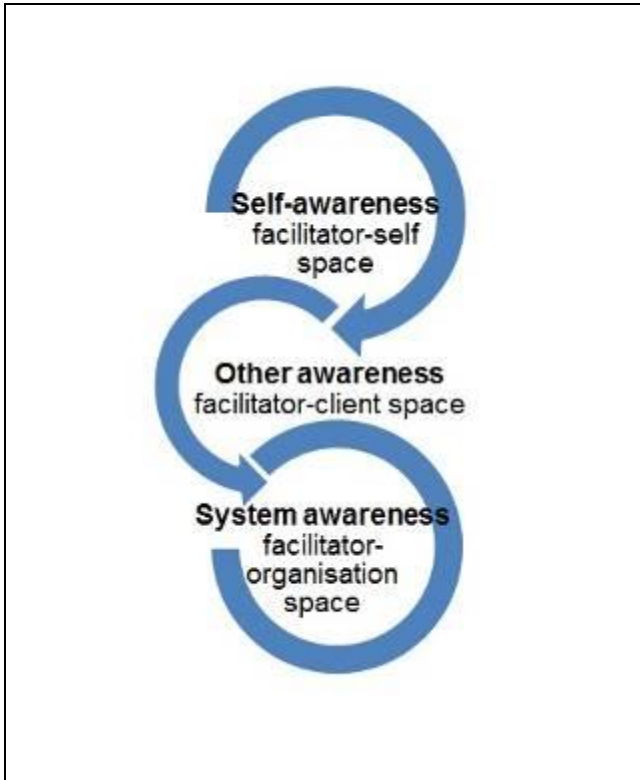


Figure 7.5: Spaces of encounter in OCD practitioner spiritual identity praxis

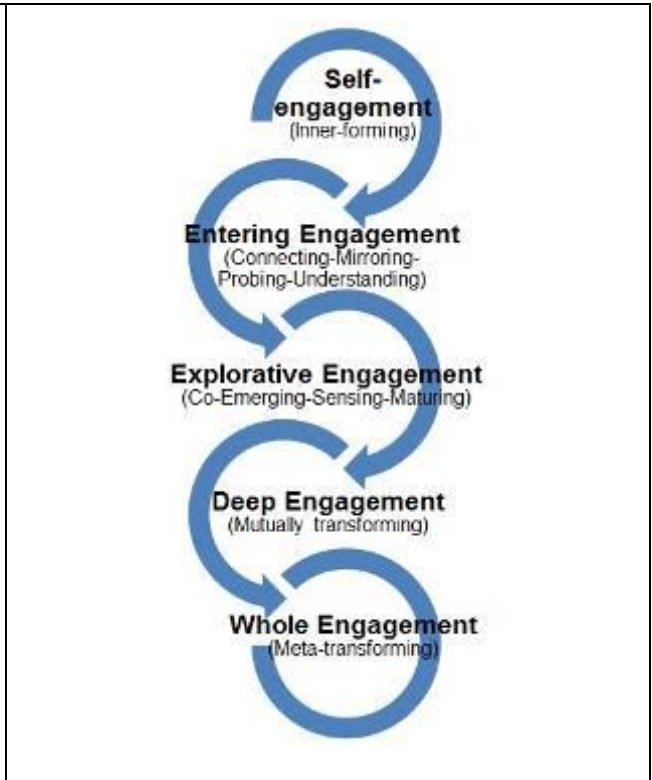


Figure 7.6: Evolving patterns of engagement in spiritual identity praxis

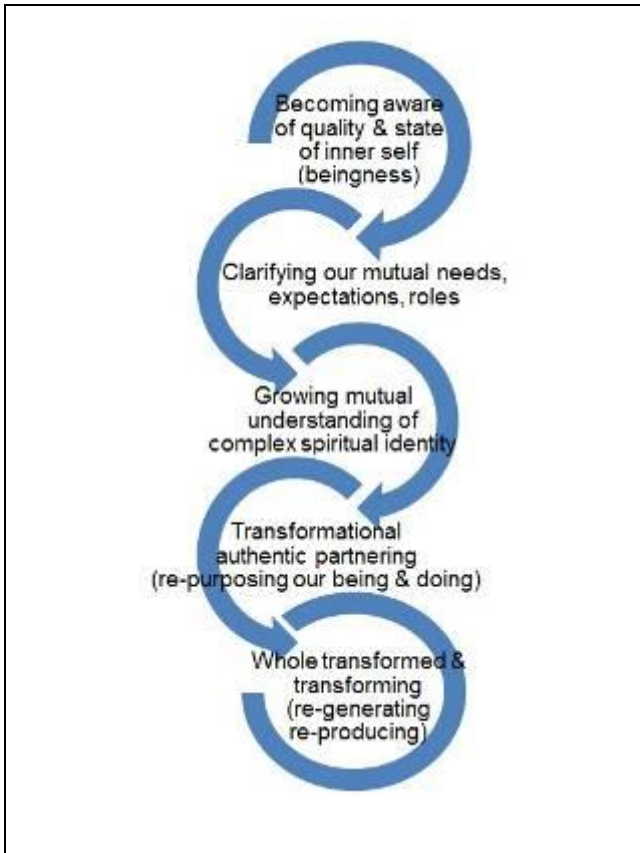


Figure 7.7: Dynamics of spiritual identity praxis in OCD practitioners

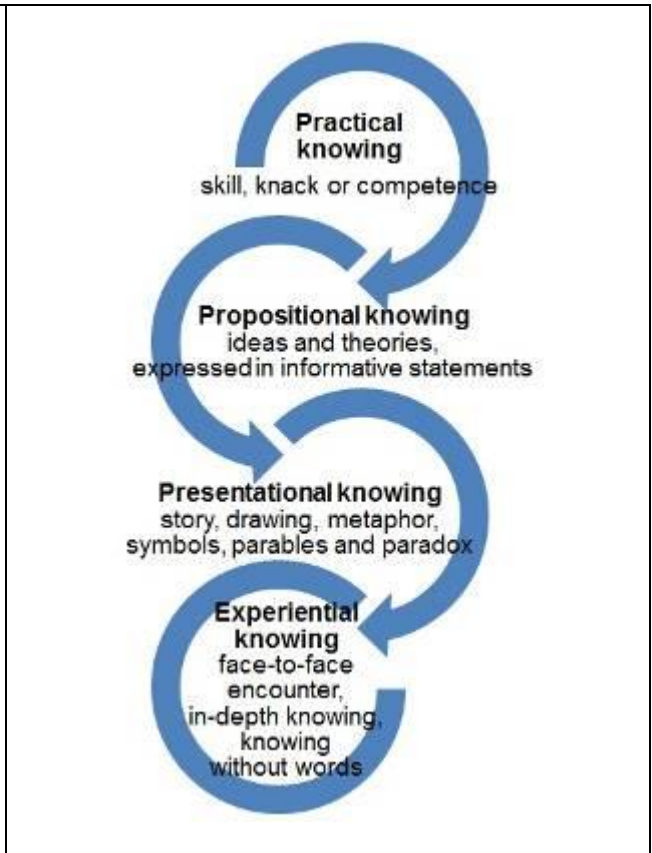


Figure 7.8: Four forms of knowing in OCD practitioner spiritual identity praxis



The re-imagined spiritual identity praxis heuristics present the co-created heuristics to guide being-becoming praxis, action and learning with self, the other and the organisational system for change agents in OCD interventions.

Next, I unpack each space of encounter (horizontal dimension - Figure 7.5) in its interaction with the evolving patterns of engagement in OCD practitioner praxis (vertical dimension - Figure 7.6). These descriptions contain the co-created spiritual identity praxis heuristics for each contextual domain of the framework (Table 7.3).

### ***Self-Engagement (Inner-forming)***

This domain relates to the processes of becoming aware of the quality and state of one's inner-self (beingness). Self-Engagement implies moments during which processes of inner-forming takes place in relation to self, the other or the system. In the Self-Engagement phase, OCD practitioners are simultaneously relating to self, other and system. Heuristics for each are described. For example:

Self-awareness – Intrapersonal (facilitator-self space)

- Letting go of past and future distractions or preoccupations in order to become present and focused in the reality of the moment.
- Becoming aware, conscious or connected (i.e. grounded, centred or realigned) to your deepest or highest self through various contemplative or self-awareness actions like meditation, prayer, mindfulness, zoom exercises.
- One's personal development history informs one's current way of being and inner-functioning and has an impact on one's inner-being (if you don't transform, you will transmit it).
- Being congruent to oneself, that is, 'being' means being aware of the way one's interconnectedness impacts on one's relational networks.
- Identifying the typical defence mechanisms one utilise before engaging with others (e.g. using tools such as the enneagram to improve this self-knowledge).
- The participatory-connectionist worldview enhancing one's own sense of interconnectedness (wholeness) and awareness of the fragmentation inherent in the materialistic-mechanistic view of one's self.

Other-awareness – Interpersonal (facilitator-other space)

- Becoming aware of one's assumptions and expectations regarding the emotional states of others in order to facilitate authentic relating.
- Becoming aware of one's danger and congruent zones relating to your behaviour allowing you to sense the quality of your integrity, authenticity and congruency.
- Being aware that one is a co-creator and not an expert quick-fix consultant.
- Considering how one might model or mirror connectedness through vulnerability and authenticity.



- Ensuring one's quality of self-awareness allowing you to fully resonate with others in the system.
- Visualising relational encounters in advance and becoming aware of one's likes and dislikes and taking care of one's emotional states.
- Staying congruent with one's deepest or highest self, or complex spiritual identity in facilitating change processes.
- Identifying one's own needs, expectations and role-functions in order to acknowledge the reality of possible ulterior intentions or motives that can be destructive in relationships.

#### System-awareness – Transpersonal (facilitator-organisation space)

- Becoming aware of one's own belief systems in order to sense how it resonates within the larger system or environment as a whole.
- Identifying the forms of complex spiritual identity at play (macro worldviews, values, belief systems, experiences) revealing the quality of one's power, vulnerability, meaning, belonging, identity, rights, responsibilities, hierarchies, hopelessness, anger, anxiety, despair, and guilt.
- Finding the atmosphere or climate dominating one's thinking and being in comparison to the system as a whole.
- Contemplating one's degree of integrity and coherence in relation to your identity and the system one is about to engage with.
- Establishing the intrapersonal, interpersonal or transpersonal images (metaphors, narratives) one has that will block, inhibit, constrain or release, free, or enable complex spiritual identity within the system.

#### ***Entering-Engagement***

This domain is related to the processes of engagement in a non-linear understanding of complex systems change. Entering-engagement implies informing moments during which processes of connecting, mirroring, probing and understanding take place in relation to self, the other, or the system. In the entering-engagement phase, OCD practitioners were simultaneously relating to self, other and system. Heuristics for each were, for example:

#### Self-awareness – Intrapersonal (facilitator-self space)

- Open yourself up to be fully yourself and to be present in order to be able to enter into relationship from the place of authenticity in humility and truthfulness (Continue to move from the place of authenticity within you)
- Connect to what you desire and become aware of your abilities, knowledge, experience, limitations and boundaries.
- Ask yourself whether you can shift your perception of what you perceive as dissonance.

- Take care of your own emotional, cognitive or volitional states in such a way that you are completely open for empathic listening (unconditional positive regard).
- Embracing your inherent uncertainty, vulnerability and powerlessness in the complex world reveals maturity and wholeness (oneness) and enables your inherent status of value, worth and acceptance.

#### Other-awareness – Interpersonal (facilitator-other space)

- Invite people into a qualitatively different way of relating by transcending the dominating system and include forms of relating to others which may be constrained in order to make visible an alternative way of being-becoming.
- Create spaces of trust, creativity and safety for others to share their relational stories explaining dissonance and connectedness.
- Try to understand the dominating narratives used by the client by helping them to complete sentences like: Life is... Humans are... What makes life good is... My history is... What makes humans good is... What is the one big problem you want to solve... What is the one thing that is wrong...
- Understand the current reality by listening to stakeholder voices.
- Co-create mutual understanding in the process of facilitation which indicates that the process is both for oneself and for the stakeholders.
- Help the client distinguish between different kinds of truth and ways of knowing, for example propositional, practical, presentational, and experiential knowing (don't let preference for propositional knowing dominate).
- Probe the belief system in the organisation or of persons (reward-recognition, productivity, accountability, responsibility, excellence, failure, mistakes, missed opportunities, profit-planet-people bottom line) by asking questions and using one's intuition (directive introspectory nudges) to help others to become aware of alternative ways of being and doing.
- Sense when to apply compassionate disruption to facilitate difference (deconstruction).
- Sense the appropriateness and intentionality of the needs of the person or organisation which is expressed (Is it ego or spirit?).
- Seek the sameness and/or differences one resonates within the client and/or organisation.
- Seek a metaphor one can use or the organisation uses to mirror ways of being and knowing.
- Be open to the anger, frustrations and vulnerability of the other to facilitate a caring environment (being with the other, holding or embracing their stories and pain compassionately).

#### System-awareness – Transpersonal (facilitator-organisation space)

- Continue to ground oneself during encounters within the relational system.
- Keep in mind the soul-print (fingerprint) one is leaving behind.
- Facilitate from authenticity and with integrity (there are no easy solutions; you cannot 'make' the change).
- Sense the quality of the integrity and authenticity the organisation have in their organisational narrative congruence and the awareness thereof.
- Facilitate trust by believing in the integrity and ability of the organisation.
- Sense the possible dysfunctions regarding roles in the organisation.
- Ask what the organisation's ideal design is.
- Ask the organisation what creates the gap between its ideal and current design.
- Sense what the quality of the collective motivation in the organisation.
- Identify external motivations, for example, social, and emotional.
- Establish a sense of cohesion through seeking acknowledgement and empowerment of peer communities to create equality.
- Establish a communicative forum to enable all stakeholders to feel heard, valuable and respond to the communication in a compassionate manner.
- Be open to the struggles and vulnerability of the organisation.

### ***Explorative-Engagement***

Here I offer the heuristics that provide contextual descriptions for explorative moments with the self, the other, or the system and which are characterised by co-emergence, co-sensing, and co-maturing. The key areas of heuristics and their respective examples are:

Self-awareness – Intrapersonal (facilitator-self space)

- Ground oneself in who you are, by affirming your loving and compassionate nature.
- Visualise the most mature you and act from the reality of this way of being.
- Establish what makes one feel anxious about revealing your own vulnerability and humility and the reason for this.
- Establish what makes one feel powerful in finding a place of autonomy and the reason for this.
- Sense one's own spheres of ego-identity which seeks power and influence.
- Become aware of and open to complexities, differences and constraints within oneself in order to create coherent emergent spaces.
- Become aware of the labels, rules and categories you apply within your own mental models as a facilitator in order to disrupt your own materialistic-mechanistic thinking.
- Determine what to associate with or mirror with the goal of facilitating a transcended and transformed identity.

## Other-awareness – Interpersonal (facilitator-other space)

- Sense when to serve and observe or when to rather disrupt and derail the change process.
- Facilitate the realisation of Newtonian thinking limitations as exemplified through inappropriate paradigms of simplistic thought and reductionist relational thinking.
- Facilitate deconstructing and reconstructing paradigms of thought or beliefs and behaviour which are inappropriate to a complexity-informed paradigm (compassionate disruption).
- Facilitate taking up the responsibility for inappropriate belief systems, experience and contextually inappropriate action.
- Help others become aware of their inner knowing by facilitating alternative complexity-informed views of the self.
- Remain aware of how one sees people and one's intentions, mental models and modes of being connected to such a way of seeing.
- Assess the context in order to establish how, when and where certain modalities need to be used and ensure not to rely only on mechanistic-materialistic worldview in opting for methods.
- Facilitate deconstruction by questioning firmly held beliefs with regard to inappropriate behavioural responses or behaviour, e.g. whether one is prepared to revisit your paradigms.
- Sense personal or organisational identity by listening to identity language, for example, I am..., we always... (I-language / we-language).
- Facilitate the journey of people revealing and expressing their deepest painful emotions by allowing them to forgive in the form of writing (acrostic poems and journalling).
- Facilitate feelings of victimhood to statements of intent which ignites an alternative disposition as expressed by an alternative way of being.
- Sense the importance of listening to crisis points or disruptive experiences (in comparison to success stories) in order to turn them into meaning-making narratives (narrative congruence).
- Facilitate a connection with deeper identity dimensions by exploring the relational past and possible future narratives.
- Facilitate 'letting go' of a relational history which affected you (the client) negatively and which keeps you captured in the situation and causes you to remain fixed in negative narratives of spiritual identity.
- Assist clients to encounter their hidden arenas of inner experience which reveal ways of being-becoming (beingness).
- Establish in what ways you could include the client in the change process.
- Facilitate trust by believing in the integrity and ability of the other person.
- Ask yourself whether you really understand the client's problem and ask for feedback to sense your grasp of it.
- Gain a deeper understanding of relational dynamics and their historical significance which reveal the quality and maturity of the system to self-organise.

## System-awareness – Transpersonal (facilitator-organisation space)

- Shift from strategic outcome-focused thinking and short-term goals to continual learning in vulnerability and humility with perpetual change.
- Sense what the organisation values most in the way it portrays, perceives and peruses its power structures (customers, revenue streams, resources, activities, partnerships, cost structures).
- Seek ways to facilitate empowerment by re-purposing what is meant by a complexity-informed understanding of spirituality and identity.
- Seek ways the organisation could reconnect with specific forms of human behaviour to attain wholeness.
- Challenge fixed roles within the organisation to reveal alternative forms of power and interacting.
- Seek ways to enable the organisation to reach a place of deep reflection regarding incongruent organisational behavioural routines in order to attain a sustainable, humane organisation in comparison to a materialist money-making machine.
- Facilitate a growing awareness of the organisational perception of its fixed spiritual identity as revealed in incongruent narratives.
- Help the organisation to embrace fluid conceptions of identity that create meaning and value and foster a sense of destiny.
- Establish how the organisation would like to sense its meaning, worth, value and connectedness (what would make it shine or beautiful?).
- Facilitate trust and respect by believing in the organisation's integrity, ability and generative capacity to embrace complexity.
- Demonstrate one's integrity to the client through billing, communication, openness and inclusiveness.
- Establish whether one really understands the organisation's problem by asking for feedback, transparency and honesty in order to sense the nature of the organisational realities.
- Enable the client to apply creativity and generative capacity to re-word, re-describe and/or re-formulate the problem.
- Ensure one finds the acupuncture points in the system.
- Establish how to creatively unite all the voices within the system (micro-meso-macro) in creating an awareness of a relational understanding of the problem.
- Facilitate awareness of what is painful in the system which may motivate change and could offer an alternative dispositional role in the change process.
- Establish whether there is a movement towards a critical mass or regime shift on the rise, and when to leverage such a moment.

### ***Deep-Engagement***

Deep-engagement provides the spiritual identity praxis heuristics for mutually transformative moments in relation to self, the other, and the system. This process occurs through authentic partnering and ways of being and becoming that reveal integrity and congruence. Interaction by means of re-purposing, re-generating and re-authoring leads to mutually transformative change. The heuristics for each dimension are, for example:

#### Self-awareness – Intrapersonal (facilitator-self space)

- One's spiritual identity is one's sense of integration and generation of the capacity to embrace complexity – it is your self-organising principle in the multitude of various disintegrated parts of the self.
- One's ego represents illusions of how one perceives oneself according to inappropriate narratives that are connected to reductionist and foundationalist belief systems and worldviews.
- One's integration and narrative congruence bring a sense of raised awareness to the system.
- Say to yourself: "I do not do the love of power; I do the power of love".
- Living from an empowered state of beingness enables re-purposing the self.
- One's tools are not the solution; one's quality of beingness is more important.

#### Other-awareness – Interpersonal (facilitator-other space)

- Modeling alternative ways of being, knowing, and creating value and worth re-purposes and shifts old worldviews, values and forms of a reductionist understanding of spiritual identity.
- Modeling alternative ways of valuing the difference of cultural positions can harness unity and can be a source of great oneness.
- Ego destroys engagement. Healthy boundaries clarify and define roles and responsibilities.
- Knowing the triggers that brought the client to this point enables understanding.
- Establish climates which foster and influence new behaviour to flourish.
- By embracing and taking ownership of one's spiritual identity one gains awareness of how your definition of your role and function can change.
- One can listen to clients' behavioural responses but cannot control their reaction to possible change interventions or outcomes.
- Creating collective awareness assists in seeing complexities of the relational system.
- Being true to oneself frees others of your control.
- Discovering and owning authentic self influences role functions.
- One's role is not to control others' behavioural responses; one's role is to bring awareness of how others in the system are already responding and responsible for their ways of being and doing.

### System-awareness – Transpersonal (facilitator-organisation space)

- When one becomes a referee in conflicting parties you start taking up the responsibilities of others.
- Remaining true to spiritual identity assists one in becoming a change instrument.
- An awareness of the whole-part system leads to a disconnection from narrow-mindedness.
- Collective awareness, responsibility and co-operation can be created by creatively uniting all the voices within the system (micro-meso-macro).
- Demonstrating one's respect for the complexity inherent in a system enables the ability to understand and address problems respectfully.
- Demonstrating one's creativity in understanding and addressing the problem that is voiced.
- Like a small fountain, transformation starts to flow and gain momentum; therefore, one should appreciate each and every trickle of the emerging stream and enhance the flow in a promising direction.
- Turn trickling moments into plans of action within the community of practice to give momentum to new, emergent spiritual identity praxis.
- Justice and equality are facilitated by deep listening which realises the relational and systemic cleansing process.

### ***Whole-Engagement***

The meta-transforming moments in relation to self, the other and the system present processes of whole-transformed-transforming, re-generating and re-producing relational networks, which manifest at multiple levels throughout the entire relational system. Here, the heuristics in terms of Preiser's (2012) framework of provisional imperatives, are:

#### Self-awareness – Intrapersonal (facilitator-self space)

- Distrust most strongly that which one believes most deeply.
- Expose the limits of the grounding principles of one's theoretical assumptions.

#### Other-awareness – Interpersonal (facilitator-other space)

- Eschew the quest for final solutions and foster possibilities ensuring continual learning.
- Act in such a way that the effects of one's actions lead to new understandings of what it means to be human.
- Resist all modes of thinking that could lead to dehumanising strategies.



- One's actions should show a fundamental respect for differences regardless of whether they reduce them.

#### System-awareness – Transpersonal (facilitator-organisation space)

- Act in ways that allow alternative and novel ways of understanding one's situatedness in the world.
- Justify one's actions only in ways not to preclude the possibility of revision.
- Make choices which keep the possibility of choice open.
- Act only in ways which will allow constrain and enable the flourishing of interactions between the components in the system.

I concluded the meeting by offering my deep appreciation of the time spent effort and sacrifices made by the participants. I invited them to attend my PhD defense once and when it is convenient to co-author an article on the research with me.

#### ***Celebration – Co-curating***

We had a research celebration dinner on 14 September 2014 at a restaurant in Stellenbosch. Our partners were also present. We celebrated our journey and shared our experiences. Each person had a final opportunity to express anything they wanted to share.

#### ***Final gathering – Co-curating***

We had another "catch up" dinner at my home on 21 April 2015. This gathering enabled us to share our experiences since our celebration. We shared experiences, thoughts, and other life events during this reflection event. The idea of the gathering was to re-connect and decide on the possibility of informally continuing the community of practice. We discussed the possibilities but decided logistically it would be difficult to continue the group. While the OCDCoP group does not gather formally anymore, we do share interesting and important discoveries, events or resources that continue to invigorate our co-discovery and co-evolving processes.

## **7.6 SUMMARY**

In this chapter, I outline the process of conducting the exploratory co-operative inquiry by detailing the major experiences, decisions, key moments and development of group inquiry questions throughout five research cycles. I provided vivid verbatim examples of the co-researchers' own words relating to the four forms of knowing with regard to their spiritual identity praxis and the critical questions answered during this self-reflexive process. I also provided verbatim descriptions of the co-researchers during the inquiry process and their reflections of their experiences of answering the inquiry questions. Finally, I provided the final group inquiry report that includes the co-created spiritual identity praxis heuristics framework.

## CHAPTER 8

# RESEARCH FINDINGS

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*As we transcend separateness and alienation, we become both more distinct and more in communion with each other. Our becoming more refined, autonomous, and discriminating in our judgments is interdependent with our entering ever more fully into participatory relations and unitive embrace (John Heron).*

## **8.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents the key research findings obtained through the action research group inquiry process with six OCD practitioners. Four major findings emerged from this study:

- (i) The majority of the OCDCoP members indicated that they engaged with and were influenced by the ideas of complexity thinking.
- (ii) The majority of the OCDCoP members recognised the importance of spiritual identity and that the group inquiry process contributed to a deeper reflection on their own perspectives.
- (iii) The majority of the OCDCoP members regarded their spiritual identity to be important to the way they frame their roles as change agents.
- (iv) The majority of the OCDCoP members co-operated and collaborated authentically during the group inquiry process.

In the next section, I discuss the findings with details that evidence, support and explain each finding. By way of following the co-operative inquiry principles and procedures, I documented with the co-researchers a broad range of experiences, and thereby provided an opportunity for the reader to enter into this study and better understand the reality of the research participants. The emphasis throughout is on letting participants speak for themselves. Illustrative quotations taken from our workshop discussions, journal entries and my transcripts attempt to portray the perspectives of the participants, the inquiry group and that of my own, in order to capture some of the richness of the subject matter. Where appropriate I include some of the key moments, patterns and themes of the collaborative process to augment and solidify the discussion. Finally, I provide some insights regarding the OCDCoP's resonance with my own thinking and thesis.

## **8.2 THE FINDINGS OF THE GROUP INQUIRY PROCESS**

In presenting the findings of the group inquiry process I want to provide relevant evidence that the outcomes of the Organisational Change and Development Community of Practice (OCDCoP), as expressed in the final report and co-created spiritual identity praxis heuristics, have indeed answered the group inquiry questions. Therefore, here I demonstrate how the findings satisfy the second of the two main inquiry questions: How does an action research inquiry process over time provide some evidence of how change practitioners shift their spiritual identity praxis when employing complexity thinking?

In order to enter this discussion I supply a summary and analysis of the group inquiry process (Table 8.1) that provides: (i) the workshop and cycles related to the specific inquiry question; (ii) a synopsis of how the OCDCoP uncovered evidence and sought to answer the group inquiry questions; (iii) the group outcomes during each of the workshops and indications of how individual or group perspectives were changing and; (iv) an interpretive column in which I rate the group in

terms of the OCDCoP's co-created spiritual identity praxis framework, according to my perception of the sphere of engagement (self-; entering-; explorative-; deep-; and; whole-engagement) the group subscribed to during each workshop.

**Table 8.1: Summary and Analysis of Group Inquiry Process**

Workshop (Cycle)	Workshop Inquiry Question (Sub-questions)	Answers to Inquiry Questions	Group Outcome & Changing Perspectives	Spheres of Engagement
Workshop 1 (Cycle 1)	<b>Main Research Question:</b> <i>How does an action research inquiry process over time provide some evidence of how change practitioners shift their spiritual identity praxis when employing complexity thinking?</i>	Group contracting and research agreement (Convergent phase).	Initiation into inquiry process and collaborative objectives. Some group members became aware of the importance of polarities or tensions within systems, e.g. both/and thinking by saying "it is and it isn't".	Self-engagement (Inner-forming phase).
Workshop 2 (Cycle 1)	<b>Launching Statement:</b> Exploring and re-framing spiritual identity in complex organisational systems in order to develop OCD praxis.	Co-creation of group inquiry launching statement (Convergent phase).	Some group members mentioned the importance of paradox, both/and thinking and embracing uncertainty in exploring the topic of inquiry.	Self-engagement (Inner-forming phase).
Workshop 3 (Cycle 1)	<b>Group Inquiry Question:</b> What is my spiritual identity in my OCD practice, and the organisations I work in?	The group struggled to answer the inquiry question at this stage. Many answers were framed in terms of religious perspectives and were framed in terms of their personal history (Convergent phase).	Most group members shared propositional knowledge regarding their spiritual identity. The group experienced difficulty in dealing with differences and diversity. The need for authenticity was expressed.	Self-engagement (Becoming aware of quality and state of inner self, other and systems' beingness)

Workshop 4 (Cycle 2)	<p><b>Group Inquiry</b>  <b>Question:</b> What is my spiritual identity?<sup>100</sup></p>	<p>The group became frustrated with the inquiry process (co-operative inquiry methodology) and difficulty in answering the inquiry question (Convergent or Mixed phase).</p>	<p>Most of the group members struggled with holding the tensions inherent in the exploration and process of dealing with paradox (applying complexity thinking) in answering the question, e.g. facilitating change and their own uncertainty in an inquiry into personal change processes.</p>	<p>Entering-engagement (Connecting-Mirroring-Probing-Understanding).</p>
Workshop 5 (Cycle 2)	<p><b>Group Inquiry</b>  <b>Question:</b>          What is my spiritual identity in my OCD practice?<sup>101</sup></p>	<p>The discussion was formed around the need to reframe our ideas on spiritual identity. Therefore, it was decided that each person should pose their new questions after having reflected on the key themes or golden thread the group shared (Divergent phase).</p>	<p>Some group members began to appreciate how difference informs identity and how diversity is a necessary condition for richer perspectives on how we view spiritual identity. At the same time, this revealed the groups' 'stuckness' regarding their experience of spiritual identity in contrast with the asserting their beliefs. This created a shift in the group regarding their lack of self-reflexivity in terms of implementing the co-operative inquiry approach which meant navigating ambiguity and incongruence and the need to embrace uncertainty in the process (letting go).</p>	<p>Entering-engagement (Clarifying needs, expectations and roles with self, other and systems).</p>

<sup>100</sup> Several sub-questions were devised to sharpen our focus in answering this question. Please see Chapter 7; Sections 7.4.1 and 7.4.2 that relate to Workshops 3, 4 and 5.

<sup>101</sup> Several sub-questions were devised to sharpen our focus in answering this question. Please see Chapter 7; Sections 7.4.3 and 7.4.4 that relate to Workshops 6, 7, 8 and 9.

Workshop 6 (Cycle 3)	<p><b>Group Inquiry Question:</b></p> <p>What is my spiritual identity in my OCD practice?</p>	<p>The OCDCoP gained insights regarding our intentionality related to our spiritual identity praxis and how we use these motivational forces to make sense of our own and other's spirituality and its influence on our OCD practice. (Divergent phase).</p>	<p>Growing awareness of the notions intentionality, authenticity and congruence. This indicated a shifted to a more in-depth perspective of the influence of the Newtonian worldview on their understanding of spiritual identity praxis and its relation with OCD practice. The group expressed the importance of processes of unlearning the fragmented view of self, others and systems by means of reconnection and integration.</p>	<p>Explorative Engagement (Co-Emerging-Sensing-Maturing)</p>
Workshop 7 (Cycle 3)	<p><b>Group Inquiry Question:</b></p> <p>What is my spiritual identity praxis as change agent in the organisations I work in?</p>	<p>The group presented their answers to the action plan by means of a case study in order to illustrate the co-researchers' sense of presentational and propositional knowing. The presentations also represent their insights in reflection on their spiritual identity praxis in their OCD initiatives (Convergent phase).</p>	<p>The group gave examples of the role of paradox in spirituality, importance of both/and thinking, interconnectedness of spirituality identity, the openness or awareness to spirituality and the role of consciousness in identity formation. This indicated a shift in moving beyond initial awareness to an experiential integration of these concepts in terms of reflecting on their OCD practice. The shift can be recognised in the concern with authenticity, congruency, connectedness and openness to our inner arc of experience and the content, quality and depth of experience of our spiritual identity praxis.</p>	<p>Explorative Engagement (Co-Emerging-Sensing-Maturing)</p>

<p><b>Workshop 8 (Cycle 4)</b></p>	<p><b>Group Inquiry Question:</b></p> <p>How does an emergent spiritual identity praxis with heightened awareness impact on our roles as OCD practitioners?</p>	<p>A greater awareness of spiritual identity praxis (ways we show up in our being-becoming) gave insights into our understanding of our roles as OCD practitioners. (Convergent phase).</p>	<p>Most group members realised their 'stuckness' of their spiritual identity praxis and the importance of reframing their ways of being-becoming through critical engagement with their mind-sets. A shift from a fixed understanding of spiritual identity to an emergent conceptualisation gave rise to re-imagining our roles as change agents, e.g. taking contextuality into consideration in role identity through co-created heuristics. Most group members shifted in how they viewed 'spiritual identity' as three separate entities, to a relational interconnected conceptualisation.</p>	<p>Explorative Engagement (Growing in understanding of self, other and systems)Co-Emerging-Sensing-Maturing)</p>
<p><b>Workshop 9 (Cycle 4)</b></p>	<p><b>Group Inquiry Question:</b></p> <p>How does an emergent spiritual identity praxis with heightened awareness impact on our roles as OCD practitioners?</p>	<p>Most group members realised the importance of addressing contextual issues in developing appropriate responses to model spiritual identity praxis. This meant developing heuristics that could give by means of short refined propositional knowledge some insight into the ways of being-becoming (spiritual identity praxis) in the various contexts and domains of change processes (Convergent phase).</p>	<p>Most group members re-interpreted their role as change agents in the following movements: (i) from changemakers to change instigators/ participants or facilitators of change at best; (ii) from controlling or managing change to through clever techniques or skills to alternative ways of being-becoming in the context of deliberate change interventions; and from ignorance of the role of spiritual identity to its major reintegration as a mode of being-becoming in change processes.</p>	<p>Deep-engagement (Mutually transforming)</p>



<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);"><b>Workshop 10 (Cycle 5)</b></p>	<p><b>Group Inquiry Question:</b></p> <p>Have you experienced any shift in your spiritual identity praxis and how has this process influenced your roles in your daily OCD practice?</p>	<p>Most group members expressed a shift in their spiritual identity praxis as evidenced in the co-created spiritual identity praxis heuristics. This co-exploration opened up possibilities for taking up new roles in facilitating change interventions.</p>	<p>Most group members felt that this alternative framing of spiritual identity praxis and the associated ways of being-becoming praxis in OCD presents a starting point for exercising and practising a critical complexity-informed alternative change agency for re-imagining the roles change agents adopt in change interventions.</p>	<p>Deep-engagement (Authentic self-partnering that transforms/re-purpose/re-generates your being and doing)</p>
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Source: The Author

### 8.2.1 Finding 1

***The OCDCoP members generally indicated that they engaged with and were influenced by the ideas of complexity thinking.***

A significant finding of this study is that the ideas of complexity thinking were engaged with and influenced both the individuals and the group in the inquiry process. The inquiry became more engaged with complexity thinking as the participants started to reflect on their spiritual identity regarding their OCD practice and the group inquiry process. The progression in reflection could be seen in the initial acknowledgement of the group of not knowing which questions to ask about spiritual identity as evidenced by the group in Workshop 2<sup>102</sup> and articulated by Janet in Workshop 3:

*I was deeply struck by the thought that our questions frame our knowing and that it might be helpful to define some questions. Because spirituality is so seldom the topic of conversation, especially in the workplace, we have few good questions defined...and this is certainly the case in terms of spiritual identity.*

The first indications of the group being engaged with complexity thinking were when the group grappled with differences in perspective on various topics and they started acknowledging the importance of both/and thinking for moving beyond dualistic thinking. One group member conveyed this view when she said:

Janet: *The conversation, which emerged, was animated and there was a lot of energy around the phrase: 'It is and it isn't', which may become a useful meta-frame to enable us to become more inclusive and open in our thinking whilst allowing us to think better about our thinking.*

As the inquiry progressed, there was a growing awareness and realisation amongst the participants of how the Newtonian worldview dominated their thinking about spiritual identity and their OCD practice. From Workshop 4 onwards we were engaged with more in-depth discussions concerning the meaning of complexity thinking and its relation to Newtonian thinking. This trend was strengthened in Workshop 6 where I gave a presentation on complexity theory and thinking as a means to review its key aspects, importance and to highlight the application thereof for the inquiry. This enabled a vibrant discussion as the group engaged with key aspects of complexity thinking. As three members put it:

Dave: *The fact that we do not discard the Newtonian way, in favour of the complexity view, but hold both views and frames simultaneously while considering a situation. I saw the parallels between the shift from Newtonian to complexity with my journey from the technical focus in engineering to the people focus on leadership and OCD. This is also seen in the shift from certainty to uncertainty.*

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<sup>102</sup> Please see Chapter 7; Section 7.3.1.

Johann: *I realised how much I and most people in our field are dominated by Newtonian thinking, especially by the principle of cause and effect. Although it definitely still has value, we can work towards the point where we integrate more complexity thinking in our approach. In that, way we will not create impossible expectations and render a better service. I must admit, however, that I catch myself wanting to use the findings of this study as easy buttons to press to elicit the desired behaviour.*

Vonnie: *For me, it was very helpful to get the Newtonian paradigms versus the more complexity paradigms and the whole thing of dualism. It means for me that my spiritual identity has shifted from a dualistic and exclusive one to a paradoxical and inclusive one. It also means that I will still practice it while using the metaphors and content as given to me by the Christian religion, but that new meaning will be given to it.*

A majority of the participants were also influenced regarding the inherent complexity as experienced through the action research approach. As another participant put it:

Janet: *It is essential to see the complex context of the research journey itself. Neither its beginning nor its end can be accurately pinpointed and its boundaries have blurred as it has become woven into every aspect of our being... What became blatantly obvious as we sought to understand the concepts of spirituality and spiritual identity is that we can only approach this from a complexity perspective... Our learning on this journey has allowed us to explore the language of spirituality. On the one hand, we have explored some useful language and even developed something of a glossary of useful terms. On the other, we have discovered the limits of language and from time to time were stuck on our individual perspectives relative to certain words.*

The awareness of complexity-informed approaches also gave rise to a deeper sense of how uncertainty, ambiguity and paradoxes deeply influenced their inquiry of spiritual identity. Vonnie, for instance, cited this example:

*The awareness of uncertainty, complexity and paradoxes surely influenced our inquiries into our spiritual identities and there is a collective story emerging, which is influencing our individual stories. Our stories emphasised our disappointments and disillusionment with organised religion and our inquiries are striving towards correcting the 'sins' of religion. Nevertheless, organised religion is surely not the only system to be blamed for the dualistic, fundamentalistic worldviews that existed and still exists in our society. What became again quite clear is that our spirituality identity is a forever-evolving process and needs to be exposed to inquiry in order to be purified from dualism and fundamentalism because we all are always at risk, even when we are not religious at all, to be dualistic and fundamentalistic in our worldviews.*

When reflecting on this, the group realised the need to respect the complexity inherent in their own praxis and practice of change interventions when exploring and re-thinking inquiry questions. This meant a movement towards embracing complexity thinking and thereby respecting the relationality of all systems in the inquiry. The process of engaging and being influenced by the ideas of complexity helped the group better grasp what was meant by some key notions in complexity theories such as 'post-reductionism', 'non-linearity', 'self-organisation', 'emergence' and 'contextuality'. The evidence

that these notions were gaining traction and growing in their frames of understanding could be seen in the application thereof to the inquiry topic. The following excerpt from a co-researcher's account illustrates how the engagement with the inquiry topic, namely spiritual identity praxis, initiated an embracing and application process of some key aspects of complexity thinking:

Rudi: *This process has made me acutely aware of how Newtonian wired we are and how we grapple to address complexities from that perspective. It will be interesting to evaluate the [current] tools offered to OCD practitioners. Many of those are most probably based on a Newtonian/mechanistic view of humanity. Even as we shared some of our challenges in the group, it became clear that we tend to frantically go in search of a tool (model/theory) to solve the problem, rather than exploring the possibility that the solution may present itself if we would dare to make room for creative solutions which include the client as a major role player. Clients are not problems in need of fixing (mechanistic); they are part of the solution if only we would include them.*

### 8.2.2 Finding 2

***The OCDCoP members generally recognised the importance of spiritual identity and that the group inquiry process contributed to a deeper reflection on their own perspectives.***

Reviewing the data of the co-researchers' experiential gains, as well as the collective inquiry process, the following major themes emerged:

- An emergent process of awareness or awakening regarding their spiritual identity.
- A deeper understanding of the role of integrity and authenticity as change agents.
- Embracing ways of being-becoming (beingness) over and above technical skills, competency or cognitive knowledge.
- Holding the tensions paradox / non-dualistic thinking/complexity thinking.
- Cultivating maturity / vulnerability / openness / uncertainty as change agents.
- Learning to deal with frustration/dissent / powerlessness in change processes.

The co-researchers' moments of *awakening or awareness* were expressed by their becoming aware of various spheres of experience of reality, indicating a process of self-discovery and critical re-thinking. This re-thinking relates to what drove their deepest ideas of themselves and understandings of meaning. It prompted them to look at the intentions involved in being change agents and allowing themselves to be part of a journey of 'unknowing' and 'letting go'. Being part of a participatory safe space to raise concerns, fears and offer critique co-created a shift towards a deeper awareness of and appreciation for spiritual identity from a complexity-informed perspective. It created an openness to knowing oneself, in order to know the other, and vice versa.

