# Making up Leaders in Leadership Development

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MAKING UP LEADERS IN LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

PhD Series 8.2020

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CBS PhD School

**PhD Series 8.2020**

CBS COPENHAGEN BUSINESS SCHOOL
HANDELSHØJSKOLEN

# Making up leaders in leadership development

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The CBS PhD School is an active and international research environment at Copenhagen Business School for PhD students working on theoretical and empirical research projects, including interdisciplinary ones, related to economics and the organisation and management of private businesses, as well as public and voluntary institutions, at business, industry and country level.

## Summary

Today, public and private organizations have increasingly turned to management and leadership development, seeking to advance their respective organizations under the assumption that leadership development programmes (LDPs) enable participants to develop their leadership capacity. As such, this capacity, whether on the individual or collective level, is cultivated through a number of techniques often associated with corporate HR, including personality profiling, 360-degree surveys, coaching, mentoring and stretch assignments. These activities usually require the participant to engage in exploring questions pertaining to herself and her organization, such as 'Who am I as a leader?' 'What is important in my organization right now?' 'What kind of leader is needed in my organization?' 'What do I need to become such a leader?' At times, this involves working on participants' experiences in the organization.

Most studies of leadership development assume that many components of such programmes exist independently of and prior to the programme. Such components include the participant's identity, the instructors, the curricular material and the process of delivering a programme. In this instance 'assume' means orient to these components as if they were somehow produced outside the world of interactions. Studies inspired by French philosopher Michel Foucault (1926-1984) question this assumption and try to unravel the historical processes by which the various components are themselves put together. An important way Foucault demonstrates these processes to work is through the very techniques for measuring, assessing and developing objects so endemic to, for instance, leadership development programmes. Other studies take a route into leadership development programmes on the premise of acknowledging the participant's agency, even in the midst of regulation.

This dissertation takes – as a first in the field of leadership development studies – a communication as constitutive approach. Anything that goes on in a programme is produced in communication, which in the approach taken here means it can be observed in either texts or conversations. This enables one to take a generative stance and thus to look for processes of constitution and creation. To take this stance, I needed to enter into the actual conversations taking place in a leadership development programme, including those spaces rarely opened up: the coaching session, the personality test feedback, the classroom and the exam. In this endeavour I followed the text that went into these conversations, the conversations themselves and the text produced from them. This work was guided by a very basic question: how are leaders made in leadership development?

This dissertation includes four articles. The first tracks texts and conversations in which an LDP participant, Nathan, takes part throughout the course of a personal leadership development module. Rather than assuming that this participant enters the LDP with an identity, a personality and a leadership practice, a communicative approach asks: how are all these things generated? Specifically examining identity work, the article uncovers a catalogue of human actors, theories and texts that take part in the participant's identity work. The analysis also reveals how conversations appropriate texts, such as the personality profile, and through such appropriations stage a number of figures – Nathan-the-profile or Nathan-the-person, for example – who become authorized in the interaction. These figures are shown to make a difference, i.e., have agency, but this agency is contingent on the interaction in progress. Interestingly, in these conversations one is able to follow how knowledge – of Nathan's personality, of leadership – is made credible by being authorized. From this communicative perspective, an LDP can be understood as a programme for *identity* *reconfiguration*, as the identity work involved entails staging and authorizing a range of figures. The analysis further shows that the world is communicated into being through two distinct movements: a *top-down* historical emergence of classifications and descriptions, like the Big Five personality theory in the test Nathan is administered, and a *bottom-up*, interactional emergence where these classifications and descriptions are appropriated as texts in interactions. These two movements or processes describe how leadership development *makes up leaders*.

The next article orients to the role of the instructor in the LDP participant's identity work, which has received less attention. In LDPs, texts – such as a management theory – are introduced by instructors, who are then tasked with orchestrating interactions around these texts. For instance, they are to get participants to share their experiences or current managerial concerns in the light of the texts. Carrying out a detailed analysis of two classroom episodes, the article explicates how this process unfolds. The executive classroom is revealed to be a setting in which the instructor demonstrably takes part in the identity work of the participant. The analysis further shows that texts can occasion identity work, but that this work is highly contingent on what happens to these texts in the interaction. In the article I propose that *regulation work* designates what effect textual and human agencies in interactions have on the identity work of participants. This work reflects some of the demands put on instructors as they – with no time-outs – facilitate participants' identity work.

The next co-authored article asks whether the way management theory and management practice relate to one another in leadership development can lead us to a new way of thinking about reflexivity. To answer this, we retain our communicative approach in which reflexivity becomes communication about communication. More specifically, we look at how practice and theory are ventriloquized in situated micro-interactions within leadership development. In this instance ventriloquized means that something or someone is made to speak through another voice or agent, just like in the once popular stage act where the ventriloquist, the vent, made a dummy speak. Analysing recordings from an executive master's programme at CBS, we show how theory enters leadership development interactions as text and affects how participants engage with and account for their own leadership practices. Three different relations between theory and practice are identified: one in which theory is appropriated, that is, dominated by practice; one in which theory measures practice, as when someone's performance is assessed against theory; and, finally, one in which theory shapes practice, as when a person observes the world through a certain theory. We find that ventriloquism explains how theory – as text – enters leadership development and becomes empowered through a web of associations, allowing a new positioning of leadership. We propose that *ventriloquial reflexivity* denotes the communicative episode occurring when participants in conversations jointly orient themselves to which agents are being ventriloquized in leadership communication and to which effect. This proposition is a contribution to leadership development studies, but also to reflexivity studies and to leadership development practice, with the latter contribution providing a procedure or design for reflexivity.

The fourth article raises a methodological question regarding the backdrop for the research interview's considerable success as the preferred route into the qualitative scholarship of teaching and learning (SOTL) field. One alternative to the research interview is to work with naturally occurring data, that is, data the researcher does not elicit, as is the case with, e.g., interviews, surveys and experiments. Naturally occurring data are then, for instance, audio or video recordings of events that would have taken place anyway, or organizational documents produced for purposes other than the research project. This article juxtaposes research interview-based analysis with analysis based on naturally occurring data, demonstrating that the use of naturally occurring data makes otherwise unavailable details available. Further, naturally occurring data demonstrate that the practice of the manager concerned is considerably less polished and more pragmatic than indicated by the account given at the interview. The article therefore calls for a stronger engagement with naturally occurring data and interactions in SOTL, which could enable us to carve out new terrain.

Taken as a whole, the dissertation offers two contributions. Leaders in leadership development programmes are jointly constructed as being in need of leadership development. This construction takes place through particular texts and sequences of interactions that appropriate texts, and in this appropriation process the leader, or, more precisely, the identity of the leader, is constructed. Texts make a difference in these construction processes, but the effects of such texts are contingent on what I call *regulation work*, that is, the situated, sustained, sequentially organized interaction in which texts are appropriated in conversations as members co-orient – which is to say, talk together about – the same thing. The texts salient to leadership development programmes are often loaded with historically important classifications and descriptions that allow the lives of people classified – whether as having this or that personality or this or that leadership style – to be constituted by appropriating these texts. The study complements Foucauldian-inspired leadership development studies by showing just *how* regulation of the leader in an LDP is the outcome of regulation work at the very site of the LDP. The constructionist leadership development studies are then extended to address how personal agency within LDPs is rather thought of as a spokesperson who amplifies the agents that are authorizing her: the personality test, theory, practice accounts. One speaks, so to say, on behalf of many; in other words, when one speaks, one ventriloquizes. In brief, the leader in leadership development is a thoroughly organized phenomenon, constituted in communication. *Ventriloquial reflexivity* is offered as a path or procedure that can reveal to interactants how the focal agency is assembled – and to what effects. Put differently, it asks of the interactant: 'What are your reasons for your actions, the agents that your communication shows you to be allied with?' And: 'Who do you move through this communication?' 'Who do you not move?'

# Resumé (Danish)

Offentlige og private organisationer vender sig i dag mod ledelsesudvikling for at udvikle deres respektive organisationer under den antagelse, at lederudviklingsprogrammer giver de deltagende ledere mulighed for at gøre det. Gennem en række teknikker vi i øvrigt forbinder med HR afdelinger som personlighedsprofilering, 360-graders undersøgelser, coaching, mentorordninger og stretch-opgaver opdyrkes ledelseskapaciteten på enten individuelt eller kollektivt niveau. Disse aktiviteter kræver normalt, at deltageren udforsker spørgsmål der vedrører hende selv og hendes organisation som: 'Hvem er jeg som leder?' 'Hvad er vigtigt i min organisation lige nu?' 'Hvilken slags leder er der behov for i min organisation? " Hvad har jeg brug for, for at blive sådan en leder? '. Undertiden involverer det også at deltageren inddrager sine egne leder-erfaringer fra organisationen.

De fleste undersøgelser af lederudvikling antager eksistensen af mange af komponenterne i disse programmer: deltagerens identitet, instruktørernes identitet, pensum-materiale og processen med at levere programmet. 'Antager' betyder her at forholde sig til dem som om de på en eller anden måde er blevet skabt uden for social interaktion. Studier inspireret af den franske filosof Michel Foucault (1926-1984) sætter spørgsmålstegn ved denne antagelse og forsøger at afdække de historiske processer, hvorigennem de komponenter selv er blevet skabt. En vigtig sådan måde er selve teknikkerne til måling, vurdering og udvikling af ting – som for eksempel ledere – der er så endemiske i for eksempel lederudviklingsprogrammer. Andre studier går til analysen af lederudviklingsprogrammer med en forestilling om at anerkende deltagernes agens, altså autonome handlekraft, selv midt i reguleringen.

Denne afhandling tager - som en første inden for lederudviklingsundersøgelser - en tilgang der opfatter kommunikation som konstitutiv. Alt, hvad der findes i et lederudviklingsprogram produceres i kommunikation, hvilket for mig betyder, at det kan ses i enten tekster eller konversationer. Opmærksomheden bliver således rettet mod generative processer hvor komponenter bliver konstitueret og skabt. For at kunne gøre det, har jeg været nødt til at gå ind i de faktiske samtaler, der fandt sted i et lederudviklingsprogram, endda åbne nogle rum op der oftest er lukkede: coaching-sessionen, feedbacken af personlighedstesten, undervisningsrummet og eksamenssituationen. Her fulgte jeg så at sige 'teksten ind i konversationerne', konversationerne selv og de tekster, der blev produceret i eller ud fra disse samtaler. Jeg stiller et meget grundlæggende spørgsmål: hvordan skabes ledere i lederudvikling?

Denne afhandling indeholder fire artikler. Den første sporer tekster og samtaler, som en LDP-deltager er en del af i løbet af et master-modul om personlig lederudvikling. I stedet for at antage, at deltageren indgår i LDP med en forud defineret identitet, personlighed og lederpraksis, spørger min kommunikation som konstitutiv tilgang: hvordan genereres alle disse ting? Artiklen ser specifikt på identitetsarbejde og afslører et katalog af humane aktører, figurer, teorier og tekster, der deltager i deltagerens identitetsarbejde. Analysen viser også, hvordan samtaler approprierer tekster, såsom personlighedsprofilen, og gennem sådanne appropriationer iscenesætter et antal figurer - Nathan-the-profile eller Nathan-the-person, for eksempel - som bliver autoriserede gennem interaktionen. Disse figurer viser sig at gøre en forskel, dvs. have agens, men denne agens er betinget af den igangværende interaktion. Det er i disse samtaler, jeg følger, hvordan viden - om Nathans personlighed, om ledelse – bliver gjort troværdig ved at blive autoriseret. Fra det kommunikative perspektiv kan et ledelsesudviklingsprogram forstås som et program for identitets re-konfiguration, da det involverede identitetsarbejde indebærer iscenesættelse og autorisering af en række figurer. Analysen viser endvidere, at verden formidles frem igennem to forskellige bevægelser: en *top-down* historisk fremkomst af klassifikationer og beskrivelser som Big Five-personlighedsteorien som Nathan forstås igennem, og en bottom-up, interaktionel fremkomst, hvor disse klassifikationer og beskrivelser bliver approprieret i interaktioner. Disse to bevægelser eller processer beskriver, hvordan lederudvikling skaber – *makes up* - ledere.

Den næste artikel adresserer, at ledelsesudviklings studier ikke har interesseret sig meget for instruktøren og andre agenters betydning for deltagerens identitetsarbejde. En almindelig praksis i ledelsesudvikling er at instruktøren introducerer en tekst - eksempelvis en ledelsesteori - og derefter orkestrerer instruktøren en interaktion omkring dette, hvor deltagerne deler erfaringer eller aktuelle ledelsesmæssige problemer i lyset af denne tekst. Denne artikel eksplicerer dette ved hjælp af en detaljeret interaktionsanalyse af to episoder under et lederudviklingsforløbet. Analysen viser endvidere, at tekster kan give anledning til identitetsarbejde, men kontingent af hvad der sker med disse tekster i interaktionen. Artiklen foreslår *reguleringsarbejde* som betegnelsen for virkningen af tekstlige og menneskelige agenter i interaktioner på deltagernes identitetsarbejde. Resultaterne bidrager til den eksisterende litteratur ved at uddybe vores forståelse af instruktørens og tekstens rolle i identitetsarbejde og kan fremme en refleksion over kravene til instruktøren i dette dynamiske felt.

Den næste artikel spørger, om den måde hvorpå ledelsesteori og ledelsespraksis relaterer sig til hinanden i lederudvikling kan føre os til en ny måde at tænke refleksivitet på. For at besvare det spørgsmål fastholder vi vores kommunikative tilgang, hvor refleksivitet bliver kommunikation om kommunikation. Mere specifikt ser vi på, hvordan praksis og teori 'ventriloquiseres' i lokale mikro-interaktioner i ledelsesudvikling. I dette tilfælde betyder ventriloquizeres, at noget eller nogen bliver gjort talende gennem en anden stemme eller agent, ligesom i bugtaleri, den engang populære underholdning, hvor bugtaleren, ventriloquisten, fik en dukke til at tale. Ved at analysere optagelser fra et masterprogram på CBS viser vi, hvordan teori indgår i ledelsesudviklings interaktioner som tekst og påvirker, hvordan deltagerne engagerer sig og redegør for deres egen lederskab. Tre forskellige forhold mellem teori og praksis identificeres: et hvor teori er approprieret, det vil sige domineret af praksis; et hvor teori måler praksis, som når lederens præstation vurderes ud fra teori; og til sidst en, hvor teori former praksis, som når verden observeres gennem bestemte teoretiske briller. Vi finder, at ventriloquism forklarer, hvordan teori - som tekst - går ind i lederudvikling og bliver styrket gennem et web af relationer som så muliggør at ledelse kan tage nye positioner. Vi foreslår, at *ventriloquial refleksivitet* betegner den kommunikative episode, hvor deltagere i konversationer orienterer sig selv mod hvilke agenter, der ventriloquiseres i ledelses kommunikationen og med hvilken effekt. Dette forslag er et bidrag til lederudviklingsstudier, men også til refleksivitetsteori og til lederudviklingspraksis, hvor sidstnævnte bidrag giver en procedure eller design for refleksivitet.

Den fjerde artikel rejser et metodologisk spørgsmål vedrørende baggrunden for forskningsinterviewets betydelige succes som den foretrukne metode i kvalitativ forskning i undervisning og læring. Et alternativ til forskningsinterviewet er at arbejde med naturligt forekommende data, det vil sige data, som forskeren ikke selv fremkalder, som det er tilfældet med fx interviews, undersøgelser og eksperimenter. Naturligt forekommende data er for eksempel lyd- eller videooptagelser af organisatoriske episoder, der ville have fundet sted alligevel, eller organisatoriske dokumenter, der er produceret til andre formål end forskningsprojektet. Denne artikel sammenligner forskningsinterviewbaseret analyse med analyse baseret på naturligt forekommende data, og viser at brugen af naturligt forekommende data gør ellers ikke er tilgængelige detaljer tilgængelige. Yderligere viser den, at naturligt forekommende data afdækker at den pågældende leders praksis er betydeligt mindre poleret og mere pragmatisk, end det fremgår af den version, der blev givet under interviewet. Artiklen anbefaler derfor et stærkere engagement med naturligt forekommende data og interaktioner i forskningen in undervisning og læring.

Generelt tilbyder afhandlingen to bidrag. Ledere i lederudviklingsprogrammer er i skabt i fællesskab. Denne samskabelse finder sted gennem særlige tekster og sekvenser af interaktioner, som approprierer de tekster, og i denne proces konstrueres lederen, eller mere præcist lederens identitet. Tekster gør en forskel i disse konstruktionsprocesser, men virkningen af sådanne tekster er betinget af det, jeg kalder *reguleringsarbejde*, det vil sige den situerede, vedholdende, og sekventielt organiserede interaktion, hvor tekster bliver approprieret i konversationer idet medlemmer co-orienterer - det vil sige taler om det samme. Tekster der er vigtige i lederudviklingsprogrammer er ofte udtryk for historisk vigtige klassifikationer og beskrivelser, der gør det muligt for de mennesker, der klassificeres - uanset om de har denne eller hin personlighed eller denne eller hin ledelsesstil – at blive konstitueret ved at disse tekster approprieres. Studiet supplerer Foucault-inspirerede lederudviklings studier ved at vise, hvordan regulering af lederen i et lederudviklings program er resultatet af reguleringsarbejdet i programmet. De socialkonstruktionistiske ledelsesudviklings studier udvides derefter til at vise, hvordan personlig agens inden for lederudviklingsprogrammer snarere skal tænkes som en talsmand, der samler og styrker e agenter, der også autoriserer hende: personlighedstesten, teorien, praksisfortællingen. Man taler så at sige på manges vegne; med andre ord, når man taler, ventriloquiserer man. Kort sagt, lederen inden for lederudvikling er et grundlæggende organiseret fænomen, konstitueret kommunikativt. *Ventriloquial refleksivitet* tilbydes som en sti eller procedure, der kan afsløre for interaktanter, hvordan den fokale agens er samlet - og til hvilke effekter. På en anden måde spørger den interaktive: 'Hvad er dine grunde til dine handlinger, hvem er de agenter, som din kommunikation viser, at du er allieret med?' Og: 'Hvem bevæger du gennem din kommunikation?’ ’Hvem bevæger du ikke?’

# Content

# List of figures and tables

## Acknowledgements

This dissertation owes its very existence to the audacity and generosity of CBS, which has not only fully backed the work financially over the years, but also provided a sustained organizational commitment, more specifically coming from my academic department, Department of Organization (IOA); the case programme, Master of Public Governance, MPG; my professional department, Management Programmes; and its mothership, the Deanery of Education. If ever there were joint endeavours across CBS, this is one of them. Here, I should include the participants and instructors of PUF, my case module at MPG. The fact that you granted me access to what you were all up to in the programme was a rare privilege for me, and – as it turned out – of quite some interest to the field of leadership development studies. And my fellow instructors of the LD module – from CBS, University of Copenhagen and UKON – still keep me alert on everything leadership development. Thanks!

My primary supervisor Magnus Larsson, IOA, deserves thanks for compelling me to meet high academic standards, but also for pointing out how I could meet them from where I was, insisting that I should push somewhere further than I could see at any one time. I would also like to thank my secondary supervisor, Brigid Carroll, University of Auckland Business School, for opening up not only New Zealand and UABS for my research stay, but also opening up leadership development studies at large by agreeing to join me in authoring two of the articles in this dissertation. Writing together is possibly the most dramatic learning device in our field, and going into that process with Brigid has been truly enriching. Magnus and Brigid have brought expertise and vision to the table, nurturing my work from start to finish – and have been instrumental in helping me find my way into the international scholarly conversation on leadership and leadership development.

The initial project support came from Christian Tangkjær, then Vice Dean of Management Programmes, CBS, and a *sine qua non* for this project. The Deanery of Education, with then Dean of Education Jan Molin and later Dean Gregor Halff, has been unflinchingly supportive and has mobilized the entire senior management of CBS too. Within the Deanery of Education, Annemette Kjærgaard has also been a great support and inspiration. Thanks a lot to you all!

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Luckily, Magnus Larsson and Morten Knudsen at IOA received an FSE (Forskningsrådet for Samfund og Erhverv) grant to study *Leadership Development in the Public Sector* and graciously included me financially and organizationally in the project, which also included Roddy Walker and Mette Mogensen. Thank you for being there, and see you soon, I am afraid, as the research dissemination is still ongoing! I should also mention Susan Ryan, a copy editor supreme, thank you for bringing forth the very best versions of my texts possible!

From the PhD dungeons of IOA, the Winner Games partners Roddy Walker – co-author on Article 4 – and Thorben Simonsen were not only great academic supporters but are, to this day, fantastic company to be around. The extended PhD family consisted of – to mention some of the louder voices – Christian Dyrlund Wåhlin-Jacobsen, Lise Dahl Arvedsen, Emil Husted, Andreas Kamstrup, Vibeke Kristine Scheller, Maibrith Kempka Jensen, Jonathan Schmidt and other PhD students at IOA. Thank you for talks, walks and laughs. Helle Bjerg and Lise Justesen provided important guidelines at WIP1, and Mie Plotnikof and Marian Iszatt-White went deep into the textscape at WIP2 – thank you to both teams!

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Finally, coming home to you, Susanne, Elisabeth and Adam. Thank you for staying in the conversation, even when I was carrying texts, once again up the mountain. I am now back at the foot of the mountain, and all is well.

*Frank Meier*

Frederiksberg, January 15, 2020

# Preface

This dissertation includes four articles, each currently at different points on their path to final publication. Below, I present the authorship and public status of these papers. Please also refer to the co-author declarations added as an appendix at the end of the dissertation.

1. The first article is co-authored with co-supervisor Brigid Carroll, University of Auckland Business School, and has been published in *Human Relations*, the 4 September 2019 issue. It is referenced as Meier, F., & Carroll, B. (2019). Making up leaders: Reconfiguring the executive student through profiling, texts and conversations in a leadership development programme. *Human Relations*, https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726719858132. In the event of any discrepancies between the version in this dissertation and the published one, please refer to the published version. A version of this article was previously presented at the 33rd EGOS Colloquium in Copenhagen, Denmark, July 2017.
2. The second article, 'Regulation work in the executive classroom', I am considering submitting to a special issue in *Management Learning* on 'Identity and Learning (Not) to be Different', with a deadline of March 1, 2020. A version of this article was previously presented at the 32nd EGOS Colloquium in Naples, Italy, in July 2016.
3. The third article, 'Ventriloquial reflexivity at the intersection of theory and practice in leadership development', is co-authored with Brigid Carroll, University of Auckland Business School, and was submitted to *Human Relations* in October 2019. In December, 2019, we were invited to revise and

resubmit this article by May 15, 2020. A version of this article was previously presented at the 34th EGOS Colloquium in Tallinn, Estonia, in July 2018.

4. The fourth article, ‘Going live! From interviews to interactions in the scholarship of teaching and learning’, is co-authored with Roddy Walker, Copenhagen Business School, and has been submitted to a themed issue of *Journal of Management Education* on research in management learning and education (RMLE). It is currently under review. The data comes from Walker’s (2018) project, and we were both involved in the FSE-funded project at CBS, ‘Leadership development in the public sector’ as well as gave presentations at RMLE conferences.

# Chapter 1. Introduction

Contemporary organizations, public and private alike, have turned to management and leadership development to enable managers to help develop their respective organizations (Day, 2001, 2011; Mabey, 2013; McGurk, 2010), a trend reflecting the common denominator of leadership development programmes, that of improvement. Participating in LDPs should improve the capacity of leadership, whether at the individual or collective level (Day and Dragoni, 2015) through a number of techniques often associated with corporate HR: personality profiling, 360-degree surveys, coaching, mentoring and stretch assignments (Day, 2001, 2011; Kempster and Iszatt-White, 2012, 2013; Mccauley et al., 2010). The activities usually involved in these practices require the participant to engage in exploring questions pertaining to herself and her organization like: 'Who I am as a leader?' 'What is important in my organization right now?' 'What kind of leader is needed in my organization?' 'What do I need to become such a leader?' (Mccauley et al., 2010; Petriglieri, 2011). Such activities thus often involved participants' experiences (Gabriel and College, 2005; Mccauley et al., 2010).

I approach leadership development programmes through the empirical entry point of identity work as it takes place in leadership development practices. According to Brown (2017), identity work consists of 'those means by which individuals fashion both immediately situated and longer-term understandings of their selves' (2017: 297). Organizational members author different versions of their selves in relation to other identities, through processes which are 'complex, iterative, often unstable and always "in process"' (Coupland and Brown, 2012: 2). One major group of leadership development studies has explored identity work as *identity regulation* (Andersson, 2012; Gagnon, 2008; Gagnon and Collinson, 2014; Kamoche, 2000; Mabey, 2013), drawing in part on the governmentality literature that is ‘a reference to those processes through which objects are rendered amenable to intervention and regulation by being formulated in a particular conceptual way’ (Townley, 1993: 1992). These processes make use of a host of descriptions and classifications (Hacking, 2004) that may even become implicated in participants’ identity work. For instance, a number of scholars from the Foucauldian strand have engaged with psychological testing, now a ‘norm’ within leadership development practices (Schedlitzki and Edwards, 2014: 191). That Foucault has provided a fruitful lens through which to research identity work in discursive LDP studies is outwardly easy to see, for such a lens reveals how when participants enter LDPs, they engage in leadership development practices described as beneficial in building capacity, learning, development and reflection. With this in mind, the regulation studies reviewed have yet to fully account for the situated dimension of regulation, in other words they have not shed real light on how and where it takes place. Likewise, considering texts deemed important in the creation of identity regulation – like the management textbook (Harding, 2005) – one can further note that the link between these texts and the effects they should occasion is claimed but not demonstrated. I find it warranted to argue for an analytical approach to LDP studies, one that enables the role of texts to be explored in more situated detail.

A growing number of studies extending from the discursive tradition have thought to explore the quality of LDPs that potentially enables agency (Carroll and Levy, 2010; Carroll and Nicholson, 2014; Nicholson and Carroll, 2013; Russell Warhurst, 2011). Compared to the studies centred on regulation, these analyses open up the interactional sites of identity construction somewhat differently by, for instance, engaging with recorded and transcribed audio and video. The papers in question are, however, less concerned with inquiring into the role of texts in these LDP interactions – or for that matter the technology of the virtual environments.

I intend to address the identified limitations in extant literatures concerning the situated processes and agents involved in LDPs. To this end, I turn to interactional studies, following a growing trend towards engaging with interactional data witnessed in identity studies (Benwell and Stokoe, 2016; Mcinnes and Corlett, 2012; Schnurr and Chan, 2011), leadership studies (Asmuß and Svennevig, 2009; Clifton, 2017a, 2017b; Crevani, 2018; Crevani et al., 2010; Larsson et al., 2018; Larsson and Lundholm, 2010, 2013; Larsson and Nielsen, 2017) and leadership development studies (Carroll and Nicholson, 2014; Meier and Carroll, 2019; Nicholson and Carroll, 2013). Specifically, I engage with communicative constitution of organization, or CCO.

TMS adheres to the constitutive model of communication, which explores the generativity (Wright, 2016) of communication through questions like ‘How does communication constitute the realities of organizational life?’ (2009: 5). This constitution of reality takes place dialogically through texts and conversations (Taylor, 1999). The *conversation* is ‘where organizing occurs (Weick, 1979; Boden, 1994; Taylor et al., 1996)’ (Taylor and Robichaud, 2004: 397), also referred to as the ‘site’ of the organization (Taylor and Van Every, 2000) because it is from within conversations that the organization is continuously constructed ‘in the interpretive activities of its members, situated in networks of communication’ (Taylor et al., 1996: 4). However, the most original idea in TMS could be that of topicalizing organizational *texts*, i.e., the appropriation of texts into conversations, their role within conversations and how they emanate from conversations in everyday organizational practices. The text is correspondingly the *surface* of the organization. Texts can be said to have agency within conversations (Cooren, 2009), that is, ‘to make a difference’ in a situation (Cooren, 2010: 51), even if it means that action is shared, following Latour's idea that when one acts, 'others are performing the action and not you' (Latour, 1984: 265). These actions can be interlocked, for instance, in programmes of action, in which case we speak of *imbrication* (Bencherki and Cooren, 2011).

The analytical concepts provided by TMS allowed me to engage with the very site of the LDP, the conversations in which texts are appropriated and produced, thereby enabling me to shed light on the situated practices of leadership development.

## Research question

Using a communicative constitution of organization lens, I thus ask:

*How are participants in leadership development programmes constructed as leaders in need of leadership development?*

A few notes on this research question (RQ) are in order. The empirical field encompasses activities that are self-described leadership development programmes, and later on in this dissertation I specify my practical choices and inquire 'what is going on' with these. The term 'constructed as' here could also read 'produced as' or even 'assembled as' – the idea is to remain analytically open to which processes that result in or have the effect of a 'leader' emerging in the programmes. By using the word 'constructed', however, I wish to imply a certain incredulity towards the view that leadership development is simply an adequate response to a pre-existing need of the participant, a need that the programme uncovers through its various practices of diagnosis and inquiry and subsequently addresses through its practices of reflection, experimentation or theorization. I submit that the programme is complicit in the construction process in yet-to-be-understood ways. The use of the passive form of the verb 'construct' in the research question is done to avoid making the premature assumption that only the participants and instructors are affecting the construction, when other agents could be involved as well.

The word 'leader' used in the RQ does not correspond to any organizational position an LDP participant might occupy outside the programme, although such a position might be used or discussed in the construction of the 'leader' referred to in the research question. Further, the word 'need' in the RQ does not imply that I am uncovering some deep-seated psychological condition, but rather designates the intricate fit between the leader constructed in the programme and the leadership development it offers. In this conception, 'need' can point both ways: the programme may need the need of this leader too.

The work conducted 'in' the research question is to be taken literally, and throughout the dissertation I use the word 'situated' to designate where and how I look at LDPs. I do not ask participants or instructors 'about' their participation or their experiences ex post, but examine the empirical phenomena as they appear in texts and conversations, that is, as interactions. Members – participants and instructors – demonstrate in texts and conversations what they are doing or trying to do, what their concerns are. In other words the analysis has to demonstrate how these phenomena – leader, develop, leadership development programme – are being accomplished by members in texts and talk. This construction work constitutes the ontological field to which I direct my analysis. Consequently, I remain agnostic to what goes on in the minds of the actors, but attendant to what is displayed and observable to co-actors as well as to the analyst. I understand these phenomena to be accomplished through members' own methods, ethno-methods, inspired by the ethnomethodological stance (Garfinkel, 1967). I therefore orient myself to communicative episodes 'within' the programme in which people communicate with each other, e.g., in coaching sessions, plenaries and exams conversations and to the texts that go into and emanate from conversations. I do not, however, include such managerial activities as faculty meetings or administrative activities and the like, a decision that reflects my desire to scope the format of the project appropriately. As such, I make no assumptions about the saliency of these activities in the construction of the leader in a leadership development programme.

The way the RQ appears self-referential is not meant to be a clever irony at the expense of participants and instructors, but rather to acknowledge that members construct their world in orderly ways. Thus, leader development is what members do in leadership development programmes. In addition, the RQ's formulation seeks to recognize that I, the researcher, must work to keep my own assumptions in check as I enter the empirical field, the analysis and the writing process. In this sense, any irony is and should be at the expense of the analyst. As such, my wording of the RQ follows this line of thinking: if I consider leadership development as a situated and interactional phenomenon, and if I only back my claims with data consisting of texts and interactions available to members, then I can reveal something as yet unknown about how participants in leadership development programmes are constructed as leaders that need leadership development.

## Structure of the dissertation

In Chapter 2 I present what leadership development programmes are usually understood to mean and which practices are its component parts. Through the deployment of identity and identity work, I account for two significant strands of theorizing of LDP's within the discursive tradition, including where I seek to contribute to these. Chapter 3 outlines my theoretical apparatus – The Montreal School (TMS) within the communicative constitution of organizations, (CCO) – including core concepts like communicative constitution, text, conversation and imbrication. While there is substantial literature covering the philosophical foundations of TMS, I seek to cover the concepts through their application in empirical studies and through some of the major criticisms raised. TMS has not yet been applied to leadership development proper, but I have selected studies that are in various ways adjacent to my field.

In Chapter 4 I follow my own project trajectory as I account for and occasionally problematize choices made and methods deployed.

Chapters 5 – 8 consists of the four research articles and the dissertation is concluded with a discussion in Chapter 9.

# Chapter 2. Leadership development programmes and activities

In this chapter, I describe what is generally understood by leadership development programmes, and how I have used identity work as a lens through which to inquire into leadership development practices. From there, I show how Foucauldian research has elucidated identity work in leadership development programmes through two lines of inquiry: organizational studies and decidedly textual studies. Both lines conclude that while leadership development programmes might fulfil some or even all of the identity benefits promised, this comes at the price of regulation. Yet, the following is clear: 1) the Foucauldian organizational studies reviewed need to more fully account for how identity regulation takes place in *situated interactions*, and 2) a fuller demonstration is required with regard to how texts relevant to identity work in both the organizational studies and the decidedly textual studies *enter into* leadership development programmes in order to contribute to the claimed regulation. Next, I turn to constructionist approaches to identity work in LDPs. In analysing identity work, these studies arrive at a more autonomous agency than Foucauldian studies, and the analyses seem closer to the sites of identity construction when compared to studies centred on regulation. However, such studies largely leave the role of texts in these interactions unexamined. I conclude the literature review by suggesting that LDP studies would benefit from moving empirically further into leadership development programmes. One could accomplish this by exploring LDPs as situated interactions as well as by accounting for the role of texts within these interactions. Undertaking such a two-pronged endeavour could thus enable a broader understanding of regulation as well as of agency in leadership development programmes.

## Developing leaders in leadership development programmes

Contemporary organizations, public and private, have turned to management and leadership development to enable managers to help develop their respective organizations (Day, 2001, 2011; Mabey, 2013; McGurk, 2010). Organizations often justify the initiative to develop their managers and leaders as a perceived need for them to change or improve. In the public sector, at least, leadership development is also promoted by important stakeholders like the state, and instigated by regulations and reforms purported to modernize the sector, thus ensuring the quality and delivery of its services (Greve and Pedersen, 2017; Smolović Jones et al., 2015a; The Danish Government, 2008). A great number of public-sector organizations choose to enrol their managers in academically oriented executive programmes offered by universities and business schools (Fox, 1997). Some of these programmes address more general managerial skills like finance or human resources (HR), while others tend to zoom in on participants' personal capacities and practical skills when it comes to exerting leadership within their organizations (Bolden, 2005; Bolden et al., 2003; Mccauley et al., 2010). These programmes come into focus later in this review.

In one way or another leadership development programmes subscribe to a common denominator of improvement. Mccauley and Van Velsor (2010: 2) from the Center for Creative Leadership (CCL)[1] identify leader development as targeting the 'expansion

[1] The Center for Creative Leadership is a supplier of leadership development programmes as well as a contributor to leadership development studies (e.g. Drath et al., 2008) and to the handbook cited (Mccauley et al., 2010) by leading LDP scholars. The entanglement of commercial and epistemic interests is obvious, for most business schools delivering LDP as well as for LDP scholarship. I

of a person's capacity to be effective in leadership roles and processes' (2010: 2). Day and Dragoni (2015) differentiate between leader development and leadership development, with the latter engaging with teams or even the organization as a whole. According to Drath et al. (2008), participants are to expand their capacity for facilitating the creation of a direction, to align the work of others in the organization in support of this direction and, finally, to instil a commitment to making this happen across the organization. For Mabey (2013) this kind of holistic leadership draws on Grint's (2005b) distinction between management and leadership. Leadership is the appropriate response to problems constructed as 'wicked' problems – ones that are hard to solve or even articulate – whereas management entails the application of known procedures to 'tame' problems (2005b: 1473). In sum, participating in LDPs should improve the capacity of leadership, whether at the individual or collective level (Day and Dragoni, 2015). Descriptions of the content of LDPs abound; see, for instance, the review by Day, Fleenor, Atwater, Sturm and McKee (2014).

Leadership development programmes of the variant reviewed here involve a number of techniques often associated with corporate HR: personality profiling, 360-degree surveys, coaching, mentoring and stretch assignments (Day, 2001, 2011; Kempster and Iszatt-White, 2012, 2013; Mccauley et al., 2010). At times these take place in conjunction with more traditional academic activities, such as using a theoretical curriculum or participating in lectures, discussions and exams (Fox, 1997; Klimoski and Amos, 2012). I refer to these techniques and activities when performed in leadership development as leadership development practices, not because they are a

address this in this dissertation as a question of 'proximity' to be dealt with through an analytical strategy.

definite class of activities, but rather because they bear a family resemblance (Rosch and Mervis, 1975). Further, since demand and supply fluctuate, these activities involve a strong element of change. For instance, digital gaming and simulation is a growing area of new leadership development activities (for a review, see Lopes et al., 2013), meaning that few lists of specific activities will prove exhaustive. However, as my inquiry is a situated one, self-descriptions of the 'content' can serve to orient my attention towards relevant empirical settings to explore. From there, the question of what is going on becomes empirical, although it might seem more robust to encircle the phenomenon of leadership development by turning to what gets done in these leadership development practices.

The activities usually involved in these practices require the participant to engage in exploring questions pertaining to herself and her organization. These might include: 'Who I am as a leader?' 'What is important in my organization right now?' 'What kind of leader is needed in my organization?' 'What do I need to become such a leader?' (Mccauley et al., 2010; Petriglieri, 2011). These questions address the leader as an individual. Yet, as 'leadership' is increasingly understood as a relational phenomenon (Crevani et al., 2010; Day and Harrison, 2007; Hosking, 2011), other questions emerge in these interrogative practices: 'What kind of leadership team am I part of?' 'How is followership fostered in the organization?' 'How is leadership mobilized across the organization?' (Drath et al., 2008; Heifetz Ronald et al., 2009; Mccauley et al., 2010). These questions are not necessarily intended to be settled, but rather follow a guiding idea that posing such questions in itself enhances the participant's self-knowledge and perhaps broadens the horizon of possibilities for being a leader. Importantly, by being posed questions like these, the participant becomes engaged in working on her identity as a leader (Andersson and Tengblad, 2016; Day and Harrison, 2007; Komives et al., 2005; Lord and Hall, 2005; Miscenko et al., 2017).

The leadership development practices described here often involve participants' experiences (Gabriel and College, 2005; Mccauley et al., 2010). This happens in at least two ways (see Day and Dragoni, 2015: 136). First, in activities like feedback, coaching, mentoring and designated group discussions, experience is thought to be the input. This input is then subjected to various explorations, for instance, by being made the object of conversations. Second, activities like 360-degree surveys, stretch assignments and simulations are thought to *generate* experiences, which are then subjected to further activities like conversations. In both cases, we refer to these as reflexive exercises (Cunliffe, 2002; Cunliffe and Easterby-Smith, 2004; Kempster and Iszatt-White, 2012; Mccauley et al., 2010). Against this background, I understand reflexive exercises as identity work to the extent that they address the same themes mentioned above, such as which leader one is, who one is to become or who one's followers are. Accordingly, I have now described the empirical phenomenon I wish to explore – leadership development programmes – and indicated a possible empirical entry point into this phenomenon – identity work as it takes place in leadership development practices. Next, I will review how the extant leadership development literature understands this phenomenon.

## Identity work in leadership development studies

In contemporary organizational life, organizational members are no longer thought of as being fixed entities having given and stable personalities throughout life (Watson, 2008). This entitative view has been supplanted by a more dynamic, relational view (Crevani et al., 2010; Dachler and Hosking, 1995) where identities are the outcome of construction processes (Andersson, 2012; Brown, 2015). This more current view seems pertinent for an inquiry into how organizations and participants seek out leadership development, which from this relational perspective could provide occasions and resources for such identity constructions.

According to Brown (2017), identity work consists of ‘those means by which individuals fashion both immediately situated and longer-term understandings of their selves’ (2017: 297). Organizational members author different versions of their selves, but they do so in relation to other identities, through formation processes which are ‘complex, iterative, often unstable and always “in process”’ (Coupland and Brown, 2012: 2). During a conversation, one is cast in particular identities (Antaki and Widdicombe, 2008; Kärreman and Alvesson, 2001) with particular characteristics. In the sphere of leadership development activities, giving a participant 360-degree feedback could be seen as an interactional occasion in which the participant is cast in certain identities. In casting the participant, the instructor likewise could become cast in a particular identity, for instance, that of the evaluator. As this example highlights, leadership development practices may not be merely innocent sites of learning, but neither is casting into identities necessarily a symmetrical interaction.

