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# Driving Insights via Processes of Socioemotional Being and Becoming: Military and Business Epistemology

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## **ABSTRACT**

*The context of strategic and operational military work provides a clear opportunity of the consideration of potential transferability of skills to business contexts. This has particular relevance to contexts of responsive change management and effective communication. Central to both of these facets of business in practice is the capacity to understand the 'self', which is reliant on the ability to make meaning of experience, reflect on the pre-existence of historical memories and to formulate appropriate, situationally responsive actions as an integral part of reflexivity. This chapter provides an insight into these processes and highlights processes of socioemotional wellbeing and becoming can serve to improve insights in business settings.*

**Keywords:** Assumption, Meaning Making, Interpretation, Epistemology, Knowledge, Philosophy, Reflection, Reflexivity, Coping, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

## INTRODUCTION

Being able to transcend disciplinary in the development of effective strategies for the communication of insights in business is pivotal to progressive development and dynamic processes of change management. The unique cultural and situational specificity of military life has a long recognised and multifactorial impact on lives lived in active service and veteran retirement (Cooper et al, 2018). There are reciprocal lessons from both business and the military which have a shared epistemological basis and as such a high degree of relevance to the communication of insights in business. Understanding the nature of 'self' is epistemologically determined by human capacity to make meaning of experience, to reflect on the pre-existing of historical memories, and perhaps, most significantly of all, to formulate a reflexive and proactive response to the future (Button, Jinkerson and Bryan, 2017). The situated nature of military service, is such that the fundamental nature of knowledge and ways of knowing, interpretation and processes of meaning making transcend several fields of individual knowledge, such as philosophy, social science, medical science, psychology and faith (Merriman et al, 2017). This chapter will embrace these potentially transferrable facets of praxis to drive discussion of how processes of socioemotional being and becoming can serve to potentially also improve insights in business settings.

The acquisition of knowledge pertaining to the self, forms the basis of epistemological debate which has endured across mankind for thousands of years (Muis, Chevrier and Singh, 2018). Providing a contextual and situational approach to understanding the complexity of military personnel and veteran perceptions of self will be the focus of this chapter rather than engaging in any deep philosophical debate of how, rather than why, knowledge is stored and accessed on a daily basis, and alongside this, how it has the potential to inform processes of immediate and long term decision making as a consequence of making meaning of experience (Campbell, 2018).

Military services have never been more in need of coping mechanisms that accommodate systemic inequity and the need to function effectively on both an individual and collective level (Olson, 2018; Rodd and Sanders, 2018). At the heart of the capacity to establish these coping mechanisms, is the need to address the emotional self in the military workplace (Conley, Durlak and Kirsch, 2015). Awareness of the concept of emotional intelligence has increased radically over the last decade (Kilgore, 2017; Garcia Zea et al, 2019). Intergenerational solidarity and understanding have never been at the fore of positive function across society in an array of differing contexts and correspondingly new approaches to supporting people in reflecting on their experiences have been developed and implemented (Williams-Klotz and Gansemer-Topf, 2017). Belying any holistic wellbeing, whether organisationally or individually, is mental health. As a consequence of this advocating, promoting and facilitating the positive health and wellbeing of staff has been identified as a key priority for address and sustained integration into educational and vocational training practice (Ghiya, 2019; Schonert-Reichl and Roeser, 2016).

The chapter serves to provide an insight into how understanding the concepts of cognition, metacognition and epistemic cognition can be used to frame and define how meaning making of military service, will be integrated, both at the point of experience and after active service is complete. Both are used to form the basis of what, in the longer term, have the potential to become the long-held assumptions and presuppositions usually surrounding internal and external life worlds. Being able to make sense of both is pivotal in supporting and addressing the issues with which military service personnel and veterans present across the societies they have served in active service.

The central aims of this chapter are threefold. Firstly, the authors have aimed to provide a theoretical rather than an applied approach to the context of business, which provides a backdrop of conceptual aspects worthy of consideration around the acquisition of knowledge and ways of knowing. Secondly, the authors aim to provide an insight into the integration of philosophical approaches into the facilitation of critical introspection and reflective practice. The third and final aim of the chapter is to increase an awareness of

predisposing factors of a decline in the mental health and wellbeing of military service personnel and military veterans and to highlight the direct relevance of this to business contexts.

