

**UNIVERSITY OF STRATHCLYDE**

**DEPARTMENT OF MARKETING**

**PhD Thesis**

**KEEPING CLIENTS IN LINE;**

**A grounded theory explaining how veterinary surgeons control  
their clients.**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis explains how veterinary surgeons keep their clients in line through a melange of fact and fiction. Originating from the intimate study of veterinary interactions, it represents theory systematically grounded in data..

Veterinarians employ mystification processes to manipulate clients' awareness. Vets engage in coaching clients to suit their own agendas. These activities may be benign or opportunistic. Cultivating strategies are also explained whereby vets seek apparently friendly relationships with clients. This disguises the instrumental nature of these interactions.

The research indicates that keeping people in line is a robust process evident in diverse contexts. It has obvious commercial significance and is likely to be of relevance to veterinarians, their clients, marketers, researchers and potentially to those wishing to control others in diverse contexts.

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# **Keeping Clients in Line;**

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- Appendix II*                    *Infiltrating – a grounded theory explaining the process of becoming a participant observer in unfamiliar territory.*
- Appendix III*                  *Pathway through the data – an explanation of how the theory emerged from the raw data.*



# 1 INTRODUCTION

This brief introductory chapter serves two purposes. Firstly, it sets the scene for the thesis to follow. Secondly, it lays out the structure of the thesis.

## 1.1 Background to the research

This thesis is the culmination of three years of full time research work. It explains the essence of a substantive theory and the systematic processes involved in its generation. The raw data in which the theory is grounded originates from participant observation of interactions within the companion animal veterinary practice setting.

The emergent theory explains how veterinarians **keep their clients in line**. My work opens up a new perspective in an under researched context. It taps the reality of how veterinarians process their main concern of dealing with the face-to-face interactions involving their clients. On the surface veterinarians are associated with tending to the health care of animals. People, the pets' owners, are a necessary component of this equation however. Vets must be actively intervene and manage clients in order to minister to their patients as they see fit.

Existing research is fragmentary in nature. It is unsatisfactory in terms of quality and focus. There is an over reliance on quantitative methods and a noticeable bias in favour of financial information. This trend is perpetuated to date. A nationwide practice survey is currently in progress. It is the product of co-operation between the BVA (the British Veterinary Association), the SPVS (the Society of Practising Veterinary Surgeons) and the VPMA (the Veterinary Practice Management Association). Every practice in the UK has been sent the questionnaires. The information being gathered is once again financial in nature. What tangible contribution this analysis will generate is unclear. The fundamental lack of understanding of the processes at play within the veterinary practice context is not being addressed. Depth of insight is lacking. This does not prevent consultants from telling veterinarians what they should do in their businesses. The problem is that they do not base their recommendations on systematically grounded research. My emergent theory begins the process of redressing this imbalance.

The relaxation of the tightly regulated worlds of professional life is changing the old ways of working. The Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS), the profession's regulatory body, and infamous for its aversion to change, has signalled the pressure toward reform of the established norms. This year has seen the first ever release of its Guide to Professional Conduct to the general public. Interested parties from outside the veterinary and legal professions can now gain access to what previously represented 'hallowed ground'. This action according to the RCVS is symbolic of a more transparent way of working. Whether this extends to anything more than fine words remains to be seen.

The public exposure of a RCVS's representative, in traditionally defensive mode, during a recent investigative documentary, indicates the claims of greater openness may be a façade for public consumption. Where cases of alleged misconduct were investigated by the RCVS, very few cases actually involved any form of reprimand to the veterinary surgeons in question.

New priorities are surfacing and must be addressed. No longer is practice ownership restricted to registered veterinarians. This change in itself has implications for the marketing and management of vet practices. Indeed venture capitalists, sensing the potential for profitability are already investing in established practices. Corporate practices are not exclusively a US phenomenon, they are infiltrating the UK market. Lifting of the traditional restrictions on the use of advertising is another recent reform to the orthodox professional ways of operating. Technological advances are also impacting on both clinical and business facets of veterinary life.

This substantive emergent theory explains how veterinary practitioners variously keep their clients in line. It is essentially a study of human interaction. It reflects my best attempt to capture the patterns of behaviour I encountered as an intimately involved researcher. My aim is conceptual clarity supported by high-density theory. The challenges and sheer heartache involved in generating this theory can only perhaps be appreciated by others who have subjected themselves to the rigours of

doing grounded theory. As I write this, I feel that I am still missing integrative connections necessary to completely explain the processes I have witnessed. I feel I am not theoretically sensitive enough to do full justice to the data I have accessed. I acknowledge these shortcomings but make no apology for them. I look upon them as indicative of the experiential nature of learning grounded theory. This is my first project involving grounded theory and limitations are inevitable. Perhaps I will return to my data in the future with fresh insight and greater accomplishment.

I did not know what aspect of veterinary life I would be exploring at the outset. Vet /client interactions emerged as being where the action was. The theory is weighted in favour of the veterinarians' perspective, this is as it emerged. Counter strategies which seasoned clients develop for the purpose of redressing the asymmetrical balance of power are explained where they are relevant. The additional incorporation of 'experiential incidents' originating from prior knowledge of what it means to be a veterinary client make the emergent theory more balanced.

The main concern of the veterinarians I studied was to gain and subsequently retain control over laymen with whom they must unavoidably interact. Dentists, lawyers, accountants and other experts similarly depend upon fees generated from clients to survive. Although this theory emerges from the veterinary practice context it is likely that the concepts will have relevance to experts in other fields who likewise interact face to face, with clients for profit. The three dimensional character of the vet/pet/client interaction has a complicating effect and makes a compelling setting for research. The existence of the 'virtual' patient who has no say in his own fate and the interactions which surround him, potentially has much in common with interactions within a paediatric context where the consultant must interact, with the patient's parents. This context would be a useful location for further research necessary to begin the developmental process of a formal theory.

The veterinary experts of my study are concerned with manipulating the awareness of clients in order to more effectively meet their own agendas. This does not mean that these experts simply disregard the interests of their clients, although this does happen. Where vet/client objectives co-incide the experts may variously wish to keep their clients in line in order to ensure mutually beneficial outcomes. Veterinarians exhibit heterogeneous motivations. Possessing professional membership does not in itself dictate a uniformity of thought or behaviour. Divergence exists. The potential for variability of agendas is significant. Not only do agendas undergo change over time with respect to, career advancement or demotion, whether newly qualified and idealistic, or, exhibiting the cynicism of the veteran. Agendas also modulate in relation to daily conditions. Intrinsic variability is significant in the context of the emergent theory that I reveal. I highlight the cutting points that signal changes in behaviour. I explore the conditions necessary for these catalysts to stimulate change. Where extremes of behaviour are revealed I identify the conditions under which such variations occur. Some of these conditions are precursory and as such are possible causes, others occurring simultaneously are likely contingencies. By incorporating these elements it is possible to utilise the theory to effect in differing situations. As a consequence the theory is not just an aggregation of abstract concepts. Those with access to the theory can deliberately select the appropriate tactics and strategies to enable them to influence interactions to their advantage.

As I have mentioned, the core variable of this research is keeping clients in line. It is explained with reference to four sub-core variables. These are mystification, information gaining, coaching and pseudo-friending. Each of these sub-processes has its own categories and properties. Some of these dimensions have commonalities between processes. For example a sub-process of mystification is awe-inspiring, this process plays its part in both coaching and pseudo-friending activities to differing degrees. There are other emergent codes that, for the purpose of this monograph, remain embryonic. They have been sidelined due to their tangential relationships to the core variable. These are aspiring grounded theories and have potential lives of

their own. Having been temporarily stockpiled they nevertheless remain viable for future exploration. Their time will come. Their current potential for diluting the core variable is countered by resisting the temptation to pursue them further at this juncture.

There are interesting indications that the process of keeping people in line has far wider relevance than my substantive work might appear to suggest. By covertly engineering interactions experts keep others in line. Likewise out with their own realm these experts themselves yield to others of expert status and their parallel strategies for keeping people in line. Pharmaceutical companies have vested interests in keeping veterinarians in line. For them vets represent a significant channel for distributing their drugs to the marketplace. These companies invest in research targeted at improving vet/client 'bonding'. This is not for altruistic reasons – they too wish to cultivate their clients, the veterinarians, for profit. My research is not influenced by a commercial angle and consequently this has implications for the authenticity of the emergent theory.

Experts suit themselves, often without clients suspecting that their interests are potentially being compromised at the professional's convenience. It is only over time and with the accumulation of experience that clients may begin to realise the existence of competitive demands on the professional's time and interest. Indeed even accounting for interactions stemming back many years some clients never detect or contemplate the existence of invisible incompatibilities. Either a single adverse event or the cumulative effect of a number of negative incidents act as a cutting point. The client ceases the customary compliant behaviour and develops a more sceptical mode. If the cause of the dissatisfaction is powerful enough, the client will go elsewhere, the effects of inertia are neutralised and terminating the relationship may be the consequence. Veterinarians enjoy broad zones of tolerance within which to operate, however. The structural condition of lack of monitoring or quality control mechanisms makes it possible for inferior work practices to go undetected. These factors have clear implications for client exploitation.