## Regulating identity work

This first group of studies of leadership development covered here have explored identity work under a rubric I will call identity regulation (Andersson, 2012; Gagnon, 2008; Gagnon and Collinson, 2014; Kamoche, 2000; Mabey, 2013). Gagnon and Collinson (2014) demonstrate how a global, corporate management development programme seeks to align participants’ identities with the programme’s ideal of the global, corporate leader, but also how participants resist this alignment. LDP, Gagnon and Collinson conclude, ‘may be viewed not only as learning processes for leadership competence, but also as relatively intensive regulatory practices designed to target and transform participant identities through processes that may add to or diminish participants’ sense of self’ (2014: 663). Such identity reinforcing processes involve ‘mandated reflection and confessions to elders’ (Gagnon and Collinson, 2014: 663). Drawing on broader, post-structuralist theory, Andersson shows that, in identity work, training processes centred on reflection can be seen as a regulatory force, as the manager subjects herself to ‘inspirational identities’ (Andersson, 2012: 572). However, such explanatory semantics reflect a Foucauldian vision of leadership development studies, through which these processes are seen as contemporary instances of historically emerged practices of examination and confession (Fairhurst, 2008a; Townley, 1993, 2002). The claim is that leadership development practices offer participants the opportunity to be tested or to share troublesome experiences. However, while engaging in these practices, the participant also becomes the subject envisioned in them. Townley asserts that ‘governmentality, therefore, is a reference to those processes through which objects are rendered amenable to intervention and regulation by being formulated in a particular conceptual way’ (Townley, 1993: 1992). It seems probable that identity work in LDPs renders participants amenable to regulation. Kamoche’s study (2000) shows how, by transmitting culture, the LDP is a vehicle for the desired corporate values and ideology.

This review includes a type of study not usually used in reviews of identity work in leadership development literature, as I want to point to studies with a potential to inform identity work in leadership development practices. I am referring to the descriptions and classifications (Hacking, 2004) that enter into such practices and that may even become implicated in participants’ identity work. A number of scholars from the Foucauldian strand have engaged with psychological testing, now a ‘norm’ within leadership development practices (Schedlitzki and Edwards, 2014: 191). I present their studies and then discuss their implications for my own. Derksen (2001) has analysed manuals on the administration of psychological tests and finds that the disciplinary mechanisms in test administration makes a particular subject – namely, a measurable one. Dammen (2012) researches how a multinational corporation used a test to facilitate communication and HR development throughout the organization. Combining a Foucauldian lens with other theories, she further finds that the test categories concerned opened up respectively closed down ‘discursive fields’ (Damman, 2012: 52), which allowed members to assert themselves with reference to their profile scores, among other things. Spaces for more independent identity articulation, however, seemed to diminish. Nadesan conducted a related study concluding that testing is ‘providing authorities with a technique for engineering the workplace and for disciplining unruly employees’ (Nadesan, 1997: 213). Garrety, Badham, Morrigan, Rifkin and Zanko (2003) report how the use of the personality profile has challenged the old discourses of hierarchy and a restrained, impersonal leadership style by introducing new forms of knowledge according to which competent managers are people who are more ‘self-aware, flexible and emotionally diverse’ (2003: 217). In particular, the authors find that ‘the workshops, with their disciplinary techniques of confession and examination, were pivotal events in the production of new discourses, or new truths, about the self’ (2003: 217). Organization studies have seen the publication of similar papers on counselling (Miller and Silverman, 1995) and dialogue (Karlsen and Villadsen, 2008).

I likewise include two Foucauldian studies that take management and management development textbooks as objects of inquiry. The first, Nancy Harding’s analysis *The*

*Social Construction of Management – Texts and identities* (2005), compares ten consecutive editions of the same management textbook over time[2]. Harding shows how the current ideals formulated in canonical LDP texts are contingent on historical changes, but when these ideals appear in management textbooks, they produce a managerial identity that she claims is ‘compliant, pliant and no threat to the capitalist enterprise’ and ‘management degrees, through the management textbooks they use, can thus be seen as a form of disciplinary practice which produces quiescent managerial subjects’ (Harding, 2005).

I note that management textbooks are set to play a significant role in management degree programmes. Cullen analyses the self-reporting technologies in Stephen Covey’s *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, finding that ‘rather than unearthing new forms of self-knowledge, these classifying and measuring processes [of measuring moral condition] effectively invent the subject (Foucault, 2002)’ (Cullen, 2009: 1248).

Before reviewing works from the adjacent, constructionist bend, I would like to sum up the takeaway from the Foucauldian works. That Foucault has provided a fruitful lens through which to research identity work in discursive LDP studies is outwardly easy to see, for such a lens reveals how when participants enter LDPs, they

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[2] From the perspective of CCO that I will develop below, this research design is no less than brilliant. The conversations that led to the new editions are no longer available to us, yet by sticking to the ‘same’ textbook in ten different editions, Harding (2005) stabilizes her analysis and reports compelling findings of the changes in the implied rationality of the manager staged in the editions. The less compelling dimension is the lack of attention to the transfer problem regarding how the governmentality ‘in’ the textbooks transfer ‘into’ the managers.

engage in leadership development practices described as beneficial in building capacity, learning, development and reflection. Indeed, the activities involved in these practices often offer seductive identity enhancements, like the possibility of becoming more competent (Gagnon, 2008), assertive (Damman, 2012) or self-aware (Garrety et al., 2003). Yet, in doing so, the participant also subjects herself to regulation.

With this in mind, the regulation studies reviewed have yet to fully account for the situated dimension of regulation, in other words they have not shed real light on how and where it takes place. Gagnon and Collinson (2008) base their study on 74 interviews, focusing on participants, accounts, some ethnographic fieldwork and a major document collection. The authors themselves regard participants' accounts as 'retrospective explanations and justifications in shaping and constituting organizational practices" (Prasad & Prasad, 2000)' (2008: 652). I have no reason to question the study's overall conclusions, but I concur with the authors that participants' accounts may be partly retrospective explanations and justifications and that the very sites of the regulation participants report on retrospectively are therefore left unexamined. For instance, confessions to elders and the leadership development activities of mandated self-regulation are assumed to sustain the prescribed leader identity. However, this is not demonstrated *in situ*. Andersson (2012) relies on interviews and some observations to support the claim that training in reflection regulates identity work, and Kamoche (Kamoche, 2000) shows the regulatory force of culture. Again, the very sites of this regulation are not probed. Andersson is also cognizant of the fact that the interview is not a window to the world but itself a part of the manager's identity work, a point that Andersson documents by reproducing part of the interaction from one interview.  More generally, the research interview has been questioned because it not only attempts to represent other interactions on which it reports, but is also itself another interaction (Atkinson and Silverman, 1997; Silverman, 2017). This theme is further explored in Chapter 4 and the fourth article of this dissertation, but supports the call for exploring the situated interactions in leadership development.

Turning to the question of how texts deemed important in the creation of identity regulation are thought to accomplish this, one can further note that the link between these texts and the effects they should occasion is claimed but not demonstrated. In the cited study (Gagnon, 2008; Gagnon and Collinson, 2014) the texts detailing the prescribed leader identity, e.g., competence frameworks, are described and catalogued, but the texts themselves are de-centred in the analysis, and precisely how these texts contribute to the ensuing regulation is unclear. Andersson's (2012) idea that training one's capacity to reflect is regulatory is promising, but would need to be demonstrated convincingly. Likewise, the textual analysis by Harding (Harding, 2005) and Cullen (2009: 1248) and those by Derksen (2001) and Nadesan (1997) share the same pitfall of assuming but not demonstrating the subjectification effect that these texts should occasion in practice. I find it warranted to argue for an analytical approach to LDP studies, one that enables the role of texts to be explored in more situated detail.

## Identity work and agency

A growing number of studies extending from the discursive tradition have thought to explore the quality of LDPs that potentially enables agency. Carroll and Levy (2010) identify three possible communicative responses to three participants' identity narratives – reframing, recursivity and polyphonic dialogue – whose enactment could foster leadership for a complex world. Their study further points to the constructed and fluid character of identity. Warhurst (2011) looks at a programme aiming at personal growth and development, finding that the management language in the curriculum enabled students who were managers to credibly challenge and change the game of management within their organizations. Nicholson and Carrol (2013) identify power-ridden processes of undoing identity as endemic to leadership and leadership development. By understanding identity as ‘assembled’ (Rose, 1996), the authors strive to strike a balance between agency and regulation, pointing in particular to the role of the facilitators. Carroll and Nicholson (2014) advance the idea of resistance in the LDP arena, afforded by crucible moments (Bennis and Thomas, 2002).

I include Fox’s (2008) work on the interactional order in the MBA classroom even though it might be less constructionist than the aforementioned papers. Fox’s ethnomethodological and interactional analysis elucidates how the socio-moral order of the executive classroom is accomplished through endogenously organized sequences of interaction. This means that in situated practices members display an understanding of a certain moral order – and in displaying this understanding, maintain and uphold the order by utilizing the sequential properties of talk. This study fully explores the interactions occurring in LDP activities and how the construction of – in this case – the socio-moral order takes place in intricate, interactional detail.

Compared to the studies centred on regulation, these analyses open up the interactional sites of identity construction somewhat differently. Warhurst’s (2011) survey technique probably leaves the activity of identity work a bit out of sight, but Carroll and Levy (2010), Nicholson and Carrol (2013) and Carroll and Nicholson (2014) all draw data from the same 18-month LDP, which comprises a large archive of observations, some recorded and transcribed audio and video, 400 pages of reflective assignments and over 6600 virtual posts made by the participants and facilitators. The three narratives from Carroll and Levy (2010) were taken from the online learning environment and were probably produced under fewer constraints than ones produced in the traditional research interview. Nicholson and Carrol (2013) analyse situated interactional identity work, again using data as they naturally occur within the LDP. This enables a credible analytical leap from an instance in the data where a participant says ‘got to let go’ to the discourse of ‘letting go’, as well as lets the reader accompany the analyst ‘into’ the situations of identity work. Carroll and Nicholson (2014) also rely on excerpts, and the paper is a very lively and even humorous read, conveying an atmosphere of the field that many practitioners will recognize. I suppose ‘conveying the atmosphere’ is one feature of analysis that this kind of data can bring. Much the same can be said of Fox’s (2008) study, which brings across the sarcasm of the MBA setting and also credibly invites the reader to make the leap from interaction data to his theory of an interactional socio-moral order.

The above five papers are, however, less concerned with inquiring into the role of texts in these LDP interactions – or for that matter the technology of the virtual environment. On this front, revisiting the data archive of the New Zealand study (e.g. Carroll and Levy, 2010), as well as that of Fox (2008), could provide some knowledge useful in establishing the role of texts in LDPs.

## Where to contribute

The discursively oriented leadership development studies have elevated our knowledge of LDPs by reporting on participants’ and instructors’ experiences and interactions. From a regulation point of view, LDP studies could bring the regulatory texts and interactions under more situated analysis. This could enable one to claim that regulation is a situated phenomenon rather than, for instance, a feature of a retrospective account produced for the interview situation. By undertaking such situated analyses, one would be likely to see texts from the leadership development programme appear in the interactions and could thus account for their significance or lack thereof. Similarly, while texts like those in management textbooks have figured prominently in discourse analytical studies, they have yet to be considered as they enter into situated interactions. The regulatory effects so vividly described in governmentality analyses like Harding's analysis of a series of management textbooks (Harding, 2005) will have to take place in interaction (where else?) if the managerial identity described is to come into existence beyond the realm of Harding's text. In terms of a 'psychotechnology of the workplace' (Rose, 1990: 104, in Cullen, 2009), such as the ones described in *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* (Cullen, 2009), one would imagine that exploring the moment such a technology enters into the identity work in LDP interaction would thrill the governmentality researcher. Foucauldian organizational studies have an ongoing methodological discussion that connects to this methodological issue and that should be based on Newton (1998). I will refrain from going into that literature here and instead complement these studies via another analytical route. Ideally, this route would connect some dots between governmentality studies and interaction studies, and I will return to this in Chapter 9.

Turning to the constructionist studies, one notices that the visibility of identity work heightens considerably. Four papers out of five markedly move the analysis of LDP into situated, interactional identity work. The reader is transported into the setting, and the analytical leap from observations to theoretical text terms like 'discourses' (Nicholson and Carroll, 2013: 1236) or 'socio-moral order' (Fox, 2008: 733) are credible and easy to follow. In the semantics of this paper, the analysis orients to the empirical *terra firma* of analytical work, that is, interaction (Cooren, 2010: xv). I wish to *extend* these works by moving the analysis further into the interactions of LDP identity work. I expect more detail will deepen our understanding of how LDP practices are accomplished, including identifying more actors and their contributions.

The next chapter will thus account for how I theoretically intend to extend current studies, including the limitations identified in extant literatures on the core process and agents of identity work in LDPs. To this end, I turn to interactional studies, following a growing trend towards engaging with interactional data witnessed in identity studies (Benwell and Stokoe, 2016; Mcinnes and Corlett, 2012; Schnurr and Chan, 2011), leadership studies (Asmuß and Svennevig, 2009; Clifton, 2017a, 2017b; Crevani, 2018; Crevani et al., 2010; Larsson et al., 2018; Larsson and Lundholm, 2010, 2013; Larsson and Nielsen, 2017) and leadership development studies (Carroll and Nicholson, 2014; Meier and Carroll, 2019; Nicholson and Carroll, 2013). Specifically, I engage with communicative constitution of organization, or CCO. I detail how CCO, in its variant of the Montreal School (TMS) develops a dialogic of text and interaction, which – in light of this chapter's conclusions – appears to me an appropriate choice. To support the argument of the kappe, I introduce the subcontractors of ethnomethodology and conversation analysis (CA), and further report on the TMS analysis relevant to my analytical needs.

# Chapter 3. The communicative constitution of organizations

Alvesson and Kärreman note that ‘frameworks, preunderstandings and vocabularies are central in producing particular versions of the world’ (2007: 1265). Concurring with them, I use this chapter to recount the theoretical perch from which I observe the leadership development programme, thereby discussing not only the theory that I draw on but also that which *directs* me as I produce my accounts of the activities of the LDP studied. With this aim in mind, I explain my choice of theory and the ways I expect it to increase my understanding of how leaders in need of leadership development are constructed in leadership development programmes. In this chapter I also equip the analysis with concepts that enable detailed insight into how leaders are constructed in situated interactions within the LDP activities. At the same time, however, these concepts must be sensitive to how these interactions are interconnected with other interactions in the programme and, perhaps, even beyond.

Before embarking on a review of the key theoretical terms needed for my analysis, I would like to say a few words about how I position my study in the communicative constitution of organization (CCO) field itself. CCO is a theoretically relatively ‘heterogeneous’ (Schoeneborn et al., 2014: 286) cluster in which one finds organizational scholars who follow different strands of organizational thinking, yet all operate on this assumption: communication is necessary for any organizing to happen. Brummans et al. (2014) present the various schools of CCO under the three rubrics of 1) the Montreal School of Organizational Communication (TMS) (Cooren, 2010; Cooren, Taylor, et al., 2006; Taylor and Van Every, 2000), 2) the Giddens-inspired Four Flows Model (McPhee, 2004) and 3) a Luhmann-inspired group (Dobusch and Schoeneborn, 2015; Seidl and Becker, 2006). As said, my intention is to study leadership development as a situated, interactional phenomenon. For reasons this chapter will make clear the Montreal School, in particular the works of François Cooren (Cooren, 2004a, 2006b, 2010, 2018), is well-suited for my purpose. For ease of reading, I have shortened ‘the Montreal School of CCO’ to ‘TMS’.

In my Chapter 2 review of the discursively oriented literature regarding LDP identity work, two related points led me to conclude that we need a theory to help us understand how the leader in need of development is constructed in LDPs. First, the regulatory studies of LDP practices assumed, yet failed to empirically demonstrate, how the regulation claimed happens. This lack was observed both in the studies aimed at textually analysing LDP-relevant text and practices, like Harding’s analysis of management textbooks, and in those examining LDP practices from an organizational standpoint, like Gagnon and Collinson’s (2014) study of a global, corporate management development programme. As such, my choice of theory springs from a wish to complement regulation studies with a situated, interactional approach. This could lead to what I call situated studies of LDP and thus reveal the *in situ* regulation until now only assumed to be inherent in LDP practices. I am not suggesting that texts like those in Harding’s study (2005) or in Cullen’ study (2009) on Covey’s *7 Habits* play no role in LDPs, nor am I saying that personality profiling technologies have no part in the interactions of leadership development practices. Quite the opposite: I submit that the texts used in LDPs are strongly implicated in constructing the needing leader ‘of’ the leadership development programme. For this reason, I need conceptual tools to demonstrate how this construction takes place in situated interaction, a matter I return in Chapter 4. From this perspective, the choice of TMS is apt, as it specifies precisely how texts enter conversations in organizational settings, what difference such texts make in the situation and which agents are implicated in the construction accomplished, all of which I show below.

My Chapter 2 review concerning the constructionist analysis of LDP identity work has further led me to conclude that we also need better conceptual tools for analysing LDPs as the existing studies proved to build on the assumption that humans are the sole agents engaged in constructing the leader that needs development. My aim is therefore to *extend* our current knowledge by suspending this assumption, meaning I approach the field with an openness to the potential role played by agents other than humans – an undertaking for which TMS offers the precise analytical resources required.

## Central elements of TMS: The dialogic of text and conversation

According to Ashcraft, Kuhn and Cooren (2009), the notion that communication is constitutive (Craig, 1999) signifies that ‘put simply, the field as a whole—and organizational communication in particular—proceeds upon the claim that communication does not merely express but also creates social realities’ (2009: 4). Here, the phrase ‘merely express’ refers to the popular communication model of communication as transmission. In this model, the authors contend, communication is ‘a conduit of sorts— a neutral tool or vehicle by which we express already formed realities to one another’ (2009: 4). For example, if a manager conveys a performance review to an employee through some medium – face-to-face speech or writing – and the employee responds, this model observes a cycle of messages being produced, disseminated and received in the organization. Such cycles can be more or less efficient, and may involve concealments and confusion as well as contain communication that is more or less clear. In this model communication cannot, however, create anything, the model’s guiding question thus becoming: ‘How can communication meet situated goals, like clarity or display of authority?’ (2009: 4).

The constitutive model would take an entirely different view of the interactions in the example. It would note how key realities of the situation were made available to the interaction by the very vocabulary of ‘manager’ or ‘performance review’, thus delineating, for instance, who speaks and when, all of which takes place before any interaction occurs (Ashcraft et al., 2009). This model would also consider how the interaction might bring policy manuals and organizational charts (Cooren, 2009) to life, as well as other agents not accounted for in the transmission model. In these real-time communicational encounters, communication would subject these agents to ‘improvisations and negotiations’ (2009: 4). Aschraft et al. maintain, here paraphrasing Heritage (1984), that the reality of the performance review is ‘communicated into being’ (2009: 5). The constitutive model for TMS follows the ethnomethodological prescripts (Cooren, 2009; Garfinkel, 1967) that attention be directed at how participants jointly produce reality in interaction, without inferring anything about the participants’ inner states. Acknowledging influence from Weick (1995), Ashcraft et al. (2009: 5) therefore suggest that meaning is co-created in communications that establish ‘“what is” and coordinate and control activity accordingly’ (Ashcraft et al., 2009: 5). The constitutive model asks nothing about the efficiency of communication, instead exploring its generativity (Wright, 2016) through questions like ‘How does communication constitute the realities of organizational life?’ (2009: 5).

This communicative constitution of reality takes place dialogically through texts and conversations (Taylor, 1999), each of which I address in turn. The *conversation* is ‘where organizing occurs (Weick, 1979; Boden, 1994; Taylor et al., 1996)’ (Taylor and Robichaud, 2004: 397). Taylor and Robichaud demonstrate how conversation organizes the corporation by analysing an excerpt from a senior management meeting in which the outgoing CEO, Mr Sam, responds to criticism by the VP, Jack Levine.

The argument is built on face-to-face conversation but need not be. The excerpt reveals three features of the conversation. First, it is dialogical, meaning that only one person holds the floor for the duration of his ‘turn’ (Sacks et al., 1974). When Sam addresses his critical remarks to everyone, they all know the VP is the true addressee. Hence, in the next turn, Jack responds to Sam, who was responding to a previous intervention in the flow of dialogue. The conversation itself thus displays an organized character. Second, ‘through dialogue, people are getting organized; they are not just talking. *The “organizing-ness” of conversation is fundamental*’ (Taylor and Robichaud, 2004: 400). By exchanging criticism, Mr Sam and Jack are organizing not only their relationship and the associated feelings involved, but also the future of the corporation after Mr Sam departs.

Third, a less intuitive feature of the conversation, yet central to TMS is one that, according to Taylor and Robichaud, is often overlooked: ‘*for people to interact in the usual way that humans do, they have to generate a text*’ (2004: 401). In this instance, text is to be understood functionally as either written or spoken language that does something in the given context. Whether text is a written document or a spoken string of words, its meaning ‘is contingent on the circumstances of its production and reception, whether immediately accessible in a conversational exchange or mediated by some kind of support system (written, recorded on tape or film, transmitted electronically, for example). What counts is that text is part of a process in which people coordinate their actions and emotions through communication’ (2004: 401). In the excerpt, Jack adamantly refers Mr Sam to details in a document Jack has written: ‘That’s why my first thing on page six (0.2) page six and I want you to go back and read it’ (2004: 400). Rereading this written text, he and Mr Sam negotiate a relevant level of emotion *and* mutually align their images of future action through textual mediation. The document Jack refers to is available to the conversation by virtue of its being a written document in the room, but the key action is that Mr Sam and Jack co-orient to this text, thereby maintaining a 'common object of concern' (2004: 397). This object is not the written text itself but the pressing question of how the corporation is to be governed in a future without Mr Sam. In the vocabulary presented here, the two interlocutors are thus authoring a new text that is a jointly produced description of the future governance of the corporation. This could then become durably mediated in meeting minutes or in revised corporate policies. Accordingly, text becomes something included in the processes that Taylor and Robichaud speak of, that is, the organizational coordination of actions.

Before continuing with the concept of text, I would like to address the conversation as the 'site' of the organization (Taylor and Van Every, 2000), although not in the sense of a physical place but of a location where construction occurs, because it is from within conversations that the organization is continuously constructed 'in the interpretive activities of its members, situated in networks of communication' (Taylor et al., 1996: 4). In TMS studies such interpretive activities tend to centre on formal and professional face-to-face encounters like those taking place during a business meeting. Bencherki, Sergi, Cooren and Vasquez (2019) explore the conversations conducted in the case of a strategic planning exercise, identifying four communicative practices through which concerns gradually become strategic: presentifying, substantiating, attributing, and crystallizing. Clifton (2017a) shows how a leader meeting with employees constructs their needs as if she had already addressed them within her own articulations and claims to speak on employees' behalf, thus subsuming or recruiting them into her particular version of the organization. Other studies explore conversations taking place during top management visits to the local medical service centre (Benoit-barné and Cooren, 2009), or during the facilitation exercise (Cooren, Thompson, et al., 2006) and the creative events (Martine and Cooren, 2016). Notably, even if the work of creating the organizational reality takes place on the *terra firma* of interaction (e.g. Cooren, 2004b: 518), these studies also show that this creation is not possible without texts of one form or another.

The most original idea in TMS could be that of topicalizing organizational texts, i.e., the flow of texts into conversations, within conversations and emanating from conversations in everyday organizational practices. At any rate, the concept of text is quite broadly defined in TMS (e.g. Ashcraft et al., 2009; Cooren, 2010; Kuhn et al., 2017), but I will mention two ways that TMS understands texts in conversations to contribute to the communicative creation of the social reality assumed by the constitutive model of communication. First, 'an organization is incarnated in the texts (documents, spokespersons) that speak in its name and through the conversations (e.g., live exchanges) where these texts are (re)produced' (Ashcraft et al., 2009: 20). This additionally enables the text to be understood as the surface of the organization, or to be read as the organization, not as its site, the conversation (Taylor and Van Every, 2000). This interplay or dialogic (Taylor, 1999) is particularly visible in studies that follow the production of organizational text over time and across conversations. The strategy study of Vásquez, Bencherki, Cooren and Sergi (2018), for example, demonstrates that for matters of concern to become matters of authority, i.e., strategy, within the organization, they have to be voiced and negotiated in conversation and then transported to and materialized through strategy texts. In part, members used such communicational and textual practices in order to grant strategy social reality. In another study, Koschmann (2013) shows how an inter-organizational collaboration (IOC) attained a collective identity through the authoritative text of a metaphorical community dashboard that became a shorthand abstraction for the entire IOC. In both studies, as texts enter into series of conversations, they become progressively authorized by members, thus progressively representing – to members – the organization as a whole.

Texts can be said to have agency within conversations (Cooren, 2009), but an explanatory word on agency first. According to Cooren (2010), agency in TMS means ‘to make a difference’ in a situation (Cooren, 2010: 51), a phrase that operates as shorthand for the notion that ‘something or someone has to *make a difference that makes a difference*, as Bateson (1972) pointed out’ (Cooren, 2017: 150). Textual agency also exemplifies the TMS contention that any such capacity to make a difference is not limited to human interactants but ‘always involves the capacities of other beings and things that should be acknowledged in our analyses of organizing processes’ (Cooren, 2017: 142). Obviously, the actions of this agency are highly contingent on the situated appropriation of the text, the local ethno-methods and the sequential unfolding of the interactional episode. Spee and Jarzabkowski demonstrate how textual agency ‘disciplines planning activities and also how the subsequent text affords agency to particular types of actors who participate, or have formal roles in strategic planning’ (2011: 1240). Spee and Jarzabkowski make the ‘organizing property’ (Putnam and Cooren, 2004: 325) of strategy text in interaction evident. Chaput, Brummans and Cooren offer a situated, interactional analysis of the identification processes that occur through the mobilization of various agents, ‘e.g. a document, the organization’s name, its history’ and of how these ‘help to coproduce the organization’s substance’ (Chaput et al., 2011: 272).

Key to this is to understand action as shared, again following Latour’s idea that when one acts, ‘others are performing the action and not you’ (Latour, 1984: 265). An utterance in a conversation, says Cooren (2010), is a series of marks like facial expressions, intonations, a string of words that the speaker delegates, yet when sent off, these marks perform the action, and no longer the speaker. The delegate acts at a distance from the speaker; they telecommunicate (Derrida, 1977). This material dimension of conversation becomes even more obvious if this delegate is inscribed in some relative permanent form like printed documents, notes, messages, emails, term papers. The sign detailing required instrument hygiene on the wall of a *Médecins Sans Frontières* (MSF) supported hospital in Democratic Republic of Congo is one such text (Cooren, 2010). At a visit made to the hospital by Carole from MSF, the local chief technician orients to this sign and says ‘It has- it has been honored’ (Cooren, 2010: 28). The sign here has acted, that is, made a difference in the situation, on behalf of MSF or Carole. The text is an agent for a principal that may not be present. One could contend that the sign did not act in and of itself, but then again, neither do humans: action is shared and delegated.

This example illustrates on the one hand the dis-local or trans-situated character (Cooren et al., 2005: 269) of the interaction between the technician, Carole, François and, well, the sign. On the other hand, that the technician reports that the sign has been ‘honored’ discloses that different appropriations are indeed possible. The schism is that the situation in which this sign is going to be understood as binding or as irrelevant or as something entirely else is ‘endogenously produced’ by interactants (Garfinkel, 1988: 103). Had the staff of the hospital understood a previous situation as being, e.g., one of ‘emergency’, it may well be the case that expedience had suspended full adherence to the instructions of the sign. The point remains, that texts are written ‘in’ a local setting, time and unfolding situation only to be understood or appropriated ‘in’ another setting, time and unfolding situation. When I in Chapter 2 express more reservation than

Harding (2005) regarding the disciplinary force of the management textbooks she analyses, the reason is this contingency on their situated appropriation in interaction.

This theme being central to my knowledge interest, I would like to take it beyond TMS. While ethnomethodology and conversation analysis (EMCA) have traditionally addressed how two or more humans in real time (Llewellyn and Hindmarsh, 2010) use the mechanics of interaction (Wooffitt, 2005) to accomplish whatever they are doing in accountable ways (Garfinkel, 1967), the question of how to sensitize one's analysis to the role of textual or non-human agents has been handled quite differently. In one study, Garfinkel and Bittner (Garfinkel, 1967) demonstrate that the accounts members generate as they go about their everyday work constitute the sense-making source of the clinical record (Garfinkel, 1967). In keeping with the phenomenological roots of the tradition (Heritage, 1984), objects in interaction are of interest only to the extent that members demonstrably orient towards them (or not), and in this sense are no different than other phenomena to which members may be oriented during face-to-face interaction. Still, a number of scholars have sought to go beyond this notion. Lucy Suchman (1985) has done workplace studies demonstrating that rather than being a representation of some subsequent actions, the plan is actually a situated product of the very interaction which the plan was supposed to describe, thus reversing the causality implied in cognitive science. In Charles Goodwin's work on professional learning, 'individual actions are constructed by assembling diverse materials, including language structure, prosody, and visible embodied displays. Semiotically charged objects, such as maps, when included within local action, incorporate ways of knowing and acting upon the world that have been inherited from predecessors' (Goodwin, 2013: 8). The textual agent of TMS fits well with both Suchman's plans (1985) and Goodwin's semiotically charged objects.

Finally, for the argument in this paper that looks at all four articles together, the metaphor of imbrication is helpful. One should imagine imbrication as a pattern of interlocked agents, activities or even programmes of action (Bencherki and Cooren, 2011). The classical line of command in which each role is embedded within the next layer of managerial roles above it is one simple example (Cooren, 2006b). Building on Taylor, Latour and Gibson, Leonardi (2011) provides to my knowledge the clearest account of imbrication, in which he offers Ciborra's (2006) metaphorical description. It is 'more subtle than a mere overlapping or mutual reinforcement … It is more "active" than that. Its sense possibly can be best captured by the technical meaning of the term imbrication in the (French version) of the Unix operating system: imbrication is the relationship between two lines of code, or instructions, where one has as its argument (on which it acts) not just as the result of the other, but also the ensuing *execution of that result*' (Ciborra, 2006, in Leonardi, 2011: 152). In particular, imbrication illuminates how the human relates to the material.

Any routine or technology is the result of accumulations of past imbrications and allows organizational members to structure their current actions. Over time, these past, accumulated layers of human and material imbrications become forgotten, black-boxed, yet 'continue to influence or condition how human and material agencies will become imbricated here-and-now' (Leonardi, 2011: 152). We might say that imbrication has an *upstream* dimension that unearths the sequences of human-material imbrications of which a given text, technology or routine is the result. For instance, Case and Phillipson (2004) report how the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® (MBTI) is often presented as a "'scientific psychology" par excellence' (2004: 478). However, the authors astro-genealogical study shows that 'its origins in the Jungian personality typology…result in the MBTI®…inheriting and reproducing theoretical and epistemological structures founded on astrological and alchemical cosmology' (2004: 478). These origins have then been forgotten or obscured through processes of scientific purification (Latour, 1993). Any technology or text may have a more or less complex upstream history of imbrication, and I will refer to this level of complexity as *imbrication density* in the discussion in Chapter 9. The *downstream* dimension of imbrication is in the first instance those sequences of interactions (i.e., programmes of action) that humans and the technology are supposed to execute together. In terms of the MBTI personality inventory, it may be the sequences of actions necessary to administer the profile: for example, 1) instructor is certified, 2) focal individual completes web-questionnaire, 3) algorithm generates report, 4) instructor and focal person meet, 5) instructor hands focal person MBTI® report, 6) instructor performs feedback with focal person, 7) focal person responds to feedback. In the discussion, I will refer to the level of detail in the downstream imbrication as *imbrication specificity*.

Downstream imbrication may often divert from (the technologies' 'own') plan as just noted by Suchman (1985) above. This comes in at least two varieties relevant here: a first in which the interaction appropriates the technology in ways that dis-align with instructions and/or add sequences of interaction to the prescribed procedure – that is, further imbricates it. For instance, the MBTI® report may feed into a selection procedure for applicants for a vacant position. The next variety, playing out within a longer timeframe, is somewhat similar to Hacking's idea of 'the looping effect' (1995) in that the persons classified by the technology may themselves change as a result of the classifications – like Hacking's study of the history of the use of the ADHD diagnosis (1995) – thus triggering revisions of the classificatory technologies themselves. Imbrication then, has both an upstream and a downstream dimension, both a density and a specificity, and the effect of imbrication can be observed within shorter or longer timeframes.

## Critiques of TMS

Various critiques have been levelled at TMS through the years, some of which I think articulate several reasonable concerns and which I therefore address here. After closely analysing a conversation at a business meeting, Cooren (2004b) showed that collective minding is only achievable on the *terra* firma of interactions that interrelate the 'here and now' with the 'there and then' in what he calls 'translocalization' (2004b: 517), a finding much in line with the text/conversation dialogic I presented earlier. Myers and Trethewey (2006) appreciate Cooren's attention to micro-level conversations but dispute that his analysis can explain 'how such conversations work their way into meso-level organizing practices or are enabled or constrained by macro-level social discourses of power'(2006: 320). In a rejoinder to this critique, a characteristically loquacious Cooren (2006a) claims that organizations can be incarnated in many things, including 'management meetings, logos, architectural elements, bylaws, stock certificates, ledgers, boards of directors, minutes, organizational charts … to just name a few, but there is not, on one hand, the organization (at a higher level) and, on the other (at a lower level), action and interaction' (Cooren, 2006a: 335). In this ontological part of the response, Cooren draws on Callon and Latour (e.g. 1981) to reiterate his rejection of the sociological 'bifurcation' (Taylor, 1999: 34) in macro structures and micro interactions, respectively, that TMS adheres to.

Interestingly, Myers and Trethewey (2006) use a quote from Weick and Robert's (1993) original ASQ article to evince how the collective mind is achieved in 'a higher-level system such as an organization' (2006: 314). The quote refers to a 'bos'n' (i.e., a boatswain) who wakes up an hour early each day just to "think about the kind of environment he will create on deck that day, given the schedule of operations. The thinking is individual mind at work, but it also illustrates how collective mind is represented in the head of one person"' (Weick and Roberts, 1993, in Myers and Trethewey, 2006: 314). I would like to make two points about this argument. First, as evidence of the existence of this system-level organization, Myers and Trethewey offer Weick and Robert's own paraphrasing of an interview with a manager, the bos'n. Myers and Trethewey thus appear to infer the existence of a system-level organization from an account provided by a manager in a researcher-provoked episode in which the manager retrospectively accounts for his own thought processes. I find this to be a fairly weak basis on which to determine the existence of system-level organization, especially in view of the critique against the necessity of using naturally occurring data that Cooren (2004b) advocates. This matter of naturally occurring data is covered in Chapter 4 on methodology and in Chapter 8, which contains the article on naturally occurring data versus the research interview. The point here is that the research interview itself is an interaction subjected to certain social expectations. When Atkinson and Silverman critique the research interview, they show it to 'reveal lively and skillful biographical work' (Atkinson and Silverman, 1997: 307). I suspect that on closer examination the boatswain's account given during the research interview and cited by Weick and Robertson (1993) would reveal a similar biographical work that extended beyond the thoughtful morning routine reported.

Bisel (2010, see also Brummans et al., 2014) noted that Taylor and Van Every's (2000) theory offers 'a dizzying number of linguistic, interpretive, and critical theories to argue that communication is the location and manifestation of organization' (2010:

126). I find this critique warranted in 2010 and no less so today. While school building necessarily implies a certain overflow of theory that then can be rejected or revised through empirical or conceptual studies, the theoretical productivity visible in a flow of ideas like *imbrication* (Taylor, 2011; Taylor and Van Every, 2011), *co-orientation* (Taylor, 2006; Taylor and Van Every, 2000), *authoritative texts* (Kuhn, 2008), *organizations as thirdness* (Taylor and Van Every, 2011) *ventriloquism* (Cooren, 2010) and *communicative relationality* (Kuhn et al., 2017) makes it hard for empirical studies to keep track of the growing pool of cutting edge concepts and how they are internally organized within the theory – and even to realize if they all aspire to a common theoretical framework. Take, for instance Kuhn, Ashcraft and Cooren's (2017) *The Work of Communication: Relational Perspectives on Working and Organizing in Contemporary Capitalism*, which is presented as an 'an array of conceptual possibilities'. Although this naturally represents an exciting option to engage with, it also distracts from more detailed applications of the theoretical TMS already developed. For my theoretical presentation here, I have therefore sought to account for as few concepts as possible.

Possibly this state of affairs is connected to another equally serious concern, even raised from within CCO. In *The International Encyclopedia of Organizational Communication* entry for CCO, Schoeneborn and Vázquez (2017) provide an overall assessment of CCO's methodological maturity, concluding that 'CCO scholars must systematize the heterogeneous and sometimes scattered methodological approaches they use'. As shown above, the methodological backgrounds, strategies and data-collection and analysis techniques are numerous and not always compatible with the ontological premises of CCO thinking. CCO scholars rarely explain their methodological approaches or reflect on the epistemological standpoint of their inquiries – a practice that should be greatly encouraged (Schoeneborn and Vásquez, 2017: 10). This is a rather scorching (self-)assessment, and this situation obviously risks making enrolling new scholars harder, as, for instance, graduate students often look for methodological guidance even before theoretical subtlety. Concerning my own methodological approach, in the next chapter I point to ethnomethodology and naturally occurring data as one fruitful methodological avenue able to unlock some of the potential of the current theoretical corpus while staying aligned with the constitutive model of communication.

# Chapter 4. Case description and methodology

I have structured this chapter along a generally chronological path, retrofitting my work onto a timeline that starts with the inception of the project in 2014 and culminates in the publication of Article 1 in September 2019. If there is one thing I have learned in this process, it is how integral recursivity has been to the project.

My employer, CBS, and myself initiated and established the project in 2014, after making some key project design decisions. This process involved such issues as determining my choice of case as well as negotiating and gaining access to the field, including considerations about the ethics of that access. The case ultimately selected takes place in-house at CBS, which raised concerns regarding my doing at-home fieldwork, including the multiple roles I would play in the case setting. These concerns motivated my decision to use naturally occurring, rather than, say, research interview data – a requirement that such proximity to the field, in my eyes, calls for. As focused ethnography partially inspired the construction of the data, it makes sense at this stage for me to provide a fuller picture of the empirical setting of the case and its elements, the LDP activities. I opted to cover some of the LDP activities but not others. Once I had gathered or constructed the data, I developed an approach to it, seeking inspiration in the CCO approach. This writing and review process is integral to the analysis, even if I am not going into detail about that process in the kappe.

## The project and the programme

This section describes the empirical case module – a *personal leadership module*, or LD module (PUF[3] in Danish) – used in this dissertation, as well as its parent master's programme, the Master of Public Governance (MPG) programme. While most documentation on the programme is in Danish, papers by Greve (2013) and Greve and Pedersen (2017) provide a detailed, English account of the content of the programme and the governance structure behind it. The programme was minutely described in a government-driven reform called the Danish Quality Reform of 2007 (The Danish Government, 2008). The programme was intended to improve the quality of the Danish public sector in part by strengthening leadership capacities and competencies, for which reason I would like to take a step back and somewhat detail the programme's background in a public-sector context. As such, I would first like to show that the case is not a local and idiosyncratic innovation of CBS, but rather anchored in Danish national policy and therefore applicable in a broader Danish context; and, second, to demonstrate that the content of the MPG programme, including the LD module, was quite precisely specified at the national policy level.

The Danish public sector has instituted a number of reforms in the last 25 years, starting with the 'modernization' campaigns of the 1980s (Rennison, 2007). Within these efforts, Rennison identifies how 'professional management' has increasingly become a central concept guiding how the sector itself raises the expectations posed to

[3] In Danish 'Personligt Udviklingsforløb'. For ease of reading, I will call it the 'LD module' for leadership development module. In articles, I have used the term LDP for the LD module to align it with the conventions (e.g. Gagnon and Collinson, 2014; Nicholson and Carroll, 2013).

its managers. The quality reform of 2007 covered eight major policy areas: User at the Centre, Attractive Workplaces, Innovation in the Institutions, Management Reform, Strong Local Government, De-bureaucratization, More Hands for Care and Future Welfare (The Danish Government, 2007). The fourth area, Management Reform, rested on three pillars: the expansion of managerial discretion, particularly at the institution or service-provision level; the provision for flexible management education; and, finally, the recognition of documented, individual leadership quality. Some practical outcomes of this reform area were two subsidized flexible programmes: the bachelor-level DOL[4] and the master's-level MOL[5]. The latter was called Master of Public Governance (MPG) and run by the so-called East Consortium, consisting of Copenhagen University (KU), Aalborg University and Copenhagen Business School (Greve, 2013). In large measure the consortium was designed by a tripartite settlement made within the confines of this reform and aimed at addressing all three of the above pillars.

The Ministry of Finance, the Danish Regions and Local Government, which implemented the reform, have all acknowledged that doing public-sector work requires one to have adequate managerial competencies, some of which were articulated in highly specific requirements regarding the programme itself, including an obligatory, personal leadership module originating in what Greve and Pedersen call, 'the borderland between research in leadership and personal development' (2017: 26). This LD module was to be co-taught in pairs composed of a CBS/KU teacher and a management consultant, thus ensuring a practice orientation. Apart from this LD

[4] In Danish 'Diplom i Offentlig Ledelse'.

[5] In Danish 'Master i Offentlig Ledelse'.

module, which is also the case module of this dissertation, modules in strategy, public governance, human resource management (HRM), leadership and coaching, communications, public reform and organizational change were also offered.