The journey for many participants was about knowing how to listen to a growing awareness in one's own self-reflection and to allow a process of self-discovery to raise awareness of being consciously involved in one's spiritual identity. This, in turn, raised awareness of how spiritual identity as driver

for behaviour affects OCD practitioners' roles, which facilitated a re-thinking and re-imagination of consulting practices. Making a concerted effort to bring their spiritual identity into their change agency allowed the participants to embrace a non-instrumentalised aspect of consulting work, and opened up new avenues of exploring OCD. The following excerpts from participants confirm these claims:

Vonnie: *I became aware of how the micro, meso and macro context was all aligned against a favourable outcome in this context. A change process on all levels was indicated and I knew it has to start with myself first. The awareness of uncertainty, complexity and paradoxes surely influenced our inquiries into our spiritual identities and there is a collective story emerging which is influencing our individual stories.*

Rudi: *This journey has raised my awareness of the importance of being consciously aware of one's spiritual identity as it is a huge driver for one's behaviour. Perhaps it is just me, but sharing one's stories and especially our spiritual identity stories again made me realise how crucial it is to have this information to build a meaningful relationship.*

Johann: *I am definitely more aware of how my spiritual identity impacts on my OCD practice and how it shapes my consulting work. I have made a concerted effort to bring it more into play in my coaching and I appreciate the importance of my own spiritual identity and those of my clients more.*

The co-researchers expressed their need for an enactment of *integrity and authenticity* by referring to their identity formation. In the process of self-discovery and critical reflection, they realised the need for authenticity in what they do. This, in turn, raised questions about whether their own identity was congruent with their behaviour. In their quest to offer solutions to organisational problems, they gradually realised the lack of integrity in their own mental models and that which they provide in change processes. The realisation that their theories of change were not the solution but rather a journey with the inherent complexity — and finding a coherency in their spiritual identity that could reflect authenticity and reveal integrity — provided a complexity-informed alternative. Part of this journey of critical self-reflection meant a serious exploration of their inner arc of experiences and identity(ies) position(s), which perpetuate dichotomies, and to explore whether it could be reconciled with a post-reductionist spirituality. This meant a realisation of their own blind spots and how difficult and uncomfortable it is to make time for critical self-reflection. The blind spots demonstrated in their reflection on spiritual identity praxis created a movement towards finding a more congruent and authentic way of being-becoming. Participants described their struggle with this disconnect in the following ways:

Johann: *The process helped me to listen to my own story of spirituality and identity, as well as spiritual identity. I had to answer what the story behind my story is and that helped me to look deeper. I discovered a lot about myself but also realised that everyone has a story to tell: stories of their search for meaning, identity, God, transcendence, connection, authenticity and the essence of life.*

Dave: *How do I 'live' and convey that truth and power in the complex organisations I work in and remain vulnerable and authentic - holding that truth lightly with non-attachment and meta-intentionality (for he who only has a hammer, every problem becomes a nail...).*

Vonnie: *I could understand for the very first time why and how I am doing things. I am also aware of my spiritual identity, and the inner conflict I have from time to time when I look at when I'm expected to practice my religion. So I became aware of the separation between some religious practices that I am expected to carry out from time to time and my spiritual identity.*

The expression of *integrity and authenticity* by the co-researchers reveals how the critical self-reflexive process of moving between reflect-reframe-reflect in the cycles of the inquiry created a space for the co-researcher to re-think their ways of being-becoming. This initiated a re-think of the role that authenticity and integrity plays in their OCD practice in terms of their alignment to their spiritual identity praxis. The co-researchers mentioned how the entire research process in an authentic way made them aware of their own dichotomies and struggles with living from their ways of *being-becoming* (being-functions). Vonnie voiced an example of this:

*Being aware of your intentions and attending to your intentions (mindfulness). My intention is that a conscious process and an awareness of what I attend to should drive my doing. If I make myself guilty of seeing some people as having the full truth and others as not having it just because of how their religious tradition shaped their practices then I am following a dualistic perspective, which separates people. For me, my doing should consistently be in line with virtues such as being authentic, open-minded, non-judgemental and able to hold paradoxes. [When I do this] I should have the ability to continue with my spiritual practices.*

The realisation of the Newtonian worldview that reduces and fragments their inner-being created a pathway for them to see their own disintegration as well as their preoccupation with ways of doing (getting the latest tools, skills or techniques) in order to change the other, or organisation as opposed to ways of being-becoming. Dave commented on this by saying:

*I am aware of the limitations of frameworks and models. The moment when you hang on too tightly onto models and frameworks you are getting in trouble with the expectations you are developing within yourself and others. An awareness of what Deon mentioned of the third order cybernetics is critical.*

The contrast between the Newtonian and complexity worldviews helped some participants to see how it influenced their consulting practice — being driven towards technical problem-solving. Although there is always a need for technical skills and solutions, they realised that such an engineering or mechanistic approach reflected upon their own worldviews inherent in their understanding of identity. The projection of their own worldview onto the change process because of their understanding of identity helped them in making a more concerted effort to shift from certainty and solutions focused interventions, to embrace uncertainty. This also allowed them to embrace their being-functions (spiritual identity) and to show up in an authentic way in the consulting process. As one member put it:

Vonnie: *When I see a team developing cohesion, when people connect and create safety for one another to be authentic, explore and learn [from their beingness]. My attempts to be ethical, acting with integrity, loving, forgiving, controlling my emotions and being non-judgemental is because my spiritual identity*



*expects it from me. I am aware of my struggle to love unconditionally, to be non-judgemental and not to be materialistic or egoistic.*

With regards to examples of *paradox or non-dualistic thinking and complexity thinking*, most participants acknowledged how the process has made them acutely aware of how Newtonian-based and wired they were in their thinking — and how they grappled to integrate the complexity-based paradigm or perspective.

As Dave put it: *I am learning to live with complexity.*

Another perspective on the non-dual nature of complexity thinking and the need to embrace paradox was the constantly emergent and complex nature of spiritual identity. This was a very important aspect to grasp in view of facilitating choice and decision-making in complex systems change. Janet voiced this by indicating how the group grappled with this aspect in the following statement:

*There is a fine balance to be struck between creating a structure, which enables a complex and emergent process, and each of us being comfortable to engage and possibly learn from a structure that does not conform to our own style.*

Themes of *maturity, vulnerability, openness and uncertainty* were evident in the process of becoming attuned to inner experience. Enabling vulnerability also facilitated the change process. Reflecting on their change initiatives meant that the participants had to become open to the idea of uncertainty and vulnerability, which in turn, related to them attuning to their inner experiences and situatedness in complex adaptive systems. As change agents, it was necessary that we should disclose vulnerability without much prompting. The group expressed the need for change agents to make people feel safe in order to trust the process. Thus, participants disclosing their vulnerability was an important vehicle for connecting to change and to help them trust the group to access their inner life.

During Workshop 8 Rudi said: *It is all about how we show up in the facilitation process. Connecting to our beingness, and aligning to it.*

Vonnie chipped in: *Which means we need to access our vulnerability easily and disclose it to others without much prompting, while at the same time checking our intentions that we do not use it as a tool to 'show off' or to manipulate the process.*

Dave reflecting on the Workshop wrote: *I appreciated the discussion about how we show up in the facilitation and the need to be vulnerable without drama.*

Modelling or mirroring an alternative mode of being that embraces complexity requires change agents to be pioneers in many respects. Change agents need to be open about their struggles and to convey their intentions authentically. This forces one to check one's intentions. For example, one can easily use vulnerability as a technique just to get people to be vulnerable and open to the change process. Such an approach would just re-legitimise the instrumental, materialistic-mechanistic and utilitarian approach characterised by the Newtonian-based worldview.



Something else the group experienced was that it struggled, in the beginning, to deal with confusion and uncertainty. It was not easy for co-researchers to open up to the uncomfortability of not knowing. However, over some time clarity developed. The more things became clear the more the group persevered which facilitated moments of unity and togetherness. The openness to vulnerability also awoke maturity in the group, which is a necessary ingredient when embracing complexity and its flow. The group realised how an alternative way of being — resulting from an interpretation of maturity and openness to vulnerability and uncertainty — is essential in modelling or mirroring a more complexity-informed way of being-becoming praxis. Janet described this process through one of her journal reflections on her inner and arc of experience:

*When the [organisational] system starts to influence your thinking to the extent that you start to doubt yourself and you [decide to] pitch up as the excellent expert, but realise that your model you offer is not really helping. This is when I realise I have to find my own internal knowledge to manage what is happening here within myself and within the system. My mistake is that I am relying so heavily on the model that when the system responds in an unpredictable way, uncertainty comes to me, and there is a need to predict its responses then I start to realise no one is going to save me here. The client will often say this was my need, this is what you said you are going to do, so where are the results now, which is very Newtonian kind of thinking and a cause-and-effect kind of thinking. This is where I need to find my own knowledge in another way and I have to open myself up to the system to try and find the knowledge from within myself and the system. What I then find is that what is making a big difference here is the integrity that you are working with right through the process.*

*Frustration, dissent and powerlessness* were illustrated by the co-researchers' experiences of engaging with their spiritual identity and interrogating their own thinking in terms of Newtonian or complexity-informed worldviews. This meant dealing with the tensions inherent in complex adaptive systems when you become aware of the interwoven nature and dynamics thereof. The participants often found the inquiry into their spiritual identity and the group process frustrating, because they had to explore many unexplored territories. They had to critically reflect on issues that made them aware of their limited understandings and way they might be stuck in their preferred modes of being and doing (spiritual identity praxis). At times, this was exciting, but it created dissent in terms of where the group wanted to go with the inquiry, and what exactly was meant with a complexity perspective (see workshops 4 and 5). As one member put it:

*Janet: I am aware that some of the members of the group are a little frustrated with the early exploration and seem to want more direction.*

Coming to terms with the complexity perspective caused feelings of powerlessness (minimal control) in what they could offer when compared to typical research seeking technical or operational knowledge. Participants found co-creating everything frustrating since learning a new methodology and applying special inquiry skills, is not something one can learn overnight, and requires a more complexity-informed understanding of spiritual identity. In addition, it is fair to say that personality differences played a role. However, gaining the gist of the special inquiry skills also served as an

informative way of understanding spiritual identity praxis. This required a shift in their ways of being and then reflecting on them within the context of the group discussions — which was both enjoyable and frustrating at times. Some members conveyed this view when they said:

Vonnie: *Initially I found the process to be very cumbersome and slow and very theoretical driven. I felt and thought that we can go into the practical application of these techniques and methodologies much quicker.*

Rudi: *It took a while to come to grips with everyone's uniqueness and to understand what they are bringing to the group. I always felt there was a high level of authenticity. However, I think we could have challenged each other more- specifically on the topic of spirituality and spiritual identity. I found us mostly to be too polite and sensitive not to offend. There was always some underlying tension and even frustration.*

Janet: *Initially we all struggled with new language and ways of thinking. We all had sufficient academic experience to be expectant of a certain direction and to be frustrated by the feelings of confusion, as we sought clarity, which did not come at that stage. I think some of us began to feel a little like lab rats – as if the whole purpose was in fact for Deon to observe us as we wrestled with this feeling. We finally began to wake up to our responsibility to process, rather than outcome. We began to experiment in new ways, to take on new roles [in the inquiry process].*

Johann: *I enjoyed the participatory nature of the research, although in the beginning we were often quite confused about the methodology and overcomplicated it. I was 'forced' by the process to reflect on the way I actioned some of the concepts we discussed during our meetings.*

Despite the frustrations, dissent and powerlessness experienced by the group, they also mentioned how during certain workshops they felt a greater sense of unity and co-operative participation.

Dave: *I found this to be one of the best workshops [workshop 9]. There seemed to be no struggle for contribution - it just flowed. There were rich cases studies shared and much was gleaned, in terms of our state of being, our practice and heuristics that were relevant to our OCD praxis.*

Following are illustrations of participants' comments regarding the importance of inquiring into spiritual identity that provides evidence that a shift occurred through the process of the inquiry:

Vonnie: *It was for me quite refreshing to see and to read, investigate and explore my own spiritual identity and to realise that actually my spiritual identity is very strongly integrated into the work that I'm doing, in the way that I am doing my work. I am also aware of my spiritual identity, and the inner conflict I have from time to time when I look at when I'm expected to practice my religion. So I became aware of the separation between some religious practices that I expected to carry out from time to time and my spiritual identity. It helped me to integrate this and the process helped me to reflect on these incongruences. It was definitely a shift that happened and I became more comfortable with this [inner] conflict.*

Dave: *The OCDCoP journey has co-created mega and meta-shift of raised awareness. My awareness of, and appreciation for, spiritual identity in a framework of complexity has opened a new world of knowing – in self, others and organisations. Another big awareness shift was that of the ego. This is not something*

*engineers bother about. Here again, Rudi's consistent refrain – 'I don't do ego' helped me to introspect a bit and see my own pride that is inherent in 2's (and my part of 7's) [Enneagram types].*

*Janet: I began to pay attention to some of the things that were happening in my world of work that were uncomfortable and undesirable and that were likely to impact on my ability to be an effective change practitioner – a craftsman skilled at using self as instrument. I was curious to discover how I might be choosing some of the unpleasant experiences, which were occurring in some of my relationships. An opportunity arose in one of my places of work, which served as a great learning ground. As our co-operative inquiry drew to an end, I do feel that I failed to deliver quality work. Equally importantly, I regret that I did not pay this process the attention it required in order for it to have been as transformative a journey as it could have been.*

*Johann: Yes, it [the inquiry process] made me think more critically about my spiritual identity. I am definitely more aware of how my spiritual identity impacts on my OCD practice and how it shapes my consulting work. I have made a concerted effort to bring it more into play in my coaching and I appreciate the importance of my own spiritual identity and those of my clients more. I have worked into my approaches a spiritual dimension. I use the following slogan beneath my email signature: 'Your identity is your destiny'. By that, I try to say: 'You are meant to become more of who you really are, and by being your authentic self, you can fulfil your calling and journey towards your destiny'.*

One of the participants felt that they did not shift in terms of their spiritual identity (e.g. Rudi), but they did mention that it was important and that the process helped them to become more aware of themselves in their interactions with people and of their immediate environment.

*Rudi: I have not experienced any major shift in my spiritual identity since I was quite clear on that from the onset. However, this journey has raised my awareness on the importance of being consciously aware of one's spiritual identity as it is a huge driver for one's behaviour. My shift happened a few years ago when I embraced the notion that I am a spiritual being having a human experience and not a human being having a spiritual experience. Since that day spirituality became a natural way of being rather than an identity that I also need to take into consideration. My whole life (also my OCD practice) is thus being spiritualised, rather than 'religionised'. Because of this, I am inspired (in Spirit) to be in alignment with universal principles like respect, honesty, dignity and love.*

### 8.2.3 Finding 3

***The OCDCoP members generally regarded their spiritual identity praxis to be important to the way they frame their roles as change agents.***

The primary finding of the study is that the majority of the OCDCoP regarded their spiritual identity praxis (and the co-operative inquiry process) as important in terms of having enabled a shift in their roles as change practitioners in change interventions. Following illustrates some of the ways participants summarised their shift in roles as change agents:

*Johann: The research process has influenced my daily OCD praxis in many ways. As I reflect on our learnings more and make some decisions how I would like to practice some of my new discoveries, the impact will be more evident. I am trying to be aware of my own spiritual state and how I feel in my own skin.*

*And I try to be spiritually awake and alive. But I am also trying to be sensitive to the spirituality of my client: what spiritual language are they using, what hints are they giving me, how can we connect deeper in a spiritual sense, what do we have in common, what is unique or different in this specific client?*

*Dave: My own growth in spiritual identity praxis has been really significant since I started on this journey – especially in coaching. The questions I am asking are far deeper. One of my clients recently remarked how their identity was so much clearer and more satisfying. I now have so much more perspectives, frames and tools to work with due in part to our conversations and also due to links, references and workshops that resulted from my being part of the group.*

*Vonnie: There is indeed a constant active-interactive process happening and the system is constantly evolving in the dynamics between micro, meso and macro levels. You cannot control or manipulate it. You cannot even facilitate it and I often stand amazed to see how something evolves in front of my eyes while I am a mere observer, with limited influence on it. Looking back to my role [in a recent change intervention], I can see how I pulled the Director and Regional Manager into the process. The system responded. Right now it looks promising in terms of the outcome that I would like to see, but the system has a life of its own and might deliver a totally different outcome to the one I am working for. I have to let go of the belief system that my expertise can produce predetermined results. This, of course, produces some kind of conflict within myself because when I produce my proposal and quote to a company I am committing myself to a certain outcome - which is Newtonian in many ways. I then rely on my knowledge, experience, models and frameworks to produce this outcome.*

*Janet: I have learned through the journey that 'It is and it isn't'. I am by nature very proactive, yet I have felt as if the last 26 months were lived in a reactive, one-foot-in-front-of-the-other, driven haze. Each moment has been lived responsive to the most pressing need and frantically trying to ensure that there were at least a few future-focused activities in the midst of them. More than anything, I learned that my propensity to take on as much as I possibly can at any time and to live my life at full throttle leaves no space for surprises and unexpected demands. My sense of responsibility refused to allow me to drop any of my major commitments, but I balked at the half-baked job I did in some cases and resented the intrusion of others into my future-building activities. Not by nature one to be too present-focused, my heart remained proactive while my mind and body were bound to right here, right now for long periods. I have said to several people in the last week that I feel for the first time in years as if I am able to spend 80% of my energy in proactive focus. It feels really good.*

Although most of the participants experienced this shift in their roles over time as change agents during the group inquiry, it is not possible to present each participant's shift in their journey in detail. However, in order to indicate in what way spiritual identity was important in framing their roles as change agents, I provide one participant's account regarding this process. Firstly, he states the importance of spiritual identity in being aware of your role as change agent:

*Vonnie: I was also aware that I was very frustrated with my projects and then I went back to the last questions about my spiritual identity and what was happening here. Also, of course, the whole Newtonian paradigm and I realised that times how I was pulled into the worldview of a very cause-and-effect kind of a worldview. And I was made aware of the fact that my own ego was at stake when I was not finding*

*successes in my work. Of course, I was aware of the fact that I want to have a reputation and be seen as an expert. This process made me realise that what I am working with and for is all ego-driven kind of dynamics that are in play and that I need to shift to an eco-driven approach.*

Secondly, he indicates a shift that has taken place in his spiritual identity and the importance of ways of being-becoming in the process:

*Vonnie: I think the process was already happening before I entered this research process. A shift happened but it is not done. There is still a lot more to explore regarding my spiritual identity. There is a lot more movement that is required in the way I show up in my praxis. There is a shift of understanding the importance of working with your beingness [ways of being-becoming] by being so aware of your intentions and purifying your intentions. I think that is where I feel the dynamics between an already and on my way (or not yet) is. I think that tension is a creative tension that will always be there and that is something which is okay for me. This is something to be aware of as long as I am awake. I must not go to sleep. So for me, this process was helpful in terms of the awakening process. I know I am falling asleep to these things from time to time and I appreciate this research process. It was part of the awakening process for me of these things.*

Thirdly, by embracing aspects of complexity thinking and taking part in the co-inquiry process allowed a realisation of the redundancy of mechanistic-materialistic understandings of identity and spirituality, relative to each person's own context and openness to their personal experience. The main aspect of this awakening process was how the co-researchers realised the difference between their ways of doing (tools, techniques, skills, knowledge and various competencies) and their ways of being-becoming (the quality of making visible intangible dimensions of relating for example authenticity, integrity and coherence from a critical subjective and self-reflexive inner arc of experience). As Vonnie put it:

*My understanding of the complexity of systems is taking me to the point where I can only commit to taking responsibility for my intentions and attention when I rock up in my role. My knowledge, skills and models help me with the attention part of my praxis, but being aware of my intentions (to be open with my soul and heart) requires much higher levels of awareness and more focus. When comparing the amount of time I am spending on the quality of my norms, values and belief systems to the time I am spending on researching for more knowledge and models, I realise that it is way too little.*

Finally, the major shift over time came in the role he took up as change practitioner. Vonnie illustrates this in his account of how this shift happened regarding his role as change agent in the following way:

*So it was also a very personal growth process of being aware of the capabilities of this ego-driven existence within human systems that you must respect and work with. And when you confront certain dysfunctional behaviours and there are fears within the system that you always do it from a position of 'I am not blaming you here but I am pulling you into a role of assisting me in and with the change process that we want to work with. It's not me against you it's us. Let's join forces and I need to confront this dysfunctional behaviour because you are not joining when you're participating in those kind of*



*behaviours'. I realised the need to respect the capabilities of the other person to influence the change process. I think there was a growing experience of reflection. Right in the beginning, I was not that reflective of these things and the mere fact that I was in conversation with these questions, and that I was in conversation with the group, automatically lead to a more reflective kind of position that I took on in how I do my work. Although I sometimes struggled to do it on paper and whatever other method there was there was definitely a lot more happening as we moved through the journey. I was questioning my work and my way in which I approached things, but more than that, I did also change the way that I communicated to my clients.*

In order to account for further evidence of the other participants' shifts in their role as change agents, I argue that the cumulative effort of the co-inquiry bears witness to the various forms of knowing presented in the final propositional knowledge as made visible by the co-created spiritual identity praxis heuristics framework<sup>103</sup>. This framework, although not entirely complexity-based, is in many respects a movement towards a complexity-informed understanding regarding their various roles as change agents. This is because the co-researchers made a conscious effort to apply key concepts of complexity and complexity thinking habits of mind (Rogers *et al.*, 2013) during the group inquiry process. In terms of the above-mentioned framework, I believe that it demonstrates the critical re-thinking of spiritual identity praxis to be important in framing the OCD COP's roles as change agents. The framework thus illustrates the way they re-imagined their roles as change agents in change interventions.

The different co-created aspects of spiritual identity praxis heuristics also serve to inform change agents as a guide regarding incongruent change practice. Gaining insights and starting to apply the critical complexity-informed paradigm not only informed the participants' spiritual identity praxis but also transformed their thinking about their mode of being: a shift from the importance of skills, knowledge and competencies to complexity-informed ways of being-becoming praxis in change agency. This was portrayed in the themes and patterns that emerged in the group processes as described in Finding 2. This shift (an emergent process understanding) in their ways of thinking about their ways of being-becoming (spiritual identity praxis) presented a complexity-informed alternative to mainstream Newtonian-informed OCD understandings of change agents preoccupied with ways of doing.

The finding of a shift in their role as change agents is supported by the understanding of spiritual identity praxis as portrayed in the framework presented in Chapter 7, Section 7.3.6; which highlights alternative roles and modes of being-becoming praxis in their change practice. An important aspect of the co-created heuristics framework entails the dynamics and dimensions of spiritual identity praxis in OCD practitioners<sup>104</sup>. On the one hand, the co-researchers conceptualised the differing spaces of encounter (self, other and system) in OCD practitioner praxis. These spheres of

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<sup>103</sup> Please see Chapter 7; section 7.3.6.

<sup>104</sup> Please see Chapter 7; Table 7.3.

engagement reveal the non-linearity and contextuality involved in change interventions. On the other hand, the dynamics of the change agent and change intervention involves evolving patterns of engagement (self, entering, explorative, deep and whole). These dynamics and dimensions constantly interact in these spheres of change that evolve in terms of their patterns of engagement within their relational networks. The following excerpts from the co-created spiritual identity praxis heuristics indicate the contextual shifts change agents are required to make in the way they conceive their roles in the different spheres of engagement and spaces of encounter during change interventions:

### **Self-Engagement**

- *One's personal development history informs one's current way of being and inner-functioning and has an impact on one's inner-being (if you don't transform, you will transmit it).*
- *Being aware that one is a co-creator and not an expert quick-fix consultant. One's tools are not the solution; one's quality of beingness is more important.*

### **Entering-Engagement**

- *Co-create mutual understanding in the process of facilitation which indicates that the process is both for oneself and for the stakeholders by becoming aware of and open to complexities, differences and constraints within oneself in order to create coherent emergent spaces.*
- *Sense when to serve and observe or when to rather disrupt and derail the change process.*
- *Remain aware of how one sees people and one's intentions, mental models and modes of being, connected to such a way of seeing.*

### **Explorative-Engagement**

- *Assist clients to encounter their hidden arenas of inner experience which reveal ways of being-becoming (beingness).*
- *Shift from strategic outcome-focused thinking and short-term goals to continual learning in vulnerability and humility with perpetual change.*
- *Ego destroys engagement. Healthy boundaries clarify and define roles and responsibilities. By embracing and taking ownership of one's spiritual identity one gains awareness of how your definition of your role and function can change.*

### **Deep-Engagement**

- *Ensure one finds the acupuncture points in the system and to creatively unite all the voices within the system (micro-meso-macro) in creating an awareness of a relational understanding of the problem.*
- *One's spiritual identity is one's sense of integration and generation of the capacity to embrace complexity – it is your self-organising principle in the multitude of various disintegrated parts of the self.*
- *Creating collective awareness assists in seeing complexities of the relational system.*
- *One's role is not to control others' behavioural responses; one's role is to bring awareness of how others in the system are already responding and responsible for their ways of being and doing.*
- *When one becomes a referee in conflicting parties you start taking up the responsibilities of others.*



In terms of the preceding framework, I believe that I demonstrated the critical re-thinking of spiritual identity praxis in OCD and sketched its apparent implications for OCD change agents. The co-operative inquiry process demonstrated the OCDCoP proposed modes of awareness; grounding explanations (in terms of higher-order connecting patterns); ontological significance; and application of a critical complexity-informed perspective. This involved re-thinking interactions and the ways of being through engagement with OCD practitioners. The spiritual identity praxis heuristics were explored and reframed through the five research cycles of the inquiry process. The various verbatim excerpts and the accompanying propositional report demonstrate that the objective of an informative outcome of co-inquiry was achieved. The alternative conceptualisations of spiritual identity praxis in OCD as reflected in the informative outcomes clearly demonstrate the impact of the OCDCoP inquiry on the co-researchers. This is most effectively reflected in the spiritual identity praxis heuristics, co-created by the co-researchers according to their real-life reflection and their thinking about praxis experiences in their local contexts. As one member put it:

Dave: *Collecting and identifying the heuristics was interesting - navigating our way without being Newtonian since I think that heuristics (principles) are by definition - cause and effect. The heuristics framework, which we all co-created, is going to be a great asset in our engagement with our clients.*

#### 8.2.4 Finding 4

***The OCDCoP members generally co-operated and collaborated authentically during the group inquiry process.***

It was not surprising that, given the time and effort that was put into the group inquiry process, the group found ways to embrace the journey of autonomous self-discovery and co-evolution. Indeed, Heron's (1996) three strands of empowerment played a critical role.

Next, I present the three strands of empowerment by presenting the movement from dependency on me as initiating researcher to: (i) a genuine co-ownership of the method; (ii) authentic collaboration in applying it; and (iii) the emotional and interpersonal competence in dealing with the underlying anxieties that arose during the co-inquiry. As two group member put it:

Dave: *It was interesting to me how the three strands wove their way through the research project. Deon's intention was that each of us should take on a role that would "manage" the group in respect of one of the strands. We each took on these responsibilities to varying degrees. Some were very intentional in assuming their roles. Others flowed more freely. What was evident, however, was that simple awareness of these parameters kept us within their bounds and there was little requirement in the end for anyone to have a formal title or role. In my opinion, it demonstrated the possibility of an 'organisation' self-governing according to a set of heuristics or values as opposed to formal leadership roles.*

The co-operative inquiry was not designed to control the parameters for co-researchers, as this does not give insight into the complexity of the human condition. As Heron (1996) claims, individuals functioning in the context of mutual communion and communication are autonomous in creative intelligent dialogue and endeavour with each other. Innovative research is determined by

autonomous creative thinking, which is self-directing and self-monitoring. As the initiator of the inquiry, I regarded the co-researchers as self-organising agents whose creative thinking determines their actions. Although as I describe further on<sup>105</sup>, it was difficult for me to let go of ideas of how the inquiry should proceed, I managed to allow the participants to take up co-researcher roles. In the end, I believe in terms of complexity theory we witnessed at least some complexity-informed self-organisation and emergence in terms of the group inquiry process. We became the imaginative co-authors of a re-imagined spiritual identity praxis heuristics framework. The co-created spiritual identity praxis heuristics present the integrated four forms of knowing about this informative exploration. Therefore, re-imagined spiritual identity praxis can be described as an alternative understanding and movement towards re-thinking the social ecology of thinking, being-becoming and doing in the OCDCoP.

*(i) Facilitating genuine co-ownership of the method*

It was clear from the earliest stage of the research that the research methodology was very challenging to apply in the broadness of its essential intention and application. After the initiation stages, one of the group members duly remarked that the vehicle of co-operative inquiry we were using to explore was a "challenging animal to master and to ride" (Rudi). As initiator-co-researcher, I gave each research participant a booklet containing a brief guide to the methodology, together with what I felt were key research insights throughout the group inquiry process. I also urged the participants to study the booklet, give feedback, and ask for assistance – if needed – as we went along. I also provided handouts at each meeting with key pointers of what was important for the respective phases, stages and cycles. As the research progressed members assisted in facilitating key decisions and critical discussion concerning the execution of the methodology. One member reflected on this process during the middle stages of the group inquiry (Workshop 4):

*Janet: I feel that after this last workshop that we are moving towards greater clarity and cohesion - though not without some wrestling with process and expectations. There is a fine balance to be struck between creating a structure, which enables a complex and emergent process, and each of us being comfortable to engage and possibly learn from a structure that does not conform to our own style.*

*Rudi: Much effort was made to initiate the group into the methodology of the enquiry in the hope that we will make it our own (cognitive strand). I have a huge appreciation for Deon's effort in this regard. Using well-designed slides and explanations, we eventually got some grip on the methodology.*

*(ii) Allocation of different roles to group members for authentic collaboration*

From Workshop 2 onwards I gave each member options in deciding which co-facilitation roles to take. Some members who felt comfortable with this quickly latched onto the collaborative effort,

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<sup>105</sup> Please see Chapter 10.

others took a 'wait-and-see' approach and slowly grew into particular roles. This challenged the authentic ownership of the process.

As Heron (1996) points out regarding the political history of research some participants during the first three cycles still saw themselves more like 'lab rats' than genuine co-researchers. It seemed that the participants found it difficult to let go of the Newtonian paradigm and move to a new participatory paradigm. I believe the breakthrough came when I gave a short lecture on complexity theory and thinking. The awareness of being participants who need to take full ownership of the process came slowly, but our collaborative effort, as is evident in the final research outcomes, was authentic (given the time constraints), and reflects how the roles moved from feeling part of the research to becoming actual co-researchers. I believe we managed to sustain the authenticity of our collaborative efforts by asking pertinent questions in all the workshop reflection journals, regarding the relationship (i) between the group and initiating researcher, and (ii) among the group members themselves. My assertions are supported by another group member who said:

*Rudi: In terms of the process, my biggest fear all along is that we get it all wrong by doing research in our default way which is purely cognitive/objective/Newtonian... With regards to the political strand: I think we succeeded in establishing participative decision-making and authentic collaboration, but I am not so sure we always co-operated fully, probably due to time limitations because of our hectic schedules.*

*(iii) Fostering emotional and interpersonal competence*

Once members started to feel at ease with one another, we appointed co-facilitators to manage the interpersonal difficulties and emotional climate at each workshop. Some members were naturally gifted in playing the devil's advocate and to challenge ideas and critically ask questions. Sometimes this created frustration and tension that made the group uncomfortable. Workshops 4 and 5, for example, were full of tension and anxiety when one of the participants withdrew after heavily criticising me as initiating researcher, as well as the entire process. The group listened to this member and invited him to continue his participation in the research but to no avail. As indicated, one other participant also withdrew due to personal reasons and the multiplicity of external demands.

Although we had very stimulating discussions throughout the co-inquiry, I felt that from Workshop 6 onwards the group gained a level of synchronicity. The quality of the discussions was also more mature, open and revealing. In fact, the nature of the topic at hand, and the interpersonal and psycho-spiritual intelligence were part of what made the OCDCoP a qualitative source of information with rich data and knowledge. In commenting on this strand of the inquiry, one member said:

*Rudi: In terms of the emotional strand: Due to the fact that all group members probably have fairly high levels of emotional intelligence, the moments of distress and tension were handled well. I think the make-up of the group is of such a nature that harmony would be favoured above conflict.*

### 8.3 RESONANCE OF THE OCDCOP MEMBERS WITH MY OWN THINKING AND THEORETICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE DISSERTATION

Given the amount of time involved in the intensive group inquiry process, it is not surprising that the majority of the participants were in accord with the importance of exploring and reframing spiritual identity praxis and its effect in re-imagining alternative roles for change agents in change interventions. My own idea was that exploring spiritual identity praxis, through a process of critical co-reflection with change agents, would contribute to re-imagining their roles as OCD practitioners. Inquiry of spiritual identity praxis implied thinking about how change agents act in congruence (or not) with their beliefs, values, lived-experience and worldviews that inform their ways of being-becoming. In the group inquiry, we studied this by looking at what we witnessed in our change interventions by critically reflecting on past situations. Accordingly, this meant interrogating the concept of spiritual identity praxis through employing reflexive thinking and complexity thinking about our role as OCD practitioners in change interventions. My goal was to explore our ways of being-becoming (spiritual identity) and doing (behaviour) in the arena of our consulting practice, through co-exploring and reframing alternative ways of facilitating change initiatives.

The extent to which the inquiry group resonated with my own thinking varied. I found it easier to share my own thinking and ideas with certain members than with others. Throughout the group inquiry, I explicitly made my points of view known to the group regarding the co-operative inquiry process and principles, complexity thinking, spiritual identity and the roles of change agents in change interventions. From the outset, I had a majority of group members in agreement with my thinking when I discussed my initial ideas on the topic<sup>106</sup> of the inquiry in order to set the scene for a collaborative formulation of the inquiry problem, question and launching statement. A minority of the group members did question some of the logic, phrasing of the concepts or terms I had used. This assisted in creating a vibrant discussion in the group. Despite some differences, the overwhelming majority of the group also expressed the importance of exploring spiritual identity in order to improve OCD practice during the early stages of the inquiry. As the inquiry progressed, some members were starting to voice their differences of opinion and perspectives on the inquiry topic. For instance, the group sometimes delved into religious debates, and I had to steer the group away from these to rather explore their own deeply felt experiences. During this middle stage (Cycles 2-3) of the inquiry, we also shared several differences in approaches to the inquiry process. Some felt it was over-structured and others felt we needed more structure. The group did not always resonate with my own thinking concerning the co-operative inquiry process, principles, my perspectives, guidance or facilitation. Similarly, the middle stage of the inquiry was also characterised with shallow understandings of complexity thinking and reductionist interpretations of the notion of spiritual identity. As one participant commented during this stage of the inquiry:

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<sup>106</sup> Please see Chapter 7; Figure 7.3.

Vonnie: *I am aware of the fact that complexity and uncertainty is the name of the game but I am questioning the way in which our conversations and language is contributing to us not really understanding one another always which lead to impasses and a passive response to the action research required. I am also intrigued by the separation/dualism I experience between the reflection workshops and the action stage of the process.*

However, the group's thinking also grew closer to some of my views on both the inquiry process and how I understood complexity thinking and spiritual identity praxis. The following statements illustrate this:

Vonnie: *The whole co-operative process of inquiry was very helpful for me. I'm also using it and bringing it into my work quite a lot. It's like the enquiry is not only a method but it's also a position that you take on many things in life and that before advocacy enquiry always comes first. Co-operative inquiry is a convergent process when you open up and you look for other possibilities by suspending your own position and embracing others' perspectives. By suspending your own position on matters of the enquiry topic, the whole concept of co-operative enquiry becomes a metaphor for self-reflection and insight by learning from others. Co-operative inquiry is a theoretical concept with which I will want to work a lot in my life, personally, as well as professionally.*

Rudi: *One common theme that became clearer as we all shared our stories behind our stories was the role that tradition played in evolution of our spiritual identities. It was interesting to notice the different levels of inquiring amongst us on our spiritual identity and could this also be a function of tradition? I am curious to know to what extent our inquiries are stimulated by influences of our time or are it such an individualistic process as we made it out to be. Is there not also a collective inquiry happening in our social systems which influence our individual inquiries?*

It was also interesting to see the extent to which the inquiry group did not resonate with my own thinking. I felt that it was really important for the group to gain an understanding of a non-essentialist view of identity and spiritual identity. I wanted the group to realise that a relational understanding of spiritual identity meant interpreting the self in a post-reductionist way. Although the group made some strides in this arena of thinking I felt we remained stuck in a narrative understanding of the self and our spiritual identity and did not completely move to the implications of the complex 'I' for spiritual identity praxis. This perspective can be seen in the following journal reflections:

Johann: *I also realised more than before that identity and spirituality are fluid, flexible, and forever changing functions of human existence - even changing on the same day. However, there might be an inner core of oneself that is relatively stable.*

Janet: *Rudi asked me, 'so what is your spiritual identity'? I said something about being a gift. But, I really do struggle to answer that question and I don't feel that my answer was complete. I struggle with the notion that any of us can be clear on the answer to the question. I think that the closest I can come to answering it is to say that I am, 'Being Redeemed'. This phrase allows for what I believe is the transient and evolving nature of spiritual identity. It allows for both my active participation and a Divine intervention in this evolutionary process. It allows for both the pro-active unleashing of something that is within me and for the co-creative and reactive response to my environment.*

In reflecting on the extent to which the inquiry group resonated with the theoretical development of the dissertation, I offer a few remarks. My own thinking and theoretical development have evolved since the completion of the group inquiry. Although we have met as a group as recent as May 2017, I have not shared all the in-depth theoretical changes and development in my own thinking with all the group members. I have sent the group some articles and interesting documents that I drew on in developing my current understanding and interpretations, but the group has not read my latest theoretical development in the dissertation on complexity-informed spiritual identity praxis. In many respects, it is hard to know exactly if the group would resonate with my current thinking. I suspect the minority of the group would resonate with the current theoretical framework I have developed on critical complexity-informed spiritual identity praxis.

However, looking back at the group inquiry, I suspect the group did resonate with some aspects of the theory and thesis I held to be true at that time of the process. Although I felt some members did not go far enough in expanding their perspectives — there were significant shifts that did occur in most members — despite various disruptions, difficulties and the messy process of doing action research. In my view, the group remained concerned with a narrative or humanistic description of the self and spiritual identity and cannot be interpreted as a complexity-informed view. There have been some significant steps taken towards such a view by some group members but does not yet entail a complex spiritual identity or praxis.

I also feel that the group cannot exactly resonate with all aspects of my own thinking. This is understandable in the sense that they have not spent all the time reading and contemplating the different sources of knowledge I drew upon in developing my current perspectives. However, one aspect I do feel the group has agreement on my own thinking is that the co-operative inquiry process does allow for deep reflection on spiritual identity praxis and the way change agent roles are framed in change interventions. This perspective is illustrated in how the CI drew the participants into a process of deliberate reflection on spiritual identity praxis. The verbalisation of deeply experiential and intangible content about their inner worlds and ways of being-becoming created a critical re-thinking of the participants' spiritual identity praxis. This form of critical re-thinking is both informative and transformative since it informs current spiritual identity praxis (the realisation of the presence of the Newtonian worldview) and transforms it (the realisation of the occurrence of a complexity-informed worldview). The CI process also allowed for entertaining different forms of knowing. This is most clearly observed in how the participants critically engaged with the notion of change making, introducing the idea of facilitators of change or change instigators, and how they perceived their roles as change agents (Workshops 7, 8, 9 and 10).

#### **8.4 SUMMARY**

In this chapter, I presented four key findings of the study. The findings were organised according to the research questions as presented in Chapter 1; Section 1.4. Data from the major experiences, decisions, key moments and development of questions throughout the five research cycles were



used to illustrate the participants' perceptions. I provided verbatim examples of the co-researchers' own words with regard to the importance of complexity thinking and spiritual identity in the way they frame their roles as change agents. This provided evidence of the various insights and shifts that occurred in answering critical questions during the self-reflexive group inquiry process.

The findings illustrated how (i) the OCDCoP members generally indicated that they engaged with and were influenced by the ideas of complexity thinking; (ii) the OCDCoP members generally recognised the importance of spiritual identity and that the group inquiry process contributed to a deeper reflection on their own perspectives; (iii) the OCDCoP members generally regarded their spiritual identity to be important to the way they frame their roles as change agents; and (iv) the OCDCoP members generally co-operated and collaborated authentically during the group inquiry process. Finally, I discussed whether the group's reflections and experiences resonated with my own thinking and the theoretical development of this dissertation.



## CHAPTER 9

# ASSESSING THE STUDY

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*There is nothing like returning to a place that remains unchanged to find the ways in which you yourself have altered*  
(Nelson Mandela, (2011).

## 9.1 INTRODUCTION

Co-operative inquiry research outcomes are evaluated in terms of the events that occurred during the collaborative inquiry process. Heron (1996: 104) writes: “the outcomes of a co-operative inquiry are to do with how its findings are to be expressed, in what forms of knowledge they are to be conveyed”. According to Heron (1996: 48) “if the inquiry is mainly descriptive and explanatory, the primary outcomes will be propositions about the nature of the domain. Secondary outcomes will be the skills involved in generating the descriptive data”. Informative inquiries are thus primarily informative and descriptive of its domain with the outcomes propositional and presentational (Heron, 1996).

The outcomes and findings are a direct result of the cycles of action and reflection and can in this spiritual identity praxis inquiry be more accurately described as reflect-reframe-reflect rather than reflect-reframe-act-reflect as typically associated with action research. The spiritual identity praxis co-inquiry was mainly about collaboratively re-thinking the domain of the second person inquiry. The intent was an inquiry from the perspective of personal (first person inquiry) and collective (second person inquiry) re-thinking, which influence decision making regarding ways of being-becoming (attitude and aptitude in change interventions), within the context of taking up change agent roles in change interventions.

The aim of this study was to *cultivate and foster a re-think of the role of change agents in Organisational Change and Development (OCD) interventions by employing a critical complexity lens to shift their current spiritual identity praxis towards co-creating alternative complexity-informed change agency praxis*.<sup>107</sup>

In this chapter, I assess the research by: (i) interpreting the findings through highlighting significant patterns and themes which emerged in answering the research question, (ii) discussing validity procedures, and (iii) synthesizing the findings.

Accordingly, the following research questions were formulated:

- (i) *How does critical complexity shift the idea of spiritual identity praxis and what might that suggest for the way change agents approach their role in change interventions?*
- (ii) *Can an action research inquiry process over time provide evidence of how change practitioners shift their spiritual identity praxis when employing complexity thinking?*

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<sup>107</sup> In Chapter 4 I explained that the application of the term complex spiritual identity can lead to confusion when interpreted from a critical complexity perspective. Therefore, I suggested that a critical complexity-informed understanding of spiritual identity praxis, is more appropriately termed as simply ‘being-becoming praxis’. In this chapter, however, I continue to use spiritual identity praxis as it was the term the co-inquiry group used.

In the co-operative inquiry process, Heron (1996: 110) distinguishes between first-order inquiry, which focuses on the topic of the inquiry, and second-order inquiry, which is about the process of conducting a co-operative inquiry. Reason and Bradbury (2001: xxv), and Torbert (2001: 251–257) prefer the terms first person and second person inquiry.

Following this distinction, I start with assessing the first person inquiry by pointing to the significant patterns and themes that emerged when focusing on the topic of the inquiry. More particularly, I offer interpretive and integrative insights to (i) highlight how the OCD practitioners understood and reflected on their spiritual identity praxis, and (ii) indicate how they could re-think their role as change agents. The purpose of this section is to present interpretive and integrative insights as gleaned from the findings.

As for the second person inquiry, I discuss the entire inquiry process in terms of validity procedures<sup>108</sup>. Specifically, I assess the study's well-groundedness, soundness and quality in terms of the interrelated four forms of knowing – experiential, presentational, propositional and practical. Also, taking the research design and evaluation criteria of action research and CI methodology into account, I weigh the strength of the validity claims.

I conclude the chapter by synthesizing and relating the research findings to broader discussions and contexts of application.

## **9.2 INTERPRETING THE OUTCOMES AND FINDINGS**

In interpreting the co-operative inquiry outcomes and findings, which emerged from co-exploring spiritual identity praxis as well as reflecting on its implications for OCD change agents, I created two interpretive categories, namely:

Interpretive category 1: exploring and reframing current incongruent spiritual identity praxis and concomitant atomistic thinking-informed change agency with a view to become aware of a critical complexity-informed perspective as an alternative change agency.