## **SHARED CONNECTIONS, SHARED PERSPECTIVES AND SHARED LEARNING**

Military and business identity have shared perspectives in relation to the universal complexity of organisational infrastructure, which forms the contextual basis for the development and operationalisation of culture, professional practice and governance. Considering different perspectives for those working in business is important if a degree of perspective on interprofessional and interpersonal relationships is to be understood from the perspective of risk, credibility and trust. Nowhere are these better typified than in a military setting where education and training form the basis of how relationships and interactions develop and shape the organisation as well as the relationships of those within it.

## **THE LEGITIMACY OF MILITARY EPISTEMOLOGY**

In relation to the social construction of reality, seminal historical research still informs how social constructionism has shaped and continues to shape understanding of how and why meaning making occurs at all (Burger and Luckmann, 1966). The context specificity of the military has the capacity in temporal terms, not only to influence the attitude and behaviour of personnel through the acquisition of habitual and learned behaviour but also to alter the psychological capacity of them to re-adjust back to civilian life as they become military veterans (Abraham et al, 2017). The long-held pre-suppositions and assumptions that accumulate via experiences in everyday life constitute the potential basis of interrelationships and effective communication with others that is either unhindered by epistemological bias or completely overshadowed by it (Gerken, 2017). Context specific language and discourse add further complexity to this, as meaning making is articulated, shared and disseminated (James, 2017). The notion of institutionalisation is apparent when personnel become so acclimatised to using similar (context specific) language and acceptable behaviours and attitudes become a social norm and expectation across working life in the military (Gibson et al, 2017). To educate personnel about this is the first mechanism to enacting positive change in relation to it but perhaps most importantly in the potential transferability understanding the significance of their insights to business practice.

Whilst current research has shifted the research landscape to the point where it is acceptable for analysis of social worlds to become commonplace, there has been limited study of the potential role of education and training in providing a protective mechanism for the future health and wellbeing of both active and military veterans. This chapter addresses this point and offers insight into mechanisms and approaches to supporting both and the contribution they could make during active duty and, subsequently, for the veteran population (Rukavishnikov and Pugh, 2018), many of which can be transferred to business contexts. Indeed, it is the legitimacy of military education and training schools which provides an ideal platform for the sharing of best practice in preparing, supporting and protecting the mental health and wellbeing of service men and women during the course of their military duties and the experiences they have within it (Sookermany, Meyer and Land, 2017). Traditional culture has also ensured that social structures have replaced accepted norms to such an extent that they are normalised in military contexts so that human constructions of reality are framed by new philosophical lenses. The most significant components of reality construction will be captured as a means of understanding how best knowledge might be progressively deconstructed as an integral part of critical introspection and reflexivity.

Since epistemology is an area of philosophy concerned with the nature and justification of knowledge in humans and features areas of liminal transdisciplinary between education, philosophy and psychology. King (2009) annotated the progressive development of students from Feldman and Newcomb's (1969) operational defining of the delineation between growth and change through a lens which provided clarity

into how ability, capacity and capability of understanding could be temporally developed. The implicit link between this and the work of Mezirow (1990; 2000 and 2009) is that habits of mind are far more durable than points of view and that they are context specific in relation to the assumptions that guide their core decision making processes.

### **Contextual Backdrop**

Facilitating the capacity of military personnel how to think rather than what to think as an integral part of their educational training has emerged as a consequence of a relatively recent recognition and value of challenging assumption and pre-supposition. This value emanates from the need to delineate perceived reality from actual reality and consequently the ascertainment of truth beyond that which can be regarded as only rationally valid instead of reflexively ascertained.

This paradigm shift in military education has largely been influenced by approaches in design thinking – an active process of integrating and discerning processes of reflexivity into complexity theory, again permitting a cognitively more flexible mechanism of delineating between truth and verisimilitude.

The context specificity of military education and training within the broad concept of institutionalism has dictated how the reflexive turn in military epistemology is becoming progressively operationalised across military praxis. Traditionally conscientious decision making, was by its very nature posited as something only to be judged through the lens of empiricism or objectivity. However, at a functional level the capacity to think intuitively often overrides capacity for rationalism and in this sense military epistemology sees a shift to the immediate integration of implicit, tacit or epistemic knowledge. Consolidating what is epistemic, with cognate knowledge of certainty rather than pre-supposition has become the keystone of assemblage theoretical perspectives on what constitutes both efficiency and efficacy in the context of military service and the critical thinking underpinning them.