According to its own statutes, the MPG programme aims ‘to qualify and develop the public manager’s ability to conduct professional management in a politically governed public-sector context, with the aim of strengthening the public manager’s competence in reflecting on and further developing his or her own management practice’ (Copenhagen Business School, 2015, my translation). The part-time student puts together 60 ECTS, some mandatory and some elective, from a diverse range of modules to engage in within a flexible delivery model whose time frame can span up to six years. The LD module selected for the case is a mandatory, half-year leadership development module slotted early in the programme and comprising six full seminar days. I will flesh out the content later, but for now allow me to reiterate that I chose the case precisely because it is rooted, as discussed, in Danish national policy and is therefore not a local, CBS outlier. Moreover, a series of key stakeholders played central roles in specifying the objectives and content of the overall programme and the specific LD module. Both points are important counters to any argument that the case can be dismissed as an oddity, or, at least if it is an oddity, it has been a consistently Danish national one for ten years and counting. Having established the significance of the case, I will now go into more detail about its content.

## Establishing the project

I became available for this project initially through my employment as a senior advisor and teacher with the master’s programmes provided under the CBS Management Programmes. I have been teaching – among other programmes – the

Master of Public Governance (MPG) since 2012. CBS and the University of Copenhagen jointly offer the programme, which has had a yearly intake of 100 to 200 student managers, primarily from the public sector, and involves a flexible, three- to six-year course of part-time study (Greve, 2013). CBS employed me to help resolve a perceived problem with the mandatory leadership development module, PUF, the one that ultimately became the case for this project. I was tasked with heading a reform that would rectify the inherent problems with the module. While the exact problems were hard for the associate dean of MPG – or anybody really – to pinpoint, student dissatisfaction with the quality of the module was obvious. Mandatory MPG assessments from 2009 to 2013 showed overall student satisfaction with the modules to average 4.1 on a scale of 1–5, with 5 being the best.[6] When I started at CBS, the average for PUF was assessed at 3.1, one full point or 25 percentage points below the overall average. Most educators familiar with executive student evaluations will recognize this as a significant negative deviation, one exacerbated by the fact that the module was mandatory and rather expensive. Add to this the political visibility of a programme like MPG with its solid intake of public sector managers, and it makes sense for the MPG leadership to try out new solutions. How we resolved the issues is

[6] Evaluation data are made available to me by the CBS evaluation unit in my capacity as the module coordinator. All personal identifiers have been removed. I will disclose, though, that my own teaching of PUF was included in the 3.1 evaluation figure from 2009 to 2013 as well as in the subsequent improved figures. The open entries in the evaluation forms enabled participants to provide some pretty candid and vivid assessments.

beyond the scope of this dissertation[7], but following our reform of the module, student satisfaction caught up with the overall average for the MPG. In the context of the dissertation, one relevant takeaway from this background information is the fact that I have had and still have a significant role in the module, its design and delivery. This chapter addresses how I have sought to manage the relation between my role as researcher and my role as a module coordinator throughout the project.

I taught and coordinated the module for a number of years and managed a faculty of around ten teachers from CBS and the University of Copenhagen and a consultancy firm presently called UKON[8]. At this point, I suggested to the Dean of Education that I undertake a PhD research project on the rather popular MPG. Specifically, I and other key persons were curious about the novel phenomenon of integrating LD modules into a master's programme (Lawrence et al., 2018), along with other more 'classical' public master's programme elements. CBS also wanted to know more about how its own programmes worked (Bacon and Stewart, 2017), especially one of its rather successful

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[7] Some of the new elements that we included in the design are prominent in the case analysis provided by this dissertation: the coaching session, the mini-ethnography and the group exam. The leadership development project and the experiments were present at the time in slightly different formats. What is retained is an intention to remain learner-centric and practice based.

[8] I should mention that the UKON consultants – most of them having earned industrial PhD degrees – played a very important role in the reform process, bringing in not only experiences from other LDPs but also strong insight within current LDP research. In particular, UKON has maintained a strong relation with the Center for Creative Leadership, CLL, referenced in Chapter 2. CLL is the organization behind works like Mccauley et al. (2010) and Drath et. al (2008). Again, these relations speak to the phenomenon of multiple loyalties in the world of LDP practice and research.

ones, at least in terms of uptake. Coincidently, Magnus Larsson and Morten Knudsen at the Department of Organization, CBS, were also applying for and subsequently received an FSE[9] grant to study *Leadership Development in the Public Sector*, a project that would run from 2015 to 2018. In this way the MPG project (my project) became affiliated with the FSE project, with the Department of Organization agreeing to subsidize it. The co-author of article 4, Roddy Walker, completed his PhD project within the FSE project (Walker, 2018) as well. This setup provided for a close-knit research group whose members – Magnus Larsson, Morten Knudsen, Roddy Walker, Mette Mogensen and myself – all came from the Department of Organization. A steering group for the MPG project was also set up, consisting of the associate dean of the MPG, Anne Reff Pedersen, IOA; IOA Head of Department Signe Vikkelsø; Vice Dean of Management Programmes Christian Tangkjær; and associate professors Magnus Larsson and Morten Knudsen, IOA. Formally, the project was anchored in a signed contract between Management Programmes, the Department of Organization, the Organization and Management School of Research and the Deanery of Research, all at CBS. The MPG project generally enjoyed wide financial and organizational support across the business school.

As alluded to above, I chose the LD module within the MPG as the study case partly because I felt it exemplified the novel approach of integrating an LD module into a broader, more classical public management master's programme. CBS, at least, had never delivered this type of leadership development before, and this inexperience with this kind of LD on the part of CBS and the University of Copenhagen may account for some of the student dissatisfaction. The novelty of the LD module may also have made

[9] Forskningsrådet for Samfund og Erhverv, a Danish, state-run funding body (see www.dff.dk).

it easier for me to gather support for exploring the phenomenon further. As the research question in Chapter 1 makes apparent, I moved away from this original curiosity towards a more wholehearted foray into leadership development literature. Still, as much as my choice of case enjoyed support in my project's social milieu, it also presented considerable risks in terms of my dual role as a practitioner – an LD module designer, teacher and coordinator – and now as a researcher. Although I, myself, did not teach but only participated in and recorded the interactions of the ultimate module studied, I have nevertheless approached the study with the scholar-practitioner conflict in mind (Carton and Ungureanu, 2018).

## The empirical work

### Navigating the scholar-practitioner's multiple roles

According to Carton and Ungureanu, scholar-practitioners are 'category-blurring' individuals, for instance, 'practitioners with PhDs who occasionally teach and conduct research in business schools, business consultants who also hold tenure in business schools, academics who consult for companies and are engaged in practice-oriented dissemination, or individuals who move on from working in business schools to create their own companies' (Carton and Ungureanu, 2018: 437). While this may all seem well and good and in keeping with contemporary ideals regarding the multiple and shifting organizational identities I touched on in Chapter 2, Carton and Ungureanu nontetheless problematize it by drawing on anthropological works on 'liminality', thus positioning the scholar-practitioner in a zone understood as a strange and potentially dangerous place outside regular, everyday practice and often referred to as 'betwixt and between' (Turner, 1969, in Carton and Ungureanu, 2018). Scholar-practioners therefore bridge separate worlds, risking that 'they contribute to all and to none of them at the same time' (2018: 437). While Carton and Ungurueanu identify research, teaching and application as three generic roles, I assert that in leadership development teaching and application will occasionally be identical, at least when it comes to research-based teaching.

An episode where my combined roles as scholar in the research project yet practitioner when 'outside' of the project became particularly relevant and ingloriously visible at a plenary session on power in organizations that I attended during the LD module (Recording 150522_0042 at time 37:35). At one point a student pointed out an inconsistency in the slide covering French and Raven's classical theory of power, which one instructor was presenting. This caused some confusion among the instructors, which then led to some unrest among the students, hearable as disappointment or frustration on the recording. Executive classes give 'no time out' for instructors, as Smith paraphrases Goffman (2006: 6). I probably felt the same unease as the instructors and could not resist checking the French and Ravens points from the curriculum on my laptop. One instructor explained to the class that the LD module faculty shared slides, an explanation that apparently failed to really satisfy any students. By then, I knew the exact elements of French and Raven to be used in the context and simply could not rein myself in. Walking up to the podium, I sought to sort out the issue, which was settled after some further scrambling. Even the low-voice deliberations between the – no longer two instructors but, including me, three – are preserved on tape, and I should add that the success of my intervention was hardly clear-cut, although my fellow faculty appeared to welcome it.

In light of such scholar-practitioner liminality, I have two takeaways from this narrative. First, my impromptu shapeshift from researcher to intervening practitioner-instructor weakened, if not destroyed, data that could have made for an analytically fascinating case of the loss of an LDP instructor's authority triggered by the malfunction of a textual agent, the slide. Yet, the contamination caused by my intervention renders the episode – at least from the moment I intervene – no longer 'naturally occurring' (Alvesson, 1997; Larsson and Nielsen, 2017; Samra-Fredericks and Bargiela-Chiappini, 2008). Thus, in a very real sense, my oscillation between the separate worlds of research and practice supremely realized Carton and Ungureanu's prediction that, when straddling two worlds, one could well 'contribute to all and to none of them at the same time' (2018: 437). Second, in my time with the LD module case, this episode adds to others demonstrating that being in that liminal space – even if just to operate a fleet of audio-recorders and to collect documents – was much more arduous than I had anticipated. This difficulty – a dimension of role multiplicity perhaps overlooked in Carton and Ungureanu's paper – has to do with the fact that if the competency levels required to be in the scholar versus the practitioner role are assymetrical, then one might resort to falling into the role in which one feels most confindent – in my case, obviously, the role of the practitioner.

## Access and research ethics

As I embarked on my project, a great many questions seemed more pressing than those concerning ethics. In fact, meta-reflections on research ethics have been central in neither the design nor the execution phase of my research project and were not really articulated cogently until as late as the second Work in Progress (WIP2) seminar in April 2019. At this seminar two scholars, Marian Iszatt-White and Mie Plotnikof, discussed the status of the project to date.[10] Both provided valuable readings and advice on the progress of the project, and both pointed to the indispensability of providing a thorough account of the ethical considerations required when one does 'at home ethnographies' (Gorli et al., 2015; Malone, 2003; Ybema et al., 2009). With this in mind, I will seek to provide an account of such considerations here.

I mentioned above that my project enjoyed wide financial, organizational and scholarly support across the business school. This, combined with my role as the academic coordinator of and occasional teacher in the LD module, also meant that I approached the empirical field with an in-house authority different from that commanded in research projects conducted from outside the project site, as was the case with Walker (2018), who worked with a university college. I initially made sense of how my position affected my project by viewing it in terms not of authority or power but of trust, thus judging that, because I was from CBS, the LDP participants and instructors would 'trust' me as researcher. In other words I assumed they would trust my research to be appropriately and professionally conducted and to somehow benefit society, and that this 'trust' in turn would open the doors of the field to me. In retrospect, I am rather stricken by the combined naiveté and presumptuousness of my thinking as regards my position or, if you like, my power, for which reason I will now problematize my method for gaining access.

To gain access to the field – the LDP activities – I needed permission 'upward' from the CBS and MPG managements and 'downwards' to the empirical field of the

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[10] Dr. Marian Iszatt-White, Senior Lecturer with the Department of Entrepreneurship & Strategy, Lancaster University Management School, and Associate Professor, PhD, Mie Plotnikof, Danish School of Education, Aarhus University.

LD module. I dealt with the upwards aspects by following what I believe to be the proper procedure, that is, I circulated relevant iterations of the project description, well knowing that lengthy and complicated project descriptions risk being read less intensely. As mentioned earlier, the CBS and MPG managements were both involved in the steering committee as well, which provided another venue for raising issues. Looking ‘downward’ towards the LDP from my vantage point, the CBS/KU instructor was my first point of engagement, in the sense that the instructor is the gatekeeper of the classroom. As discussed, the LDP team consists of a faculty member from CBS/KU and an organizational psychologist from a private consultancy provider. I chose to contact the most senior of my CBS/KU instructors and ask him or her to let me use the classroom for my fieldwork, my reasoning being that a person with high seniority would be more likely than someone with lower seniority to have the confidence to reject a proposal from the academic coordinator. The senior instructor reacted positively, even enthusiastically, to my proposal – a reaction that I am quite certain was sincere. After receiving this acceptance, I went to the corresponding consultant in the instructor team, who accepted the proposal as well.

However, these two acceptances do not dematerialize the fact that accommodating the person in charge of hiring and firing you is a fundamental aspect of modern bureaucracies, in which ‘bureaucrats follow rules and orders voluntarily because they are given by officeholders as trustees of a legitimate and impersonal rational-legal order’ (Olsen, 2008: 18). I am unsure how intelligent my approach was. I could have designated a particular class as the backdrop for my fieldwork and then called for instructors to apply for giving the class, knowing it came with ‘researcher included’. Yet, no amount of elaboration can really document how fully a person consents to participating in research conducted by her direct superior, perhaps especially in an organization where research is a core activity that is ascribed high value. My own conclusion is this: only put yourself and your direct subordinates in this situation as a last resort. In my situation, there may have been some alternatives (other programmes and/or other providers), yet, as said, at the time I did not consider the issue of power versus informed consent as problematic.

Power versus informed consent possibly became even more pertinent at the next level, when I sought the informed consent of the participants in the class in question. For this process I started by writing a declaration of consent (appended in Danish, page 266) along with a one-page project description (appended in Danish, page 270), both of which I authored in dialogue with the CBS/KU class instructor. I then wrote an invitation to participate (appended in Danish, page 264), in which I state, among other things, that the coaching sessions will be recorded and ask the participant to accept or reject this recording. The invitation ends with this statement: ‘We would also be pleased if you want to contribute to the project and thus the development of the teaching’. The declaration of consent reads in my translation:

> I hereby consent to having my coaching session within the LD module recorded on audio media and used for research purposes, cf., page 2 [i.e., the one-page project description]. The consent assumes that the recording is used in accordance with good research practice and ethics, including that data is anonymized and blurred before dissemination, so that identification cannot take place. I have received relevant information about the project, and I can withdraw this consent at the end of the coaching session

(from ‘Declaration of informed consent’, appended in Danish, page 266).

The invitation was sent out by the MPG management secretariat to the participants, along with the one-page project description appended. At the actual coaching session, the participant was then shown the informed consent declaration to be signed – or not – and the one-page project description. As I was not present, the instructor facilitated the consent process as well as operated the recorder.[11] To the best of my knowledge, I believe that the texts I have produced so far reflect the consequences of opting in as well as out of the research project. From CCO in Chapter 4 we know that an organization is constituted of not only texts but also their appropriation in interaction (Cooren, 2010). Because I designed my research with an eye to recording all scheduled LD module interaction, I happen to have the audio archive of the coaching sessions in which consent was obtained for all class participants. From this corpus, I have selected the following excerpt, which occurs at the outset of the recording, for further scrutiny. Present at the setting are the participant and the instructor, and paper is handled during the excerpt.

1. Instructor: So here [we are].
2. Participant: Then I think I'm ready.
3. Instructor: Yes … and you should actually just sign such a declaration of consent that it's okay that …

[11] At the first seminar of the LD module, all participants were asked to sign a similar declaration of consent to allow the full module to be recorded. This part of the consent process could be subjected to a similar analytical problematization.

4. Participant: that I … yes … of course.

5. Instructor: Yes … exactly … And that's … yes … page two is the same as the one that was sent out to you … it’s simply so that we can use data in a research context … and you wanted coffee right↑

6. Participant: Yes, please.

Although not providing a full analysis here, I would like to share a few insights from this excerpt. First, the participant ‘think[s]’ she is ready at Turn 2. ‘Think’ could be heard as a way of modulating the propositional content of the assertion that she is ‘ready’. In other words, she does not claim to know exactly what is going to happen – but nevertheless makes herself available for whatever is coming. By doing so, the participant marks her inferior epistemic status vis-á-vis the instructor. ‘Think’ might also serve to mitigate the unpleasant feeling of an unknown interactional territory. In the next turn – at which paper is being handled – the instructor displays her superior epistemic status by declaring what the participant is supposed to do, that is, to ‘sign such a declaration’ (Turn 3). Disalignment on the part of the participant is a dispreferred response and possibly made even harder to do by the instructor’s use of the colloquial ‘okay’. The participant displays her agreement by finishing the instructor’s turn (Turn 3, Instructor: that … /Turn 4, Participant: … that I) as well as by adding ‘of course’.

At Turn 5, the participant seems to be reading page 2, the one-page project description, as the instructor informs her that it ‘is the same as the one that was sent out to you’. One could hear this as the instructor’s assuring the participant of consistency, but it also projects the supposition that the participant already knows the content of page 2 and implies that her taking time to read it in detail could show disalignment – with the assumption either that she indeed read it in advance or that she still is deciding whether to give consent. The use of ‘simply’, like that of ‘okay’, in the instructor’s turn could be heard as a downgrade of the request made, which increases the likelihood of alignment, which both parties prefer. Notice that an eventual denial of the request might cause the instructor to lose face she would have to shut off the recorder. The topic change – ‘and you wanted coffee, right↑’ – offers both interlocutor’s a ‘closing-relevant environment’ (Robinson, 2013: 277), allowing both to move past the potentially controversial topic of consent, because a question ‘sets agendas that recipients are obliged to address’ (Clayman, 2013: 641). The topic is effectively closed when the participant accepts coffee at Turn 6. In conclusion, we may say that both interactants appropriate the texts, the declaration of consent and the project description in ways that interactively organize the preferred response of the participant and allow the interaction to proceed to the business at hand, that of the coaching session.

Speer and Stokoe (2014) explore how informed consent is gained from research subjects across a range of institutional settings in social psychological research. They find that rather than being asked to opt in to new research projects, subjects were asked to opt out of research activities that were – much like my recording above – already underway. As such, opting out becomes constrained because the participant must effectively stop the research process if she wants to withhold consent. Speer and Stokoe also find that continued participation is the preferred response, as consent-gaining turns are tilted in favour of not opting out. They ‘constrained recipients to give “no problem” (Houtkoop-Steenstra & Antaki, 1997), consenting responses’ (Speer and Stokoe, 2014: 68), like in the excerpt above. Seen against this study, the excerpt from my project is no outlier but simply exemplifies how we as researchers and research subjects accomplish consent in our everyday research practices.

Speer and Stokoe do not suggest that consent-gaining interaction – the joint accomplishment of informed consent – can be made to conform to the consent-gaining process assumed to be in written declarations of consent. They do, however, contend ‘that guidelines of all kinds are based on a misunderstanding of how interaction works, and an assumption that it is both possible and desirable to translate written scripts unproblematically, and pristinely, into spoken interaction’ (Speer and Stokoe, 2014: 69). They also offer some guidelines to mitigate the risks of staging interactional coercion in consent. First, they recommend that recordings not commence before the consent dialogue takes place, so participants can opt in rather than out. Second, researchers might articulate, rather than assume to be known, the reasons for participants to withhold consent, such as the fact that consent to record interaction may constrain what the participant wishes to say. Third, and perhaps controversially, consent-gaining activities could be initiated or picked up again at the end of recordings. All three ideas could have been put to test in my project, and they are certainly possibilities as I design future research projects. Undeniably, my research exploits the fact that people – for reasons other than my project – participate in some common activities. However, I can improve my efforts, for instance, by using the ideas of Speer and Stokoe (2014) to support potential research participants in their efforts to make sense of the research project as well as to understand the project’s possible risks and rewards before they give their ultimate consent.

## Naturally occurring data

From the outset of this project, I was interested in what I in this dissertation call situated analysis of leadership development programmes. However, I did not engage with CCO from the beginning, and entered the empirical field with a somewhat different theoretical guidance. My initial theoretical work presented at EGOS in Naples (Meier, 2016) was an attempt to integrate Althusserian interpellation (Butler, 2013; Harding et al., 2017; Youdell, 2004) with interactional identity theory (Antaki and Widdicombe, 1998) in order to reveal how micro-interactions during LDPs relate to the ideological and political commitments of textbooks and pedagogical techniques used in the programme. Integrating Butler's Foucauldian-inspired philosophical and political theory with the essentially empirically minded interactional studies from Antaki and Widdicombe (1998, 2008) proved to exceed the scope of my empirically oriented project. Nonetheless, the important takeaway for the project at that point was the way it guided my approach to the empirical field and committed me to engaging with naturally occurring data as being integral to the work with interpellation and interactional identity theory in which I was engaged.

The critique of contemporary social science's reliance on the research interview has further stimulated my interest in using naturally occurring data for this project (Alvesson, 1997; Atkinson and Silverman, 1997; Silverman, 2017). This critique can also be levelled at qualitative LDP studies, as the selection of works in Chapter 2 indicates. The proliferation of the research interview has, according to Atkinson and Silverman (1997), led to the 'invention of the self', in that 'the interview becomes a personal confessional, and the biographical work of interviewer and interviewee is concealed', and the society thus characterized becomes an 'interview society' (Atkinson and Silverman, 1997: 305). This may well pertain to the LDP research interview insofar as it often concerns questions about who one is as a leader, how one became this leader and similar themes.

A number of scholars have developed research strategies that transcend the social science reliance on research interview data by seeking out more ‘naturally occurring’ sources of data (Alvesson, 1997; Mik-Meyer and Silverman, 2019; Samra-fredericks, 2000), that is, data whose content is not provoked into being by the researcher. Data of this provoked sort encompasses experiments, surveys, research-requested diaries and the research interview I am now discussing. Article 4 analyses excerpts from an interview with an LDP participant, on the one hand, and naturally occurring data from a meeting with employees, on the other. It reveals how a managerial self is presented in the interview, a self that is much more polished than the subtle and skilled presentation of self *in medias res* of the business meeting.

I consider my research question – how the leader in need of leadership development is constructed in LDPs – to caution myself with regard to research methodology. A lot of leadership development practices – like coaching and peer group sessions – themselves share features with some of the data gathering methods I could have deployed, such as the research interview or focus group methodology. What goes on in these LDP practices may, following Atkinson and Silverman (1997), actually partake in not only the invention of the self but also the invention – or construction – of the leader. The ‘biographical work’ (1997: 305) possibly involved in these LDP practices is a possible factor to consider when one is exploring the construction of the leader. Consequently, deploying methodologies like the research interview is ill-advised for me, as it risks repeating rather than exploring these construction processes.

A similar consideration stems from my theoretical observation point, CCO. CCO scholars embrace a range of methodologies, including research interviews (Vásquez et al., 2018; Wright, 2016), experiments (Wright, 2016) and naturally occurring data (e.g. Benoit-barné and Cooren, 2009; Bergeron and Cooren, 2012; Clifton, 2017a; Cooren, 2004b; Dobusch and Schoeneborn, 2015; Martine et al., 2016). Yet, according to the principle of communication as constitutive (2009; Craig, 1999), data that allows explorations *of* communicative episodes (like excerpts from meetings, social media exchanges, documents in interaction in the given organization) takes precedence over data that only enables explorations of communicative episodes (like the research interview, ethnographic field notes, the survey) *about* communicative episodes (in the organization). In this project, this means that the relevant communicative episodes must be identified and, within the ethical constraints imposed, recorded on a durable and mobile medium (Morgan and Guevara, 2012).

The final consideration underpinning my decision to pursue an analysis based on naturally occurring data originates in my position as the aforementioned scholar-practitioner (Carton and Ungureanu, 2018). Someone reading about a CBS executive programme analysed by an analyst employed by CBS would justifiably expect to be informed how the inherent risk of 'siding' with the programme or CBS has been managed. The primary concern of organizational ethnography has been immersion into the field, while the problem in this case, as Ybema and Kamsteeg (2009) suggest, relates to the opposite problem, that of 'distancing', because ethnographers risk becoming 'socially bound up with their field sites and thus becoming increasingly "templated" by that field (Parkin quoted in Mosse, 2006: 936), particularly when they delve into contexts somewhat familiar to them, as is often the case in organizational ethnographic research' (2009: 101). Ybema and Kamsteeg suggest six strategies researchers can employ to achieve distance, including holding on to the mystery, looking for the 'irrational' and breaking the friendship bond. I suggest adding a seventh, ‘capturing and analysing naturally occurring data’. This affords distancing for three reasons. First, repeatedly listening to recordings over the course of – in my case – several years after the completed fieldwork made my relation to the interactions surprisingly alien. Even the rare instances where I hear my own voice have ultimately become decidedly unfamiliar, as though spoken from a distance. Second, listening and analysing can be done communally in data sessions – in my case in New Zealand, the United Kingdom and Denmark. At such sessions, scholars with no relation to the empirical case can bring their interpretations of the communicative episode to the table. This seems harder to do with findings from interview data, at least if they are abstractions like those from a well-known qualitative analytical framework, the ‘Gioia methodology’, in which ‘2-order aggregate dimensions’ are ‘distilled’ from lower orders (Gioia et al., 2013: 20). Third, readers of the final analysis can ask themselves whether the analysis seems biased since the author’s affiliations as well as the excerpts analysed are available for scrutiny. In other words, the validity of the claims can be examined. This, of course, directs attention to the analytical process justifying the selection and framing of these excerpts, a topic I will turn to below after accounting for data capture and storage.

## Capturing texts and conversations in the field

Now that I have justified my decision to use naturally occurring data, allow me to address how I approached the task in practical terms. First, I had to decide whether to use video or audio recording to capture my data (Morgan and Guevara, 2012). I am aware that the use of video as a data-capturing methodology is gaining popularity in social science (Mondada, 2006), as it provides a richer picture of a setting than does audio alone. CCO studies have also embraced video (e.g. Bencherki, 2016; Cooren et al., 2012; Martine and Cooren, 2016; Vásquez et al., 2018) as a means of exploiting more cues regarding communicative actions, such as facial expressions and the ways objects are handled. I opted for audio recording due to a specific consideration regarding access. As I saw it, seeking permission to record video could complicate my access to salient activities in the field, as instructors and administrators, among others, generally consider LDP activities to involve sensitive information and activities. This attitude was entirely possible, obviously, and just one non-consenting member of the field could exclude me from the focal activity altogether. Still, the exclusive use of audio indeed restricted my ability to delve deeply into the socio-material complexity (Kuhn et al., 2017) of my case. However, in some ways the data analysis process also became less complex, as the lack of visual data forestalled an otherwise endless spiral of relevant questions (Hindmarsh and Llewellyn, 2018). I am content with my decision to use audio, as it did not jeopardize access – although participants might not have objected to video any more than audio. Certainly, the audio recordings I got provided ample richness for the analytical work. Nonetheless, I would probably consider using video-based data capture for future projects, depending on the specifics of the research question at hand, of course. I would also ensure that the data volume enabled the more time-consuming analysis that video data demands, at least if the analysis were to exploit the visual data beyond the conversation itself.

The formal LDP activities (see p. 95 for full description) consist of a series of interactions: a coaching session, six days of seminars involving plenaries and group work, peer-to-peer mini-ethnographic site visits and exams involving the whole work group. From an early stage, I decided to keep my personal presence at the activities to a minimum, which would be in line with my reliance on naturally occurring data and would help prevent my mere presence from provoking data. In particular, some settings in an LDP could be anticipated to contain conversations on which my physical presence would have an effect, for instance, the coaching session. One could argue that I should have refrained from attending the exam, as my presence could pose a risk to the student's optimal performance. Considering, however, that two examiners and five to six participants attend the exam, I felt that an additional researcher would not adversely affect performance and I could therefore be present to manage the audio recording. Still, I felt myself more poignantly to be the odd one in the room than I had in the plenaries I attended. In retrospect and considering how well the instructors independently managed the audiotaping of the coaching session, I could very well have captured the exams the same way. In the unlikely case that a student had both failed and filed a complaint against the business school, I suppose my presence at the exam could have been invoked as problematic.[12]

As my CCO approach relies on the dialogic of texts and conversations (Taylor, 1999), this dimension of the empirical field also requires mention in contexts apart from capturing conversations. Fortunately, the LDP is quite rich on 'concrete texts' (Kuhn, 2008), that is, documents. These include the NEO PI-R® personality inventory, a blue book of participant leadership bios, curricular texts, manuals and instructions, Power Point presentations, written ethnographic reports, term papers and personal

[12] Exams at Danish universities are in principle open to the public, and specific considerations would have to be weighed against this (cf. 'Bekendtgørelse om eksamen ved universitets-uddannelser', retrieved from https://www.ft.dk/samling/20051/almdel/uvt/bilag/85/232819.pdf (only in Danish)) This, however, does not absolve me from reflecting on the research ethics involved.

portfolios. I managed to collect and store all these texts. Of course, a lot of text – such as participants' notes during group work, iterations of term papers and most personal portfolios – were not collected. However, the text and conversation dialogic is not intended to consider texts relevant by their mere presence in the LDP. Rather, texts become salient to the CCO analysis insofar as they are appropriated by or produced in conversations (Cooren, 2010). In this regard, the analyst only becomes aware of which texts are consequential in the programme when listening to the audio recording. This, too, follows the principle that members demonstrate what their concerns are in texts and conversations and thus that they, not the analyst determine which texts are salient to the programme.

Table 1 below sums up all efforts to capture conversations and texts during LDP activities. Notice that I chose not to capture audio either in the participants' own organizations, during participants' work with practical leadership experiments or when participants performed the peer-to-peer ethnography. This was not because the conversations connected to these activities were deemed irrelevant, but because I – in dialogue with the instructors – considered this to further complicate already complicated participant activities. In these instances adding a researcher – or even an audio recorder – would have been counterproductive for the participants or their organizations. Luckily, these activities are rather well described in the participants' term papers as well as in the stand-alone ethnographies produced by the visiting peer students. Moreover, participants and instructors describe and analyse these activities in some of the audio recordings, so these activities are hardly absent from view. However, the constructing of the leader – constructing anything, really – takes place on the *terra firma* of interaction (Cooren, 2004b), and the motive for capturing data in a CCO analysis is to cover as much of this *terra firma* of interaction as technically and ethically possible. Both of these activities, the experiments and the ethnographies, posed both technical and ethical problems with regard to data capture.

| Activity | Audio recordings managed by | Texts collected |
|---|---|---|
| **Coaching session** | Instructor | NEO PI-R® (selected)<br>Blue book entries |
| **Plenaries** | Researcher | Curricular texts, Power Point presentations |
| **Group sessions** | Participants | Instructions |
| **Exams** | Researcher | Term papers |
| **Ethnographic visit** | Not recorded | Ethnographic reports |
| **Experiments** | Not recorded | Term papers |
| **Portfolio work** | Not recorded | Invited to submit portfolio to researcher |

*Table 1: The management of audio and text in capturing data*

'Managed by' refers to who actually brought the audio-recorder into the setting and operated it. The results of this recording vary depending on whether the instructors or participants carried it out. The coaching sessions were all recorded by the instructors themselves, and the serial numbers and corresponding duration are noted in Table 2 below.

| Coaching session (Serial no.) | Duration (hrs:min:sec) | Coaching session (Serial no.) | Duration (hrs:min:sec) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **150316_0010** | 1:22:05 | R09_0043 | 1:06:27 |
| **150407_0026** | 1:31:05 | LS110028 | 1:27:07 |
| **150318_0018** | 1:17:44 | LS110027 | 1:01:04 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **150318_0017** | 1:38:29 | LS110026 | 1:09:57 |
| **150317_0014** | 1:22:18 | LS110025 | 1:02:29 |
| **150317_0013** | 1:05:12 | LS110023 | 1:12:37 |
| **150316_0012** | 0:32:14 | LS110022 | 1:05:13 |
| **150316_0011** | 1:02:55 | LS110021 | 1:26:09 |
| **150316_0010** | 1:22:05 | LS115032 | 1:13:45 |
| **R09_0044** | 1:14:13 | | |

*Table 2: Recordings of the coaching sessions, spring 2015*

The next major type of programme activity is the plenary session. I audiotaped and observed all of these sessions, and all the recorders worked and succeeded in capturing audible data. It proved especially instrumental to my analysis (e.g. Article 1) that not only was the instructor recorded, but that the interspersed dialogues between instructor and participants were also captured at good quality, in great part due to the built-in stereo microphones of the Olympus SL 12, my main recorder. However, shorter group sessions (typically five to ten minutes) around the tables in the plenary hall were not recorded, as this would have entailed distributing recorders and quite possibly disrupting conversations. The recordings vary greatly in length, as the sessions could consist of long lectures on some topic, plenary discussions or shorter instructions on upcoming activities.

| Plenary session (Serial no.) | Duration (hrs:min:sec) | Plenary session (Serial no.) | Duration (hrs:min:sec) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **150423_0028** | 1:12:42 | 150522_0040 | 0:53:44 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **150423_0029** | 0:05:49 | 150522_0041 | 0:56:59 |
| **150423_0030** | 1:10:29 | 150522_0042 | 0:52:57 |
| **150423_0031** | 0:36:44 | 150522_0043 | 0:24:35 |
| **150423_0032** | 0:54:41 | 150522_0044 | 0:57:57 |
| **150423_0033** | 1:14:45 | 150522_0045 | 0:00:02 |
| **150423_0034** | 0:17:55 | 150522_0046 | 0:42:09 |
| **150521_0035** | 1:08:33 | 150824_0047 | 1:28:36 |
| **150521_0036** | 2:08:13 | 150824_0048 | 1:20:18 |
| **150521_0037** | 6:35 | 150824_0049 | 1:32:37 |
| **150521_0038** | 1:39:45 | 151116_0059 | 0:59:32 |
| **150521_0039** | 1:14:39 | 151116_0060 | 0:36:23 |

*Table 3: Recordings of the plenary sessions, 2015*

The following category comprises those group sessions at which participants left the plenary and moved themselves into five fixed groups. This typically happened once per seminar, although there was no fixed rule. To record such sessions, I borrowed five recorders from the CBS Library. Their quality was lower, but they were easier to operate. The participants were to operate the recorders themselves, which generally went well with the exception of a few incidents where a group forgot to turn on the recorder or preferred not to. Regarding the latter instance, I only registered whether participants had told me anything as they handed back the recorder. Whether the group in question failed to follow the instructions given or just wanted time 'on their own', unfettered by the recorder, I did nothing to remedy the situation. The design decision to record all five groups meant that the project remained robust in spite of these occasional recording lapses.

| Group session (Serial no., group, day) | Duration (hrs:min:sec) | Group session (Serial no., Group, day) | Duration (hrs:min:sec) |
|---|---|---|---|

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **150824_0050 (G1) D1** | 0:41:42 | WS114058 (G4) D1 | 0:43:04 |
| **150521_0038 (G1) D2** | 1:39:45 | WS114059 (G4) D1 | 0:27:28 |
| **150423_0029 (G1) D6** | 0:05:49 | WS114060 (G4) D2 | 1:42:19 |
| **WS119253 (G2) D1** | 1:22:51 | WS114061 (G4) D4 | 1:28:21 |
| **WS119254 (G2) D2** | 1:55:56 | WS114062 (G4) D5 | 0:30:06 |
| **WS119255 (G2) D4** | 0:49:32 | WS114063 (G4) D6 | 0:42:52 |
| **WS119256 (G2) D4** | 0:16:48 | 712_0096 (G5) D1 | 0:0:43 |
| **151116_0059 (G2) D6** | 0:59:32 | 712_0097 (G5) D1 | 1:19:26 |
| **WS117492 (G3) D1** | 1:11:53 | 712_0098 (G5) D2 | 1:57:36 |
| **WS117493 (G3) D2** | 2:09:24 | 712_0099 (G5) D4 | 1:24:54 |
| **WS117495 (G3) D4** | 0:54:38 | | |
| **WS117496 (G3) D6** | 0:33:18 | | |

*Table 4: Recordings of the group sessions, 2015*

The final audio category is that of the exam. I was present myself and recorded all of the exams but not examiners’ deliberations between the exam sessions.

| Exam session (Serial no.) | Duration (hrs:min:sec) | Exam session (Serial no.) | Duration (hrs:min:sec) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **151116_0059** | 0:59:32 | 151118_0063 | 1:12:42 |
| **151116_0060** | 0:42:32 | 151118_0064 | 1:25:14 |
| **151116_0061** | 0:36:32 | 151118_0065 | 1:22:22 |
| **151116_0062** | 1:25:03 | | |

*Table 5: Recordings of the exam sessions, 2015*

While the previous tables have reported on audio recording, this final table reports on the types and quantities of documents collected during the LD module. These documents are – as are the audio recordings – naturally occurring in the sense that they would all have been produced or made available had the researcher not been present. I should mention that I also made my own brief notes on each session, which have mainly been used to create an overview of what transpired during each of the sessions at which I was present. Compared to the audio data, my notes – not least when observed in hindsight – seem fragmented and incomplete. In that sense they probably aptly mirror what happens when someone tries to make sense of what is going on as it is going on – thus reflecting the situation members themselves are in.

| NEO PI-R® test results | Blue book entries | Curricular texts | Power Points© collected | Ethno-graphies | Personal portfolio | Term papers |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Access strictly as needed** | 19 | Full curriculum | Full set for LD module | 19 | 1 | 19 |

*Table 6: Documents collected during LD module, 2015*

Finally, despite my preference for naturally occurring data, during the project I did, in fact, undertake four research interviews with participants in the LD module. I conducted the interviews in the spring of 2016 after the LD module ended, and have included the interview guide in the appendix. My motive for doing these interviews lies in the original project design, which apart from following the LD module also involved doing fieldwork in selected participants' home organizations, my purpose being to explore how the module would or would not show itself in the participants' practices. This was in the first half of 2016, a time where I found myself deeply engaged in analysing the material accounted for above and literally had my hands full. I also considered whether proceeding with this next part of the project would jeopardize my work with the LDP data. Following the four research interviews, and in consultation with my primary supervisor I decided to abandon that part of the project so I could properly explore the data already captured. This was a complicated decision for me to make at the time, but I am convinced it was best for the project. I have yet to find an occasion to use the research interview for analytical purposes, which probably has to do with its not being naturally occurring data, but also to the fact that my interview guide is uniquely designed to address analysts' and not members' concerns. For instance, Question 9 from the guide asks: 'Identity: Who do you think you are today as a leader – and is that changing? What will your employees say about this? And your own manager?' Whatever the interview elicited from questions like these, I

| Interview ID (Year, no.) | Duration (hrs:min:sec) |
|---|---|
| **2016_01** | 0:48:46 |
| **2016_02** | 1:12:37 |
| **2016_03** | 2:25:34 |
| **2016_04** | 1:38:24 |

have had a hard time using it in my analysis.

*Table 7: Research interviews, 2016*

The total amount of data from these five settings – the coaching session, the plenary, the group session, the exam and the research interview – are reported in the table below:

| The coaching session (hrs:min:sec) | The plenary (hrs:min:sec) | The group sessions (hrs:min:sec) | The exams (hrs:min:sec) | The interviews (hrs:min:sec) | Total audio (ex. interviews) (hrs:min:sec) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 23:13:08 | 15:53:51 | 21:26:22 | 9:08:51 | [6:05:21] | 69:42:12 |

*Table 8: Total audio recordings in the project, 2015*

The recordings in Table 2 through Table 5 were stored in a cloud service currently approved by CBS for research purposes and backed up on hard drives. The recordings are titled with serial numbers, and I hold a separate key file, in which each audio-file is described in terms of activity and participants. The audio itself is sensitive data, although connecting the utterances in the recording to specific individuals in public sector service would – apart from requiring access to the files themselves – require voice recognition technology that, as far as I am aware, does not currently exist. The audio files were then uploaded to Nvivo 11, a qualitative research support software that allows audio files to be given tags describing data content. These tags can then be organized through further tagging in hierarchical relations. The texts described in Table 6 were also uploaded in Nvivo.

As for the further processing of data, the question of transcription was actualized. My initial approach was to have the entire archive transcribed, so I had five coaching sessions, one whole series of group sessions (Group 4) across the six days seminars and the full archive of exams transcribed by three different providers outside CBS, all of whom were established professionals. One value of having a transcription in contrast to an audio file is that establishing an overview of the content is considerably easier in terms of what interlocutors are talking about. However, my experience to date has prompted me to pause the transcription of the corpus in its entirety, at least for now.

First, the transcripts thus far completed already meet my objective of understanding the ‘meanings’ of what is said in the files. By this I am suggesting, that the transcripts also took upon themselves to sort out contradictions or tidy up too messy encounters. Some transcripts were even ‘good reads’ in the sense that they conveyed the interaction to be more smooth and harmonic than the audio might suggest. I could perhaps see this outcome work for other analytical purposes, but for a situated analysis, it does not.

Interactively sorting out ‘what is going on here’ is not a prelude to the really important – and less messy – matters. Sorting out things in intricate and at times cumbersome detail is what makes communication constitutive.

Take the excerpt of the informed consent conversation on page 76 as a case in point. If only observing this interaction in terms of the analyst’s concerns, one might conclude that in actual fact the instructor ‘is explaining the form to the participant’ and the participant ‘is then signing it’, in other words an uncontroversial transaction of giving consent. After all, the signed form ‘documenting’ this very transaction is already right there. However, it is in exploring the details of the interaction that one comes to understand that ‘informed consent’ might be not only the simple transaction my consent form assumes, but indeed also an artful accomplishment in an increasingly unequal interaction. There is not only *no time out*, in Goffman’s famous words, but apparently *no way out* for the participant. So, cleaning up the messiness often means glossing over the constitutive work of communication that is visible just there. Or, put differently, transcribing the text as if one is reading *messages* – what was meant by each utterance – blinds one to transcription as a reading of *actions* – this was done at this turn, this at that.