## 1.2 Thesis structure

Having outlined the background to the research, I now explain how the main body of the thesis is structured.

Chapter two is devoted to a detailed explanation of the ‘Research methodology’. Contained within this chapter is a section outlining the aims of the research this incorporates sub-sections revealing the existence of pre-understanding and its perceived influence on the project. I state the reasons for generating a substantive grounded theory. Subsequently I mention the factors that I judge to be critical to the ultimate quality of the emergent theory. I highlight the importance of accessing authentic data within the substantive field. I explain the role participant observation has had in this context. The next section focuses on the research chronology and documents the sequencing of activities. I then discuss the sources of raw data and how I subsequently recorded the data. The chapter is concluded with a comprehensive explanation of the systematic procedures employed in the process of analysis and synthesis of grounded theory.

Chapter three reveals the substantive theory of how veterinarians variously keep their clients in line. The emergent sub-processes are mystification, information gaining, coaching and pseudo-friending. It explains these principal components of the theory and how they interrelate. The chapter is intended to represent the author’s attempt to think on a theoretical level whilst writing English. In reality it is a hybrid; at times I keep the theory implicit, sometimes explicit. The intensity of the concepts and their supporting categories and properties together with the underpinning conditions, causes, consequences and turning points make for challenging reading. The impact of extreme density on the readability of the theory is not easily overcome. I have incorporated some shards of raw data in an attempt to dilute what is, at times, intoxicating theory. This practice would ordinarily be avoided, however, the need to provide the reader with some form of respite was judged essential. One benefit from the inclusion of these indicators (sections of raw data) is that it helps the reader make the connection between the theory and the data in which it is grounded.

I have positioned the chapter entitled 'Pathway through the data' in Appendix II. This provides an insight into how the theory was grounded. I have incorporated some samples of raw data in fieldnote format. I demonstrate how open coding was operationalised. Subsequently I give examples of theoretical codes and by including a selection of memos, of varying degrees of development, I reveal how constant comparisons influence the synthesis of the emergent theory. Ultimately, it should be possible for the reader to detect the proximity of saturation. Sorting is less easily depicted. I include a diagram illustrating this process to aid clarity.

There are obvious difficulties in communicating explicitly the subtle interplay involved in the analysis and synthesis of grounded theory – this chapter merely serves to offer glimpses of my endeavour. In that sense it is necessarily limited.

Chapter four contains the 'Literature comparison'. The first section sets out the strategy that guides the subsequent review of the literature. It explains the idealised framework and goes on to reveal how this design underwent modification in light of the variable quality of the literature. This is followed by an overview. The comparison then proceeds initially with reference to the substantive area. Selection of material for comparison is governed by straightforward criteria such as perceived relevance. A comparison with the relationship marketing literature is then undertaken. Sociological material forms another differentiable segment within the comparative review of the literature. I bring this phase of the research toward closure with exploration of chosen grounded theories that contribute to the task of locating my emergent theory. I conclude with a brief discussion of the comparison.

Chapter five, 'Implications' deals primarily with the question of how my grounded theory should be judged. Part one tackles the issue of validity. Part two is devoted to the implications for future researchers. I then discuss the possible contributions the research will make to others and I also mention the impact of the research process from a personal perspective. I give some indication of potentially fruitful avenues



that may be considered appropriate for further exploration. Finally, I discuss the scope for raising the substantive theory to a more formal level.

Appendix I, incorporates industry background information.

Appendix II, is an explanation of the pre-cursory emergent theory providing an insight into how I 'infiltrated' the various veterinary practices as a participant observer with the aim of accessing data. It is appended because, in spite of its theoretical naivety, I believe it is capable of sensitising other inexperienced researchers as to how they might best proceed with the challenge of entering unfamiliar territories for the purpose of research. Indeed the infiltration process itself would make a fascinating basis for the development of formal theory with wide ranging potential for applicability.

Appendix III, outlines the 'Pathway through the data', as mentioned above. This section incorporates tranches of raw data. It attempts to trace them through coding, comparisons, memoing, in order to demonstrate transparency and authenticity. In other words I have incorporated sufficient data to enable those of sufficient sensitivity to assess for themselves the extent to which the theory can be considered to be grounded.

## **2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The following chapter explains the research design, implementation, and justification. The chapter comprises three distinctive segments.

First I define the aims of the research and their influence on the choice of methodology. I then highlight how the various activities were scheduled.

Next, I describe the process of accessing the substantive area.

Finally, I outline the systematic nature of Grounded Theory research methodology. I explain, for the unfamiliar, the logic of the approach, its hidden complexity, and my own conceptualisation of the processes fundamental to generating valid theory.

## **2.1 Aims of the research**

The aims of undertaking this research are twofold and reflect real personal interest. Firstly, I wished to undertake research that would generate theory from within the context of veterinary business. Secondly, I had encountered Grounded Theory and was eager to undertake an apprenticeship. These two overarching objectives seemed to synchronise.

At the time this project was embryonic, veterinary services were relatively untouched in terms of research. Additionally, my exposure to marketing and research as an undergraduate, indicated that much of the research being carried out appeared likely to be of dubious relevance to practitioners. The predominant methods of investigation being positivistic hypothesis testing. Verificational studies result in perpetuation of existing wisdom and a consequent neglect of fundamental understanding. The aim is therefore to redress the perceived imbalance. The benchmarks in this case are understanding as opposed to quantification, reality as distinct from fiction. In view of grounded theory's proven ability to facilitate the generation of meaningful theory I employ orthodox Grounded Theory (Glaser,1978) for this purpose. Others who have generated grounded theory have demonstrated its utility and endurance (Simmons (1993); Lowe (1998)).

### **2.1.1 Pre-understanding**

When undertaking research of this nature the key is to remain open and avoid prejudging the issues of importance. It is not therefore possible or desirable to be more explicit as far as the aims are concerned. The need to retain freedom and prevent preconceiving the data is in order to allow a truly grounded reflection of what is happening in the social situation to emerge. The idea that the less one knows about the area of study, the greater the likelihood of original thought emerging, flies in the face of positivistic logic. Unlike other research methodologies where an initial all-encompassing literature review is standard practice, recourse to the substantive literature is forbidden when using grounded theory. This is intended to guard against

contamination by existing thought. The main point about pre-understanding is to be aware of its force and account for its impact during the course of the project.

### **The negative impact of pre-understanding**

I was acutely aware of the fact that I was far removed from the theoretically ideal *blank canvas*. I had experience of veterinary interactions stemming back more than twenty years. I was familiar with the context but from an outsider's standpoint - from the perspective of a pet owner. I could not discount the impact of possibly sub-conscious bias. I hesitated over fixing on to a core variable for the study in an attempt to guard against the influence of pre-understanding. The impact of such delay was, however, negative in terms of causing indecision and consequent de-motivation.

### **The positive influence of pre-understanding**

In contrast, the knowledge that veterinarians are notoriously busy people was one aspect of pre-understanding that I was able to use to my advantage as far as the research design was concerned. I instinctively felt the best way to generate valid data would be to enter the field as a participant observer. The difficulties a non-veterinarian would encounter in gaining co-operation for postal, telephone, or face-to-face interviews, would I felt, be insurmountable. The risk of my work being labelled irrelevant because of the superficially vague objectives, I judged too great. In saying this I do not mean to suggest that I arrived at the decision to become a participant observer by default. This is definitely not the case.

### **2.1.2 Why aim to generate grounded theory?**

The question of why I should be interested in developing a theory from the concerns of those in practice is pertinent. After all, those who live and breathe what it means to be a veterinarian over a lifetime must surely understand all there is to know with far greater intimacy than could be possible for a mere researcher. The essential difference lies in the grounded

theorist's theoretical level. The veterinarian is undisputed in his ability to *describe* the way things work in his domain. He does not welcome an outsider telling him what he already knows. The explanatory power characteristic of grounded theory is where the difference lies. It gives practitioners a new understanding and control over actions like never before. Even when confronted by novel situations theory yields powerful predictive ability enabling those with access to it to influence the direction ahead with recourse to appropriately selected strategies.

It is, as I have discovered, all too easy when immersed in the immediacy of interaction, to lose perspective and fail to see the essence of what really matters. Grounded theory elevates the theorist to an influential level. Description, on the other hand, complicates and distracts.

Prior to explaining the systematic procedures required in order to generate grounded theory, I detail the strategy employed in order to access authentic data.

The requirement for generating authentic data is fundamental to the emergence of grounded theory. This was of ongoing concern for me throughout the research process. To counter the probability of incorporating proper-line data (data which respondents think they are *supposed* to communicate to outsiders because of the force of vested interests or others' power over them), I adopted the role of participant observer. The logic behind this decision was to become an insider and as such not be seen as a threat. In short I would see how things really worked for myself not as others would portray them. I was thus able to guide the direction of the research proactively. I side-stepped others' attempts to feed me the 'party line'.

Central to generating data is the ability to melt into the background where necessary, to become invisible and be humble enough to listen to the participants as they interact one with another, resolving their main concern, unconscious of my presence. I gained significant insights simply by listening in this way. Emergent 'juicy' incidents can always be followed up at a later date.

### **2.1.3 Justification**

There are three main reasons for using grounded theory research methodology for the purpose of this research.