Interpretive category 2: re-imagining the change agent role as revealed in the co-created spiritual identity praxis heuristics framework.

I next discuss interpretive category one.

### **9.2.1 Interpretive Category 1**

This category deals with evaluating and reflecting how the group explored and possibly reframed current spiritual identity praxis by becoming aware (by means of the co-operative group inquiry) of incongruent ways of thinking, being-becoming and doing. This category also pertains to the reflect-reframe-reflect group inquiry process concerning spiritual identity praxis, from a complexity-informed

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<sup>108</sup> Please see Chapter 6.

perspective. The OCDCoP explored the interrelatedness between identity and spirituality in the participants' lives and how it connected to the group's OCD practice.

*(i) Incongruence in Spiritual Identity Praxis*

As the group explored spiritual identity praxis, we were confronted by the incongruence between what we thought about ourselves, what we believe and experience, and how this reflects on what we enact in accordance to our OCD practice mindset. The exploration of our personal development history regarding spiritual identity formation created a broad spectrum of questions for reflection. Therefore, the group inquiry highlighted the direct impact of being-becoming on our OCD contexts. Confirmation of this is found in Kreiner and Sheep's (2009) work on spiritual identity where they argue for the primacy of spirituality in identity formation and its pivotal role in enabling individuals to link their workplace goals to their personal identity development. Furthermore, the reflections on the OCDCoP's current change interventions revealed incongruence with our personal spiritual identities in the group. Posing questions like: "what is the thinking, behind our thinking?" and "what is the doing behind our doing?" regarding the group's spiritual identity, indicate the OCDCoP's problem of becoming aware of the gap between their ways of being-becoming and their ways of doing. Boulton *et al.* (2015: 123) write about the process of becoming aware of one's mind-sets: "to accept that the world is complex rather than predictable and controllable is to change our approach to everything: our approach to change, to management, to policy development, to evaluation, to leadership — and to living". I think it is possible that our deeply held beliefs and experiences and our views of ourselves as authentic or acting with integrity were challenged. It is likely that the incongruence and incoherence we experienced between the Newtonian-based understanding of spiritual identity and its relation to our change agency was an uncomfortable experience in the OCDCoP. Letiche *et al.* (2011: 4) explain:

*When we perceive the world as coherent, as holding together and as making sense, we have the ability to assume our situation and to get on with things. When our perception of coherence is shattered, the world no longer seems to hold together. Things do not make sense. We continually have to ask questions and we worry about our inability to find answers in which we can believe. We react to our loss of assurance with a loss of self-confidence, and we pull back to whatever coherence we can find.*

Accordingly, it appeared to us that the incongruence and incoherence were inevitably linked to the contrast between the Newtonian and complexity-based worldviews. From my perspective, the basic understanding of identity and spirituality in the group was based on foundationalist and reductionist or fixed versions of what Letiche *et al.* (2011: 4) call 'measured coherence or change', and therefore irreconcilable with their respective notions of emergent coherence or change. The group members acknowledged the difficulty in critically reflecting on how its spiritual identity praxis informed its OCD practice. We found it challenging to explore our own inner arc of experience and how our OCD practice was informed by belief systems, experiences and values regarding our spiritual identity. As the study progressed, the group appeared to become more open, genuine and willing to critically

engage the underlying dynamics in the inner arcs of our experience. The OCDCoP reflected on its change agency, which was atomistic-informed and driven by varying self-interested, self-maximising and mechanistic mind-sets (as symbolised in the notion of the rational change agent). I believe, to a certain degree, this was a novel experience for all the participants. This highlights as Boulton *et al.* (2015: 54) argues “that change is not incremental and continuous but is episodic; where sometimes big changes happen and other times situations become locked-in and are very hard to shift”. Also, it confirms the claim that OCD practitioners are often unwilling to voluntarily reflect on their practice and therefore perpetuate simplistic approaches (non-complexity-informed) to change. Stevenson (2012a: 86) concurs:

Leaders and managers in private and public sector organizations more often retain conventional ‘old ways of seeing’ the world with paradigms and worldviews that are largely mechanistic...experience in examining these behaviours suggests that while some simply give lip service to new concepts and ideas, others appear incapable of escaping the bondage of linear thinking.

Setting time aside to contemplate and exercise critical self-reflection is often not considered as essential or possible in deliberate change processes, which are under pressure to achieve bottom-line demands (Stevenson, 2012b). The convenience of applying the paradigm of simplification in change interventions by change agents seems to strengthen the status quo which re-inforces Newtonian ways of thinking and doing (a reductive understanding of reality where certainty and control are assumed attainable and projected as such). Boulton *et al.* (2015: 123) substantiate this:

Finding ways to help people to reflect on mindsets and overarching worldviews, and finding ways to critique some long-held beliefs about the ‘way things are’, is absolutely critical to their really coming to terms with the world and its complexity—or indeed with any other shift in paradigm.

The movement towards a critical complexity perspective and concomitant mode of being-becoming suggests an alternative pathway to thinking about OCD interventions. It implies courage and willingness to face the unknown and complexity inherent to life.

As the cycles of reflect-reframe-reflect continued, the OCDCoP slowly started challenging their own and others’ views regarding change and shortcomings in understanding spiritual identity. Firstly, as a group, we gradually realised, as we listened to each other’s stories, that if we see ourselves, our religion and our spiritualities as fixed (in a foundationalist manner), this reveals fundamentalism and incongruence in our spiritual identity praxis. Secondly, I believe we became aware that OCD as deliberate intervention could no longer be systematically approached in a clear, linear, rational and well-calculated manner. Therefore, the tradition of OCD practitioners to say to their change interventions clients: “in order to manage the change we will control this and do this by following steps one, two and three” are highly incongruent and limited when subscribing to a complexity-informed worldview. What likely assisted the group was the self-reflexive processes and journaling of the CI participatory process, which created a space of trust, coupled with the special inquiry skills, which demanded an alternative way of approaching the topic. In the OCDCoP, we shared our

authentic experiences, which highlighted the incongruences in our spiritual identity praxis within our OCD practice (although not all members could acknowledge incongruences or even became aware of certain key aspects which were limiting, while others were more confident that they were well aligned). Finally, what also, I believe, assisted us in becoming aware of our incongruence and incoherence in our spiritual identity praxis in OCD, was the participatory worldview underlining co-operative inquiry. This worldview includes the three strands of empowerment (cognitive, political, and emotional) which enable co-subjects to become co-researchers and assists in facilitating co-researchers in special inquiry skills. During the group processes, we made deliberate efforts to engage with the special skills, by appointing facilitators. I believe this also contributed to the necessary critical self-reflexivity and emotional competence required to explore dimensions of our spiritual identity praxis and our change agency in OCD.

*(ii) Becoming aware of a critical complexity-informed perspective*

The problem of operating in the current socio-economic climate, dominated by the Newtonian-based paradigm, is that facilitating emergent, non-linear and episodic change processes are counterintuitive to many OCD practitioners (Eoyang, 2011). In our OCDCoP group, we had to admit that our approaches were restraining innovation, diversity and subscribed to reductive rationalised agency and that an attitude of humility, honesty and openness was required. Chia (2011: 192) writes: “the lived experiences and vulnerability of everyday lives...are the very qualities that make for a deeper appreciation of what a ‘paradigm of complexity’ implies...especially those of organisation and management practitioners”. Consequently, the OCDCoP had to acknowledge and communicate to change participants, that what they most probably deeply believe about the reality of change, is, in fact, a very fragile appropriation of the inherent complex reality of change processes (Allen, Maguire, & McKelvey, 2011).

It appears that the OCDCoP journey took us from acknowledging the pervasiveness of the Newtonian worldview and its mechanistic-materialistic assumptions about change to a growing awareness of a possible alternative complexity-informed way of thinking. But, at the same time, it also appears that it revealed the lack of complexity thinking in terms of habits of mind (Rogers *et al.*, 2013).

In Chapter 4, I presented a reading of a critical complexity-informed understanding of identity, by combining De Villiers-Botha and Cilliers (2010) notion of the complex ‘I’ and updating it with Woermann’s (2013) eight features of complex systems. As a result, I derived four iterative principles, which could inform a critical complexity-informed understanding of change agents and their role in organisational identity formation<sup>109</sup>. The four iterative principles are (i) embracing complexity thinking; (ii) navigating ambiguity and incongruence; (iii) awareness of relational constitutedness;

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<sup>109</sup> Please see Chapter 5.

and (iv) resilient heuristics. Table 9.1 provides a summary of the principles. The four principles became apparent to me in reflecting on the cycles of reflect-reframe-reflect and the group inquiry process. As explained, the journey of becoming aware of these iterative principles took effect in significant areas of inner and outer experience and action, yet also fell short of realising in some spaces of encounter and evolving patterns of engagement.

**Table 9.1: Summary of four iterative principles for a critical complexity-informed understanding of the change agent**

Change agent iterative principles	Description
1. Embracing complexity thinking.	The process of becoming conscious of binary thinking and embracing 'both/and' thinking in the spaces of encounter with self, other and system, while simultaneously maintaining radical perception of evolving patterns of engagement in the inner and outer arcs of experience and action. This non-dual approach to perception requires a radical openness to the meaning inherent in conceptual contexts, while simultaneously have capacity to do conceptual revisioning of the assumptions inherent in the conjoined perspectives.
2. Navigating ambiguity and incongruence.	The process of navigating intentions, motivations, beliefs, sense of purpose and underlying values embodied in experience and action, while simultaneously, realising the lack of congruence, coherence, authenticity and integrity in the different facets of experience and action. Navigating these dimensions means self-correcting to achieve a dynamic balance, harmony and acting with irony despite the inherent antagonisms present. The navigation process reveals the capacity to live in the tensions and paradoxical nature of complex systems.
3. Awareness of relational constitutedness.	The fostering of awareness in change agents regarding the underlying mechanisms (whether with self, other or system) that cause certain behaviour, structures and events to come about and be what they are. It is the capacity to grow in awareness of the ontological status of relationships, i.e. between complex 'I' and difference in a qualitative and



	meaningful way whilst allowing for diversity in the system.
4. Resilient Heuristics.	The process whereby change agents assess narrative themes and patterns which relate to power relations and quality of normative congruence in order to embrace uncertainty, diversity and the episodic nature of change and therefore allow for openness to transformation. This means the capacity to co-create resilient heuristics requires adaptation to and emergence from navigating contextually appropriate ways of thinking, being-becoming and doing in both the inner and outer arcs of experience and action.

Source: The Author

The group regularly discussed the idea of embracing of complexity thinking, the need for paradox and applying a both/and type of thinking, yet at the same time, it seemed to struggle to apply this to its understanding of identity (**iterative principle one**). This is evident in its struggle until cycle 4 to apply non-reductive logic to the notion of spiritual identity, that is, viewing spiritual identity as a relational concept bounded by difference. A complexity perspective would hold that identity is a relational concept with no singular or individual self separate from spirituality (an atomistic view), and that the self can only be understood as always being in complex networks of relations. Woermann (2016: 126–134) explains:

*“the self is seen as constituted through virtue of a dynamic process. The self emerges over time and in a network of relations with other selves and with the world...complex identity cannot be thought of in terms of only two components (an ‘I’ and a singular other), but must be emplaced in a network of relations.”*

Thus, the essential dimension or the individual self falls back onto reductive understandings and cannot be seen as a complex ‘I’. No longer is there an individual self in terms of critical complexity; there are only relational-selves. From this perspective, it seems that the group subscribed more to a relational understanding of self in terms of the narrative view of the self<sup>110</sup>. Although this view of the self is dialogic in its conceptualisation it maintains a singular understanding of the self (Polkinghorne, 2014). There was a progression in the group’s ability to think in terms of dialogical description, as most of the conversations implied a narrative understanding of the self, and its spiritual identity. Nevertheless, this view falls short of an understanding of *critical complexity-informed perspective* of

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<sup>110</sup> Please see Chapter 2; Section 2.6.4.

spiritual identity where a change agent's ability to think in terms of co-operative bounded difference allows for conditions of meaning and emergence to arise in the network of relations.

The themes and patterns that emerged in the OCDCoP were: Awareness / Awakening, Integrity / Authenticity, Ways of being-becoming, Non-dualistic thinking, Maturity / Vulnerability / Openness / Uncertainty and Frustration / Dissent / Powerlessness<sup>111</sup>. The co-created patterns and themes seem to point to how the group allowed narrative processes of relating to become inter-related: the co-creation of narrative insights in its spiritual identity praxis. A complexity thinking perspective requires a rethinking of what it means to make sense in order to act. During the inquiry, it seemed that it dawned on us that our inner arc of experience was largely informed by reductive and foundationalist ways of thinking about spiritual identity and OCD practice. Concurrently, this led to an unsettling realisation that our change agency subscribed mostly to the 'paradigm of simplification'. This, in turn, seemed to reveal the group's ability in maintaining differences, dissent, and a diversity of narratives in its inner and outer arc experiences, which in all probability points to the presence of navigating ambiguity and incongruence in the group (**iterative principle two**).

It is also likely that the co-exploration gave the group a structured safe space, from a complexity perspective, to critically reflect on its spiritual identity formation. For us, this possibly meant a shift towards acting meaningfully in the complexity of change in order to facilitate alternative complexity-informed spiritual identity praxis in reflection on OCD practice was required. A likely explanation for this shift in awareness is that during deep interaction and interrelatedness, and fearfully embracing the unknown and the future, we started realising what being human could alternatively mean within a critical complexity-informed OCD and spiritual identity praxis. It seems to me that this revelation opened up the understanding of the deep vulnerability of the human condition, i.e. an awareness of our relational constitutedness. Thus, it possibly compelled us to re-evaluate the safe structures of truth, knowledge and reality in our spiritual identity praxis in OCD. Having the courage to truly favour an alternative and transformative approach requires a metamorphosis in ways of being, thinking and doing (an application and embodiment of the critical complexity approach) (Preiser, 2012). Although it is easy to criticise the group's OCD practice, the crux of the matter is that as a group of OCD practitioners we wanted to act and effect real change. However, revealing an alternative change agency requires an embedded-embodied embracing of uncertainty, openness and diversity. The group seemed to have critically engaged with the ability to embrace uncertainty, openness and diversity, but it is unlikely that each participant found the inquiry transformational in a complexity-based understanding. While the group did engage with spiritual identity from a place of deep knowing and interrogated its interconnectedness within the various spheres of encounter and engagement, it is possible that some participants remained locked-in and did not shift their views regarding a complexity view of spiritual identity praxis, i.e. the group did not realise full awareness of their

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<sup>111</sup> Please see Chapter 8.

relational constitutedness (**iterative principle three**). After all the inquiry was the first of its kind regarding the topic and was a journey less travelled by OCD practitioners (Karakas, 2009).

In essence, the co-operative inquiry was an exploration of what might be possible within the demands of the dominance of the Newtonian world in terms of OCD practice, and how alternative spiritual identity praxis may be probed that might open up alternative critical complexity-informed heuristics. It was a journey with co-researchers who, despite common features of being Judeo-Christian white South Africans, who were deeply connected to the controversies, debates and conversations of a local Southern African globalised mono-logic Newtonian world, i.e. the Western cultural values which are in many instances impossible to escape (Castells, 2011).

The OCD community, mainly informed by a Western societal perspective, thus subscribed to the demands of upholding the values of effectivity, productivity and efficiency in OCD. I believe the inquiry revealed many instances where the group subscribed to complexity thinking understandings, but at the same time showed deep critical insights into and reflections on the Newtonian worldview and contrasting the insights with the complexity-based paradigm. There were moments where we could see past the chasms and forces of gravity of Newtonian approaches of fixing and *making* change, to a world where change — and the meaning of embodied complexity — was emerging and transforming our schemata of interpretation (sense-making and meaning-making frameworks). Thus, from my perspective, it seems that the group presented valid and logical alternatives to embrace uncertainty, diversity and openness to change.

The group demonstrated these insights by its re-thinking of the implications of spiritual identity praxis on their change agency and the propositional forms of knowing it co-created in the spiritual identity praxis heuristics framework<sup>112</sup> that represent a form of resilient heuristics (**iterative principle four**). However, regarding the group's ability to develop the capacity for critical complexity-informed resilient heuristics, navigating between the complex 'I' and the economy of difference in a meaningful way, it fell short to entertain the required diversity and feedback of normative congruence. This is because the group's understanding of their own identity formation remained within descriptions of a dialogic and narrative view of the self. The group's perceptions could not fully engage with a completely relational understanding, where the self is solely constituted in a network of relations, without any reference to a separate or singular notion of the self as in the complex 'I'. Critical complexity-informed resilient heuristics in change agents has to incorporate the complex 'I' that always stands in a dynamic relation of difference into their approaches to self, other or the entire system as a whole.

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<sup>112</sup> Please see Chapter 8; Section 8.2.3 and Table 8.3.

### 9.2.2 Interpretive Category 2

I outlined the possible re-imagination of the role of change agents in terms of what can be called Systems Change Curators (SCC), and explained that making sense of complexity in order to act in change was a necessary process and crucial in growing the awareness of complex systems interventions in change processes<sup>113</sup>. However, I argued that literature and practice guidelines are limited in describing what an emergent and complexity-informed approach in OCD might entail. Consequently, the group by employing CI explored alternative ways of thinking (a shift from the Newtonian worldview and atomistic thinking-informed OCD) to a re-awakening of what the implications are for spiritual identity praxis in OCD and the role of change agents from a critical complexity perspective.

As I indicated,<sup>114</sup> making sense is a necessary emergent process of becoming aware of the complex contextuality and situatedness of change interventions. However, making sense of complexity in order to act (awareness) does not necessarily equip OCD practitioners to act meaningfully or in a qualitatively different way. Differently poised, becoming aware of people's thinking and realising the cognitive dimensions of complexity in change interventions does not automatically translate to meaningful behaviour change or a more complete alternative suggesting a new way of being-becoming in OCD. "Complexity is not a solution word, it is a problem word" (Preiser, 2013). Thus, there is an ethical imperative in terms of critical complexity (Cilliers & Preiser, 2016) to not only find new ways of thinking but also important, to extend the new ways of thinking (post-reductionist ontology) to new ways of being-becoming and doing (complexity-based agency).

The possible significance of this study is exactly the movement made visible in terms of a co-exploration of spiritual identity praxis, from new ways of thinking (embracing the paradigm of complexity) to an emergent conceptualisation of what embodied critical complexity-informed ways of being-becoming might entail. Although a work in progress, and certainly not fully realised, the movement does present the integrative process towards a more complete alternative way of being-becoming praxis (critical complexity-informed spiritual identity praxis) which impacts on ways of doing in change agents. In practical terms, this was the co-created spiritual identity praxis heuristics framework (Table 7.3) presented in finding three<sup>115</sup> of the OCDCoP inquiry.

The spiritual identity praxis heuristics framework reveals an alternative mode of being-becoming or inter-related action modalities that can also inform Systems Change Curators. It presents a framework that links contextual knowledge to the realities and spaces of change agent encounters in a way that opens up the necessary evolving patterns in change interventions. It models ways of being-becoming on multiple interacting individual-organisational dimensions: a movement towards

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<sup>113</sup> Please see Chapter 5.

<sup>114</sup> Please see Chapter 5.

<sup>115</sup> Please see Chapter 7; Section 7.3.6.

complex ‘I’ and critical complexity-informed spiritual identity praxis (De Villiers-Botha & Cilliers, 2010). Re-imagining the roles of change agents in OCD is a critical competency for building capacity in order to co-create and co-explore the formation of Systems Change Curators. The re-imagination process, as illustrated through this co-operative inquiry, would enable radically transforming OCD practice towards a complexity-based approach in the context of the current global demands.

In the field of socio-ecological management, scholars have researched the notion of transformative agency from a complexity-informed perspective — a notion I associate with SCC praxis. Westley *et al.* (2013), for instance, recognise the lack of a coherent theory regarding the role of change agents in transformational eco-system-based adaptive management. This is because the current theory does not give insight into the strategic actions change agents employ. They argue: “there is a need for a contextual understanding of the relationship between different strategies and techniques actors utilize, and the broader system dynamics that shape the context in which they are working” (Westley *et al.*, 2013: 1). I believe the OCDCoP addressed this shortcoming by introducing this type of contextual knowledge through its spiritual identity praxis heuristics framework. The framework presents a re-thinking of what complexity thinking-informed change agency might entail.

Other scholars have also built better descriptions of the change agent praxis in transformational approaches. Moore *et al.*, (2014) developed an analytical framework for understanding deliberate socio-ecological transformations. In their framework, they outline the processes and phases of transformative change in socio-ecological systems. Comparing the framework by Moore *et al.*, (2014) with the co-created spiritual identity praxis frameworks (Table 9.2), I noticed some inter-related dimensions regarding transformational processes which describe the various phases of emergence in systems change. In a way, it is similar to how the OCDCoP conceptualised its evolving patterns of engagement in the spaces of encounter in OCD practitioner praxis and highlights some of the trajectories in phases of systems transformation.

**Table 9.2: Comparison between frameworks of systems transformation**

<b>Framework for analysing the multiple sub-processes in each phase of a social-ecological system transformation process (Moore <i>et al.</i>, 2014).</b>	<b>Complex spiritual identity praxis framework for alternative change agency in OCD</b> (Evolving patterns of engagement in OCD practitioner praxis)
Triggers or Pre-transformation	Self-engagement (Inner-forming)
Preparing for change	Entering-Engagement (Connecting-Mirroring-Probing-Understanding) & Explorative Engagement (Co-Emerging-Sensing-Maturing)
Navigating the transition	Deep Engagement (Mutually transforming)
Institutionalizing the new trajectory	Whole Engagement (Meta-transforming)

Source: The Author

Although there are similarities in the two frameworks in terms of the phases involved in the change agency important differences are also highlighted. Moore *et al.* (2014) identify the ‘preparing for change’ phase to include sense-making, envisioning and gathering momentum; whereas the

OCDCoP group identified two separate phases. The OCDCoP co-discovered that the initial phases of entering-engagement in the collaborative process of effecting transformative change build critical capacity between actors. In addition, it interacted and built the necessary foundations for the second phase. The explorative engagement phase, however, demanded more than creating consensus and facilitating the common ground into a type of momentum. This critical movement allowed for a conjoint encounter of the OCD practitioner between systems of self, other and the system as a whole. To enable explorative engagement, OCD practitioners need to model a qualitatively different mode of being-becoming praxis (critical complexity-informed spiritual identity praxis) by creating spaces of trust, congruence and integrity. This, in turn, allows for a maturity and integrity within the phases of the engagement, which opens up a deeper form of engagement — termed by the group, the mutually transforming phase. What is more, the OCDCoP's framework allows for whole engagement (meta-transforming) in the trajectory of change agency.

Moore *et al.* (2014) use the notion of institutionalisation to describe the phase in which a new state is created to allow for building resilience (Olsson *et al.*, 2006). Although it is important to build resilience by “routinization, strengthening cross-scale relationships, and stabilization” (Moore *et al.*, 2014: 6), I would from a critical complexity perspective, prefer to add the importance of maintaining a critical instability in the stabilisation. This creates an openness to re-routinise regularly, not only strengthening cross-scale relationships but also seeking a re-generation and re-production of relational networks at multiple levels throughout the entire OCD systems intervention. This application of the critical complexity argument deepens our understanding of whole systems change interventions and contributes to the lack of propositional knowledge in terms of critical complexity-informed change agency, which might be applicable to other disciplines like socio-ecological systems management and their work on social innovation<sup>116</sup> and change interventions.

I already explained the difference between the concept social change entrepreneurs and systems change curators<sup>117</sup>. In short, social change entrepreneurs link to the social innovation agenda by organising, managing and creating entrepreneurial initiatives to effect social change. In my view, SCC has deep-seated knowledge of critical complexity in the systems they work in, but more importantly, intimately engage with the complexity of their own spiritual identity praxis on three dimensions simultaneously (self, other, and the entire system) in a personal self-reflexive way. Thereby, they not only subscribe to the ethics of provisionality (Cilliers & Preiser, 2016), the ethos underlying critical complexity and the economy of difference (Human & Cilliers, 2013) implied in complexity, but also deeply embody critical complexity in their systems change curation (embodied

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<sup>116</sup> Westley (2008: 47) refers to Westley, Zimmerman, and Patton (2009) who describe social innovation as: “a process of alteration of what is established by the introduction of new elements or forms (including new ideas, practices and policies, or resource flows). In particular the alteration of patterns of social action and engagement to allow for an improvement in or transformation of intransigent and broadly based social problems”

<sup>117</sup> Please see Chapter 5.



complex spiritual identity praxis). What makes the findings of the OCDCoP interesting is how they open up possibilities for re-imagining the change agent and alternative change agency. The findings also present pathways to filling some of the theoretical gaps in change agency theory. Traditional change agency focuses exclusively on change practice such as skills, cognitive knowledge and technique. This often happens to the exclusion of exploring the importance of change praxis, i.e. that which reveals inner knowing, intention and ways of being-becoming linked to the generative capacity to navigate complexity, while at the same time being an integrative force that embraces the rupturing and harmonising of a complex, ambiguous and uncertain world. For instance, Moore and Westley (2011: 6) point out how few studies have looked at the overlap between “the agency of the institutional entrepreneurs and their impact on, and relationship with, networks”. They argue that many studies that deal with agency theory do not “grapple directly with the breadth and depth of the impact of entrepreneurship, and they neglect questions about how social system boundaries may be crossed if social networks are skilfully mobilized.” Moore and Westley (2011) thus highlight the ‘theory-practice-gap’ problem as encountered with OCD practitioner change interventions. Just as OCD practitioners require an alternative complex approach to facilitate systems change, social entrepreneurs require such an approach that would enable them “to recognise which types of relationships within the network are crucial at specific times and to mobilise those relationships in order for innovations to cross scales” (Moore & Westley, 2011: 6).

This study presents a movement towards offering complexity-informed spiritual identity praxis that suggests an alternative mode of being having transformative potential beyond mere skills, competency and mono-logic knowledge advances. It attempts to bridge the theory-practice-gap in dealing with ways of being-becoming that are congruent and coherent to ways of bringing about change in OCD. The co-operative inquiry method and its extended understanding of knowledge (four forms of knowing) co-created spiritual identity praxis heuristics signalling a shift in their spiritual identity and the way they frame their roles as change agents. The co-operative inquiry made visible certain aspects of what such complexity-informed ways of being-becoming might look like. It not only shows the primacy of the Special Inquiry Skills (SIS) in co-operative informative or transformative inquiries but also extends it in developing critical complexity-informed spiritual identity praxis — in terms of the four forms of knowing (presentational, propositional, practical and experiential) — in a collaborative, co-created fashion. This participative process engages change agency praxis in OCD research from the subjective-objective ontology and participatory worldview. As Heron (1996: 163) argues:

[P]articipative reality is neither wholly subjective nor wholly objective, neither wholly dependent on my mind nor wholly independent of my mind. It is always subjective-objective, inseparable from the creative, participative, engaged activity of my mind but never reducible to it, always transcending it.

The participatory-informed process allowed for extending the SIS (being present, imaginal openness, bracketing, reframing dynamic congruence, emotional competence, non-attachment, and



meta-intentionality), since critical complexity-informed spiritual identity praxis introduces contextually appropriate heuristics, giving credibility to the efficacy of the SIS. This extends it by connecting the SIS to re-imagined change agency. The critical complexity-informed spiritual identity praxis heuristics open up new ways of understanding OCD praxis and assist in building the capacity of SCC. This is not an esoteric or unembodied way of being-becoming, but a very integrated practical wisdom of showing the interrelatedness between the four forms of knowing and their connection to fostering complexity-informed change agency praxis. Critical complexity-based SCC thus embody ways of being-becoming revealing integrity, coherence and congruence. SCC embody complex spiritual identity praxis as it reveals contextually specific extended epistemologies of OCD practitioner praxis. In this regard, the theoretical connection between critical complexity and its framing of identity, spirituality and the movement to critical complexity-informed spiritual identity praxis (as best made visible in SCCs), presents a qualitative leap in Organisation Theory literature by using a complex systems understanding of co-operative inquiry. Nayak and Chia's (2011: 282) conceptual discussion from a process philosophy perspective indicate the need for such a qualitative leap:

[P]rimacy is accorded to becoming over being, difference over self-identity, and time and temporality over simple spatial location. We then examine the implications of process thinking for understanding organisation as an ongoing 'world-making' phenomenon and show that the current interest in organisational sense making, organizational identity and entrepreneurial logic provides good illustrations of how and when process and emergence are taken seriously, our understanding of organisational situations can be vastly enriched.

This study shows how spiritual identity praxis in terms of critical complexity-informed being-becoming praxis (spiritual identity praxis) offers the viability of prioritising becoming over being, and how openness to difference (critical complexity thinking applied to uncertainty, openness and diversity) allows for more than sense-making, and meaning-making, but also fostering individual-organisational emergence and self-organisation, i.e. affirming the ontological status of relationships. Having outlined the interpretations of the findings in terms of the two interpretive categories, I now evaluate the findings in terms of validity procedures.

### **9.3 EVALUATION OF VALIDITY PROCEDURES AND QUALITY ACTION RESEARCH**

Heron (1996) describes CI evaluation criteria as validity procedures interrelated to special inquiry skills. The purpose of the criteria is to resolve distortions of uncritical subjectivity, which may arise when there is a lack of soundness with a form of knowing, or when unhealthy interdependence with one or more of the other forms of knowing occurs. It also serves to enhance the quality of knowing in terms of the four forms of knowing. I provide excerpts from the OCDCoP's stories or final reports and how these represent the kinds of inquiry skills that were developed during the action phases, which in turn, contributed to the group's overall experience of the project.

Next, I assess the validity procedures as described by Heron (1996) and employed in the study.

(i) *Combined research cycling*

As initiating researcher, I had the responsibility to assure that research outcomes were well-grounded in the inquiry. I co-facilitated the refining, clarifying and deepening of the focus of the inquiry by organising 10 research workshops over a period of 13 months which included 5 full research cycles. This cycling facilitated checking, correcting, amending and deleting what the co-inquirers found to be ill-grounded about the way they were framing and practising the focus. I created this balance by enabling the co-researchers to share and discuss the content and method of the cycles in a collaborative manner. For example: In each of the five research cycles, the OCDCoP's responsibility was to create and decide upon the launching statement, co-constructing the research questions for a specific stage or cycle and reviewing the congruency of the questions with their experiences in order for the process to evolve. In addition, the research questions were revised or deepened individually and collectively at various stages of the process<sup>118</sup>.

(ii) *Intermediate model of divergence and convergence*

The processes of moving through intermediate models of divergence and convergence were related to how the co-researchers grew with regard to their responsibilities. Taking appropriate participative and democratic decisions was intuitive at times and complicated in others. In the early action phases, each group member explored a different part of the inquiry. From Workshop 3 onwards the co-researchers converged in the action phases on key research questions, but as the research progressed into later cycles they diverged again from cycle 3 and 4 or Workshops 6 and 7. Thus, in terms of Heron's (1996) outline, there was a healthy movement between divergence and the final convergence in cycle 5.

(iii) *Balance between reflection and action*

Heron (1996) argues that validity is enhanced through research cycling. Therefore, moving within these phases meant that a right balance was paramount. As the OCDCoP met at an average of every six weeks, we created enough time for action and reflection on an individual level and connecting this to reflection meetings on a collective level. As initiating researcher, I was cognisant of the fact that finding dates to meet and to schedule workshops within the demands of co-participants' busy working lives was a challenge. According to Heron (1996), the challenge is to find an appropriate length of time for action phases, while at the same time also not allowing for it to be extraordinary prolonged or allotting minimal time for the reflection phases. The danger in such an instance would be a supersaturated action phase with a multiplicity of experiences, but no adequate or coherent findings that could be distilled due to a lack of reflection. To mitigate this, I suggested to the group that we meet every six to eight weeks, with the co-participants making journal entries of significant experiences that they could reflect upon and share with the OCDCoP during the reflection phases. Here, I followed Heron

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<sup>118</sup> Please see Appendix K for a reflexive analysis of the inquiry question development.

and Reason's (1985) guidelines of a holistic medicine inquiry with similar dynamics. This movement between action and reflection was monitored throughout the study.

(iv) *Aspects of reflection*

Heron (1996: 142) explains that, after the action phase, at least four different forms of thought are applicable in the following reflection phase: (i) the descriptive, (ii) the evaluative, (iii) the explanatory, and (iv) the applied. These forms provide a framework for making sense of and reaching agreement on presentational and propositional meaning, and of informative and transformative meaning. As co-researcher I facilitated the application and accentuation of critical complexity thinking throughout the study. The explanatory thought processes are related to the reflection of higher-order forms of thinking. Through higher-order forms of thinking, theory building takes place and becomes the basis for phenomenal categories which are descriptively derived.

In his descriptions of these higher-order forms of thought, Heron (1996: 143) states: "holistic thinking, bipolar thinking, hermeneutic thinking, aperspectival thinking, subtle thinking, mystical thinking and deterministic thinking, loose construing, divergent thinking presentational construing, free and directed association, firm construing and convergent thinking". My contention was and is, that critical complexity thinking contains in its philosophical groundings all the various forms of thinking as outlined in the different sorts of thinking required in explanatory reflection. As the co-researchers and I grew in applying the complexity-informed paradigm our descriptive, evaluative, and explanatory capacities also increased. This happened in accordance with the application of critical complexity thinking and its various imperatives which collaboratively assisted in co-creating alternative forms of thinking about the research questions in the action and reflection phases. This can be seen in the following examples of the OCDCoP participants' contributions:

*Dave: The fact that we do not discard the Newtonian way, in favour of the complexity view, but hold both views or frames simultaneously while considering a situation. I saw the parallels between the shift from Newtonian to complexity with my journey from the technical focus in engineering to the people focus on leadership and OCD. This is also seen in the shift from certainty to uncertainty.*

*Johann: I also realised how much I and most people in our field are dominated by Newtonian thinking, especially by the principle of cause and effect. Although it definitely still has value we can work towards the point where we integrate more complexity thinking in our approach. In that way, we will not create impossible expectations and also render a better service.*

(v) *Challenging uncritical subjectivity*

The basic intention of the inquiry was to contemplate on the spiritual identity praxis experiences of the action phase and to share those propositions in the reflection phase. The challenge of

overcoming uncritical subjectivity lied in how the co-researchers had to grow in the idea and experience of the practice and become fully immersed in it. The group had to sufficiently encounter the practice of applying critical subjectivity to their beliefs, experiences and to value the extent of reflection on their actions in order to bring the engagements and encounters into a space of reflection on their practice.

The aspect that was challenging in reflecting on our spiritual identity praxis was growing in vigilance concerning how the engagements and encounters in our inner arc of experience relate or do not fully reveal themselves in our OCD practice. The co-researchers thus required vigilance to counter the possible shortcomings or blind spots in reflecting on spiritual identity praxis in relation to OCD practice in the action phase. The vigilance was valuable, but at the same time, the OCDCoP had to remain critical of the emerging insights in the reflect-reframe-reflect process. Critical subjectivity demanded the ability to remain critically open to the limitations inherent in the belief systems, experiences and spiritual identity praxis in the formation of alternative being-becoming praxis. Thus a double movement was at stake. On the one hand, the individual researcher needs to critically explore the practice in the action phase and recollect the experience in the reflection phase. On the other hand, he or she needs to bring this individual experience to the collective in such a way as to stay true to the experience whilst remaining critical thereof.

Uncritical subjectivity is then challenged on individual and collective levels of sharing in the reflection phase to counter consensus collusion. Heron (1998: 239) summarises:

We attend both to the grounding relations between the forms of knowing and also to their consummating relations. This means that we do not suppress our primary subjective experience but accept that it is our experiential articulation of being in a world and as such is the ground of all our knowing. At the same time we accept that it is open to all the distortions of those defensive processes by which people collude to limit their understanding.

As initiating researcher, I remained cognisant of how I organised the data gained through the five cycles in collaboration with the co-researchers and presented in Heron's four ways of knowing. I remained critically meticulous of the need to clarify and refine the co-researchers postings and reflections. This, I co-facilitated by appointing co-facilitators which had specific roles in terms of the three strands of empowerment.

A key role in challenging uncritical subjectivity was assigned to specific individuals on all three strands by means of acting as devil's advocate. For instance, throughout the process, I remained co-facilitator of the cognitive strand. Lucille in the initial stages and later Johan, Rudi and Janet took turns in assisting me to critically assess the appropriateness of methodological direction and application during the research cycles. Other members took responsibility of taking up the devil's advocate role in the political and emotional strands. This was done by reminding us as a collective to allow for the validity of individual experiences and not to seek

external sources of confirmation like other popular or well-known theories. At the same time, we also examined these theoretical frameworks and compared them to our individual OCD praxis engagements and encounters.

Assisting each other in remaining grounded and connected with our own unique experiences was important in the initial research cycles, as the Newtonian worldview privileges external objective generalisable forms of knowledge. I felt it important for OCD practitioners to remain true to their own experiences in the action phase, whilst maintaining a critical position towards their action experiences. Making visible how our own ideas and approaches fell short in OCD practice, and how these could possibly be augmented or adjusted in a cognitive, political or emotional level was important. This was achieved by collective group feedbacks on co-researchers' action experiences.

(vi) *Movements between chaos and order*

During the earlier cycles of the co-inquiry (cycles 1 to 3), co-researchers often felt lost and uncertain as to where the research was going, and at other times they requested less structure and order. This movement between chaos and order is likened to what scholars of complexity theory refer to as necessary. Paradoxically, the co-researchers cannot plan or pre-plan this as a programme or process. Snowden (2015) describes this in terms of the *Cynefin* framework as a movement between the four domains (simple, complicated, complex and chaotic). For a novel practice to be unearthed there is a critical moment when complex systems go through short periods of chaos (a shallow dive into chaos), and all formal structures are disorientated and deconstructed. The chaotic experience, in our case, re-ordered the spiritual identity praxis and our roles as change agents non-linearly and created an alternative structure or new order in the process. Moreover, the OCDCoP group participated in a complexity workshop on 21 October 2013, at which Professor Dave Snowden presented the *Cynefin* framework and the dynamics involved in complex systems change and transformation. The learning experience from this presentation assisted the OCDCoP group to make more sense of the movements between chaos and order, and that it was necessary for developing complexity-informed spiritual identity praxis and change agency. In cycles 4 and 5, the OCDCoP matured in its openness to the uncertainty contained in unstructured research experiences and developed a healthy sense of appreciation for ordered and structured processes in determining spiritual identity praxis processes.

(vii) *Managing unaware projections and distress*

As co-operative inquiry is utilised to explore and assist participants in reflecting on the nature of their own human condition (or ways of being), the research process unintentionally gave rise to probing personal dimensions co-researchers might not have expected. The co-inquiry thus opened up defensive routines and fears which were unknown to participants'

psychological base. This is similar to processes of transference in psychotherapy (Heron, 1996).

To make co-researchers aware of this process, I devised a monitoring system by allowing group rituals at the start of each reflection phase and co-facilitating the emotional strand of empowerment with other co-researchers. This allowed for a safe space to free themselves of the distorting effects, fears and hidden distress of the inquiry. This is displayed in the structure and process of each workshop meeting and how it related to the larger research question during the various cycles of inquiry<sup>119</sup>. Moreover, the information-transformation of personal being pays testimony to their journey moving from a fearful clinging to what made the participants feel safe and provided a sense of order (Newtonian-based paradigm), to a space of being 'uncomfortably comfortable' with the tension of standing radically open to the uncertainty, vulnerability and volatility of the reflection on the change processes (complexity-informed paradigm). The process of embracing complexity thinking in the OCDCoP and shifting in their understanding of spiritual identity also correlates with the major themes I highlighted namely: Awareness or Awakening; Integrity and Authenticity; Ways of being / Beingness; Paradox / Non-dualistic thinking / Complexity thinking; Maturity / Vulnerability / Openness / Uncertainty; Frustration / Dissent / Powerlessness. These themes were shared throughout the process in open discussions during the workshops as well as in personal journal reflections by the participants.

(viii) *Sustaining authentic collaboration*

Heron (1996: 152) describes two levels of authentic collaboration: (i) the relationship between group members and the initiating researcher/s, and (ii) the relationships among group members themselves. Authentic collaboration can only take place when all co-researchers are collaborating and contributing fully during each stage of the research. The key to authentic collaboration is in many ways determined by the initiation of the inquiry. The choosing, launching and co-researching of the research topic are paramount in co-opting inquirers to present the participants' authentic experiences, positions and perspectives.

I made it clear throughout the inquiry that the project was not mine only. I requested throughout the process that the participants take up the responsibility to share their experiences. In this way, I facilitated a space for authentic collaboration and co-initiation to emerge from the inquiry in a vigorous manner. I took conscious decisions about not shepherding the co-participants into the envisioned behaviour.

As mentioned, the difficulty for me was 'letting go' of my ideas of what the co-operative inquiry should look like and how I wanted to leave my imprint on the research, but at the same time

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<sup>119</sup> Please see Chapter 6.



taking up my own authentic space in the research as initiating researcher and empowering myself and others on the three strands of empowerment. What indicated a shift away from me taking up most of the cognitive strand in terms of the methodology in the initial stages, was the co-researchers starting to ask critical questions regarding the methodology and how to apply it in practice. The growing awareness of the particularities of the inquiry methods, and especially the group's 'wow-moment' during Workshop 4 on the special inquiry skills were heartening. For instance, Rudi shared his experiences of doing qualitative research and therefore assisted in communicating the "uniqueness of this beast" (his own words), and how we need to learn how to ride it. This process of training and consciousness-raising was carried out throughout the research. For each workshop, I handed out workshop workbooks that contained the key details of the methodology for that particular stage. This workbook was correlated with presentation slides that I always projected with an overhead projector. I also put up posters of the various methodological, political and theoretical design issues such as: the three strands of empowerment, extended epistemology, stages and phases of the inquiry cycles, special inquiry skills, methods for improving the quality of knowing, the development of the inquiry questions and the research outcomes in terms of the four forms of knowing<sup>120</sup>.

The study entailed an exploratory process of inquiry, and co-researchers had to employ and train their individual and collective practical knowledge in ways that manifested their own value and worth. The process of sharing their own realities in terms of the subjective-objective worldview of co-operative inquiry assisted the manifestation and interaction of their own truth and integrity, creating spaces for emergence and self-organisation to take place in terms of complexity theory.