As a second and somewhat related point, the standard transcript – as a literary genre, if you will – seems to lose the liveliness of action that audio has. My inexperience in reading transcripts may very well play into this, but for me, at least, the text seems flat and uneventful. I am aware that working with naturally occurring data implies exploring the ‘indexical expressions and other practical actions as contingent ongoing accomplishments of organized artful practices of everyday life’ (Garfinkel, 1967: 11). The operative expression here is ‘everyday life’. The drama involved in my data might not always be able to compete with the enchanted ‘invention of the self' (Atkinson and Silverman, 1997: 304) that sometimes arises in the research interview. However, to the novice the medium of the document compared to that of the audio recording somehow points to a different empirical phenomenon. For this reason, too, I prefer working with audio recordings rather than transcripts. Of course, given our current format for research communication, the transcript will appear eventually. Next, I will describe the LD module and then provide a more detailed account of my analytical practice.

## The content of the case LD module

The official learning objectives of the LD module are: 'on solid theoretical grounds to develop the student's personal leadership capacity in the interplay between person ("the inside") and the organizational task ("the outside"), within the institutional context of the public sector. The course thus seeks to strengthen the task completion of the student's organization through theoretically supported experiments with insight into and reflection over personal leadership' (Copenhagen Business School, 2015: n.a. my translation). I notice that this description strives to cover much territory, both in an institutional and an individual context, to give insight into and reflection over personal leadership. Further, according to the programme's *Welcome Letter to Participants*, the LD module should enhance the student's 'self-awareness' and her 'ability to act in [a] leadership role through the interaction of her personal qualities and the conditions characteristic of public-sector leadership'.[13] The LD module has a reading list totalling about 800 pages and covering such leadership literature as *Leadership in Organizations* (Yukl, 2013) but also texts like 'Direction, alignment, commitment: Toward a more

[13] From 'Welcome Letter to Participants'.

integrative ontology of leadership' (Drath et al., 2008) and instrumental resources like 'Manage Your Energy, Not Your Time' from *Harvard Business Review* (Schwartz and McCarthy, 2007).

The LD module entails a range of activities, including one-on-one developmental dialogues between students and instructors, lectures, work in continuous work groups of four to six students, a day-long peer-to-peer ethnography, writing assignments and an oral examination conducted together with the student's work group. I have based this description of the overall LD module structure on statutes (Copenhagen Business School, 2015) and other public sources. The module runs in three phases: the so-called search phase, the experimentation phase and the reflection phase. The search phase enables the student, aided by instructors and peer students, to explore possible areas on which to focus her leadership development project. These focus areas are then meant to drive the entire LD module. In the subsequent experimentation phase, the student tries out various changes in her leadership practice 'at home'. The module then concludes with a more evaluative reflection phase. At the start of the module, a 1.5-hour, one-on-one coaching session between the student and one of the two academic instructors sets the search process in motion.

Before attending the coaching session, the student submits a short leadership biography and takes a web-based personality test comprising 60 questions. The test used for this exercise is the NEO FFI, a shortened version of the NEO PI-R® personality inventory, a proprietary yet industry-wide recognized test of the so-called Big Five personality traits (McCrae and Costa, 2008). The test purportedly 'measures' five traits, summarized here:

- Neuroticism (N): The level of emotional reactivity. Persons with high scores tend to become anxious or excited in stressful situations, whereas those with low scores remain more composed.
- Extroversion (E): The demand for social activities. High scores indicate a preference for social activities, including leadership, whereas low scores indicate seriousness and a preference for completing tasks by one's self.
- Openness (O): Also called 'intellectual curiosity', refers to a person's attitude toward change and the unknown. High scores indicate creative and imaginative capabilities, while low scores indicate a more practical, mundane approach to problem-solving.
- Agreeableness (A): Also called 'friendliness', refers to how a person relates to others. High scores indicate an inclination towards cooperation and empathy, whereas low scores indicate a proud, self-reliant attitude, often with a taste for competition.
- Conscientiousness (C): This dimension covers the need for order and efficiency. High scores indicate a sense of duty and an eye for planning and organizing, while lower scores indicate spontaneity, flexibility and less need for details.

Completing the profile involves completing an online questionnaire about 'your thoughts, feelings, and goals' (Costa and McCrae, 2008), the inputs of which are then calculated into a 'profile'. This profile graphically consists of a summary page, in which each dot represents a score on one of the five dimensions, and the five dots are then connected with four straight lines. The results are subsequently standardized and converted to a T-score such that all scores end up distributed around a mean of 50 and with a standard deviation of 10.

The NEO FFI test results are compiled into a ten-page report that is fed back to the student at the coaching session. It should be noted that only persons or professions certified by the proprietor, Psychological Assessment Resources, Inc., may administer the test itself, for which reason all instructors on the module are certified. Possibly due to the proprietary nature of the exam, details regarding how the user input is calculated for the report output are not publicly available.

At the coaching session the student is also introduced to the LD module, in particular to the idea and requirements of the leadership development project. Following this introduction, the student and instructor are to draw on the module design, the submitted leadership biography, the NEO PI-R® profile and the material uncovered during the actual coaching session in order to generate appropriate ideas for a relevant leadership project. Several instructors add that, in addition to these ‘official’ expectations, the activity also helps develop a familiarity with the student’s leadership practice as well as cultivates a relation of trust with the student going forward.

This leads me to my last point of this case background description. I have positioned this case as *a case of* leadership development, rather than as a case of a management education. This is due to its content. In Chapter 2 I listed a number of techniques associated with leadership development: personality profiling, 360-degree surveys, coaching, mentoring and stretch assignments (Day, 2001, 2011; Kempster and Iszatt-White, 2012, 2013; Mccauley et al., 2010), occasionally including more theoretical curricular activities (Fox, 1997; Klimoski and Amos, 2012). The content of the LD module maps quite well onto this.

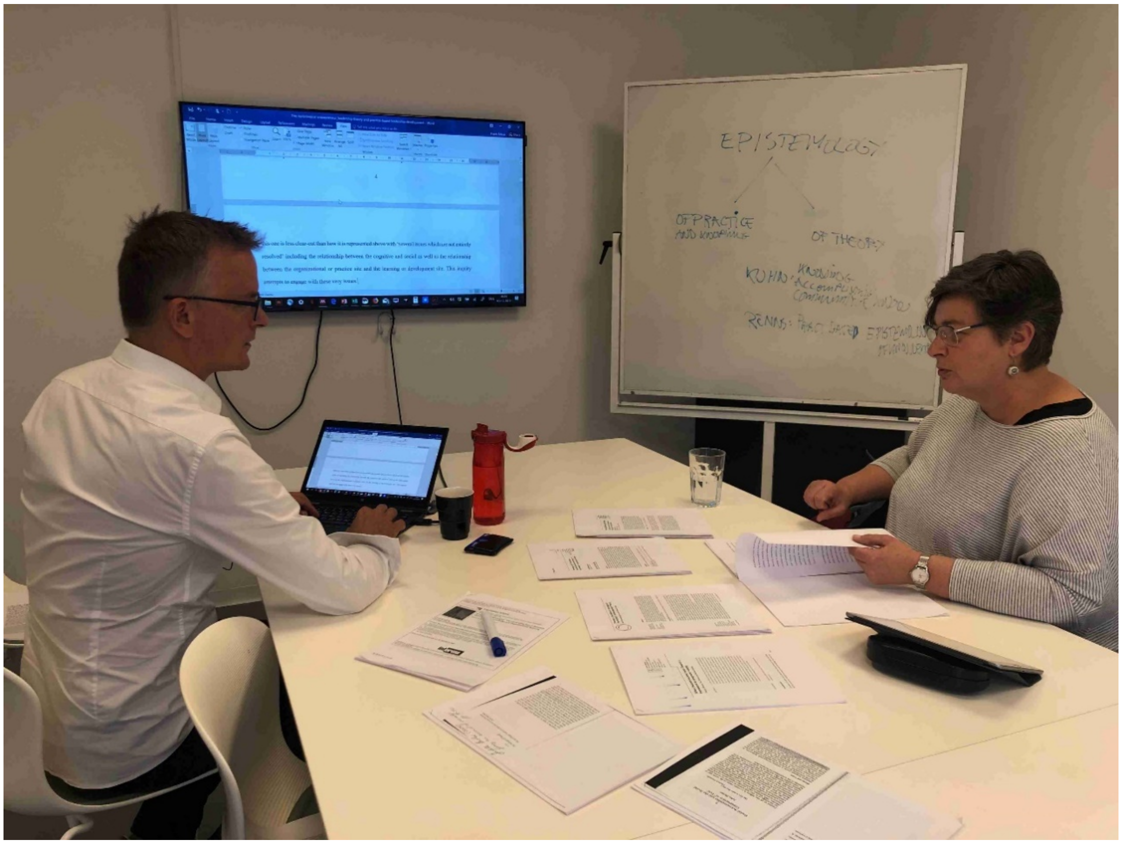
## Analytical process

When I embarked on the analysis, I had transcripts and audio at my disposal, organized somewhat systematically in Nvivo and in properly named directories. I had an archive. So … how to go about analysing these data – the naturally occurring audio alone totals just short of 70 hours – without losing track of my research question? I have since repeatedly listened to all the tapes, repeatedly read the transcripts and, in each of the articles I have written, accounted for which part of the data I have utilized[14] and how. Here, I will account for my general analytical approach, which can be summarized in the words ‘constitutive’, ‘focused’ and ‘situated’.

Constitutive in this instance refers to the ontological assumption on which my analysis is based: communication – like this dissertation – does not only *report from* some other, empirical world. If I though it did, I would subscribe to the transmission model of communication (Ashcraft et al., 2009), which I do not. Unlike that model, the constitutive model recognizes that reality is ‘communicated into being’ (2009: 5), that communication also *creates* reality – and it does so through the dialogic of texts and conversations (Taylor, 1999). Take, for instance, the snapshot of myself and Brigid Carrol producing Article 3 from Chapter 7. The photo probably resembles many readers’ experience of co-authoring. Looking at the photo, I notice that we, the authors, appear to be in a conversation where there is – sufficient – co-orientation towards a shared task, that of text production (on the screen). Our conversation appropriates texts

*Figure 1 The author and co-author working on article 3*

[14] Article 1 is probably an exception, as I reported the whole archive – then again, this article draws on most of it, even if only in fragments.




like the articles on the table, parts of the extant literature. This literature offers ways of talking about the world of LDP that the text we are producing – Article 3 – needs to align with. It also needs to depart sufficiently from this literature if it is to offer a 'contribution'. The way we craft the text in the photo is very much oriented to this extant vocabulary and our ability to position our text in a way that elicits a contribution.

The research question is constructed from this extant literature (Sandberg and Alvesson, 2011) under the ideal that it 'will open up new research problems, might resolve long-standing controversies, could provide an integration of different approaches, and might even turn conventional wisdom and assumptions upside down by challenging old beliefs (Campbell et al., 1982: 21)' (Sandberg and Alvesson, 2011: 23). My point here is not whether my RQ meets these high aspirations, but that, ultimately, I do all my analytical work knowing that I need a receptive audience somewhere in the community of scholars, and my RQ is my shorthand address for this audience. I stress this for two reasons. First, I think this approach is at odds with popular, more grounded approaches (Strauss and Corbin, 1998) in which the analyst seeks to dis-attend to any theoretical presumptions going into the data analysis – as well as at odds with the equivalent in conversational analysis, ‘unmotivated looking’ (Clifton, 2012; ten Have, 2002). Second, although this does not mean that I enter the analysis deductively, heavily armed with detailed hypothesis, it does mean that some version of this question is always at the back of mind when I'm working with data: ‘*How might this episode throw light on how the leader is situatedly constructed in interactions with humans and texts in this LD module?’* And in this case, it could be enlisted in building my answer to my RQ, a.k.a. my contribution to the extant literature. I will return to this below when I discuss the focused ethnography (Knoblauch, 2005). For now I will remain with the texts that impact my analytical work.

A photo taken before the one in Figure 1 would perhaps have depicted Brigid Carroll and myself revising our initial submission of Article 1 to *Human Relations*, orienting ourselves to the reviewer's comments while writing it. If ever a text ‘made a difference’ (Cooren, 2010) in research interaction, ‘reviewers comments’ would probably be a candidate. The way we approached it was to revise the article step-by-step, following (most) of the comments in the review, in particular those the associate editor had elevated to figure in his response letter to the authors. Concomitantly to these step-by-step revisions, we produced a response letter answering the reviewers concerns *line by line*, specifying our stance on the issue raised and referring to where and how we had addressed it in the revised version. This procedure was repeated once more until the third version was accepted for publication. Apart from revising the theoretical framing, we frequently also revisited the original data, shifted data and revised the analysis of excerpts to strengthen our claims during these interactions. I bring this probably familiar process up because, in my experience so far, analytical work is what conversational analysts call ‘recipient designed’ (e.g. Mondada, 1998), meaning that speakers – in order to be understood – design their utterances by orienting to what they take the addressees to know, expect, demand or align with. In research reporting, some of these ‘recipient expectations’ are articulated in, for instance, the aims and scope section of journals relevant to my empirical field, but even more intensely so in reviewer’s comments, for example.

Articles 1 and 3 thematically touch on this observation of recipient design in my research process as being performative (Gond et al., 2015; Hawkins et al., 2017), meaning – much in line with CCO thinking – that our organizational theory journals not only report on my research (the transmission model of communication, cf. Ashcraft et al., 2009) but retroactively shape and govern my research process (the constitutive model of communication). I am not suggesting that one should resist this state of affairs. Neither do I find myself in a loyalty conflict between journal reporting and the interests of members of the empirical field, because I find this conflict unconvincing. My position is that this is how communication works: if speakers do not design for recipients, the chances for continued communication (like staying in the revision loop with editor and reviewers) go down, and the communication will go on without you. I acknowledge that one can roam the literature to find more fitting recipients to one’s article, but even there I suspect that ultimately one will report one’s research *to their journal* even more than *from one’s field*. Thus, although I do not believe in individual resistance to the performativity of research reporting, I will attest to the fact that the review process in particular – Article 3 is currently being reviewed anew by *Human Relations* – is an intense and almost palpable experience of regulation, to take an expression from leadership development studies (Gagnon and Collinson, 2014; Kärreman and Alvesson, 2001). Certainly, I am not above designing my next research project with this experience much more in mind, which is to say designing for the recipient.

Having established where I experience the gravity of the research process to reside (in journal communication, not in the communication of one's empirical field), I will now return to how, with this experience in mind, I have entered the field with a particular focus, for an articulate focus that directs not only the analysis but, in fact, also the entire project design aligns well with the idea of focused ethnography as developed by Knoblauch (2005). Focused ethnography is well encapsulated in this long but instructive quote:

> A peculiar form of ethnography, it is characterised by relatively short-term field visits (i.e., settings that are "part-time" rather than permanent). The short duration of field visits is typically compensated for by the intensive use of audio-visual technologies of data collection and data-analysis. Length (extension) of data-collection as it is common in conventional ethnographies is substituted for by the intensity of data-collection. In addition, the lack of intensity of subjective experience in conventional ethnography is compensated for by the large amount of data and the intensity and scrutiny of data analysis. Writing is increasingly complemented by recording, solitary data collection by collective data collection and subsequent data analysis in collective data sessions. Instead of social groups or fields, studies focus on communicative activities, experiences by communication. (2005: par. 2)

My project fits well with this description, the project's involving short-term field visits, yet intensively deploying data collection. Moreover, the large volume of data and intense analysis compensate for the absence of attention to my own subjective experience. Notably, the workshops Brigid Carroll and myself hosted in New Zealand, the UK and Denmark go well with the idea of collective data sessions previously mentioned. Notice how the communicative feature of the focused ethnography corresponds with the ontological assumptions of CCO. For my project, I have further narrowed this focus, as my research question indicates. Alvehus and Crevani (n.d.), in an article currently under review, support the use of micro-ethnography to uncover how – in their case – leadership is performed on the frontstage of interaction (Goffman, 1959)

Having accounted for the 'constitutive' and 'focused' character of my analytical approach, I turn to its final aspiration, that of being 'situated'. Having access to naturally occurring data is a necessary condition for the kind of analysis I am proposing. In the CCO version to which I subscribe, one uses a variety of conversation analytical resources to do the portion of the analysis 'closest' to the data – usually the video or audio data. The following briefly introduces the resources I have found most useful.

The first issue to consider is relevance. In other words, of everything happening in the audio recording, what is the analyst supposed to attend to? Schegloff (1991, in Hindmarsh and Llewellyn, 2018) suggests two solutions: either draw on some statistical measure to demonstrate the success of a particular feature of talk, or, as Hindmarsh and Llewellyn (2018) themselves advocate, show how some feature is relevant to participants. In the analysis regarding the administration of the consent form on page 76, the form was demonstrably relevant to participants (but the table it appeared on was not). Here, the principle of ‘next-turn proof procedure’ (Sidnell et al., 2013: 79) is a helpful means by which to ground one’s analysis by looking at the recipient’s response, which often provides evidence of what the speaker was doing in the prior turn. Again, in the consent interaction, the instructor changes the subject in the middle of her turn, Turn 5, asking, ‘and you wanted coffee right↑’. There, one can only conclude that the topic of consent was indeed jointly closed, because we can prove it was in Turn 6 where the participant politely answers in the affirmative rather than, say, question the consent form.

This brings us to an overall consideration in conversation analytical action: the sequential organization means that ‘each and every action in interaction can be seen to be attentive to what has just gone before and recast the interactional environment in which subsequent actions are produced. Thus participants, in the very course of their affairs, display to one another (and therefore to the overseeing analyst) the matters to which they are attentive in producing an action’ (Hindmarsh and Llewellyn, 2018: 445). Another popular way of putting this is that the ship – the context for the conversation – is built *en route*, for the ship is at sea. As such, it becomes obvious why CA and ethnomethodology practitioners have been reluctant to employ classical sociological analytical moves like invoking class, gender or culture as ‘causes’ working behind interactants’ backs. Garfinkel famously denounced such sociologists’ ideas as assuming that people are ‘cultural dopes’ (Garfinkel, 1967: 68).

As a supplement to CA concepts, the specific analytical resource that CCO brings to the analysis is an attention to the dis-local character of interaction (Cooren and Fairhurst, 2009). Again, our little scene of administering informed consent serves as a good example. The document to be signed is, of course, local, but its appropriation in interaction means the participant signs it and thereby submits herself to a text written *somewhere else* and in the *past*. She also opens her data up to *future* exploitation by the research project at *unknown locations*, including figuring in the very text you are reading right now.

# Chapter 5. Article 1: Making up leaders: Reconfiguring the executive student through profiling, texts and conversations in a leadership development programme[15]

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**Abstract**

Are leaders born or made? In this study of contemporary leadership development programmes, we find that leaders are not only made but also – in Ian Hacking's sense – *made up*. Such programmes increasingly employ practices like personality profiling, appraisals, feedback and coaching aimed at creating knowledge about individual leaders in order for them to develop. The effects of these practices on participants have been theorized in terms of identity regulation and resistance, yet in our view the

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situated accomplishments of authority and identity remain inadequately theorized. This study follows a number of such practices as texts and conversations and shows how a programme participant's leader identity becomes authorized and acknowledged as participants and instructors ventriloquize texts in conversations. We theorize this as *identity reconfiguration*, as it entails the continual staging and authorizing of diverse figures. Our findings have implications for the relation between governmentality studies and studies of texts and conversations in leadership development programmes as well as for how we approach agency and context in this realm.

**Keywords**
Leadership development programmes, personality profiling, leader identity, CCO, texts, conversations, agency, power

## Introduction

Present-day organizations appear to operate on two powerful assumptions. First, they assume that most problems currently facing organizations are to be solved at the leadership level, an assumption that resonates with today's emphasis on top-level remuneration and liability in cases of crisis and failure. The second assumption goes that such leadership is preferably developed through leadership development activities, which have become an essential strategic priority (Collins and Holton, 2004) for organizations seeking to orchestrate the necessary change. Many of the activities companies implement to develop leaders deploy a range of formal techniques and interventions that target leaders as *persons*: for example, profiling, performance appraisals, 360-degree feedback and coaching (Day et al., 2014; Edwards et al., 2012). The personality profile, a particularly prominent such technology, is supported by statistical, psychological and managerial theories, detailed and proprietary certifications, elaborate procedures and a convincing corporate and technical appearance, and is presently ‘a norm’ within leadership development programmes (LDPs) (Schedlitzki and Edwards, 2014: 191).

Foucauldian-informed studies of the field have demonstrated that seductive identity ideals and even fantasies accompany LDP techniques, which are referred to either as ‘examinations’ (Fairhurst, 2008b), such as tests, appraisals and profiles, or as ‘confessions’, such as coaching, mentoring and networking (Sveningsson and Larsson, 2006). Participants in such programmes are brought to appreciate how these ideals are attractive and align with, if not emanate, from their own ideals, thereby coming to embody a certain modern governmentality (Townley, 1993). LDP researchers inspired by Foucault have primarily been interested in how leadership identities are regulated (Gagnon, 2008; Gagnon and Collinson, 2014) and which strategies of resistance, if any, are deployed. In contrast, researchers working from the constructionist end (Carroll and Levy, 2010; Petriglieri et al., 2011) focus on how agentic spaces are induced and even protected in identity work. Technologies like profiling are central concerns of both research groups, yet neither studies the situated micro-processes by which such technologies interact with different leadership development actors – the participants, the instructors and the peers. The communicative constitution of organizations (CCO) approach addresses just this gap, that is, the question of how texts are appropriated and how figures are staged in interactional, communicative events by being ventriloquized (Cooren, 2010) and possibly authorized (Taylor and Van Every,

2014) as interactants negotiate their epistemic authorities (Heritage, 2012). According to Hacking (2004), the two research approaches indicated above – the analysis of discourse, its classifications and descriptions versus that of interaction – are complementary, and combined they account for the *making up of people* (Hacking, 2007). The making up of people involves five interacting aspects: 'not only the names of the *classifications* [this emphasis added], but also the *people* classified, the *experts* who classify, study and help them, the *institutions* within which the experts and their subjects interact, and through which authorities control. There is the evolving body of *knowledge* about the people in question—both expert knowledge and popular science' (2007: 295).

Our research question situates itself exactly along these lines, as we inquire: How is a leader produced in an LDP? Which actors and agencies are involved in the process, and how do they change?

This paper shows that leadership development programmes *make up leaders*, as participants, instructors and peers engage in sustained interactions with each other as well as with the classifications and descriptions of contemporary LDPs, such as tests and texts. It draws on a focused ethnography (Knoblauch, 2005) of a six-month LDP in a university-based master's programme in which the first author observed and audiotaped virtually all interactional activities, including exams, and collected all related documents. Excerpts from transcriptions covering almost the entire timeline were analysed as communicative events according to a CCO approach. The analysis reveals that the personality test classifications become authorized through subtle epistemic negotiations, in which the given participant's profile, professional expertise and private experiences are invoked with the profile, thus staging the figure of a new leader identity for the participant. Here, the instructor's and the participant's interactions with each other and the classifications and descriptions within the programme *make up* the leader, thus enabling leadership practices – both past and future – to be reimagined. We theorize this as *identity reconfiguration*, a theorization that has implications for our approach to agency and context in leadership development studies. Further, our study suggests a new relation between governmentality and interaction studies in LDP research.

## Personality profiling and identity work

Personality profiling is fraught with epistemological and methodological issues, even within its supportive literature. Most research addressing the interplay between personality and organizational life usually applies a psychometric instrument and relates this to work engagement (Bakker et al., 2012), job performance (Bakker et al., 2012; O'Boyle et al., 2011), personnel selection (Morgeson et al., 2007a, 2007b) and leadership behaviours (Judge et al., 2002). Put simply, in mainstream approaches personality and leadership behaviour and their mutual outcomes are regarded as objective, measurable and quantifiable. However, researchers within this mainstream admit that studies involving personality profiling are historically 'inconsistent and often disappointing', (Judge et al., 2002: 765) 'methodologically flawed' (Boyle et al., 2008: 295) and susceptible to the interests of the leadership diagnosis industry (Morgeson et al., 2007b). Michell (2008) questions the central axiom of psychometrics, which states that psychological attributes are indeed quantitative, and explains the lack of academic response to this axiom as 'the ideological and economic secondary gains derived from presenting psychology as a quantitative science' (2008: 7). Nonetheless, these and similar psychometric measures have been readily imported into contemporary human resource management (HRM) approaches and leadership development programmes (Schedlitzki and Edwards, 2014).

Scholars who connect personality profiling and identity work in the Foucauldian tradition envision personality profiling as a quintessential technology of the self, thus rendering the self as measurable, calculable and governable (Townley, 1993). Scholars like Alvesson and Kärreman (2000) and Deetz (2003) have presented analyses exposing personality, or, as it were, *subjectivity*, in organizational contexts as a construct made possible through discourse and specific technologies (Fairhurst, 2008b; Hacking, 2004). Governmentality, observes Townley (1993), is a certain rationality permeating the confessional HR practices of inscription, calculation, recording, and disciplining in modern work life. In this view knowledge production like the personality profile is not neutral, but is integral to the operation of power, 'of things being known and people being seen' (Foucault, 1980; Townley, 1993). Profiling thus appears as a practice through which the individual becomes known to herself, *identified* we could say, in certain ways, thus providing her with a 'more or less open field of possibilities' (Foucault, 1994: 337). Studies taking this approach have revealed how personality profiling and other processes of *subjectification* are located in a 'complex of apparatuses, practices, machinations, and assemblages within which human being has been fabricated, and which presuppose and enjoin particular relations with ourselves' (Rose, 1998: 10).

A significant amount of leadership development research has revolved around the concept of *identity work* in which participants are 'forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening or revising the constructions that are productive of a sense of coherence and distinctiveness' (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003). Indeed, some scholars understand leadership development to mainly concern identity work (Ely et al., 2011).

One line of research understands leadership development and the associated identity work to be an organizationally controlled site (Gagnon and Collinson, 2014). Organizations that run LDPs have many means, both explicit and implicit, of sanctioning, constraining and privileging desired and preferred leadership identities while excluding and marginalizing others. Research shows that such regulation can occur at the design level, where certain participants are invited or selected and others not (Gagnon and Collinson, 2014); at the programme level, where discourses and behaviours promote and sanction pre-defined leadership behaviours and discourses over others (Gagnon, 2008; Gagnon and Collinson, 2014); at the educational level, where both espoused and implied developmental assumptions shape different participant pathways (Andersson, 2012; Nicholson and Carroll, 2013); and at the participant level, where participants themselves give voice to prevailing leadership assumptions (Ford and Harding, 2007; Sinclair, 2009). Overall, the bulk of such work tends to cast leadership development as a contemporary site of prolonged control, domination and discipline in which prospective and organizational leaders are mass-produced to meet often narrow and non-negotiable organizational criteria. This, of course, runs counter to the overall LDP industry rhetoric, which often adopts a language of transformation, change, challenge and renewal.

Another research stream running parallel to the regulation-focused research into leadership development seeks to recognize and explore the *agentic spaces* in which programme participants, but occasionally also instructors and facilitators, create, craft, adapt and pursue their leadership identities. Rather than advocating voluntarism, these studies point to instances and episodes where participants resist and even reject the dominant host organization or educator assumptions (Carroll and Nicholson, 2014; Gagnon and Collinson, 2017), actively negotiate or co-create identity constructs and processes with educators (Iszatt-White et al., 2017; Smolović Jones et al., 2015b) and use epistemic, aesthetic and collective resources to re-narrate the entire process of leadership development itself (Carroll and Smolović Jones, 2017). The majority of this research casts leadership development as the provision of a 'space of action' (Carroll and Levy, 2010) where participants and instructors can confront their identity choices, make identity judgments, fashion identity alternatives and more or less deny identity impositions, well knowing that all of such identity work carries organizational and personal consequences.

Identity regulation and construction both fall under the rubric of identity work but differ on theory and the theoretical constructs foregrounded (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003). Researchers in this tradition share an interest in technologies like the personality profiling highlighted in this inquiry, but tend to interpret them very differently: either as disciplinary practices emblematic of a 'psy' epoch (Rose, 1998) or, alternatively, as bundled expertise and resources available for the contemporary project of self-discovery and fulfilment (Giddens, 1991). Both research traditions are remote from the situated, interactional practices (Suchman, 2006) in which these technologies operate, as neither a discourse analysis of documents and archives nor an analysis of *post hoc* interviews sufficiently explicates these leadership development processes. To enable such explication, we propose a turn to the tenets of communicative constitution of organizations, one that opens up to the interactional, mundane practices of the field while not losing sight of the technologies (Lynch, 2013) and texts (Smith, 2005) that are appropriated by and emanate from these practices. We conjecture that identity work – including identity regulation and/or construction – is visible right there-and-then.

## The communicative constitution of organization as analytical approach

The communicative constitution of organization, or CCO, is well positioned for our empirical analysis because it has the ability to observe how *texts* in *conversation* make *agency* of all sorts visible (Brummans, 2018). Texts form the conversations that appropriate them, and in so doing 'speak' for the organization (Cooren et al., 2011: 1155)**.** The Montreal School of Organizational Communication sees the event of interaction as its empirical *terra firma*, but in considering how any action is accomplished, the school moves beyond human-to-human interaction to draw on studies of scientific practices (e.g. Callon and Latour, 1981). This enables agency to be defined as making a difference: 'whenever one can identify someone or something that makes a difference, whether in terms of activity or performance, there is action and agency' (Cooren, 2010: 21). Organizational phenomena emerge in and through communicative events like faculty meetings, test situations, coaching sessions and doorway chats. These events can never be reduced to the performance of any single instructor or actor, however. On the contrary, we must allow for the fact that a 'plethora of beings or things can come to act' (Cooren, 2010: 5), such as 'buildings, strategies, statuses, operations, bodies, conversations, art, photographs, and documents – are co-implicated and co-constituted in organizing' (Cooren et al., 2011: 1153). Such organizing is constituted through interactions or conversations where the talk in effect *is and does* the work. Within conversations, *figures* become staged. A figure is anything that is convoked, invoked or evoked (Cooren, 2010) in interaction, intentionally or not, and thus makes present anything 'other' or 'absent', such as policies, absent persons or objects, one's organizational position, status or experience, as well as less tangible phenomena like personality, values or ideas. Whenever we stage such figures, we also mobilize different sources of authority (Cooren, 2010) that may or may not be acknowledged by other interactants.

An important way of authorizing is to *ventriloquize*, that is, to speak for figures (Cooren, 2012; Cooren and Bencherki, 2011). Cooren draws the idea of ventriloquism from the 'minor form of entertainment' (Latour in Cooren, 2010: XIV) in which a ventriloquist (or vent) lets the figure (or dummy) talk back to the vent (Cooren, 2010: 86). As a more general phenomenon, when communicating, we create agents (utterances, signs, texts, gestures) that speak for us on our behalf (Cooren, 2010: 90). When a shop assistant *gives voice to* the shop's reimbursement policy to a customer, she ventriloquizes the policy (Cooren and Bencherki, 2011). The assistant may in the next turn comment on this policy, be *animated* by it, thereby enabling us to see how agents oscillate between ventriloquizing and being animated by figures. The policy does something, *makes a difference*, in that it animates the assistant and gets her to talk. It also stages 'the shop' as a figure in the conversation, even a figure of authority. As we will suggest below, applying personality profiles and other texts within a leadership development programme entails subtle and oscillating processes of authorization via ventriloquisms that involve the instructor, the participants, the profile, texts and other figures.

The Montreal School pays attention to the sequential organization of interaction (Sacks et al., 1974), as the sense of any next utterance displays a certain understanding of the prior turn – and of how it simultaneously projects next actions. Any extended interaction creates a growing intersubjective field or shared understanding of what is going on, which is then drawn upon as a context for continued talk. Socio-epistemics (Heritage, 2012) then explicates how the relative and dynamic epistemic status of speaker and hearer is a 'fundamental and unavoidable' (Heritage, 2012) element of social action. To speaker and hearer we add the epistemic status of ‘text’, as it too can have agency (Cooren, 2004a).

The Montreal School’s theorizing of power draws on Latour’s (1984) idea of association: the power of the shop assistant’s answer to the reimbursement request above is an effect of the situated and performed associations between the assistant, the policy and, indeed, the entire corporation, which in turn holds the assistant liable for enforcing the policy. Crucially, and going beyond actor-network theory (ANT), the customer in the interaction has to acknowledge the answer if power is to be accomplished, which points to a co-constructed process of power enactment (Cooren, 2010: 75). Authority is constituted by legitimate power that reveals itself to be distributed among beings we are representing and, through this disclosure, holds actors to particular obligations and principles. Further still beyond ANT, texts come to matter because an association ‘becomes inscribed in the typifications of the language, and is stored in its texts’ (Taylor, 1999: 41). The concept of authority suits our study well because it supports empirical analysis and because authority and authoritative texts play a particular role in the leadership development context. Leadership development recognizes and utilizes authority in sophisticated ways in order to anchor and legitimize the claiming and granting of identity by deploying texts, tools, talk and frameworks. We argue that all such agents can take part in leader identity work in so far as they become authorized to do so through communicative events (Vásquez et al., 2018).

Finally, our inquiry recognizes two of Ian Hacking’s ideas, one of which we touched upon in the introduction. The first idea, then, is the well-known notion of *making up people* (Hacking, 2007), which posits that when people are classified – e.g., by diagnosis, courses of death or organizational roles – they come to fit their classifications, thereby changing ‘the space of possibilities for personhood’ (Hacking, 2002: 166). We always live ‘under a description’ (Anscombe, 1957, in Hacking, 2002), not least under a psychological one and our interaction with such descriptions changes and shapes the kinds of persons we are. Hacking’s (2004) second idea relates to his perhaps lesser-known claim regarding the complementarity between two different forms of analysis that are largely kept isolated from each other in research: a ‘top down’, Foucauldian one, which accounts for the historical emergences of practices, knowledge, governmentalities and institutions and a ‘bottom up’, Goffmanian one, which accounts for how everyday face-to-face interactions ‘constitute lives’ (Hacking, 2004: 278). Aspiring to this complementation, we first indicate the ‘top down’ discourse analytical approach, in which the conflictual emergence of one of the relevant classifications – the personality profile – provides descriptions of practices, subjectivities and so forth. We then, in analytical detail, show from the ‘bottom up’ how these classifications and descriptions – *texts* in Montreal School parlance – become appropriated in interaction, the *terra firma* of the Montreal School ontology. While a long line of important Goffmanian studies has uncovered exactly how lives are constituted in interaction, we suggest that taking a CCO approach here can add analytical insight through the concept of *text*, thus allowing us analytically to link the top-down and bottom-up processes (Hacking, 2004).

## Case and method

The highly popular Danish Master of Public Governance programme was established to develop the leadership capacity of the Danish public sector (The Danish Government, 2008). For our case we chose a mandatory leadership development module (here shortened to LDP) positioned at the start of the programme and comprising six full seminar days over a six-month period. The module was to ‘develop the personal leadership [capacity] of the student in the interplay between person ("the inside") and the organizational task ("the outside") within the institutional context of the public sector' (Copenhagen Business School, 2015).

To facilitate a full understanding of the analysis, we describe the case module, including the personality inventory, in a bit more detail. The module opens with an online personality inventory, followed by a one-on-one coaching session during which the instructor presents the results of the personality inventory (here called the profile) to the student, who is further interviewed on her organizational situation. On the basis of these activities, the instructor and participant explore possible routes for developing the student's leadership capacity. The course then follows the progress of the individual participant's leadership development project, including participant-driven, on-the-job leadership experiments, peer shadowing and data analysis using theoretical resources provided in the course. The module concludes with a 15-page paper and an oral exam to be taken with the student's work group.

The personality inventory administered – a version of the Neo PI-R® personality inventory – is a state-of-the-art profiling instrument designed from the *Big Five* personality traits: neuroticism, extroversion, openness, agreeableness and conscientiousness (Costa and McCrae, 2008). Creating a profile involves completing an online questionnaire about 'your thoughts, feelings, and goals' (Costa and McCrae, 2008), the responses to which are run through an algorithm that produces the 'profile'. This profile graphically consists of a summary page (the first author's summary page is provided in Appendix 1 for reference), in which a dot represents a score on the dimension in question, and the five dots on the five dimensions are then connected by four straight lines. The results are compiled into a 40-page report, including the graphic profile, and the student receives feedback from the instructor on the report at the coaching session. The report and the student interview are meant to generate ideas for a relevant leadership development project.

The first author is a former instructor and the current academic coordinator of the case course, thus providing *member's knowledge* (ten Have, 2002) of the work setting as well as fluency in Danish. Ethnomethodologists consider member's knowledge important in making locally produced meaning intelligible. Such embeddedness also allows for extended field access – with the written consent of all students and instructors – to all activities and documents pertaining to the programme. Further, we consider the first author's presence to have generated a lower observer effect than an outside observer (such as the second author) might have. Being entirely outside the research site, the second author must encounter its claims and processes solely through texts – in the form of translated interaction transcripts – thus assuming the role of the sceptical, if informed, external analyst.

The data was obtained through a 'focused ethnography' (Knoblauch, 2005) conducted in the setting of the master's programme and serving to record the 'communicative event', that is, 'a sequence of instances of communication (texts and conversations) that are performed in a distinct space-time' (Vásquez et al., 2016: 634). Field visits in focused ethnography work can therefore be short term, the data collection process is typically intensive, as is the analysis phase, which preferably includes a series of collective data sessions, as was done in this study. This method shifts the objects of observation from social groups to communicative events and from members' experiences to communication.

Through this procedure, in which the first author targeted LDP activities of expected relevancy, we built up an archive of data from naturally occurring events (Silverman, 2006). This archive consists of audiotaped coaching sessions of 1.5 hours each (n=18), six days of 8-hour seminars (18 plenary sessions and 25 group sessions, all audiotaped) and oral exams (n=19), which were audiotaped and observed by the first author. For parallel sessions such as group discussions and coaching sessions, a digital recorder was assigned to each activity and participants were instructed in recording the respective activities themselves. The documents collected include term papers, reports on students' leadership experiments as well as reports on peer-to-peer leadership ethnographies (n=19).

We approached the large data set with a quite focused knowledge interest, namely to understand what happens as participants and instructors engage with the objects of leadership development – texts, tests, lectures, etc. – and in the course of such engagement what kind of identity work, if any, becomes visible. First, we listened to and partly transcribed the audio archive, seeking to find initial answers to our focus of interest. Here, the personality profile stood out as an especially important object in the identity work undertaken. Next, the transcriptions were coded into episodes, which allowed us to map occasions of identity work involving profiling and similar elements. At this point, our analysis moved toward identifying how participants' identities more generally emerge from these precise interactions. Of the 18 cases analysed, we chose to present Nathan's case in analytical detail, as it is particularly rich and comprehensive with regard to interactions between participants, instructors and the programme elements, thus enabling a particular participant's identity work to be observed *over time*. The interactions presented are in no way unusual, but rather quite common across the types of interactions observed. In sum, the case presented can be viewed as *critical* in Flyvbjerg's (2006) sense, as it is strategically important to our knowledge interest.

## Analysis 1: Establishing the tasks and epistemic domains

### Excerpt 1: Establishing the tasks and initial domains

The following four excerpts are from a coaching session between Marian, one of the two course instructors, and Nathan, an executive student. The first excerpt shows how the instructor enacts her privileged epistemic authority as instructor by presenting the institutional tasks, controlling speakership and exerting topic control – an authority visibly granted as Nathan enacts followership.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 01 | **Nathan** | Yes? Yes? I am quite calm about that. I just needed to understand the purpose of |
| 02 | | our talk today apart from feedback on this ((moves paper)) (0.5) erhh (0.5) |
| 03 | | *test* that I took, [Okay?] |
| 04 | **Marian** | [Yeah!] It really is to get you properly into the |
| 05 | | subject [this…] |
| 05 | **Nathan** | [yeah?] |
| 06 | **Marian** | … and in that way set up some framework for what a project could be for. you. |
| 07 | | Yes (0.5) will, ehh, that do? |
| 08 | **Nathan** | That's understood, that's understood for the time being … I understand. |
| 09 | **Marian** | Fine. How is it now (laughter)? (0.5) Won't you then tell me about yourself? |
| 10 | **Nathan** | Yes, I can do that. |

In Line 01, Nathan needs 'to understand the purpose of our talk', and by designing this utterance, he positions Marian to know this. In Line 04 Marian is clearly enacting her epistemic authority (Heritage, 2012) as instructor, which Nathan also appears to grant her, even if the rising intonation of 'yeah' (Line 05) can be heard as conveying uncertainty on Nathan's behalf. Marian occupies – relative to Nathan – the epistemic high ground (Heritage, 2012), as she is the one made accountable for the task, an accountability congruent with her role as instructor. Nathan is positioned as a beneficiary, since the outcome is supposed to describe his future leadership development project (Line 06). Then at Line 09, Marian rather abruptly changes the subject, taking a decidedly unknowing stance and saying, ‘Won’t you tell me about yourself?’ This type of utterance is known to invite further elaboration rather than closure (Heritage, 2012) and grants Nathan epistemic status with regard to matters concerning his own experience – a status that Nathan readily claims in Line 10. Here, and throughout the corpus, the participant’s ‘epistemics of experience’ are actively coordinated with the products of the LDP’s ‘epistemics of expertise’.