## **HISTORICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVES ON TRUTH**

Establishing the truth in historical perspectives is illustrated widely across philosophy and academic literature, where the establishment of truth and being able to discern between actual rather than perceived reality has been posited as the central crux of rationalistic decision making for centuries. Within this, there was also the much later acknowledgement of how the emotional can override the rational, due to human conscience and capacity for reflexivity in action. However, the complexity of military service means these philosophical standpoints can be contested and debated as to whether the aim of military education and training is to reach a position of truth, or, rather, the best or least bad outcome in circumstances where lives are at stake. This demands much of military personnel making the decisions and their ability to act, under pressure, often with incomplete information and with lives very much at stake. Trying to identify a truth in military decision making is further complicated when an active and skilled enemy is involved, seeking to win victory by all the means at their disposal, including deception. In such circumstances it is absolutely imperative that a decision maker may actively choose to wait and delay a critical decision until more information or clarity is available or discernible. To remain inactive in such circumstances is the military equivalent of a mortal sin, as it invites the enemy to seize the initiative and gain a potentially decisive advantage. Military education and training seek to avoid this by linking the need to be decisive in uncertain circumstances, with the necessity for individual moral courage:

*We must have the moral courage to make tough decisions in the face of uncertainty – and accept full responsibility for those decisions – when the natural inclination would be to postpone the decision pending more complete information. To delay action in an emergency because of incomplete information shows a lack of moral courage. We do not want to make rash decisions, but we must not squander opportunities while trying to gain more information.*

*(General A M Gray and Major J Schmitt, Warfighting, United States Marine Corps, 1989)*

In relation to the core issues of transferability and ecological validity that surround research with a specific contextual setting or situated nature, these can be important factors to consider, both in relation to active military service and in how military candidates are educated and trained with a sense of civic as well as institutional responsibility. For those in the context of decision making where temporality is a key driver of decision making (i.e. thinking in the moment) the question of being able to ascertain truth stems from the question of whether that truth is purely a matter of objective binary decision making, or whether it is an epistemic means of consolidating both pre-existing and sometimes co-existing beliefs and assumptions. The aim of establishing truth is therefore twofold. The value of truth is firstly rooted in the value of having a true belief and secondly the devaluing of having beliefs that are false.

As a general rule, human belief is not based on any innate sense of intentionality. Usually there is a source of tangible evidence to support assumptions or pre-suppositions of perceived truth and actuality, the basis of which are used to proactively formulate decision making by mankind. From this assertion, it is also possible to posit that humans have an aim of epistemic rationality, which underpins their beliefs and their systemic bases of truth and perceived reality. Extending this idea further, it might also be posited that people have an aim of believing by being epistemically rational but that this poses a fundamental challenge because of human emotion at an epistemic level. This is particularly dangerous when assumptions and pre-suppositions remain unchallenged or unacknowledged. It is what leads to the concept of methods driven instead of question led research, where in the attempt to find truth, it becomes possible to believe only in the pursuit of it. Framing human capacity in this respect, is determined by the fundamental and blatantly apparent relationship between knowledge, truth and belief. The purpose of establishing truth in the context of decision making, ought to be to guide intrinsic belief to the actual evidence available on any given issue or stance of relevance to the potential outcome. What may rightly or wrongly regarded as evidence then, clearly resonates as an issue for further consideration. This has particular resonance in the context of immediate and instantaneous decision where the ramifications of a wrong decision can potentially mean the difference between life and death in military service. If self-belief is the source of guidance in the establishment of truth, then epistemically it can be posited that ways of framing belief are nullified in terms of their generalisable or transferable value since they are couched in the aim of truth being belief alone. The individuality of mind is central to the concept of epistemology. This has also become a fundamental basis for deciding who ought to be taught *how* as well as *what* to think in relation to military organisational hierarchies.

Propositions stem from the constructions of people, for whom research into a specific area or discipline is a motivating factor and this is common to all situations and contexts, not just military settings. The ability to critically appraise and evaluate claims of truth are the very hallmarks of 21<sup>st</sup> Century research synthesis and these are echoed by Descartes' discussion of the clarity of truth in original debates of the legitimacy of metaphysics (Descartes, 1641). This was extended into current practice by Leibniz (1989), whose 'Theory of Truth' formed the basis of modern systematic inquiry.