- Firstly, the non-standard nature of the qualitative data generated through participant observation necessitated a systematic yet flexible method capable of handling large quantities of data and discovering the underlying patterns of meaning. Grounded theory was judged to be suited to the task.
- Secondly, grounded theory's purpose is to discover theory from data and this was my aim.
- Finally, the intellectual challenges which placed emphasis on the researcher's abilities held intrinsic appeal on a personal level.

## **2.2 Gaining access to the substantive context**

At first I was unsure as to precisely where I should plan to enter the field. Knowing nothing about the nature of the exploration ahead, it would seem impossible to decide where best to venture for the purpose of discovery. The fear is of missing vital information by choosing the *wrong* location. The truth is, as I discovered, there is **no** wrong place to begin. There are such things as *better* places where a researcher can

fit in seemingly effortlessly with those whom he wishes to learn about. These dimensions are only a matter of degree, however. Glaser's (1998: x) statement reflects this, "They [grounded theorists] trust to the fact that the world goes on whether or not they know how and the research issue is to discover a core variable..." The self-correcting mechanism of grounded theory means that it is unnecessary to be concerned with missing what is important. Life is patterned and it is the task of the researcher to uncover the patterns and explain their meanings. The researcher just starts wherever, secure in the knowledge that by adhering to the rigours of grounded theory, relevant concerns will emerge regardless. As a novice researcher such notions seem improbable. Experience teaches otherwise.

Realising that the question of where to start generating data is really neither here nor there in relation to the bigger picture of the research effort, I pushed ahead. I opted to request access to a veterinary practice by taking advantage of a recommendation through a friend. At that point in time my knowledge of the practice was restricted to the geographic area. Due to the sponsor/self-funding character of the research funds were constrained. The practicalities of scheduling ongoing visits to the veterinary practices was a further consideration. It was not feasible given the aforementioned conditions to extend the scope of my research beyond Central Scotland. Whilst these limitations are likely to have implications for the emergent theory, I do not consider them to be significant. Theoretical density, the richness of explanatory power, is the dimension that would suffer from constraints on pursuing the fullest range of theoretical sampling (see p 40 for definition and explanation). In essence the fundamentals of the theory and their integration should not be damaged. The emergent theory I develop is, in any case, only transitory. New dimensions revealed through further comparisons will alter it. Theory which has been systematically grounded is designed to accommodate modifiability. Future comparisons drawn from diverse contexts have the potential to build more formal theory.

### 2.2.1 Research chronology

This section begins by documenting the research schedule. I chart the key activities as they occurred. This makes it possible to see, at a glance, how the various activities were operationalised. Against this backdrop I then explain the more subtle dimensions of doing grounded theory.

**Table 1. Research schedule**

Familiarisation with research methodology	*	*****			
First involvement in vet context	*				
Grounded Theory seminar (Kingston)	*				
Fieldwork	*	*****	****	***	*
Coding/analysis		*****	*****		
Constant comparison/memoing			****	*****	** * **
Research methodology course	*	*****			
Emergence of theory of infiltrating			*		
Theoretical reading			**	*****	
Writing papers			*	**	
Establishment of Grounded group			*	*****	*
Experiencing confusion and regression			***	*****	*
Theoretical sampling			*	***	**
Grounded Theory workshop (Brussels)			*		
Substantive theory emergence				**	* *** *
Time out				*	* ** **
Thesis writing					*** ***
Elaboration					**
Literature comparison					** *
Reworking					**
Completion					*
	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000



### **2.2.2 Progressing the research**

Prompted by my supervisor and guided by the thesis that I should ‘jump in’, not knowing anything and discover what was going on, I took the plunge. It was late November 1996 when I made my first foray into the field, just two months after beginning my study. I felt reluctant to begin the fieldwork in light of my feelings of inadequacy with relation to my lack of familiarity with the subtleties of grounded theory. I was uncomfortable and felt insufficiently well read in the mechanics of how to proceed. Attendance at a Grounded theory seminar at Kingston University, the following month proved beneficial. It made me realise that I actually understood more about the essence of this methodology than I had previously realised. I became more confident in my ability to proceed. Participants at the seminar, whose interests were principally in the small business sector, had by and large, low-level understanding of Grounded theory. Consequently, the debate was non-developmental and frustratingly overly rhetorical in nature. Glaser’s response was straightforward. He urged those interested simply to get on and do grounded theory and to bypass the unnecessary debate. Retrospectively this type of advice is invaluable. There is no substitute for practice. The first year of the research can be viewed as being a familiarisation process with the theory and practice of grounded theory. My subsequent time has been devoted to building on this foundation.

### **2.2.3 Interaction with fellow grounded theorists**

A distinctive contribution to progressing the research originates from my interactions with colleagues.

As an apprentice grounded theorist mentoring played its part in honing my skills. Dr Andy Lowe, my supervisor and active grounded theorist, guided me through the trials of this status passage. Six months into the research Dr Lowe encouraged me to retrospectively analyse the processes I had experienced in becoming a participant observer. This acted as a sensitising

mechanism. By coding, comparing, memoing and sorting I experienced some of the fundamental grounded theory procedures.

During 1997, Dr Lowe instigated the formation of a formal grounded theory group. This became a forum for novice and more experienced grounded theory researchers. Each participant was given the opportunity to explain to his fellows the current status of his own research. Meetings were scheduled at eight weekly intervals. These encounters were beneficial particularly in their motivating properties. Unfortunately the continuity of these interactions suffered as group members had other demands on their time, often being required elsewhere. To be utilised optimally groups such as these should probably convene more frequently.

#### **2.2.4 Becoming a participant observer**

The selection of the first venue for data generation, whilst appearing to outsiders as somewhat haphazard, nevertheless proved fruitful. In terms of becoming enmeshed in the day to day routine and interacting with the veterinarians, the location proved ideal. The process of being accepted as an 'insider' is, in itself interesting. I will therefore outline in brief how I entered and proceeded within this setting. For a conceptual explanation of this 'Infiltrating' process please refer to Appendix II.

#### **Fitting in to the practice setting**

First I will describe how I gradually fitted in with the vets and nurses. I was aware of the importance of establishing good relations from the outset. How I paced this was vital. If I assumed I could carry out certain tasks before it was seen to be appropriate I might risk alienation. Accordingly I bided my time and assisted where it appeared appropriate. Initially during my visits I was intent on 'fitting in'. This, I judged necessary in preparing the way for good relations bearing in mind the likelihood that I would wish to maintain contact with the practice over a considerable timespan. Time devoted to cultivating friendly associations was judged time well spent. I have since encountered

articles written by those who have experience of becoming participant observers in the service of research. They tell of similar experiences. Janice Morse, in her editorial role in *Qualitative Health Research*, writes “It takes a lot of donuts to get good data”(1997: 147). Her description mirrors my experiences. She explains the importance of sharing food with those whom one studies. I explain the phenomenon, in more conceptual terms. I distinguish this as being part of the ‘affiliating’ process fundamental to infiltrating an unfamiliar group. It is quite symbolic in nature and is one indicator of the researcher undergoing one of many transformations in status with respect to incorporation into the group.

Initially my efforts were almost exclusively devoted to infiltrating the veterinary practice setting. The data generation, recording and analysing were largely suspended during this phase. To overtly make notes and scrutinise procedures would have been counterproductive, I felt. I have since made retrospective notes on significant discoveries from that period, which whilst not officially noted, were nevertheless subconsciously stored – to re-emerge when triggered by some connected idea.

Had I been more experienced in this type of research and more sensitive, I am sure I would have latched on to many more meaningful snippets sooner. For example, when arranging a suitable time to visit the veterinary practice for the first occasion, by telephone the owner was definite that I should avoid attending on a Friday. He was being helpful, trying to ensure I could see plenty of action. He explained that there are no operations scheduled for Fridays (unless absolutely unavoidable) because they did not want any complications to crop up over the weekends. Clearly this statement is an interesting piece of data which gives valuable insight into the existence of diverse agendas.

The practice itself is extremely busy all the time. Staff always work long hours and are never idle. These characteristics facilitated my task of infiltrating. There were always an abundance of opportunities to assist in some way or other. In fact, before long, I had to be careful to remember my true purpose! I was so much part of the team the practice tried to recruit me when a staff member decided to leave!

I was purposely vague in explaining the nature of my research to the staff. I simply told them I was doing some research and was keen to learn what life was like in veterinary practice. I thought it best to employ a vagueness in the hope of accessing baseline data. Had I been more specific and focussed on one dimension of life I felt those involved might have felt under pressure to alter how they did things, being scrutinised unfairly. I made it clear that I was very happy to help out in whatever ways I could. At first, I think the vets and nurses thought it was rather strange that I should be interested in them and their work. In light of my goals, to retain openness and to focus on those dimensions of significance to those in the thick of the action, my strategy seemed appropriate.

As a consequence of my success in infiltrating the veterinary team, I was welcome to appear, disappear and reappear as the research and other demands on my time dictated. Even when I'd been absent from the practice setting for weeks on end due to the demands from elsewhere, usually involving data analysis and synthesis, I was treated as if I'd never been away. Fitting back in was never of concern. The relationship became similar to that enjoyed by good friends, who whilst being fully occupied with their own lives can pick up on the same footing, often after many years of silence. Usually however the intervals between visits were measured in days, not weeks. I would still phone up and enquire after a particular case and have a chat – keeping in touch.