## Excerpt 2: Reshuffling epistemic domains

Eight minutes later, Nathan and Marian both add to the epistemic authority of the profile, and Nathan increases Marian’s as she apparently gains access to Nathan’s experience.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 01 | **Nathan** | So how can I lead through others and (2.0) such (0.5). I probably also have some 02 |
| | | challenges in this regard (.), as you probably can see from the *profile* that was |
| 03 | | done, right↑? |
| 04 | **Marian** | I haven’t *looked* at it (0.5) […] I don’t actually *do that* because I want to be as |
| 05 | | neutral as possible *before* I talk to you (1.0) erhh (1.0), so then we can actually |
| 06 | | *together* begin to explore if, *hey*, there is something about it. So it does not |
| 07 | | interfere with … |
| 08 | **Nathan** | [Obviously] |

Before this excerpt takes place, Nathan talks about managing his five teams, and how he 'leads through others' (Line 01). He speaks slowly and with audible pauses that support the possibility that he has 'some challenges in this regard'. We might interpret these pauses as Nathan's leaving Marian space to confirm that she and Nathan agree on the nature of his shortcomings. In the absence of such confirmations, Nathan seeks a more explicit confirmation that Marian 'can probably see' his challenges from the profile (Line 02). In seeking this confirmation, Nathan also ascribes epistemic status of 'knowing' Nathan's managerial shortcomings to Marian, or more precisely to Marian-plus-profile, *before it is actually presented.* Nathan thus partly recedes from the privileged epistemic domain of his own practice.

As Marian does not directly orient herself (Line 04) to Nathan's concerns about his profile, neither does she actively disconfirm his image of the profile's capacity, for his utterance is framed as a question and thus projects subsequent affirmation. However, Marian delivers a non-affirming response, instead orienting herself towards the profile in general and the way she is handling its presence in the session. We learn that Marian 'hasn't looked at it' (Line 04) to avoid its 'interfering', presumably with her own perception of Nathan (Line 07). In this interpretation, the profile is ascribed a capacity to blur the vision of the professional. When Marian emphasizes 'do' (Line 04), one can hear that this is a routine practice: as a rule she never looks at the profile before a feedback session, so the two interlocutors can explore the profile 'together' (Line 06). This practice might be an attempt on Marian's part to equalize the epistemic asymmetry connected with the profile. By affecting the expectations the two interlocutors carried into the conversation, the profile is making a difference, amplifying the epistemic authority of itself as well as that of the instructor. In terms of ventriloquization, we would say that the profile animates them both.

## Analysis 2: The ventriloquization of two Nathans

### Excerpt 3: Nathan-the-profile …

Here we witness how the conversation ventriloquizes two *figures*: Nathan-the-person, i.e., the Nathan according to the evolving narrative, and Nathan-the-profile, i.e., the Nathan made present by the profile. We also see how the two figures differ to the interlocutors, both of whom are oriented to the profile report graph:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 01 | **Marian** | Emotional reactions, there you are actually close to the middle […] |
| 02 | | Sometimes you can look at opposites and say maybe you will not be |
| 03 | | able to stand someone that talks (0.5) in the abstract *a lot*. Do |
| 04 | | you recognize that? |
| 05 | **Nathan** | *Yes*, *yes*, I can't *stand* that. |
| 07 | **Marian** | No, so, so (0.5) oftentimes opposites are [inaudible] in the worst case. |
| 08 | **Nathan** | I would say that *there* I would probably lie a bit more *over here*, I think. |
| 09 | **Marian** | Yes. |
| 10 | **Nathan** | I like that about (0.5) that you (0.5) we are just (0.5). We have a result |
| 11 | | to achieve, ↑yes? |
| 12 | **Marian** | Yes, actually from your narrative I would also have thought |
| 13 | | that you were situated more towards *this side*, so |
| 14 | | you tell it more [like] |
| 15 | **Nathan** | [But it is OK] |
| 16 | **Marian** | Expressively than the profile actually shows. |

In the first line (and through the first omitted part), Marian ventriloquizes the profile, saying 'there you are actually close to the middle', thus staging a new *figure*, Nathan-the-profile. Nathan *also* ventriloquizes a figure, Nathan-the-person, which slightly deviates from the figure of Nathan-the-profile, as in Line 08 where he states, ‘I would say that *there* I would probably lie a bit more *over here*, I think.’ From the interaction in Excerpt 4 below, we understand that Nathan is puzzled by his scoring high on ‘Agreeableness’, a dimension that indicates a friendly, empathic personality as opposed to his scoring low, which would indicate competitiveness. In Line 10, Nathan ventriloquizes Nathan-the-person as someone who aims to achieve results, which is a credible assertion given his access to that domain. In Line 12, Marian reveals that judging from Nathans own ‘narrative’ (Line 13), she shared his expectations. Marian’s loyalty is clearly split between Nathan-the-profile, which is the institutional figure she is tasked with ventriloquizing, and Nathan-the-person, the evolving narrative.

The negotiation *about* the profile in Excerpt 3 takes place *on* the physical profile itself, meaning that the materiality of the profile, Nathan-the-profile, in a very literal sense *pre*-scribes what Nathan-the-person can be, *tout court*. Subsequently, at Line 08, Nathan physically engages with the profile summary page, suggesting by pointing at it that he probably lies a bit more ‘over here’, and Nathan corroborates his idea of his alternative position in Line 10 with a – somewhat slowly produced – reference to himself as aimed at ‘results’. Marian confirms this assertion in Line 13, with an explicit reference to ‘more towards *this side’*. The negotiation *about* the profile is taking place *on* the physical profile itself, a practice that can be observed across the corpus of coaching sessions, pointing to the importance of the materiality of the summary page for Nathan-the-figure to become staged.

## Excerpt 4: … sounds boring

Nathan and Marian continue to evaluate Nathan-the-profile, becoming animated by it and now also considering it against leadership ideals. The profile also enables Marian and Nathan to move beyond troublesome material.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 01 | **Nathan** | That one I probably would have expected to lie a bit more over here, this |
| 02 | | one, right? The one we talked about. Apart from that, there is nothing surprising. |
| 03 | | I think (0.5) I'm a bit surprised that I lie so much in the middle. And I can't |
| 04 | | grasp completely whether this is good or bad. |
| 05 | | ((Both laugh)) |
| 06 | **Marian** | The point was… |
| 07 | **Nathan** | I sound a bit boring. |
| 08 | | ((both laugh for the next two turns)) |
| 09 | **Marian** | That's what I'm saying, it's nothing, because you're a unique person. |
| 10 | **Nathan** | It sounds *a little bit* boring. |
| […] | | |
| 18 | **Marian** | So in terms of a leadership profile, this is an excellent profile, and when I say |
| 19 | | excellent, I do not mean it normatively. |
| 20 | **Nathan** | I understand what you mean, but it's nice to know anyway. |

This excerpt is close to the end of the session section where Nathan and Marian discuss the profile, and Nathan engages in a more comprehensive evaluation of Nathan-the-profile. Nathan reiterates that he should lie a bit more 'over here' (Line 01), that is, towards the competition end of the agreeableness dimension. Further, Nathan keeps orienting to his placement 'in the middle' (Line 03), which surprises him, although he has no idea whether this is 'good or bad'. At Line 07 it becomes obvious that it *is* bad, as Nathan says, ‘I sound a bit boring’. At this moment two things become apparent. The profile obviously does make a difference here, for it animates Nathan, who seems disappointed. Note the shift in pronoun from Line 07, ‘I sound a bit boring’, to Line 09, when ‘it sounds a little bit boring’. In the former case the profile says Nathan is what is boring. In the latter, *what the profile says* sounds boring. This constitutes a ventriloquial oscillation, allowing Nathan to distance himself from the profile. Through a formulation at Line 09 that makes no distinctions between person and profile, one might also hear it as an affirmation of Marian’s assertion that Nathan (the-person and/or the-profile) is a ‘unique person’. Also note that the verb used – ‘sounds’ – evokes a scene in which Nathan and Marian listen to the profile talking. The animation and the verb used both support the agency of the profile. Moreover, we note that the interactants display a preference – well-known in leadership theory – for the extraordinary, unique and vibrant, ‘beyond the petty and mundane’ (Alvesson and Sveningsson, 2003: 1435), thus implicitly acknowledging the norms and expectations of grandiosity that Nathan brings to the profile.

Following a short, omitted section, at Line 18 Marian produces a formulation of the entire previous section, where the profile was involved in their conversation, evaluating Nathan’s profile as excellent. This – evidently normative statement – is immediately followed by a statement in Line 19 that she does not mean this normatively. The first part of the formulation – the excellence of Nathan’s profile – is the pivotal conflation of Nathan-the-person and Nathan-the-profile. In epistemic terms, this could show that Marian is knowledgeable of Nathan-the-person, including his leadership acumen, thus proving her remarkable epistemic authority, which Nathan possibly confirms in Line 20. Moreover, the two lines 18 and 19 could constitute the contradiction inherent in much leadership development, including our empirical corpus: the profile appears non-normative, even scientific, but in leadership development practice proceedings are usually rather appreciative, which allows the conversation to move beyond the impasse the discrepancy between person and profile has generated.

## Analysis 3: Cool future – cultured past

### Excerpt 5: Testing

While the previous excerpts all took place within one setting, coaching, six months later the following exchange on the last day of the course took place between Nathan and Anna, one of Nathan's fellow students, in the somewhat noisy lobby of the course seminar venue. Nathan-the-profile now fully replaces the old Nathan-the-person from the coaching session, who is now seen as a cultural product. Further, we see how the profile organizes talk across the LDP.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Nathan** | But regarding the Neo PI-R part (.), I think it was quite interesting (1.0). I always thought I was very much in, like (0.5) in that one, you know, those boxes, Goleman boxes, very much in the one … |
| **Anna** | Oh yeah, work or [pacesetting |
| **Nathan** | [yes result-seeking |
| **Anna** | Or |
| **Nathan** | yes, or ((inaudible)) |
| **Nathan** | Then I found out that, that I, in fact I was not ((background noise)), when I took the Neo PI-R, it was quite … |
| **Anna** | Yes |
| **Nathan** | very *cool* actually [I thought I would score in the high [end] … |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 12 | **Anna** | [yes] |
| 13 | **Nathan** | so I think it has something to do with the culture, the culture you work in, |
| 14 | | it affects you a lot; it cultivates some things e::h (2.0) ((sighs)) (5.0). |

Initially, Nathan accounts for the Neo PI-R profile's contradiction with the pacesetting result he previously scored in the Emotional Intelligence test (cf. the 'Goleman boxes' in Line 03) as well as with his own narrative, both of which were incarnated in a figure we have called Nathan-the-person. However, at this juncture, Nathan-the-profile is fully replacing Nathan-the-person, for Nathan's Neo PI-R profile is accounted for as a fact (Line 08) to which other facts need to submit. We get a clue to which other facts in Line 14, where Nathan speaks about the work culture of his department that 'affects you a lot'. The old Nathan-the-person is now accounted for as a product of the high pace and high performance environment at Nathan's work.

We further observe here that in order for this conversation to take place at all, a certain knowledge *about* these profiles (whether it is emotional intelligence or Neo PI-R) or figures must be shared and cultivated among participants. So, the presence of the profiles across the community of students is the factor that enables the cultivation of these figures in the first place, as witnessed in the conversation between Anna and Nathan. This community is partly created by the simultaneous deployment of the same personality test across the whole cohort of students and reiterated in the conversation above. Thus, apart from acting along the trajectory of Nathan's participation in the LDP, the personality profile is also an agent acting *across* the cohort, constituting a community by supplying a common figure that allows participants to attend to, share and co-construct their personalities in the first place. The occurrence of this conversation completely depends on the fact that profiling is shared among participants, thus imbuing the profile with an organizing quality.

Finally, this new identity is now ‘cool’ (Line 11), quite unlike in the conversation in Excerpt 4 half a year ago, where Nathan found his Neo PI-R profile ‘a bit boring’. In terms of stabilizing this new identity, a new actor – the peer – becomes associated with and lends her authority to the changed identity, which on this occasion becomes (more) ‘public’ within the community of peers in the programme.

### Excerpt 6: Everything is accounted for

The final excerpt is from a 15-page term paper titled ‘From Pace to Direction’. We notice how the change in identity – first pacesetting, then less so – has been accomplished by a number of actors, thus occasioning renewed leadership options.

01 To my surprise, my Neo-PI-R profile did not show me to be pacesetting […] I was located
02 midway without large variations out of the axes. On the other hand, it was possible to
03 track – albeit not to a large extent – pacesetting elements in the feedback I received
04 from colleagues during the [360-degree survey]. […] You can also find pacesetting elements in
05 the shadowing report. The pace is high [at the Treasury], and there is a strong
06 focus on results, which my ethnographer, Bernie Fleming, describes well.
13 […] Thus, part of the explanation of my pacesetting behaviour may be that I am a product
14 of the culture I grew up in, rather than because I, by nature, am particularly pacesetting.
16 [Nathan wants to focus on] collective leadership, (Drath et al., 2008), [and]
17 with Goleman’s leadership styles, in particular the visionary style and the coaching style.

In the excerpt, the author is making sense of his ‘surprise’ (Line 01) that the profile did not show him as pacesetting. Reformulating disappointment into surprise may serve two purposes here. First, surprise may be a more socially acceptable emotion than disappointment. Second, the reformulation creates a mystery to be solved in the paper. The solution is actually found when Nathan reiterates the cultural explanation (Line 05) hinted at in the previous conversation with the peer. Culture in this instance is contrasted with what Nathan thinks of himself as being ‘by nature’ (Line 14). Here, nature, or Nathan’s innate qualities, is ventriloquized to authorize the new identity, and fits with Nathan’s leadership development project, which is intended to foster ‘collective leadership’ (Line 15), cf. Drath et al. (2008), as outlined in the LDP curriculum. So, the gradual authorization of the new identity animates *and* authorizes imaginations of new leadership options. Inscribing the new identity in a document enables a deliberate selection of causes and effects, reduces the equivocality of conversations and stabilizes and orients the subsequent oral exam, which was passed.

## Implications

Below, inspired by Vásquez et al. (2018), we summarize the various ways agency is accomplished by the interaction of *actors*, *theories* and *texts* of the LDP and the differences made in the identity work undertaken.

| Key element | Key differences made in the ongoing identity work |
|---|---|
| **Actors** | |
| **Instructor** | Ventriloquizes the institutional task and is granted the institutionally authorized identity as instructor. Also ventriloquizes the profile, thus staging Nathan-the-profile. When negotiating the profile, she legitimizes the participant’s concerns, but also evaluates and authorizes the leadership potential of the profile |
| **Profile** | By using algorithms on the participant’s input, generates a five-dimensional profile that initially is treated with some scepticism but eventually makes a considerable difference to the participant |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Participant** | Is ventriloquized – then animated by the profile, initially evaluating it negatively relative to the narrative figure, but eventually participating in its authorization |
| **Peer** | Orients to the participant's concerns in ways that display acknowledgement that identity is – in this LDP – to be talked about in this way, thus also authorizing it |
| **Organization** | Conveys concerns (e.g., regarding leading others, being tested on the job) and helps legitimize previous, pacesetting identity |
| **LDP** | Apart from providing institutional infrastructure, etc., prescribes critical figures (e.g., tests, theories) and authorizes actors (e.g., instructor, examiners) and texts (e.g., via assignments) |
| **Theories** | |
| **Personality theory** | The profile is authorized by the 'Big Five' personality theory that is embedded within it and which dictates its five dimensions, thus prescribing – in the LDP – what Nathan can be |
| **Management theory** | Provides the general normative figures allowing the initial negative evaluation of the profile as well as accounts for the previous perception of the participant's identity as a cultural product |
| **Texts** | |
| **Profiles** | The Neo PI-R profile as text provides a material surface that enables and constrains the negotiation of perceived deviations, i.e., concerns. It also generates a speech community across the class. Emotional Intelligence provides a figure – the pacesetting leader – that articulates the participant's previously preferred identity |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Term paper** | Materializes, stabilizes and transports the change in identity in ways accountable to the participant's organization as well as to the LDP. The paper transports the conversations into the future exam for the final authorization |

*Table 9: Key elements in the participant's identity work*

Profiling within the LDP thus becomes authorized as accounting for the participant's identity through a process in which authority is summoned from a plenum of agencies: the participant's narrative, the profile, the instructor, leadership theory and professional history. This identity expresses itself through multiple media (as when new leadership futures are imagined), and its continued existence remains dependent on being performed for another *next first time*, Garfinkel's (1967) well-known expression for the alteration implied in any reproduction. We theorize this identity work as *reconfiguration*, as it entails continuously ventriloquizing diverse figures and negotiating their authority, epistemic or otherwise. This reconfiguration comes to be through conversations in which some texts – like the profile – are appropriated and from which other texts – like the term paper – emerge. Texts stabilize and mobilize the participant's identity such that it becomes able to enter new conversations. We consider such identity reconfiguration to be pivotal to LDPs, where the figures of instructors, management theory, experience and the organization are staged in situations, authorized through negotiations and stabilized into new patterns for new leadership options to emerge. We note the role that institutions like the LDP and experts like the instructors play to accomplish this. Such reconfiguration is highly performative, as any configuration is only relationally given and has 'to be performed in, by and through those relations' (Gherardi, 2001: 135).

The analysis allows us to make five contributions. First, when we revisit Hacking's (2004) complementarity, then both top-down and bottom-up processes have been accounted for. In *top-down* terms, we have indicated how the classifications and descriptions of confessions, exams, personalities, theories and professional expertise appear as elements within a particular modern governmentality (Derksen, 2001; Harding, 2005; Vikkelsø, 2012). In *bottom-up* terms, we have applied our communicative and agential analysis, demonstrating how the descriptions provided with these classifications enter the institution and are appropriated, prompting the executive student to become reconfigured in interactions. This duality of processes, we suggest, is how leadership development *makes up leaders* (Hacking, 2007). Our analysis thus literally complements the governmentality studies of leadership development by explicating how interaction accomplishes reconfigurations within, to paraphrase Hacking (2002), the space of leadership possibilities. However, while Hacking (Hacking, 2004) suggests that the constitutive, interactional processes should be analysed following Goffman, we contribute to such analysis by demonstrating that CCO gives us a stronger analytical ally, for it encompasses the concept of *text* storing 'the typifications of the language', as Taylor puts it (1999: 41). These typifications include Hacking's (2007) classifications, while CCO analysis lets us follow such classifications right into interaction.

Second, the analysis sheds light on the role of legitimate power or authority in leadership development. Gagnon's and Collinson's (2014) study finds that the 'divestiture' strategy – the leadership development strategy associated with the practice of increasing insecurity through control and coercion and thus diminishing extant identities – produces a narrower leader self. However, as a self-described open academic programme, our case can reasonably be classified as belonging to the opposing ‘investiture’ strategy. This strategy involves less control and fewer sanctions, with the programme itself being designed to construct a self that is ‘more open-ended and less culturally rigid’ (2014: 659). While we in no way refute the authors’ large-scale comparative study, we do wish to challenge their central distinction. What we demonstrate is that, even within an ‘investiture’ strategy, the participants’ identity work to a large degree operates within culturally given, rigid classifications, thus in effect diminishing extant identities. We tease out a myriad of communicative events: the granting of epistemic authority (Excerpt 1); profile support (Excerpt 2); the granting (Excerpt 1) and denial (Excerpt 2) of participant epistemic authority over his own experience; the animation of Nathan-the-profile (Excerpt 4); the acknowledgement of a new identity in a speech community (Excerpt 5) and so on. Through these events, the rather consequential reconfiguration is accomplished less through contextual sanctions and controls, and more through the sustained ventriloquization and acknowledgement of various authorities. This is important, because it shows that the effects of power are contingent on a multitude of situated performances involving a plenum of agencies. It also shows that the design features of a programme may be an unreliable predictor of the type of identity work done and the extent of the power dynamics undertaken within it.

Third, Gagnon and Collinson demonstrate the importance of ‘the discursive context’ (Gagnon and Collinson, 2014) for understanding the tensions and outcomes of leadership development practices, but they rely methodologically on how these practices are ‘reconstructed by participants’ (Gagnon and Collinson, 2014). We acknowledge their work, but also show how context – the profile, the organization of the LDP, leadership theory and narratives from participants’ practices – take part in the identity work undertaken. Specifically, we find that context is already oriented to and produced by agents, as these ventriloquize a range of figures: experience, profile, theory and nature. We can say two things about how context comes about. On the one hand, 'context' for identity work in LDP is created from within the interaction, that is, endogenously in the ethnomethodological sense (Cooren, 2009; Fox, 2008). People create context as they talk. On the other hand – and here we go beyond ethnomethodology – this interaction is fundamentally dis-local, because it is populated with figures that are ventriloquized but still authorize shifting identities. Importantly, these figures may be ventriloquizations of classifications and descriptions given by discourse and selected through institutions like the programme, as Hacking (2004) maintains. Context, to stick to this term, is as indexical as anything else. Take, for example, when the participant in Excerpt 1 grants the instructor status *as* the instructor, i.e., grants her the institutional authority she just claimed. Put another way: contexts that matters must – *to matter* – be oriented to in the interaction. We suggest that our approach be considered in future analysis of the significance of context in LDPs, as it demonstrates how *the interaction itself* zooms in and out (Nicolini, 2009), ventriloquizing multiple agencies present and absent.

Fourth, Carroll and Levy (2010) argue for the importance of a 'space of action' for the participant in leadership development, a space characterized by a 'conscious decision to be the subject that decides as opposed to an object that is decided on' (Holmer-Nadeson, 1996, in Carroll and Levy, 2010: 214). We find that other agents 'haunt' such a space for participants' agency in two ways. First, other agents may prescribe the scope of a decision, as when the profile prescribes (Excerpt 3) what kind of person the participant can be at all. Second, an action by any one agent in some way always invokes other agencies, as when Nathan decides to cast his new, less than expected pacesetting personality as a resource for a future coaching leadership style

(Excerpt 6). The space of action might instead be a plenum (Cooren, 2006b) configured by a number of actors, thus providing for a *relational* concept of agency in which agency does not rest with any single agent.

Fifth and finally, our analysis combines a relational and performative approach with elements from a socio-epistemic one. Such an extension brings to light how the accomplishment and distribution of authority – with regard to identity – partly depends on the ongoing claiming and granting of epistemic authority. This is apparent, for instance, when the participant's epistemic domain of experience is subsumed into that of the profile. Taking our argument for using socio-epistemics further, we see a growing variety of textual or non-human agents noted within The Montreal School studies: written sheets of paper (Cooren, Thompson, et al., 2006), a contract (Brummans, 2007), a note on the wall (Benoit-barné and Cooren, 2009), a measuring stick (Cooren and Matte, 2010), space and clinical objects (Caronia and Mortari, 2015), a strategy document (Vásquez et al., 2018), to name some. Profiling situates itself amongst the most complex of these, and we suggest that one consider socio-epistemics in the analytical mix when unfolding how organizational technologies with comparable complexity and comparably strong claims to authority contribute to performing organization.

We acknowledge that our study has a number of limitations. Our critical case (Flyvbjerg, 2006) allows us to make the theoretical contributions above, but we are not empirically generalizing to cases outside this corpus, especially those involving personnel selection and other HR settings, where different figures are made present and authorized. Future studies, also those following a communicative approach, could look for variance across cases (of participants, programmes, inventories) to determine possible patterns and interactional strategies, but should more importantly move beyond leadership development and into adjacent settings. Next, our focused ethnography (Knoblauch, 2005) is blind to leadership-related identity work taking place outside the chosen focus, such as in participants' work settings during and, in particular, after the programme. Research following the participants post hoc (in any setting) to reveal the durability of the configurations would be exciting, if methodologically challenging (Walker, 2018). Third, video data would exhibit additional density (Grimshav, 1982), thus allowing us to analyse facial and embodied expressions and performances, the movement of texts and objects and the impact of clothing. This would, of course, also heighten the complexity of the data (Hindmarsh and Llewellyn, 2018), as well as lower the likelihood of gaining access to the private practices of the field. Fourth, the first author's status as a field member with authority and who is thus complicit in parts of the programme design is somewhat offset by the second author's distance to the case. However, this circumstance meant that the case did not include some important occasions for studying the role of power and authority at the level of programme governance and design; for example, faculty meetings chaired by the first author were excluded. As a result, we have no data to shed light on how classifications and descriptions enter or leave the programme in the first place, an obvious weakness.

## Conclusion

Some future perspectives for leadership and leadership development in particular follow from our approach, which highlights the constitution of agencies, including those of epistemic texts delineating the spaces of possibilities mentioned. Figures to single out more thoroughly than possible in this study could be leadership theory, participants' leadership practices, 360-degree feedback and the coaching practice itself, but also recent phenomena like the turn to ‘neuro’ or ‘cerebral knowledges’ (Rose and Abi-Rached, 2014). How does an interaction appropriate and reconfigure these figures in leader identity work? Our approach further enables future studies to explicate how artefacts and texts become authorized within institutional *design processes*, and which spaces of possibilities they open and which they close. Such situated studies should shed light on how various agents, including texts and technologies, become staged to speak for, through and with participants and instructors, and how they in series of communicative events are appropriated, authorized and affirmed or rejected in identity work. Studies of this kind may allow us ‘to conceive of a world where not only old configurations are reiterated and reaffirmed, but *also new ones* [emphasis added] are or can be created and acknowledged’ (Cooren, 2010: 81). This is precisely what analysing the performativity of leadership development in a communicative constitutive perspective entails, explicating accomplishments of reiteration and renewal – reconfigurations – in *the making up of leaders* and the intricate interactional and relational negotiations that go into it.

We suggest, then, that leaders are not born or made but made up. Being ‘made up’ opens up perspectives relevant not just to researchers as per above, but to organizations, leadership development programmes and participants too. Organizations produce numerous texts – visions, mission statements, strategy documents, HR performance classifications and interventions – and authorize their use in the leadership development domain. Yet, the performativity of how people *come to fit* these classifications is rarely explored. Do these texts and interventions, through their partly autonomous agencies, threaten to crowd out the very leadership they supposedly develop? The authority of leadership development programme designers and instructors appears pivotal in shaping reflections on the performative effects of the supplied classifications. Finally, participants could become more qualified consumers, users and co-constructors of such texts so that they can, like Nathan, rework them in their ongoing narrations of self and organization. They need to become skilled at interactions that claim, contest and co-create authority in their own and others' identity work. Creating a cadre of leaders compliant and at the mercy of such texts seems diametrically opposed to what developing leadership ought to be about.

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# Chapter 6. Article 2: Regulation work in the executive classroom[16]

**Abstract**

In leadership development studies, although interest in the identity work of the participant has been significant, the instructor and other agents in the development setting have received less attention. This article seeks to generate a greater interest in how instructors and peers impact leadership identity work in leadership development programmes (LDPs). A common LDP practice is to introduce a text – such as a management theory – and then orchestrate an interaction around this, with participants' sharing experiences or current managerial concerns in the light of the given text. This article explicates how this is done, using a detailed interactional analysis of two classroom episodes during a leadership development course within an executive master's programme. The communicative constitution of organization (CCO) lens is brought to the corpus of text and conversation data, revealing the executive classroom to be a setting in which the instructor demonstrably takes part in the identity work of the participant. The analysis further shows that texts can occasion identity work, but this work is highly contingent on what happens to these texts in the interaction. The article proposes that *regulation work* designates what effect textual and human agencies in interactions have on the identity work of participants. The findings

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[16] This single author article I am considering submitting to a special issue in *Management Learning* on 'Identity and Learning (Not) to be Different', with deadline March 1, 2020. A version of this article was previously presented at the 32nd EGOS Colloquium in Naples, Italy, July 2016.

contribute to the extant literature by deepening our understanding of the role of the instructor and texts in LDP identity work, and, as such, reflecting on the demands put on instructors as they – with no time out – strive to facilitate identity work.

**Keywords**: Interaction, identity work, facilitator, management education, CCO.

## Introduction

Contemporary public organizations expect their managers to commit to improving performance by continuously engaging in management and leadership development activities such as online self-studies, workshops and more extended leadership development programmes. This generates a demand for education and training, met either by in-house human resource departments or by management and leadership development providers, including academic, university-based programmes. Participating in such programmes, however, presents the manager with significant identity challenges, seductive identity choices, a potential for identity regulation and, perhaps, the possibility of constructing a new identity. The programme deploys management theories and other resources as well as tasks instructors with facilitating their use through, for instance, the sharing of professional experiences, as these may indicate areas for improvement or development.

Identity work engages with questions like 'who we are', 'who we want to be' and 'who we are seen as' in the context of 'being a manager' or of 'being a student' and how this is jointly and reflexively achieved. Participants are not just at the mercy of dominant governmentalities, but may reject or resist programme intentions (Carroll and Nicholson, 2014), as identities are co-created with educators (Iszatt-White et al., 2017; Kempster et al., 2008; Smolović Jones et al., 2015b) and perhaps with non-human agents (Elmholdt et al., 2016; Meier and Carroll, 2019). These identity work processes might position participants in situations where tensions between identities are brought to the fore, threaten identities held or trigger conflicts between identities. Studies on identity work in leadership development have focused much attention on the role of participants themselves (Gagnon and Collinson, 2014; Westwood and Johnston, 2012) and given some to the role of instructors (Iszatt-White et al., 2017; Kempster et al., 2008; Kennedy et al., 2013; Smith et al., 2017; Smolović Jones et al., 2015b) – and even some to the non-human agents involved (Elmholdt et al., 2016; Meier and Carroll, 2019). Yet, there remains a dearth of situated analysis regarding the agencies of these partakers in LDP identity work.

This article shows that participants share their identity work with instructors, peers and texts in what I call regulation work, which is the combined effect of textual and human agencies in interactions on participants' identity work. The article is based on audio recordings totalling slightly less than 16 hours of classroom interaction in a leadership development programme, of which two episodes were selected for in-depth analysis. I demonstrate the distinct role of texts in occasioning and allowing for participants' identity work, although the role of text is contingent on interaction. I also propose that regulation work designates the sequentially organized, sustained effort to accomplish identities in LDPs, in particular the instructor's role in this context, as well as spell out the implications of this concept for the extant literature.

## Identity and identity work in leadership development

As introduced above, identity work engages with questions like 'who we are', 'who we want to be' and 'who we are seen as' in the context of 'being a manager' or of 'being a student'. Like the concept of leadership, the concept of identity is 'essentially contested' (Grint, 2005a), yet revolves around questions concerning who one is, who one can possibly become as well as what one should do (Coupland and Brown, 2012), including through performative engagements (Down and Reveley, 2009; Patriotta and Spedale, 2009) and in interaction with non-human agents (Meier and Carroll, 2019; Symon and Pritchard, 2015). Further, in the extant literature the distinction between personal identity and social identity is at times applied in the study (Watson, 2008) and at other times assumed (Ibarra, 1999). The social and relational character of identity is also recognized (Mabey, 2013; Sluss and Ashforth, 2007), for example, when leadership identity is considered complementary to follower identity (Derue and Ashford, 2010). Similarly, Coupland and Brown (2012) point to identity as reflexively accomplished, for example, when ethnomethodology refers to identity as the 'indexical, oriented-to and recipient designed *accomplishment of interaction*' (Benwell and Stokoe, 2016: 84). This study aligns with these assumptions, i.e., that identities are jointly and reflexively achieved.

Leadership development programmes provide an arena in which participants can engage with such identities in various ways. These identities are not passively taken up, but generated through situated identity work in which identities are accomplished, modified and redefined from available identities (Brown, 2015), rendering them crafted and improvised. Gagnon and Collinson (2014) describe how the idealized, prescriptive leader identities emanating from the discursive context confront and regulate participants in corporate leadership development, and how this regulation creates tensions and paradoxes. In these studies, identity work often takes the shape of resistance (Gagnon and Collinson, 2014; Westwood and Johnston, 2012). In terms of identity work and agency, other studies have been seeking 'to recognize and explore the *agentic spaces* in which programme participants, but occasionally also instructors and facilitators, create, craft, adapt and pursue their leadership identities' (Meier and

Carroll, 2019: 4, see also Carroll and Levy, 2010). Here, participants are not only at the mercy of dominant governmentalities, as we saw above, but may reject or resist organizational or the instructor's intentions (Carroll and Nicholson, 2014), as identities are re- and co-created with educators (Iszatt-White et al., 2017; Kempster et al., 2008; Smolović Jones et al., 2015b) and even with non-human agents (Elmholdt et al., 2016; Meier and Carroll, 2019). Studies of identity work in leadership development need to address identity as a situated accomplishment, thus enabling not only actions but also agencies.

Not only do LDPs trigger identity work by providing new and seductive identity offerings, but they might also position participants in situations where tensions between identities are brought to the fore, threaten identities held or trigger conflicts between identities. The fact that people might come to deploy possibly contradictory identities – even within a single interaction – has, according to Brown (2015), opened the field for research into the management of role identity conflicts. Looking through the lens of practice, Walker (2018) shows how doing LDPs help middle managers operate with the conflicting demands posed in their work, because, as middle managers, they are situated between the overall organizational imperatives and the local, employee-oriented relevancies. Carden and Callahan's (2007) leadership development participants navigate identity conflicts between professional loyalism and a core set of values, beliefs and interests unrelated to work, whereas Warhurst (2011) reveals the tensions between the professional and a managerial identity. Nicholson and Carroll speak of identity work as 'identity undoing', by which they mean the participant's experience of 'moments of being destabilized, unravelled and deconstructed in leadership development' (2013: 1226). They especially notice how this undoing disconcerted participants, going on to discuss the implications of this sensation for leadership development practices.

Research on identity work in leadership development has focused much attention on the role of participants themselves (Gagnon and Collinson, 2014; Westwood and Johnston, 2012) and given some to the role of instructors (Iszatt-White et al., 2017; Kempster et al., 2008; Kennedy et al., 2013; Smith et al., 2017; Smolović Jones et al., 2015b) – and even some to the non-human agents involved (Elmholdt et al., 2016; Meier and Carroll, 2019). Yet, there remains a dearth of situated analysis concerning the agencies of these partakers in LDP identity work. Kempster and Parry explore how observing significant others forms an important part of experiential learning (2014) and Kennedy, Carroll and Francoeur (2013) set out to explore leadership development as emergent, relational and collective. Carroll and Simpson (2012) also position sociality at the core of leadership development interventions. This study seeks to deepen and extend this literature.

Most of the studies covering participants' and instructors' roles work from ex post research interviews, which complicates the situated exploration of agencies in identity work, as, for instance, participants might not recall the interactions taking place during focal events in sufficient detail, perhaps especially when it comes to the role of other agencies. Also, the interview situation is itself an interaction with its own specific requirements, making it less of a trustworthy representation of some prior interaction (Atkinson and Silverman, 1997; Silverman, 2017). This study seeks to explore how identity work is performed in situated interactions in concert with other agents, human or beyond, in leadership development programmes.

## Analytical approach

While studies have established how the identities of LDP participants are crafted and modified, I present an analytical framework that enables me to empirically inquire how these phenomena unfold in situated LDP interactions. For this, I use a two-step process. First, I position my analytical approach in the communicative constitutive approach of organizational analysis. Communication does not just transmit information from A to B, but rather, by the very act of communicating, agents and objects are identified (Ashcraft et al., 2009) and brought to life (Cooren, 2009). This approach takes the ethnomethodological route (Cooren, 2009; Garfinkel, 1967), attending to how participants jointly produce reality in interaction. In other words, communication is generative (Wright, 2016) through questions like ‘How does communication constitute the realities of organizational life?’ (2009: 5). This communicative constitution of reality takes place dialogically through texts and conversations (Taylor, 1999). In conversations ‘organizing occurs (Weick, 1979; Boden, 1994; Taylor et al., 1996)’ (Taylor and Robichaud, 2004: 397). Texts become appropriated in conversations (Taylor, 1999) and can be said to have agency within conversations (Cooren, 2009). Agency here means ‘to make a difference’ in a situation (Cooren, 2010: 51). Textual agency reveals that even a capacity to make a difference may extend to ‘other beings and things that should be acknowledged in our analyses of organizing processes’ (Cooren, 2017: 142), and is highly contingent on the situated appropriation of the text and the sequential unfolding of the interaction.

Second, and within a communicative framework, I engage with interactional identity theory as developed by Antaki and Widdicombe (2008). This addresses how a member’s identification of herself and others involves being ‘cast into a category with associated characteristics or features’ (2008: 3). Categories like ‘mother’ or ‘friend’, for example, are used to explain and evaluate the actions of a person, ascribe properties to her, attribute responsibility to her and engender expectations about her (Deppermann, 2013), in other words to make her knowable ‘under a description’ (Hacking, 2002). Identity is also indexical and occasioned (Antaki and Widdicombe, 2008), meaning that it makes sense by tying itself to the interactional environment in the same way as the indexical ‘I’, ‘she’ and ‘there’ do.

Furthermore, identity categories matter only if people make these relevant in talk and orient to them as part of the interactional business at hand. By orienting to relevance, I ensure that the analysis rests on members’ concerns rather than on those of the analyst. The extent to which an identity is consequential downstream in the interaction depends on relevance, and it constrains the warrants of the analysis to what makes a difference (Cooren, 2010) in the interaction. Finally, the casting of a person in an identity should be visible in how interlocutors exploit structures of conversation. An interactant that exploits a conversational structure that lets her take longer turns to speak or to allocate her turns to other interactants might be seen as someone casting herself as ‘instructor’. The next turn in conversation is always contingent on the previous ones: anything can be unsaid and yet relevant – and other participants will take anything actually said to mean something conversationally relevant (Antaki and Widdicombe, 2008: 4). Similarly, any relevant identity must be shown to be in some way consequential. For instance, the next speaker can acknowledge the given identity, or the focal participant engages in talk at relevant positions and uses devices specific to the setting. Such a device can be seen in a classroom organization with the teacher at the front. In this configuration, a teacher might use an initiation-response-evaluation (IRE) device (Gardner, 2013), whereby she asks a question whose answer she already knows and, on hearing the student’s reply, evaluates its adequacy.

## Case

The data collected for this study originate in a flexible Master in Public Governance programme offered by a Danish university consortium of which CBS is part. The objective of this programme is to ‘qualify and develop the public manager’s ability to conduct professional management in a politically directed public-sector context, with the aim of strengthening the public manager’s competence in reflecting on and further developing his or her own management practice’ (Copenhagen Business School and University of Copenhagen, 2013).

The course in question is a six-month leadership development module offering a student-led leadership project conducted over six full seminar days and divided into three phases: *searching*, *experimenting* and *reflecting*. A theoretical curriculum was provided, and faculty gave plenary lectures covering topics like personal growth, dialogue, communication, power, change management and ethics. The course is intended to strengthen ‘the performance of tasks in the student’s organization via experiments with, insight into and reflections on one’s personal leadership development project’. Being the academic director of the case course, I was embedded in the programme – but did not teach on this occasion – and therefore had a pre-understanding (Ybema et al., 2009) about the members that proved crucial in making the meaning produced locally intelligible in my analysis. In practical terms, this embeddedness allowed me to more easily negotiate access the field, including all activities and documents pertaining to the course. I obtained the written, informed consent of all participants and instructors taking part in the case module. However, this closeness came at some costs, one being that my own preconceptions regarding the case may have been harder to control. To counter this risk, I chose to rely exclusively on naturally occurring data rather than, for instance, on the research interview

(Silverman, 2017). My assumption is that naturally occurring data reduce the risks of bringing bias into the analysis – at least a bias subsequently hidden to the reader.

I engaged with the field through a focused and textually oriented ethnography (Knoblauch, 2005; Pink and Morgan, 2013). During my engagement, I remained particularly sensitive to what agency non-human objects – such as management theory and didactic devices – might acquire in their interaction with participants and instructors in the executive classroom, and what effects this agency might have. To collect data, I audiotaped the plenaries for the six days of the module, recording 16 hours of executive classroom interactions in all. I was present at all the plenaries, and the data on these are naturally occurring (Alvesson, 1997; Atkinson and Silverman, 1997), i.e., not based on research interviews, surveys or experiments.

While around half of the sessions consisted of lecturing, these lectures were always interspersed with Q&A sessions, invitations to reflect, group dialogues at the tables or instructions for further activities. After repeatedly listening to all the recordings, I selected the episodes I believed conveyed identity work sufficiently dense for detailed, sequential analysis. From this pool of data, I chose two specific episodes for further analysis. The first was sufficiently rich to demonstrate some paradigmatic features across the corpus (Mik-Meyer and Silverman, 2019), and the second broke this paradigm, revealing a rare conflict in the classroom. A simplified Jefferson transcription format was used to transcribe the excerpts, which were then submitted to data sessions with colleagues at my parent business school as well as at conferences abroad.

## Analysis of Episode 1: Power differentials at sea and in the courtroom

In this section, I analyse the two episodes from the executive classroom, one of which contains two shorter excerpts, while the other consists of a single, longer excerpt, thus totalling three in all. The plenary in which the class takes place is a rectangular, elongated meeting room with five islands of tables and chairs, each occupied by one of the student groups. Participants shift orientations between their respective groups, the instructors and a screen with slides. The first excerpt follows the joint watching of a YouTube video ('US Navy vs lighthouse'), with over five million views. It is a clever ship-radio spoof that self-describes as a 'genuine conversation between Spaniards & Americans at sea on the emergency maritime frequency'. In the audio, the Spaniards request that a massive American fleet adjust its course by 15° to avoid collision. The American fleet in turn demands that the Spaniards adjust their course by 15°, which they ignore, reiterating their original request to the Americans. This back-and-forth goes on for three minutes, throughout which the American captain with mounting vehemence describes the overwhelming number, size and force of his vessels, ultimately threatening violence if his demand is not met. Finally, the Spaniards reveal that they are, in fact, transmitting from a mainland lighthouse. After watching the video, the class engages in a conversation about conflict and domination in leadership. For brevity, I have split the analysis into two parts and omitted turns.

