

Appendix B Learning log thematic analysis

Code 1 Defining conversational consulting = Insights that explore and open up what this phrase means both in terms of practice and as an abstract construct.

| <i>Theme</i> | <i>Sub Themes</i> | <i>Examples</i> | <i>Comment</i> |
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| Exploring what the experience of conversation feels like in consulting relationships from a consultants perspective | | | Code 1 is a very broad code which captured material that relates to a number of other codes. The theme and its associated sub-themes do however represent patterns within the data set. |
| | Hosting conversation | 'I tend to refer to myself as a host of conversations and the act of physically serving someone encourages them to incline towards you---to be attentive and open to contact' | A pattern within the data suggests an identity focussed on the practice of hosting conversations |
| | | 'so at its simplest what we need to offer is help for people to network, connect, converse, innovate with others, engage deeply' | This example gives a sense of some of the aspects of what hosting means in practice |
| | | 'Concern about language and understand-ability' | The data suggests an underlying concern about what the practice actually means—it seems not to be well understood |
| | Leadership development and conversational consulting | 'I think it is probably not possible to disconnect the notion of conversation from leadership' | Conversational consulting appears linked with leadership and leadership development |
| | | 'what is to co-create development opportunities which help people learn for themselves what it is to become a conversational leader' | |
| | | 'There is a growing worldwide interest in new forms of participatory leadership and of approaches to employee and community involvement that significantly and speedily shift behaviours and outcomes. My sense is that a | |

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| | | conversational approach to consulting will offer support and encouragement to these emergent approaches to change' | |
| | Conversational consulting meeting consultants needs | 'In my ideal consulting relationship I recognise that I am looking for mutual positive engagement. Without it it seems as though creativity is stifled and I become guarded in the conversation' | A pattern , often implicit in the data, is that the personal needs of the consultant can be met by the practice particularly needs for 'connection' with other people |
| | Conversational consulting as a process | <p>'It felt like a several stage process;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The gathering of people in one space ➤ The opening up of the space (the hosting) ➤ The signally of safety to share personal matters ➤ The speaking and responding ➤ The closing down of conversation ➤ The dispersal | A pattern in the data indicates that conversational consulting can be viewed as an umbrella term that includes a range of consulting activities and processes resulting in outcomes that are often more subtle and less visible than some forms of consulting |
| | | No noise and no loud brash trumpets but rather marked yet at times subtle shifts in behaviour and attitude. | |

Code 2 Contracting with the client =Descriptions of experiences where conversation is perceived to have impacted on how the initial relationship with the client started and developed.

| <i>Theme</i> | <i>Examples</i> | <i>Comment</i> |
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| Questions that emerge in the contracting process with clients | | The pattern in the data points to a number of interesting questions which focus on the purpose of the consultant/client relationship. The reflective nature of the questions suggests that part of the consulting practice involves 'holding' questions in relation to the client and your relationship with them |
| | 'What questions open up a space for learning and what attitudes need to enable that space to become of value? To me and to us?' | This points to a pattern in the data where the consulting relationship is reframed as a potential learning space |

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| | <p>'People often refer to the need for difficult conversations—what are they—why are they difficult—why do people hesitate and why do they want to label them difficult? And why does this label irritate me? When have I been in a difficult conversation and have I recognised it as such? There is a big business around such conversations? What is it about apparent conflict or anticipated conflict'</p> | <p>In this example the consultant reflects on why clients perceive conversations in the work place as almost invariably 'difficult' –involving challenging feedback . Presenting as a conversational consultant might tap into peoples beliefs that conversations only happen when difficult things needs to be said to others</p> |
| | <p>What does it mean to connect? How do I know I am in connection? How do we know we are in connection?</p> | <p>'Connecting' is a need on the part of the consultant at the outset of a relationship. It is not clear what this necessarily means form this example</p> |

Code 3 Helping the client=The inquirers intuitive sense that their conversational approach benefited the client. This may or may not have been confirmed by the client.

| <i>Theme</i> | <i>Examples</i> | <i>Comment</i> |
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| | | No theme identified in the data |

Code 4 Conversation as an organisational change process=Either explicit or implicit illustrations of how conversation changed either relationships or meanings or understandings.

| <i>Theme</i> | <i>Examples</i> | <i>Comment</i> |
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| Insights into the relationship between change and conversation | | The data contains a pattern of explicit and implicit assumptions about the relationship between conversation and change |
| | '...and I mentioned the possibility of | A conversation with a colleague leads to action on their part (a change) and |

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| | developing a community of practice and using Participative Inquiry approaches to engage one another in research. Liz responded well to this and I found myself exploring in my mind how this inquiry or research approach could both be an integral part of my own research but also offer development for others' | changed thinking on my part. |
| | 'There were also two different perspectives on change in the room — well at least two expressed. One saw change as a continuous process-always going on whilst there was a view that change would be achieved once specific actions had been agreed and taken' | Recognition by me that there are a range of perspectives (both socially constructed) around the nature of the change process. |
| | 'There is a growing worldwide interest in new forms of participatory leadership and of approaches to employee and community involvement that significantly and speedily shift behaviours and outcomes. My sense is that a conversational approach to consulting will offer support and encouragement to these emergent approaches to change. I am excited at what there is to be discovered' | This example reflects a pattern in the data where the issue of changed approaches to understanding change itself are beginning to become of interest to people |