Aloof, scientific enquiry was not my chosen root. Enthusiasm for intimate interaction was my trademark. If I had chosen to take on the role of impartial research instrument standing on the sidelines, not helping or interacting, I am convinced the resultant theory would have been far less rich and quite possibly contrived. Additionally, the need to be present in the action over long periods would have been difficult to sustain. Who wants to be scrutinised and be subjected to formal interviews for more than a very limited period, particularly by a stranger?

During the course of the research I simply chat with people to discover their thoughts. I do not document a quantifiable number of 'interviews' with respondents. Indeed who is to make the distinction between a chat, discussion and a legitimate interview? As far as I am concerned such distinctions are academic. The important element is not the label attributed but the relevance of the information generated.

As will be revealed, my insider status opened up a whole world of action that would, through other strategies, have remained hidden.

I cultivated friendly relations with both veterinarians and nurses. To have favoured one group as a more valuable source of insight would have been counterproductive. I varied the times I arrived at the practice and was familiar with all normal procedures. In order to cement my commitment I would wait on until the work was completed, often quite late, sometimes giving one of the nurses a lift home as she lived on my route home and did not have transport. At such times I would also benefit from further information snippets.

In such a busy environment it is easy to appreciate how extra help was welcomed. I was comfortable involving myself with the many and varied tasks characteristic of the daily routine. I learned to juggle in the same way

as the vet nurses were accustomed to. This involved dealing with clients on the phone or in person. It also involved assisting the vets in the operating theatre. Much frenetic activity revolved around the consulting area. Cleaning the examination table between patients, restraining fractious animals, fetching vaccines, weighing pets, dispensing medication, 'raising veins' for vets to administer intravenous injections, putting dead animals in body bags and many other chores, including taking money from clients and making bookings for surgical procedures. I received deliveries, did the filing, chased up lab reports and met with salesmen in order that the vets could avoid such time-consuming interruptions. In effect I performed the work of an extra veterinary nurse. The tasks undertaken and my role as participant are very similar to those of Sanders (1994) during his time spent collecting data from a veterinary hospital in New England. No tasks were out of bounds. I had free reign to explore at will. This meant I could 'interview' salesmen, clients and staff members as and when the opportunity arose. There were no restrictions, I was trusted. This intimate view of veterinary life enabled me to predict where I would learn the most at any given time, and capitalise on that knowledge. If, for example I wished to stimulate discussions with the senior vet I would make sure I was on hand whilst he was at work with the scalpel. Much of the operating was routine in nature and as with anything which is repeated day in day out over a lifetime – comes as second nature, demanding little thought and allowing for interesting conversation to flow. I think these discussions were mutually beneficial as they helped to counteract his monotony, whilst informing me. Others, members of the practice's extended family, were permitted visiting rights to the otherwise sacred operating theatre.

Another useful strategy emerged in order to facilitate further discussions with the veterinary surgeons who otherwise would have been difficult to access. This involved me accompanying whichever vet was travelling to the branch practice to conduct evening surgery. This allowed one hour in total for

discussing any topics of relevance. I often used this time in order to check up on things that had emerged previously. I did a great deal of checking out of this nature. It would be all too easy to deduce meanings by logic and habit rather than ensuring verification with those in the know.

From time to time when accompanying the senior vet to the branch practice for evening surgery we would stop off at a local chip shop to refuel – such pit stops were always useful for discussing my work. In addition I was invited to socialise with the team on nights out – ten pin bowling, a summer party, and vet’s farewell bash. On such occasions tongues are always loosened and some interesting data merges (such as ‘in’ jokes). Shared experiences of this type enhance feelings of camaraderie that spill over to the work situation.

#### **2.2.5 Who’s perspective? A holistic viewpoint. Identifying the sources of data employed**

By initially focusing on becoming a participant observer in one location and developing a deep understanding of how things worked in that setting I was well equipped to determine where next I should venture in the service of theory generation. The shape of where one seeks data is not predetermined. The sources emerge developmentally. Broadly speaking the sources within each case are equivalent. A weighting in favour of the veterinary surgeons and their perspective becomes evident. This is emergent – I did not intend to focus on any party more than another. I tap the perspectives of veterinary nurses, receptionists, managers, salesmen, clients in a holistic approach. Finally, I incorporate some personal experiences that emerge as relevant to add to the client view.

**Table 2a, Participants in the research project**

<b>Main Veterinary Practice</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Key</b>
HQ	Vet/practice owner	HP
	Assistant vet (left Nov96)	St
	Assistant	ES
	Vet nurse	Ly
	Vet nurse	Li
	Vet nurse	Ca
	Vet nurse (part-time)	Na
	Branch Practice	Vet (part time)
	Vet (part time)	An
	Vet nurse	Ma
	Accounts/kennels	Je
	Vet nurse/dog grooming	Ei
	Apprentice vet nurse	Sh
Extended Family*	Regular helper	Pa
	Nurse's son	Se
	Nurse's sister	Ei
	Regular clients	Je
	Vet's wife	Na
	Vet seeing practice	Al
	Others	Pharmaceutical sales
	Vaccine sales	Si
	Sales rep	Ma
	Clients	McM

• Extended family is a term I use to describe 'regulars' in the practice setting – they are permitted privileged access to the inner sanctum – they have a distinctive association with the practice 'family'.



**Table 2b. Participants in the research**

<b>Comparative practice</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Key</b>
	Vet partner	Ro
	Vet partner	Al
	Assistant vet	Ca
	Senior vet nurse	Su
	Vet nurse	Mo
	Trainee vet nurse	Sa
	Trainee vet nurse	Li
	Receptionist (part-time, ex nurse)	Hi
	Receptionist (part-time)	He
	Receptionist (part-time)	Tr
	Practice manager	Ro
Satellite Practice	Vet partner	BMc
	Vet partner	Ia
	Receptionist/vet nurse	Le
	Vet nurse	Ka
Others	Vet's wife (ex vet)	Ru
	Pharmaceutical sales	Si
	Pharmaceutical sales	Jo
	Clients	Cl

## **Case No 1 - The primary and principal research unit's characteristics**

It is important to understand the character of the sources from which I generate the data used in the development of my theory. The practice is city centre based (south-side of Glasgow) with a branch practice located less than ten miles away in a nearby town. The practice treats small animals (domestic pets). It provides a value for money service that is demanded by the location. With limited exceptions, the clientele are predominantly of lower income. High volumes of cases are the norm and it is rare to experience quiet times. By having high caseloads it is possible to keep prices affordable for clients. The business employs six full time staff and a further four part-time roles. The practice is distinctive in relation to most veterinary practices in that it does not merchandise pet-food. Sales of pet-food are a valuable income generator for most veterinary practices. The absence of such profit focus is unusual, but symptomatic of the ethos of this practice. Getting through a lot of work, maintaining skill levels through experience and giving fair deals is synonymous with the practice. Treatment is never denied on account of lack of funds. This is not the case elsewhere. The features that I have highlighted as distinctive are significant in defining the direction of the research project.

The practice is a long established business, the owner, a veterinarian has been in practice for over fifty years and is approaching retirement. He is a highly intelligent, widely read, articulate man. He is reflective in his attitude and refreshingly candid. His impending retirement possibly added to his openness. He and his small team provided the ideal environment in which to discover the essence of life in veterinary practice. The relaxed atmosphere was conducive to animated, insightful, discussion. The veterinarian, H, would often describe to me the changes he had borne witness to within the profession. The value of this perspective was significant and provided useful insights into the veterinary world. He employed one full time veterinarian plus another on a part-time basis. In vet terminology such employees are usually referred to as assistants, occasionally the term colleague is used. Words are more than mere vocabulary, they are vehicles charged with meaning. In this instance the

term 'assistant' communicates a markedly inferior impression, someone who exists to help a superior being. This perpetuates the image of a newly qualified veterinary assistant hanging on the coat tails of his boss, a 'partner' or the 'principal.' Only after an appropriate apprenticeship, the duration and demands of which, being arbitrarily dictated by the boss, could the junior ascend the ranks to fully-fledged partner.

#### **The shape of a typical day at the practice**

When the practice doors were opened first thing there were often clients waiting to leave their pets for surgery that day. Soon after checking-in the in-patients the first clients for morning surgery would be arriving. There was no scheduling of appointments – clients were seen on a first come first served basis within the open surgery times. It was not unusual for veterinarians to process about 20 clients within a given surgery. After morning surgery there was possibly time for a swift coffee prior to going downstairs to begin the day's operating schedule. Depending on the workload the vet might have time to dash home for lunch. Frequently, due to the high volume of cases and the *intrinsic unpredictability of surgical procedures*, operating would continue until afternoon surgery without a break. Often there would be leftovers to be dealt with following afternoon consultations. On a quieter day vets would do five-seven operations and see approximately 30 cases during consulting hours. Tuesday and Thursday's, with evening surgeries were legendary for their over-running properties. Knock-on effects from earlier surgeries at the feeder practice exacerbated the delays. Vets were frequently still consulting until 10pm. This was then followed by yet more operations, sometimes going on until the early hours of the morning. Theoretical sampling (for explanation, see p 40 ) prompted me to seek out a contrasting practice, hence my selection of the subsequent venue.