I described, by means of the validity criteria the ways the group worked to improve the quality of knowing. Taking the above into account, I suggest that the OCDCoP adhered to the validity procedures, and therefore ensured the quality of knowing required to validate the well-groundedness of the research outcomes relating to the four ways of knowing. For me, the most important measure of validity is concerned with how "the justification of truth-values, is interdependent with that which transcends it, and is the celebration of being-values" (Heron, 1996: 158). Consequently, I suggest that it is evident that co-operative inquiry is a viable and valid method for exploring the spiritual identity praxis and growing peoples' understanding of the role of the change agent from a critical complexity perspective.

In Table 9.3, I offer a summarised assessment of the quality and extent to which 'good action research' was conducted through the CI group inquiry process according to the seven quality choicepoints for action research (Bradbury-Huang, 2010: 102-103).

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<sup>120</sup> Please see Appendix J for pictures of some posters.



**Table 9.3: Assessing the Quality of the Action Research Approach**

<b>Seven Quality Choicepoints.</b>	<b>Description of Quality Choicepoints.</b>	<b>The extent to which the choicepoints were achieved in this study.</b>
1. Articulation of objectives.	The extent to which authors explicitly address the objectives they believe objectives relevant to their work and the choices they have made in meeting those.	Achieved. The research agreement stated the objective is “to improve OCD practitioner’s understanding, application and facilitation (praxis) of spiritual identity formation in organisations from a complexity perspective”. This repeated at the initiating workshop and reviewed by group members throughout the study.
2. Partnership and participation.	The extent to and means by which participative values and concern for the relational component of work is maintained. By the extent of participation we are referring to a continuum from consultation with stakeholders to stakeholders as full co-researchers.	Achieved. One of the key focal concerns of CI is the initiation of the participants by means of the three strands of empowerment to become full co-researchers (See Chapter 8; Section 8.2.4.).
3. Contribution to theory/practice.	The extent to which the work builds on (creates explicit links with) or contributes to a wider body of practice knowledge and or theory.	Achieved: The OCDCoP contribute to our knowledge of spiritual identity in OCD and conducting CI as a method for re-think the role of change agents. It also provided insights into how to co-create alternative OCD practice.
4. Methods and process.	The extent to which the action research process and related methods are clearly articulated and/or illustrated. Statistics are often best accompanied by analysis of data that includes the voices of participants in the research. It is important to “show” and not just “tell” about processes.	Achieved: A detailed articulation and clarification of the methods (Chapter 6) and process (Chapter 7) of conducting the group inquiry were offered.
5. Actionability.	The extent to which the work provides useful ideas that guide action in response to need.	Achieved: The co-created spiritual identity praxis heuristics framework and the way in which it offers an alternative view of the roles of change agents highlights the usefulness of the inquiry.
6. Reflexivity.	The extent to which self location as a change agent is acknowledged. By self location we mean that participants take a personal, involved and self-critical stance as reflected in clarity about their role, clarity about the context in which learning takes place, and clarity about what led to their involvement in this research.	Achieved. The importance of self-reflexivity was emphasised throughout the study by regular reflections on actions in journal entries. Furthermore, CI requires critical subjectivity as a key resource to harvest insights and manage potential bias. My reflexivity as change agent is discussed in Chapter 10 and continually reflected upon throughout the study.
7. Sustainability.	The extent to which the insights developed are significant in content and process. By significant we mean having meaning and relevance beyond their immediate context in support of the flourishing of persons and wider communities. Clarifying the infrastructure that can support ongoing maintenance of the work is key.	Achieved. The majority of group members expressed a shift in the way they perceived their spiritual identity praxis and the roles they have as change agents in OCD interventions. The OCDCoP inquiry has influenced a wider network of OCD practitioners and the group members have stated that their approach to change interventions has changed.

Source: Bradbury-Huang (2010:102-103)

Next, I offer a synthesis of the findings.

## 9.4 SYNTHESIS

It is important to distinguish re-thinking from possible change practice or praxis actions in organisations. As already indicated, praxis for me entails something different to practice<sup>121</sup>. Praxis is not about practical actions like portraying technical skills, competencies or information, but rather refers to intentions, a mode of being-becoming that reveals deep-seated meaning and purpose which lead towards practice or action.

The largest part of the study focused on the group exploring its spiritual identity praxis – the intentionality, congruency, values, guiding beliefs and experience of the participants' inner arc or intrapersonal dimensions — that which reveals and connects to their roles as change practitioners (the outer arc or interpersonal dimensions). In other words, the exploration of spiritual identity praxis and the role of change agents in OCD represented the first person inquiry dimensions, which relate to the inner arc of inquiry. At the same time, the study was concerned with the spiritual identity praxis and the role of change agents in OCD in the context of a second person inquiry. The second person inquiry also connected to the outer arc of inquiry, which reveals how the participants took up their roles as change agents, as a result of their spiritual identity praxis.

This inquiry has not emphasised 'action' or practice in business organisations directly. Rather the group explored how to re-think spiritual identity praxis and the process of this discovery through the reflect-reframe-reflect cycles, which could provide new insights in re-thinking the role of its change agency from a critical complexity perspective. Moreover, the outcomes and findings reflect first-person action inquiry of both the co-researchers and the initiating researcher (me), and our second person action inquiry together as an OCDCoP.

It is important to distinguish second person action inquiry from third person action inquiry of co-researchers and the initiating researcher. All the co-researchers were involved in their own consulting practices, and I was involved in some change programmes and held part-time positions during the project. Throughout the research, the OCDCoP reflected on the experiences of organisational interventions, and their impact on spiritual identity praxis inter-related change agent roles. The outcomes thus pertain to the group's 'reflect-reframe-reflect' process, in terms of all three pathways of inquiry (first, second and third person inquiry). The dominant focus was on the group's first and second person inquiry, with regular attention given to the first person inquiry through personal self-reflexive journaling and group reflections.

Third person inquiry and evidence of change or transformation in wider organisations were not directly researched, and therefore no claims that organisational change interventions contributed to evidence can be made. However, throughout the process, the group's role as change agent and its OCD practice through various action plans were explored and participants indicated how the re-

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<sup>121</sup> Please see Chapter 2.

thinking and reframing influenced their practice in organisations they were involved with (see the case study presentation during workshop 7). However, the group did not establish a meaningful connection with any actions and the process of inquiry cycled around theoretical propositions related to insights and growing awareness through the reflect-reframe-reflect process of the inquiry (first and second person inquiries). The discussions were centred on real experiences and case study examples of OCD practice that were re-worked into propositional and presentational knowing<sup>122</sup>.

The outcomes of the inquiry were mainly informative of the spiritual identity praxis of OCD practitioners, but also had some transformative implications for their change agent roles. Heron (1996: 48) states: “an inquiry may aim to be both informative and transformative, one before or after the other.” The initial intent and focus of the co-inquiry according to its original launching statement was “Exploring and re-framing: (i) spiritual identity in (ii) complex organisational systems in order to develop (iii) OCD praxis”. However, during the inquiry process it was realised that answering the initial inquiry question regarding exploring and reframing their spiritual identity in their OCD practice, was more achievable. We decided that extending the focus of the inquiry to explore the change in the organisations they work in and the intention to develop OCD praxis from the group’s explorations in spiritual identity would not be achievable within the allotted time structure to materialise fully.

While informative in terms of spiritual identity praxis through the second person action inquiry (the reflect-reframe-reflect process), extending the focus of the research to include the third person inquiry pathway — the OCD practice – is not feasible. Hence, the inquiry into spiritual identity through exploring and reframing of spiritual identity praxis was decided to be the focus of the inquiry and we then interpreted its implications for our roles as change agents from a critical complexity perspective. When considering spiritual identity praxis from a critical complexity perspective the inquiry also has some transformative implications for the roles, change agents take up in change processes. However, by no means can it be claimed that I or the group developed transformative practitioner praxis in OCD practice. Further, while re-thinking spiritual identity praxis from a critical complexity perspective reveals compelling insights for an alternative being-becoming praxis as witnessed in the heuristics framework. The spiritual identity praxis heuristics framework and its application in OCD practice need to be further developed.

The study was informative about the domain of inquiry and has transformative implications for the role of OCD practitioners in change interventions. Therefore, following Louw (2014) and Bouckaert and Zsolnai (2011), one can argue that deeper than the level of ethics, the spiritual question prevails, because from a complexity perspective it relates to the generative capacity and integrative force to be within the rupturing and harmonising of being human in an ever-changing world. The OCDCoP was interested in finding alternative ways of being-becoming, that is, reflecting on the group’s spiritual identity praxis, which could offer a mode of resilient change agency. This meant that OCD

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<sup>122</sup> Please see Chapter 7.

practitioners' identity should not be seen as dependent on mere temporal functional need-fulfilment or the activist claim for human rights and wellbeing, but also on a kind of identity, which may assist one to discover meaning and resilience within the complex realities of life. This holds true even for harsh conditions of human suffering, for example, addiction, gluttony, greed, egoist-power trips and poverty.

Realising a critical complexity understanding of spirituality required the OCDCoP to become versed in simultaneously dealing with contradictory and paradoxical issues (embracing complexity thinking). A critical complexity perspective means that one cannot analyse spiritual identity on a rational level because the system of knowing involves many different but related parts. By using Morin's (2008: 20) ideas on complexity, I at some point explained to the OCDCoP: "complexity is not only quantities of units and interactions that defy our possible calculation; it also is made up of uncertainty, indeterminateness, and random phenomena. Complexity is, in a sense, always about chance". This articulation of complexity points to a radical new way of thinking in theory formation about spiritual identity praxis. Rather than being analytic and reductionist within the split between subject and object, complexity probes into the "in-determinant factor within the happenstances of life" (Louw, 2014). Therefore, it was my view, and that of the OCDCoP, that a complexity approach in spiritual identity praxis is more interested in the collective, co-operative and organisational aspects of change agents in the context of their inner arc of experience. Complexity-informed approaches allow practitioners to focus on integration in order to detect wholeness and allow for synthetic and holistic dynamics and networking. Rather than following an 'either/or' mode-of-being, or even an 'and/and' mode-of-being, complexity becomes a way of being-in-the-world that promotes generativity, explosive change and creativity at once; a happenstance wherein order-disorder are about a complex system of interacting relationships. Louw (2014: 96) explains:

"within an open system the focus is not on *omniscience* (the quality of knowing everything that can be known) or *omnipotence* (the quality of having unlimited or very great power), but rather on *infiniscience*, the unexpected but ongoing events of life as well as the explosion of new integrative complex systems of creative change and hoping".

For the OCDCoP, the process of exploring the complexity of their own ways of being-becoming praxis, i.e. spiritual identity praxis resulted in a warning against simplification of interconnected processes of relating. Therefore, critical complexity-informed spiritual identity praxis presents the practitioner with an alternative understanding of spirituality (whether individual or organisational) allowing him/her to embrace a relational understanding beyond the separate self. It is a hidden and emerging factor that always introduces the surprise of new potential meaning of forms of engagement and encounter in complex systems and change agency praxis. It is at this point that spirituality reveals the self-organising and emergent characteristics of complex 'I'. In this profound scission between the parts and the whole, between the world of the internal and that of the external, the notion of a complex whole (critical complexity-informed spiritual identity) opens up the vista of

immanence and transcendence in unexpected happenstances of OCD change agency (an alternative change agency). It equips practitioners with a resilient mode of change agency, which embraces change and lives with the embedded-embodied nature of change: a resilient way of being and becoming from a critical complexity perspective. It can be both informative and transformative of OCD practice, whilst remaining critical of change agency by seeking congruence on all four forms of knowing (Heron's extended epistemology). A critical complexity-informed being-becoming praxis thus presents a provisional change agency which implies transgressing the Newtonian ways of being and doing but remains critically self-reflexive of its own spiritual identity praxis it is engaged in.

Without re-imagined normative congruence and re-purposed spiritual identity praxis, OCD practitioners are left to rely on the dominant Newtonian-based worldview and atomistic thinking in their change initiatives — a search for a more efficient, effective and productive approach which subscribes to the deterministic improvement of skills, competency and mono-logic knowledge. The process of co-researching through CI facilitated not only the co-exploration but also assisted in growing the awareness of current incoherent and incongruent OCD practitioner praxis, which were not critical complexity-informed. The co-operative inquiry process allowed for the co-creation of a critical complexity-informed spiritual identity praxis heuristics framework, which informs and equips OCD practitioners to continually evaluate and co-develop their own critical complexity-informed being-becoming praxis and change agency. Also, it creates contextually appropriate knowledge for change agents to re-think their role in change initiatives and to consider an alternative to Newtonian-based approaches and atomistic thinking in change interventions.

In answering the research question, I present my interpretation that highlights some of my significant insights gleaned from the findings. These are:

- Peoples' being-functions (ways of being-becoming) are more fundamental than their OCD practice (doing-functions) and therefore their doing-functions (skills, competency, knowledge and strategies) are not decisive regarding who they are (identity) as OCD practitioners in the workplace (a movement towards a more relational understanding of identity).
- The quality of peoples' spiritual identity praxis (the integrating and re-self-organising principle) is what gives direction to their decisions, the reason for their motivations or intentionality, and what determines the appropriateness of their responsibilities, norms and values that determine goal setting (purposefulness). Spiritual identity praxis designates a specific qualitative role (stance) in peoples' OCD practitioner practice.
- The quality of peoples' spiritual identity praxis offers a mode of sustainable action. This involves a resilient way of being-becoming, so that individuals or organisations are not merely dependent on temporary functional need-fulfilment like efficiency, effectivity and productivity (a materialist-mechanistic worldview), or mere activism regarding human rights; but also reveal a kind of identity that helps them discover a sense of meaning that enables a critical

complexity-informed praxis (an openness to change, uncertainty, and vulnerability in organisational life).

- A critical complexity-informed spiritual identity praxis reflects a network of social-ecological systems and power-vulnerability structures that are immanently connected to sustainable ways of being and doing. It designates a qualitative transgressive and informative-transformative way of being as change agents.
- The quality of peoples' spiritual identity praxis denotes the quality of their positions (attitudes, aptitudes, being-functions) within the dynamics of relational networks and interconnected relations (self, other and whole of system).
- Spiritual identity praxis as an organisational spirituality reveals peoples' understandings (philosophies of life - i.e. schemata of interpretation, belief systems, norms, values, worldviews, lived experiences and right action) that underlie current organisational praxis and are key to change processes.
- An in-depth understanding of the critical complexity of identity (complex 'I') in change agents equips OCD practitioners to facilitate the uncertainties and vulnerabilities of being human in the dynamics of complex organisational demands.
- The quality of peoples' spirituality is revealed between the tension of identity and that which is different (i.e. the complexities of being and doing functions within the context of the identity position).
- A fundamental openness to harvest the resourcefulness of a critical complexity perspective is essential in continual learning and in adaptive resilient organisations for emergent change agency praxis.

## 9.5 SUMMARY

In this chapter, I offered an assessment of the study. First, I discussed the findings through highlighting the significant patterns and themes that emerged in answering the research question. Here, I created two interpretive categories that aligned to the research question. The first dealt with creating awareness of the incongruence in the OCDCoP's spiritual identity praxis through the co-operative inquiry process. This allowed the group to become aware of what a critical complexity-informed perspective would entail. It also enabled me to assess the alignment of critical complexity-informed thinking in the group to the four iterative principles that inform critical complexity-based understanding of the change agent in organisational identity formation.

Regarding interpretive category two, I discussed the possible re-imagination of the role of change agents in terms of what I called Systems Change Curators (SCCs). The participatory worldview of co-operative inquiry and the complexity-informed perspective made it possible to extend to the special inquiry skills as part of the method since it introduced contextually appropriate critical complexity-informed spiritual identity praxis heuristics — which gave credibility to the efficacy of



special inquiry skills. The co-developed critical complexity-informed spiritual identity praxis heuristics framework opens up new ways of understanding the role of change agents in OCD and assists in building the capacity of SCCs.

Second, I evaluated the CI process by discussing the eight validity procedures and how they improved the quality of knowing, trustworthiness and consistency of the findings. I also included an assessment of the quality of the action research approach according to the seven choicepoints framework of Bradbury-Huang (2010) as presented in Table 9.3.

Thirdly, I provided a synthesis of the outcomes and findings of the OCDCoP inquiry that pertain to the group's 'reflect-reframe-reflect' process. The outcomes of the inquiry were mainly informative of the spiritual identity praxis of OCD practitioners, but also have some informative-transformative implications for the roles they have as change agents. The findings regarding spiritual identity praxis indicated that the propositional and presentational outcomes both offer a re-thinking of the importance of ways of being-becoming in OCD practice. I indicated why a critical complexity-informed approach prioritises ways of being-becoming to ways of doing (technical skills, competency and mono-logic knowledge), i.e. the primacy of the ontological status of relationships. A re-thinking of spiritual identity praxis, through the heuristics framework, enables a re-imagination of the role of change agents in OCD. Such a re-imagined change agency from a critical complexity perspective was revealed in the assessment of notion of Systems Change Curators (SCC).



CHAPTER 10

# REFLECTIONS AND LEARNINGS

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*A life that is not reflected upon is not worth living (Henri Nouwen).*

## 10.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I offer my first-person action inquiry reflections on the research journey. The research story presents a behind-the-scenes account of the key moments during my doctoral journey<sup>123</sup>.

With this research project, my intention was to undertake CI that would provide me with a doctoral degree, and benefit research participants, research colleagues, the wider profession of OCD and the society. In action research terms this means engaging in first, second and third person research (Torbert, 2001: 150). These arenas of inquiry processes then occur in terms of one's own self-inquiry (first person), an inquiry with co-researchers (second person) or research within the wider world (third person) as explained by action research authors (Heron, 1996; Reason & Bradbury, 2001: xxv; Torbert, 2001: 251–257). Reason (2003) places co-operative inquiry as a form of action research, which emphasises first-person research/practice in the context of supportive and critical second-person relationships while having the potential to reach out toward third-person practice.

The first arena of inquiry is the personal. In this arena, I afford explicit attention to my inquiry and actions in order to explore my own beliefs, values, assumptions, ways of thinking, behaving, motivation, what has driven me, my own feelings, thoughts and how I track changes in my responses as I progress through the inquiry. Schurink (2009) explains the importance of a reflexive research journey in qualitative research. I made entries about decisions I took during the doctoral journey as both research instrument and co-participant. As Ellis (1995) points out, the aim of keeping a journal is to document feelings, thoughts and interpretations as events occur, thus helping the researcher to eventually write about them. The research journal serves as an audit trail that is invaluable in assessing the trustworthiness of a qualitative research project (Schurink, 2009). Maintaining a research journal throughout the inquiry was important for keeping track of the research story, but also a valuable vehicle for self-reflexivity. In fact, first-person inquiry as described by Torbert and Taylor (2008: 241) maintains there are four territories of experience when it comes to the personal reflection process of one's own action inquiry process. The first territory explores reflections on the outside world. The second territory keeps track of one's own sensed behaviour and feelings. In the third territory, the focus of reflection pertains to the realm of thought, where the fourth territory of experience deals with the realm of vision, attention and intention.

Second person inquiry can be described as “our ability to inquire face-to-face with others into issues of mutual concern” (Reason & Bradbury 2001: xxv), and “speaking and listening with others” (Torbert 2001: 251). Heron and Reason (2001) write extensively about co-operative inquiry, as a particular discipline of second-person inquiry. This practice addresses action researchers' collaborative inquiry and works with others on issues of mutual concern, through face-to-face dialogue, conversation and

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<sup>123</sup> Please see Chapter 6 for a description of the role of the research journal in a dissertation journey and Chapter 7 for some of my journal reflections during the CI process.

joint action. The purpose of this is to give insight into the second person inquiry reflections of the co-operative inquiry process.

Reason and Bradbury (2001: xxvi) explain that third person inquiry:

aims to create a wider community of inquiry involving persons who, because they cannot be known to each other face-to-face (...), have an impersonal quality. Writing and other reporting of the process and outcomes of inquiries can also be an important form of third-person inquiry.

As I am completing this dissertation, I can only make minor claims to third person inquiry practices. I present the possibilities of the third person inquiry and its possible impact in this chapter.

In order to embark on a critical reflection of the study, I first provide a short description of myself and a self-reflexive summarised account of my experiences during the doctoral journey. After the discussion of my reflections, I conclude with the most important learnings as gleaned from the entire research process (first person, second and third person inquiries).

## **10.2 WHO AM I? INTRODUCING DEON CLOETE**

I was born on 28 August 1980 in Vereeniging, South Africa to Susan and Ben Cloete. My father recalled that I was in quite a hurry to be born that day (being in a hurry remains a theme to this present day), and this caused him some distress, resulting in him mixing-up the dates on my birth certificate, and writing down 29 August instead of 28 August. To this day, I use this as a wonderful excuse to celebrate both my legal birth date and my actual biological birthday, two days in a row.

I am the middle child of three siblings. My sister, Hanlie, is the oldest and I have a younger brother, Derik. Being the son of a Christian reverend, I experienced an exciting childhood, regularly moving to different parts of the country. My high school years were spent in Humansdorp (Eastern Cape) – a farmer's community close to Jeffrey's Bay, South Africa's famous surfing mecca.

During high school, I delivered newspapers early in the morning, and on Wednesday and Friday afternoons, I worked for the local jeweller in town. The jeweller trained me in basic watch and jewellery repairs, sales and engraving. After high school, I was unsure of what to study and decided to work for a high-end luxury jeweller in Cape Town. The firm offered me the opportunity to complete a part-time diploma in watch and clock making through the British Horological Institute. Reflecting back on this experience now, it gives me insight into how the Newtonian clockwork worldview initiated the start of the industrial revolution. The major technological breakthrough of that era was the possibility of keeping accurate time and the idea that one could capture time with a timepiece. The concept of time was reduced to the Newtonian worldview's understanding of taming nature for the advancement of human species. The ability to measure things was made possible through the development of watches and clocks within that period. Without capturing time, the technology of today would be limited. In a similar vein, we have all the luxuries of the modern era because of the Newtonian technological advancements, which will continue to require this type of thinking implicit in producing this type of knowledge.

At the age of 23, while working as a jeweller, I started studying B.Com Industrial Psychology through UNISA (distance learning). The B.Com included accounting subjects of which I could make no sense and had no passion for, and after the first six months, I transitioned to a BA Degree in Psychological Counselling. Studying part-time and working within organisations held a great advantage since I could apply the psychological ideas from the learning process to my workplace context and experiences. One thing that I found hard to understand was how limiting psychological theories were in viewing human beings, and the psychosocial aspects of relational functioning. Interpreting this now, I see the continuation of Newtonian thinking in psychological theory development and wonder how appropriate this view of the world is in terms of understanding complex human beings. My view, as discussed with the OCDCoP, is that psychology has reduced the human being too mechanical and computer-like principles. The metaphors used in mainstream psychology clearly illustrate this, for instance, the way some interpret neurological functioning in terms of computer processing.

My work experience did not only include the jewellery trade, but I was also deeply involved with a non-profit organisation that works with community development issues regarding psychosocial development and training. This allowed me to gain experience as a social and organisational change agent in South Africa, the Middle East and Eastern Europe. I completed my Honours degree in Psychology (UNISA) while I was still working as a consultant, implementing the quality business management system (ISO 9001:2000) in organisations. I had the privilege to meet my wife, Maria, while completing my Master's Degree in Clinical Pastoral Psychology (M.Th.) at Stellenbosch University. She is a clinical psychologist and we met at one of the psychiatric ward rounds during our internship rotation at Stikland Hospital. I think my degree in Pastoral Psychology has been of great assistance in the consulting, coaching, leadership and managerial roles I have held since.

Finally, I will provide a description of the world I would like to live in. I imagine a world where organisational communities become transformative and innovative spaces for human well-being and self-actualisation. I believe a healthy society, one that can embrace the inherent complexity of our world, will develop resilient ways of living and working that will transform how we think about business, and discover creative sustainable business practices.

### **10.3 REFLECTIONS**

The following reflections form part of my (i) research journal inscriptions; (ii) Post-Group Reflections I voice recorded after each workshop during the OCDCoP co-operative inquiry; and (iii) reflections on the possible areas of third-person inquiry.

#### **10.3.1 First Person Inquiry Reflections**

During the research, I recorded my reflections continuously on several formats as part of the research journal entries. I had a physical old-fashioned diary in which I wrote reflections on the vast array of experiences, thoughts and feelings I was going through. I also used my smartphone to record important discussions in voice and written formats. Apart from these two forms of entries, I

also used my laptop computer to record notes on events, lectures and readings of books and scientific journals. This created a huge volume of first-person reflections and therefore I only present excerpts of reflections, which were of most significance and importance to the study of its duration. Here are examples of these reflections that relate to each year since the registration of the doctoral research project in January 2013.

- **Significant personal reflection in 2013**

Reflections on participation in the M.Phil. lectures on a complexity approach to business ethics (26 February 2013):

*Whenever we model complex systems, we are forced to reduce certain things. This causes a fallout and certain things are left out without knowing exactly to what extent they will have an impact or whether you can even know what you leave out in modelling a complex system. This means that whether we are aware of it or not there is a certain normativity involved in our making of choices in the modelling process. So to understand why we do what we do, we need to explore how we create these models, and what the emergence entails in the formation of identity. I wonder if this 'certain normativity' that is mentioned can relate to a type of spirituality? It presents a way of being in the modelling process and to what extent there is congruence in what is known/not known and what arises from the model that was created i.e. the new identity position. Doesn't this cause a new role identity as well? My perception of this complex understanding is that the formation process of identity entails a shift in interactions and context, and therefore shifts in the position of the self. In terms of my research story, I think this compels a journey into the body, a journey from the head to the heart. In business, the idea of 'homo economicus' has dominated the landscape of ideas. But is there a danger if we allow capital to shape our moral fibre i.e. to shape our spirituality and identity? A type of D.N.A. that infiltrated our societal progress. In my mind I can see this movement across the centuries from the power situated in faith communities (church) to government and today I think multi-nationals are more powerful than governments because they hold the money and power to change policy decisions and effect real change. Has business become the new religion? What are the implications for our identity and spiritualities of the day? How does the "I-want-it-now" mentality compare to Cilliers' "importance for a certain slowness?" Can we distinguish between personal and corporate/organisational identity? How does the ecological schizophrenic behaviour of employees affect their work identity in relation to their wider personal identities? Their spiritual identities? Who are we in all of this? Who am I in all of this? What can the emergence of organisational identity tell us about the nature of our responsibilities and spiritualities within the workplace towards change initiatives?*

- **Significant personal reflection in 2014**

Reflections on participation in the 12<sup>th</sup> Annual International Globalisation for the Common Good Initiative (GCGI) conference with the theme "The Value of Values: Spiritual Wisdom in Everyday Life" hosted in Oxford, UK (4 September 2014):

*The participation over the last few days in the GCGI conference has given me new insights on how scholars and practitioners work with the notion spirituality in economics and management. The question is no longer if spirituality can save the world (naïve question), but how can one live in a world of dominance, greed and competition. How can I live in a VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous) world? How can I live in a world where there is a loss of trust, a loss of foundations? I like what Prof. Luk Bouckaert said in the keynote*

*address about reframing spirituality as a public good. Can spirituality be a heuristic for solving economic problems as he mentioned? If spirituality is a way of living connected to a way of thinking that originates from deep experience of interconnectedness, can it unlock our sense of change in organisations to a new ethics? Can it become the intrinsic motivation for unlocking inner meaning and spiritual self? I wonder what a complexity perspective on this might be. Through my own experience of being part of this inter-faith community these past few days and having contemplated the discussions we had, I wonder if spirituality is not just your deep experience of interconnectedness. In my own life the deep experience and ability to deal with the fragmentation, standing in the disconnectedness, taking up a position towards the disintegration and associated 'foundationlessness' of being human is also part of spirituality. What will happen if spirituality is not just a public good in terms of economics, but also a relational good in terms of it coming first and it being the glue for all the complex relational networks we are engaged in?*

- **Significant personal reflection in 2015**

Reflections on participation in the USB M.B.A. electives on complexity by Dave Snowden and Dr Bridgette Kleymann (11 November 2015):

*How do you change people's beliefs or what Snowden calls their dispositions? The classical approach has been through theory informed practice, but what about practice informed theory. The argument from my perspective is whether 'sophia' (theoretical knowledge) can change people's disposition or rather through 'phronesis' (practical wisdom)? This reminds me of the book by Bent Flyvbjerg I read on 'Making Social Science Matter' during the writing of my proposal. It is through the exclusion of 'phronesis' that the social sciences have mainly been preoccupied with technical wisdom. But has this focus not destroyed the exact thing we were trying to find in knowledge production? Mastering technical knowledge as an explicit reward has destroyed our intrinsic motivation or beliefs that drive the practical wisdom. This has made us focus on the development of rules and policy in a very rigidly enforced way, and then leads to people just subverting the broken rules that do not work from a practical wisdom perspective through making use of heuristics — which are what people use on the other side of the broken rules. These rituals reinforce our actions and therefore change is very onerous, because there is a role alignment according to our identity through these rituals. It this is true what does it mean for exploring our ways of being-becoming praxis (spiritual identity) that informs our role identity? Is it possible to explore the heuristics underlying our OCD practice in our OCDCoP group? What does it mean for what we have found thus far? Does the heuristics we developed present a complexity-based perspective or are they just complexity-informed? Snowden confirms that one cannot create or make change or culture in organisations because it can only evolve to a point. From what I understand, I think we through the probing of the relational networks (the evolutionary potential of the present) gather significant evidence of the way we do things that reveal our behaviour. This tells us something about our way of being, which for me relates more to the inner dimensions of action, and therefore I think it was worthwhile exploring the emergence of my own and the participants' own ways of being-becoming (spiritual identity praxis). This revealed the themes and patterns we use for making decisions in change initiatives. This confirms my hunch that these explorations into what Snowden calls the 'evolutionary potential of the present' have given us a greater idea of what we need to dampen within ourselves in relation to the complex relational systems we are involved in. It also gave us a clearer sense of what to amplify in our change disposition. Reflecting on the lectures and my notes, I am relieved to have found support for the direction the co-operative inquiry took us. Staying with the evolving nature of our explorations of our spiritualities and their interrelatedness to our identities in relation to change*



*processes have at least given me hope that writing this up (in terms of the thesis), that there is value in exploring a complexity perspective. I do fear that the research group may not all have been on the exact wavelength in our understanding of complexity thinking. Somehow the participants who wanted rules and simple answers to ways dealing with complex systems (following the Newtonian paradigm) in their practice were showing signs of a growing realisation that there is no such thing as ‘managing or controlling’ complex systems change, i.e. a silver bullet which can solve their OCD practice problems. I think we did learn that we could develop or at least move towards the re-thinking through re-training our feelings (praxis) when engaging with complex change. Returning to the difference between ‘sophia’ and ‘phronesis’, I feel that spiritual identity from a complexity perspective might just be the domain of exploration that provides greater access to the underlying dispositional causes that propel the inability to think in terms of complexity. More importantly, exploring spiritual identity, I believe could show how to live and develop a mode of inner-being within complex change initiatives. Such a practical wisdom of ‘spiritual identity praxis’ could allow change agents to know themselves (their inner-being) and their tendencies towards ways of becoming that are not self-reflexive of individual or organisational levels of change.*

- **Significant personal reflection in 2016**

Reflection after supervision meeting with supervisor — Dr Rika Preiser (7 and 21 July 2016):

*I must have designed hundreds of frameworks for the chapter outline of the thesis! I have looked at other co-operative inquiries, qualitative studies, studies using a complexity approach. I have read journal articles, I have developed outlines according to trans-disciplinary approaches, and I have considered classical outlines. It seems that I will have to be a bricoleur. I will have to put all of these different ideas together in a way that will create an overall framework for building on the ideas of others. It will have to be a complexity-informed thesis, because I feel I have to be true to the inherent paradoxes involved when writing a thesis in terms of complexity, i.e. having to reduce the reality of experiences and forms of knowing to literature in a highly structured reductive doctoral thesis format. Complexity argues for post-reductionism, while I have to continuously find a way to reduce my experiences, the group’s experiences and the theoretical framework into a highly structured reduced version of the entire four years evolving process and dissertation. I will have to find a way in which I can convey the idea that the implications of complexity for the notions of identity and spirituality are now based on a critical complexity understanding of the complex ‘I’. I will have to argue that spiritual identity is not just the integration and inherent interconnectedness of two otherwise unrelated concepts (spirituality and identity), but in actual fact from this new view, not a bodily perspective, nor is it a mind perspective. I think it is in the interconnection between spirituality and identity that alternative ways of being-becoming arise. Rika has suggested that this ‘spiritual identity praxis’ or alternative ways of being-becoming might be likened to the ‘foundational grounds on which resilience is built’. I have not attempted to interpret the concept in terms of resilience before, because of my psychological background and understanding of the concept. This may have impacted on me not considering the connection of the concept to a wider social-ecological or system understanding. Therefore, I regard spiritual identity praxis as an ecology of being-becoming and more than just sense-making, it is a meaning-making process that relates to praxis of the interrelation between systems of self and systems of belief (experience included). It relates to phronesis, habitus or practical wisdom in the living experience of our inner-being-becoming in the interaction with ‘outer-being-becoming’. I believe it is a new way of being-becoming because it relates to a whole-making-process, i.e. the integrative potential inherent to it. It stands in contrast to the movement of reductive-disjunctive world of fragmentation of systems of self,*



*belief and experience, and can maybe be likened to something similar as in Edgar Morin's self-eco-re-organisation process. It includes a re-purposing, re-making, re-authoring, re-discovery of what it means to be human in a complex world and therefore an entire shift in 'being' a change agent and the role of the change agent.*

### **10.3.2 Second Person Inquiry Reflections**

The second person inquiry reflections presented below relate to the immediate reflections I made in my personal diary after the OCDCoP group workshops during the co-operative inquiry.

- **Workshop 1**

Excerpts from entries made on 9 August 2013:

*What an intense first workshop experience! I had quite a struggle to get everything ready for the day, including the tea, coffee, lunch and all the other refreshments.*

*It was great to see everyone I previously met with personally and invited to take part in this OCDCoP group. It immediately seemed as if everyone got along well, and some even knew each other from previous interactions prior to this group.*

*The introductions went well and everyone was excited to start. I was pre-occupied with all the other small details of assisting everyone with a cup of coffee and setting up the projector. After the first initial discussions and introductory conversation, I launched into the formal programme of the day. I started by discussing the practicalities, things like the toilet facilities and refreshments, and giving everyone an idea of how the workshops will be facilitated and utilised.*

*This was followed by a short introduction from everyone guided by the following questions: (i) what occupies your time? (ii) where are you from? (iii) what do you like/dislike? and (iv) why are you here?*

*I noticed some group members answered with great openness to the process and others remained more superficial and factual. What was interesting was how some people answered the questions specifically related to their work, and some generalised a bit more regarding personal preferences. The initial group dynamics gave me insight into who was secure in their sense of self and who needed to present a rather idealised version in their first encounters with others. I was pleasantly surprised by the overall level of maturity in the group, considering how people, in general, feel quite exposed in circumstances where they know we will go into in-depth participatory sharing.*

*The question regarding 'why you are here' was of special interest to me. Some gave, what appeared to me to be, selfish reasons for joining such a group. I also got the impression from some that they were not here to learn from me, or from the group, but to see what they could gain from this process to benefit their work as OCD practitioners. I personally dislike it when I feel others want to make use of other people's theories, or intellectual property, without sharing or giving something themselves. This prompted me with the idea that I would suggest a ground rule, that if we use each other's sayings/words, that we should acknowledge the source/author / the intellectual property of the study/person. That we have to be ethical throughout the study with regards to each other's work and the topic at hand.*

*It was encouraging that the majority of group members really wanted to learn through the process of self-discovery, as they had mentioned in my initial conversations with them. Some admitted they felt guilty when we could not finalise the first date to initiate the workshop. They did not want me to feel like I could not get people to commit to the study. Some admitted their participation is for the benefit of their own spiritual journey, which is fine, since I do not necessarily have something to teach them, as they are experts in their field of organisational development, but I do have, my own unique contribution, which I believe, will be of value to them.*

*Theoretical reflections:*

One member started challenging me on what I was saying, complaining that I was making strong statements, and questioning whether they are facts, and kept on challenging me. Some of the group members started defending me, and I tried to avoid the confrontation. I then tried to convey the duality in the understanding of the meaning of the word 'continuity'. Different meanings of the word were explained and there were some misunderstandings in the process. I sensed it was a mature group, and that we would have interesting group dynamics. Vonnie intervened and someone made the comment that there is always a duality in words, at least two perspectives. I explained how I had made sense of it, and reiterated that their viewpoints are also valid. I stressed the importance of noting the duality in ourselves as humans and a duality in our thinking. One member wanted to know if this a proven fact, generalisable to the whole world. I was just making my point of view known to the group, and this became an important aspect throughout the discussion – the fact that no one has the only truth, the right truth and valid truth. Vonnie, the psychologist, made the point that no one's perspective is the right or only truth. I thought I might approach Vonnie to play the role of facilitating the emotional tensions that might arise in the group. Otherwise, I thought the group members can nominate each other, and then that person can monitor the emotional climate in the group or the mood. I wanted everyone to take up their co-facilitation roles and to rotate them.

*Methodological reflections:*

I felt it was difficult to manage the available time we had, since some members had a lot to say, while others were not getting an equal opportunity to speak.

The group was excited by the suggested research methodology; some said the co-operative inquiry approach is similar to "Theory-U" by Otto Scharmer. I clarified that Scharmer's work is difficult to use as an academic theory, because of a lack of references as to how he developed the theory. In my opinion, I felt he must have used or built on Heron's work of co-operative inquiry.

We really struggled to get a date to meet again! We wanted to meet quite soon to keep the momentum going. We considered the question if everyone should take part in all the workshops every time we meet. This was imperative and not negotiable for me. I decided to think it over, and to talk to Professor Schurink about it.

We discussed some dates and times we could possibly meet, for example, Saturdays, or weekday evenings, on a Tuesday or a Thursday. I realised the logistical arrangements were going to be a very challenging aspect. We also discussed the joining criteria for group members, Lucille said it is the nature of life that not everyone will be able to be there every time. I felt the methodology requires co-researchers, therefore we need everyone to participate and be available; someone suggested Skype meetings in case we could not meet in person. I explained that this would mean I would need to write about virtual reality and the role of technological media in research. This would further complicate the research methodology. We also discussed giving informed consent, the commitment and benefits of being involved in the research, the contracting, and that they might have to make a sacrifice or give up other commitments and obligations in order to attend meetings.

*The challenges experienced were:*

- To get the people going! They were all enjoying each other company and the introductions, but simultaneously we were running out of time to get into the main content and purpose of the meeting for the day.
- I knew we had a diverse group. I showed them how complexity could accommodate different perspectives, but it was quite challenging encountering conflict during the first workshop.
- Some of the members have encountered complexity theory, but not to the extent that I have dealt with it on an academic level. Lucille said their International OD conference "Flourish" is about Complexity. She said I could maybe even present at the conference if I was interested.
- We had different spiritual/religious perspectives: some liberal, some more conservative, and I thought we had nice diversity in the group.
- We discussed some religious practices and the question of how open and self-disclosing we should be about our own beliefs / spiritual views and experiences.