## **HEURISTICS AND BIASES**

In relation to the potential transferability of knowledge between the context of military and business epistemology, there are key operational definitions, which although similar in semantics have entirely different meanings in epistemological praxis. In military settings the organisational knowledge hierarchy is structured into strategic then operational then tactical, whereas in business the terminology is reflective of strategic thinking at an executive level, being operationalised by work at the front line of business. This subtle but resonant difference is reflective of the equally resonant difference to the consequence of a poor decision being made. Ultimately the stakes are high in both contexts but the clear line of delineation in the military is the potential for immediate loss of life or devastating injury, which is incomparable to an error

in the context of everyday business performance. In the contexts of decision making which is fundamental to both environments, the seminal work of Tversky and Kahneman (1974) from the discipline of economic psychology is most overlooked. 'Judgement under Uncertainty: Heuristics and Biases', remains as relevant to the context of human decision making today as it was at the time it was published, when it challenged the theory of human rationality. It is the situated context of workplace ambiguity that lends itself so well to the concept that uncertainty impacts upon the human capacity to make informed decisions. Nowhere is this of greatest relevance than to the field of military epistemology and the potential transferability of military epistemology to those situational contexts and settings where higher order critical thinking 'in situ', has greatest resonance. What Tversky and Kahneman revealed, was the predictability in those errors of judgement, made in the context of ambiguous evidence and in the face of multi-combinatorically framed complexity, where several intraneous and extraneous variables might potentially be at work. They framed the term 'heuristics' and 'biases' as explanatory mechanisms of the subconscious mental shortcuts that underpin the sometimes necessarily spontaneous decision making in applied contexts and settings.

The methodological approaches that examined the interpretive and analytical approaches surrounding Tversky's and Kahneman's approach to heuristics modelled, exactly, how high-level quality interpretation is fundamental to correspondingly high-level criticality in applied professional practice. Those subconscious processes underpinning this high-quality interpretation, are pivotal to the function of the human mind and have provided a platform of psychological theory and conceptual thinking that has not only shaped modern-day economics in the case of the authors. Beyond this, the approach has transcended disciplinary to become of relevance to every professional identity where subconscious thought can sway and influence the optimal chance of making sense of ambiguity in practice.

With a career trajectory and respected background in military psychology, Kahneman had been responsible for the assessment of soldier capability and the fact he had been raised in a war-torn country provided the motivation for him to intellectually prefer applied, rather than purely theoretical knowledge. This has the potential to influence capacity for valid decision making in practice. Recognising the subconscious influences impacting on human judgement in action was a fundamental landmark in the study of human psychology.

### ***The Influence of Cognitive Biases in Practice***

The erroneous decision making that stems from making automatic judgements in the process of complex decision making were identified by Tversky and Kahneman as being attributable to two concepts. These were termed 'heuristics' and 'bias' – the two are subtly but significantly different in terms of their impact on practice. Cognitive bias constitutes systematic errors in thinking which can often be attributed to the nature and presentation of problems. This fundamentally challenged the model of rational choice theory that was a keystone of social sciences research at the time. Tversky and Kahneman highlighted the limitations of human cognition and highlighted that the reality of human decision making is rooted in the capacity of humans to know the outcome of options available to them. Fundamentally and of exceptional significance to practice based learning and research, Tversky and Kahneman provided a means of educating members of society by introducing mechanisms of being able to understand that the limitation of human reasoning is shaped by the subconscious biases that frame human thinking. Important considerations of human emotion in the context of departing from rational thinking were considered in 'Judgement under Certainty' (1974). These are the resultant systematic errors in thinking when people are emotionally impacted upon by issues are something which are automatic and that humans have no subconscious control of. As such the complexity of human nature is one which has to be considered in any aspect of research claiming to be purist in its objectivity, since it is debateable whether this is achievable at all.

## ***Sociological Perspectives in Heuristics and Biases***

Social scientists have traditionally posited decision making as being either descriptive or normative – the delineating features, of which, are that description posits experience in the past, whereas a normative approach advocates the core concept of reflexivity. Placing cognitive limitation at the heart of what it is to be a human decision maker, opens avenues of understanding that had never been recognised before and which are of huge relevance in decision making today. This stems from the challenge that identifying workplace issues for address, understanding and wider dissemination necessitate. Ambiguity adds another dimension to reasoning capability and what Tversky and Kahneman highlight before all else is that the unlimited cognitive capacity to predict certain outcomes simply does not exist in the human brain, since cognitive capacity for it is limited.

Defining the study of heuristics is relatively straightforward when applied to human decision making. Most straightforwardly, heuristics can be regarded as the cognitive illusions that the human mind uses to bypass complex decision making with the consequence they are often unintentionally, yet irrefutably, wrong. In the same manner in which heuristics are context specific and bound by the situated nature of key events and practices, so too is validity, which has important ramifications for the concepts of perceived reality, actual reality, verisimilitude and trustworthiness in practice. It is the predictability of heuristics and the consequent errors that manifest from them which are tangible and, in this respect, predictable. Within ‘Judgement under Uncertainty’, the three heuristics identified for specific concern are the concepts of representativeness, availability and adjustment (otherwise termed anchoring). Stereotypical assumptions fall under the bracket of representativeness, where human judgement can be very evidently skewed by the pre-cognition that people enter the construction of meaning making with. Humans therefore construct perceptions of reality based on their previous experience and the epistemically cognitive pre-suppositions and assumptions they hold about them in practice. As a consequence of this, representativeness can potentially be fundamentally wrong and as a direct consequence of this, can ultimately lead to misdirected or simply wrong conclusions about the information available to the human mind.