## **Case No 2 -The comparative case, a polar opposite**

Theoretical sampling, indicated I should seek out a contrasting venue for further data collection and analysis. A newly established veterinary hospital provided the complete contrast I was looking for. Here, I found myself poles apart from the veterinary practice with which I was familiar. Purpose built premises and state of the art equipment together with a marked commercial emphasis revealed a very different world. The services offered were sophisticated with pre-anaesthetic health screening commonplace. Appointments were scheduled for each of the veterinarians and consultations of 10-15 minutes were normal. 95% of the workload was devoted to small animal interventions, the remaining 5% to large animals – horses, cattle and sheep. Client throughput was much less per veterinarian per day than experienced at the first practice. For example, a typical day for the vets at the hospital might involve ordinarily 2-3 operations plus possibly a total of 10 clients at consultations. The satellite practice located about 6 miles from the hospital served a community of 10,000 economically varied but relatively affluent residents.

### **Personal Experience – a client viewpoint**

As an adjunct, but only after the theory had emerged, I reflected on my own experiences of veterinary interactions. Even although such incidents did not originate from systematic research I judged their incorporation as simply more data for legitimate comparison. I analysed this data and found it fitted, and contributed to, my conceptualisation and integration. The possible benefits of recourse to data of this type should not be ignored. Comparisons such as these are termed “*experiential incidents*” (Glaser, 1978: 51). In this case their contributions were twofold. Firstly, they enhanced the density of categories and properties by providing further incidents for comparison and powerful insight. Secondly, the data repeatedly showed good *fit* with the emergent theory and demonstrated its *workability*. *Fit* and *workability* are two of the principle benchmarks against which the validity of any grounded theory is measured. These criteria are amongst those fully examined in chapter five.

### 2.2.6 The challenges

It was against this backdrop that I began the field research. Flaherty's (1996: 295) comments about research being "a felicitous combination of curiosity and opportunity" ring true. Discovering I had chanced upon such a fertile oasis as the launch pad for my research was both exciting yet daunting. I was eager to profit from the beneficial surroundings but felt paralysed to get on and simply do grounded theory. I procrastinated with operationalising the explicit procedures demanded of grounded theorists. Unsure of the reality of 'coding' (see p33-37 ) and never before having written a memo, I simply delayed doing them. Looking back now, I think I was scared I would be unable to do what was required. Rather than risk confirming my fears I chose to put things off. I understood the purpose of the 'memo' – but I could not imagine what a memo should look like. Consequently, putting pen to paper was neglected. Glaser (1978) purposely does not include a sample memo as a template for novice grounded theorists. Doing this could induce wholesale copying of the 'correct' way to memo. Such constraints are to be avoided. Freedom of form in the service of creativity is justified.

To compensate for my lack of dedication to the systematic procedures required to generate grounded theory, I spent much time out in the field – busily gathering fascinating data and stockpiling it. The pull of being a participant subsumed all else. The caveats given by Glaser (1978) to guard against gathering too much data went by the board. The interactions to which I was privy were magnetic. A further impediment to progress was my decision not to take notes whilst in the field increasing the workload manifold. I found it uncomfortable to take notes whilst helping in the practice – it felt like a barrier coming between myself and the subjects. In retrospect I think I should have persisted and tried to get accustomed to making field notes in situ. If I had done so, I would have eliminated the many hours of work re-tracing the day's interactions, recalling the detail and painstakingly documenting it. Instead the laborious work this entailed could more profitably have been devoted to analysing the data as it was being generated.

The consequence of my daily catch-up routine of writing field notes was a snowballing effect. I was simply gathering huge amounts of, admittedly fascinating, raw data. Later on, I paid the price for my overzealous field work. I was caught up in the avalanche of data. I literally felt overwhelmed by the sheer volume of data and couldn't see a way out. Instead of taking brief 'time-outs' from the field work on a regular basis, I was forced to tear myself away periodically from the veterinary life in which I had become enmeshed.

There were periods of intensity interspersed with respites designed to allow me to step back from the all encompassing effects of being in the thick of the action.

The interstices indicated are important. Their function is to enable the researcher to fragment the data, giving some distance, in order to allow a more conceptual view to prevail. These are breathing spaces that prevent the researcher from suffocating in the intoxicating atmosphere surrounding captivating raw data.

Originally I had anticipated I would undertake participant observation in a number of different veterinary practices. This strategy was judged inappropriate in light of the emerging data. I could see patterns of behaviour being repeated and could identify their causes, albeit not explicitly. I chose to focus on a single comparative case. This approach enabled deeper understanding than would have been possible had I flitted between numerous practices. Subsequently I directed my explorations to a practice that was the polar opposite of my initial study. The logic for this decision lay in the conviction that if I could see the same things happening in both cases I could be sure of their robustness. By identifying the processes which were predominant in one case and which were subordinate in the other, I felt it

would be possible to see the causes, consequences and cutting points that trigger and inhibit behaviour.

### **2.2.7 Recording the data**

As I have explained I wrote long-hand field notes immediately after returning home from the field. On occasions when I returned home too late I would begin writing up first thing the following day. Looking back at my notes now, I realise how raw my skills were at the outset. The limited efforts of those early days have been superseded by much more incisive observations.

Some months into the research, I was concerned that I might be missing important pieces of data by relying on my memory. I also feared the delayed write-up might cause me to forget vital information. To guard against these dangers I decided to take a tape recorder with me on my visits. I soon realised this was not the way forward and discontinued my trial recording.

The reasons why I would not recommend taping are as follows; firstly, it gives a false sense of security. When I knew the tape was running it was tempting to mentally 'switch off' - safe in the knowledge that everything was being captured. This impacted on the depth of exploration. Discussions would fizzle out because I was not pursuing emergent themes. Secondly, the time involved in transcribing tape recordings is much greater than simply writing-up from memory. Thirdly, the intensity of codes emergent from the field notes was greater than that evident from the transcriptions. I realised I was acting as a human sieve, detailing the relevant information in my notes whilst discarding the unimportant material. The recordings did not offer this in-built selectivity. Instead, everything was being documented irrespective of its significance. Lastly, the difficulties of remembering when to replace a tape were quite incompatible with the hands on requirement of being a participant observer. Invariably I forgot to press the record button and seemingly important data were lost.

In my experience the benefits of tape-recording did not materialise. It seemed to be a psychological crutch rather than a tangible benefit to the research activity. The salient point, in my opinion, is that one must accept it is not possible to document every detail of interest in the field in notes. This is normal and not something to invalidate the procedure. The power of the brain to make connections with subconscious thought should not be overlooked. I found myself making retrospective linkages with data I had unknowingly hidden. The memoing process, a necessary and ongoing feature of doing grounded theory (explained in detail p38 & p39) seems to stimulate such connections which otherwise might be overlooked.

### **2.3 Theory Generation**

Having outlined the research design and explained how it evolved in light of the developmental character of the investigation, I now turn to the intricacies of the analysis and synthesis that build the emergent theory.

The procedures which follow lend themselves to handling notoriously awkward qualitative data (though they are equally capable of dealing with quantitative data). Each stage is necessary. In order to generate authentic grounded theory I endeavoured to adhere to the tenets of orthodox grounded theory as expounded by Glaser (1978). My decision to follow the grounded theory blueprint was not the consequence of methodological dogma. The decision was based on my conviction that grounded theory works in practice. In future studies it may be advantageous to adapt certain procedures dependent upon the task in hand. This possibility is not a problem because grounded theory is adaptable.

The operations that I now explain are reflected in my research effort. The success of my accomplishment varies. What is most noticeable is that where I have not adhered to the procedures to the fullest, there are consequent weaknesses in the theory. Noticing these failures when standing back from the project is enlightening.



However, by noting the inadequacies of my research I am sensitised for future attempts.

The pre-cursory grounded theory that I have incorporated in Appendix II for comparative purposes is lacking in ways in which my main theoretical contribution is not. There is a visible theoretical maturation in evidence. Mastery of grounded theory remains an ambition.

### **2.3.1 What is a core variable, a category, a property and an indicator?**

Prior to explaining the procedures I employed in generating grounded theory, I will briefly outline some key terms that it is essential to understand.

The **core variable** is central to the emerging theory. It accounts for a pattern of behaviour which is both “relevant and problematic for those involved” (Glaser, 1978: 93). Centrality and frequency of reoccurrence are two important features indicating possible core variable status. Discovering the main concern of the participants is what socially organises behaviour and in turn the emerging theory. **Categories** capture the underlying patterns in the data. They give conceptual empowerment to the analyst. **Properties** are concepts about a category. **Indicators** are pieces of raw data that signal from where the categories or their properties emerged. They are in effect pieces of evidence which demonstrate the theory’s grounding. As is implied above grounded theory generates third level perspective. The basis is the data, moving to a conceptual level involving categories and their properties, and then to a higher level which represents an integrated theory – at a third level.