- *I thought that I might say I am very open about my beliefs and that this might encourage some other voices to share.*
- *I felt we needed to build on the group ground rules, facilitation roles and group dynamics.*

- **Workshop 2**

Excerpts from entries made on 24 August 2013:

*I arrived early at the venue in Rondebosch called Little Stream. An old farmhouse next to a little stream that runs through it. I set up my projector and equipment for the day in the large room overlooking the little stream and terraces. After a short introduction, I asked the group to give a round of reflections on their experiences since our last meeting together. It was worrisome to hear that many of the group members were extremely busy and that they did not get around to either the journal entries or reflecting on our initiating meeting. It was also good to hear that most thought it was a great experience. I re-emphasised the three strands of empowerment and asked members to take up certain roles to facilitate. I keep on feeling that I need to make sure the basic methodological challenges of doing co-operative inquiry is well communicated so that we can work towards a genuine co-created launching statement. Most of the day was spent in inquiring about our understanding of what is meant by spiritual identity in small groups discussions and sharing it back to the larger group. I hoped that we could also get some clarity within the group on the possible outcomes of the research and to develop a basic action plan. I feel frustrated that we could not achieve this. We also fell short in fully discussing the options underlying the data generation.*

*Methodology:*

*A particular discussion that was challenging for me was raised by Lucille. She challenged us on the diversity of the group regarding the gender ratios and different types of spiritualities involved. She pointed out there were only two women that were part of the group and we mostly presented the Judeo-Christian worldviews. This was a valid observation. I discussed and clarified that this type of research does not necessarily have to be representative of the larger population in order to generalise findings, but it was about finding people that had interest in complexity, spirituality and OCD. As part of this discussion, I used the opportunity to encourage members to bring their whole selves to the group (heart, head, and hands) and to take up roles for facilitating it. I appointed Vonnie for timekeeping. Janet assisted with facilitating some process issues. I also encouraged the group to undergo a paradigm shift in their understanding of how to conduct research. Co-operative inquiry was different from traditional research where one lead researcher has to make all decisions. I stressed that this type of research was participative and that group members could engage in co-operative basis regarding decisions.*

*Topic – spiritual identity formation in organisations:*

*I enjoyed the group discussions. We discussed some ideas and approaches to understanding spiritual identity. I tried to explain to the group that the research moves beyond the levels paradigm, where we fragment the topic into measurable parts, but rather that we should include the several dimensions at play into the research question or statement. We also discussed the notions of paradox, both-and-thinking. It was encouraging to have a vibrant discussion. I was glad to see that the question of "who am I" in a spiritual sense was seen as important for the research. We raised many valuable questions including the practical use of spirituality in the workplace, consciousness and developmental approaches. During all these discussions, I found myself trying to help the group reflect back on what was being said. I also tried to make the group aware of the group processes, especially about participation, finding autonomic voices and trusting their own experiences. I stressed that it was not about just sharing literature they have read but acknowledging their own value and worth of their lived experiences.*

*The highlight was the co-creation of the launching statement! I am so relieved that we were able to make this a genuine group effort. I think the launching statement is handy because it keeps the focus on our spiritual identity in OCD practice, but also has the intent to develop alternative OCD practice.*

*The last part of our time together was spent on trying to unpack what we will explore first and what action plan would be best to explore. The whole day was a success and I felt this was a great start to co-developing a launching statement and action plan.*

- **Workshop 3**

Excerpts from entries made on 18 September 2013:

*Tonight's meeting was at Dave's house during the week. The meeting started off on a sombre note as Janet shared the news that her father had passed away. This sobriety helped us get into the bulk of the discussion for the evening, and encouraged us to share our experiences on a deep heart-to-heart basis.*

*We had great discussions and unpacked the research launching statement into personal or group research questions. Sharing in pairs on several occasions with different partners helped the group members to get to know each other, and to get to know each other's perspectives. Lucille came up with the idea of "the thinking, behind our thinking". I suggested the importance of connecting the "thinking, behind our thinking" with the "doing, behind our doing" (praxis). We ran out of time again, and everyone left in a hurry because it was a weekday evening and work the next day...*

- **Workshop 4**

Excerpts from entries made on 19 October 2013:

*This is my voice recording on the way to Langebaan for a friend's wedding just after we completed workshop 4.*

*It went well, there was some tension, moments of uncertainty and frustration, and periods where we felt stuck. Janet co-facilitated with me. Vonnice and Johann arrived early at 8 am while the meeting was scheduled for 9 am. This caused a little anxiety for me, as I felt pressured to talk with them while trying to get everything ready for the day. Earlier that morning I was still printing my notes at the business school and I forgot my notes at home that we had used and created last time. So I had to drive like a maniac to get to the venue on time. The projector was also not set up and all this resulted in me being a bit flustered!*

*I did not know how to start, since I wanted participants to co-participate, co-operate, and during previous meetings they were waiting for me, so I opened the meeting by suggesting people occupy different roles of the weatherman (facilitates the emotional strand), the social / group engineer (the political strand), and the rocket scientist (the cognitive strand). It took a while for them to understand what I meant, and it took a while for them to volunteer to occupy the different roles. I think they feared exposure, and some suggested that the different roles should just emerge, while some said we should appoint them. This caused tension between some participants – seeking structure, and others in the group wanting things to just emerge. After appointing facilitators, I asked the group for a starting ritual and Lucille volunteered to do a ritual. She had African sage (which traditional African sangomas and witch doctors use to welcome the spirits, with a lovely fresh veld or bush-like smell). It was a moment of quiet and peace. I enjoyed the silence and the smell.*

*Methodological and Theoretical reflections:*

*We reflected on the experience of journaling and reading, the highlights and low-lights.*

*The group disagreed about the journaling format. Some said it was too structured, others liked it, and someone said I was "over-structuring" it and it needs to be a more emergent process. One person said I was "deadening" it with my agenda and outcomes. The suggestion was made that I need to focus more on the interpersonal aspects and the group would benefit from more time to talk about their personal experiences, opinions, etc.*

*I felt frustrated with the group not getting around to some of the readings I left in the Dropbox folder. Only two people actually completed the prescribed reading. Their comments were that it was a great experience reading the article on philosophical arguments about complexity, but that it was “not their thing”. I decided to discuss/reflect on it later. I felt a bit stuck and it seemed the group questioned whether the journaling and reading were necessary.*

*One member said I was giving too much information. He called it “downloading” in terms of Theory U. The group felt I must rather just facilitate what was happening, and only mention afterwards how the methodology was demonstrated or illustrated within the process.*

*Janet gave some ideas and advice on how to go about facilitating the group process. I found it very helpful since she gave some practical ideas and I wanted more collaboration. It was encouraging to see people take co-responsibility for group process facilitation. Originally, I thought I would start with a group round general check-in (climate check-in). Then I would give a short refresher on the methodology and highlight the inquiry question for the day. My initial idea was to do things according to what I had planned, but I did not quite know if this was still appropriate now. I realised I had to read Heron’s book on facilitation urgently, to gain more practical ideas of how to facilitate the metaphorical or experiential or relational interactions we have in the group.*

*I was quite pleased by the group’s first co-developed conceptual map of spiritual identity. I think as the first presentational knowing it was a well-grounded effort and was promising for further explorations.*

*Group experience reflections:*

*Overall, I felt it went well! By the end of the meeting, one member pointed out in front of other members that I was too flustered, should relax, and that I should not try so hard to structure things. I felt humiliated on a personal level. I had the courage to welcome the criticism but also checked if the member was aware of his/her own internal processes, since I was receiving lots of critique towards the process, as well as directed to me personally. I acknowledged the critique and the feedback of the other group members. Afterwards, Vonnie and Johann congratulated us both on having the openness to share the tension and frustration we had. The other member left without greeting me, and I wondered whether it was a painful experience for her. I made a note to follow up with the member directly.*

*I felt the personal confrontation of the one group member disrupted the process a bit, and it challenged me to distinguish between what the member’s feelings were and what I felt was more a personal attack on my facilitation style.*

*Thinking back, I could have used the interaction more constructively, than allowing it to become a personality clash in front of the group. The tension in the group was difficult for me. I acknowledged I have to work on certain aspects such as over-structuring, over-controlling, over-stressing and letting go a bit more, but I also do not know what to do with only having a limited time, and so much we need to do. I know I demanded a heavy workload from the members in terms of their contribution to time and effort, but we only have 10 workshops, and we do have to make progress within this period. There is a difficult tension between process and progress, allowing emergence without forcing it. Perhaps the tension is in myself and therefore may be reflected in the group? I often feel I do not make enough progress regarding my own character and spiritual development, but perhaps I am doing it too wilfully and not willingly (just allowing it to emerge by letting go). This is part of my journey, and I have been thinking about this the past few weeks.*

*I am wondering how I can be more aware of this tension and my own projections. Maybe I should ask the group to enhance my awareness throughout this process to help me let go of my tension and fears. However, I also need to have the necessary structure to achieve the research goals of the project, as well as the emergent part of it. I think the tension between me and the other member was good, although I am not sure what to do about Stan that decided to leave the group. I suggested to the group that I will re-invite him, but I am not sure in terms of the methodology if he would be able to catch up. I think he can, but I really want the group to read the articles and become more involved in terms of the three strands of empowerment.*

*Reflection on my experience regarding the journaling:*



*Thinking back on this issue now, I realise how my fear of not following the exact procedures of co-operative inquiry correctly brought tension to the group. I did over structure the sessions and wanted to make sure the participants stay committed to their resolutions of reading the suggested materials and doing their personal reflective journaling concerning the inquiry topic. I wanted the participants to honestly reflect on why it was so difficult to get around to reflecting about the topic they all confessed was so important to them - their spiritual identity.*

- **Workshop 5**

Excerpts from entries made on 23 November 2013:

*I was a bit tense and anxious this morning. I arrived early, and tried to visualise the day by organising some of the milestones I would like us to reach in my thoughts. The slogan in the Christian Brothers Conference room caught my attention: "We will find peace on earth when we find peace with the earth". To find peace within yourself is to find peace within the human condition. This was a challenge for the group and myself.*

*I sensed that some members were deflecting the importance of delving into the depth of the human condition. I decided to share my thoughts with the group so that we could discuss it together and reach a consensus. Dave arrived first; he gave me a hug and asked about my expectations for the day. Dave told me his idea of a group exercise for today, and we spoke a bit about the tension and the member that was leaving the group. Dave spoke about his felt sense that we needed to look after ourselves, within this process. He was supportive. Just as we were about to start, the member that we thought had left the group, arrived outside on the porch. It was an awkward moment, and we joked about having a welcoming party for him. We then discussed the expectations for the day. We discussed the human spirit as a fundamental concept in our explorations and why are we doing the research, and where we are going with the inquiry.*

*I felt the tension in the air, and the 'leaving member' not agreeing.*

*The rest of the group responded well, and each one shared their typical emotional states. I showed them the special inquiry skills (being present, congruent, meta-intentionality) and this seemed to resonate well with the group. I explained it is like a mature way of being, a type of spirituality in the inquiry process.*

*I was grateful for Rudi who stepped up and took on a facilitation role with me. Taking ownership of our emotional states was empowering. The group challenged me not to be too defensive, which was difficult since it felt like 'the leaving member' was challenging me directly.*

*Methodological and Theoretical reflections:*

*I felt that, in this storming phase, I needed to show how complexity theory would interpret this experience in comparison to the Newtonian worldview that reduced things if things got uncomfortable. The group seemed to understand and grasp the whole idea of "difference creates identity in complexity".*

*I also used complexity theory to explain why I think it was so difficult to get around to reflecting on their own spiritual identity praxis or 'why is it so difficult to get around to it'. This discussion made the group realise that they were not taking this journey seriously enough: their spirituality and their reflection on it. Some group members spoke about the journaling, they complained about it again, and I challenged them that they had agreed to it. Lucille simplified matters, by suggesting that the goal was that we should journal about our personal experiences and our OCD experiences. The importance was capturing the significant experiences that happen and reflecting on it.*

*I think the discussion on the difference between Newtonian thinking and complexity thinking helped the group realise the challenge of connecting their identity, to their spirituality in the workplace, in such a way that they can find a meaningful approach to stay congruent and authentic throughout the process.*

*I realised that some of the group members just wanted to know where we are heading – or be sure of what we are going to achieve. I explained to them the importance of being present, the use of co-operative inquiry process and special inquiry skills.*

*Many members did not read the articles. It was obvious that they were only starting to grasp complexity theory now.*

*The group process of sharing their personal experiences after lunch was very encouraging. Everyone shared their personal history about the development of their spiritual identity. Some members spoke about it in a very candid manner, and I sensed it was not connected to the heart space. Others started sharing on a deeply personal level. Some shared their movement from brokenness to healing, and how the integration connected to their faith. One person, in particular, shared authentically, powerfully, and on a deeply personal level, (there were some tears). Some shared poems that they had written, and acknowledged their pain of connection to the Christian religion, and what injury the experience has caused them. Some held great anger against Calvinistic Afrikaans ideology.*

*I struggled to share my personal story because I did not want to make anyone feel excluded and so I ended up sharing very broadly and not as deeply as I would have liked to. I did, however, share about my own experiences, my feelings of brokenness, and my movement to what I called "the Wounded Healer". Some shared their stories by making use of strong religious language and others used more generalised non-religious language.*

*We had different opinions on what a theme or general pattern might be in terms of our spiritual identity formation. We were unsure of what to include and what to exclude. I cautioned the group not to fall into reductionist traps of wanting to converge too quickly or reduce things into neat categories (Newtonian thinking).*

*It was encouraging to see the group and myself grow in terms of 'letting go' and growing our skills in applying complexity thinking in a critical manner, by noticing Newtonian habits of mind and pointing it out to other group members.*

*I felt some members were starting to take up their facilitation roles and helping me to manage the time and allowing each person an equal opportunity to speak.*

*The group congratulated me on my patience and sticking with the topic at hand. I was thankful for how vulnerable and openly some of the members shared their personal history and really appreciated their co-operation in this regard.*

*It was an exhausting day since it was deeply personal and thus difficult territory! That is why I believe complexity perspectives take us beyond the 'either/or' to the 'both / and' position (non-duality). This opens up relational thinking and doing, which was slowly emerging in the group.*

- **Workshop 6**

Excerpts from entries made on 1 March 2014:

*Some people were late for the workshop and I felt frustrated! I lost two participants in one day! Apart from that, the venue was a disaster. I booked a boardroom at the J.S. Gerike university library and the air conditioner did not work, so it was steaming hot inside. It was disorganised, the librarian on duty could not find the key to our room at first, the other person on duty was off ill, and so we were moved from room to room.*

*Lucille facilitated the Enneagram as an OCD and spiritual identity praxis discovery tool or model to assist us in our own research journey. We applied it to our spiritual identities and own worldviews. The whole session opened up a lot of deep reflection about things we had not thought about before and how it relates to our own ways of being and doing. It was meaningful.*

*I gave another overview of where we are currently, how we got here and asked where we want to go from here. I felt an emphasis on really getting into complexity thinking was necessary and the group found it helpful. The emphasis on processes of emergence, to challenge our own motivations and forms of complex spiritual identity, and how it is closely linked to identity was a very thought-provoking session. However, the whole experience was hampered by the conditions of the venue and moving to different locations more than once. The room arrangements were very frustrating - a lot of time went to waste, due to taking breaks because of the heat.*



*I think this also linked to my personality that wants to get more things done and go deeper than might be realistically possible in a short time. I need to explore why I feel this urge or need to do that.*

*I felt encouraged that the group wants to really get into the work and try to finish the study in a meaningful way. No one did the reflection journaling during the time we were apart (except one member). I just explained to them they are the ones losing out, but I felt so am I. I hope to still formulate the new action plan, send it out to the group, and get them to do their action plan in a rigorous manner.*

*I am on my way to my friend's bachelors, very frustrated and exhausted by how the day went, but glad it is finally over!*

- **Workshop 7**

Excerpts from entries made on 17 May 2014:

*We moved into the experiential phase of trying to deepen our experiences and presenting some of our experiential data. The theme was co-creating our practical experience of spiritual identity formation in the workplace and practical tools in the workplace.*

*We started with coffee and rusks and catching up. It was a beautiful day at Christian Brothers Centre. I reminded everyone to take up the facilitation roles and the status of our current progress and focus of the research. The "reassemble to share phase" was a wonderful and powerful session. We just connected and were synchronised.*

*Methodological reflections:*

*We needed to create our own language, since developing contextual knowledge means creating new ways of conveying the situatedness of the experience. I was really encouraged by Rudi's questions: "What are we really great at as OCD practitioners? What am I doing when I feel most comfortable/beautiful in my practice? What can OD practitioners do to facilitate something beautiful and long-lasting in organisations?" These were meaningful questions.*

*We developed the vocabulary for new forms of language using words like awareness, being, quality of being, knowing who you are, deconstructing, co-creating, paradox, difference, playfulness, engaging, the awakening, discovery process, the need for sense-making frameworks.*

*I was interested to listen to the case studies everyone presented. Everyone gave wonderful practical examples of their workplace experiences in relation to their spiritual identity.*

*From Dave's coaching in a school, I understood how difficult it is to create awareness when one leader is very dominating within a system. This opened up the idea of shifting yourself in order to shift the other in the system, and the need to sharpen your own awareness, to sense the person's spiritual position. To raise your own awareness of what their spirituality could look like.*

*The whole day we also thought about reconfiguring the questions. Are we still asking/answering the right questions in the research. We started exploring the questions "What is authentic self or spiritual identity really? What is it not like?" The plan for the week was to have time for reflection.*

*We had a wonderful lunch at the dam and spent the time discussing the questions of how complexity thinking and Newtonian thinking influenced our way of thinking about spirituality.*

*Maria, my wife, was so wonderful; she helped me in a team effort to make them feel comfortable and cared for.*

*I just felt everything emerged effortlessly throughout the day. Maybe, I had started trusting the process, and felt comfortable with what to do? I showed them how we are already doing the theory. This was wonderful! We had an amazing time of just connecting today!*

*Questions we are exploring were: "How should we think about the authentic self/selves? Is there in-authentic self/selves?"*

*We also had some time to do the journaling at the venue. I feel very relaxed and comfortable, and hope that next Saturday we could build on today's work and put together a framework that describes spiritual identity praxis (practical skills for OCD practitioners to facilitate spiritual identity and change in the workplace).*

*From Vonnie and Johann's case, I learnt how important the history of a system is; and the problem of trying new methods in an old system that might not be ready or have the necessary awareness to work with such a new method.*

*Janet gave an example of her more personal experience of working and trying to be a change agent, but it is not working the way she would have liked. The importance of self-care in being a change agent was highlighted as being very important.*

*Rudi gave a practical example of how to facilitate the authentic self or spiritual self, and how this process took place within a client he had coached.*

- **Workshop 8**

Excerpts from entries made on 24 May 2014:

*Maria came to help me again, to set up all the posters and previous work we had completed, all the examples and experiences everyone had shared. I wrote down the co-created vocabulary we had shared last week. We spoke about our week, things we had experienced over coffee and rusks.*

*We were stuck today! Some people wanted to rush through things, others were happy to do their own thing. We struggled to get into the focus of the inquiry. After I gave them an overview and the proposal of what the research question could be for today, I showed them that we neglected to give feedback after the one workshop (Workshop 5) where the question was about our spiritual identity and how we would describe it. We decided to go into more detail on that.*

*Rudi suggested we interview each other by making use of a role-play. He suggested asking, "How do we view spirituality, our identity and then our spiritual identity, and what does it look like in our change praxis? Does it influence our different beliefs?"*

*It was a great roundtable discussion, where everyone had to ask questions. Everyone had an opportunity to clarify if they were uncertain of what the other person that was answering was saying. We had interesting discussions. I tried to understand different positions on spirituality by listening to the answers of the role-plays. I tried to put together the themes that emerged from our discussion by starting to jot down key observations and patterns.*

*During lunch, we discussed the practical examples on what feedback we can give the previous week that relates to our experiences with clients, and how spirituality could be understood in the workplace or how we work with spirituality in the workplace. Everyone shared practical experiences from the workplace and were questioned, "How that was spiritual"? We co-created some heuristics from their feedback.*

*I had some great flashes of insight and tried to draw some parallels between theory and practice issues. We had to guard against a religious debate that wanted to derail us from the focus of the day.*

*The group did not take up their facilitation roles well sometimes. I had to do a lot of the timekeeping, managing the group process, emotional states etc. This was tiring! We did not get time for journaling directly after we finished as we had hoped to do. It was disappointing.*

*I wondered if we should leave the questions as they were, and how we could go about compiling the research report.*

*Rudi gave his shorthand version. We decided we would meet again on 19 July and have a Skype conversation to discuss details on how to finalise things for our meetings in September or October.*

*I felt that we were not as effective as we could have been during the workshop. The group did not take up their roles effectively, and they did not do their reading as required. I know that they do not do it deliberately, but reflecting on their*

*own experiences was an important part of the process. This is frustrating for me. My fear is that we will just rush through things and ignore important experiences.*

*I just sent the group a WhatsApp message to remind them to do a journal reflection as soon as possible over the weekend. They are so busy during the week, so they do not make or find the time to do it.*

*There is something to learn in this, from what I am noticing in terms of the importance of reflection and the practitioners not reflecting on their practice by means of the journaling process.*

*Overall, I think it was a wonderful day, and we shared a lot. I also sensed a dissatisfaction in the group with what we have achieved today. Maybe it was also fine that we do not have all the answers. The idea is not to get all the answers in the inquiry process. Although I sense the group might have the desire to get some quick answers to satisfy key questions they might have. I still believe we are on the right track and we can get some good content or outcomes from all of this. I am relieved, and I hope that we can continue to make good progress.*

*I am not exactly happy with the suggestion regarding the question about our spiritual awareness in the workplace (the action plan question for the action phase). I felt the group maybe did not buy into it and just accepted it to rush off during the last part of our discussions.*

*I do think there was progress made, and maybe more than I could have imagined. I should look at what is happening inside ourselves (our spiritual identity space).*

- **Workshop 9**

Excerpts from entries made on 9 July 2014:

*I stressed the morning before we started because it was an important day. We had to bring many threads together and finalise our ideas for our last action phase. Vonnie could not be part of the group today since he had business to do in Zimbabwe.*

*We had a rich experience today! We worked through many of the topics at hand, the connections were valuable, and the information and data we shared had depth. I realised a lot of our OCD praxis was built on certain assumptions, how we engage with the group, how we start with our own ego, how we change from being a change maker to a change facilitator. You cannot make change happen; you can just facilitate some form of change.*

*Everyone shared their experiential journeys and revealed some patterns and trends. It was important to understand and share everyone's workplace experiences. Janet, Johann, and Rudi had some differences in their understanding of spiritual identity. Some placed more emphasis on becoming, where others place more emphasis on being (e.g. Rudi) which are both important. We further developed our heuristics throughout the day. We concluded with our discussion on writing the combined report.*

*Some group members felt we have to have another cycle to check some of our findings and the way we experience these things. I felt from a methodological point of view that I have some questions on how we are going to apply this co-created model of praxis heuristics. Should we put it in a matrix, or some networking or connectionist framework? Does it correlate with how the group awareness is growing? Should we model this in a linear way for OCD practitioners who want a linear manner of applying it or not? Where should we say the journey starts? Does it start with "who am I?" as the main theme, and then move on to "who am I with others?" and then move on to the broader system?*

*The whole journey was to facilitate a discovery on "what spiritual identity in OCD" could mean for others. I sensed that some of the group members have their basic questions unresolved, while others have a much more personal agenda, in terms of understanding their own "who am I?" Others have a much more practical focus. I think we are getting to a phase where we need to clarify things while maintaining a "both-and" approach or focus. Some group members are struggling*

*with that, but I feel that as we move along and get deeper into things we will understand more and collaborate more. In the end, the report will be a good reflection of what our experience was like.*

*It was difficult this morning for me to let go of what my expectations were for today, but I felt that there was a greater sense of urgency with everyone in terms of the group processes. Everyone contributed well and gave each other equal turns to speak. I had a sense that there was still some tension regarding a different emphasis in our own spirituality, but it was not detracting from the group experience too much. Therefore, I am still hopeful that we are doing something worthwhile and meaningful. I think it will be a great contribution to the body of work on how OCD praxis can deal with spirituality and spiritual identity formation. I just hope that we can have some document and body of knowledge ready for when I present at the Oxford conference next month (The 12th GCGI Annual International Conference and our 2nd Joint Summit with the School of Economic Science).*

- **Workshop 10**

Excerpts from entries made on 16 September 2014:

*After last night's wonderful celebration with my fellow research participants at 'The Big Easy Restaurant', it was a bit difficult to get out of bed this morning. I had to print some documents for today from our last session. I arrived early and set up my posters as usual. It was a beautiful day again at Onze Rust. I was stressed because I knew we had to do many things, but I had no agenda and we just had to discuss the final reports we did for this workshop, including reworking the praxis heuristics.*

*Dave suggested we do an icebreaker where we all hold hands and stand in a circle, and when he says jump to the left, we all jump to the left, and then he reversed it. When he says jump to the left, we had to jump to the right, and vice versa, which was quite interesting – hearing one thing and doing something different. This symbolic activity showed us the paradoxical character in ways of being-becoming and the double movement at stake in complexity thinking.*

*Vonnie gave us some mindfulness techniques, and I suggested that we take a few moments to be quiet, and reflect on our whole journey together.*

*We started planning our day and I gave an overview of the praxis heuristics. We tried to find the language, a way of explaining the whole process of consulting, engaging with the workplace, with people, and with the environment. We spent a large part of the day trying to find the words to describe what we meant. There was lots of frustration trying to express the deeply felt experiences and the difficulty finding words to express and explain the intangibles, the contextuality of certain experiences, and behaviour. This gave us a good idea of how hard it is to find the metaphors for facilitating change in fresh ways, without making use of old Newtonian metaphors (the problem of language from a complexity perspective).*

*By lunchtime, we had finished the outlines of the framework for the praxis heuristics, and we had changed many of the words that we initially developed or chose. We co-created a language of our own, which reflected what most of the group believed to be true. We co-developed the dynamic, evolving, interactional process. Most of the members wanted to simplify it and make it easy. I had to constantly remind them that we wanted to maintain the complexity and the "both-and" thinking; that it is not one or the other when we think of being and our beingness, it was related to our becoming, and doing – there is this dynamic interaction the whole time. It was difficult for me at times to listen to what group members said, and to help us to critically examine and become aware of the importance of maintaining a critical complexity thinking approach.*

*After a lovely lunch, we discussed the usefulness of this framework. We explored how to work with the content of the heuristics that we have developed. We then broke into dyads and divided all the information. We then tried to put all the statements, questions, phrases, sentences, into a heuristic framework that would make sense for that stage or phase or moment within the praxis encounter. My idea was to develop this whole understanding of how one could make sense of real OCD praxis problems by maintaining an awareness of complex spiritual identity throughout the process.*

*We continued with this process throughout the day, there were many disruptions, for example, Vonnie had some phone calls regarding his Ukraine Visa, Janet had a business call for more than 30 minutes, and it was quite cumbersome getting into this way of thinking, understanding the complexity of the experience, and some group members became quite tired.*

*I had to be very patient and affirming, reminding them that it really is a tough process and that we are making progress, and to be patient with each other. It was challenging but rewarding, to get to a place where we knew that we nearly have something workable. We edited many of the sentences, and I took responsibility for the outstanding work of retyping the co-created heuristics. The importance of the heuristics was not only to be informative, but also to explain the reasoning, or the reason why things were important at this stage. Dave was very helpful in formulating these heuristics, so I decided to ask him to help us formulate these into final statements.*

*By four o'clock we still had quite a bit to do, frustrations were high, and some members were very tired. Some suggested it was enough, but we persisted and tried to finish off well. At least we went through the whole framework, discussed it and made some suggestions. In the end, we really felt that what we had delivered and designed was something worthwhile, but we were also open to the idea that the format might still change. It was something that might be very useful. I got a lot of positive feedback from the group members.*

*We concluded the final meeting by giving each member a chance to share some reflections on the journey. We shared our experiences and everyone gave some comments and asked critical questions regarding the use of the actual information we developed together. We explored how we may use it. Some had ethical concerns; others asked if they might use it in their work, to make money from it. Others had concerns regarding intellectual property rights. We also shared questions and ideas on how we could continue to be part of the group and share documents and information and useful findings.*

*I was exhausted and it was a very taxing day. At least I could see some light at the end of the tunnel as this part of my research journey ended.*

### **10.3.3 Third Person Inquiry Reflections**

The third person inquiry reflections relate to the possible impact the research has on the wider community. In my case, the research was interested in my own and the OCD practitioners' inner arc of experience and the reflection on the impact it has on their outer arc of experience. This means we did not engage directly with a wider-community explicitly. Despite the lack of wider-community engagement, I still present what I think constitutes third-person inquiry in this study. Mostly this involves my academic engagements in events and conferences where I presented the research progress and development of ideas.

In 2014, I presented a research paper at the annual international conference hosted by Globalisation for the Common Good Initiative (GCGI) in Oxford, the UK on 'Organisational Spirituality: Exploring and re-purposing identity in complex organisational development systems.' In 2015, I presented two research papers. The first paper presentation was at an international conference on the topic of 'Management in a VUCA<sup>124</sup> world: The role of spirituality hosted by Spirituality in Economics and Society (SPES) at Vrije University in Amsterdam, Netherlands. My paper presentation title was 'Critical Complexity and Organisational Development Praxis: Exploring and Re-Purposing Identity and the Role of Spirituality'. The second international conference was hosted by the European

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<sup>124</sup> The abbreviation VUCA is short for volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous.



Doctoral Association for Management and Business Administration (EDAMBA) in Athens Greece. My presentation title at this conference was 'Critical complexity and co-operative Inquiry: Exploring organisational development practitioners' spiritual identity praxis.' In 2016, I had the opportunity to present my work at two wider audiences. The first was at the Stockholm Resilience Centre where I gave a talk on 'Co-creating change praxis with co-operative inquiry methodology' and then attended the International Sustainable Transitions (IST) conference in Wuppertal, Germany where I presented a paper on the same title.

The paper entitled 'Integrating critical complexity with co-operative inquiry as a research method for change agent praxis' I presented in August at the Transformations 2017 conference at the University of Dundee (UK). This event provided me with the opportunity to share the process, journey and outcome of my inquiry with a larger audience.

I have introduced the concepts of spiritual identity praxis, critical complexity as philosophical framework and co-operative inquiry methodology to the University of Stellenbosch Business School and have engaged with the South African Organisational Development Network on this topic. In all these examples, participants have responded with interest and I am currently exploring the idea of writing a policy brief with implications for OCD practitioner practice.

Once I have completed a dissertation I hope to publish in journals and contribute to the broader research and practice communities by sharing my passion for complexity-based approaches to OCD and re-imagined being-becoming praxis for alternative change agent praxis. I also hope to continue to raise questions regarding critical complexity-informed approaches to change agents with implications for society and the world at large.

## **10.4 LEARNINGS**

### **10.4.1 Reflections on my journey as researcher**

With this research project, I had initially hoped to develop transformative praxis for OCD practitioners from a complexity perspective. During the process of the inquiry, it became clear to me that my own blind spot in doing the research from the outset with a specific idea in mind of what I thought to be possible was indeed flawed. I realised that if I was promoting a non-linear, critical self-reflexive process of change agency, I had to "practice what I preach", and adjust my approach to be more radically open to the uncertainty of the possible outcomes. I could not control the participants or the environment of our workshop venues. I could not control the emotional states and group culture that was emerging. I could not control the amount of journaling by research participants and if they were really delving deeply into the topics at hand. I could not control the grasp of their understanding of co-operative inquiry and their levels of co-participation in the group. I could not control whether they actually commit to their action plans, during the action phases and then bring something significant to the group regarding the inquiry questions at that stage. I just had to embrace the complex reality of the world, and that I could not secure a great outcome for my doctoral research through the co-



operative inquiry process. I had to embrace that my own uncertainties, ambiguities and vulnerabilities were affecting my decision-making and group facilitation. I had to let go of my idea of what cooperative inquiry should be like. I had to let go of my idea and beliefs of what a complexity perspective of spiritual identity and OCD might be. I had to become aware of my own blind spots, and the idea that developing a transformative praxis in the context of OCD practitioners at the outset was actually a pre-planned linear understanding.

#### **10.4.2 Reflections on my personal journey**

I was blind to the fact that the entire process itself was under the scrutiny for being complexity-informed itself. I had to challenge myself to become radically open to the limitations in my own thinking and shortcomings in my ways of being-becoming. I also had to make peace with the idea that my own spiritual identity was under constant reconstruction during the process of inquiry and writing up the research. Could I really embrace the rupturing and harmonising of the inquiry process and doctoral journey? Could I embrace the uncertainty and live with the tension in my inner arc of experience, where I felt incapable, incompetent and out of sorts at certain times during the process. Could I embrace that incongruence and incoherence in my outer arc of experience, where my actions were often paradoxical to my intent and my claim to non-reductionist understandings of myself, others and organisations fell short at times and were pretty atomistic, either/or and linear (as pointed out by the co-researchers and my supervisors). I had to make peace with the paradoxical nature of my own ways of being-becoming. This I did by developing a sense of critically engaging these tendencies to explore reflective signposts that could open up new possibilities or new worlds for me.

#### **10.4.3 Reflections on writing the dissertation**

During the writing up, and in discussions on what a sense of this envisioned critical complexity-informed change agent might look like, I discovered that the research was not just about applying complexity thinking to spiritual identity and OCD in order to develop new practice. I realised that critical complexity was more than just surpassing the Newtonian-based paradigm. It was more than just developing a complexity understanding of identity, spirituality or spiritual identity. The insight I gained from doing this inquiry was that critical complexity was about a qualitatively different way of being-becoming. It was also dealing with the possibility of reframing what a critical complexity-informed spiritual identity praxis could be. For me and through the engagement with the OCDCoP I realised during the latter stages of writing up that the notion of complex spiritual identity praxis could enable me to describe in a more tacit manner the ways of being-becoming that were genuinely a more complete alternative. This perspective meant I had to step into the tensions of non-duality in my own thinking, being-becoming and doing. I had to re-consider and re-think what it truly meant to embrace a complexity-based paradigm in the contexts of my own lived experience. Could I for instance really allow the world of others and organisations to enter into those areas, which I felt, were foundational to whom I am, and what I do? Could I allow for the diversity of perspectives about spiritual identity without feeling endangered about my own experiences about it and its impact on my

beliefs? Could I develop a stance towards life that is transgressive and critical of my own positions and actions at the same time? I had to question, if I were comfortable to start acting in such a way, to allow them to be revisable, therefore an openness to the provisionality in what I do. These are the questions I am asking and have found some pathways to possibly start addressing them. I think I found some navigational routes, which at least gave me some framework to live within the tensions of a critical complexity-based paradigm. I have significantly revised my notions of identity and the ways of embracing the new worlds that have opened to me — about my spirituality and myself.

#### **10.4.4 Reflections on the extent of my learning**

Dealing with the relational character of complexity and the complex, 'I' have been difficult to grasp in a practical sense. I think this is because the world we live in is deeply enmeshed with the singular self in politics, economics, society and the ecology. The separateness and fragmented structures of these narrative patterns and themes of the Newtonian world are difficult to escape. Nevertheless, I have also learnt that although it is important to let go of the Newtonian worldview in my ways of thinking, being-becoming and doing; it is also a necessary part of human becoming. I remember the disgust I would experience when watching news, movies or reading books where I felt the atomistic thinking underlying the narratives was just revolting. I have to admit seeing that part of myself, which find the Newtonian-worldview as unacceptable, also finds it appealing (for the various obvious reasons I have argued in this study). Yet, through the works of for instance Allenby and Sarewitz (2011), I have come to realise that with certain problems within certain categories one requires a Newtonian-based approach e.g. closed systems like computers.

However, when applied to open systems like humans and organisations we require a different paradigm of thinking. It is perhaps through the entire philosophical approach to complexity that the task for all concerned is to create spaces where alternative narratives could be introduced when complex problems are attempted to be solved. It is in these contexts that I think it is important to introduce the idea that people are applying the inappropriate Newtonian-approach to certain categories. Therefore, it is a category mistake to apply atomistic thinking to the solving of wicked problems. Wicked problems from a complexity perspective are not solvable, but, as I argue, a condition to be lived with. The process of becoming aware of these category mistakes I applied to my thinking, being-becoming and doing has not been completed. In fact, I think it is a continual process of being critical of any positions I might take up as well as being self-reflexive in the manner in which I take up the stance. I realised that in the contexts of my engagements my function often changes. The emergent and self-organisatory nature of entering change processes often require a revisable understanding of the function you have within the network of relations. This also means that my roles I take up also often change. Navigating these tensions requires an adjustment to functions and roles I occupy. This critical self-awareness I believe is integrally linked to spirituality i.e. my quality of stance and navigational adaptability towards the incomplete and ever-changing universe.

This research journey, although coming to an end with the handing in of the manuscript, does not necessarily mean my personal journey is complete. In fact, I see this as the start of my transitional journey in growing critical complexity-based approaches in my own thinking, being-becoming and doing. That inadvertently implies my spiritual identity praxis and my role as a change agent (systems change curator). I hope that I have demonstrated that my 'models' of a complexity-informed spiritual identity praxis and the implications for change agents, exposed the inherent complexity of these framings. I also hope that where they are still hiding the complexity, that I would be able to critically reflect upon it, see it and adjust my ways of being-becoming accordingly.

## **10.5 SUMMARY**

In this chapter, I offered my first, second, and third person reflections on the study. The reflections included my research journal inscriptions and post-group reflections on the OCDCoP co-operative inquiry. In addition, I provided my key learnings concerning my journey as a researcher, personal experiences, the journey of writing the thesis, and the extent of my learning of the entire process.

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CHAPTER 11

**CONCLUSIONS AND  
RECOMMENDATIONS**

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## 11.1 INTRODUCTION

The study presents an exploration and description by means of a critical complexity lens, into spiritual identity praxis of OCD practitioners and their role as change agents. Re-imagining the change agent as Systems Change Curators demonstrates an alternative avenue of inquiry, which connects the inner and outer arcs of experience with an extended understanding of change agency praxis.

The conclusion from this study follows the research questions and the findings and addresses four areas:

- (i) The OCDCoP members generally indicated that they engaged with and were influenced by the ideas of complexity thinking.
- (ii) The OCDCoP members generally recognised the importance of spiritual identity and that the group inquiry process contributed to a deeper reflection on their own perspectives.
- (iii) The OCDCoP members generally regarded their spiritual identity to be important to the way they frame their roles as change agents.
- (iv) The OCDCoP members generally co-operated and collaborated authentically during the group inquiry process.

In the concluding chapter, I provide a brief summary of the study and thereby present how the research aim and objectives were achieved. This enables me to draw conclusions from the four findings and to consequently discuss the study's contributions. Finally, I propose recommendations for implementation and future research and offer final reflections.

## 11.2 SUMMARY

The study is contextualised in **Chapter 1**. I provided my interest in the study and outlined its scope. I also offered the research problem, the aim, the objectives and the anticipated contributions of the inquiry.

The research addressed the following questions:

*How does critical complexity shift the idea of spiritual identity praxis and what might that suggest for the way change agents approach their role in change interventions?*

*Can an action research inquiry process over time provide evidence of how change practitioners shift their spiritual identity praxis towards their change agency when employing complexity thinking?*

The research aim was:

*To cultivate and foster a re-think of the role of change agents in Organisational Change and Development (OCD) interventions by employing a critical complexity lens to shift their current spiritual identity praxis towards co-creating alternative complexity-informed change agency praxis.*

In order to accomplish the research aim, I developed a number of objectives.

The research objectives were:

- (i) *To explore how current and/or traditional conceptual understanding of organisation theory, organisational change and development literature, identity theory and spirituality inform current change agent praxis and to highlight the limitations of these traditional understanding of change agents in OCD; and to suggest how complexity thinking and a critical complexity lens can inform alternative perspectives for understanding these concepts.*
- (ii) *To re-imagine the role of the change agent in OCD through an exploration of the process of becoming aware of a critical complexity-informed perspective as an alternative to current being-becoming praxis.*
- (iii) *To co-facilitate an exploratory action research approach by drawing on the principles and procedures of co-operative inquiry in order to co-create a spiritual identity praxis heuristics framework for change agents from a critical complexity-informed perspective.*

In **Chapter 2**, I provided an overview of traditional conceptual perspectives on the change agent by exploring four fields of study, namely: (i) organisation theory, (ii) organisational change and development, (iii) identity theory, and (iv) spirituality. In each exploration, I sought to point out how the traditional understanding and resulting conceptual perspectives of the change agent in these fields have affected the notion of change agency and informed change agent practice and praxis. I emphasised the distinction between change agent practice and praxis. Change agent praxis refers to the inner intangible dimensions of being human, which reveal intentions, motivations and practical wisdom. Praxis reveals more than just skills, technique or knowledge, entailing a way of being-in-the-world relating to the inner arc of experience, which may be informed by identity and spirituality.

Next, I summarised the limitations of each study field pointing to the underlying Newtonian-based rationalist interpretation of agency. Hereafter, I highlighted the dominant perspectives in organisation theory and pointed out how they influenced notions of objectivity, identity, intentionality, causality, change and language. I argued that the limitations with regard to current change agent praxis are characterised by (i) an inadequate awareness of the dominance of the rationalist view of change agency; (ii) that change is assumed to be an irregular phenomenon requiring adjustment towards equilibrium; (iii) that current transformative theories of change practice are derived from pre-planned, large-scale, top-down approaches, and are thus limiting; and (iv) that the underlying philosophy of Newtonian science and atomistic thinking in OCD change agent praxis is prevalent, which provided an opportunity to employ a critical complexity lens in order to explore alternative change agency praxis.

Thus, **Chapter 2** assisted in achieving the first objective of the research by offering a comprehensive literature review of the limitations of current and traditional conceptual perspectives of organisation



theory, organisational change and development literature, identity theory and spirituality literature which informed current change agent praxis.

In **Chapter 3**, I introduced the notion of complexity as an alternative relational paradigm for understanding the change agent and provided a brief overview of the systems approach and complexity theory or science. Based on the work of Woermann (2013, 2016), I elucidated philosophical complexity as the distinguishing feature in a generalised approach to complexity, rather than the restricted view, which seeks to decomplexify. I explicated the notion of philosophical complexity, discussed the complexity-based paradigm and complexity thinking, and contrasted it to the Newtonian-based paradigm and atomistic thinking. I offered a synopsis of the features of complex systems, identified and outlined common misconceptions by distinguishing between holistic thinking and complexity thinking, and the notions of complicated and complex. However, the main intent of the chapter was to explain what is meant by critical complexity (Cilliers & Preiser, 2010; Cilliers, 2016) and the normative turn in philosophical complexity. Critical complexity as a scientific approach implies a double movement in which one remains critical of ways of thinking, being and doing, while simultaneously remaining self-reflexive in relating to complex phenomena. This double movement and non-dual thinking embedded in critical complexity is important for re-imagining the change agent from a post-reductionist and post-holistic perspective in scientific theory formation. In addition, I pointed out that the framing of being-becoming praxis implies a commitment to a certain critical and reflexive stance that is qualitatively different to other types of being-becoming because it embraces the incommensurability and indeterminacy inherent in reality (Cilliers & Preiser, 2010).

Thus, **Chapter 3** also served to achieve the first objective of the research, because it provided the explication of the alternative relational paradigm of critical complexity, which could inform and possibly transform current framings for understanding the change agent.

In **Chapter 4**, I employed critical complexity as a lens to the concept of identity and offered a complexity-informed understanding of the change agent. I explored what an alternative understanding of identity could entail by applying Woermann's (2013: 34–40) eight features of complex systems to De Villiers-Botha and Cilliers' (2010) notion of the complex 'I', which reconceptualises the notion of identity through the lens of critical complexity. I outlined four iterative principles for a critical complexity-informed understanding of change agents, namely: (i) embracing complexity thinking; (ii) navigating ambiguity and incongruence; (iii) awareness of relational constitutedness; and (iv) resilient heuristics.

**Chapter 4** thus achieved both the first and second objective of the research, because it suggested how complexity thinking and a critical complexity lens informs the concepts of identity and change agents. It also provided the theoretical framework for re-framing the role of the change agent in terms of complex 'I' from a critical complexity-informed perspective.

In **Chapter 5**, I employed a critical complexity-informed framing of spirituality; I re-framed the concept to enable an exploration of complexity-informed change agency. A critical complexity-informed spirituality denotes a navigation of the tensions of the lived experience of complex 'I' (a relational self) between the inner arc of experience and the outer arc of experience. This perspective on spirituality also relates to the generative capacity to be in the tension of binaries, paradox and dynamic change, while suggesting an openness for what the creative tension brings forth. In other words, the way in which complex 'I' makes visible the integrative and explosive dimensions. These dimensions may be characterised through notions like 'self-organisation', 'emergence', 'non-linear interactions' and 'contextuality' in networks of relations with the 'I', the 'we' and the 'they', which informs being-becoming praxis.

In addition, I introduced a critical complexity-informed understanding of spiritual identity praxis to be more appropriately termed as critical complexity-informed being-becoming praxis. Finally, I re-imagined the change agent from this broadened critical complexity-informed perspective as Systems Change Curators, and offered alternative change agency praxis, with reflective signposts, and integrative movements for ways of being-becoming praxis.

Thus, **Chapter 5** also achieved both the first and second research objective by suggesting how complexity thinking and a critical complexity lens informs the concept of spirituality. In addition, it also achieved the second objective by re-imagining the role of the change agent in OCD, as Systems Change Curators, through the conceptual exploration of the process of becoming aware of a critical complexity-informed framing of spirituality and spiritual identity praxis.

In **Chapter 6**, I offered a rationale for employing co-operative inquiry as a research methodology. In connecting complexity thinking to CI I offered a qualitative exploratory action research approach to explore spiritual identity praxis and the role of change agents. I explicated the participatory worldview and accompanying paradigm, and how due to its underlying subjective-objective ontology and extended epistemology (propositional, practical, experiential and presentational forms of knowing) it entails a reflexive research process. I discussed the research design and its execution covering sampling and member recruitment, setting up of the inquiry group, and the various phases, stages and cycles of action and reflection. In addition, I discussed data generation, data analysis, validity procedures, special inquiry skills, and ethical considerations in participatory approaches to inquiry.