Excerpt 1

1. Instructor: So, how does this relate to what we talked about yesterday, conversations, conflicts and (0.5) power, which we are continuing to talk about?
2. (3.0)
3. Erica: Well, I think it speaks to how you enter a discussion with your own hypothesis (2.0) when you feel strong, and you feel you have the arguments.

4. Instructor: Yeah, yeah.
5. [omitted turns]
6. Mel: I came to think of (0.5) the *'conflict staircase'* that is how it [escalates]
7. Instructor and plenary: [yes … yes]
8. Mel: in the course of the conversation, becoming more and more (1.0) *tight* and [the Americans], uh, I mean, issuing orders in the end, right↑
9. Instructor and plenary: [Yes]

The first turn can be heard as the speaker claiming his identity as 'instructor'. The salient features of this casting include him self-selecting as speaker and demonstrating topic control by framing this conversation as one of conflict and power relating to the nautical narrative. The participants grant these claims to the instructor, as documented in the ensuing turns. The subsequent three-second pause at Turn 2 is long, considering it occurs at a relevant place for transition in ordinary conversation, but it allows for the next speaker to self-select at Turn 3. Saying nothing is also an interactional contribution that helps produce a certain, joint understanding of the situation – here hearable as 'time to think' – thus moving the interactional business forward. At Turn 3, Erica references a practical scenario in which one enters a discussion strongly, and the instructor affirms her point in his next turn. A few turns later, Mel responds to the instructor's question by referring to the 'conflict staircase' model from the curriculum presented the day before. The instructor also evaluates Mel's utterance positively in the next turn, which overlaps with affirmation tokens from the class. Both of the above sequences are *initiation-response-evaluation (IRE)* sequences that produce a joint understanding of the interaction as being between instructor and students, which is in keeping with the identities already cast at the instructor's first turn. The 'conflict staircase' is an appropriate answer to the question posed, as the evaluation by the instructor and plenary at Turn 7 shows. The identities constructed at this turn are the monitoring yet supportive instructor who is in dialogue with competent, if acquiescent, students who construct adequate answers in the setting. These two sequences are paradigmatic for the corpus of plenary sessions. The alignment here is not only with instructors' actions (turn and topic control), as seen in the way students participate in IRE devices by referencing adequate theory or real-world examples subsequently evaluated by the instructor. In fact, the video occasioning the interaction can be said to be a textual agent in the weakest of senses, meaning that the participants also co-orient to the nautical narrative in the IRE sequence.

However, other student identities are constructed in the classroom, as the next excerpt shows the construction of the executive student. This excerpt occurs a few minutes later in the interaction, when the instructor is slowly self-selecting to close the session:

1. Instructor: [slowly] So now I just make the transition [to the next]
2. Andrew: [low voice] [Can I just tell a small story?]
3. Instructor: Yes, indeed.
4. Andrew: I work in the (0.5) city court, the Middletown City Court, and here [the citizen] must appear before a judge within 24 hours if the police have a warrant out for your arrest … uh … People come to this in *very different conditions* …
5. [laughter in the plenary]
6. Andrew: … and some judges are of the opinion that because they themselves are employed in accordance with *the Constitution* and can only be dismissed through a *verdict* from The Special Court of Indictment, they have particular powers. So, often, on a Saturday morning, one can observe a judge who says [ironic voice], 'The defendant shall face the court without restraints, they shall be released from their handcuffs or we will not proceed'. And then the probation service [refuses to comply…]

7. Instructor: [Yeah]

8. Andrew: … and the judge says, ‘They *must* be removed↑’ […] And the probation service says, ‘In that case, it’s entirely at your own responsibility’, and then, a *split-second later*, the courtroom … so there is no dialogue around this, they simply *must* be removed ((theatrical)) ‘*I am in charge here*’… a split-second later, six chairs are destroyed and the counter is smashed.

9. Plenary: [laughter and sounds of approval in the plenary]

10. Andrew: And *then* the judge says, ‘We cannot have this person in the court, you will have to remove him again!’

11. Plenary: [laughter]

12. Instructor: And what do you think, *why* is it like that?

13. Plenary: [chuckling]

14. Andrew: Well, I cannot see it otherwise, and we often talk about it, that those at the top, those who sit on the bench, they are *elevated* above us, ((shows elevation with hands)) *this much*, overlook us …

15. Instructor: Yeah.

16. Andrew: …‘*We* are in charge, and you should not, even if you come with some kind of knowledge about the situation, think you get to decide on *anything*. And we don’t have a dialogue, because ‘*I am in charge*’ …

17. Plenary: [Sounds of approval]

18. Andrew: … and *then* afterwards, he [the judge] appears as a *very*, *very*, *very*, *very* small man, when six chairs and a counter are destroyed.

The instructor keeps maintaining the identity established in the first excerpt. As for Andrew, he is engaging in managerial identity work, specifically that of coming to terms with inferiority and the less than impeccable management of the court that this gives rise to. At Turn 1, the instructor exerts topic control, suggesting a topic transition. Andrew self-selects, overlaps the instructor and produces a story preface to secure the floor for a multi-unit turn (Mandelbaum, 2013), and is granted the right to do so. The possibly hesitant request for the floor and the deference to the instructor's calling for answers to how the nautical drama related to yesterday's discussion might be interpreted as an anticipation of a level of delicacy regarding the matter to come – a delicacy which, I suggest, is related to a potential identity threat. After laying out the legal problem relating to a citizen's right to appear in court without restraints until convicted, Andrew conveys at Turn 4 that people come to court in 'very different conditions'. This utterance elicits laughter in the classroom, which can be interpreted as a way of 'joining in' (Fox, 2008) the concerted, communal activity of storytelling, and of displaying acceptance of the extended turn-at-talk requested by Andrew, the teller. It can also be heard as an affiliation with the narrator.

At Turn 6, Andrew speaks in the judge's voice, but keys the voice in a theatrical, ironic modality (Cooren, 2010), possibly designed to convey category contrast for the recipients (Hester, 2012), thus marking who the speaker – and the plenary – do not identify with. The probation service officer is also quoted theatrically (Turn 8), but not ironically, and the lack of laughter in the plenary here could signal alignment with the officer and the speaker. The judge, powerfully allied with the constitution, finally gets his way, again ironically quoted by Andrew as '*I am in charge here*' (Turn 8), and an almost instantaneous mayhem ensues in the court, which elicits what could be heard as affiliative laughter in the plenary. We are, I suggest, at the heart of Andrew's managerial identity work as he struggles to come to terms with his identity as inferior to the judge's and his frustrations over the damage done to the courtroom. Note, that the narrative is produced with and for the peer executive students, themselves also managers in the public sector.

Following another staging of the judge, the instructor asks Andrew, '*Why* is it like that?' (Turn 12). The instructor could be seen as doing several things here. First, he works to make the story relevant to the business at hand, the teaching about conflicts and power. This could allow Andrew to be constructed as a relevant executive student storyteller, rather than a humiliated manager, in which case the instructor can be seen as de-escalating the identity threat mobilized by the story. The preface 'and' in Turn 12 does not indicate a first pair part (i.e., the first part or an ordinary adjacent pair, like a question) and can rather be heard as a continuation. If heard so, the instructor can further be heard to mitigate the potential tension between being manager and executive student, for a continuation of a conversational section rather than completion is less confrontational. A few more turns complete the story by conveying a stance toward the event told. The stance is one of frustration regarding Andrew's inferiority to those at the top, for which even 'knowledge of the situation' (Turn 16) cannot compensate.

Andrew artfully mitigates the identity threats of being seen as an incompetent manager that submits to overly principled superiors, because he tells the 'second story' (Lindström and Sorjonen, 2013) as a mimicry of the nautical narrative, reflexively waits for affiliation tokens, like laughter from the plenary, and reacts to them in a way that recipients continuously understand which stance they should eventually be prepared to take. In summary, Andrew shares the student identity with Mel, as Andrew, too, aligns with the instructor's actions and participates in an IRE device, if a multi-turn variant. Yet, he constructs himself as an *executive* student identity, jointly with the instructor, therefore engaging in managerial identity work, referencing problematic experiences from his practice and possibly processing these. By way of telling the second story, with himself as the Spanish lighthouse, the unlikely defeater of greater powers even when he is not, he aligns the plenary affiliatively and relieves the potential tension, including by letting the interlocutors orient to the comical elements rather than the managerial shortcomings.

The nautical narrative observed as a textual agent can be said to exert a stronger agency in this part of the plenary session than in the previous one by its very narrative structure: the initial troubles of a protagonist confronting a stronger antagonist, following a heroic insistence on behalf of the protagonist and the eventual vindication. Andrew's narrative, of course, deviates from the nautical narrative in that Andrew is not eventually vindicated. One way of understanding how this narrative allows Andrew's narrative to be told is that the immediate context for the telling of Andrew's story is an interactional environment in which the recipients are sympathetic and receptive to a(-nother) David/Goliath story.

## Analysis of Episode 2: The dirty leadership team

This episode takes place at the very end of a plenary session, after a period dominated by long turns taken by Instructor 1, who is lecturing on the claims made in a curricular article currently under discussion. While orienting himself to the slides, Instructor 1 references the less-than-ideal description of the leadership team detailed in the article, in which the team is advised to accept the 'dirty' reality of the complicated feelings in the team. The final slide of the presentation appears in

Figure 2:

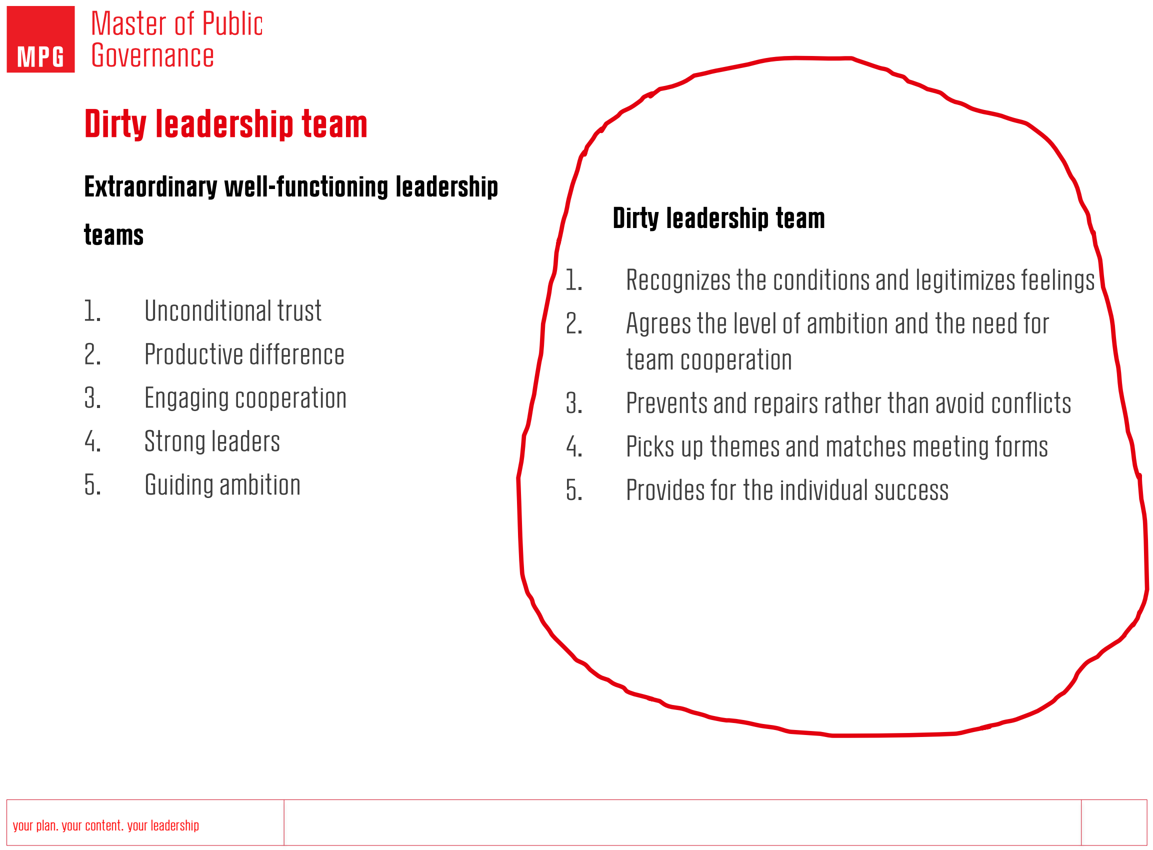


Figure 2 The PowerPoint® overhead (trans. by author)

1. Instructor 1: … and the last (0.1) point here is that it (0.1) must be evident that, of course, there is an individual success with the individual members. If for too long you have an imbalance in that there are *some* who always … well, emerge good and some emerge bad, then it gives the intra (0.5), uh (0.5), it creates internal problems. That's what *they* say, the dirty leadership team can do. (1.0) And when we look at it, then I think … Have any of you encountered the dirty leadership team … or conversely, have you encountered the ideal (0.5), the good team? (2.0) So if you just spend like five minutes discussing this and then think the idea of authenticity into it …
2. Instructor 2: Hmm …

3. Instructor 1: … if it’s not too complicated.
4. [Giggling in the plenary]
5. Instructor 1: Two things after lunch … but …
6. [One student in the plenary laughs.]
7. Instructor 1: …have you ever encountered the dirty leadership team, and what is the significance of the idea of authenticity (0.5) with regard to that?
8. Maya: ((raises hand))
9. Instructor 1: *Yes*?
10. Maya [assertive voice]: What is all this with the *garbage* and *dirtiness* and all?
11. [Laughter and crosstalk in the plenary]
12. Maya: [assertive voice] I totally get it, but *dirty*?
13. Alba: Yes, it [inaudible] me very much too, I have to say.
14. [Laughter and crosstalk in the plenary]
15. Nate [distant, in a caricaturing voice, to Maya]: But you are so *sensitive*!
16. [Laughter and crosstalk in the plenary].
17. Maya: But *dirty*, it doesn’t really (0.4), it doesn’t really hit the mark?
18. [Laughter]
19. Instructor 1 [To instructor 2, in a lighter tone]: Do you … maybe you’ve got the anecdote down there? ... [The authors of the article] are your colleagues …
20. Instructor 2 [hesitantly]: Well, [actually ...]
21. Maya [low pitch]: [but you are talking about our daily work, our everyday work, after all?]
22. Instructor 2: Yes, and it … it … I reckon, this discussion always comes up when we present this (0.2), this [article]. You should see it with a twinkle in your eye.

[Omitted part]

31. Maya: But it's just … I don’t think it's *dirty*, I believe that it’s a highly sophisticated *craft* that I practice every day […]

What identities are operating here? At Turn 1, Instructor 1 orients to a line on the projected slide describing the ‘dirty leadership team’. He then turns to the plenary with two questions, thus exercising topic control and calling for participants’ own experiences with the dirty leadership team. Instructor 2’s acknowledgement token ‘Hmm …’ can be heard as neutrally aligning to the question being put and even aligning with her peer instructor. The vagueness of the question may be heard as warding off potential delicacy. In response to the lack of uptake in the plenary, the instructor does not repair the question, yet ironically acknowledges that it may be ‘too complicated’, which is met with affiliative laughter in the plenary. In Turn 7, the instructor finally repairs the question and Maya asks to speak. So far, both instructors are constructing themselves as instructors, and the participants in the plenary are constructing themselves as executive students.

Maya does not produce the expected second pair part to the adjacent pair for an executive student (cf. Andrew above), that is, an offer of relevant experiences, here concerning being in a dirty leadership team. She turns the question back on the instructor, asking about ‘*garbage* and *dirtiness*’ (Turn 10) in a modulated voice. By repeating words from a question, the question recipient may reinterpret the question, thereby potentially undercutting the questioner’s topic control. At this point Maya is obviously not constructing herself as a proper executive student, and her action can be understood as a defence against a threat posed by the association between her own leadership practice and the dirt metaphor. The laughter of the interlocutors can be heard as an affiliative token, and as her turn’s not being interpreted as only a question. The instructor does not construct an answer at the relevant place – at Turn 11 – and Maya continues her repetition of ‘dirty’. There is no obvious comicality to this turn, and the plenary’s laughter may now be heard as an understanding of the situation as delicate, even conflictual.

The dirt imagery provides context for Turn 15, in which Nate gives ironic voice to Maya as ‘so sensitive’. The exchange occasions further laughter that still displays alignment yet one that can increasingly be heard as evincing a delicate interactional situation and possibly a collaborative mitigation of the mutual identity tensions that Maya and possibly the instructor are encountering. The third repetition of the question, at Turn 17, is noticeable, as a non-response is considered highly dis-aligned. At Turn 19, Instructor 1 still does not answer the question, but, with pauses that can be heard as hesitation, orients herself to Instructor 2, the consultant instructor, as her colleagues apparently wrote the article. The vagueness of the instructor’s turn (19) may be an attempt to ward off identity tensions (Linell and Bredmar, 1996), and the actions manage to establish a deference to what may have been a sustained conflict over the semantics of the article. By referring to the evidence as an ‘anecdote’, Instructor 1 weakens the epistemic authority (Heritage, 2012) of the article, possibly also weakening its capacity to sustain an identity threat. Yet, and considering the instructor’s identity, more or less abandoning a curricular text one just asked the students to reflect on does seem to carry potential identity threats to the instructor, but the downstream interaction bears no evidence of such threats.

Interestingly, Maya audibly orients herself to this shift of interlocutor from Instructor 1 to Instructor 2, but continues using the tone of voice deployed when talking to Instructor 1, although she is now speaking to the instructors in the Danish second person plural, ‘I’, [pronounced ‘ee’]: ‘…but you are talking about our daily work, our everyday work, after all?’ (Turn 21). Here, it becomes clear that Maya is, in fact, defending herself against an identity threat – that of her own identity as a competent manager – a threat that she understands as coming from not only Instructor 1, but all the instructors (therefore the use of the second person plural), and perhaps even academia itself. This can be heard as a judgement that the instructors have overstepped their rights to theoretically describe participants' professions.

By Turn 22, Maya's question finally gets an answer. Somewhat vaguely, Instructor 2 claims this discussion 'always' comes up around this article, which could be heard as his initiating a de-escalation of the conflict. Second, he suggests that the plenary read the article from a distance, 'with a twinkle in your eye', further weakening its epistemic authority. Following a few omitted turns, Maya reaches the narrative apex, asserting her leadership job 'is a highly sophisticated *craft* that I practice every day'. This turn adds to my claim that Maya is constructing herself as a manager in the executive classroom, and that she is defending that identity against the threat levelled by the academics and their imagery of 'dirt' by describing her practice diametrically as a highly sophisticated craft.

## Regulation work

The analysis of situated identity work reveals that it is sequentially organized. Through the deployment of the *initiation-response-evaluation* device (itself sequentially organized), the paradigmatic executive student identities of Erica and Mel are constructed in Episode 1, following and referencing the nautical narrative. Andrew's narrative is sequentially related to the nautical narrative in that it mirrors part of its structure, that of the (if only apparent) inferior protagonist. In Episode 2, the identity work is also occasioned indexically, that is with reference to a local reception of the text, here the dirty management team. Maya's intervention reacts to the dirt metaphor, but is sustained sequentially, as instructors and peers align and de-escalate. In parallel to this, the identity of Instructor 1 as classroom manager changes sequentially, first as a response to Maya, then in relation to Instructor 2. Sequential in the sense I am using it means not only one action's following the previous, but also one action's being conditioned by the very context made up by previous actions.

Through both episodes texts make a difference (Cooren, 2010). The nautical narrative makes a difference in Episode 1 through all three identity work interactions, but also through its *restance* (Derrida, 1977), its ability to stabilize the conversation around a theme over time, here conflict and inferiority. Eventually, the nautical story – and its affiliative reception in the plenary – contributes to the creation of an interactional environment sympathetic and receptive to Andrew's potentially humiliating identity as a powerless manager of the court. The dirty management team – in Episode 2 – also emerges as a textual agent that not only makes a difference in Maya's identity work, but also 'forces' Instructor 1 to downgrade it to an 'anecdote'. The text becomes the thread that keeps the interlocutors navigating the conversation, even through a conflict. The sequential organizing is key to understanding the shift in interpretation that the textual agent occasions – first understood as a metaphor for less-idealized management practices, then understood, by the students, as a contentious labelling.

I propose to call *regulation work* this effect of textual and human agencies in interactions on the identity work of participants. I will explain the two expressions in the concept in turn. The meaning of regulation here follows the classic lead in Willmott and Alvesson's 2002 paper 'Identity Regulation as Organizational Control: Producing the Appropriate Individual', in which (identity) regulation signifies the 'more or less intentional effects of social practices upon processes of identity construction and reconstruction. Notably, induction, training and promotion procedures are developed in ways that have implications for the shaping and direction of identity' (2002: 625). Notice here that the quote mentions 'procedures', which imply texts like programmes, manuals and instructions that align well with the notion of 'text' in my study. Also, I need not retain any normative connotations of regulation, which is the case at times in critical management studies (CMS). There is no emancipatory connotation in this – in fact, I would suggest that if one wanted to promote 'autonomy' to anyone, regulation work would also be called for, and in this sense my use of regulation comes close to Willmott and Alvesson's reference to training.

'Work', then, in my definition of regulation work, opens up the very 'social practices' that Willmott and Alvesson point to, and follows the ethnomethodological idea of the sequentially organized interaction (Hindmarsh and Llewellyn, 2018: 445). Work in interaction is, in other words, not only organized one turn at a time, but it also accumulates, as, for instance, when a theory is rejected in interaction. Merriam-Webster's dictionary defines work as 'a specific task, duty, function, or assignment often being a part or phase of some larger activity… [a] sustained physical or mental effort to overcome obstacles and achieve an objective or result' ('Work', n.d.). The idea of 'task' aligns well with the institutional character of regulation work in the shape of LDPs, and being 'sustained' is also key: regulation work is a process over time, as is the idea of achieving an 'objective or result', in this case the specific intentions or goals of the leadership development practice in question.

The textual agents – the YouTube video in Episode 1 and the management theory article of the dirty management team in Episode 2 – contribute differently. The video occasioned *aligned* conversations, first by triggering IRE devices, then by allowing Andrew's identity work as he reports from the courtroom. The article of the dirty management team occasioned the accomplishment of *dis-aligned* identity work. In other words, the textual agents' significance is contingent on interaction. This is why regulation work is not just the sum of textual and human agency, but the *combined* effort of textual and human agents sequentially conditioning each other.

## Discussion

Iszatt-White, Kempster and Carroll discuss the use of theory – or 'knowledge objects' (2017: 592) – in the pedagogical enterprise and propose a shift from 'a technical understanding where they are treated as fixed, pre-defined, permanent and replicable' to an 'epistemic where they are seen as relatively undefined, open-ended, historically situated and still experimental' (2017: 592). The textual agents in the situated analysis are demonstrated to be just this, epistemic objects, although they may well have been conceived of as knowledge objects at the time the programme was designed and curriculum decisions made. In both Iszatt-White et al.'s and my studies, the student seems even more adept than the instructor at using theory in epistemic ways. A textual agent can, in fact, be both knowledge object and epistemic object, depending on one's point of observation – yet as the agent is appropriated in conversations, the outcome may differ. I extend Iszatt-White et al.'s study further by proposing that regulation work account for this sustained and contingent relation between the textual agent and the human interactants. Specifically, the sequential character of regulation work points to the fact that the text 'at hand' is the current interactively produced context for the conversation – as, for instance, the content of the 'dirt' article loses relevance sequentially – and may indeed differ from the original text, the textual agent as 'knowledge object'.

This theme of the identity of the educator in a shift from knowledge objects to epistemic ones could, as Episode 2 reveals, indeed come at the risk of 'educator undoing', that is 'an overlooked phenomenon of loss, fragmentation and disruption … manifested through a range of processes from reflexive critique (shaking up) to unlearning (letting go), to episodes of "stuckness" and seeming immobility (floundering), accompanied by a similar range of emotional responses from delight to pain' (Iszatt-White et al., 2017: 584). The analysis demonstrates the hybrid agency of the instructor, as her authority and that of the text are highly intertwined, as when the instructor subtly extends the session to allow for Andrew's request in response to the nautical narrative. In Episode 2, on the other hand, the authority of the instructor comes under strain given how the textual agent is appropriated in the interaction. The concept of regulation work recognizes that the appropriation of texts – that is the transition of objects from knowledge objects to epistemic objects in the pedagogical enterprise – is one of sustained effort, and the role of the educator thus becomes not the authoritative ruler of knowledge objects, but the responsive participant of regulation work, in which objects are shape-shifters never entirely under the educator's control.

Smolović Jones, Grint and Cammock (2015b) distinguish between two categories of facilitator choices in a leadership development programme where work is done with leadership theory as well as with the positioning of participants: the first category entails framing, that is, 'what "leadership" is there to achieve, what kind of acts can be defined as "leadership" and who is responsible for these acts'; and the second is adaptive, concerning 'the degree to which facilitators maintain discomfort among participants' (2015b: 399). I appreciate the theoretical detail in the distinction, and the textual agent in my analysis corresponds quite well with (parts of) the framing operation of Smolović Jones et al. The authors further differentiate framing done in deliberate programme design decisions and in more continuous in-the-moment facilitator decisions, suggesting, for instance, that ‘holding the ideological as an explicit reflective frame may prove valuable in navigating both design and in-the-moment framing’. My analysis, however, demonstrates that navigating the executive classroom is slightly more messy in that, while the framing – such as the nautical narrative – might indeed prevail and afford meaningful identity work, it takes much more work – regulation work – to make this happen than Smolović Jones et al. acknowledge. Episode 2 demonstrates the potential dynamism of interaction in an executive classroom. Even if Episode 2 is somewhat an outlier, it does point to the fact that 1) the appropriation of texts in conversation is not causal but contingent and that 2) there is ‘no time out’ in interaction, as ethnomethodologists like to point out (Garfinkel, 1988: 103). The framing is potentially sequentially reframed, leaving the instructor – or anyone else in the interaction – with less sovereign control than framing appears to me to assume. I do, however, concur with the intention of Smolović Jones et al. that executive programmes should be able to accomplish these kinds of reflective episodes, but I think we need more situated studies to understand how this is done and indeed how pedagogical decisions are taken, not in principle, but in practices in *medias res* in the executive classroom.

This study has some important limitations. While the episodes span a wide variety of patterns of interaction – paradigmatic and less so – the approach chosen cannot cover the full 16 hours of interaction. The analysis allows us, though, to make theoretical contributions as discussed above. The focused ethnography (Knoblauch, 2005) cannot report anything going on in the organization ‘outside’ the focus chosen, and, for instance, interactions of programme management and faculty could possibly shed some light on how the curricular texts are chosen and other design decisions made, among other things. Also beyond the scope of this study is how the identity work undertaken in the programme lives on in the participants' home organizations (e.g. Walker, 2018), and thus also how instructor contributions may be durable. The data source chosen was audio, yet the use of video data is on the rise, also in studies based on a CCO approach, and this would have given me access to richer detail – but perhaps complicated access to the field, as video is more intrusive as seen from members of the field. My own organizational embeddedness in the field does support my understanding of the field – what ethnomethodologists call membership knowledge (ten Have, 2002), yet may de-sensitize me to important observations. I have sought to mitigate this by engaging in data sessions – extended workshops in which the transcriptions of my study are analysed with competent peers.

## Conclusion

How are participants' identities accomplished in LDPs and what role do instructors play in that? My study demonstrates that identities are accomplished in situated interaction, an interaction in which agents other than participants partake. Specifically, textual agents make a difference, if one contingent on interaction. The joint effect of textual and human agencies is what brings about identities in LDPs, an effect I propose to call *regulation work*. Textual agency encompasses both knowledge object and epistemic object, the latter being an open-ended, historically situated feature. In terms of framing leadership development interactions, the framing intervention is ultimately sequentially organized (which means it may itself be reframed in the downstream interaction), leaving the instructors with less control.

Smolović Jones et al. (2015b) suggest that reflective episodes should be staged in leadership development programmes, for instance, through the holding of an ideological frame. Here I suggest more situated studies to understand how pedagogical decisions are made and how pedagogical interactions are governed in situated practices in leadership development programmes.

## Appendix: Transcription symbols used

| | |
|---|---|
| ((description)) | description of an action |
| Word= | word latched to another word |
| :: | extension of vowel sound |
| *word* | word spoken with emphasis |
| WORD | word spoken loudly |
| ? | rising intonation |
| … | falling intonation |
| >word< | word spoken faster than surrounding talk |
| <word> | word spoken more slowly than surrounding talk |
| (.) | slight pause |
| (0.5) | longer pause |

# Chapter 7. Article 3: Ventriloquial reflexivity at the intersection of theory and practice in leadership development[17]

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**Abstract**

Could an empirical engagement with the theory-practice conundrum in leadership development lead us to a new way of thinking about reflexivity? To answer this, we employ a CCO approach focused on how practice and theory are ventriloquized in situated micro-interactions within leadership development. Analysing rarely available data from an executive master's programme, we show how theory enters leadership development interactions as text and affects how participants engage with and account for their own leadership practices. These effects occur through three different relations between theory and practice: one in which theory is appropriated by practice, one in which theory measures practice and, finally, one in which theory shapes practice. Through such interactions, leadership is positioned in three corresponding modes: legitimized, objectified

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and augmented. We claim ventriloquism explains how theory – as text – enters leadership development and is empowered through a web of associations, thus allowing a new positioning of leadership. We propose that *ventriloquial reflexivity* denotes the communicative episode when participants in conversations together orient themselves to which agents are ventriloquized in leadership communication and to which effect. We contribute to leadership development and reflexivity studies and to leadership development practice. A call for an epistemology of agency concludes the argument.

**Keywords:** Theory-practice, leadership development, CCO, ventriloquism, reflexivity, epistemology

## Introduction

The precise relation between theory and practice is one of those seminal controversies that cross academic disciplines, including studies into the role of knowledge and knowing in organizations, leadership development studies and theories of reflexivity. This is scarcely surprising given that 'relating theory and practice poses the important question of how individuals and organizations develop the means for addressing complex problems in the world' (De Ven and Johnson, 2006: 803) – a question that should sit at the heart of any learning, development and reflection associated with organizations, management and leadership. Leadership development is being called upon to enable participants to address complex problems in their organizations, and, to this end, leadership theory plays a central role. A concomitant component seized upon by leadership development is reflexivity in which the participant's leadership in various ways is made an object of inquiry. Practice-based leadership development programmes seek to bring together practice, management theory, didactic devices, instructors and participants to understand how leadership practice is advanced, yet have little to go by in terms of research into how theory and practice accounts relate to each other and how reflexivity may fit into that picture.

Epistemological inquiries have, in parallel to leadership development, turned to practice and left the cognitive semantics of object and possession in favour of one of process and practice. The emphasis has shifted from what is known to how it is used in action (Cook and Brown, 1999), perhaps even interaction. Here, knowledge simply is the capacity to act, recognising the helpful or instrumental, even 'tool-like character' of knowledge (Worren et al., 2002: 1229) in overcoming obstacles. Crucially, knowing is now construed as accomplished in social interactions rather than in the individual mind. This turn to situated practices extends to reflexivity, which some scholars resituate as doing, rather than thinking tied to a cognitive realm. It is our conjecture that that the trajectories of studies into the theory-practice relation and studies of reflexivity may intersect in the analysis of situated action.

Deploying the concepts of *text, figure* and *conversation* used in the communicative constitution of organization (CCO) (Cooren, 2004a), we hope to unpack this very intersection, making visible the agency of theory – how it is appropriated as text and staged as a figure in interactions. Theories, frameworks and conceptual models constitute a certain category of such texts and are arguably the central figures with which we as academics, researchers and educators primarily associate (Latour, 1984) when grappling with phenomena like power, authority and even purpose in empirical settings. We underscore, however, that our aim here is not to make a case for the overall importance of theories in leadership development, but rather to seek to understand their agency in communicative episodes where the participants in development interactions themselves invoke theories, particularly in relation to practice, and from this extract a novel understanding of reflexivity.

The paper engages with two research questions:

1) How do theory and practice relate to each other in the context of leadership development, and which positions are subsequently made available for participants to enact leadership?
2) How might an engagement with the theory-practice relation in leadership development provide new ways of thinking about reflexivity?

In addressing these questions, we start by discussing how the turn to pragmatism has relocated both the relationship between theory and practice and how we theorize reflexivity. Next, we outline a CCO approach focused on ventriloquism, text and figures, using these as central concepts for explicating how theory affects the ways participants engage with and account for their leadership practices in leadership development. Third, using naturally occurring data from a leadership development programme, we analyse three paradigmatic vignettes of interactions between human agents (instructors, programme participants and peers) and texts (leadership theories, term papers), focusing specifically on interactions where participants engage with experiences gained from their leadership practices. We observe that theory and practice relate to each other in three different ways: 1) theory is *appropriated by* practice, 2) theory *measures* practice and 3) theory *shapes* practice. We also examine how these three relations position leadership in three distinct ways. We employ the notion of *ventriloquism* to account for how the theory-practice relationship comes to be and how leadership positions are made available. By ventriloquizing theory and organizational sources of authority, the leader authorizes, moves and animates herself, thus potentially authorizing and mobilizing others to act. Our analysis recommends a closer engagement with the agential dimension of knowledge and knowing, explicating the situated and bi-directional (Cooren, 2012) translations between theory and practice and uncovering the web of associations that empower leadership theory to position leadership differently. We propose that co-orienting to this communicative process be termed *ventriloquial reflexivity*, which we feel captures and specifies a core facet of leadership development and thus enables us to extend both leadership development and CCO theory. Ventriloquial reflexivity is further explored for its value to the practice of leadership development. Finally, we call for a corresponding *epistemology of agency*.

## From thinking to doing in epistemology

'The persistent and difficult problem' that the theory-practice relationship presents for scholarship is hard to understate (Van de Ven and Johnson, 2006: 802), rife as the discourse has traditionally been with a foreboding language of gaps, bridges and distances somewhat akin to a discursive minefield. However, a 'revolution' in paradigms has moved learning 'from an "epistemology of possession" to one of "practice"' (Easterby-Smith et al., 2000: 787), with the former emphasizing individual, cognitive and formal processes and the latter social, situated and relational ones. This ground-breaking movement advances the ideas of the American pragmatists (Dewey, 1927), bringing knowledge and knowing together and thus shifting the emphasis from 'what is known' to 'how it is used in action' (Cook and Brown, 1999: 382–383) – from noun to verb (Rennstam and Ashcraft, 2014). This pragmatic construct of communicative knowledge stresses the accomplished and communal character of knowing, which is 'housed in interaction' (Rennstam and Ashcraft, 2014: 10). We adhere to this pragmatic validity by acknowledging that 'the users themselves might be the ones who are best qualified to judge' whether theory actually 'helps guide action to attain goals' (Worren et al., 2002: 1245).

Raelin's programmatic paper 'Toward an Epistemology of Practice' (2007) speaks to the notion of mediation by claiming that 'our learning is often mediated, that is, it is facilitated through the use of tools and artefacts, such as through conceptual models from the world of theory and through norms and conventions from the world of practice' (2007: 504). It is worth noting that the leadership development literature has largely left 'conceptual models from the world of theory' alone, even as it has investigated other artefacts like psychometric profiles (Meier and Carroll, 2019) and assessment tools (Elmholdt et al., 2016). Raelin (2007) further calls for research that might ‘shed light on our so-called regimes of signification, the abstractions that make knowledge appear coherent to a community of inquirers’ (2007: 506). In developing an epistemology of practice that allows for a more integrative relation between theory and practice, Raelin (2007: 499–504) points to the three elements of tacit knowledge, critical reflection and mastery as underappreciated and hitherto underused.

According to Rennstam and Ashcraft (2014), the turn to pragmatism contributes three insights that can help one understand this territory anew. First, knowledge is simply a capacity to act in a given situation, and any capacity to act ‘depends on one’s being able to make distinctions between the useful and the useless’ (2014: 455). Further, one can observe that ‘knowledge is deeply social’ and through this observation understand how experts are moulded in the community (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Finally, a pragmatic turn enables a shift in the traditional criterion for what counts as knowledge from ‘truth’ to ‘what provides an ability to engage in and to overcome obstacles to ongoing practice’ (Rennstam and Ashcraft, 2014: 456). We align ourselves with these tenets of pragmatism, but unlike Rennsstam and Ashcraft, our study engages not only with knowledge of participants’ practice, but also with leadership knowledge in its theoretical form. However, we seek to complement their work by remaining within situated interactions as participants engage with theory and seek to overcome obstacles in their leadership practices.

Advancing towards our ultimate conceptual destination, Cunliff and Jun (2005) understand *reflection* through the traditional notion of a ‘mirror image’, an understanding grounded in ‘an objectivist ontology based on the idea that there is an original reality we can think about and separate ourselves from’ (2005: 226). Adriansen and Knudsen (2013) rearticulate this as a ‘reasoning without questioning basic assumptions’ (Adriansen and Knudsen, 2013: 111), and they see this reasoning as being relevant when, for instance, one chooses among possible solutions to a problem. Reflection is predominantly calculative thinking, say Cunliffe and Easterby-Smith (2004), drawing on Heidegger, who describes reflection as 'a form of thinking that moves towards closure because it is concerned with understanding, categorizing, and simplifying phenomena in order to plan, organize, act, or theorize' (2004: 32). Ann Cunliffe's concept of practical reflexivity (Cunliffe, 2002; Cunliffe and Easterby-Smith, 2004) claims to reconstruct experience-based learning and involves an existential questioning of self as well as an explicit understanding of one's current situation. Critical reflexivity, on the other hand, entails the unsettling of not only basic assumptions, but also of discourses and practices for describing reality (Cunliffe and Jun, 2005). This unsettling is key because it helps to uncover the assumptions underlying administrative practice, thereby enabling one to think more critically about the impact of such practice and thus potentially to construct new organizational and social realities.

Elkjaer and Nickelsen (2015) have challenged this position, adhering to the same turn to pragmatism (as well as actor-network theory) in their analysis of critical reflexivity. The two authors understand reflection as doing and not only thinking, and echo van Woerkom's (2010) critique of dominant reflexivity scholarship as overly rationalist, problematizing whether critical reflection in Cunliffe's (2004) sense really has the capacity to mirror the complexities of organizations. In Elkjaer and Nickelsen's eyes, the problem lies in a prevailing understanding, at least until now, that critical reflection is mostly a cognitive phenomenon rather than a performance tied to organizational experiences as well as to materiality. If reflective practice is seen as a strictly mental affair, it loses its connection to organizational practice and thereby – crucially – operates outside participants' matters of concern. This concept is taken from

Latour's (2004) idea that matters of fact merge 'into highly complex, historically situated, richly diverse matters of concern' (2004: 237). The pragmatic turn, the turn from thinking to doing within epistemology and reflexivity allows us analytically to delve right into participants' richly diverse matters of concern and locate not only how the theory-practice relation is done, but also how participants orient to this – an exploration that may lead us to new ways of thinking about reflexivity.

## A pragmatic approach through ventriloquism

Ventriloquism as conceived by François Cooren (2010, 2012, 2015, 2016) and further developed within the CCO scholarly community (Caronia and Cooren, 2014; Cooren et al., 2013) is a viable route if we wish to follow calls to inquire into the relation between theory and practice empirically while staying true to the pragmatic turn. Ventriloquism aligns well with the concerns of Rennstam and Ashcraft (2014) as well as those of Elkjaer and Nickelsen (2015), as it acknowledges the performative, agential, communicative and accomplished character of social practices. The concept of ventriloquism in organizational theory is inspired by the well-known comedy act where a comedian, or vent, makes a dummy appear to speak, and the two converse (Cooren, 2010). Human interactants ventriloquize to make *figures* present that would otherwise be absent, thus enabling these figures to speak in their conversations. A figure, then, is anything made present, that marks what does and does not count in an exchange – i.e., is that which *makes a difference* (Cooren, 2004a). Figures are so intrinsic to organizational interactions that Cooren and Fairhurst (2009) speak of the 'dislocal' character of interactions. When one analyses interactions, figures enable the focus to be simultaneously local and dis-local.

Ventriloquizing affects or *animates* both the ventriloquist herself and the others present. At a budget follow-up meeting, for instance, the CFO might quote the quarterly earnings, thereby making the budget present or ventriloquizing it, but also – reflexively (Clifton, 2017a) – positioning herself as the authoritative leader. This, in turn, may animate the sales director to explain his poor quarterly results, whereby he acknowledges not only the authority of the budget, but also that of the CFO and her prerogative to make him accountable for his results. Importantly, by ventriloquizing the budget, the CFO obligates not only the sales director but also herself to be accountable to quarterly results as well as to the entire budget. This example demonstrates a continuous oscillation (Cooren, 2010) between the ventriloquist and the dummy, between staging a figure and becoming animated, moved and constrained by it, as any figure becomes an agent in its own right, no longer entirely under the vent's – the original speaker's – control. It also illuminates how our agency is hybrid, shared with other agents. 'When you exert power,' Latour maintains, 'others are performing the action and not you' (Latour, 1984: 265).