### **2.3.2 Open coding**

#### **Fracturing the data**

The first step involves what is known as **open coding**. This procedure is the means by which the dense data generated from the participant observation is dismembered. The process of fracturing allows the analyst to become one

stage removed from the data. It is necessary because otherwise the proximity to the data is such that it is impossible to move beyond the detail of description. By fragmenting the essence of the data abstract comparisons are feasible.

All field notes were scrutinised. Initially I would read and reread the notes and record any emergent codes. This overview was then followed up by a more rigorous analysis on a line by line basis. The aim was to transform the tightly packed data into its component parts. The process renders the different elements more amenable to manipulation. In retrospect I should have used the question Glaser (1978: 57) advocates more often, "What is this data a study of?" I found it quite difficult to see the bigger picture when enmeshed in the detail of coding every which way. Exactly how open coding works in practice can be seen in Appendix III.

I photocopied my field notes and proceeded to code directly alongside the data. In this way I could easily see where the codes origination and by having two sets of field notes I was able to keep one set free of jottings. In order not to force any preconceptions onto the data there was a proliferation of codes. The intensity of code generation varied according to the richness of the data. Some sections of raw data had copious quantities of codes, others were sparse.

Codes were given labels that were intended to reflect the meaning of the data they represented. If appropriate a term lifted directly from the context would be used, labels of this type are referred to as 'in-vivo' codes. Where judiciously selected, such codes have much imagery and are highly meaningful to those working in the substantive field. Careful use of language is called for when coding and subsequently when memoing. Most frequently codes were labelled simply with a gerund. Gerunds encourage the researcher

to constantly think in terms of processes and capture the dynamics of interactions.

Other researchers who have employed grounded theory, such as Haslam (1999: 54), enumerate the codes they have generated, for example “The study generated four hundred and twenty four open codes.” I am not so explicit. The long-hand nature of my coding would make the task of counting too time consuming. It is my belief that such quantification is redundant. It is irrelevant how many open codes or memos are created. What does count is their utility in the service of generating theory. Does it really matter whether an analyst has laboured over three thousand codes or three hundred?

The importance of open coding is its power to subsume an empirical view with conceptual insight. The physical work involved is painstaking and can be monotonous. The fact that open coding should be interspersed with further data collecting and memoing processes tempers the drudgery.

When I reflect on my experiences of doing grounded theory, I think I continued open coding for too long. The reason for this was my fear of forcing concepts that were not fully grounded onto the agenda. To counter this possibility, I postponed selective coding until a much later stage. Consequently the ongoing open coding revealed too broad a diversity of concepts. Nothing seemed to pattern – the picture appeared to be random. The scale of the endeavour became too unwieldy. Regression blocked progress. I felt stupid that after some two years working on the project I was still unable to identify a core variable with certainty. The feelings of not knowing were intolerable. Fortunately I realised that it is not uncommon for researchers using similar approaches to encounter similar challenges. Sanders (1997: 462) echoes my experiences saying, “the ambiguity of not working with the “net” offered by a preconstructed hypothesis, the confusion of not knowing what is important or how it all fits together, are experiences that our

nonqualitative colleagues have rarely, if ever”. Bott (1972: 46) also writes of the problems encountered when operating without a predetermined hypothesis, saying, “One is caught in a dilemma between succumbing to confusions or choosing some simple, plausible, but false explanation. We decided to succumb to confusion in the hope that it would be only temporary.”

In similar vein, Fagerhaugh (1995: 173) highlights the complexity of tackling theory generation. He states “Process analysis is often the most difficult level of analysis for the novice researcher handling qualitative data because it involves ordering and linking hundreds of bits of loosely formulated categories into a logical whole.” His observation that explanatory power originates from the integration of many parts of the problem being studied reflects the difficulties encountered in developing theory.

My inability to settle on a core category with the capacity to explain “as much variation in behaviour as possible, and uses the fewest number of concepts possible” (Fagerhaugh, 1995 :175), however understandable, was nevertheless paralysing. External pressures compounded my lack of progress at that time. I was fortunate to have back up from Dr Lowe, my supervisor, himself a seasoned grounded theorist. He assured me that the trauma of ‘knowing nothing’ would be transitory. I took some time out to attend to some personal challenges facing me and returned afresh to the research process.

### **2.3.3 Selective coding**

As a consequence of my lack of confidence in acknowledging the core variable until the eleventh hour, selective coding was not a proactive process in its own right. Selective coding seemed to happen spontaneously. The fact that I was aware of the delimiting happening automatically would appear to be a contradiction in terms. On reflection however, given my understanding of grounded theory methodology and its intrinsic qualities, it is perhaps not surprising that the procedures happen even when the analyst is inexperienced.

In essence, I see grounded theory as the systematic explanation of the fundamental process by which people, unknowingly, make sense of their worlds. For example where constant comparisons are concerned, everyone continually compares things in everyday life. When memoing those processes, their categories and properties which are meaningful with respect to the main concern take centre stage. Codes that are spurious and do not relate to the core category fall by the wayside.

Glaser (1978: 61) raises the question of how the analyst should know “when it is safe to selectively code for a core variable and to cease open coding.” He suggests that delimiting is indicated when a theory appears to be capable of explaining the data. Judging precisely when to delimit seems to be experiential. By this I mean it is something which is internalised through experience and guides future decisions.

Instead of allowing the emergent codes to direct the theory development and signal the transition to selective coding, I arrived at the core variable in reverse. Four sub-core variables had emerged and finally I discovered the core variable that explained the how these processes integrated.

Selective coding was not omitted from the grounded theory process – it was instigated in an unconventional way. Once the core variable had emerged I was sensitised to the conditions, consequences and other dimensions which had been latent in data.

#### **2.3.4 Theoretical coding**

This is an emergent process that is the conceptualisation of how the substantive codes interrelate. The integrative function is fundamental to the generation of meaningful theory. Without theoretical coding the subtleties of how the variables interact are lost. The lack of proper theoretical sampling and coding in my theory of infiltrating was noticeable. The interrelationships

between the emergent categories were lacking. I implicate my inadequate knowledge of theoretical codes in causing this theoretical shortcoming. Subsequent to this discovery I have endeavoured to familiarise myself with a range of coding families in an attempt to avoid a similar lack of integration in the main project of generating a substantive grounded theory.

### **2.3.5 Memoing**

The data having been rendered manageable through open coding, the interplay between **memoing** and **constant comparisons** began. Memos are the ideational building blocks of theory. They are stimulated primarily by constantly comparing the emergent codes, their indicators (the raw data from the field notes) and new concepts and their indicators. The essence of memoing is eloquently explained by Glaser (1978: 83) as “the theorising write up of ideas about codes and their relationships as they strike the analyst whilst coding.” Getting into the routine of memo writing was not difficult after I had overcome my initial fears of how to adopt a perfect memoing style. The realisation that memos are essentially private, and there exists no such requirement for perfection, freed me to simply write.

The habit of memoing became second nature. A class, part of the Research Methodology Course run within the graduate business school at Strathclyde University, aimed at stimulating writing skills encouraged ‘free writing’ as a technique to get ideas down on paper. This was instrumental in establishing writing as normal practice. The proliferation of memos was exponential; the density contained therein, phenomenal. These characteristics actually presented their own problems in handling the sheer volume of memos for comprehensive comparisons and eventually in sorting.

During the research effort I became aware of the developmental character of memoing. Over time my memos became more sophisticated as the links between the variables were revealed. My memoing style is quite free. A more regimented format, encouraged by my supervisor, felt inhibiting. Only

late on in the research process did my memos become more structured – this seemed an appropriate development as it reflected the growing theoretical scope of my work.

A framework for memos suggested by my supervisor included the following;

1. A label
2. Summary of the contents of the memo
3. Explanation of the categories and their properties
4. Indicators of the processes – i.e. examples taken directly from the fieldnotes
5. Possible links to other memos
6. Indication of the deductive/inductive balance

Examples of my differential style of memoing can be seen in Appendix III which reveals the paths taken during the transitions from raw data to emergent theory. Glaser (1978: 91) quotes a colleague whose personal recipe for memoing more closely reflects my own than the aforementioned example. For Bigus, “The memos will not be in a logical, chronological, or any other particular order because I would like to have the freedom to reflect on and build on what comes into my mind as I go along. Thus, I may start one memo, interrupt it with another, and resume it at a later time. This confused sort of approach can easily be sorted into an integrated order at a later time if need be. The advantages of this “*free association*” technique far outweigh the disadvantages...” The main issue where memoing is concerned is simply to do it. The appropriateness of how the memo is operationalised is defined according to the stage in the analysis as well as ones own style.

I discovered that labelling memos accurately helped with ideation. Inappropriate labels seemed to act as psychological stumbling blocks. They seemed to divert attention temporarily away from potentially fruitful avenues of discovery. A truly reflective label on the other hand, with its rightness,

stimulates creativity and captures the subtleties of where the analyst is at. Regarding a label as provisional until such time as a better version is selected counters the uneasy feeling of working with a label which is spurious. The discovery of what seems to be the most suitable label is supremely satisfying. Meaningful labels facilitate the sorting process to follow. They communicate instantaneously with the analyst who is sensitive and intimate with the data. In concert with the deepening of understanding and the discovery of conceptual scope, memos mature – new supplants old remorselessly and incrementally. Memoing continues even now as the final draft of my thesis is taking shape.