Code 5 Development of conversational consulting skills=Description of skills or aptitudes that have appeared to developed through the inquiry process

| <i>Theme</i> | <i>Examples</i> | <i>Comment</i> |
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| Skills and attitudes identified as relevant to conversational consulting | | The data contains a pattern of comments relating to the skills and attitudes I perceived are helpful in fulfilling the role of a conversational consultant |
| | ‘Opportunism I think figures largely in consulting work, we look for work where we can find it and then seek to use each opportunity for greatest impact and learning’ | Being alert for opportunities to practice |
| | <p>‘I tend to refer to myself as a host of conversations and the act of physically serving someone encourages them to incline towards you---to be attentive and open to contact.’</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ ‘GATHERING---being present—acting as a focus—ensuring chairs available—but also being where people physically are ➤ OPENING—social questions—nothing heavy—opening the flow ➤ SIGNALLING—complex but I think there was mutual tacit signally that it was ok to share personal stuff—my role—I think to ask a gentle but generative question in response to my response to what I had heard with my eyes and ears ➤ SPEAKING—to dive in to open up the question and hear new emerging questions ➤ CLOSING---to take the lead from others when they started to change subject ➤ DISPERSAL—to signal informally through body language that I was content to move on—on supporting role rather than a lead role, | Hosting conversations and people in the physical space in which the conversations are happening. Understanding the elements of hosting and the types of behaviours that support its practice. |
| | ‘we need to offer is help for people to network, connect, converse, innovate with others, engage deeply’ | Helping people connect and network |
| | ‘I need to re-evaluate the offerings I make and see what is to co-create development opportunities which help people learn for themselves’ | Being prepared to co-create with clients |
| | ‘In my ideal consulting relationship I recognise that I am looking for mutual positive engagement’ | Seeking relationships that have a strong degree of mutuality |
| | ‘I am excited at what there is to be discovered’ | Maintaining a sense of expectation |
| | ‘I still feel anxiety about the challenges ahead’ | Handling personal anxiety |

Code 6.Naming and describing skills=Skills specifically identified as relating to conversational consulting

| <i>Theme</i> | <i>Examples</i> | <i>Comment</i> |
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| | | Incorporated in theme 5 |

Code 7 Development of confidence in Conversational consulting=Narratives in which inquirers either explicitly or implicitly indicate that their confidence in using conversational consulting skills has developed over time.

| <i>Theme</i> | <i>Examples</i> | <i>Comment</i> |
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| | | No theme identified in the data |

Code 8 Perceived improvement in consulting effectiveness=Judgements of inquirers in relation to how clients experienced the effectiveness (as defined by inquirers) change over time.

| <i>Theme</i> | <i>Examples</i> | <i>Comment</i> |
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| Perception of improvement in consulting effectiveness | 'I have noticed though that I continue to notice clues to the effectiveness of my work as conversational consultant. A client told me last week that she had adopted my approach to world café and appreciative inquiry as a way of developing understanding of difficult issues in a complex environment. Another client asked my advice on designing a conversational process to help with exploring how to improve patient safety. My colleagues seems to be expressing continuing interest and my coaching conversations since I have come back from holiday appear to have greater edge to them—more focussed' | Through the interpretation of feedback I have begun sensing improvements in how clients perceive the work I do. This is however not a strong theme with a limited number of examples. |

| <i>Theme</i> | <i>Examples</i> | <i>Comment</i> |
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| The personal tensions experienced in initiating and leading the co-operative inquiry process | | The data set for the co-operative inquiry process did not include any identifiable themes relating to my personal experience of initiating and leading the inquiry process. However, my personal learning log does and this additional theme summarises the pattern in the data which revolves around the tensions implicit in the multiple roles held by me in the process as inquirer, colleague and employee. |
| | ‘But there is something calling me to play or enjoy the life –giving space that an inquiry group offers. I sensed a bit of this opportunity when we met on the 11 th Feb. However, I also detected the call of the doctoral researcher in me, the desire for people to collect their insights, to adopt a clear process, to commit to the work of inquiry. It felt like impatience in a way—a concern that people would not understand my needs as a doctoral researcher’ | This example highlights a tension between my own desire for making the most of the space the group offers and my own responsibilities towards the process |
| | ‘I note from all of this experience that the process of inquiry is not necessarily enough to draw people—there are a range of in the moment issues that concern folk’ | Here I note that I am caught up in my own interests whilst having to recognise what others wish to bring to the inquiry meeting |
| | <p>‘As I write this I need to acknowledge the range of roles I sense I have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ First and foremost I am an employee of OPM working in this way because of their permission and active support ➤ I am a consultant with clients whose “material” will be part of my research and reflections’ | This is a neat example of my own felt tensions. |