### ***Informing Judgement***

The availability heuristic is dependent on how common an experience something has been, the meaning attributed to it and the capacity of people to make meaning and judgement in the light of it. It could potentially account for the subtle nuances of organisational culture that go unnoticed because of their relative degree of frequency. Memory was thus posited by Tversky and Kahneman to distort as well as inform judgement, leading to an increasing likelihood of human error. Their work at this point made significance of the connection between cognitive bias and heuristics. Whereas heuristics were benchmarks of context and time, cognitive biases were acknowledged for the first time as being far more straightforward systematic errors of thinking.

Kahneman was later keen to clarify that this connection does not necessarily denigrate heuristics as something bad, but rather something to be acknowledged and aware of. What the impact of this was though, was to frame intuition as something fundamentally flawed but nevertheless valued in the absence of wider knowledge access at given points in time (Kahneman, et al, 1982). The wider implication of this now historical research is that, for the first time, it identified a dualistic model of thinking, in which some of the time humans have the capacity to think quickly, intuitively and rashly, which is prone to error and the other part of the time humans are considered, reflective and less influenced by the mental shortcuts that characterise quick thinking. It is these recognitions, which have consequently been used to explicate human capacity for reasoning and the projection of behaviour in practice-based settings.

Linking both intuition and research is a third element, ‘military experience’. The value of practical application of military skills during warfare or training is recognised as key, as much for the ability to



function under pressure and to give orders and make plans that by their nature are well-suited to the complex and confusing environment that is battle:

*Battle experience overcomes friction, from troopers up to the divisional commander.*

*(Von Clausewitz, On War, tr Michael Howard and Peter Paret, 1976)*

Yet while direct experience of battle will help prepare an individual for further action in future, supplementing it with wider knowledge can help prepare for the wider challenges which occur during warfare and when societal norms no longer apply:

*Direct experience is inherently too limited to form an adequate foundation either for theory or for application. At best it produces an atmosphere that is of value in drying and hardening the structure of thought. The great value of indirect experience lies in its greater variety and extent.*

*(Captain Sir Basil Liddell Hart, Strategy: The Indirect Approach, 1954)*

Kahneman (2013) first recognised dual processing theory via discussion of the dichotomy between two modes of thought, termed (the fictional) system 1 “instinctive and emotional” and (the fictional) system 2 “deliberative and more logical”. This was used as a metaphorical understanding of how behaviour is a direct consequence of proactive response, where system 1 processes are intuitive, fast, autonomous, and high capacity in contrast to system 2 processes, which are reflective, slow, and resource intensive. System 1 processes are hypothesised to provide default outputs that may be acted upon as explicit representations manipulated in working memory via System 2 processing, (Evans & Stanovich, 2013a & Thompson, 2013). The important and relevant points from Kahneman’s work are;

System 2 can potentially be less objective and more ambiguous and multifaceted in contrast to System 1. When System 2 is engaged belief stems from knowledge provided by System 1 and contrary to scientific belief the tendency is for humans to rely on data, which consolidates and supports their own perspectives (confirmation bias). System 2 necessitates deliberate effort, focused attention and slow thinking constructs mechanisms of deliberate self-control. In situations of cognitive overload in the System 2, the System 1 overrides thinking processes and as a consequence questions to System 2 are raised by System 1. Whereas System 2 searches the memory to find a measured response, System 1 continues to constantly monitoring the external world.

Substitution occurs when a cognitive shutdown of System 1 occurs, which a consequence of no answer is being found to a hard question and the brain searching for an alternative easier question. System 2 is capable of constructive critique but is somewhat reliant upon presupposition and assumption rather than evidence-based decision making. Since System 1 has developed to prioritise potentially negative information and threats to mankind, there is a tendency to give priority to threat as opposed to opportunity, which is of huge consequence to perception of risk and perception of opportunity. Kahneman termed this ‘broad negativity dominance’, or negative bias, which provides a basis for why it is never difficult to recall a critical incident yet instances of excellent performativity may be overlooked.