It follows that ventriloquizing is often, if not always, an operation of authority and power. This is due to the implicit relation or association (Latour, 1984) between the ventriloquist and the entities being ventriloquized: by making the budget present as above, the CFO associates herself with it, speaks 'on its behalf', in effect fuses the authority of the budget with her own. The subsequent acknowledgement from interlocutors, such as the sales director, of this combined authority then accomplishes power as a co-constructed enactment process (Cooren, 2010: 75). Authority is defined as 'legitimate power' distributed among agents that are presentified (Benoit-barné and Cooren, 2009), holding certain actors to certain obligations and principles.

Following Taylor and Van Every (2000), while the conversation is the *site* of the organization, the *text* is its surface. Texts can be sorted along their degrees of authorization. The vocal utterance is perhaps the least authorized, at least until the next turn, when a listener acknowledges it *as* an utterance and displays what was heard, reflexively acknowledging the speaker. From there, the utterance may continue to make a difference in or affect the ongoing conversation. At some point *reification* may occur, where the text concerned becomes fixed in media like handwriting, print or some digitally recorded memory – i.e., a material rendition of some kind that makes the text durable (Latour, 1991). An organization's written records, which are crafted according to specific procedures and subjected to specific validation processes are an important example of such reification, as they are both durable and may ultimately carry the authority of the organization (Smith, 2005; Van De Mieroop and Carranza, 2018). In our case, texts like peer ethnographies and assignments become progressively authorized during the course of the programme studied, culminating in an ultimate institutional authorization/de-authorization at the exam.

Exactly what a text does as it enters interaction is contingent on the specific appropriation – as any student who has submitted a term paper for oral defence will attest to. Even so, the textual properties of a document tend to stabilize conversations and make it possible for interlocutors to refer to formulations within the document – a feature less certain with the more ephemeral speech mode of communication. *Texts* make human sense-making manifest and reflexively fixate it (Weick, 1995), whereas *conversations* appropriate texts as a resource (Taylor, 1999; Taylor and Robichaud, 2004) and themselves produce texts. Text and conversation thus appear in a mutual, dialogic and sequential relation, with neither dimension of organizing reducible to the other. Ventriloquism and the dialogic and sequential relation of text and conversation allow us analytically to theorize not only the theory-practice relation, but also reflexivity in leadership development.

## The case and the methods

Data for this study is drawn from a flexible Master in Public Governance programme offered by a Danish university consortium of which the first author is part. The programme seeks ‘to qualify and develop the public manager’s capability to conduct professional management in a politically directed public sector context with the aim of strengthening the public manager’s competence in reflecting on and further developing his or her own management practice’ (Copenhagen Business School and University of Copenhagen, 2013).

The course in question spans six months, with six full seminar days, and is organized around a student-directed leadership project comprising three phases: *searching*, *experimenting* and *reflecting*. The course includes a one-on-one coaching session with an instructor, experiments in the student’s own leadership practice and – importantly here – a peer-to-peer ethnography. Theoretical texts and lectures are provided on topics as diverse as personal growth, communication, power, change management and ethics. Towards the end of the course students hand in a 15-page term paper in which they report on and analyse their leadership development project, after which they take an oral exam in the active presence of the full learning workgroup of five to six students. According to the programme objectives, the course should strengthen ‘the performance of tasks in the student’s organization [via] experiments with, insight into and reflections upon the personal leadership’.

Of particular interest to this study is the embedded ‘mini-ethnography’. In this assignment students are tasked with shadowing a peer student in his or her organizational practice for a day or two and then turning their notes from this activity into a few pages of text, referred to as ‘the ethnography’. Students are further instructed to write the ethnography on the premise that a selection of observed situations be ‘reflected on from a theoretical point of view so that the observed situations are not solely “everyday actions”, but become examples or illustrations of more general leadership issues that can be discussed’. The observers’ ethnographies are appended to the host students’ final papers, and are treated as possible data for reflections on the activities and outcomes of the leadership development course.

We applied a focused and materially oriented ethnography (Goodwin, 2000; Knoblauch, 2005; Pink and Morgan, 2013) for this study, which is to say that we entered the field guided by our conscious knowledge interest in how non-human objects – such as management theory and didactic devices – interact with participants and what kinds of agency these objects might be granted and to what effects. This focus was sufficiently specific to inform the selection of settings and specific communicative episodes to cover. The settings selected for audiotaping include 17 exam interactions from the executive master’s programme and 17 written term papers, including appended peer ethnographies. The first author was further present as an observer at all the exams. Data are exclusively naturally occurring (Alvesson, 1997) as opposed to being experimental or based on research interviews.

The entire body of examinations was transcribed in full, amounting to about 4200 lines of conversation plus the term papers. Listening to and reading this corpus in repeated cycles, the first author, a Danish speaker, identified all conversational episodes in which theory and practice were invoked together. Excerpts were subjected to detailed joint analysis in a series of data sessions with faculty peers. Through this process, types of relations between theory and practice emerged, and we finally identified three paradigmatic ways (Mik-Meyer and Silverman, 2019) in which theory and practice related to each other across our samples of interactions. For the analysis, we transcribed the conversation excerpts corresponding to these three ways in a simplified Jefferson format. We should note that these relations are not in themselves necessarily exhaustive across all contexts but in this particular data corpus, they were demonstratively evident.

The exams constitute a very particular institutional interaction (Heritage, 2005; Makitalo and Saljo, 2001) and are patterned quite homogenously across our corpus in terms of interaction. The instructor chairs the exam session by controlling the topics and assigning speakership to students – although the co-examiner may take the floor of his own accord. An exam commences with an extended turn by the student being examined, followed by a Q & A between the examiners and the student concerned. The examiners then expressly invite the student's ethnographer – i.e., the one who shadowed him or her – to join the dialogue.

## Analysis of three vignettes

### Theory being appropriated by practice: The case of Megan

Megan is a middle manager in municipal elderly care provision. In the excerpt, we learn that Megan does not identify easily with the 'controlling' subject position to which she was exposed in the programme, so she goes looking for other ways of obtaining compliance. However, although Megan displays her very own stances to the specific content of each theory she raises, she nevertheless ventriloquizes them in the authorization of her practice, despite the accounts given by Walter, her ethnographer. We analyse this episode in terms of theory *appropriated by* practice in a way that serves to authorize whatever the participant is currently underway with.

**Examiner 1:** […] And then I wondered a little, it's a strange match, yes, you have some things you want them to do, control issues, and some details, et cetera, and then you say, you'd like to coach your employees here.

**Megan**: I think it's about softening things up […] Actually I think it's my way of softening up this power so I can exist in it. I think managerial coaching is a type of control that I can exist in. I could never use traditional coaching, but managerial coaching […]

**Examiner 1:** [smiling voice] Then one is compelled to ask you: Why can't you remain in the ordinary controlling mode in relation to your employees?

[Laughter]

**Megan**: uhh … well, I'm just not that person by nature. I find it … really, when I think about power in general, it's not a person I want to be, but as I write, when you have dealt a bit with Foucault, where power is something completely different, where power is about the power to give sense, then I think I can accept managerial coaching.

**Examiner 1**: But is this a long-term solution, if it's so hard for you to do?

**Megan**: Well, I think I need to practice, it's just that in the long run if I practice managerial coaching, it can help me tremendously in becoming more succinct …

**Examiner 1:** [to examiner 2] ... Do you have anything? Otherwise, we could invite in the ethnographer [to the conversation].

**Walter:** [smiling voice] I will … I would like to continue along this 'control' thing. It doesn't look to me at all that you would possibly appear tough or authoritarian, and it doesn't seem that your employees perceive you to be so either. They were, like, *really happy* to answer questions [at the meeting observed by the ethnographer], and I think that

23 everything you think of as ‘control’, they think of as ‘interest’.

24 **Megan:** [approvingly] Hmm …

At the point this excerpt picks up the conversation, the examiner is more closely addressing the apparent contradiction between Megan’s intention to control and her choice of tool – coaching – to do so, thus ventriloquizing the theoretical curriculum and potentially de-authorizing Megan’s choice by calling it ‘strange’ (Line 1). Surprisingly perhaps, during her turn to talk Megan does not orient to that possible de-authorization but ventriloquizes a version of the curriculum, making ‘managerial coaching’ present (Line 2). According to the authors, this theory is a specific attempt to make power differentials an explicit coaching resource, which traditional, supposedly more egalitarian coaching would not. Megan says she ‘could never use’ such traditional coaching (Line 6). After a few omitted turns, in which Megan still does not address the contradiction, nor does the examiner restate it, the examiner orients to why Megan cannot be in a ‘controlling mode’ (Line 8). The ensuing laughter in the group (Line 9) might be heard as uncomfortable, as the examiner’s question gives Megan an immediate risk of exposure. At her turn, Megan – as a reason for her aversion to control – ventriloquizes her own, personal ‘nature’ as one that has no desire to be powerful. She then provides a second theoretical account (Line 12) in which Foucault is the provider of a ‘completely different’ idea of power, his power being one of giving ‘sense’. Here, Megan seems to be crafting a theoretical amalgam from Michel Foucault’s theory of power and Karl Weick’s theory of sense-making, a fusion that makes her ‘accept managerial coaching’ (Line 13).

The examiner then invites the ethnographer to speak with what is a very open call (Line 18). What follows is a highly emblematic ventriloquization of Megan’s practice, its being largely affirmative of what Megan already does, as the ethnographer finds no reason for Megan to worry that she appears ‘tough or authoritarian’, and that, in fact, the employees perceive Megan’s controlling efforts as showing ‘interest’ (Line 23). Note that the ethnographer is reporting on practice but, in the process, is also interpreting the experiences of Megan’s employees.

In this vignette, Megan describes her practice in theoretical terms (continuously also accountable to the exam setting), yet theory still appears to *fail* to affect practice, although becoming involved in the account produced and thus legitimizing the status quo. While the programme provides otherwise ample theoretical resources for authorizing legitimate positions from which to exert power, Megan’s practice is rendered in terms of theoretical concepts *appropriated by* the practice to fit the problem at hand, including Megan’s own preferences – an appropriation the examiners did not de-authorize. Megan is able to attend to her current concern by crafting and aligning theory to this end, resulting in a leadership positioned as *legitimized*, which indicates that while such positioning succeeds in being authorized in the interaction and thus legitimized, theory defends current practice. Compared to the next two vignettes, this one shows theory having a somewhat modest impact on the participant’s practice and positioning of leadership. We get a reflexive indication of how – in this setting – crafting and aligning theory allows a sustained attention to current concerns, thereby retaining the privilege to simply go on.

## Theory measuring practice: The case of Edward

In the following two excerpts, one of which is taken from Eve’s observation-based ethnography of Edward and the other from his term paper, Eve reports what she observed at a meeting led by Edward, and Edward subsequently reflects on this report. Both excerpts evince how theory becomes ventriloquized as a norm against which practice is *measured*, and further how theory makes it possible for interactants to speak on behalf of bodies other than their own.

> In my optics, Edward largely engages in congruent communication, the content of the dialogue with the managers is in accordance with the way in which the information is delivered. Tone, voice and body language are attuned to the subject of the dialogue. For some issues, expression of an inner dialogue with EH is observable, especially with controversial issues. It expresses itself in a slightly strained voice and a hand on the chin, in front of the mouth or on the forehead. This body language sends me signals of a challenging situation.

Here, Eve accounts for her observations at a meeting by ventriloquizing a communication theory model from the curriculum (Madsen 2004). According to this model, ways of communicating are ‘congruent’ if the content and bodily style of delivery match. Eve demonstrates that a claim of congruence is warranted by referring to how Edward’s communication style shifts as issues at the meeting grow more controversial (Line 5). The account offered by Eve reveals a way of using theory as a template for action rather than as, say, a repository for posing new questions about practice. Importantly, in the excerpt Eve further describes the corporeality of Edward, his ‘strained voice’ in Line 5 together with various positions of his hand. Eve perceives Edward’s ‘body language’ as sending her ‘signals of a challenging situation’ (Line 7). Here, Eve is ventriloquizing the very body of Edward, speaking on its behalf in order to support her interpretation of the situation. Eve is effectually claiming her own authority as a privileged observer and conveyer of signals, even signals from the observed body. To bolster this claim, Eve refers to the progressive shift in Edward’s communication style as issues grow more challenging. Notably, Eve presents this account with great confidence. In the excerpt, theory and body are explicitly ventriloquized with an authority that traces back to the curricular theory, and, as such, we observe more actors involved in accomplishing the authority of the account.

Now, how does Edward appropriate and acknowledge this text? The following excerpt from Edward's term paper provides the answer:

> Eve also observed my communicative performance and noticed how my voicing changes in uncharged and charged situations. Fortunately, she perceives that I am predominantly conducting congruent communication in relation to the content of the dialogue – that tone, voice and body language are matched to the content of the dialogue. However, despite Eve's perception of congruence, it has led me to some reflection, as I'm not quite aware of [the level of congruence] in my dialogues, which I will be in the future, due to these observations. (1502, p. 15)

In this excerpt Edward fully trusts Eve's account, which he acknowledges explicitly, and he also reiterates Eve's theoretical re-description of his practice. In Line 2, Edward notices in a positive sense – by using the word 'fortunately' – that in Eve's estimation his behaviour meets the theoretical expectations. Here we notice how Eve's theoretical rendition of Edward's practice not only seems to lend credence to her observation but also authorizes her to *evaluate* Edward against the theoretical figure. We further notice in Line 6 that this has led Edward to 'some reflection', prompting him to commit to raising his awareness of his congruence level *in the future*. We shall develop the theme of reflection and reflexivity further in the Discussion below. Communication theory in this instance is staged as a norm that not only affords an evaluation of past events but also projects its normativity into Edward's future leadership practice. Indeed, Eve acknowledges that being observed is – also – being evaluated, and evaluated against a theoretical norm stemming from the curriculum. We notice that as Eve lets communication theory speak for her – herself being animated by what Cooren calls 'downstream ventriloquism' (2010: 89) – the theory then moves or *animates* Edward to pledge an onward commitment to it, in other words an example of 'downstream ventriloquism' (Cooren, 2010: 105).

In sum, communication theory is ventriloquized as a norm against which the ethnographic observer Eve measures Edward's performance. We find that theory *measures* Edward's practice, which is the object of evaluation, meaning that theory appears as a normative template for Edward's performance – as well as for Eve's observations. In these excerpts, theory has a stronger impact on how leadership is positioned than in Megan's vignette, and we assert that leadership in this instance becomes an *object* of evaluation, for theory is a normative ideal made available by ventriloquizing theory. Theory specifies various ways of communicating and promises to optimize Edward's performance if he performs according to its norm, that is, if he meets its criteria for efficient communication, such as a 'congruence' between content and bodily style of delivery. The texts taken together reflexively indicate how a leadership participant comports himself when being observed as an object of evaluation by the normative ideals given in the programme.

## Theory shaping and solving practice: The case of Gwen

In this excerpt, we meet Gwen at the beginning of her final examination. She is the manager of a group of highly autonomous consultants who, we understand from her term paper, have just written her a letter anonymously signed 'The Consultants' and saying that their workload had grown too big. Prior interactions indicate that Gwen did not convey this message upward in the organization. As Gwen speaks of this episode in the excerpt, we notice how theory manages practice in two ways: it *shapes* the account of the practice problem Gwen faces – and *solves* it, but also reveals some consequential *shifts* in leadership positions:

**Gwen**: I always thought this authoritarian [leadership style] was *horrible,*
but, but, but it worked right *there* in *that* moment, and I think that's actually been (0.5)
the biggest thing for me in these six months or year in which I've been working on being
more structured in my leadership styles, ok↑ […] And I am sure it's not the last time I do
this, but I've actually been a leader since '98, and this is the first time I've tried this, and
it's also the first time I've been like totally hit inside, deep in my (1.0) *basic personality,*
(0.5) uh, and I do find that deeply unprofessional […] *Usually* in relation to [the fact that] it
is we who work from a systemic approach, with Appreciative Inquiry and all that, as we
do also read about here [in the curriculum]. Uh (0.5), uh, what I've been thinking
about subsequently is whether you can be so *democratic* and be so *appreciative* that
you end up blinding yourself to certain things (0.5). I think that's interesting […]
I have sometimes felt that I sat between a rock and a hard place [between the political
and operational levels], and have to be a *membrane* ((laughing)) you might say,
and *right there* it's damned difficult to be appreciative, excuse my language.
**Examiner 1**: But, uh, can I start asking you a bit here↑
**Gwen**: You're welcome to.
**Examiner 1**: ... what was the reason you made that choice, I'm assuming that you made

it together [with the chairperson], that it should be an authoritarian leadership style↑ Was it just an *experiment*, or, what was the reason that it was exactly this that you did↑

**Gwen**: […] The reason we chose the authoritarian [style] is *because* the theories *say* that *if* you take on the responsibility (0.5) and take responsibility away from *those people* (1.0) … It works when (1.0) … Sorry, I sense I'm losing the thread, I'll try to pick it up, uh, uh (1.0) … uh, I took away the responsibility from the consultants, and I told them in which direction we're heading and what we wanted and what was achievable for them. I also told them what was *not* negotiable.

The excerpt begins in the middle of Gwen's long first turn, during which she is ventriloquizing her own practice. An internal conflict is very evident, as she finds an authoritarian leadership style no less than horrible (Line 1) but nonetheless recognizes its instrumental merits, in that 'it worked right *there* in *that* moment' (Line 2). She even contends that this recognition is the single greatest insight she has experienced at any time in the leadership development programme – in fact, since she became a leader 20 years ago. Employing authoritarian leadership style has also come at a cost, however, as her basic personality has taken a hard blow. She has previously alluded to being 'split in two' by this style and, by ventriloquizing her *basic personality*, she stages a figure quite prevalent in our leadership development data corpus – that of the personality. This figure manifests itself here with a moral authority, disproving that Gwen uses the authoritative leadership style – but Gwen finds this moral split 'unprofessional' (Line 7). At this point we learn that Gwen's practice – prior to anything the programme brings – is already informed by management theory, namely its systemic, appreciative and democratically oriented variants. Crucially, these resources seem insufficient (Line 11), as Gwen operates as a membrane (Line 13) between the executive and the operational levels. While this organizational position is, of course, a well-known dilemma for a middle manager, Gwen does not orient herself to the problem as being organizational but rather as being one of *lacking adequate theory* to manage the situation from this position (Line 14). In other words, Gwen is ventriloquizing her organizational position in the light of theory so she can account for her need to look for further theoretical resources. In Gwen's practice account, theory evidently takes part in *shaping* the problem – but how does it solve it? At line 17, the examiner, knowing from the term paper that the authoritative route was in fact taken, asks why. At her turn, Gwen, appearing somewhat troubled, ventriloquizes Goleman's theory, which apparently discusses the central importance of taking on responsibility and establishing the organization's direction – the two precise strategies that she conducted in dealing with the group of consultants. Gwen's intervention sidesteps her failure to involve top management, but it does seem to succeed in managing the disgruntled consultants. We observe here how theory – however loyally ventriloquized – *solves* a problem partly created by theory, and with the added consequence of not challenging the organization's hierarchy. The ventriloquization of Goleman's theory *authorizes* the account Gwen gives in response to the examiner's question.

This vignette displays a more complex relationship between theory and practice in that, at the outset, the democratic and appreciative theories that have informed Gwen's practice allegedly produce a 'blind spot', rendering this kind of leadership inadequate to deal with the demands of the consultants. Indeed, the very inadequacy of theory brings the practice problem to light. In a complementary way, Goleman's theory of emotional intelligence provides an 'authoritative leadership style' that fits or solves this problem, providing legitimacy while doing so. We find that theory *shapes* Gwen's practice by shaping the problem account, as well as provides a *solution* to it. While theory – as was the case with Edward – provides legitimacy, it also makes Gwen's failure to challenge her superiors slip out of focus.

In terms of how leadership is positioned in this vignette, we observe quite a journey. For a start, Gwen is saddened by the original letter from the consultants regarding their workload and by her own failure to bring their concerns higher up the chain of command. Reflecting on this, she ascribes this lapse to her being too appreciative and systemic as a leader, which creates blind spots for her vis-à-vis her organizational position. From there, she moves or expands into a newfound assertiveness or 'authoritative' position in her handling of the conflict she faces. This movement follows the raison d'être of most leadership development programmes, but we focus on the particular role of theory here. In Gwen's case a process can be identified in which theory problematizes *and* solves a practice account, thereby shifting her position from one of being democratically inclined into more assertive and authoritative positions. This shift is essentially theoretically driven. What is more, it results in a very public process, which may indicate its durability, as she has become publicly accountable – in the programme and possibly in the organization as well. We categorize Gwen's new leadership as being in an *augmented* position, for Gwen expands her leadership capacity through the way theory creates and solves her managerial problem. Reflexively, the interaction indicates a need to negotiate and possibly re-evaluate the old democratic and appreciative values of the organization confronted with new, effective means.

We summarize our analytical findings from the three vignettes in the table below:

| Vignette | Megan | Edward | Gwen |
|---|---|---|---|
| **The theory-practice relation** | Theory is *appropriated by* practice (by being vested with different meaning) | Theory *measures* practice (by providing norms for behaviour) | Theory *shapes* practice (by taking part in shaping the problem as well as solving it) |
| **positions leadership as** | *legitimized* by theory | an *object* for theory | *augmented* by theory |
| **reflexively indicating** | how to align theory with current concerns | how to comport oneself to norms | how to relate to old values when handed new means |

*Table 10: Theory-practice, leadership and reflexivity*

## Ventriloquial reflexivity in leadership development

What is the value of bringing ventriloquism to the theory-practice debate in leadership development? First, while ventriloquism is a communicative operation, in our case it is also an epistemological one in that it *makes known* (to the participant) something in the world possibly unknown before. It is even a performative operation (Callon, 2009) in the sense that the unknown was itself non-existent prior to the knowing produced for the occasion. When Eve reports her observations of Edward's performance, she ventriloquizes communication theory, thus making something about Edward's performance known – that it was 'congruent' – which was unknown before. Performatively, we argue that this congruence is produced for the occasion and that communication theory plays a crucial part in this production. Likewise, when Gwen ventriloquizes a democratic leadership style in the situation with the disgruntled consultants, we *know* that a democratic leadership style was no longer adequate – and we later come to *know* that an authoritarian leadership style was just that – adequate. This ventriloquial operation is ‘bi-directional’ (Cooren, 2012: 6); for instance, the communication theory that ‘measures’ Edward’s performance becomes, by the very act of measuring, a *normative* theory, regardless of the intentions of its creators, its instructors or even its own epistemological claims. Ventriloquism demonstrates how *knowing* (Cook and Brown, 1999) is accomplished in local interactions by bringing together human and non-human agents, thus performing knowledge hitherto unknown and showing that any connection, ‘*in order to be what it is, has to be performed and materialized in one way or another*’ (Kuhn et al., 2017: 75, emphasis in original). Being bi-directional, this accomplishment alters agents too, not only theory and practice, as we just saw, but crucially also the positions from which participants subsequently find themselves having to perform leadership. A pragmatic epistemology (Raelin, 2007; Rennstam and Ashcraft, 2014) must recognize the nested relations between the communicative, the epistemic and the performative dimensions of knowing.

Considering how the participant seems subjected to these three dimensions, one might rightly ask where this leaves human agency (Carroll and Levy, 2010; Meier and Carroll, 2019). The answer is ambiguous. Ventriloquism reveals how the human speaker is but one in a chain of agents, thus making up a hybrid agency (Clifton, 2017a; Fairhurst and Cooren, 2009; Kuhn et al., 2017; Latour, 1993), whether such agencies are leadership theory or stories of disgruntled consultants and the like. Stripped of these agents, the executive student would stand bare as Latour’s rather incapable naked soldier did (1988). One might even argue that much of leadership development consists of presentifying models and theories to students who are then expected to ventriloquize them, a process in its crudest form known as rote reproduction (Lave, 1996). If this is the case, then leadership development participants are indeed positioned as *cultural* *dopes*, in Garfinkel's striking expression. Our analysis shows that theories may be powerful allies, hard to control yet capable of legitimizing, measuring and even shaping one's practice. However this alliance comes with a consequence: it will eventually reposition the leader as – to take Edward's example – an object to be measured. Even without perceiving the executive student as a cultural dope, ventriloquism shows how our agency is shared with others (Meier and Carroll, 2019) and, crucially, which others as well as just how these others are being made present in order to make which difference. Ventriloquism makes this analytically accessible in leadership development studies more strongly than most concepts.

Even if the consequences of sharing agency with other agents are rarely known in advance, human agents like the executive student and her interlocutors are uniquely able to *orient themselves to* which agents are participating in the actions at hand (Cunliffe, 2002; Cunliffe and Easterby-Smith, 2004; Cunliffe and Jun, 2005; Raelin, 2007) through co-orientation (Taylor, 2006). When Gwen states that 'I always thought this authoritarian [leadership style] was *horrible*, but, but, but it worked right *there* in *that* moment' (Third vignette, Line 1) she is orienting to this agent, the authoritarian leadership style that she also becomes when ventriloquizing it. Co-orientation is evinced in the examiner's asking Gwen for 'the reason you made that choice […] that it should be an authoritarian leadership style?' (Line 17). Gwen is held accountable (Garfinkel, 1988) for why she let herself be moved or animated (Cooren, 2010) by an authoritarian leadership style, and through conversation this account then becomes the object of co-orientation. We propose the term *ventriloquial reflexivity* to denote when interactants co-orient to the accounts given and the agents ventriloquized (Cunliffe, 2002; Rawls, 2008). Ventriloquial reflexivity compares to critical reflexivity in the sense that it may bring our mental models and cultural myths into the conversation

(Raelin, 2007) and even allow, as with Gwen's conversation with the examiner, 'a critical examination of the way we constitute knowledge, meaning, and our lives as social actors (organizational members, managers or researchers)' (Cunliffe, 2003: 990). It differs from critical reflexivity in that it is a formal, empirical definition, and members may engage in it to meet other concerns, functionalist or instrumental (Kuhn and Jackson, 2008). This ventriloquial reflexivity seeks to capture reflexivity as a 'members' phenomenon' (Llewellyn and Spence, 2009), rather than an analyst's, as we contend that members' accounts constitute actual practices.

We substantiate this through our main findings, the three ways theory-practice relations are enacted: that is appropriation, measuring and shaping. These speak to the considerable power of theory to make a difference within a learning and development context. As we discussed above, however, participants need not be at the mercy of this power, and a case for the reverse could, in fact, be made. The analysis makes the participants visible as ventriloquists, able to authorize themselves in a complex organizational and interactional field and thus use theory to account for experiences from their practices while in the presence of two examiners, student peers and documents detailing experiments and ethnographies in these practices. These experiments were previously carried out in full view at their own organizations. The student can be made accountable to any of these empirical sources at any time during the exam. Nevertheless, participants manage – perhaps with varying degrees of success – to make convincing accounts, in which theory variously moved themselves, while also advancing whatever cause they were pursuing. While theory, for instance, (re-)positioned the participants as leaders, the participants also progressed on the various problems they confronted in their organizations. The participants enact the idea of 'communicative knowing' developed by Rennstam and Ashcraft (2014), as 'a distinct *form* of knowing, accomplished and "housed" in interaction, but that is also *about* interaction, about how to interact persuasively and effectively within the frame of one's practice'. Knowledge *about* interaction and its persuasiveness and effectiveness in terms of leadership is precisely the outcome of observing upstream and downstream ventriloquism, or in other words the outcome of ventriloquial reflexivity.

We find that ventriloquial reflexivity captures a crucial dimension of leadership development: the training of participants (and instructors) to become more adept at both directions of ventriloquism (Cooren, 2010: sections 4.2 & 4.3). The *upstream*, which pertains to composing and executing ventriloquial work, concerns recognizing which agents are assembled to authorize, persuade, mobilize and discipline others, even if we know better than to overly rationalize the communicative work. The *downstream*, on the other hand, pertains to how interlocutors are animated, moved or influenced (or quite frequently not) by what is being ventriloquized. To inquire into that, ventriloquial reflexivity will follow the given communication downstream, observing if and how the difference it made distributes itself (Caronia and Cooren, 2014) in networks of texts and conversations throughout the organization. Accomplishing ventriloquial reflexivity means staying in motion, observing the up- and downstream ventriloquizations that a manager and, indeed, her interlocutors make during communicative events in which there is often *no time out* (Goffman, 1981). Of particular importance to organizational theory is how the manager ventriloquizes the organization's *authoritative texts* (Kuhn, 2008), that is, the 'abstract representation of the entire organization and the connections between its activities, which portrays the relations of authority and criteria of appropriateness that become present in ongoing practice' (Kuhn, 2012: 553). Ventriloquial reflexivity in this instance entails observing how, by ventriloquizing these authoritative texts, the manager is involved in constituting the organization itself (Cooren, 2012). Ventriloquial reflexivity combines Taylor's concept of co-orientation (2006) with Cooren's idea of ventriloquism (Cooren, 2010, 2012), and, by demonstrating its analytical usefulness to communicative leadership scholars (Clifton, 2017a; Crevani et al., 2010; Fairhurst and Connaughton, 2014; Larsson et al., 2018; Meier and Carroll, 2019), offers an empirical framework for inquiring into leadership learning and reflexivity. Likewise, it gives CCO scholars an opportunity to extend their interest into the leadership development terrain, firmly within a communicative, relational ontology (Cooren, 2018; Kuhn et al., 2017).

What does ventriloquial reflexivity offer its practitioner, the executive student? We show that ventriloquial reflexivity is what makes visible the tension between Gwen's old values of democracy and appreciation against those of the new, augmented means of assertion and authority. For Edward, it surfaces the object-like position, his leadership is given. We suggest this textual visibility is a vital condition for the critique and perhaps relocation of one's leadership. Ventriloquial reflexivity may foster awareness of the cunning ways management theory legitimizes, measures or constrains oneself and, conversely, of how to promote dexterity in fusing with the right theory to move one's leadership into truly augmented positions. An overreliance on the promises of prescriptive leadership theory, whether these regard leadership style, transformational leadership, authentic leadership or any other, could work against subsequent adaptation and correction. To this end, a participant may use ventriloquial reflexivity to become more aware of the power of organizational and developmental texts and carve out spaces within organizations in which textual authorities could be suspended, combined, challenged or negotiated. Such developmental spaces may enable experiments and innovations of up- and downstream ventriloquial reflexivity through which organizational members assemble and affirm a multiplicity of agencies – even if eventually getting anyone to listen, let alone to move the organization ahead, always requires the next agent to authorize the speaker's authority. Lastly, a reflexive awareness of how various leadership theories position leadership differently (beyond its more utilitarian value, as when an authoritarian leadership style 'works' for Gwen) seems increasingly important to leadership practitioners, as prescriptive leadership theories like emotional intelligence or transformational leadership continue to proliferate.

Ventriloquial reflexivity would enable a leadership development professional to become reflexively aware of how the act of ventriloquizing theory makes her agency hybrid, i.e., instructor+theory, an agent not entirely under her own control. It further sensitizes the instructor to be aware of how students ventriloquize theory 'back at her' – as we have seen at the executive exam – crafted and transformed. This is not necessarily due to faulty understanding or misguided application, but to the local and agential intersection of theory and practice. Imagine theory as a piece of clay being moulded and remoulded as it moves between participants, instructors and practices and in turn moulds and remoulds those who interact with it, akin to a boundary object (Star and Griesemer, 1989) that gathers negotiations around itself. Any instructor's stable and powerful sense of identity due to her possession of management theory is in this view only a situated accomplishment, dependent on being performed for *another next first time*, in Garfinkel's (2002) expression, indicating the fragility and alteration implicit in all repetitions. On the other hand, one can subject this accomplishment to ventriloquial reflexivity, for instance, following it downstream as participants are animated (or not) and thereby revealing the distributed character of instructor+theory.

The power of the instructor is only analytically, not empirically, bifurcated from the power of theory. When one acts, as it were, others are moved to action.

Our study comes with limitations. For one, the case module is early in the executive programme, and more sophisticated uses of theory could emerge later. By way of example, Gwen might also orient herself to her precarious organizational position as a middle manager rather than solely to leadership styles, if for no other reason than the access she gains to a wider variety of theory. One could investigate this assumption by replicating our study at the very end of a programme. A second limitation is that the exam chosen involves the student's workgroup. While the presence of peer students, in particular the ethnographer, probably increases accountability with regard to the practice accounts provided, it also makes the examination a rather complex interactional field, thus pressuring the student to perform instantly with less perceived time to reflect and deliberate on the examiner's questions. Finally, we have only observed and recorded interactions and documents in the programme. Even if activities like experiments and ethnographies were carried out in participants' practices, we only have the accounts produced for these activities in ethnographies, term papers and exam interactions. Ideally, researchers should follow participants in their organizations during and after the leadership development programme, as demonstrated in the work of Walker (2018), to further reveal the applicability of ventriloquial reflexivity.

## A call for an epistemology of agency

Our findings demonstrate that ventriloquism offers leadership development studies a fertile analytical approach, enabling the empirical explication of thorny issues like the theory-practice relation and reflexivity. In particular, our findings challenge any assumption that staging practice within a leadership development programme is reducible to representing practice. Rather, management theory is appropriated by practice and, conversely, measures and shapes it. Further, as theory enters the interaction, it has the power to shift leadership positions into being legitimized, measured and augmented by theory. This does not mean, however, that we have to eschew bringing either theory or, indeed, practice into leadership development. In fact, we propose the converse: that *ventriloquial reflexivity* designate the communicative episode when participants in conversations co-orient to which agents are ventriloquized in leadership communication and which are moved by this ventriloquization. Ventriloquial reflexivity can also be understood as a developmental and didactic device, a way of learning how agents, by ventriloquizing theory, practice, authoritative texts and a host of other agents, constitute and move themselves and the organization.

However, we sense a need to go beyond an epistemology of practice (Cook and Brown, 1999; Duymedjian and Rüling, 2010; Raelin, 2007; Worren et al., 2002) towards an *epistemology of agency*, more sensitive to the agential (Brummans, 2018; Kuhn et al., 2017; Rennstam and Ashcraft, 2014), performative (Callon, 2009), distributed (Fenwick and Edwards, 2014), hybrid (Cooren et al., 2005; Fairhurst and Cooren, 2009; Hawkins, 2015; Latour, 1993) and reflexive character of knowing, learning and leading. Such an epistemology should engage with empirical endeavours as much as with conceptual ones, committing itself to a plenum of agencies (Cooren, 2006b) on the *terra firma* of interaction and acknowledging the situated and reflexive dimensions of knowing, learning and leading, thus sensitizing our empirical, conceptual and developmental devices to this end.

# Chapter 8. Article 4: Going live! From interviews to interactions in the scholarship of teaching and learning[18]

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**Abstract**

The research interview enjoys a privileged status as the overwhelming method of choice for qualitative scholarship of teaching and learning (SOTL) work. This paper, developed within the Research in Management Learning and Education (RMLE) Unconference community, draws attention to the potential gains that drawing on alternative data sources can bring. The case is made that qualitative research in SOTL should focus more attention on the naturally occurring forms of data present and produced within specific settings. Analysing and then juxtaposing various types of data collected during a specific SOTL study, including both qualitative interview material and naturally occurring data, the paper shows how extending the scope of qualitative research in this manner makes an array of methodological and analytical advances

[18] This article is co-authored with Roddy Walker, Copenhagen Business School, and has been submitted to a themed issue of *Journal of Management Education* on research in management learning and education (RMLE). The data comes from Walker's (2018) project, and we were both involved in the FSE-funded project at CBS, 'Leadership development in the public sector' as well as gave presentations at RMLE conferences.

possible. The new point of departure these opportunities open up can help to revitalize qualitative approaches to SOTL.

**Keywords**: research interview, naturally occurring data, scholarship of teaching and learning, RMLE, methodology, analysis

## Introduction

This paper is to be read in light of the enormous gains scholarship of teaching and learning (SOTL) has realized from the advent and advancement of the qualitative research interview. As colossal an achievement as this represents, we nevertheless proceed to problematize interview methodologies as the primary data vehicle of qualitative SOTL, making the case that colleagues should also consider focused ethnography (Knoblauch, 2005) and naturally occurring data when inquiring into the situated practices of teaching, learning and, indeed, work more generally. By embracing such methods, the analyst can go beyond the individual accounts typically produced by the research interview (Atkinson and Silverman, 1997; Silverman, 2017) in unprecedented ways and thus explore and explicate events as naturally occurring (Alvesson, 1997). This allows the analyst to appreciate the everyday interaction of talk and text produced by members, as these attend to their own – and not the analyst's – concerns. Further, following the suggestions made in this paper can enable one to both recognize and account for the multitude of non-human agents populating our educational world ([reference deleted to maintain the integrity of the review process]).

## Ethnographic inquiries in leadership learning and development

The 2017 Research in Management Learning and Education (RMLE) Unconference in St. Andrews, Scotland, provided the opportunity to articulate and start to consolidate the insights emerging from a major 5-year SOTL project focused on analysing leadership development in the public sector ([reference deleted to maintain the integrity of the review process]), conducted at ([place deleted to maintain the integrity of the review process]). The knowledge interest of this project was to go beyond individual accounts of how leadership development affects identity and practices. The QIC (research questions, ideas, and concerns) submitted to RMLE and the ensuing engagement and discussion at the St. Andrew Unconference were both enriching and thought-provoking, in turn galvanizing a commitment to broaden and pursue this emerging research agenda. In this way, the RMLE Unconference came to directly interact with and inform the evolution of the SOTL research project running concomitantly at ([place deleted to maintain the integrity of the review process]).

In keeping with the research agenda unfolded below, this *textualization* ([reference deleted to maintain the integrity of the review process]) and its appropriation in the discussion group cluster '[title deleted to maintain the integrity of the review process]' (Bell, E., Blasco, M., Bridgman, T., Dean, K. L., Drake, M., Forray, J., ... & Kenworthy, 2018) helped materialize previously ephemeral ideas and observations. This highlighted what proved to be a rather pronounced discrepancy in our empirical corpus comprising interview data, observations, audio recordings, documents and more. Specifically, we identified a discrepancy between the accounts gained through research interview data and the insights derived from the concurrently collected naturally occurring data, a discovery that contributed to our knowledge interest in the impact of the leadership development programme (LDP). Within the interview accounts, participants (and possibly the analyst) celebrated the educational programme concerned, its positive and lasting impact on their practices as well as on how they gauged their own professional acumen and organizational status. However, when analysed, the naturally occurring data – the talk and text – depicted a much more complex and less polished educational and organizational reality. Our newfound awareness of this discrepancy led to what we felt to be quite vibrant analytical encounters. All the more, we also eventually gained avenues for different – and traceable – warrants for subsequent claims, even if these claims seemed to emerge in less sensational a manner. Such claims may be less of a box-office event, even miniscule at times, but also more resistant to appropriation by our – us analysts' – prior theoretical persuasions.

## Theory

The privileged position of interviews in qualitative research has long been a general issue of debate in the social sciences, with Atkinson and Silverman (1997) providing an early and explicit critique of this tendency. They question the 'interview society', detailing serious concerns about the perfunctory adoption of interviews in social research and the 'spurious sense of stability, authenticity and security' (1997: 309) that researchers derive from interview material. Their critique makes the case for a more critical approach to understanding and working with the personal narratives offered in qualitative interviews. They further recommend that the character and utility of such narratives be subjected to closer reflection and also given greater attention as regards the way they are actively constructed and accomplished in situ instead of being instances of self-revelation to be uncovered by the interviewer. Twenty years later, Silverman (2017) revisits this topic, noting and bemoaning the fact that little has changed – that the vast majority of published research papers involving qualitative methods continue to be based on interview studies. Silverman makes an appeal for a more inclusive and exploratory approach to qualitative research, one more informed by ‘naturally occurring data’ and perhaps drawing inspiration from ethnomethodology (Garfinkel, 1967) that sees ‘the everyday world as a “topic” to be studied rather than as an explanatory “resource”’. Rather than provoking data by asking people about what they do and why they do it, the researcher can observe their actions in situ and in real time, thus seeing how such actions are accomplished in interaction, while also drawing on sources of data that document these situations. Alvesson emphasizes the utility of such an approach, stating: ‘A study design focusing on the observation of a naturally occurring event avoids- or, more usually, reduces the researcher’s dependence on the perceptions, understandings and accounts of respondents’ (1997: 467). In this manner, one can undertake the research endeavour with a more inclusive and open attitude, where participants’ matters of concern take precedence over the analyst’s – thus facilitating a ‘postponement of closure in the research process as well as the written text’ (1997: 469).

These reflections on the role and status of interviews in qualitative research and specific appeals for alternative approaches are highly relevant to SOTL, where the research interview retains its privileged status. A more situational focus trained on naturally occurring events, the interactions constituting them and sources of data present within them offers greater scope for appreciating and investigating the complexity of social life as it happens (Boden, 1994), thus allowing the research endeavour to take its point of departure in the terra firma of interaction (Cooren, 2010). The researcher almost certainly enhances the potential for new insights and analytical surprises by embarking on this less-trodden path, the use of which this paper seeks to encourage by pointing out potential analytical gains.