Thus, **Chapter 6** achieved the third research objective by providing the rationale for employing co-operative inquiry as a research method that accommodates complexity thinking and offers a research design for co-exploring and co-creating extended forms of knowledge regarding spiritual identity praxis and the role of change agents in OCD.

**Chapter 7** provided an in-depth discussion of the process of conducting 13 months of action research with a group of six Organisational Change and Development practitioners, reflecting collaboratively on their spiritual identity praxis and their roles as change agents. The initiation and

establishment of an Organisational Change and Development Community of Practice (OCDCoP) served as the forum for the co-operative inquiry investigation and provided possibilities for co-exploring spiritual identity praxis and the role of change agents in OCD.

I provided an insider's account of the planning, the key constituents, the initiation, the launch, and embarking on the research cycles. Ten workshops were hosted to form five research cycles that ensured the necessary depth and immersion into the topic of inquiry. The launching statement was: "Exploring and re-framing: (i) Spiritual identity (spirituality/identity/spiritual-identity) in (ii) complex organisational systems in order to develop (iii) OCD praxis". The statement was revised and adjusted according to the emergence of the group processes; various specific research questions were posed as a result of reflexivity during the workshops.

In exploring the focus of the inquiry the group shared individual and collective reflections on their inner arc of experience (praxis) and how these related to their outer arc of experience and action (OCD practice). Verbatim reflexive accounts of the workshop assisted in the co-creation of research questions. In the discussions, special inquiry skills were applied with regard to propositional, practical, experiential and presentational forms of knowing. Constant revisioning and reflection on the inquiry focus, and collaborating regarding facilitator roles, assisted in creating the final OCDCoP inquiry report and co-created spiritual identity praxis heuristics framework.

Thus, **Chapter 7** achieved the third research objective by providing the insiders perspective of conducting the co-operative inquiry process that was followed by the OCDCoP, but more importantly evidencing the way the co-researchers answered the group inquiry question.

In **Chapter 8**, I outlined the following research findings: (i) the OCDCoP members generally indicated that they engaged with and were influenced by the ideas of complexity thinking; (ii) the OCDCoP members generally recognised the importance of spiritual identity and that the group inquiry process contributed to a deeper reflection on their own perspectives; (iii) the OCDCoP members generally regarded their spiritual identity to be important to the way they frame their roles as change agents; and (iv) the OCDCoP members generally co-operated and collaborated authentically during the group inquiry process.

Thus, **Chapter 8** achieved objective three of co-facilitating an exploratory action research approach by drawing on the principles and practices of co-operative inquiry in order to co-create a spiritual identity praxis heuristics framework for change agents from a critical complexity-informed perspective.

I assessed the study in **Chapter 9**, by interpreting the group inquiry outcomes and findings. In order to assess the reflect-reframe-reflect of the OCDCoP process, which explored spiritual identity praxis and the role of change agents in OCD, I introduced two interpretative categories. The first dealt with the exploration and possibly reframing of current spiritual identity praxis by becoming aware of incongruent ways of thinking, being-becoming, and doing. It also pertained to the reflect-reframe-

reflect process of the OCDCoP inquiry regarding spiritual identity praxis, and the process of becoming aware of the critical complexity-informed perspective. I assessed the awareness of this perspective by discussing the four iterative principles for a critical complexity-informed understanding of the change agent<sup>125</sup>.

The second interpretive category entailed the process of re-imagining the change agent role as revealed in the co-created spiritual identity praxis heuristics framework. I discussed the value of the framework by comparing it to that of Moore *et al.*, (2014) which also describes a phase-oriented process of change and transformation. I indicated the similarities and discussed key differences by employing a critical complexity-informed understanding, which I argued deepens the understanding of whole systems change interventions. Thereby, I demonstrated how the spiritual identity praxis heuristics framework contributes to the lack of propositional knowledge in terms of critical complexity-informed change agency praxis.

In assessing the study's validity, I employed eight co-operative inquiry validity procedures to determine the soundness, trustworthiness and quality of knowing which were presented in the findings. The OCDCoP demonstrated that each of the eight validity criteria was adequately attended to and confirms the trustworthiness of the informative findings. While the inquiry was mainly informative of the spiritual identity praxis of OCD practitioners, it also has some informative-transformative implications for their roles as change agents.

**Chapter 9** thus achieved the third research objective. This was done by confirming that the exploratory co-operative inquiry co-facilitated the process of becoming aware of a critical complexity-informed perspective, which assisted the OCDCoP in re-thinking their being-becoming praxis, re-imagining the roles of change agents and thereby co-creating the spiritual identity praxis heuristics framework.

My personal reflections of the inquiry and what I learnt in the process are outlined in **Chapter 10**. In my research journey I offered first, second, and third person reflections and shared key insights I gained with regard to the design and initial development of the research, the execution of the process, namely: the OCDCoP research cycles as presented in the ten workshops. The reflections also include insights I gained through the writing-up process of the research, my perspectives, thinking, being-becoming praxis, my doing and how this influenced what I learnt through the research process.

### **11.3 CONCLUSIONS**

Having reached the end of the dissertation I wish to bring the threads together and describe what the research findings mean in relation to broader issues, towards re-imagining the change agent from a critical complexity perspective. I hereby intend to expand on the significance of the findings

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<sup>125</sup> Please see Chapter 4.

that was co-generated through the exploratory CI approach. In so doing I revisit the important question with which the OCDCoP started the co-inquiry and show how this has changed over time. These changes lead me and the majority of the OCDCoP to a different way of understanding the concepts of identity, spirituality, spiritual identity and the change agent. The re-framed or critical complexity-informed concepts are suggested to encourage new ways of addressing these issues in OCD practitioner practice and within OCD initiatives.

I now offer the conclusions according to the four findings: (i) embracing complexity thinking as change agents: engagement with ideas of complexity thinking and its influence on change agents; (ii) navigating ambiguity and incongruence of spiritual identity: importance of spiritual identity and the co-operative inquiry process in contributing to a deeper reflection on their perspectives as change agents; (iii) awareness of relational constitutedness of spiritual identity praxis: importance of spiritual identity praxis in framing the roles of change agents in change interventions; and (iv) co-creating resilient heuristics: authentic co-operation and collaboration during the co-operative inquiry process.

### **11.3.1 Embracing Complexity Thinking as Change Agents**

*Engagement with the ideas of complexity thinking and its influence on change agents.*

The first major finding was that all participants expressed the need to gain knowledge about the content of complexity thinking. In addition, they wished to better understand the process involved in conducting complexity-informed change interventions this became apparent through their various forms of presentational knowledge in the OCDCoP. Presentational knowledge was made visible through expressive modes such as storytelling, narrative writing (personal journaling), sharing of poems, pictures, drawings, metaphors and taking part in role-plays. While this highlights the reasons for an alternative complexity-informed perspective of change agency, the participants' process of becoming aware of their assumptions and limitations in their current change agency was imperative. As I argued in chapter 2, there is a critical need for alternative ways of thinking about change agency in organisations (Boulton, Allen, & Bowman, 2015) as well as ways of being and doing in current social and organisational change and innovation practices, which need to be re-invented (Bradford & Burke, 2005).

A conclusion that can be drawn from this finding is that the engagement with complexity thinking and its influence on how the group perceived their change agency provides an alternative way of thinking about change agency and ways of being and doing in change practices. It is a step towards re-inventing and providing a viable alternative way of critically re-thinking change agency.

The OCDCoP acknowledged how caught up they were in the Newtonian worldview (reducing, disjoining, fragmenting), and how difficult it was to transcend its atomistic thinking which subscribes to the 'paradigm of simplification' (Morin, 2008).

Although most practitioners said they had heard or read information on complexity theory, it was clear that theory alone is insufficient for change agents wishing to gain an in-depth knowing of the

complexity-based paradigm and complexity thinking habits of mind. Through co-exploring the complexity-based relational paradigm, the participants shared their narratives which revealed how ingrained the Newtonian-based paradigm was in their perception of themselves (identity, spirituality, change praxis). They acknowledged the pervasiveness of dualistic thinking in their being-becoming praxis in their OCD practice. This also highlights the importance of experimenting with viable novel methods to explore possible alternatives in overcoming the mainstream tendency and embracing complexity thinking or both/and thinking in change agency praxis.

An additional conclusion to be drawn from this finding is that the cultivation of a critical complexity-informed approach to notions interacting with change agency praxis, coupled with employing the CI method can foster a complexity-informed understanding of change agency.

### **11.3.2 Navigating Ambiguity and Incongruence of Spiritual Identity**

*Importance of spiritual identity and the CI inquiry process in contributing to a deeper reflection on their perspectives as change agents.*

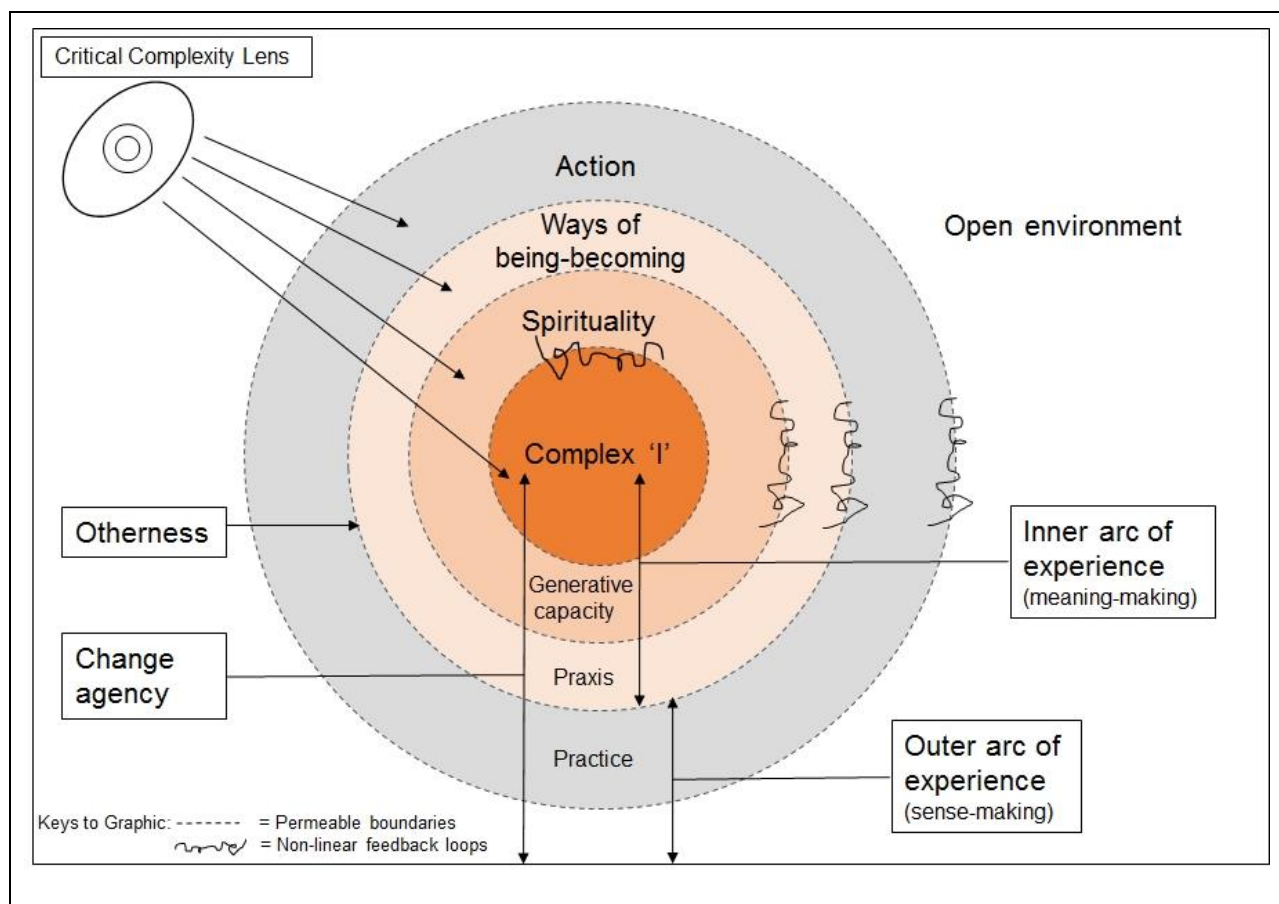
The second major finding of this research is that the co-operative inquiry process, in conjunction with employing the critical complexity lens, disclosed current incongruence in spiritual identity praxis in the OCD practitioners. This revealed the lack of experiential knowledge regarding their inner arc of experience (identity, spirituality, being-becoming praxis) in reflection on their outer arc of experience (change agency practice) in the context of OCD practice. Change agents traditionally view the domain of change to solely concern the outer arc of experience and action, i.e. skills, techniques and cognitive knowledge (Cameron & Green, 2015; Cummings & Worley, 2014). The importance of these skills, techniques and cognitive knowledge in intentional OCD initiatives, should not be denied. These practical competencies provide a general understanding of methods and strategies to improve effective change interventions. However, that which underlie taken-for-granted practices points to the following assumptions (i) the universal applicability of organisational change practices, (ii) the general resistance to planned organisational changes, and (iii) the general approach to change requires engaging with organisational hierarchies (Jansson, 2013). These views of OCD undermine the findings in which the contextuality in a broadened view of change agency is emphasised and the role of the inner arc of experience in relation to the outer arc of experience in change agents need to be taken into account.

What is generally lacking in this view of change agency is the reduced understanding, consideration and importance of the inner domain. The reductionist view on both the inner and outer arc of experience consequently leads to a disconnected change agency, devoid of experiential knowledge regarding being-becoming praxis and its interrelatedness with change practice. This limiting view of change agency cannot be informative or transformative of change agent's personal being and therefore becomes limiting when applied in dynamic change contexts where unexpected or unforeseeable problems may arise. In this regard, the inclusion of the inner arc of experience of



change agents is important, because it allows participants to become aware of the assumptions — which inform their current perspectives on identity, spirituality and change agency in the context of the change intervention.

In the light of this, it seems reasonable to argue that change agents engaged in change interventions are not fully equipped to facilitate change interventions when they are solely concerned with a narrow understanding of change agency relating to practice in the outer arc of experience and action. A conclusion which can be drawn from this finding is the importance of spiritual identity in contributing towards deeper reflections on their perspectives as change agents. Change agents cannot be expected to be fully equipped to facilitate change interventions if they do not consider a broadened or critical complexity-informed view of change agency (Figure 11.1), which includes both the inner and outer arc of experience and action.



**Figure 11.1: A broadened or critical complexity-informed view of change agency**

Source: The Author

In chapter 2, I argued that a critical re-framing spiritual identity is required, particularly because of its importance as “an integrative and harmonizing function that involves (a) our inner unity and (b) our relationship and connectedness with others and to a broader reality that powers our ability to be transcendent” (Nelson, 2009: 8). Thus, the fact that we are spiritual human beings is not an isolated aspect of ourselves from the nature or characteristics that we have (our identity); but is an inseparable and intertwined part of all we are and do, i.e. our spiritual identity serves as the

integrative and integrating dimensions of being human (Benner, 2012; Polkinghorne, 2014; Wilber, 2007).

This process of becoming aware through the exploratory CI process facilitated a deeper reflection on their spiritual identity through the discovery of incongruent understandings of spiritual identity praxis. The discovery of incongruence was followed with questions regarding their intentions, motives and rationale in facilitating change, which was in turn related to their authenticity and integrity as change agents. The CI co-initiated a re-exploration and re-discovery of what is meant by identity and spirituality from a complexity-informed perspective. It is, therefore, reasonable to argue that the CI process opened the group up to gain awareness of their current incongruent spiritual identity praxis in OCD in the spaces of self (intrapersonal), other (interpersonal) and system as a whole (transpersonal).

A conclusion that can be drawn from this is that the CI process affirms the assumptions that spiritual identity serves as the integrative and integrating force when approached from a complexity-informed perspective.

A further and related conclusion that can be drawn is that, although various theories of change inform change agents in approaching interventions, these constructs are sometimes inadequate because the frameworks and models ignore the integrative dimension of complexity-informed spiritual identity. For this reason, I think exploring spiritual identity might provide some insights into developing more sustainable or even transformative change agency in organisations. Failing to include spiritual identity as a source for understanding change agency might be a significant reason as to why it is so challenging to co-create resilient models of change practice.

While this understanding accounts for the importance of spiritual identity and the CI process in contributing to deeper reflections on change agents, it does not take into account the complex episodic nature of systems (including social actors), which can remain locked-in for long periods of time or abruptly shift without warning (Boulton *et al.*, 2015).

Another conclusion that may be drawn from this is that the CI process also revealed how change agents are unaware or remain fixed in their beliefs of their own spiritual identity. Hence, the reliance on traditional and limiting theories of change and change agency is prominent. This can mainly be attributed to an uncritical or unreflective stance on their spiritual identity and its relation to praxis. By following this way of thinking, they perpetuate change agency that sustains the status quo due to immovable mindsets and ways of being-becoming that prefer to cling to the idea of control and certainty.

Thus, when the OCDCoP became aware of their assumptions (regarding both their spiritual identity and spiritual identity praxis) and realised the limitations thereof, alternative conceptualisations became possible. This meant entering into engagement with their inner arc of experience and reflecting how this affects their change agency. This critical exploration through the co-operative

inquiry process of reflect-reframe-reflect, coupled with the introduction of complexity thinking, allowed the group to become aware of the limitations of their current spiritual identity praxis and its influence on their change agency.

### **11.3.3 Awareness of Relational Constitutedness of Spiritual Identity Praxis**

*Importance of spiritual identity praxis in framing the roles of change agents in change interventions.*

The third major finding, facilitated by the process of participating in cycles of reflect-reframe-reflect, resulted in the group becoming aware of the need to re-think their roles as change agents in OCD. Here two points need to be emphasised. First, by employing a complexity-sensitive method which explored spiritual identity praxis and facilitated a re-think of change agency roles, the group inquiry led to the co-researchers becoming self-sufficient with regard to the practical wisdom and intentionality required for alternative ways of framing their roles in being and doing in change processes.

Second, integrating CI with a critical complexity lens creates an engagement platform for exploring the inner arc of experience (inner-forming dynamics) associated with spiritual identity praxis and therefore allows for re-thinking its relation with the outer arc of experience (outer-forming dynamics) regarding the roles change agents take up in change processes. As indicated in Chapter 2, what is generally missing, in theory, is the underlying assumptions pertaining to the role of change practices and change agency, which are seldom questioned.

A conclusion that can be drawn from this is that this study provides a detailed account of the underlying assumptions, as discussed in the exploration of the inner arc of experience and spiritual identity praxis in change agency roles. Therefore, one can conclude when developing and improving change practices or evaluating the role change agents employ it is imperative to include spiritual identity praxis and its influence in shaping the roles change agent take up in change interventions.

Another conclusion from this finding is that CI as a method, undergirded by complexity theory, provides an appropriate research approach for critically re-thinking change agency roles with OCD practitioners since it co-creates the opportunity to re-imagine their roles as change agents. Such an approach has the potential to be informative of alternative practitioner practice, and when applied in organisations, could be transformative of current change agency praxis — as suggested with the re-imagined notion of change agents as Systems Change Curators. Therefore, complexity-informed CI presents a viable exploratory method change agents could employ to co-develop a co-operative understanding of critical complexity-informed heuristics, which in turn can facilitate an alternative of being-becoming praxis and doing in OCD.

A conclusion which can be drawn from this is that the OCDCoP found the research process to shift the way they framed their roles as change agents. The embedded nature of reductive and disjointed framings of spiritual identity praxis and change agency roles that were revealed were informative to the OCDCoP. It made them aware of the deeply seated ways of thinking such as instrumental,

utilitarian and mechanistic approaches to ways of being-becoming and doing in OCD. Thus, the design and implementation of the exploratory CI were important in informing the OCDCoP about probing into the spaces of encounter and evolving patterns of engagement in spiritual identity praxis with regard to their roles as change agents.

The inquiry also provided the group with an understanding of identity and spirituality as interconnected from a critical complexity-informed perspective. This growing awareness of the OCDCoP meant an immersed and saturated sense of reflection on its inner arc of experience in relation to its actions in change interventions. The exploratory CI co-facilitated through a critical complexity lens led to an alternative perspective for understanding spiritual identity praxis and resulted in the OCDCoP's spiritual identity praxis heuristics framework, as indicated in Table 11.1.

**Table 11.1: Re-imagined spiritual identity praxis framework for OCD practitioners**

Spaces of encounter in OCD practitioner praxis				
	<b>Dynamics of spiritual identity praxis in OCD practitioners</b>	<b>Self-awareness</b> (facilitator-self space)	<b>Other awareness</b> (facilitator-client space)	<b>System awareness</b> (facilitator-system space)
Evolving patterns of engagement in OCD practitioner praxis	<b>Self-engagement</b> (Inner-forming)	Become aware of the assumptions and the context that underlie current change agency praxis and inform the change intervention.		
	<b>Entering Engagement</b> (Connecting-Mirroring-Probing-Understanding)	Critically explore the limitations of traditional perspectives of the current change agency praxis and foster an alternative complexity-informed perspective of the current change agency praxis.		
	<b>Explorative Engagement</b> (Co-Emerging-Sensing-Maturing)	Cultivate a complexity-informed approach to current change agency praxis and employ a complexity-informed method that can foster an alternative understanding of change agency.		
	<b>Deep Engagement</b> (Mutually transforming)	Co-develop a co-operative understanding of critical complexity-informed heuristics, which can facilitate alternative roles for being-becoming praxis and doing in change initiatives.		
	<b>Whole Engagement</b> (Meta-transforming)	Distil reflective signposts and iterative principles from co-developed heuristics to co-create frameworks for transformed and transforming change agency praxis.		

Source: The Author

This framework provides different modes of being-becoming and ways of framing their roles in change interventions, which are informative of OCD practitioners' spiritual identity praxis. Since the framework provides contextual and self-reflexive ways of knowing, it is adaptable to dynamic emergent change contexts.

The conclusion that can be drawn from the co-created framework is that it also presents a re-imagined spiritual identity praxis heuristics with integrative action logics, which demonstrates a type of critical subjectivity that fosters the four iterative principles for a critical complexity-informed understanding of change agents, namely: (i) embracing complexity thinking; (ii) navigating ambiguity and incongruence; (iii) awareness of relational constitutedness; and (iv) resilient heuristics.

The exploratory CI cultivated information about alternative spiritual identity praxis, which fostered the re-thinking of their change agency roles. The re-thinking has transformative potential for the roles of change agents when viewed from a critical complexity perspective.

#### **11.3.4 Co-Creating Resilient Heuristics**

*Authentic co-operation and collaboration during the CI inquiry process.*

The fourth major finding was a genuine co-ownership of the method in the OCDCoP, which resulted in participants taking up different facilitator roles and therefore authentically collaborating. Moreover, there was a level of emotional and interpersonal competence that facilitated the process of not merely being participants but becoming authentic and genuine co-researchers. Thus, co-operative inquiry does not only offer a method of inquiry into the human condition. Viewed from a complexity perspective, CI entails a collaborative approach, which is appropriate for co-exploring and co-creating emergent informative inquiries for alternative perspectives of change agency praxis.

Complexity-informed CI as a praxis of human sense-making and meaning-making creates spaces for contextual emergent modes of knowing, being-becoming and doing (liminal spaces) that make critical complexity and its accompanying provisional ethics visible, i.e. the modelling and mapping of evolving patterns of complex engagement.

The conclusion to be drawn from this finding is that such inquiries offer a pathway to distil reflective signposts or iterative principles from co-created heuristics and frameworks for alternative and resilient change agency praxis.

*Implications of the four conclusions.*

The preceding four conclusions have the following important implications for the re-imagined spiritual identity praxis framework for OCD practitioners. In Table 11.1, I highlight five iterative praxis heuristics, which can be drawn from the conclusions. The iterative praxis heuristics offer change practitioners conducting OCD interventions a critical complexity-informed pathway to co-facilitate alternative change agency praxis.

In order to co-facilitate alternative roles in change agency OCD practitioners should:

- (i) Become aware of the assumptions and the context that underlie current change agency praxis and inform the change intervention.

- (ii) Critically explore the limitations of traditional perspectives of the current change agency praxis and foster an alternative complexity-informed perspective of the current change agency praxis.
- (iii) Cultivate a complexity-informed approach to current change agency praxis and employ a complexity-informed method that can foster an alternative understanding of change agency.
- (iv) Co-develop a co-operative understanding of critical complexity-informed heuristics, which can facilitate alternative roles related to being-becoming praxis and doing in change initiatives.
- (v) Distil reflective signposts and iterative principles from co-developed heuristics to co-create frameworks for transformed and transforming change agency praxis.

This alternative way of being-becoming praxis, as presented in the re-imagined spiritual identity praxis framework, provides a middle way towards experiencing the comfortable-uncomfortableness of being human in change interventions. At the same time, critical complexity-informed being-becoming praxis also provides a steppingstone to navigate the unknown-unknowns and the messiness of OCD in a coherent way, in order to comprehend discernible patterns, which enable emergence for a resilient being-in-the-world. These characteristic features are the hallmark for moving towards the re-imagination of the change agent, which in my view is most appropriately demonstrated in the notion of Systems Change Curators.

The central argument thus concludes that where traditional change agency focuses exclusively on improving practice such as skills, cognitive knowledge and techniques, critical complexity-informed change agency praxis reveals an alternative critical self-reflexive inner knowing, intentionality and ways of being-becoming grounded in the complex 'I'. Therefore, as an alternative type of change agent (role), the re-imagined Systems Change Curators have the potential to harness the generative capacity to navigate complexity, while at the same time being an integrative force which embraces the rupturing and harmonising of a complex, ambiguous and uncertain world. This re-imagination of change agent roles opens up possibilities for developing resilient and transformative change agency praxis.

## **11.4 THE STUDY'S CONTRIBUTIONS**

While the study contributes in various ways, I highlight the most noticeable ones on a theoretical, methodological, and praxis level.

### **11.4.1 Theory**

Studies completed by scholars that explore spiritual identity praxis with OCD practitioners and seek to re-think change agency roles are limited. In addition, those that do exist, are more focused on external dynamics of practice in OCD practitioners related to change agency, than the inner arc of experience which relates to change praxis. Moreover, these studies do not take into consideration complexity thinking as a lens or re-think the role of change agents by exploring the limitations of traditional views of the change agent in OT, OCD, identity theory, and spirituality literature. While



this study did not develop OCD practice, it strove towards extending the current knowledge base on re-thinking change agency by applying a critical complexity-informed perspective in its exploration of identity, change agents, spirituality, spiritual identity, and spiritual identity praxis in re-thinking the role of change agents. More specifically, the exploratory co-operative inquiry is informative of OCD practitioners' understanding of change agency in that it provides an extended understanding of change agency praxis, by including critical complexity-informed notions of the complex 'I'. This framing of identity allows for the theoretical conceptualisation of critical complexity-informed framing of change agents with four iterative principles<sup>126</sup>, namely: (i) embracing complexity thinking; (ii) navigating ambiguity and incongruence; (iii) awareness of relational constitutedness; and (iv) co-creating resilient heuristics. These iterative principles are premised on a relational understanding of identity and are novel in suggesting a re-think of the traditional understanding of change agents as informed by current organisation theory, OCD and change agents' roles. Also, this re-framing opens up the possibility of concurrently re-framing current foundationalist conceptualisations of individual and organisational spirituality. Therefore, an additional innovative contribution to theory entails the application of critical complexity towards reframing the concepts of spirituality and spiritual identity praxis (or my preferred term: being-becoming praxis).

In addition, by exploring spiritual identity praxis from a critical complexity perspective, the OCDCoP co-developed the re-imagined spiritual identity praxis framework for OCD practitioners. The framework contributes to the field of OCD specifically, and to the fields of identity theory and spirituality literature in general by explicating being-becoming praxis and suggesting alternative framings of these concepts. A final contribution relates to the complexity-informed re-imagination of the role of the change agent as Systems Change Curators, which in turn, contributes to the field of OCD.

#### **11.4.2 Methodology**

There are not too many accounts of the practical execution of co-operative inquiry in business studies available. As far as I could establish, this is the first doctoral research dissertation employing CI in South Africa. Complexity-informed co-operative inquiry presents a novel research approach to research OCD practitioners' spiritual identity praxis and to re-thinking their role as OCD change agents. Linking critical complexity to CI offers a research approach to study complex change processes, and in particular to explore complex concepts such as human-organisational identity, spirituality and change agents. Enhancing CI with complexity assumptions and principles provides an alternative approach to enact complex change processes. The subjective-objective ontology and extended epistemological framework enable inquiry into the complex dynamics at play in change processes and practitioner praxis. CI coupled with critical complexity extend methods facilitate alternative perspectives on current OCD models, approaches and processes. In addition, it provides

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<sup>126</sup> Please see Table 9.1.

the possibility of becoming aware of simplified forms of knowing (technical skills, mono-logic cognitive knowledge, and competencies) as implied by atomistic thinking and the Newtonian-based paradigm. Finally, as a bridging method, it serves to overcome the theory-praxis divide by creating multi-ontology frameworks for exploring being-becoming praxis and re-thinking change agency practice.

### **11.4.3 Praxis**

There is a lack of practitioner praxis for exploring spiritual identity praxis in change agents and their ways of being-becoming, and by employing a critical complexity-informed perspective it informs change agents. A complexity-informed co-operative inquiry approach allows OCD practitioners to explore their spiritual identity praxis (the inner arc of experience) and to critically re-think their roles as change agents (the outer arc of experience and action). Two praxis contributions are:

- (i) Providing OCD practitioners with an approach to critically explore and frame an extended change agency. Complexity-informed CI presents a viable approach for co-exploring, co-creating and distilling reflective signposts, iterative principles and praxis heuristics for OCD practitioners and offers an innovative approach to extend practitioner praxis when exploring their spiritual identity praxis.
- (ii) The principles and procedures of CI offer a viable approach for exploring alternative being-becoming praxis in an OCDCoP. They provide an important vehicle to co-explore and co-create an alternative change agency and to re-imagine the role of OCD practitioner praxis. The praxis contribution lies in the five iterative praxis heuristics presented in Table 11.1. Integrating the inner arc of experience of change agency with its outer arc can be demonstrated through employing the heuristics from a critical complexity-informed approach. Moreover, the traditional role of the OCD change agent can be re-framed by exploring the current focus of OCD to improve technical skills, cognitive knowledge and competencies relating to the outer arc of experience and action. By applying the heuristics, OCD practitioners can co-develop an extended and re-imagined framing of change agency. This means the heuristics offer a critical complexity-informed pathway for change agents to enact a broadened understanding of change agency, thereby including spiritual identity praxis considerations, which imply re-imagining their role as change agents.

## **11.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

As is the case with any social science research project the present study has shortcomings, which are related to the critique generally levelled at qualitative research and action research. I have given these limitations careful thought and I would like to offer some ideas how these may be addressed.

### **11.5.1 Limitations of the Co-operative Inquiry**

Since co-research generates a large amount of data it is difficult to decide what to present and what to evaluate. Although the OCDCoP was involved in co-creating the final praxis heuristics and writing

up the entire inquiry process it remained my prerogative. This I found very difficult since on the one hand I wanted to be true to the spirit and journey of the OCDCoP group, but on the other hand, critical complexity implied that I had to acknowledge my normative ethical stance, i.e. my personal desires and expectations of what I want the research to achieve. It was not possible to anticipate the appropriate ethical choice with regard to including or excluding data generated by the group or that which I evaluated. Also, approaching this methodology from a critical complexity perspective challenged me to remain critical of my thought strategies in compiling the co-created data. More particularly, the challenge was to take appropriate decisions as to which important moments, significant experiences, and enlightening discussions to include. I attempted to address this by regular reflective journal inscriptions as part of an audit research trail.

A further limitation that should be noted relates to the articulation of the findings. Some of the data invariably entailed tacit knowing of the 'inner arc of experience' that was gained by collaborated facilitation. It is more than likely that I did not identify or clearly express these findings in words. In fact, the OCDCoP noted this and decided to co-create its own vocabulary in order to find ways to articulate the ways of thinking, being and doing. The inherent nature of articulating oneself through language make it difficult to communicate the deep meaningful experiences one has had. This is also relevant when writing down the experiential knowing in propositional forms. As the initiating researcher, I remained aware of this and continually attempted to find an alternative, creative means of expression and sought to assist participants in developing their own vocabulary to express themselves.

CI is about the co-creation of various forms of knowledge embedded in contextual and experiential realities. I do not intend that the knowledge should be interpreted as linear, universally applicable generalisable knowledge in terms of classic Newtonian science. It was the endeavour of the study to co-generate knowledge that acknowledges a post-reductionist approach to knowledge. Therefore, the data should not be interpreted as generalisable in a deterministic way to OCD practitioner change agency praxis. The following observation of Stake (1995: 135) remains valuable:

Qualitative case study is highly personal research. Persons studied are studied in depth. Researchers are encouraged in the interpretation....The quality and utility of the research is not based on its reproducibility, but on whether or not the meanings generated, by the researcher or the reader, are valued. Thus a personal valuing of the work is expected.

When considering the quality and utility of this research one should not interpret the value thereof in terms of reproducibility, but rather according to the meanings generated by the research participants. Although the meanings may be valuable, a limitation of the study is the reliance on the principles and procedures of CI as a sole method of exploration. Therefore, it would have been preferable to

explore this research problem in terms of transformative science, contemplative science, and by applying a variety of deliberate transdisciplinary research methods and approaches.

The CI group inquiry process was challenged with issues of time, money, location, constraints concerning the co-researchers personal issues, availability, logistics, finding suitable dates for workshops to enable a balance between action and reflection phases, and facilitating the three strands of empowerment — especially related to the methods applied. Although well within the suggested parameters of a number of research cycles, the one long break between November 2103 and March 2014 posed a challenge. In an attempt to address this a WhatsApp chat group was created to keep the conversations active, the reflections ongoing and to discuss new insights.

### **11.5.2 Limitations of Addressing Possible Bias**

As initiating researcher, I was aware that I didn't bring a neutral or objective stance to the study and that my own preferences and views might affect my observations and conclusions. As Yin (2011) recommends I tried to establish a 'research lens' and monitored my possible influence by introspective entries in my research journal. I assumed that CI would assist in helping the participants to point out false assumptions, and thereby bring such assumptions to conscious awareness. However, as the OCDCoP discovered, there is a danger of the participants being blind to their own biases, values, and assumptions. This required constant attention. To address this we engaged in cycles of reflect-reframe-reflect in order to critically engage with our own thinking and to allow other perspectives and possibilities to come to the fore.

As the participants delved into various concepts, models, and schemes they tried to make sense of their experiences and searched for reflections to validate the conclusions. This process, if not open to validity procedures and the use of special inquiry skills — as suggested by Heron (1996) — would lead to shaping the participants' observations and experiences according to what they expected to find. Thus, this challenged me to become open to my own biases and to urge the co-researchers to do the same. To thwart possible bias amongst co-researchers, Heron (1996) proposes that co-researchers challenge uncritical subjectivity. This is done by playing Devil's Advocacy enabling co-researchers to be mindful of uncritical subjectivity and by assisting in differentiation between aspects of reflection.

As initiating researcher my biases were:

- CI requires emotionally mature individuals who are open to settings where decisions are made collectively.
- Tensions and emotional states among co-researchers should be discussed openly and requires resolving interpersonal problems in a peaceful and timely manner. Also, I believe these issues can be resolved as long as all participants are willing to take the time and make the effort to reach resolutions.

- CI is ideally practised by groups of people who are open to re-think Newtonian worldview values and ideals, thus suggesting that non-hierarchical and de-instrumentalised co-operation is valuable. There is no one right way or procedure to inquire or structure the co-creation of knowledge. Openness to chaos and uncertainty are key attributes. While I realise that the complexity-informed paradigm is not necessarily held by everyone, I regard it as beneficial in executing co-operative inquiry processes.
- CI of the human condition, although through mini-groups (the microcosm) offers a basis from a complexity perspective to find patterns which are applicable to other contextual learning of the human condition and dimensions of practice (the macrocosm).
- Communities of practice enable courageous forms of inquiry, which is often required for research on personal-organisational change and transformation. Co-operation is better than explorations on one's own. Communities of Practice also allow that diversity within the group is fully appreciated implying that each person's unique contribution is realised.
- With the dominance of Newtonian science in the Western world, large numbers of adults in the Euro-centric culture have had little practice in this form of interdependent democratic co-inquiry. Therefore, the movement from co-participant to co-researcher is often a frustrating experience, leading people to conclude that collaboration is too cumbersome and may not be worth the effort.
- Facilitating CI inquiry requires a specialised set of skills that should be learnt by means of personal tangible experience. Co-operatively facilitating the process is not merely identifying skills and practising them, it involves a fundamental shift from the paradigm of simplification to that of complexity.

### **11.5.3 Limitations in Relying on Critical Subjectivity**

Although no perfect measure can be developed to remove the subjectivity of human experience, a key cornerstone in the study was the way in which the OCDCoP members viewed complexity thinking as important during the inquiry. The group inquiry took deliberate measures to integrate the ideas of complexity thinking into our approach. This assisted in becoming aware of critical complexity, which promotes an ethics of maintaining an openness to models of thinking, and action in relation to unexamined processes of doing. The included the importance of critically examining their own thought strategies and the process of becoming aware of deeply held assumptions as implied by critical subjectivity. Despite these measures, researcher bias occurred.

## **11.6 RECOMMENDATIONS**

While various recommendations could be offered, I focus on those for implementation and future research.

### **11.6.1 Recommendations for Implementation**

Here, the following recommendations seem particularly relevant to (i) OCD practitioners, (ii) change researchers, and (iii) change agents.

#### **(i) OCD practitioners should consider:**

- Re-thinking their roles in current change agent praxis which seeks pre-planned linear mechanistic change approaches, based on atomistic assumptions about the rationalised self-maximising change agent.
- Co-developing critical complexity-informed praxis heuristics frameworks, which can inform their roles in OCD practice, given the multiple challenges involved in complex change processes.
- Re-framing their roles as change agents from a critical complexity perspective and explore the re-imagined notion of Systems Change Curators.
- Co-developing Systems Change Curators through communities of practice who would apply critical complexity-informed praxis in order to distil reflective signposts or iterative principles for resilient and sustainable change agency.

**(ii) Change researchers should consider:**

- Sharpening their knowledge of philosophical complexity, complexity thinking and critical complexity with reference to organisations. This can be done by immersing themselves in the exploration of alternative complexity-informed organisational change and innovation practitioner networks, which might assist them in understanding the relations between the change praxis required for enacting Systems Change Curation.
- Fostering partnerships to facilitate complexity thinking habits of mind and action in learning centres that specialise in complexity-informed praxis which seek opportunities to build the capacity of SCC's in research networks.
- Exploring complexity-based change agency praxis with a variety of change practitioners from a transdisciplinary perspective in order to further develop the scope of change agency. This might improve the reach of OCD practitioners actions and assist in building resilience and sustainable change in organisations.
- Further developing complexity-informed co-operative inquiry methods for exploring change practitioner praxis and co-creating actionable being-becoming praxis for integrating resilience into sustainable organisational development at local and global scales.

**(iii) Change agents should consider:**

- Transdisciplinary approaches that broaden the horizons and fields of application of philosophical complexity, complexity thinking and critical complexity.
- Developing theoretical frameworks, pedagogical methods and methodological models which take into account the reality of complexity.
- Alternative complexity-based paradigms and methods. This means a movement away from a fixation on the paradigm of simplification to embracing the inherent realities of the paradigm of complexity (uncertainty, vulnerability, ambiguity) in programme and workshop development.



- A new understanding of how to model and understand complex systems (such as change agency) in terms of the Organisational Theory in which the primary objective should be to move beyond reductionist science to post-reductionist and post-holistic forms of knowledge.

### 11.6.2 Recommendations for Future Research

I recommend future research be conducted in the following research fields: (i) Organisational Theory; (ii) Organisational Change and Development; and (iii) Contemplative and Transformation sciences.

#### (i) Scholars researching Organisation Theory should consider:

- Further exploring and developing the scope of complexity-based transformative change agency praxis with a variety of change practitioners from a transdisciplinary perspective in order to build resilience in organisations;
- Further exploring the implications of complex 'I' (De Villiers-Botha & Cilliers, 2010) on resilience thinking and its interconnectedness with organisational resilience in complex transitional systems;
- Further developing co-operative inquiry methods for exploring practitioner change agency praxis and co-creating actionable tools for integrating resilience into sustainable organisational development at local and global scales;
- Building complexity-based knowledge programmes for learning in social systems change and innovation on local and global scales.

#### (ii) Scholars researching Organisational Change and Developments should consider:

- Enabling OCD practitioners to co-create local heuristics for the development of global emergent practices for transformative systems change curator practitioner praxis.
- Developing and coordinating a global research network of systems change curator communities of practice to enable transformative change, learning and praxis.

#### (iii) Scholars researching Contemplative and Transformation sciences should consider:

- Developing capacity and policy for future research initiatives and application for complexity-based spirituality and spirituality praxis regarding sustainable ways of being-becoming for alternative transformative futures in the workplace applicable to the fourth industrial revolution.
- Applying complexity-based methods for theoretical development and assessment frameworks of critical complexity-informed spiritual identity praxis to enable transformative potential in organisational and social-ecological systems.
- Provide strategic support for building mindfulness, meditation and other contemplative praxis for systems change and transformation science initiatives in order to operate as knowledge partners to academic and practitioner networks.

## 11.7 FINAL REFLECTIONS

It now is clear to me that by exploring my own and other change agents' inner arc of experience; deeper insights were created into what it really means *to be* an agent of change. I believe this should be a continuing inquiry for me, that is, my own personal exploration of what it means to be a change agent, why I want to be involved in this work, and why it gives me a purpose to engage with others about their change processes. More than just my personal continuing journey, I also want to continue working in organisations. The workplace and organisations, apart from family and formative figures in our lives, are one of the major role players in affecting our ways of thinking, being-becoming and doing. With all the challenges of the 'human epoch' (Anthropocene) and the associated fourth industrial revolution, I ask myself what my role is in creating spaces for people and organisations to engage in their own change journey. It is my wish that my engagements together with those of others will contribute to authentic human flourishing and social, economic and environmental justice.

My desire is that organisations will become places where inner change and transformation can be valued and that this study will be a seed that will contribute to the relational character of organisations. Of course, in this study, I have emphasised the change agent that has access to the levers of power and influence to effect positive change in organisations. This meant exploring new ways of thinking integrated with new methods of inquiry to co-create genuine alternatives to the current ways of doing in change agent practice. The intent was to foster and cultivate the climate and conditions for whole systems change and transformation. It is from this perspective that I believe that change agents do not think themselves into new ways of doing; they live themselves into new ways of thinking and being! Providing the necessary space for people to explore this alternative non-linear pathway to change is what drives me to further explore my own spiritual identity praxis and change agency. The value of this endeavour lies therein that it offers various change agents in professional settings the possibility of exploring and extending the quality of being-becoming praxis and their change agency roles.