### **2.3.6 Constant comparisons**

As I have suggested earlier the comparative process is fundamental to understanding. The comparisons we make every hour of every day are so much part of life that they are subconscious. The **constant comparative phase** of grounded theory involves rendering something explicit, which ordinarily is taken for granted. The idea of comparing seemingly incomparable elements is at first difficult to embrace.

Comparisons must be operationalised at and between different conceptual levels. Indicator is compared to indicator, concept to indicator, and concept to concept, every which way. It is in this way that the full range of categories and properties are generated.

### **2.3.7 Theoretical sampling**

Theoretical sampling is the evolution of the interaction between data collection, coding and analysis whereby the analysts is guided as to where next to search for further data. In essence theoretical sampling is the mechanism whereby the emergent theory controls data generation. During this process the induction characteristic of grounded theory yields to deduction, in the service of further induction. By this I mean the analyst



decides in light of the emergent dimensions of theory where, logically, further exploration is judged appropriate.

Theoretical sampling was constrained by my failure to analyse the data as soon as I entered the field. The delay caused by my preoccupation with stockpiling data rather than coding, comparing and analysing prevented theoretical sampling from being employed optimally. I cannot plead ignorance to the temptation to forget about coding, analysing, etc. Glaser (1978: 47) explicitly warns against such dangers saying, “It is vital to avoid burning up one’s energy in data collection, leaving none for coding and analysing.” Data collection as distinct from emerging theory became the dominant force. Theoretical clarity was lost and this was the source of my feelings of regression.

The label **bloodhounding** conveys the feeling of exploring unknown territory in light of current discoveries. Like the hound who picks up a scent, the researcher is compelled to follow where the data leads, as it undergoes analysis. Nothing is predetermined everything is developmental.

The “basic question in theoretical sampling is : what groups or subgroups does one turn to next in data collection?”, according to Glaser (1978: 42). Theoretical sampling led me to seek out data from a variety of sources connected to the first practice, then to switch units to sample elsewhere. The emergent concepts indicated that I should seek out a polar opposite venue. This stimulated further comparisons that , in turn, spawned yet more theoretical sampling. Comparisons were operationalised at and between varying conceptual levels. Seemingly incomparable variables are rendered amenable to comparison. For example, by comparing diverse indicators of properties of a category comparisons can yield valuable insights. The detail of how theoretical sampling, was influenced by and, influenced the developing theory is revealed explicitly in Appendix III.

### **2.3.8 Theoretical sorting**

The process of theoretical sorting is the means by which the structure of the theory is defined. The emergent core variable guides the integration. The sorting is at a conceptual level. All that is required to begin the process is the memo fund, space and one's creativity. I cleared the decks in the living room and began to deal with the huge heap of memos. There are no rules as to where to begin sorting. In that sense it is arbitrary. Accordingly I just began to systematically place the memos on the floor. I had no notion of what shape the sorts would take. I simply located memos according to their apparent similarities and basic uniformities. Memos with perceived links were grouped in close proximity, their links to be the source of further memoing. Because of my familiarity with the memos, I decided to use only the memo labels for simplicity of this first sort to provide an overview. In this way it was easier to see the overall shape without the complexity of dealing with how the properties related to one another and to the categories. Having experienced the mechanics of sorting, I then reintroduced my memos in their entirety to permit the more intricate interconnections between ideas. Where properties are judged to have multiple fits this becomes a matter of record. Analytic rules serve this purpose. The analyst knows precisely where things fit in the emerging theory. Focus is retained, divergence constrained. Theoretical coding is the basis for integrating the theory. Decisions as to whether a category is a cause etc., requires recourse to the underlying data. The aim of sorting is to relate each element of the theory to all others meaningfully at an ideational level.

Theoretical saturation around the core variable and most of its sub-core variables signals an end to sorting and gives the green light for writing up.

### 2.3.9 Saturation

#### **Theoretical saturation**

In grounded theory terminology saturation is signalled when continuing analysis and synthesis fail to yield any incremental categories or properties. Nothing more of consequence remains to be explained in the context of the specific research endeavour at that moment in time. In other words, the diminishing returns from further data collection approach zero.

Judging when it is safe to venture sufficiency of saturation is debatable. Personally, I would suggest that adequate saturation has been demonstrated when a theory continually resolves the main concern of those in the thick of the action. Additionally, the theory must be well integrated and have potent explanatory ability. The theory should employ the fewest number of concepts necessary to fully explain behaviour. It must have both parsimony and scope. Dense theory is an indicator of the researcher's *theoretical sensitivity* and likely attainment of saturation.

#### **Personal saturation**

This is a second type of saturation. It indicates the researcher has reached the point beyond which he can go no further. I experienced this. In my case there were a number of interrelated causes. These predominantly revolved around time, energy and money. Demands from elsewhere were cumulative. Having devoted more than three years of my life to the grounded theory effort there came a time when I accepted the existence of the *trade-off*. The desire to articulate what one considers the 'perfect' theory was mitigated by the realisation that in life there are always trade-offs. I resigned myself instead to settling for a theory that represents my best contribution at this moment in time. Given its honest origination and systematic grounding I acknowledge its imperfections, of which there are many, and prepare to move on to new challenges, better furnished to deal with them with humbleness and enhanced sensitivity. I hope to have contributed in small ways to understanding through

my research. If nothing more is achieved I hope my insights may encourage others to explore potentially fruitful avenues identified as being significant.

## **2.4 Developing theoretical sensitivity**

Theoretical sensitivity is the ability to attune oneself to the subtleties of social situations and to be aware of their implications for theory development. A capacity to think creatively on different levels of abstraction is intertwined into what it means to be theoretically sensitive. It is a prerequisite to transcending description. It is both intrinsic and experiential in nature. Opening one's awareness to how theories are constructed is instrumental in developing sensitivity.

Cultivating theoretical sensitivity was of ongoing concern for me throughout this, my initiation into doing grounded theory research. There are a number of ways in which I actively endeavoured to stimulate my theoretical sensitivity.

### **2.4.1 Reading**

#### **Methodology texts and examples of grounded theory**

Initially I confined my efforts to reading and re-reading texts on grounded theory methodology (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978). This raised my awareness of the intricacies of the systematic procedures involved. This still left a gap in my understanding of the more intangible dimensions such as induction and its interplay with deduction. Study of examples of well-constructed grounded theories assisted in this respect (Glaser, 1993; 1995, 1998). True sensitivity comes with experience. This is consequent upon actually doing grounded theory and reflecting on it. There can be no substitute for this.

### **Examples of well constructed theory**

Grounded theorists are forbidden to read within the substantive area whilst theory generation is in progress. Reading out with the substantive field is permitted, indeed it is positively encouraged. I chose to focus my attention on French literature predominantly. The pursuit of insight into differing styles of theoretical writing gave me the ideal excuse to indulge my passion for the French language. The theoretical talents encountered were of impressive proportions. The skills exemplified in Saint-Exupery's (1943) "Le Petit Prince" are truly memorable. He paints pictures with words so vivid as to enchant a child whilst simultaneously interweaving powerful theory at a level of abstraction far removed from the enveloping description. The sum of his 'little logics' is far greater than their parts.

Albert Camus' mastery of theory construction is formidable. Analysing "L'etranger" (1958) in order to discover how the building blocks of theory fit was sensitising.

Stendhal's accomplishment in writing theory is enduring. His novel "Le rouge et le noir" (1827) written back in 1827 demonstrates this quality. He locates his characters in history and yet his work is timeless. The historical context is merely an interchangeable backdrop against which the real action takes place. He manipulates the causes and consequences of behaviour at will, demonstrating intimate understanding of how theory is catalysed. He creates conflicts which are, for example, independent of time and place and are universal in relevance. He succeeds in working on two levels, each supporting the other.

### **Miscellaneous material**

Sayer and Walker's (1995) "The New Social Economy" was instrumental in sensitising me to the shape of a well articulated theory. Mills' (1959) treatise on "Intellectual craftsmanship" was inspirational.

#### **2.4.2 Being reflective**

This involves consciously thinking about what one is doing. It means cultivating a humble attitude and it also demands an openness to embrace ones own shortcomings. Such reflectivity has enabled me to acknowledge how, faced with similar decisions in future, I would choose to do things differently.

Being reflective is particularly important in the context of doing grounded theory primarily because the researcher is intrinsic to the process. Developing the capacity for theoretical sensitivity is therefore fundamental to generating valid grounded theory. This chapter was designed to reveal the systematic nature of grounded theory together with the subtleties of the researcher's role; firstly in gaining an understanding of the grounded theory process and secondly in learning the reality of grounded theory by experiencing it. Denzin's (1970: 132) words encapsulate the challenge, "...there is more to doing research than is dreamt of in philosophies of science, and texts in methodology offer answers to only a fraction of the problems one encounters."

#### **2.4.3 Writing the theory**

Crafting the theory involves integrating the pieces of the theoretical jigsaw to reveal a meaningful image that is understandable to the intended audience. The level of density may be adjusted to suit. Those who originate from the substantive area can handle full density, others can only cope with theory of lesser intensity and broader applicability – for them the concepts and how they interrelate is what matters.