## Analysis

In the following, we present two data sequences, Excerpt A from a research interview with Eve, who is a middle manager in municipal day-care provision, and Excerpt B, a transcription of a meeting between Eve and her employees. In excerpt A, Eve responds to a request by the interviewer to explain a previous statement in which she opined that her participation in the LDP had changed her awareness of her organizational function:

1. **Interviewer**: And that is something that you … that you have in connection with the
2. programme?
3. **Eve:** Yes
4. **Interviewer**: How?
5. **Eve**: Well then. I think that throughout the programme I have obtained
6. a view of myself as a tool. Like, that I am not just … Eve the pedagogue or Eve the
7. manager; I am part of an organization, I am one of these cogs that should get the
8. whole thing moving, so, strictly speaking, it doesn't … in a way it doesn't really
9. matter what I think, as long as I play along. And that is the same as I expect of my
10. staff, that we should be professional. We are neither private nor personal
11. in our work, we must be professional, we must look at the task that is to be
12. performed – how can we perform it in the best possible way for the customer in the shop
13. and also for the organization that is to perform it – how can we do that? … And I think
14. that we have learnt that in the programme, and I can see a significant difference
15. from before I started the programme compared to now. To look much more at …
16. what the result ... the desired result is, and maybe not always focus so much on
17. the process. Where you could say – in the old days we always said that – with children

18. it was the process that it was all about … Sometimes we simply have to take
19. some decisions, that we have to get so far, and it may well be that we lose a
20. few on the way, but then maybe they shouldn’t have been here at all. Because if
21. they aren’t playing along and aren’t one of the cogs, then they should find some
22. other cogs, where they’re a better fit. And I think that’s very different to what
23. I’ve done before. (Eve interview 2: 09.03.2017)

In this excerpt we wish to draw attention to how the interview situation becomes an arena for the presentation of selves (Goffman, 1959), Eve’s self as well as that of the researcher. Eve’s above account is recipient-designed in ways projecting her as professional and loyal to the organization – a loyalty that also extends to how the organization perceives itself. As ‘one of these cogs that should get the whole thing moving’ (Line 8), Eve recognizes her leadership identity as one of mechanical obedience. She also communicates an understanding that the whole organization is attuned to ‘the customer in the shop’ (Line 12) and the efficient production of services. Finally, she accounts for her view of her own staff being aligned with her in order to ‘play along…be professional’ (Line 9). We notice that these three elements of the interview – the customer, service production and alignment – are all in mutual and systematic correspondence, and for Eve a likely output of this interactional work is a certain sense of her own predicament. In a key passage, Eve asserts that the programme has taught her to ‘look much more at … what the result ... the desired result is, and maybe not always focus so much on the process’ (Line 15), with the latter part of her statement tying in with a professional pedagogical perspective that has now been subsumed under an organizational prerogative. This will presumably have implications for how working with children is to be understood. Furthermore, under this prerogative, employees that refuse to play ‘along and aren’t one of the cogs’ (Line 21) can be quickly replaced with some other cogs.

Crucially, even if the interview may be conducted under the ‘confidentiality agreement’, the informant wilfully produces an account that questions neither any of the organization’s fundamental properties nor the received expectations of the educational programme’s outcome. In other words, the informant presents a very particular self, i.e., one that accords with her presumptions concerning the programme expectations.

The analysis could easily stop here, and in much current writing, indeed it does. However, instead of stopping, we suggest turning to naturally occurring data as a means of inquiring into which other accounts of identity and organization these data make available for analysis. The excerpt examined below was recorded at a meeting Eve conducted with her employees after the programme’s completion but before the above interview excerpt took place. We enter the conversation as the participants discuss structural changes introduced by Eve’s superior.

1. (E): So you can say, it is something we must work with, and in that way I can see that
2. there are some … like, our children come under a lot more pressure than they did
3. in the old structure.
4. (M): Hmmmm …
5. (U): Yes.
6. (E): So my task is to look at how on earth I can get [people] to accept that we are still working
7. as teams, because we will never come back to calling ourselves rooms.
8. (U): No.
9. (B): No!
10. (E): But how, how will we be able to [inaudible word] work together as a team around

11. the children so that they get the developmental opportunities they require, and
12. that there are more sets of eyes on them … [I] have actually held
13. these reflection meetings and planning meetings and team meetings that made us look
14. at the children all together, so that produced something different. But also the fact that
15. you like, mixed around …
16. (U): Hmmmm …
17. (E): those twice a week and you didn't just say, 'Yeah, so we're the red room,
18. and we only do things with the red room.' But now, said, 'we're in the red room, but
19. would also like to be together with the green and yellow and blue, so therefore we'll
20. mix the children up' like we did at Halloween, like we did at Christmas and like we did
21. in summer. Because it makes sense that way.
22. (U): That it does.

Here, Eve asserts that the structural changes are causing the children to feel under greater 'pressure' (Line 2). The employees acknowledge this assertion (Lines 4 and 5) and Eve orients herself to how management will accept the unit's retaining elements of the abandoned structure while satisfying the new demands for 'developmental opportunities' (Line 11) and for 'more sets of eyes on them' (Line 12). In Eve's account, she articulates and emphasizes her managerial task as she makes clear that she has complied with her superior's expectations by setting up series of reflection, planning and team meetings (Line 13). As such, she has encouraged staff engagement with a change agenda, a claim that also is being acknowledged by the staff. Through the excerpt, Eve holds the line that acknowledges that the employees' perceptions and standpoints diverge slightly from the thrust of the managerial change imperative yet details examples of instances in which they have integrated the fundamental change agenda with the most valued elements of the previous practices, ‘because it makes sense that way’ (Line 21).

## Discussion

The interview provides insights into how Eve manages the presentation of self (Goffman, 1959) accountable to the interview setting, and into how in managing this, she *retrospectively* references resources from the LDP and its fundamental organizational intentions, which are to integrate middle management into the greater organizational rationales and thus make it part of the bureaucratic machine. Within these rationales, Eve seems to understand that only managerial shortcomings on behalf of the individual manager are supposed to be the object of ‘reflections’ or perhaps even ‘critique’. The role of the manager is to keep the organization running and to engage in and translate organizational initiatives introduced within the organization’s hierarchy – a machine in which the manager serves as a compliant administrator and is therefore just a ‘cog’ (Line 7). However, turning to the interaction excerpt, we notice that Eve manages to entertain dual accountabilities – dancing between the organizational imperatives and local relevancies, in sum performing as the pragmatic operator. For instance, at Line 2 we understand that ‘our children come under a lot more pressure’, whereas at Line 20, the organizational imperative comes to the fore, as she prescribes the solution to ‘mix the children up’.

The analysis of naturally occurring data substantially qualifies the managerial self presented in the interview after the LDP and manifested as ‘a cog’ in the machine, thus allowing one to appreciate the subtle and skilled presentation of self *in medias res* for which there is *no time out* (Goffman, 1981). We summarize our findings in the table below:

*Table 11: Juxtaposition of the research interview and naturally occurring data*

| **Empirical gains regarding** | **The research interview** | **Naturally occurring data** |
|---|---|---|
| *Organizational function* | Part of the bureaucratic machine | Entertain dual accountabilities |
| *Managerial understanding* | Compliant administrator (even with personal qualms) | Pragmatic operator |
| *Temporality* | Retrospective | In medias res |
| **Epistemological aspects** | | |
| *Validity claim* | A production of a cohesive narrative account of 'Eve' through a presentation of self | Direct access to the world as it happens |
| *Methodological pitfalls* | Accountable to the interview setting, incl. the interviewer, rather than to the practice | At all times accountable to the practice setting, yet focal excerpts are selected according to analyst's relevancies |

## Conclusion and perspectives

These findings question the research interview's monopoly within qualitative SOTL. Embracing naturally occurring data into its empirical repertoire, we suggest, more strongly positions SOTL to engage with practice, educational as well as managerial. Crucially, such gathering of data can be done *in vivo*, thus bypassing the shortcomings of the *ex post* research interview and revealing intricacies and details otherwise unavailable. As such, a 'filter' is removed, as the analysis shows Eve's account of her managerial practice to be more polished, but in our view the account appears redacted and impoverished when compared to the analysis made possible by naturally occurring data. Within local SOTL endeavours and invigorated by future RMLE conversations, such an approach expands the current horizons for SOTL research, particularly in areas where SOTL is struggling to gain a foothold. Observing naturally occurring data and interactions might enable SOTL to carve out new terrain, not only in classrooms and programmes but also in the organizations such programmes are thought to impact.

# Chapter 9. Discussion

In this section I reconnect with the two areas I singled out in the extant LDP literature discussed in Chapter 2 and to which I aim to contribute. The first, which I identified as organizational analysis, lies in the Foucauldian-inspired literature. Building mostly on participants' retrospective accounts, this literature has demonstrated LDP's regulatory effects on participants' identities (Andersson, 2012; Gagnon, 2008; Gagnon and Collinson, 2014; Kamoche, 2000; Mabey, 2013). However, these studies stop short of examining the situated character of this regulation, that is, how participants' identities are constructed in interaction and within the constraints reported by these studies. I therefore wish to complement this line of research by demonstrating what these studies have only assumed – that regulation is accomplished as a situated phenomenon.

On the other hand, in the Foucauldian vein I also point to discourse analytical literature, which has shown how – in LDP relevant texts like management textbooks (Harding, 2005), handbooks (Cullen, 2009) or tests (Nadesan, 1997) – the manager's identity, if not her entire mentality, is disciplined in various ways, made to fit the executive demands of contemporary organizations. These governmentality studies present strong claims about the effects of such texts but, once again, assume rather than demonstrate just how these effects materialize themselves in the empirical field. Hence, a complementary contribution approaching this regulation as taking place in situated interactions is called for.

The second strand of LDP literature I identify for further examination lies in the constructionist-inspired studies, which in a sense come 'closer' to what I understand as situated, interactional analysis (Carroll and Levy, 2010; Carroll and Nicholson, 2014; Nicholson and Carroll, 2013; R. Warhurst, 2011). These studies report from the interactional *terra firma* – particularly in the New Zealand case (e.g. Carroll and Levy, 2010). My intention in engaging with these studies is to extend our knowledge in two ways. First, I suggest a full, situated analytical strategy for revealing how LDPs are situated accomplishments displayed in turn-by-turn sequentially organized interactions. Second, I conjecture that using this strategy will also reveal how not only participants and instructors but possibly also the managerial texts explored in governmentality studies participate in such accomplishments.

## Summarizing the four articles

The first article, in Chapter 4, revisits Hacking's (2004) complementarity thesis in which *a top-down* process of analysis indicates how classifications and descriptions like confessions, exams, personalities, theories and professional expertise are components of modern governmentality (Derksen, 2001; Harding, 2005; Vikkelsø, 2012), while a *bottom-up* process demonstrates how these descriptions and classifications are appropriated and thus reconfigure the student in interactions. Further, CCO is suggested as a stronger ally than Goffmanian sociology, for CCO offers the concept of *text* as carrying 'the typifications of the language' (Taylor, 1999: 41). These typifications include Hacking's (2007) classifications, while CCO analysis follows such classifications' appropriation in interaction. As such, even under the less regulated 'investiture' strategy (Gagnon and Collinson, 2014), the participant's identity work operates within culturally given classifications. However, the reconfiguration of the student is accomplished less through contextual sanctions, and more through the sustained ventriloquization and acknowledgement of different authorities. This demonstrates that the effects of power are contingent on a multitude of situated performances involving a plenum of agencies. This interaction is dis-local, colonized with ventriloquized figures, thus authorizing shifting identities by ventriloquizing classifications and descriptions given through discourse, as Hacking (2004) maintains. The space of action (Holmer-Nadeson, 1996, in Carroll and Levy, 2010: 214) is a plenum (Cooren, 2006b), which provides for a *relational* concept of agency. Finally, the analysis combines a relational and performative approach with elements from a socio-epistemic one. Such an extension brings to light how the accomplishment and distribution of authority – with regard to identity – partly depends on the ongoing claiming and granting of *epistemic authority*.

The second article, in Chapter 6, also explores identity work, yet in the setting of the executive classroom in which identities are being both regulated and constructed. In the extant literature, interest in the identity work of the participant has been significant, but the instructor and other agents in the setting have received less attention. This article explicates such identity work by way of a detailed interactional analysis of two classroom episodes during a leadership development course within an executive master's programme. The analysis of texts and conversations reveals the instructor as an important figure in the identity work of the participant. The analysis further shows that texts occasion identity work but in highly contingent ways. The article proposes *regulation work* to mean the effect of textual and human agencies in interactions on the identity work of participants. I contribute to the extant literature by deepening our understanding of the role that the instructor and text play in LDP identity work and reflect on the demands on the instructor in facilitating dynamic identity work.

In Article 3, Chapter 7, ventriloquism is demonstrated to accomplish *knowing* (Cook and Brown, 1999) in situated interactions by bringing together human and non-human agents, thus revealing the human speaker as part of a hybrid agency (Clifton, 2017a; Fairhurst and Cooren, 2009; Kuhn et al., 2017; Latour, 1993), whether such hybrids encompass leadership theory or stories of disgruntled consultants. Although theories are capable of legitimizing, measuring and shaping one's practice, human agents are uniquely able to *orient themselves to* this hybrid agency (Cunliffe, 2002; Cunliffe and Easterby-Smith, 2004; Cunliffe and Jun, 2005; Raelin, 2007) through co-orientation (Taylor, 2006). *Ventriloquial reflexivity* covers two dimensions: the *upstream dimension*, which concerns recognizing what agents are assembled to authorize, persuade, mobilize and discipline others, and the *downstream dimension*, which pertains to how interlocutors are animated, moved or influenced (or not) by what is being ventriloquized. Ventriloquial reflexivity can show how, e.g., theory legitimizes, measures or constrains and conversely fosters awareness of the ways one can fuse with the theory to move one's leadership forward. Ventriloquial reflexivity offers the LD professional an opportunity to become reflexively aware of how the act of ventriloquizing theory makes her agency hybrid, an agency not entirely under her own control.

Finally, the fourth article, in Chapter 8, is positioned 'across' the dissertation in that it supports my methodological commitment to naturally occurring data. The article analyses both qualitative interview material and naturally occurring data, showing how one can extend the scope of qualitative research – methodologically and analytically – by engaging with naturally occurring data. These opportunities opened up can serve to revitalize qualitative approaches to the scholarship of teaching and learning.

## Answering the dissertation's research question

The research question posed in the introduction reads '*How are participants in leadership development programmes constructed as leaders in need of leadership development?*' I am able to contribute to the two strands of extant literature by using

TMS to engage with the research questions, that is, by understanding leadership development programmes as constituted in communication (Craig, 1999). Here, any organized construction process takes place on the *terra firma* of interaction (e.g. Cooren, 2004b: 518). At this site, texts are appropriated and produced in conversations (Taylor and Robichaud, 2004) and can then connect the focal construction with other, wider sequences of interaction in iterative patterns of imbrication (Taylor, 2011).

A first observation that emerges across the articles concerns the role of the textual agent (Cooren, 2009) in constructing the leader in need of leadership development. In Article 1 we saw how the identity offer of the personality profile was realized in a *reconfiguration* of the executive student, assisted by figures of theory as well as practice. The NEO P-IR® ostensibly measures participants' personalities, yet the analysis reveals how the interactive staging and authorizing of the profile makes the participant fit the description. In Article 2, participants responded strongly to the textbook imagery of the dirty management team, and the text on the Power Point clearly made a difference, eliciting explicit identity work in the classroom, though not exactly to the specifications offered in the text. In fact, Maya's identity work takes another track in opposition to this very imagery of dirt. In Article 3, the deployment of theory is shown to position participants' leadership in various ways that likewise differ from the purpose espoused in the theories mentioned, although in this case, more alignment with the texts can be observed. In all these findings, however, the situated effects of the texts in question tend to differ from their espoused 'intention'.

This finding generates two contributions to extant LD studies. First, my study complements Foucauldian-inspired studies like Gagnon and Collinson's in which the authors conclude that the LDP can be understood as 'relatively intensive regulatory practices designed to target and transform participant identities through processes that may add to or diminish participants' sense of self' (Gagnon and Collinson, 2014: 663), as it shows that the 'intensive regulatory practices' they cited involve *textual agents* that specify interactional sequences, offer identities and make other identities disappear from view. These agents are readily available in Gagnon and Collinson's empirical corpus, because, for instance, 'applicants were extensively assessed and tested before being granted entry, including through the Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT)' (Gagnon and Collinson, 2014: 654). Yet, as their analysis is not situated in the sense I use the word, and makes no use of naturally occurring data, these agents' specific contributions can only be assumed, not demonstrated. The research interview – and even the ethnographic rewriting – that they ground their study in tends to systematically underreport other than human contributions.

Gagnon and Collinson further contend that 'the emphasis on the practices through which idealized leader selves were resisted also informs an understanding that actors' identity work is always situated, and that its context is invariably rooted in power relations' (Gagnon and Collinson, 2014: 662). I concur that actor's identity work is always situated, but I question whether the authors sufficiently demonstrate how power operates in situated identity work. My analysis shows that the authorization of textual agents constitutes *legitimate power* distributed among a number of beings – tests, theories – that tend to disappear in Gagnon and Collinson's analysis. This touches on the role of 'discourse' in these types of studies. Discourse is set to do some heavy lifting, as the word itself occurs 34 times in the analysis. When, for example, it comes to the non-compliance of senior employees, in this instance 'neither the programme's disciplinarity, nor related promises of increased status, power and "market value", quashed participants' own agency and discretion in their local contexts. Rather, some were able to subvert the "grand" discourse of leader that operated in the programme, creating their own alternatives' (Gagnon and Collinson, 2014: 662). This is a classical formulation in Foucauldian-inspired studies, where discourse is ascribed agency, but the chain of agencies from discourse to conversation is underspecified. I prefer the concept of text (Taylor and Robichaud, 2004), as a text can be analytically traced in conversations in ways unavailable to 'discourse', as some Foucauldian studies themselves point out (e.g. Garrety et al., 2003; Newton, 1998).

I turn to the group of Foucauldian-inspired studies that take as their analytical object texts and technologies often deployed in LDPs, for instance, the personality profile (e.g. Damman, 2012; Derksen, 2001; Nadesan, 1997), the management textbook (Harding, 2005) or the leadership handbook (Cullen, 2009; Hughes, 2010). These works – unlike those in the discussion above – already in a sense rely on the text's agency in terms of its ability to regulate the subject. However, none of these studies demonstrate the *interactional accomplishment* of this, as I have done in my analysis – for instance, the way conversations appropriate texts in Article 1 or how conversations appropriate theory in Article 2 and 3. Nancy Harding's analysis in *The Social Construction of Management – Texts and identities* (2005) claims, for example, that management textbooks produce a managerial identity that is 'compliant, pliant and no threat to the capitalist enterprise', and that 'management degrees, through the management textbooks they use, can thus be seen as a form of disciplinary practice which produces quiescent managerial subjects' (Harding, 2005). My analysis in the articles cited demonstrate that – by using a TMS approach – one can, in fact, *demonstrate* the production of this managerial subject. In all the studies, I point not only to textual agents like tests and theory, but also to ones like peer students and instructors. As these studies conclude, texts do make a difference, but one *contingent on* interaction.

The idea of textual agency is perhaps a bit more alien to constructionist studies of LDPs, as these often centre on personal agency (Carroll and Levy, 2010). Yet here, one can point out that any agency, personal or otherwise, is a gathering of a plenum of agents. Reconfiguration, as seen in Article 1, means that ‘the person’ is a pattern or a cloud of diverse figures accomplished by several agents in interaction. In this light personal agency is an ascription of agency to this cloud pattern. Carroll and Levi claim that ‘social agents are quite capable of sustaining, mixing, adapting, and modifying the discourses that would seek to claim them, but can only do so (if our three narrative cases are anything to go by) if they have enough agency to keep making decisions to be subjects who choose’ (2010: 227). However, the idea of agency my study proposes is less zero-sum than this quote suggests and, in fact, paradoxically *stronger the more it is shared*. I might even go so far as to say that the *only* way personal agency in LDP becomes stronger is by being shared with agents like tests (Article 1), management theory (Article 3) or practice accounts (Article 1, 2 and 3). This is in line with Callon and Latour’s (1981) re-articulation of Hobbes’ Leviathan, the sovereign who ‘says nothing without having been authorized by the multitude whose spokesman, mask-bearer and amplifier he [*sic*] is’ (1981: 278). Personal agency within LDP is, then, this spokesperson who amplifies the very agents that are authorizing her – the personality test, theory and practice accounts – and thus making her bigger.

This is where the idea of *ventriloquial reflexivity* developed in Article 3 might be useful, as it describes a specific path or procedure in an LDP that reveals the agential multitude (upstream ventriloquism) and the effects (downstream ventriloquism) that *make up* this, in Hacking’s (2004) words, Leviathan of personal agency. Ventriloquial reflexivity demonstrates that an approach whereby communication is constitutive might uncover how the voice of the sovereign agent is actually a cacophony of ventriloquized voices. In Article 1, we suggested that ‘in *top-down* terms, we have indicated how the classifications and descriptions of confessions, exams, personalities, theories and professional expertise appear as elements within a particular modern governmentality’ (e.g. Derksen, 2001; Harding, 2004; Vikkelso, 2012). In *bottom-up* terms, we applied our communicative and agential analysis, thus demonstrating how the descriptions provided with such classifications enter the institution and are appropriated, thereby inducing the executive student to become reconfigured in interactions. This duality of processes, we suggested, is how leadership development *makes up leaders* (Hacking, 2007). This observation holds *mutatis mutandis* for Article 2 and 3 as well. Ventriloquial reflexivity is thus a phenomenon that occurs when participants, peers and instructors co-orient to how agency is joined or assembled and collectively explore how the focal person’s agency is composed.

Finally, let me draw on the contribution from Article 2, in which I suggest that the term ‘*regulation work*’ designates the joint effect of textual and human agencies in interaction. Having an effect greater than the sum of textual and human agencies, such regulation work is generative, because new agencies can be said to emerge – as described in this study – due to this regulation work. This phenomenon is demonstrated not only in Article 2 but, indeed, all the articles. In Article 1 the reconfiguration of Nathan is the result of the sequential, interactional appropriation of texts, the staging of figures or, if you like, the assemblage of new agents[19]. Regulation work enables one

[19] Cooren uses *figure* and *agency* almost interchangeably. However, agency refers to the agential dimension of a given entity or being, while figure points to the fact that this being or entity needs to be ‘made up’ (Cooren, 2010: 3). Figure, Cooren also notes here, has etymological roots common with ‘to make’ or ‘to fabricate’.

to point at, for instance, when an instructor stays in sustained co-orientation with participants, even when conflicts (Article 1), inferiority (Article 2) or intellectually demanding conversations (Article 3) arise and must be navigated. In my view no real alternative to regulation work exists. Even emancipation from a hegemonic, repressive set of ideals – an idea promoted by critical management studies – entails regulation work, the sustained appropriation of texts in conversations that produces or stages alternative figures or agencies, for instance, the figure of the emancipated individual.

As for LD practice implications, I observed that Stephen Covey's *7 Habits* or Daniel Goleman's *Emotional Intelligence* outplays academic management theory, as models like Covey's and Goleman's can be speedily applied to one's leadership practice under promises of positive impact. My study thus contributes to management education, for instance the work of Reynolds (1999) in which he distinguishes between 'radical content' – that is, critical theories and textbooks covering complex social phenomena – and 'radical process' – that is, 'structures, procedures, roles, and relationships within the programme and the methods it incorporates' (Reynolds, 1999: 544). The key is to link these two dimensions of content and process, and while Reynolds points to advanced interventions like orchestrating a learning community for this purpose, this study points in a less spectacular direction. Simply, to be efficient, critical ideas should textualize themselves in texts, technologies or procedures – tests, games, handbooks – as mainstream ideas do. While such a strategy means downplaying theoretical subtleties, its effect would probably be greater than that attained with a focus on 'radical content', which is to say critical theories and concepts. The peer-to-peer ethnography[20] exercise done for the case module helps to illustrate the implications of this recommendation, because a detailed, meticulously scripted intervention leads the participants through the ethnographic process. Such highly processual and detailed interventions and the conversations that occur within them occasion the type of regulation work that I am suggesting is integral to any personal change – or change to 'the person' – that is intended to happen.

The study comes with some limitations. First, it is based on a leadership development module within a more conventional master's programme and, as such, sits at the intersection of leadership development practices and management education. This may limit its applicability, although I have sought in the individual analyses and in the dissertation overall to offer findings for this double or extended field. The study is further limited by the fact that the four articles, running from Chapter 4 to Chapter 8, are the object of analysis in the introduction, a format used in Scandinavia and called a 'kappe'. Going forward, more studies of leadership development from a communication as constitutive approach are – in my opinion – bound to emerge, so findings can be further consolidated. The question of how figures produced in the programme are able to 'keep together' with participants or communities of participants and in their home organizations is a pertinent question that Walker (2018, 2020) is beginning to address with an approach similar to mine. The analysis in this dissertation has made it obvious to me that the lack of data from faculty meetings, programme management and programme administration meetings must be rectified before the question of the politics of the programme can be uncovered. I am receptive to any

[20] I should mention that this intervention was designed by the author of this dissertation.

critique of this work that power – as construed in the critical tradition, for instance – largely goes unaddressed here. Were one to include more intelligently chosen meetings and corresponding texts, one might uncover the communication that conditions the communication within the LD module – and, of course, that will eventually also appropriate the communication emanating from the module.

## Conclusion

This dissertation shows that leaders in leadership development programmes are *jointly constructed* as being in need of leadership development. This occurs through a series of interactions that *appropriate texts* and thereby *progressively construct* the identity of leader. I suggest to call this *identity reconfiguration*. Texts make a difference in these construction processes, but the texts' effects are contingent on considerable *regulation work*, which is to say the situated, sustained, sequentially organized interaction in which texts are appropriated as members *co-orient* towards the business at hand. The texts salient to leadership development programmes are often enfolded with historically emerged classifications and descriptions that allow the people classified – whether as having this or that personality or this or that leadership style – to constitute their own lives by appropriating these texts. The study offers to complement Foucauldian-inspired leadership development studies by showing how regulation of the leader in LDP is the outcome of regulation work at the very site of the LDP. The constructionist leadership development studies extend the Foucauldian-inspired ones, highlighting how personal agency within LDP is the spokesperson that amplifies the very agents authorizing her: the personality test, theory and practice accounts. In brief, the leader in leadership development is a thoroughly organized phenomenon, constituted in communication. Ventriloquial reflexivity offers a path or procedure that can reveal to interactants how the focal agency is assembled – and to what effect.

One avenue for further engagement would be to explore the managerial texts and interactions to which this LDP and its activities answer to, not only those close to the programmes but across the business school and even extending into governmental and industry sectors. Such an exploration could possibly start with faculty and programme management meetings as well as the corresponding texts and then extend further into meetings and texts in stakeholder institutions such as the Ministry of Higher Education and Science and, indeed, the entire Danish government. A sensitivity to how the programme communicatively ties in with key texts regarding reform and public policies would enable a discussion of what role leadership development plays in the public sector. Another route would be to intensively explore core textual agents in leadership development. The personality profile is one such agent for further exploration. For instance, one could study what kinds of algorithms are enfolded in such a profile and how these algorithms have changed historically. Importantly, among other things, this could shed light on what designers of leadership development in effect decide on when choosing a particular personality profile, thus opening up the *black boxes* of these technologies.

Although more than 30 years have passed since Latour (1987) sent us all looking for black boxes to pry open, leadership development studies still cherish quite a few of them, for example, the coaching conversation, or, say, the peer group dialogues and the executive programme exam. Some of the textual agents, such as the personality profile, could also be added to the list. I wonder how well maintaining the mystique and exclusivity that surrounds these practices actually serves participants, instructors or the broader community. I think these practices could be explored, not only in the name of some abstract research agenda and not only because – in the case of the public sector – taxpayers are footing the bill, but also because the making up of leaders, in turn and partly, is making up society – a phenomenon that necessitates transparency and accountability as to how this is done. Ultimately, all of this serves to stimulate discussions aimed at answering another question: are these leaders thus made up, in fact, the ones we need?

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# Appendices

## Information letter to LD participants (in Danish)

Leadership Development and Leadership Practice: Worlds apart?

2015 - 2018

CBS
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***Projektets formål***

Projektet undersøger

1. hvordan forskningsbaserede ledelsesuddannelser – som MPG – egentlig tilegnes af den studerende under Personligt Udviklingsforløb, PUF, samt under arbejdet med masterprojektet? samt
2. hvordan PUF henholdsvis masterprojektet senere anvendes i den studerendes egen praksis?

Eller mere enkelt: *Hvordan forandrer MPG den studerendes lederskab?*

***Empiri***

Projektets nysgerrighed retter sig på undervisningssiden mod såvel den konkrete undervisning og vejledning som den enkelte studerende. På praksissiden fokuseres på den enkelte studerendes ledelsespraksis i dennes organisation.

Metoderne vil være kvalitative og etnografiske. Det vil sige at undervisningsaktiviteter registreres i digital lydform,og gennem klasserumsobservation, ligesom nogle studerende - efter informeret samtykke - vil blive interviewet og observeret i deres organisationer.

***Forankring***

Projektet er finansieret af CBS og forankret på Institut for Organisation, IOA. I styregruppen for projektet sidder lektor Magnus Larsson og lektor Morten Knudsen, begge IOA, samt MPG studieleder, lektor Anne Reff Pedersen, IOA samt lektor og vicedekan for Management Programs, Christian Tangkjær, IOA.

Projektet afvikles sideløbende med et større søsterprojekt – Leadership Development in the Public Sector – som Magnus Larsson og Morten Knudsen leder i Region H. Dette projekt deler formål og metode med søsterprojektet.

Projektet udføres af cand. scient. pol., BA psych. Frank Meier, chefkonsulent ved Management Programmes, CBS. Frank kender MPG gennem sin rolle som fagkoordinator for PUF og vejleder ved masterprojekterne. Frank indskrives som PhD-studerende ved *PhD School in Organisation and Management Studies*, CBS.

***Kontakt***

Frank Meier besvarer alle spørgsmål på fm.mp@cbs.dk eller mobilnummer 2225 4932.

# Invitation to participate (in Danish)



**Invitation til forskningsprojekt**

Master of Public Governance <mpg@cbs.dk>

Tir 10-03-2015 12:46

Cc: Frank Meier <fm.mp@cbs.dk>

2 vedhæftede filer (433 KB)

Franks projekt forklaret på 1 side.pdf; Tidsplan for udviklingssamtaler.pdf;

**INVITATION TIL FORSKNINGSPROJEKT**

*Kære studerende på Personligt udviklingsforløb A, hold XA,*

Vi skriver til dig, fordi Management Programmes og Institut for Organisation, CBS, har iværksat et forskningsprojekt der inddrager MPG og Personligt Udviklingsforløb, PUF. Projektet er nærmere beskrevet i den side, der er lagt ved denne mail.

Du er som MPG-studerende tilmeldt PUF og skal til udviklingssamtale hos Annemette Kjærgaard eller Manon de Jongh i uge 12, 13 eller 15.

**Jeg vil derfor spørge dig, om vi må optage din PUF udviklingssamtale på bånd? Der ikke vil være andre til stede i lokalet end underviseren og dig selv.**

Optagelserne vil kun blive aflyttet af mig i deres helhed – dele heraf kan blive afspillet for udvalgte forskere. Data vil blive fuldt anonymiseret og sløret i forbindelse med videre analyse og publicering, og der er ingen risiko for, at du kan identificeres i projektets formidling.

Du behøver ikke svare på denne henvendelse. Ved udviklingssamtalen kan du give samtykke - som du i givet fald kan trække tilbage ved afslutningen af udviklingssamtalen. Hvis du afslår deltagelse har det naturligvis ingen negative konsekvenser for dig, og samtalen vil blive afviklet som vanligt.

Det vil samtidigt glæde os, hvis du vil bidrage til projektet og dermed udviklingen af undervisningen

på MPG.

Venlig hilsen

**Frank Meier**

Projektleder

## Interview guide for interviews after the LD module

1. Current organizational position and the three most demanding managerial tasks / tasks for you at present?

2. Do you have an intention with your leadership?

3. What does your own manager have his/her focus on?

4. How would you describe your take-away from the LD module today? And MPG?

5. Are there any elements in PUF that seemed particularly useful (can be omitted)?

6. Can you point to some special results from the experiments?

7. And from your own ethnography as well (Who visited you?)

8. Let's look at the time following the LD module: Have you done any other experiments?

9. Identity: Who do you think you are today as a leader - and is that changing? What will your employees say about this? And your own manager?

10. Current / upcoming activities that are most demanding for you as a leader:

11. Can you describe some processes or characteristics of your current organization that make it more difficult for you to realize your intention with your leadership?

12. Have you disrupted existing patterns in your new group?

13. Have you encouraged innovation?

14. Have you acted as a sense-maker?

15. On what occasions do you influence your organization?

# Declaration of informed consent

Samtykke-erklæring angående
Leadership Development and Leadership Practice: Worlds apart?
2015 - 2018

CBS forskningsprojekt ved Frank Meier

CBS
COPENHAGEN BUSINESS SCHOOL

2015

Copenhagen Business School
Institut for Organisation
Kilevej 14A
2000 Frederiksberg

Projektleder
Frank Meier
Tlf.: 3815 3815
Mob.: 2225 4932
fm.mp@cbs.dk
www.cbs.dk

Side 1 / 2

Samtykke:

Jeg afgiver hermed samtykke til, at min udviklingssamtale i forbindelse med modulet Personligt Udviklingsforløb kan optages på lydmedie og anvendes i forskningsøjemed, jf. side 2.

Samtykket forudsætter, at optagelsen anvendes i overensstemmelse med god forskningspraksis og –etik, herunder at data før formidling anonymiseres og sløres, således at identifikation ikke kan finde sted.

Jeg har modtaget relevante informationer om projektet, og jeg kan trække dette samtykke tilbage ved samtalens afslutning.

Dato: __________

Den studerendes navn: ______________________________

Den studerendes underskrift: ______________________________

# Co-author declarations

CBS COPENHAGEN BUSINESS SCHOOL HANDELSHØJSKOLEN

**Co-author statement**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Title of paper** | Making up leaders: Reconfiguring the executive student through profiling, texts and conversations in a leadership development programme |
| **Journal and date (if published)** | Meier, F., & Carroll, B. (2019) *Human Relations*, 0018726719858132. Published Sept. 4, 2019, OnlineFirst |

| |
|---|
| 1. Formulation/identification of the scientific problem to be investigated and its operationalization into an appropriate set of research questions to be answered through empirical research and/or conceptual development |
| Description of contribution:<br>Frank Meier identified the scientific problem to be investigated and its operationalization. Brigid Carroll contributed through the iterative development of an appropriate RQ. |
| 2. Planning of the research, including selection of methods and method development |
| Description of contribution:<br>Frank Meier did the planning of the research, selecting methods and developing methods. |
| 3. Involvement in data collection and data analysis |
| Description of contribution:<br>Frank Meier did the data collection and headed the data analysis. Following the translation into English, Brigid Carroll contributed with ideas and observations. |
| 4. Presentation, interpretation and discussion of the analysis in the form of an article or manuscript |
| Description of contribution:<br>Frank Meier headed the presentation, interpretation and discussion of the analysis in the form of an article or manuscript. Brigid Carroll contributed to the Theory section, in particular with regard to Identity work and with ideas to the implications for practice and the conclusion. |

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. Co-author (PhD student) | Frank Meier |
| **I hereby declare that the above information is correct** | |
| 27/12 2019<br>Date | Frank Meier<br>Signature |

| 2. Co-author | Brigid Carroll |
|---|---|
| **I hereby declare that the above information is correct** | |

**Co-author statement**

| **Title of paper** | Ventriloquial reflexivity at the intersection of theory and practice in leadership development |
|---|---|
| **Journal and date (if published)** | Submitted to journal, October 2019. |

| |
|---|
| 1. Formulation/identification of the scientific problem to be investigated and its operationalization into an appropriate set of research questions to be answered through empirical research and/or conceptual development |
| Description of contribution:<br>Frank Meier identified the scientific problem to be investigated, and headed its operationalization. Brigid Carroll contributed importantly through our prolonged and iterative development of an appropriate RQ. |
| 2. Planning of the research, including selection of methods and method development |
| Description of contribution:<br>Frank Meier did the planning of the research, selecting methods and developing methods. |
| 3. Involvement in data collection and data analysis |
| Description of contribution:<br>Frank Meier did the data collection and the major part of the data analysis. Following the translation of excerpts into English, Brigid Carroll contributed with pertinent ideas and observations. |
| 4. Presentation, interpretation and discussion of the analysis in the form of an article or manuscript |
| Description of contribution:<br>Frank Meier did the presentation, interpretation and discussion of the analysis in the manuscript. Brigid Carroll contributed to the Theory section, in particular with regard to knowing. In the iterations of versions, Brigid Carroll contributed by sustained critical readings. |

| 1. Co-author (PhD student) | Frank Meier |
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| 2. Co-author | Brigid Carroll |
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**Co-author statement**

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|---|---|
| **Title of paper** | Going live! From interviews to interactions in the scholarship of teaching and learning |
| **Journal and date (if published)** | Submitted to journal, November 2019. |

| |
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| 1. Formulation/identification of the scientific problem to be investigated and its operationalization into an appropriate set of research questions to be answered through empirical research and/or conceptual development |
| Description of contribution:<br>Frank Meier and Roddy Walker collaboratively identified the scientific problem to be investigated, and its operationalization. |
| 2. Planning of the research, including selection of methods and method development |
| Description of contribution:<br>Frank Meier and Roddy Walker collaboratively planned the research and selection of methods for this article. The data used was made available through a prior project by Roddy Walker, in which he did the planning of the empirical work, including selecting and developing methods. |
| 3. Involvement in data collection and data analysis |
| Description of contribution:<br>Frank Meier and Roddy Walker collaboratively did the data analysis, whereas Roddy Walker did the collection of the original data. |
| 4. Presentation, interpretation and discussion of the analysis in the form of an article or manuscript |
| Description of contribution:<br>Frank Meier and Roddy Walker collaboratively did the presentation, interpretation and discussion of the analysis in the manuscript. |

| | |
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| 1. Co-author (PhD student) | Frank Meier |
| **I hereby declare that the above information is correct** | |
| 27/12 2019<br>Date | Signature |
| 2. Co-author | Roddy Walker |
| **I hereby declare that the above information is correct** | |
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*Institutional Transition and Organizational Diversity:*
*Differentiated internationalization strategies of emerging market state-owned enterprises*

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*IT, organisation og digitalisering: Institutionelt arbejde i den kommunale digitaliseringsproces*

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*Hvilke offentlige ledere er der brug for når velfærdstænkningen flytter sig – er Diplomuddannelsens lederprofil svaret?*

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*Self-conception and image of context in the growth of the firm*
*– A Penrosian History of Fiberline Composites*

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*The Daily Selection*

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*The Cancer Centre That Never Was*
*The Organisation of Danish Cancer Research 1949-1992*

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*Relational Perspectives on Brand Logics and Design Innovation Strategies and Implementation*

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*In the gray zone*
*With police in making space for creativity*

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*Healthcare Innovation under The Microscope*
*Framing Boundaries of Wicked Problems*

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*Risk Management in large Danish public capital investment programmes*

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*Film som design*
*Design af levende billeder i film og tv-serier*

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*Interzones of Law and Metaphysics*
*Hierarchies, Logics and Foundations of Social Order seen through the Prism of EU Social Rights*

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*TRUSTWORTHINESS: ENABLING GLOBAL COLLABORATION*
*An Ethnographic Study of Trust, Distance, Control, Culture and Boundary Spanning within Offshore Outsourcing of IT Services*

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*A CONSTRUCTIVIST INQUIRY INTO CHINA'S PRAGMATICS OF GREEN MARKETISATION MAPPING CONTROVERSIES OVER A POTENTIAL TURN TO QUALITY IN CHINESE WIND POWER*

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*A Multi-case Analysis of the Development of Enterprise Resource Planning Systems (ERP) Business Practices*

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*New Cooperativism:*
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*Sustainability-Focused Identity: Identity work performed to manage, negotiate and resolve barriers and tensions that arise in the process of constructing or ganizational identity in a sustainability context*

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*Organizing Science in Society – the conduct and justification of resposible research*

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*Implementering af ITIL® IT-governance - når best practice konflikter med kulturen Løsning af implementerings-problemer gennem anvendelse af kendte CSF i et aktionsforskningsforløb.*

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*Knowledge dissemination based on terminological ontologies. Using eye tracking to further user interface design.*

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*Designing performance management for operational level*
*- A closer look on the role of design choices in framing coordination and motivation*

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*Objects and Social Actions*
*– on Second-hand Valuation Practices*

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*Innovation-based M&A*
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*Enactment of the Organizational Cost Structure in Value Chain Configuration*
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*Enterprise Social Media at Work*

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*Dirt, aesthetics and inclusion in public service work*

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*Tie formation in the sector of shipping intermediaries in shipping*

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