This doctoral journey<sup>127</sup> has transformed my thinking, being-becoming praxis and doing as a change agent. The research process has enriched my realisation and embodiment of critical complexity-informed spiritual identity praxis. It has provided me with an emergent and contextualising way to approach encounters within both the spaces of change and emerging patterns of engagement in change processes. It also has assisted me to re-imagine alternative possibilities to relate with the rupturing, harmonising, unexpected, uncertain, vulnerable and integrated dimensions of the complex realities of organisational life. Through the journey, I experienced the explosive and integrative forces of this complexity stance and the generative capacity of re-imagination for creative change and hoping, which meant compassionate action towards myself, others and the systems of my livelihood.

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<sup>127</sup> Please also see Chapter 10 that outlines my personal reflections and learnings.

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## **APPENDIX A**

### **RESEARCH AGREEMENT**



### **RESEARCH AGREEMENT**

#### **INFORMED CONSENT**

#### **RESEARCH DESCRIPTION**

As a participant in the PhD research study undertaken by Mr Gideon Stephanus Cloete of the University of Stellenbosch Business School on "complexity, spirituality and identity formation in organisational development praxis" you are being asked to take part in verbal and non-verbal actions and reflections through one-on-one encounters, face-to-face groups and structured larger group meetings which may include participant observations, interviews and writing personal journal entries.

The goal of the research is to improve Organisational Development Practitioner's understanding, application and facilitation (praxis) of spiritual identity formation in the workplace on an individual and organisational level from a complexities perspective.

Data collected from you in the form of verbal and non-verbal communication (video or audio recording), writing (electronic or handwritten) will be for the purposes of either addressing the following questions or issues (subject to change as per group decision):

1. Co-exploring with other research participants organisational development praxis on the general topic of complexity, spirituality and identity formation in individual, group and organisational life.
2. To engage with the OCDCoP in understanding the dynamics of the emergence of spiritual identity formation in organisational life.
3. To engage with the OCDCoP in interpreting the narratives that constitute our spiritual identity as perceived in correlation to our changing environment in which we operate.
4. To promote a complexity understanding of quality being in organisational life through new insights in spiritual identity emergence.
5. To accept responsibility for the state of our quality of being (spiritual identity emergence) by determining appropriate responses within the current business and organisational life climate, particularly how OD practitioners can contribute meaningfully by engaging in "complex relational" emergent processes.

**YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION**

First Name:	
Last Name:	
Email:	
Phone Number:	
Street Address:	
City:	
Province:	
Postal Code:	

**RESEARCH ETHICAL PRINCIPLES**

Principle of Prior Rights	This principle recognises that all participants have prior, proprietary rights and interests, together with all knowledge and intellectual property rights associated with such resources and their use.
Principle of Self-Determination	This principle recognises that all participants have a right to self-determination and that researchers and associated organisations will acknowledge and respect such rights in their dealings with the participants.
Principle of co-operation	This principle recognises the holistic interconnectedness of humanity with other participants as part of our Sacred Earth and the obligation and responsibility of participants to preserve and maintain their role as co-researchers through the maintenance of their cultures, mythologies, spiritual beliefs and customary practices
Principle of Active Participation	This principle recognises the crucial importance of all participants to actively participate in all phases of the project from inception to completion, as well as in application of research results.
Principle of Full Disclosure	This principle recognises that participants are entitled to be fully informed about the nature, scope and ultimate purpose of the proposed research (including methodology, data collection, and the dissemination and application of results). This information is to be given in a manner that takes into consideration and actively engages with the body of knowledge and cultural preferences of the participants.
Principle of Prior Informed Consent and Veto	This principle recognises that the prior informed consent of all participants must be obtained before any research is undertaken. Participants have the right to veto any programme, project, or study that affects them. Providing prior informed consent presumes that all potentially affected participants will be provided complete information regarding the purpose and nature of the research activities and the probable results, including all reasonably foreseeable benefits and risks of harm (be they tangible or intangible) to the affected participants.
Principle of Confidentiality	This principle recognises that participants, at their sole discretion, have the right to exclude from publication and/or to have kept confidential any information concerning their culture, traditions, mythologies or spiritual beliefs. Furthermore, such confidentiality shall be guaranteed by researchers and other potential users. Participants also have the right to privacy and anonymity.
Principle of Respect	This principle recognises the necessity for researchers to respect the integrity, morality and spirituality of the culture, traditions and relationships of participants with their worlds, and to avoid the imposition of external conceptions and standards.
Principle of Active Protection	This principles recognises the importance of researchers taking active measures to protect and to enhance the relationships of participants with their environment and thereby promote the maintenance of cultural and biological diversity.
Principle of Precaution	This principle acknowledges the complexity of interactions between participants and their communities, and thus the inherent uncertainty of effects due to co-operative inquiry research. It advocates taking proactive, anticipatory action to identify and to prevent cultural harms resulting from research activities or outcomes.
Principle of Equitable Sharing	This principle recognises that all participants must be consulted regarding their contribution/s to the co-operative inquiry research process, activities and outcomes involving their knowledge. Participants acknowledge the use of any of the knowledge generated during the active research process will be used for the sole purposes of enacting the research. All research participants must be fairly and adequately acknowledged with regards to their contribution to the research.
Principle of Supporting	This principle recognises, supports and prioritises the efforts of fellow participants in undertaking their own research and publications and in utilising their own local knowledge/s.

Local Knowledge	
Principle of The Dynamic Interactive Cycle	This principle holds that research activities should not be initiated unless there is reasonable assurance that all stages of the project can be completed from (a) preparation and evaluation, to (b) full implementation, to (c) evaluation, dissemination and return of results to the participants, to (d) training and education as an integral part of the project, including practical application of results. Thus, all projects must be seen as cycles of continuous and on-going dialogue.
Principle of Restitution	This principle recognises that every effort will be made to avoid any adverse consequences to participants from research activities and outcomes and that, should any such adverse consequence occur, appropriate restitution shall be made.

## **PARTICIPANTS**

You are being asked to participate in the study because you have indicated considerable interest to participate in the research project as per previous personal meetings and/or discussions.

## **PROCEDURES**

Your voluntary participation in this study will entail verbal and non-verbal actions and reflections through one-on-one encounters, face-to-face groups and structured larger group meetings which may include participant observations, interviews and writing personal journal entries.

## **BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION**

There (may or may not) be direct benefits to you as a participant in this study. However, the aim of the project is to co-operate in and contribute to the following:

1. Participation in collaborative approaches to management research / organizational learning practices (community of practice that functions as community of inquiry).
2. Continually co-developing a complexities thinking perspective.
3. Participation in critical discussions on organizational behaviour and development practice with the goal of improvement of personal practice and organisational practice and policies.
4. Contributing and developing an understanding of that which gives meaning, belonging and identity in the workplace.
5. Developing policies and practices that will contribute meaningfully to the field of OD and OB.
6. The possibility of gaining new insights in your personal and organisational development approaches.
7. A regular opportunity to collaboratively discuss and relate to fellow practitioners with what you might experience as a key problem of your practice currently.
8. An opportunity to engage and network with others that might hold unique or different perspectives and work in other fields of OD practice to your own.

## **RISKS OF PARTICIPATION**

There are risks involved in all research studies. This study may include only minimal risks. You may become uncomfortable or feel embarrassed when answering some questions in one-on-one encounters, face-to-face groups and structured larger group meetings.

**COMPENSATION**

This study is likely to take up approximately 4 of your working hours per month and approximately 2 after-work hours per month for a duration of approximately 1 year for which you will receive no compensation.

**VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION**

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate in this study or in any part of this study with no harm to you, the group or our relationship. You may withdraw at any time without prejudice to any relationships you may have. You are encouraged to ask questions about this study at the beginning or any time during the research study.

**ACADEMIC PERMISSION**

The participant further grants permission for the data collected to be used in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree PhD: Business Management Studies, including a dissertation and any future publication(s) of Mr. G.S. Cloete.

**CONFIDENTIALITY**

The data collected will be used for research purposes only; the researcher undertakes neither to disclose the identity of any of the participants, nor the origin of any of the statements made by any of the participants. However, the undersigned participant understands that the researcher may make use of verbatim statements in order to give the perspectives of participants a voice in the research report.

**PARTICIPANT'S RIGHTS**

Principle supervisor: Dr Rika Preiser

Co-supervisor: Prof. Willem Schurink

I agree that:

I have read and discussed the Research Description with the researcher.
I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the purposes and procedures regarding this study. My participation in this research is voluntary.
I may withdraw from participation at any time without jeopardy to future health, employment, student status, or other entitlements.
the researcher may withdraw me from the research at his professional discretion.
If, during the course of the study, significant new information that has been developed becomes available that may relate to my willingness to continue to participate, the researcher will provide this information to me.
Any information derived from the research project that personally identifies me will not be voluntarily released or disclosed without my separate consent, except as specifically required by law.
If at any time I have any questions regarding the research or my participation, I can contact the principle supervisor, who will answer my questions. The principle supervisor's phone number is 082-809-0647.
If at any time I have comments or concerns regarding the conduct of the research or questions about my rights as a research subject, I should contact the University of Stellenbosch Business School at 021-918-4205.
I have received a copy of the research description and this participant's rights document.
If video and/or audio recording is part of this research, I give consent to being video/audio recorded.



The written, video and/or audio recordings and materials will be viewed only by the principal supervisor and members of the research team.
I undertake to give a true representation of my perspective and/or my experiences.
I will meet at mutually agreeable times and duration(s) or other means of communication, e.g. by e-mail, as reasonably necessary to enable the researcher to gain a thorough understanding of the process researched.
I will provide the researcher with my experiences and views of the area of research to the best of my ability.
I am willing to become a co-researcher within the framework of the co-operative inquiry methodology.
My signature means that I agree to participate in this study.

### **PARTICIPANT CONSENT**

I have read the above information and agree to participate in the study a copy of this form has been given to me

Signature of Participant:	
Date:	

### **RESEARCHER'S VERIFICATION OF EXPLANATION**

I certify I have carefully explained the purpose and nature of this research to

Participant's name:

in age-appropriate language. He/She has had the opportunity to discuss it with me in detail. I have answered all his/her questions and he/she provided the affirmative agreement (i.e. assent) to participate in the research.

Researcher's signature:	
Date:	

## APPENDIX B

### RESEARCH PARTICIPATION UPDATE



Deon Cloete &lt;deoncloete@gmail.com&gt;

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#### Research participation update

28 messages

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**Deon Cloete** <deoncloete@gmail.com>

Tue, Jul 2, 2013 at 4:59 PM

To: [REDACTED]

Dear Dave

Hope you are doing well!

I would like to update you on the research project I invited you to be part of (and you have shown initial interest in). Since our last discussion I have finalised the last of my preparations. It took me a while to rework some of my initial ideas and concepts regarding methodology and theoretical aspects. I hope it will make things easier as I continue the research journey.

In our last discussion I invited you to become a participant (co-researchers) in the research project on the broad topic of spiritual identity formation in the workplace (communities of practice). The basic idea is to co-explore how organizational development practitioners can better understand what is meant by "spirituality" in the workplace, with a specific focus in understanding identity formation in the context of organizational communities of practice - from a complexities thinking perspective. We will unpack this in more detail as soon as we meet up.

You might have the following questions:

#### **What will happen now?**

I will invite you to take part in the start-up session (workshop). The first workshop will focus on the general overview of the research project. At the end of the start-up workshop you will be requested to finalise your interest by making a formal commitment to the research by means of the informed consent document.

#### **When and where will it happen?**

**When:** The date and time of our first start-up workshop will be voted on by using the Doodle online program (more details below).

**Where:** Little Stream, Klein Constantia (Southern suburbs) - A relaxing conference environment with a beautiful garden. The venue of the following workshops will be open to discussion and can be interchanged between Stellenbosch, Bellville or Little Stream (Constantia).

#### **How will the whole process involve me?**

As mentioned above, the research process will require you to become co-researchers. The workshops will include theoretical, methodological, group discussions and personal interviews. The main requirement will be a commitment to keep a research diary with your reflections on the process (highlights of the main themes emerging from your reflection). Some preparatory reading of key documents before workshops might also be required. I will provide all the necessary facilitation and assistance in the process.

#### **What effort and time will it take from me?**

The initial idea is to have approximately 12 workshops over a 18 month period (every 6-8 weeks). Most workshops will be 2-3 hours (one or two workshops will require half-a-day commitment). All of the suggested criteria is open to discussion and flexible within the boundaries of the collaborative research question and chosen methodology.

#### **What benefits does the involvement in the research have for me?**

- Participation in cutting-edge collaborative approaches to management research / organizational learning practices (community of practice that functions as community of inquiry).
- Developing a complexity thinking perspective (Complexity theory is seen as providing a way of transcending the outdated divisions between the physical and social sciences - developing a unified view of life).
- Participation in critical discussions on organizational behaviour and development practice with the goal of improvement of personal practice.
- Contributing and developing an understanding of that which gives meaning, belonging and identity in the workplace.
- Developing policies and practices that will contribute meaningfully to the field of OD and OB.
- Possibility of gaining new insights in your personal and organizational development approaches.

#### **What you can look forward to:**

1. An invitation to the start-up workshop via Doodle to set up our first collaborative meeting ([www.doodle.com](http://www.doodle.com))
2. A request to become part of the virtual group space hosted on an online platform called sgrouples ([www.sgrouples.com](http://www.sgrouples.com) is a new integrative social networking platform with total privacy features and integrates your Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter accounts. The group space will help us stay organised regarding events, documents and continual discussions.
3. The workshop "manual" and research diary that will guide us on our journey.
4. The snacks and drinks provided at our first meeting ;-)
5. A regular opportunity to collaboratively discuss and relate to fellow practitioners with what you might experience as a key problem of your practice currently.
6. An opportunity to engage and network with others that might hold unique or different perspectives and work in other fields of OD practice to your own.

Hope this email has served to update and inform you sufficiently until we start the research project.

PS Feel free to contact me if you have any comments, questions or suggestions.

Kind Regards / Vriendelike groete

Deon Cloete

+27724603023

Skype me: noedie80

## APPENDIX C

### RESEARCH PARTICIPATION LATEST



Deon Cloete <deoncloete@gmail.com>

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#### Research participation latest - New dates for start-up workshop

6 messages

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Deon Cloete <deoncloete@gmail.com>

Tue, Jul 16, 2013 at 7:51 AM

To: odcop@sgrouples.com



Good morning

Thank you for your responses on Sgrouples about your preferences about the meeting options. It seems that for most of you, week day morning meetings will best fit your schedule, as long as I can confirm the next group meetings well in advance. I have added the scheduling of the other meetings for the next of the year to the start-up workshop agenda.

The coordination of the initial meetings seems to be a challenge, but I believe we can overcome it as soon as we have our first get together.

**I have resent new dates for the Organisational Development research group via Doodle.** The previously suggested dates did not seem to accommodate most participants. I decided to divide the start-up workshop into two different sessions - the Northern Group and Southern Group.

I hope the new dates will fit your schedule better.

The dates are available for both the:

Klein Constantia venue (Southern Group) <http://www.doodle.com/tiazqsn5n92ypuai>

or the

Stellenbosch venue (Northern Group) <http://www.doodle.com/pg372kxumyxzaxfc>

**Friday 9 August 09h00 - 13h00**

**Wednesday 14 August 09h00 - 13h00**

**Friday 16 August 09h00 - 13h00**

Thank you for your willingness and I trust you have a great week!

Kind Regards / Vriendelike groete

Deon Cloete

+27724603023

Skype me: noedie80

**APPENDIX D****START-UP WORKSHOP 9 AUGUST STELLENBOSCH**

Deon Cloete [REDACTED]

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**Start-up workshop 9 August Stellenbosch**

7 messages

**Deon Cloete** <deoncloete@gmail.com>

Tue, Jul 23, 2013 at 3:08 PM

To: odcop@sgrouples.com

Cc: [REDACTED]

Dear OD research project group

Your responses on Doodle have indicated that **9 August 09h00-13h00** seems to be the most popular date which all can attend.

**Regarding the venue:** Practically it just makes sense to hold the start-up workshop at the **Stellenbosch venue at first** (I got the most votes for Stellenbosch as some of you do not mind to travel to both suggested venues). For those of you that does find it difficult to travel to Stellenbosch I will suggest that we rotate between the Stellenbosch and Klein Constantia venues (I trust the group will agree to this suggestion).

Unfortunately I will not be able to hold an additional start-up workshop, so participation in this event is crucial if you want to further participate in the research project.

**The morning will be spent on the following basic ideas:**

Joining together  
What for?  
Why?  
How?  
When, where etc?  
Co-initiating

**Here is what the morning could look like:**

- Welcome and introductions, helping people feel at home.
- Introduction by Deon: the broad topic of inquiry to be considered
- Informal discussion regarding enquiry topic
- Introduction to the process of the inquiry
- Time for reflection in nature and refreshments (coffee, tea and snacks will be provided)
- Clarification of criteria for joining the inquiry group
- Practical discussion: number of cycles, dates, times, venues, financial, communication and technology and other commitments.
- Self-assessment exercise (group contracting)
- Role distribution and skills facilitation
- Preliminary discussion on primary outcomes of research

For those who are not in a hurry are welcome to **join me afterwards for lunch at Sage Restaurant** (<http://www.chabivin.co.za>). It is close to Christian Brothers Conference Centre in Paradyskloof on the Blaauwklippen Rd.

Please let me know who are interested in lunch afterwards so that I can make a reservation for us.

### **Directions to Christian Brothers Conference Centre:**

#### **From Cape Town via N2:**

Take the Baden Powell Drive exit to Stellenbosch  
At Lyndoch turn right and take the Annadale Rd to the R44 (Strand-Stellenbosch Rd)  
At the traffic lights turn left towards Stellenbosch  
As you enter Stellenbosch drive past the Engen garage (Blauwklippen Rd)  
Look out for Paradyskloof rd turn of and turn right into Paradyskloof  
Stay in Paradyskloof Rd and until you find a mini-circle  
Turn left at the circle, thereby staying in Paradyskloof rd  
At the big Oak Tree in the road turn left into Christian Brothers Centre.

#### **From Cape Town via N1:**

From the N1 take the R304 (Stellenbosch) exit  
Drive all the way through Stellenbosch (Turn into R44) towards Somerset West  
As you drive past Parmalat and Medi-Clinic Head Offices on your left (on the R44) look out for Paradyskloof Rd  
Turn left into Paradyskloof Rd  
Stay in Paradyskloof Rd and until you find a mini-circle  
Turn left at the circle, thereby staying in Paradyskloof rd  
At the big Oak Tree in the road turn left into Christian Brothers Centre.

Looking forward to our journey together!

Kind Regards / Vriendelike groete

Deon Cloete

[+27724603023](tel:+27724603023)

Skype me: noedie80



## APPENDIX E

### CO-OPERATIVE INQUIRY ADVICE



Deon Cloete &lt;deoncloete@gmail.com&gt;

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#### Co-operative inquiry advice

7 messages

Deon Cloete &lt;deoncloete@gmail.com&gt;

Mon, Aug 12, 2013 at 12:03 PM

To: jheron@human-inquiry.com, jnheron@xtra.co.nz

Best Dr John Heron

Firstly, I really appreciate your work and would love to meet you if I ever have the privilege to travel to New Zealand.

I am a PhD researcher with the University of Stellenbosch Business School in Cape Town, South Africa.

I have commenced (collaboratively) a research project on the following topic: The need to reframe spiritual identity in organisations from a complexity perspective (Working title: Towards complex spiritual identity: Co-exploring organisational development praxis). I have initiated a group of 8 people (organisational development practitioners) to become co-researcher on the topic by using co-operative inquiry methodology.

I have held the first initiating meeting last Friday. It went really well and we followed the guidelines you suggested for initiating meetings. We have however encountered a challenging problem regarding participation. I had a question regarding participants not being able to make one or two meetings due to work commitments or illness and how that would impact on the study.

My questions:

1. Is it of importance to have participants commit to the entire process upfront with the goal to participate in all meetings as far as possible? I understand that life happens and illness or work matters can cause participants to reconsider their participation in a specific meeting, but I also feel that if one participant misses out on the whole group encounter and experience, it will be impossible or highly problematic for them to catch up again. It also leaves a loop-hole for participants to not fully participate to the extent others do. Is it better that participants who want to voluntarily commit to the process also accept that they must far as humanly possible commit to partake in all group meetings?
2. Do you have any suggestions or advice in this regard? Or can you point me to readings or articles you think could be of benefit to me? I have read widely to pick up on the specifics of co-operative inquiry group contracting regarding these practical matters, but still have this outstanding question regarding full-time commitment to participation in group meetings as far as possible.
3. Do you have an example of an informed consent document (research contract) that includes group ground rules and facilitation roles or something of that sorts?
4. Do you know of people in South Africa that have done co-operative inquiry research that I can link up with?

I have also consulted my supervisor regarding this matter, but he has no direct experience of doing co-operative inquiry (although he is a very experienced qualitative methodologist and have supervise action research projects).

It would be great If you can give me a few pointers regarding this matter.

Greetings from Cape Town!

Kind regards  
Deon Cloete

072 460 3023  
Skype me: noedie80  
PhD researcher (USB)  
Chartered Organisational Development Practitioner (SABPP)  
Research Member (SAODN)  
Accredited Practitioner (IE)



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**John Heron** <jnheron@xtra.co.nz>  
To: Deon Cloete <deoncloete@gmail.com>

Wed, Aug 14, 2013 at 4:25 AM

Deon

Many thanks for your appreciation of my work, and yes, let's meet if you come to New Zealand.

You are initiating a very interesting inquiry.

With regard to your questions:

1. About importance of full-time attendance: Yes, it is essential that participants commit to attend all meetings, save for illness or some other major unforeseen personal crisis. Everyday work commitments of any kind I would not consider an adequate reason for missing a meeting: meetings need to be agreed at a time where this cannot arise.
2. About my advice: If there are 8 meetings in all, then missing 1 of them (for genuine crisis reasons) can be covered by giving the one who was absent a thorough briefing about what went on. Missing 3 meetings would require that the absentee would have to drop out of the inquiry - too much of the process has been lost, and making up for the loss by briefings won't do. Missing 2 out of 8 meetings is very undesirable, but in some cases the solution may be inquiry specific: it may depend on the topic of the inquiry, which meetings in the sequence have been missed and in what stage of the unfolding inquiry dynamic, and on the considered judgment of the other participants.
3. About informed consent documents/research contracts: No, I don't have any examples of these. These are typically used where the researcher is doing research **on** people. CI does research **with** people, and in my view it is better if the guiding principles of the inquiry are developed, in its opening stages, within the living relationship between the initiating researcher and the participants, rather than being signed up to in advance. But of course papers outlining the nature of CI can be explained and handed out to prospective participants at an induction meeting.
4. About other CI researchers in South Africa: No, regretfully I don't know of other people in South Africa with CI experience. I have had some email inquiries about CI over the years with maybe three people, but to the best of my recollections they were not about actually doing a CI. But of course this does not mean that they are no CI practitioners in South Africa.

If it would help, I'll be happy to talk over any of these issues on Skype video. Cape Town is currently 10 hours behind Auckland time so your 9 am is my 7 pm same day. A starting time between your 9 am and 10.30 am would work for me. No problem at all if this doesn't suit you.


I wish you well with your important research.

Warm regards

John

## APPENDIX F MEETING MINUTES TEMPLATE

# Meeting minutes



### ODCoP research project

<b>Notes taken by</b> <input style="width: 90%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	<b>Date</b> <input style="width: 90%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>
<b>Facilitator/s</b> <input style="width: 90%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>	<b>Co-researchers</b> <input style="width: 90%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>

.....

**General reflections and summary of previous meeting**  
*Overview and main conclusions*

<b>Outstanding topics from previous meeting</b> <i>Indicate what has to be discussed from previous meeting</i>	<b>Previous meeting date</b> <input style="width: 80%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>
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<b>Topic #1</b> <input style="width: 95%; height: 50px;" type="text"/>	<b>Additional Comments</b> <input style="width: 95%; height: 50px;" type="text"/>
<b>Topic #2</b> <input style="width: 95%; height: 50px;" type="text"/>	<b>Additional Comments</b> <input style="width: 95%; height: 50px;" type="text"/>
<b>Topic #3</b> <input style="width: 95%; height: 50px;" type="text"/>	<b>Additional Comments</b> <input style="width: 95%; height: 50px;" type="text"/>



**Topic 1**

*Discussion and conclusion*

Action item

Person responsible for

**Topic 2**

*Discussion and conclusion*

Action item

Person responsible for

**Topic 3**

*Discussion and conclusion*

Action item

Person responsible for



**Chosen actions and methods for recording**

*Participants decide individually and/or collaboratively on how to go about current research question*

**Chosen actions**

Suggestions to successfully achieve objective:

**Method/s for recording data**

Suggestions to successfully achieve objective:



**General Group Feedback on Research Topic, Questions, Aim and Objectives**

*Three strands, Phases, Quality Criteria etc.*

Individual responses and conclusion

General group response and conclusion:



Further comments



## APPENDIX G

### PRESENTATIONAL KNOWING OF THE OCDCoP

Lucille shared this poem with us after workshop 3:

#### SELF-PORTRAIT

It doesn't interest me if there is one God  
or many gods.  
I want to know if you belong or feel  
abandoned,  
if you can know despair or see it in others.  
I want to know  
if you are prepared to live in the world  
with its harsh need  
to change you. If you can look back  
with firm eyes,  
saying this is where I stand. I want to know  
if you know  
how to melt into that fierce heat of living,  
falling toward  
the center of your longing. I want to know  
if you are willing  
to live, day by day, with the consequence of love  
and the bitter  
unwanted passion of your sure defeat.  
I have heard, in that fierce embrace,  
even the gods speak of God.

From RIVER FLOW: New and Selected Poems by David Whyte and Many Rivers Press

I shared this poem with the group during Workshop 5:

Since it is your task to make visible the first vestiges of liberation for others, you must bind your own wounds carefully in anticipation of the moment when you will be needed.

You are called to be the wounded healer, the one who must look after his own wounds but at the same time be prepared to heal the wounds of others.

A deep understanding of your own pain makes it possible for you to convert your weakness into strength and to offer your own experience as a source of healing to those who are often lost in the darkness of their own misunderstood sufferings.

Making one's own wounds a source of healing call for a constant willingness to see one's own pain and suffering rising from the depth of the human condition which all men share.

Adapted from Henri Nouwen (2013) in *The Wounded Healer*

Johann shared this poem with us he wrote after Workshop 5:

I AM ... MORE

I am not  
what I have,  
my age or my looks.  
I am not what I've achieved,  
nor my title or my position,  
not my marital status or qualifications,  
not my experience and knowledge.

I am more.

Should I lose all of these great things,  
- traumatic loss indeed -  
I will still be me :  
one of a kind,  
unique homo sapiens,  
uniquely part of others,  
yet on my own;  
in shared space,  
but: in my space.

I am...

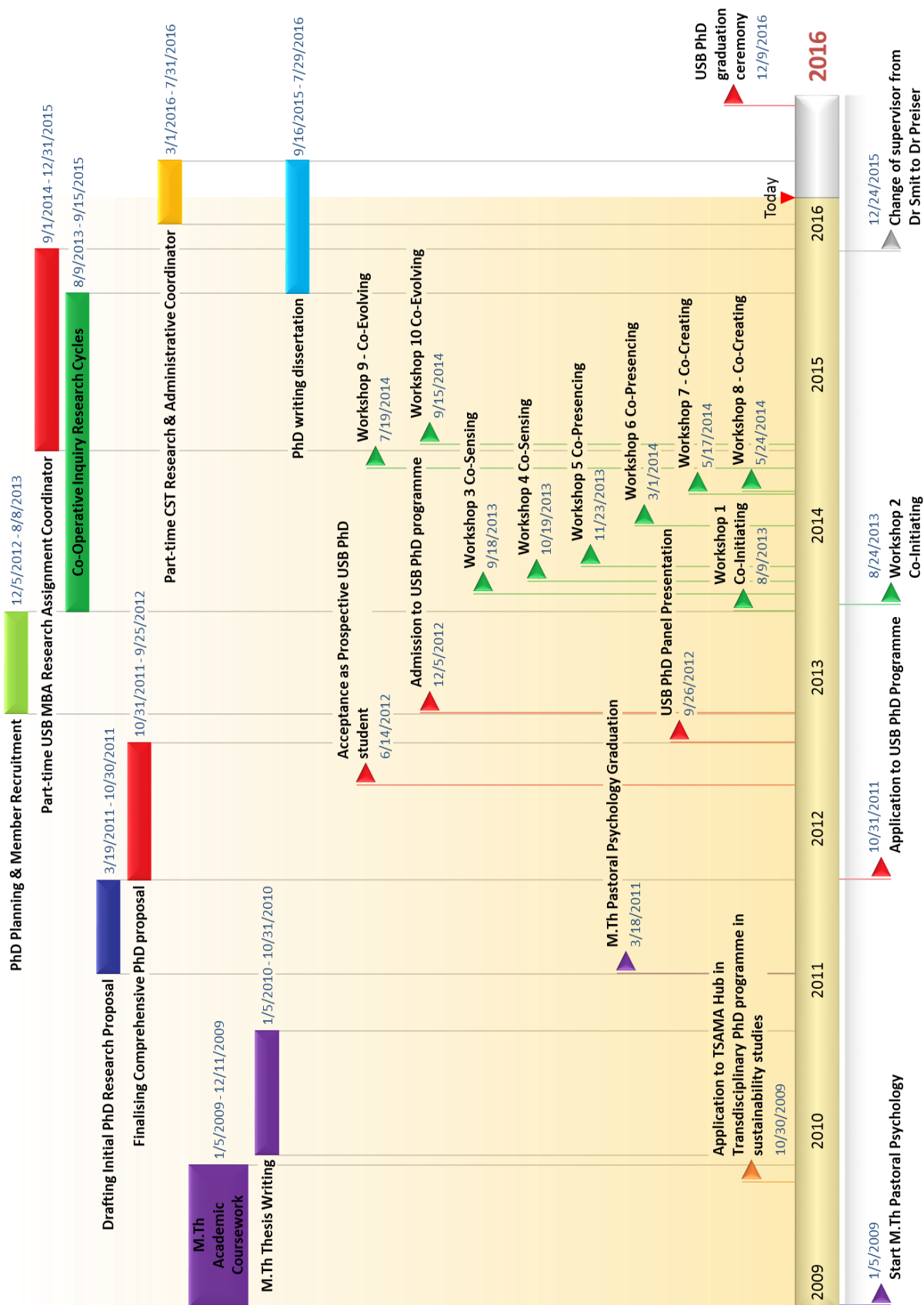
I am more than my heartbeat, more than my breathing,  
I am my love for God and people.  
I am my private inner self where no one else can see  
except me and God.

I am more than the things I do more than the thoughts I think:  
I am also what I feel,  
what I enjoy...  
and yet: more!

I am  
my deep awareness of life and purpose,  
conscious awareness of  
unique worth:  
of self and others and  
of God...  
for now and forevermore!

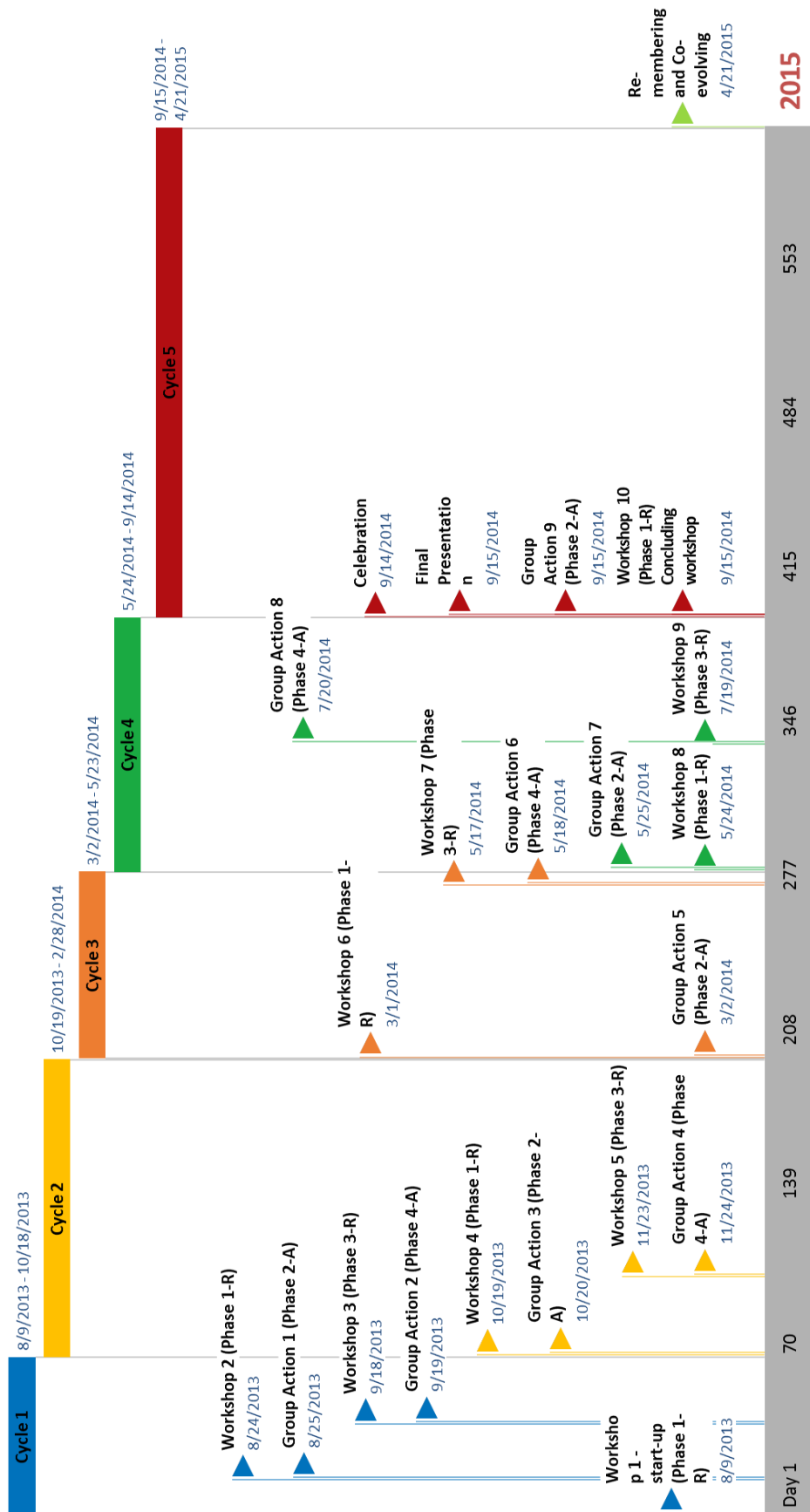
# APPENDIX H

## OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT



# APPENDIX I

## OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH CYCLES



Key to graphic: A = Action; R = Reflection

## APPENDIX J

### PHOTO GALLERY

#### KEY MOMENTS DURING THE STUDY

This section presents some key moments that had an influence on the study.

##### **Background to the study**

A key moment during my completion of my Master's degree was when my uncle, a Professor in Public Leadership and Governance at Stellenbosch University, referred me to a new doctoral program that was launched that year in 2010. I applied to the new TSAMA hub (Transdisciplinary, Sustainability, Analysis, Modelling and Assessment) doctoral programme; although I knew, I was still completing my Master's degree. Although my application did not succeed, the approach and ways of thinking inspired me to connect and pursue a PhD. My interest in transformative change on a personal and organisational level kept on encouraging me to understanding change in new ways.

To enable me to sharpen my research skills, I took part in the African Doctoral Academy Summer Research School in Social Science research methods from 9 to 13 February 2012. This opened the door for me to start thinking about my philosophy of science I wanted to apply, the methods I wanted to use, and how to go about finding an inspirational topic and suitable supervisor.

During this time, I was consulting at a firm and this helped tremendously in shaping my thoughts regarding key challenges practitioners might have in facilitating change.

##### **Getting married**

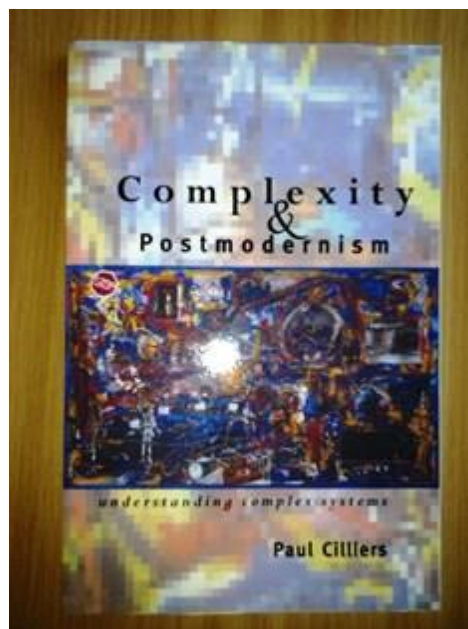
I got engaged in November 2011 to Maria and we were married on 5 May 2012, in Fouriesburg, Eastern Free State, South Africa. The experience of getting married during the writing of my PhD proposal made me realise the importance of the connectionist worldview of complexity and a relational understanding of life. Moving from the individualist life of a bachelor to a mutually sharing and open space of relating requires a mind shift. During my Masters degree, I was trained in systems thinking and narrative therapy, which enabled me to understand the importance of this mind, shift of an interconnected worldview. Interactions in married life should not be reduced to the analytic mind of the Newtonian worldview, where communication and sharing is reduced to measureable outcomes and the relationship is measured in terms of success according to objectively observable characteristics. Rather, it became important to understand partnerships in terms of emergent processes and growing in the co-created collaborative identity by co-creating heuristics.



**Photo: Maria and I with the Maloti mountain range and the super moon in the background.**

### **Complexity colloquiums**

Being part of the Centre for Studies in Complexity's weekly colloquium was a great source of encouragement and knowledge. I took part in the colloquiums from 2012 until they were discontinued in 2015. The Centre for Studies in Complexity (CSC) is now part of the new Centre for Complex Systems in Transition (CST). During this time, I met Dr Preiser, who completed her PhD in 2012. I also developed close relationships with fellow complexity thinkers and they inspired me to continue with my research, and gave me courage to continue to explore the implications of complexity thinking for change processes and Organisational Change and Development in particular.





**Photo: Paul Cilliers' book played an important role in shaping my thinking – June 2012.**

### **Meeting Professor Schurink**

During the USB Doctoral Research Training Programme (DRTP) which was hosted from 3 to 7 September 2011 I took part in the qualitative methodology training. This is where I met Professor Schurink. I approached him to be my supervisor in helping me draught my PhD proposal.



**Photo 1: First discussions with Prof. Schurink about supervision**

(USB DRTP - 7 September 2012)





**Photo: Final proposal discussions with Prof. Schurink and Maria**

(Randburg, Johannesburg - October 2012 )

### **PhD Proposal acceptance**

The proposal presentation and procedure was a nerve wrecking experience. I knew I was doing something outside the norm. I was unsure how USB staff might respond to this type of research problem or approach. I was grateful for gaining acceptance to the programme and their two-year full-time scholarship.



**Photo: After a USB PhD colloquium presentation – November 2013**

(Prof. Arnold Smit, me and Prof. Schurink)



**Photo: PhD colleagues at USB colloquium**

(Prof. Schurink's qualitative research students – January 2013).



**Photo: Celebrating our new home with my uncle Prof. Fanie Cloete**

(Bellville, March 2014)

## SIGNIFICANT MOMENTS AND EXPERIENCES DURING THE GROUP INQUIRY



**Photo: Co-developing the launching statement - 24 August 2013**

(From left to right: Rudi, Johann, Vonnie, Stan, Janet, Dave, Lucille and me).