Schwartz developed and extended this work on human emotion in practice and attributed it to the fuelling of heuristics in the formulation of subjective opinion (Schwartz, 2000). The notion of conscious brain activity is central to the context of critical thinking, critical introspection and reflexivity. Claxton (2015) highlighted how so many aspects of human experience lie in stark contrast to the concept of common sense that mankind would often like to think characterise personhood, as somehow making it credible as a species. Whilst intellectuals may disagree on the subtle nuances of what constitutes the conscious awareness of the human mind, it is startling how their consensus all collides in the context of humanity being inveterate storytellers, who automatically make meaning of the world around them, then assimilate it into a story to be told. It is a distinctive characteristic of the species that delineates and disarticulates it from the rest of

the animal species occupying the world. It has sustained mankind for generations in its capacity to provide explanation and rationale for being and for perceiving.

Experience belies all perceptual reality and the mind, in all its complexity, is responsible for the glory of what is now badged under the label and taxonomy of human experience. This capacity to formulate and regale stories, whether to ourselves or others, is pivotal to the process of being able to reflect and consolidate knowledge of what has been, what is and what has the potential to be in the world:

*What is the good of experience if you do not reflect?*

*(Frederick the Great, quoted in JFC Fuller, Decisive Battles of the USA, 1953)*

## **THE POWER OF COLLECTIVE NARRATIVE**

Collective narrative provides a context for the establishment of socio-cultural context, history and works far beyond the context of description and elaboration in being able to frame future action and dependency on pre-existing meaning. Story telling is intergenerational, cross generational and characterises us as being distinct in being able to traverse and incorporate representations in a process of sense-making that characterises existence itself. Claxton's observation that the perceptual world exists on the outside and memories, thoughts and feelings are on the inside does much to unpack the significance of the unconscious mind in action.

The temporal nature of consciousness is also something of huge significance to experience, particularly experience of a particular point or time in history. Key words amidst our capacity to make sense of things are rationality, sense-making and explication. How fantastic is it then, which the most celebrated of man's achievements are characterised by the capacity to take risk, think laterally and thrive on ambiguity and the complexity of human life on earth. This does not deliberately or flippantly question our capacity as a fundamentally unique species, but rather addresses the beautiful irony that frames our existence and the meaning we ascribe to it.

## **HEURISTICS AND BIASES IN ACTION**

As outlined earlier, heuristics and biases serve as cognitive shortcuts to aid and support the processing information given to the brain, upon which decisions can not only be made, but which can also lead to significant errors of judgement (Tversky & Kahneman, 1974). Recent authors have contributed to the heuristics and biases knowledge extending it beyond the parameters of this original work. Key authors in the field (Shepperd et al, 2008; Funkhouser, 2007; Mather et al, 2000 and Pettigrew, 1979) have added several recognitions, that also contribute greatly to the discussion around self-deception and the understanding of self:

The first of these is the concept of 'self-enhancement biases' – describing oneself more positively than a normative criterion would predict, Krueger (1998). In contrast to the theory of self-verification theory, which proposes that humans fundamentally have a desire to be perceived by others as they perceive themselves, this can drive motivation for this affirmation in practice. Moving from this theory is the concept of group biases, which facilitates a sense of active belonging to collective groups and communities of praxes. In contrast, self-serving attribution biases refer to the interpretation of events in a way which can be regarded as self-serving in the claiming of responsibility for positive outcomes and externalising responsibility for those which have the potential to be negative. Status quo biases arise in instances when sometimes it can be perceived as being somewhat better to do nothing when faced with adversity, it can also be perceived as stemming from the need not to change that which is already working in practice. Optimism bias is the capacity to predict the near future based on an overestimation of a potentially positive

outcome, which differs from the illusion of control bias where the human mind can perceive being able to influence outcomes despite there being no causal connection to them (Langer, 1975). Memory biases can be divided into the selective recall of information, which incorporates Festinger's (1957) work on cognitive dissonance, and self-serving to achieve a positive self-assessment of our past choices, (Mather et al, 2000). Confirmation bias is the concept of searching for new evidence to support our perspective and interpretation of evidence in a skewed manner whereas belief preservation bias is wishing beliefs could to remain the same when we are unwilling to admit when we are wrong, or to admit uncertainties or fallibilities.

## **PERFORMATIVITY**

The concept of performativity as elucidated by Lyotard also has a striking impact on individual capacity to express and articulate meaning of experiential learning and positioning. What is of greatest significance to the deconstruction of long held pre-suppositions and assumptions from individual realities and lived experiences is his acknowledgement of the fact that structuralist approaches denigrate and largely ignore the intraneous and extraneous figural components, which serve to function beyond the constraints of representational frameworks and structures. Positionally, Lyotard states the mutual reciprocity of the two and the relative implications of this to fundamental fields of academic disciplinarity such as linguistics and phenomenology. Perhaps most significant to research praxis was Lyotard's acknowledgement of the relevance of temporal and spatial specificity, which links directly to the situated nature of research-based practice. Experience and experiential articulation of sensorial self in an external world, therefore become an imperative to the credibility of language structure and discursive accounts of it. This essentially destabilises traditional thinking, ensuring that the world of interpretivist research remains free to celebrate the value of ambiguity and chaos that is a life lived and to abandon all hope of binary thinking in consideration of a 'real world' It is this stance that permits us to frame professional identity, regardless of discipline or profession, in the context of truth, positionality and knowledge, as epistemic reflexivity, in contrast to purely descriptive autobiographical narrative. This is in keeping too, with the dynamic shifts in professional identity that a career trajectory based in the midst of politics, governmental change and upheaval and consequently professional practice can ensure.

## **INTUITION AND KNOWLEDGE**

Since the whole emphasis of workplace research is placed on the sensorial awareness of experience from professional practice, then the notion of intuition and the role intuition plays in the motivation and formulation of new knowledge cannot be ignored. Whether belief based on intuition is knowledge is a long-contested debate and perceptual reality occupies the same philosophical reasoning space. Since perceptual realities also lead to belief via sensorial experience then to frame intellectual understanding in this seems reasonable, which in turn makes it constitute knowledge, regardless of whether or not it is true. In turn, the notion of making sense of intellectual awareness can be regarded as socially constructed knowledge formulation, regardless of how abstract the intellectual awareness actually is. For either to be possible it is necessary to firstly delineate intuitive from perceptual knowledge. Perception is inherently more advanced than simply having a sensorial experience or an acknowledgement of externality. The two are inextricably intertwined in the sense that perceptual reality is largely dependent upon priori knowledge of sensorial experiences.

In the context of the social world there is no singular truth but a continuum of truth which acts as a lens of interpretation for the execution of pragmatic research. This stance is termed relativism. Relativism is often closely associated with the concept of triangulation, in particular the triangulation of research findings from the context of research-based practice or practice-based research, or most often work based research. Triangulation might be used to assess congruency or consistency rather than repeatability, the concept of the testifiability of knowledge is largely redundant because of the temporality of knowledge i.e. it is only

true for that particular snapshot of time within which it is captured. Multiple realities within the context of positionality are also worth considering, since human perception is subject to maturation, change and adaptation in the light of additional human experience and perception. This in itself raises important debates in relation also to what perceptual knowledge is.

Delineating between what is perceptual and what is sensorial is a key mechanism of distinguishing between different states of mind and the meaning the mind makes of information supplied to it. The fact is that being sensorily aware of something is inherently different from perceiving it. The two are very much interrelated in that it is possible to perceive without first having had sensorial experience of something. There is a non-stasis of positionality that aligns with this, that accounts for this capacity for change. For each perception in the world, there is a representation of a propositional truth about the world. In this sense, knowledge that derives from human perception is therefore experientially valid but not necessarily true. This forms the basis of the delineation between perceived and actual reality.

## **THE STRUCTURE AND AGENCY OF EXPERIENTIAL BEING**

Structure and agency have determined that the situated nature of experience is specific to our life trajectories, individual experiences and personal perceptions of them. For every context specific interpretation, there will be as many realities of it as there are experiencers of it. It is here that the fundamental question of how we can prioritise and give salience to emergent themes becomes an issue. Locating the specifics of our own situated nature as interpretive researchers, making experience of these realities, is imperative to this process of acknowledgement. Failing in this respect lends itself to the processes of overgeneralising, rather than making specific informed decision making as to whether emergent theory may have potential transferability to similar contexts and settings rather than generalising and making universal claims about the value of data interpretation. Constraints of the process lie in the capacity of researchers to be sufficiently reflective and reflexive in accounts of themselves. The process is inherently reliant on self-evaluation and the acknowledgement and meaning of self that not all interpretivist researchers necessarily achieve. Perhaps it is the difficulty of recognising and critiquing concepts of personality, as opposed to just positionality, which makes this discourse so potentially challenging in practice. The concept of the personal, as opposed to purely the positional, integrates the concept of emotional intelligence into the dilemma of how best to present self. Personality itself can be seen as a paradigm influencing interpretive stance.