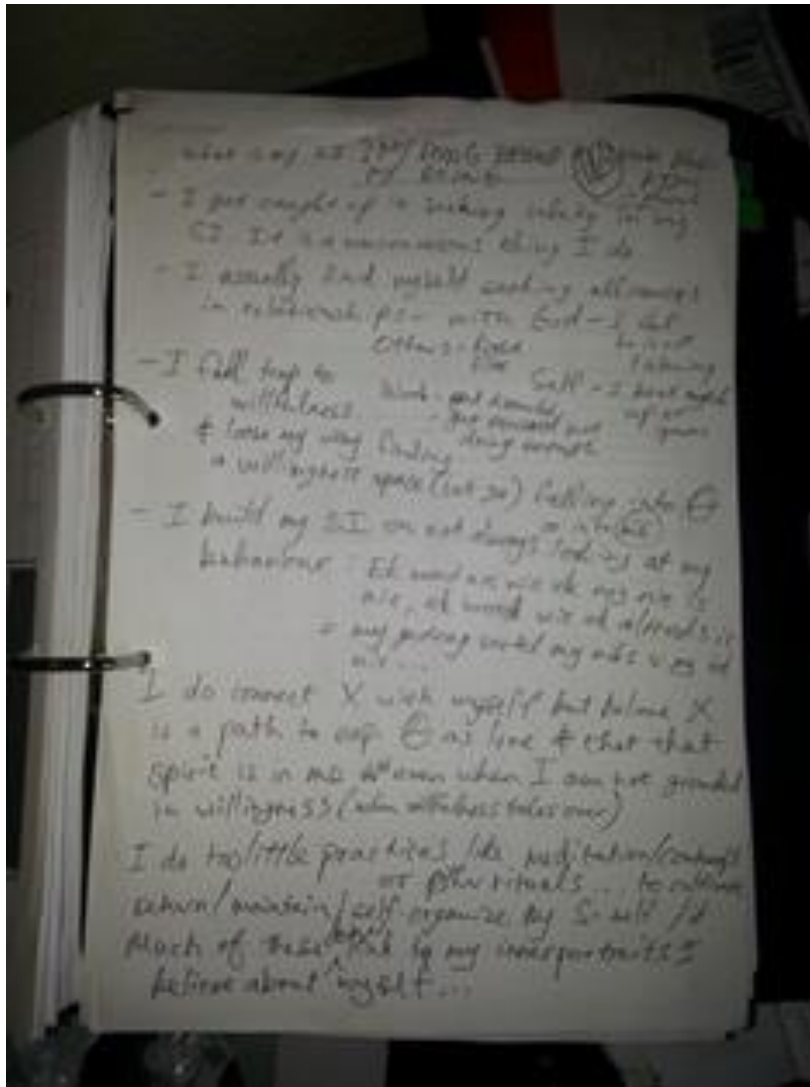


Photo: Fieldwork notes taken during workshop 3



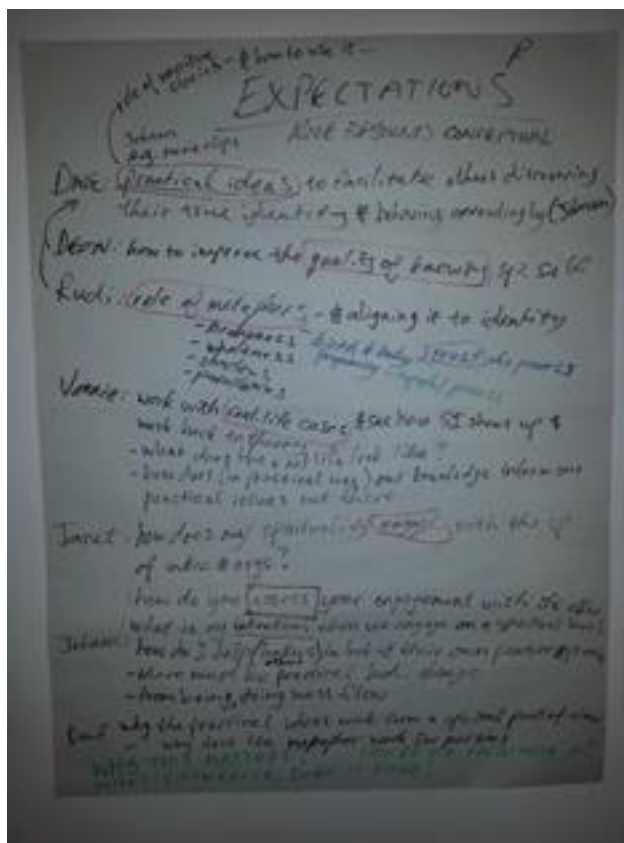


Photo: Notes taken during the research process (trying to find consensus)



Photo: The OCDCoP group with co-operative inquiry methodology posters and research question development



**Photo: Dave presents his case study to the OCDCoP group**



**Photo: The OCDCoP group writing journal entry reflections after the workshop**





**Photo: Meeting Prof. Luk Bouckaert and his wife from Euro SPES  
(Spirituality in Economics and Society).**



**Photo: A final group photo with the OCDCoP  
(From left to right: Johann, Dave, Janet, me, Vonnie and Rudi)**





**Photo: Our last workshop: struggling to find neatly phrased heuristics that explain contextual knowledges  
(Johann and I)**



**Photo: Research celebration dinner with partners – 14 September 2014**

## **EXPERIENCE OF BEING PART OF AN ACADEMIC INSTITUTION**

### **USB doctoral programme**

I think doctoral programs should critically examine the role of marketing a specific philosophy of research, and then not being able to fulfil on the commitments contained in the stated objectives. For instance, the University of Stellenbosch Business School states on their website that the research philosophy is to “develop employable knowledge underpinned by theory and practice, PhD students conduct action research on real-world problems and develop personal and transferable skills which can be used in a range of applied situations” (USB, 2016). However, I could not find a supervisor at USB who had knowledge of action research or extensive knowledge of qualitative research methods when I developed my proposal. Therefore, I suggest doctoral programs should consider a congruent implementation between that what they market as a PhD approach they apply and their exact academic and educational offering. This implies that academics at the USB should be versed in research approaches that seek the primacy of practical knowledge and practical tools for real-world problems embedded in complexity thinking (e.g. co-operative inquiry or other emancipatory action research methods). Faculty administrators, doctoral program heads and research institutions should endeavour to develop transformational science in transdisciplinary contexts that opens up to the realities of the most pressing issues in organisations in order to develop employable knowledge that has tacit practical skills. Not only in word, but through deeds, as inherent in action research as inquiry practice (Reason, 1996; Reason, 1998). Academics should be skilled in applying multiple action orientated methodologies (which was not the case with USB) that make way for contextual knowledge that can be applied within real-world complex contexts

### **Writing up the dissertation**

In September 2014, I was offered a part-time position on the USB MBA programme to coordinate the research assignment systems. This was just after completing the final workshop 10. It was a welcome source of income at the time and gave me good structure to work from the business school office and connect with staff and students at USB. The position was more involving than I expected and I had to put a lot of systems into place and develop reports for the university to make decisions on through-put rates of MBA student’s assignment completion rates. I also had to follow-up on about 300 students who were behind on their progress and submission dates. This was a good experience of getting to know the USB organisational decision-making structure and organisational systems. Reflecting back on the experience now, I realise how this assisted me in understanding organisational change in large institutions like Stellenbosch University and the fragmented nature of organisational processes and dynamics. The Newtonian worldview and atomistic thinking is pervasive throughout the structures of the staff, programmes, pedagogic material and the wider system of the business world in which students are educated.



### **Conferences and International exposure**

I had the privilege to attend the International Spirituality for Economics in Society Conference (SPES) in July 2015. It was hosted by Vrije University, Amsterdam in association with Nyenrode Business School. The theme of the conference was: Management in a VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous) world: The role of spirituality. Here I presented a paper titled: Critical Complexity and Organisational Development Praxis: Exploring and Re-Purposing Identity and the Role of Spirituality.



**Photo: The Netherlands for the SPES conference, June 2015**

I was also privileged to attend the European Doctoral Association in Management and Business Administration in Athens, Greece. Here I presented a paper titled: Critical Complexity and Co-operative Inquiry: Exploring organisational development practitioners' identity praxis.



**Photo: EDAMBA conference July 2015 - Athens, Greece**

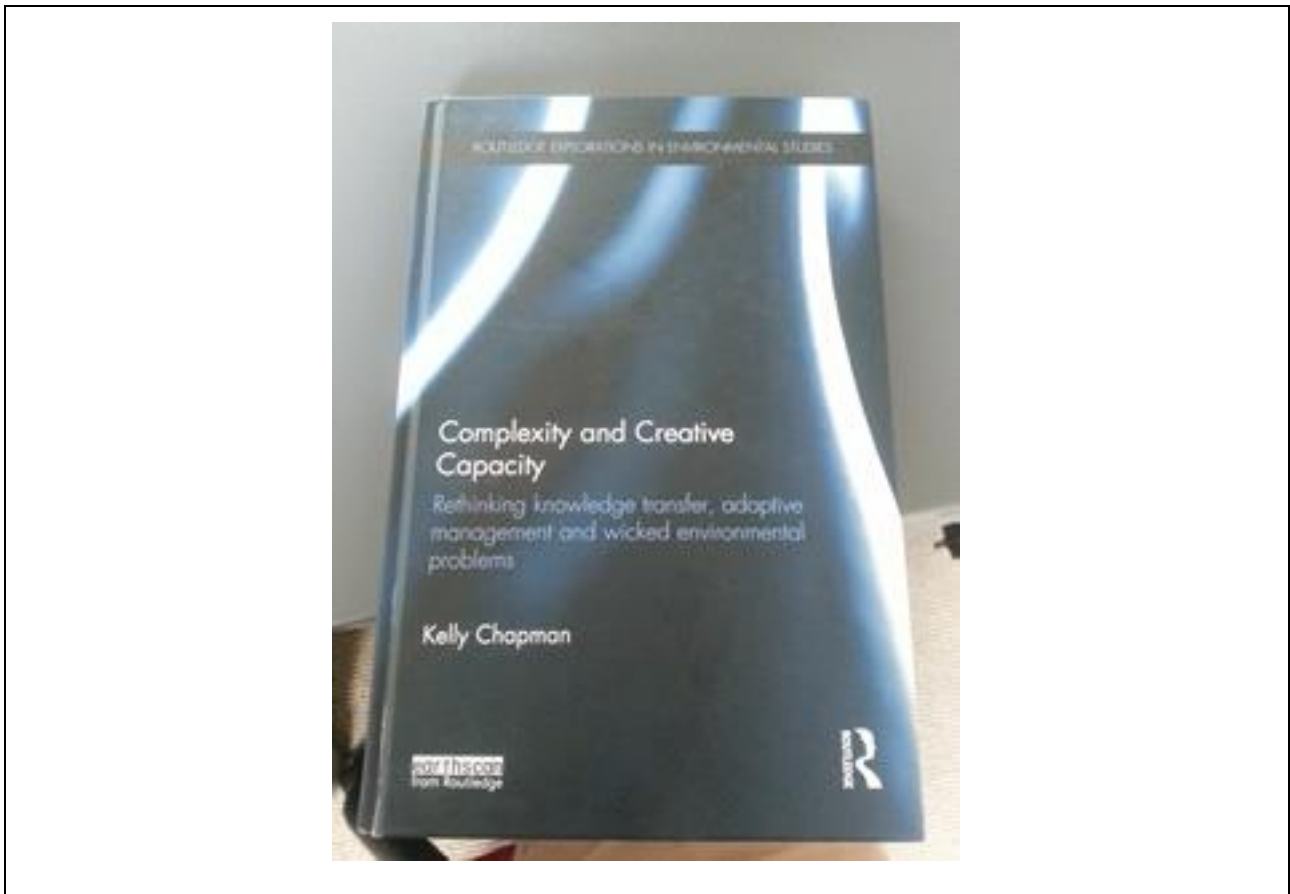
(the Acropolis in the background)

I recently attended and presented a paper at the International Sustainable Transitions conference in Wuppertal, Germany. The four-minute speed talk was titled: Co-creating complex transformative praxis with co-operative inquiry methodology. It was a wonderful experience and I had a 20-minute feedback session with great questions and comments afterwards. I was a welcome experience to have many fellow academics interested in my work and talking to me about my research. The collaborative interests we shared in transformational and transition sciences and approaches gave me energy to complete the final part of the dissertation.



**Photo: Dr Preiser presenting a research paper**

(International Sustainable Transitions Conference – Wuppertal, Germany 6-9 September 2016)



**Photo: Kelly Chapman's book on complexity thinking was influential in my writing process**

### **Taking a new supervisor on board**

In November 2015, I was experiencing difficulty concerning the packaging of my study, and how to integrate the critical complexity argument. I did not know exactly how to approach the research arguments and issues I particularly wanted to explore. I was also unsure how I could design the theoretical framework to form a coherent whole. Although Prof Arnold Smit assisted me well during the study to date on the theoretical guidance side of things, I realised I required an expert in complexity thinking to guide me. I turned to Dr Preiser to assist me with this problem and to help me redesign the theoretical structure of the dissertation. I wanted to be congruent to the implications of complexity and the methodological insights in a coherent manner. This was challenging and Prof. Schurink and Dr Preiser gave me good guidance in this regard.



**Photo: Re-packaging the research with Dr Preiser – 11 November 2015**



**Photo: Supervisors meeting at my home**

(Prof. Schurink and Dr Preiser – 27 April 2016)

### **Becoming part of the CST family**

My part-time contract at USB on the MBA programme was not renewed in January 2016. This was quite a stressful experience, as I had to vacate my office and receive the news that my contract was not going to be renewed on the same day. Dr Preiser approached me to assist her with the complexity module she teaches at the Sustainability Institute in Stellenbosch. During our discussions, she mentioned that there were some opportunities at the Centre for Complex Systems in Transition (CST). In April 2016, I accepted a part-time position at CST to work as a research



assistant and administrative co-coordinator. I was a wonderful open environment where one could connect with other complexity thinkers and explore mutual research interests. A wonderful moment during this time was the book launch of the late Professor Paul Cilliers. All his family, friends, colleagues and associates attended his book with collected essays on critical complexity.



Photo: Presentation slide I designed for the book launch



Photo: Dr Preiser welcomes the guests at the Paul Cilliers book launch 6 April 2016



**Photo: Centre for Complex Systems in Transition (CST)**  
(STIAS Complex, Stellenbosch – May 2016)



**Photo: New signage at CST front door with Prof. Oonsie Biggs and Dr Rika Preiser**





**Photo: Celebrating Maria's birthday with friends – June 2016**



**Photo: A selfie in Stockholm**

(Swedish Academy of Sciences Museum – Nobel Laureates, 29 August 2016)



**Photo: The Stockholm Resilience Centre, 1 September 2016**

## **REFLECTIONS**

I spent the week of 29 August to 2 September at the Stockholm Resilience Centre with Professor Oonsie Biggs. I presented my research at a lunch hour meeting titled: Co-creating transformative change praxis with co-operative inquiry methodology. I received good feedback and held several meetings with fellow transition and transformation scholars. During this time, I wrote most of chapter 6 and 7 in Stockholm at the Stockholm Resilience Centre.

Writing this doctoral dissertation and exploring alternative theories of change in the process was a journey well worth the effort. Working with fellow Organisational Change and Development practitioners and co-exploring our own change praxis was both a stimulating and challenging experience. The challenge of continual self-engagement in order to draw on the inner sources that cultivate and nourish complex spiritual identity is one of the key aspects of the research. Growing in our dimensions of engagement and awareness of our situatedness in the different domains and spaces of interaction remains a challenge. The critical complexity lens on personal and organisational identity and spirituality has informed and transformed my ways of seeing and being in the world. I hope to foster this in my own self-formation processes and to continue to cultivate it as change praxis in the various systems I engage in.

## APPENDIX K

## REFLEXIVE ANALYSIS OF INQUIRY QUESTIONS

Table A1.1: Reflexive analysis of inquiry questions

Workshop	Inquiry question	Consideration & Re-framing of Inquiry Question (Convergent or Divergent?)	Action Plan & Indications of changing perspectives
Main research questions	<p><i>(i) How does critical complexity shift the idea of spiritual identity praxis and what might that suggest for the way change agents approach their role in change interventions?</i></p> <p><i>(ii) How does an action research inquiry process over time provide some evidence of how change practitioners shift their spiritual identity praxis when employing complexity thinking?</i></p>		
Workshop 1	<p>Inquiry questions explored with regard to the research proposal:</p> <p>What is the current reality of individuals and organisations regarding basic existential realities in the workplace? How does one determine the identity of a complex system? What is the current reality of individuals and organisations regarding basic existential realities in the workplace? How can a system be interconnected with all other systems, derive part of its identity from them, and remain unique? Are we equipped to deal with the current complexities of the human condition in the workplace? How should we</p>	<p>Group contracting and research agreement (Convergent)</p>	

	approach and conceive of "complex identity"? Is there a "need to reframe spiritual identity in organisations from a complexity perspective" and what would the possible title of a launching statement be?		
Workshop 2	<p>Launching Statement: Exploring and reframing:</p> <p>Exploring and re-framing: (i) Spiritual identity (spirituality / identity / spiritual-identity) in (ii) complex organisational systems in order to develop (iii) OCD praxis.</p>	Other order or versions of the statement to be considered as we move along the research cycles (Convergent).	Action Plan — Go explore the following questions: (i) What is my spiritual identity (ii) in my OD practice and (iii) the organisations I work in?
Workshop 3	<p>What is my spiritual identity in my OCD practice, and the organisations I work in? Who are we and what has formed our spiritual identity? What is my spiritual identity? What is the story behind the story that I tell easily? What is the story that I have not yet told about it?</p>	We devised several questions that could further probe into the first part of the question regarding what our spiritual identity was. (Convergence)	Action plan — Go explore the following questions: (i) How did this come about? What is the story behind the story of how my personal spiritual identity came about? (ii) How do you handle people's responses on this question of what my spiritual identity is? (iii) What is the thinking behind my thinking about my spiritual identity towards myself/others? (iv) How do you actually respond to other people's responses to this question? (v) What is the doing behind my doing regarding my spiritual identity towards myself/others?

Workshop 4 – Onze Rust	What is the story behind the story of how my personal spiritual identity came about? What is the thinking behind your thinking about your spiritual identity towards yourself and others? What is the doing behind your doing regarding my spiritual identity towards yourself and others? What does this all mean regarding your spiritual identity? So what?	We decided to stick with gaining a deeper understanding of the first part of our launching statement, but to add a reflective loop to the information we shared at the workshop. (Convergence or Mixed)	Action plan — Go explore the following questions: Ask yourself the same questions of the previous action plan and then ponder the “so what?” question (what does this mean for my OD practice?)
Workshop 5	Tell us more about the key themes or the golden thread of the most significant influences on how your spiritual identity came about. Tell us more about how the reflection helped you make sense and deepened your experience beyond (superficial understandings). And, how do these experiences connect with your work experiences (realities) and the research?	The action plan derived from Workshop 5 (the discussion during this workshop) was formed around the need to reframe our ideas on spiritual identity. Therefore, it was decided that each person should pose their new questions after having reflected on the key themes or golden thread the group shared (Divergence).	Action plan — Each co-researcher was tasked to devise his/her new action phase research question:  Dave: How do I ‘live’ and convey truth and power in the complex organisations I work in and remain vulnerable and authentic - holding that truth lightly with non-attachment and meta-intentionality? [for he who only has a hammer, every problem becomes a nail...]  Janet: What significance do the concepts of choice, redemptive potential and defining moments have in spirituality? How do they impact on my use of self as instrument? How do they manifest and impact on organisational health and effectiveness? How might they be consciously harnessed to increase

			<p>organisational health and effectiveness?</p> <p>Vonnie: How congruent and authentic am I when working with high-end level of executives? How overriding is my need to be accepted and does it influence my authenticity?</p> <p>Johann: Am I really authentic - being who I am? And how can I help others to be more authentic, open, aware and honest about their spiritual identity?</p> <p>Rudi: What are the consequences in coaching when a client believes he/she is a mere human being and not in essence a spiritual being? Also, in what way are they influenced by a specific image they hold of God?</p> <p>Me: How congruent am I in the ways of being-becoming that demonstrates authenticity despite unconscious feelings of rejection, inferiority or failure that might be motivating my actions?</p>
<p>Workshop 6</p>	<p>In general the question we pondered was: what does the enneagram bring to my story about my spiritual identity? This was followed by exploring these questions:</p> <p>How do my defences impact on the way I practice OD?</p>	<p>The enneagram links to our intentionality and how we resonate with particular motivations more than others. The enneagram gave us</p>	<p>Action plan — Go explore the following questions:</p> <p>How did your spiritual identity come about and what are the implications thereof for your OCD practice?</p>



	<p>How does my motivation impact on the way I see business?          What is the quality of my intentions and what is the quality of my being-functions?</p> <p>We used our beliefs and knowledge to deepen our story about spiritual identity by asking: (i) how do my defences affect the way I practise Organisational Development? (ii) How does my motivation impact on the way I see business? And (iii) How does my motivation affect the way I see OCD?</p>	<p>great insights into our own spiritual development and identity formation, and how we use these motivational forces to make sense of our spirituality, others and then especially the workplace and our OD practice. Meaningful insights were gained by exploring how our key motivational forces influences our view of organizations and therefore the impact thereof on our spiritual identity praxis and its relation to OD practice.</p> <p>We looked at the impact of Newtonian thinking on organizations and contrasted it with complexity thinking. This was a divergent phase.</p>	
Workshop 7	<p>From each of our divergent research questions of workshop 6 the following themes emerged regarding the inquiry questions:</p> <p>(i) Spiritual identity praxis: How would you describe your journey to discovering your authentic self (identity)? Have you found your</p>	<p>The reflections on the explorations of the action plan and different forms of knowing were presented by means of case studies that were particularly</p>	<p>Action plan — Go explore the questions raised during the workshop.</p>

	<p>authentic self? How far are you on this journey? What does it look like? How do you discover or become aware of it?</p> <p>(ii) Spiritual identity praxis connected to the role of change agents: How do you facilitate spiritual identity in others (individuals and organisations)? How do you use metaphors in your OCD regarding spiritual identity, e.g. like chipping away at that which is not you (Leonardo looking at the David statue)? How do you facilitate unlearning that which is not you / incongruent / inauthentic or inappropriate in your spiritual identity praxis as OCD practitioner?</p> <p>(iii) Spiritual identity praxis in organisations: How do you move from who you are to changing the system? What role does identity formation play in your OCD approach? If you subscribe to a complex view of the self, is spirituality (the spiritual whole and part of self) not already included in the dynamic concept of identity?</p>	<p>perplexing or of interest to the participants in their personal journeys as OCD practitioners. The main goal was to re-assemble after the phase of explorations and to share the group's specific reflection on their OCD practice experiences. The group presented their answers to the action plan by means of a case study in order to illustrate the co-researchers' sense of presentational and propositional knowing. The presentations also represent their insights in reflection on their spiritual identity praxis in their OCD initiatives. This was a convergent phase.</p>	
Workshop 8	<p>How do you see spirituality or would you describe your own spirituality? How is spiritual identity different from the other identities you have? Why do you see spiritual identity in this way? Complete the sentence: I am... When do you feel that you are not connected to your spiritual identity? Do you think you came across as certain or uncertain about your spiritual identity? Did you find</p>	<p>By employing role-play, Rudi elicited our spiritual identity praxis and demonstrated how this opened our understanding of the roles that change practitioners engage. This dramatic presentation assisted</p>	<p>Having completed the role-play session, we started devising the next action phase, which included reframing and revising the research question to: (i) How does higher levels of awareness (spiritual identity) and expression impact on your OCD praxis? (the quality of my role</p>

	<p>questions about your spirituality and identity a bit daunting?</p>	<p>in eliciting the workplace realities and lived experiences of how we enacted upon our spiritual identity and fulfilled a particular role in deliberate change contexts. This was a convergent phase.</p>	<p>functions and feedback regarding my behavioural responses and performance) and, (ii) what does it reveal about myself? (the quality of my norms, values, belief systems, worldviews and paradigms).</p>
Workshop 9	<p>How does higher levels of awareness (spiritual identity) and expression impact on your OCD praxis? (the quality of my role functions and feedback regarding my behavioural responses and performance)</p> <p>What does it reveal about myself? (The quality of my norms, values, belief systems, worldviews and paradigms).</p> <p>How do you apply your spiritual identity praxis to OCD practice encounters and experiences, and what are the implications for our spiritual identity praxis heuristics?</p>	<p>Workshop 9 entailed the refining of our propositional knowledge regarding spiritual identity praxis to the impact it has in change agent contexts. Our saturated lived experiences regarding our spiritual identity praxis in the context of our role as OCD practitioners were questioned and explored from a complexity-informed perspective. This was a convergent phase.</p>	<p>The reframing of the spiritual identity heuristics led us in the direction of a qualitatively different role of interpreting the role of the change actor: from the position of spiritual identity praxis presenting an alternative shift in ways of being-becoming in the context of deliberate change interventions.</p>
Workshop 10	<p>How did you experience the overall research journey?</p> <p>How did you experience the methodology and the participatory worldview connected to the three strands of empowerment?</p> <p>How did you experience the way you could or could not take up co-facilitatory roles?</p>	<p>As this was an informative inquiry, the co-inquiry explored our spiritual identity praxis within the domain of OCD. Our goal was to explore our ways of being-becoming (spiritual identity) in reflection on our</p>	<p>The meaning of this alternative framing of spiritual identity praxis and the associated ways of being-becoming praxis in OCD presents a starting point for exercising and practising a critical complexity-informed alternative change agency for re-imagining the roles</p>

	<p>How did you experience the way you moved through various questions of the research in relation to the topic on spiritual identity?</p> <p>How did you experience your process of transformation of personal being through the engagement with the focus and process of the inquiry?</p> <p>How did you experience your encounter with the various propositional knowledge we shared (reading articles, emails, quotes) we co-explore or you self-explored, and in what way was it informative to the inquiry process?</p> <p>Have you experienced any shift in your spiritual identity?</p> <p>How has this process influenced your daily OCD praxis?</p>	<p>doing (behaviour) in the arena of our consulting practice. This co-exploration opened up possibilities for a new way of taking up facilitating roles in change initiatives.</p>	<p>change agents adopt in change interventions.</p>
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## APPENDIX L

### INTEGRATIVE ENNEAGRAM SOLUTIONS



#### What is the Enneagram?

The word Enneagram comes from the Greek words ennea (nine) and gram (points / what is written or drawn). It refers to the nine different Enneagram styles, identified as the numbers 1-9. Each number represents a worldview and archetype that resonates with the way in which people think, feel and act and how they stand in relation to the world, others and themselves.

The Enneagram Profile is a useful guide on the journey towards self-development, relationship building, conflict resolution and the improvement of team dynamics. It should be applied from an Open Systems perspective. It is therefore not aimed at “boxing”, limiting or categorising people. The Integrative Enneagram Report works with an individual as a more complex, layered, unique and distinct being than other Typing systems.

#### Why work with the Enneagram?

The organisation consists of groups of individuals working together and as such the optimisation of the individual, team and organisational level behaviour and outputs contribute significantly to the overall success of the business.

The Enneagram creates meta-awareness at an individual and team level and uncovers the focus and patterns of behaviour that sub-consciously drive and motivate us to act in certain ways. In making these patterns and motivations conscious, the individual is able to develop and transcend these. The Enneagram also provides a very powerful model for understanding how development and integration operates, given the core motivational pattern we start from. It empowers the individual to take responsibility for his or her own behaviours and growth from a greater understanding of why they act and react in a certain way.



#### Using the Enneagram as a development tool In Coaching:

The Enneagram has, over the past four decades, proven to be one of the most powerful tools in the coaching environment. When being coached, the use of the Enneagram does not only fast track insight, growth and integration for the individual client, but also gives durability and magnitude to the individual development process over time. The Enneagram is not a superficial framework to provide just a quick and short-lived insight. The depth and layered approach to the Enneagram enable the coaching process to allow the clients to develop themselves over time, as it continues to resonate more deeply as they change and their circumstances change. Through the lines, wings, centre of intelligence, instincts and levels of integration, more subtle and powerful pathways to development open up to the individual.



## APPENDIX M

### ACTION PLAN TEMPLATE

# Research journal

## Action Plan Reflections



### ODCoP research journal

Name

Date

Phase of research



#### What is the research question you are asking (your current action plan)?

Our general question: What is my spiritual identity, in my OD practice and the organisations we I work in? Now determine your own question by reflecting on how your identity was formed and is continually being influenced regarding your spirituality and the frameworks of your God-images you apply to your OD practice and orgs.

Develop your question around how the influence of your Ennea-type, Newtonian thinking and Complexities thinking has influenced your praxis (being-functions) and practice (doing-functions) by applying it to a specific project your client you are working on. It can also be an experience you have had in the past. It is a reflection that you look upon now that will give you insight into the question you are asking here. This is like a mini case study applied to your work experience.

#### What was it like applying and integrating the special inquiry skills during this research cycle?

Please indicate which of these skills were valuable in your experience and why (see special inquiry skills doc for descriptions).

Being present, Imaginal openness, Bracketing, Reframing, Dynamic congruence, Emotional competence, Non-attachment, Self-transcending intentionality

#### What was it like applying your chosen method/s of recording your experiential data?





**Reflections on your personal experiences**

Please include propositional, practical, experiential and presentational forms of knowing and beliefs

**Reflections on your workplace experiences**

Please include propositional, practical, experiential and presentational forms of knowing and beliefs

**Let your free spirit out here...**

## **APPENDIX N**

### **PURPOSE OF PERFORMING RITUALS**

As a group of co-researchers, we decided that we needed a way in which we could start the day that could signify the deeper meaning of our togetherness and the focus of our community of practice on spirituality, identity, complexity and OCD practice through taking turns of facilitating group rituals.

In my reflection of the group rituals, I have realised the following significance of what the rituals that were performed contributed to the group experience. These are some examples of how the group rituals contributed to the inquiry process:

- It created a space to my visible our own unique spiritual identity to other members.
- It presented some of our OCD practice skills we use in other settings, which allowed the group processes to start well and serve as a kind of icebreaker.
- It created a spiritual atmosphere and focus for the workshop that allowed each individual and group to be reflective and mindful of the space.
- It opened up a space for empowering the group in embracing the three strands of empowerment (political, methodological and emotional) that facilitated a participatory climate and worldview.
- It allowed the group to be mindful of their situatedness in the present (presencing).
- It gave us a way in which we could best bring our whole selves to the collaborative environment.
- It created a space for co-researchers to share their four kinds of belief and how it has developed into well-established practical knowing.
- It allowed for presentational knowing by means of drama, art and poetry.
- It allowed for experiential knowing by means of meditative exercises or moments of silence.
- It allowed for practical knowing to show some of our OCD skills to share the skills with group members.
- It allowed us to connect with the relevant propositional knowing as could be found in our shared readings and journaling.

## APPENDIX O

### LIST OF COMMON THEMES ABOUT SPIRITUAL IDENTITY

- We all fall short in terms of our actions in comparison with our intentions
- Our perceptions are created by our history
- The power of forgiveness
- The power of epiphanies or 'wow' moments
- Gratefulness and gratitude
- Questioning how religion has impacted on general ideas regarding spirituality
- The threat of dogma versus openness to mystery
- The impact of evangelistic doctrine (sinners who needs to be converted)
- The ability to see God in multiple sources (nature, others, self)
- God comes to you as your life / God reflected in us
- The anger at fundamentalism
- Feelings of being left out or not fitting in
- The divide and separation we create between things like spirituality and identity in terms of our worldviews or systems of belief and knowing
- We are spiritual beings having a physical experience
- Paradox of woundedness, brokenness and wholeness
- Moving towards authenticity rather than striving for perfectionism
- Different ways of knowing different places and levels of knowing
- Mystic and metaphysical ways of knowing and knowledge
- The problem of religion as industry
- Business is a modern form of religion
- The roles of parents, fathers, mothers or authority figures in identity and spiritual formation
- God's love and unconditional love
- The Christian views of good and bad
- The role of redemptive potential
- Growing in awareness through questioning the experiences about life
- Finding your spiritual self through either experiences of great love or of great suffering (dark night of the soul – paradox)
- Rejection by or of the system of the day
- The concept of choice
- Driven by feelings of rejection to find acceptance (value purpose and meaning)
- Driven by feelings of worthlessness to search for a worth and value (being precious)
- Driven by feelings of inferiority to a prove our ability and importance (vulnerability and uncertainty)
- The role of power, empowerment and disempowerment
- Spiritual identity as our view of life and actions and reactions to life
- The personification of God through the use of gender
- Ethics beyond right or wrong - as a way of being

## APPENDIX P

### VONNIE'S LETTER

#### Workshop 9 Preparation: Saturday 19 July - Onze Rust Guest Farm Stellenbosch

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Vonnie [REDACTED] Sun, Jul 13, 2014 at 7:18 PM  
To: Deon Cloete [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Dear All

Thank you David for your very helpful heuristics you offered. I am unfortunately unable to attend next week's session and want to offer my sincere apologies for what looks like a very promising session - given the topic. Please find some thoughts from my side as my response to the two questions posed by our research.

- **How does higher levels of awareness (spiritual identity) and expression impact on your OD praxis?**

You are all familiar with my [REDACTED] project in the Cederberg where I am following the Theory U process of Otto Scharmer as my methodology to bring about change. I am very aware of the fact that my initial intentions with this project was quite ambitious because it was such a typical South African dilemma of the divide between employer and employee. On a macro level this divide is of course fueled by the past and current political dispensation and dynamics of the South African workplace context. I was committed to enter a process which can serve as a learning process and possibly blueprint for other similar workplace scenarios. The project took me through highs and lows but unfortunately the lows got the upper hand as I was approaching a phase where I was aware the intervention was losing its credibility amongst the majority of the stakeholders. I was aware of how my own ego responded to it and how emotions such as hopelessness, frustration and even anger towards pivotal roleplayers evolved. I was reminded of a quote from Joseph Jaworski: "When you open your soul and you bring your whole heart into the room, it changes the structure of the room." I became aware of how the micro, meso and macro context was all aligned against a favourable outcome in this context. A change process on all levels was indicated and I knew it has to start with myself first. I needed to move from an ego to an eco perspective with this project which required that I should let go of seeing myself as the change maker. This self-imposed identification with the project and the ego-driven competitive nature needed to be replaced with a more inclusive and shared strategy. Meetings with the Conservation Director and Regional Manager of [REDACTED] led to a session with the whole workforce from the Cederberg and a process was facilitated to get everybody in various change projects. The control shifted from me being the change maker to the stakeholders being the owners of the change. It is quite clear to me that there is still a strong presence to what Robert Keegan calls an "immunity to change." He describes an immunity to change as the "processes of dynamic equilibrium, which, like an immune system, powerfully and mysteriously tend to keep things pretty much as they are." I am using his book "*How the Way We Talk Can Change the Way We Work*" as a framework to transform people's way of talking to themselves and others. In each case, the transformation in people's way of talking is a shift from a habitual and unreflective pattern to a more deliberate and self-reflective pattern. The four transformations, each of which corresponds to a column of the immunity map, are:

- From the language of *complaint* to the language of *commitment*
- From the language of *blame* to the language of *personal responsibility*

- From the language of *resolutions* to the language of *competing commitments*
- From the language of *big assumptions that hold us* to the language of *assumptions we hold*

"Low hanging fruit" and actions were identified by all project teams and whether movement was made to move through the "eye of the needle" only time will tell. But I am not the person who determines that anymore.

- **What does it reveal about myself?** (the quality of my norms, values, belief systems, world views and paradigms)

I am aware of the limitations of frameworks and models. The moment when you hang on too tightly onto models and frameworks you are getting in trouble with the expectations you are developing within yourself and others. An awareness of what Deon mentioned of the third order cybernetics is critical. There is indeed a constant active-interactive process happening and the system is constantly evolving in the dynamics between micro, meso and macro levels. You cannot control or manipulate it. You cannot even facilitate it and I often stand amazed to see how something evolves in front of my eyes while I am a mere observer, with limited influence of it. Looking back to my role in the process described above - I can see how I pulled the Director and Regional Manager into the process. The system responded. Right now it look promising in terms of the outcome that I would like to see, but the system has a live of its own and might deliver a totally different outcome to the one I am working for. I have to let go of believe systems that my expertise can produce predetermined results. This of course produce some kind of conflict within myself, because when I produce my proposal and quote to a company I am committing myself to a certain outcome - which is Newtonian in many ways. I then rely on my knowledge, experience, models and frameworks to produce this outcome. My understanding of the complexity of systems is taking me to the point where I can only commit to taking responsibility for my intentions and attentions when I rock up in my role. My knowledge, skills and models helps me with the attention part of my praxis, but being aware of my intentions (to be open with my soul and heart) requires much higher levels of awareness and more focus. When comparing the amount of time I am spending on the quality of my norms, values and believe systems to the time I am spending on researching for more knowledge and models, I realise that it is way too little.

Thank you - this inner conversation served my praxis very well :) I hope it make as much sense to you as it is making to me.

Warmly

## **Vonnie Mostert**

***Psychologist & Organisational Development Consultant  
Certified YPO-WPO Facilitator***



***"Integrity largely has to do with purifying our intentions and a growing honesty about our actual motives" - Richard Rohr***

## APPENDIX Q

### INQUIRY REPORT LIST

Heron's describes the content of co-operative inquiry to include the following. But in his words: "Here is my current, highly Apollonian, list of what I would find of great interest, although I would be astonished, if not dismayed, to discover all of it in any one report" (Heron, 1996:102):

- Relevant information about the initiating researcher, including their prior experience or knowledge of co-operative inquiry; and the same about the group members.
- A brief account of the background to the inquiry, how and why it has come into being; including something about the inquiry topic, where it came from, and how it was stated before the inquiry opened.
- Details about methods of recruiting group members, about the induction meeting and responses to it, about the nature of the entry contract, and about the number and gender and ages of contracting members.
- Details of the time-structure: the total number of inquiry cycles, the length of the reflection phases and of the action phases.
- Information about the type of inquiry: full and internally initiated, or partial and externally initiated, inside or outside, open or closed boundary, same/reciprocal/counterpartal/mixed role, Apollonian and/or Dionysian, informative and/or transformative:
  - If externally initiated, how do the initiating researchers deal with their lack of full participation in the action phases?
  - If an open boundary in the action phases, do the inquirers elicit any data from the noninquirers with whom they interact at the boundary?
  - If an open boundary in the reflection phases, who is invited to visit them and what impact do the visits have?
- An account of how the inquiry topic was processed at the first reflection meeting, and how it was shaped up into a launching focus for the whole inquiry.
- A summary story of all the research cycles with some resume of what went on at each reflection meeting, what was done in each action phase and of the ongoing fate of the launching proposal.
  - Were presentational as well as propositional forms of recording in the action phases and of making sense in the reflection phases used, and with what effect?
- Information about the overall pattern within and between research cycles in relation to divergence and convergence, and in relation to parts, subwholes or the whole of the inquiry topic.
- The story of inquiry initiation, of the move from dependency on the initiating researchers to:
  - Genuine co-ownership of the method.
  - Authentic collaboration in applying it.
  - Emotional and interpersonal competence in dealing with the underlying anxieties to which it gives rise. With respect to these three items, were different roles allocated to group members, and in what manner?
- An account of the validity or soundness of the inquiry (which includes the previous item):
  - When and how was the validity of the inquiry process self and peer assessed and by what methods and criteria?
  - An overall assessment of the validity of the inquiry process.
  - In an Apollonian inquiry, did making sense in the reflection phases rise from description to evaluation or even explanation? Was there any intentional explicit transfer of learning from the last action phase to planning the next?



- In a Dionysian inquiry, were richly expressive forms of making sense used in the reflection phases? Was there strong intentionality about tacit transfer of learning from the last action phase to the next?
- An account of the outcomes of the inquiry, whether experiential, presentational, propositional or practical. And an evaluation of the strength of their claim to be warranted belief or knowledge in the light of criteria internal to them, of their grounding in other forms of knowing, and of assessments of the validity of the inquiry process.
- Some sampling of group members' stories about the kinds of inquiry skills they developed in the action phases, and about their overall experience of the project.

## APPENDIX R

### APPROACHES AND MODELS TO OCD

**Table A1.2: Approaches to OCD**

<b>Type of transformation</b>	<b>Researcher</b>	<b>Scope</b>	<b>Type of change</b>	<b>The what</b>	<b>Change management</b>
Culture change (for example total safety culture or culture climate of inclusivity)	Kuhn (2012); Mihata (1997); Nel (2003); Wilkins & Patterson (1985)	Radical	Culture	Fundamental Change	Critical
Mergers and Acquisitions	Andrade, Mitchell & Stafford (2001); Jovanovic & Rousseau (2002); Shleifer & Vishny (2003)	Radical	Culture, processes, structures	Fundamental Change	Critical
New business ventures	Drucker (1987); Hagen (1962); Hamilton (1978); Jones & Clark (1976)	Radical	Culture, processes, structures	Fundamental Change	Critical
Business process re-engineering	Champy & Cohen (1995); Dubois (2002); Hammer (1990)	Radical	Processes	Fundamental Change	Critical
Right-sizing	Allan (1997); Newell & Dopson (1996); Smeltzer & Zener (1994); Worrall, Cooper & Cambell (1999)	Job contents	Functional	Employees	Very important
Restructuring	D'Aveni (1989); Edwards, Robinson, Welchman, Woodall (1999)	Organisational	Process	Reporting structures	Very important
Total quality management	Deming (2000); Gummer & McCallion (1995); Hill & Wilkinson (1995)	Improvement from the bottom of the organisation up	Large-scale systems change	Customer centric	Very important
Automisation	Braverman (1955)	Systems	Procedures	Technology	Very important

Source: Adapted from Viljoen, 2015:30-32

**Table A1.3: Organisational Change Models**

Organisational Change Model	Description
The Seven S-model of McKinsey (the consulting firm)	A management model that describes seven factors that may be used to organise a company in a holistic and effective way. The seven factors comprise shared values, strategy, structure, systems, style of management, staff and skills (Peters, Waterman, & Jones, 1982). The model highlights the importance of the people component in business success.
The Burke-Litwin model	Describes how to create first- and second-order change (Burke & Litwin, 1992). First-order change refers to situations in which certain features of organisation change, but the fundamental nature of the organisation stays the same, whereas the nature of the organisation itself is transformed with second-order change.
French and Bell (1999) synonyms for change	According to French and Bell (1999), synonyms for first-order change include: transactional, evolutionary, adaptive, incremental or conditional change. Synonyms for second-order change are transformational, revolutionary, radical or discontinuous change.
Requisite Change by Elliot Jaques (1998)	A unique, systemic, scientific approach to effective management of work systems, including structure, leadership processes and human resources.
The Beehive model by Christo Nel (2003)	A model that describes organisational renewal, that is both a theoretical model and an analytical tool in a honeycomb formation, and is used to obtain a snapshot of organisational compliance with the application of either best or poor practices associated with seven individual workplace practices in the contemporary economic climate.
Clinical Paradigm of Change by Manfred Kets de Vries (2005)	A model based on three premises: (i) what you see is not necessarily what you get; (ii) all human behaviours, no matter how irrational they appear, have rationale; and (iii) we are all products of our past. The meta-force that underpins these three premises is the unconscious. A considerable part of our motivation and behaviour takes place outside our conscious awareness.

Organisational Change Model	Description
Kurt Lewin's (1951) change management theory	A model for planned change in organisations that follows a process of unfreezing, changing and refreezing.
The change formula by Richard Beckhard and Reuben Harris (1987)	A simple, yet powerful tool that provides a quick first impression of the possibilities and conditions that are relevant to changing organisations. The formula, also known as the change equation, describes dissatisfaction and vision as the first steps to overcome the resistance to change within an organisation ( $D \times V \times F > R$ )
The eight steps model by John Kotter (1990)	This change phase model must be followed in exact order to ensure sustainability. The steps include: establishing a sense of urgency, creating a coalition, developing a clear vision, sharing the vision, empowering people to clear obstacles, securing short-term wins, consolidating and keeping on moving and anchoring the change.
Six strategic levers model by Frederick Miller and Judith Katz (2002)	This model emphasises the importance of education and accountability in the supervisors, the value of talent, and the need for creating a culture that is supportive of the change initiative.
Theory U by Peter Senge, Otto Scharmer, Joseph Jaworski and Betty Flowers (2005)	The model describes how the systems model of change of input, transformation and output does not take into account the human impact to the necessary depth. Change initiatives therefore do not fail because they lack grand visions and noble intentions, but rather because people are not able to see the reality they face. Seven core capacities for transformation are needed. Each capacity is seen as a gateway to the next activity and these are described as the seven capacities of the U-figure movement. They are: holding the space, observing, sensing, presencing, crystallising, prototyping, performing. The five core elements of the U-curve are: co-initiating, co-sensing, presencing, co-creating, co-evolving.
Spiral Dynamics Integral by Beck and Cowan (1996), and Beck (2001)	The essence of human nature pertains to different distinct ways of thinking or structures of thought. The different structures of thought are the foundations on which underlying beliefs or worldviews are constructed. Eight ways of thinking can be identified according to colours in a spiral: beige, purple, red, blue, orange, green, yellow and turquoise. These colours correspond to thinking systems, which are referred to as values systems or memes.

Source: Adapted from Viljoen, 2015:34-39