Simplistically posited, the unique universality of human experience from the perspective of all individuals means that interpretivist approaches to research, arguably like any other human research are influenced by the combinatorial variables that shape and inform the human mind. Personality can be defined though, as the paradigmatic characteristics of perception, thought, feeling and behaviour expression that can delineate one individual from another and which is recognisable between temporal and situational contexts. Emotional intelligence hinges on all of these and for the majority of people, personality remains fundamentally stable throughout life. It is this which can influence chosen ontological and epistemological stance as opposed to the specific ontological or epistemological stance of the questions and research areas we propose for study, however as unique individuals, these are all inherently unique. The implication with this is that our personalities can be argued to be the sum of our positionalities however this can be contested with debates of whether personality is socially constructed. It is not our aim through this text to debate this sociological frame of perspective but it ought to be recognised that for the large part the concept of human universality actually transcends situation, context and time and that this is what actually frames human research endeavour.

### ***Introspection and Critical Judgement***

Introspection is directly linked to the notion of human consciousness, a process of intraneous self-examination and explication of internal thoughts, feelings and memories with the resultant outcome of

critical self-reflection (Cherry 2016). There is nothing new in curiosity surrounding levels of consciousness or the liminality of conscious mental states and historically this was also a focus for research (Wundt, 1879). Initial studies examined how conscious mental states (elements of consciousness) could be scientifically studied using introspection as an integral part of formal experimental processes and as a consequence leading the field as a founder of cognitive psychology. Wundt's attribution to the establishment and progressive development of structuralism, forms the fundamental basis of understanding thoughts, sensation and perception. Consequently, it was contested that self-analysis was not feasible since individuals did not possess an appreciation of the processes or mechanisms of their own mental processes, Blumenthal (2002) & Danziger (1980).

## CONCLUSION

Since the armed forces are an extension of national/government policy and there to undertake its bidding, not serve as a judiciary seeking to determine 'truth', it ought to be clearly acknowledged that this lies in contrast to business settings. The military has to interpret and seek to apply government policy and intent within a highly dynamic and contested environment, that in recent years has had the added complexity of dealing with the potential for all decision making to be circulated and publicised online, in real-time. As a direct consequence of this, even minor tactical issues can have a strategic impact, which is essentially what General Charles Krulak referred to as the 'Strategic Corporal'. It is clear that there are the added implications of this for the mental health and wellbeing of those who make and implement military decisions. Further research is required to understand the impact of whether this is too 'managed through' a heuristic approach, with the consequences only recognised by the individual well after the event.

This raises further questions of direct relevance to both military and business contexts of how reflection on learning and experience be incorporated in practical terms into military education and training. This brings in the potential for the integration of the teaching of 'positionality' or 'positional stance' across everyday academic and military curricula. Within the military context this is traditionally it is done by rank held, sometimes by the types of appointment to which someone will be assigned, but both are only after someone has been selected for that rank or appointment. This raises the far more contentious debate of whether the capacity for critical reflection and reflexivity ought to be taught and the ability to do so, confirmed as a prerequisite for promotion or appointment throughout a career trajectory in the military or business?

Military education and training need to strike an appropriate balance between indirect experience (study), direct experience, reflection/reflexive behaviour and heuristics. It is arguable that business is no different. The nature of interdisciplinary research is such that linking these areas for knowledge construction together through collaborative effort, could be of significant reciprocal value to both.

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## KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

**Assumption:** Something that is accepted as true or as certain to happen, without factual or evidence based proof.

**Meaning Making:** A process of making sense of what is meant by experience, words, text, concepts, philosophies or action.

**Interpretation:** The process of explaining the meaning of something or an explanation or way of explaining.

**Epistemology:** The theoretical perspectives of knowledge, especially with regard to its methodology, methods, validity, and scope, and the distinction or delineation between justified belief and opinion

**Knowledge:** The facts, information, and skills acquired through experience, action, research or education; the theoretical or practical understanding of a specific subject or discipline.

**Philosophy:** The study of the theoretical basis of a particular branch of knowledge or experience.

**Reflection:** A process of serious contemplative thinking or active or consideration of past events.

**Reflexivity:** Is the consequent processual meaning making on experience beliefs, judgments and practices which influences future direction, as opposed to reflection, a process of contemplating past events.

**Coping:** Is the process of making a conscious effort to deal with problems or issues causing psychological stress or inner conflict which impact on psychological functionality.

**Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD):** A mental health condition, which can be directly attributed to the experience of trauma.

## **ADDITIONAL READING**

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