The writing up process is simply the write up of how the memos combine and integrate as revealed by the process of sorting. In my case, most probably as a consequence of my newness to the experience of doing grounded theory, I still discovered pieces of theory that I had overlooked during synthesis. Oversights of this nature largely took the form of conditions, causes, or

consequences. Additionally, I found a number of my memos collapsed into one another during sorting. I am not sure if this is usual or whether this indicates an insufficiency of comparisons. Had I compared memos rigorously enough prior to sorting then they would surely have condensed sooner. Shortcomings of this nature are, in my opinion, unavoidable given the experiential nature of doing grounded theory. By reflecting on previous endeavours theoretical maturity can be enhanced incrementally.

### 3 THE EMERGENT THEORY

I now reveal a theoretical explanation of how veterinary surgeons process their main concern of keeping their clients in line.

This chapter explains the process of **keeping clients in line**. It presents a challenge to the reader on account of its degree of density. Diagrams intersperse the text in an attempt to provide respites from the otherwise unrelenting bombardment with concepts and categories, often with their own sub, or sub sub processes, together with their respective categories and properties – such is the intensity of the ideation.



### 3.1 The context

Veterinarians are trained to deal with the clinical care of companion animals. As the term ‘companion’ suggests these pets and their healthcare impact on their owners’ lives. The power of the human/animal bond is relevant in understanding the role of vets. Animals are part and parcel of peoples’ daily existence. They have social meaning and significance. As a consequence, the processes veterinarians employ are influenced by sociological considerations.

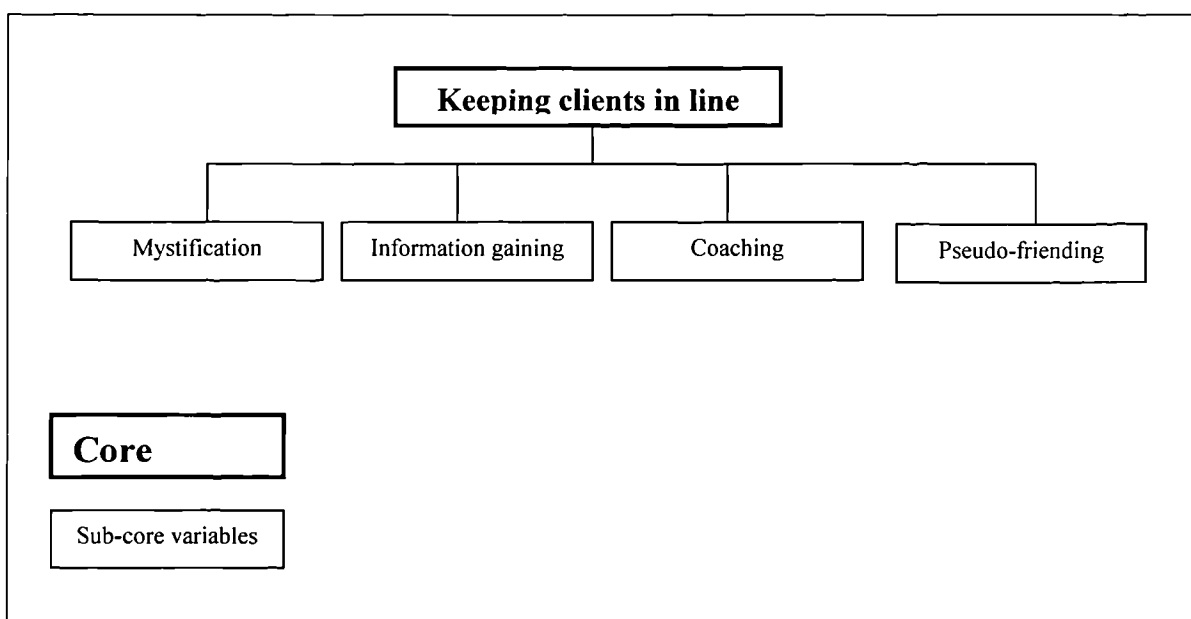
Animals being unable to speak for themselves are dependent on their owner/vet interaction. Veterinarians may wish to concern themselves principally with clinical diagnosis and subsequent treatment. In order to attend to the animal’s needs the vet must necessarily encounter the owner. Some may have self-serving motives in mind. In any case dealing effectively with clients is critical.

Clients can be notoriously difficult. They can, and do, obstruct the vets progress at every turn if not managed judiciously. One seasoned veterinarian volunteered, “*The trouble is the public are such a PEST, they think nothing of phoning up about a budgie’s toe-nail if the thing strikes them at ten o’clock, or how much is it to vaccinate a dog against distemper?*” It is against this backdrop that vets have learned to protect their interests. Keeping clients in line is paramount.

### 3.2 Keeping clients in line

*Keeping clients in line* has emerged as the core variable of this study of life in veterinary practice. It explains how vets routinely guard against becoming overwhelmed by the demands of their work. By manipulating clients' awareness through mystification, information gaining, coaching into clienthood and cultivating through pseudo-friending vets engineer client compliance. Veterinarians selectively employ these processes as operational conditions dictate. In so doing they are able to process daily interactions with clients in accordance with their own agendas.

Figure 1



### 3.3 The Mystification Process

Creating and maintaining compliance is operationalised by vets indulging in mystifying tactics. Two sub-processes emerge to explain what happens; firstly, *fictioning* and then *covering*.

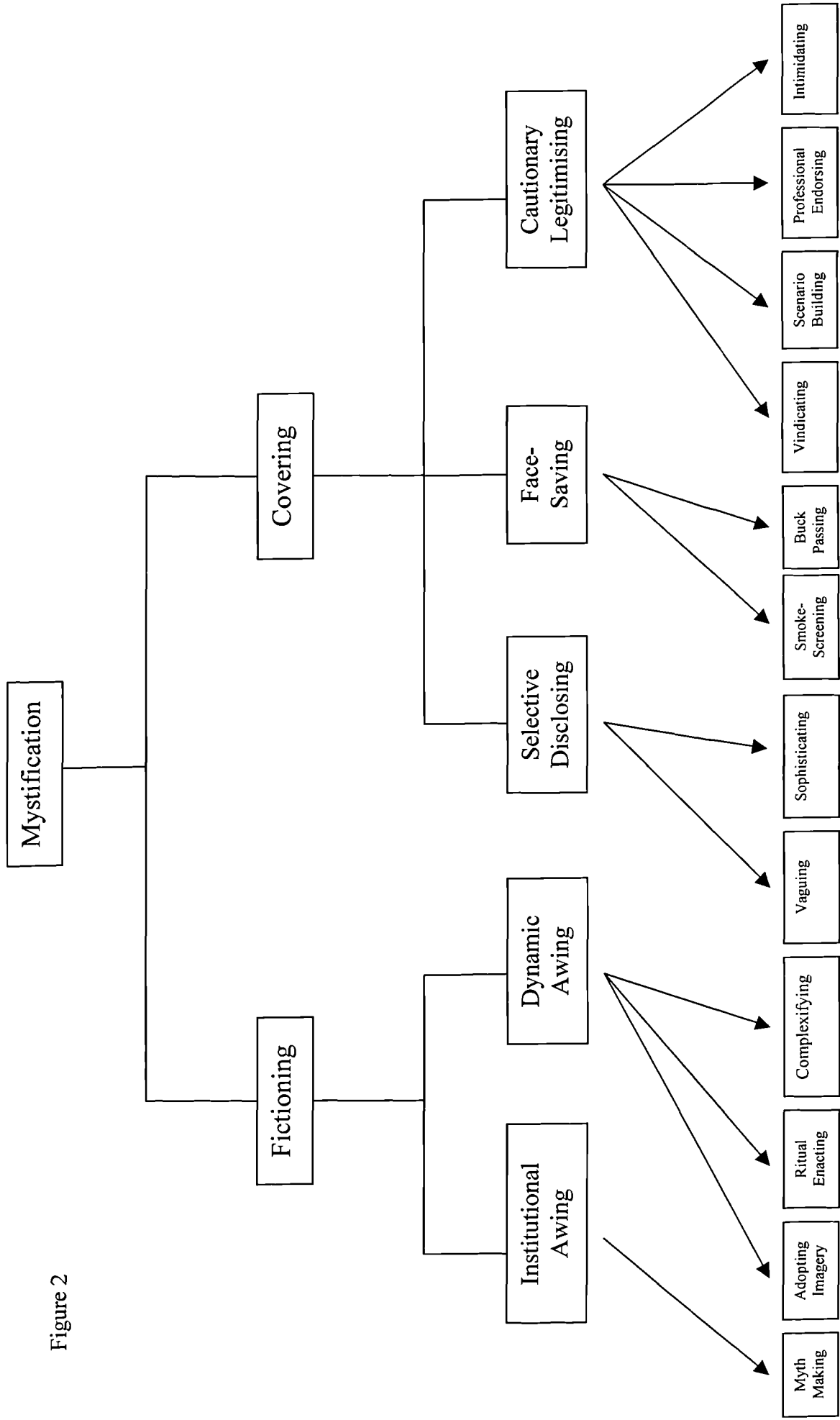


Figure 2

### 3.3.1 Fictioning

*Fictioning* involves manipulating how outsiders perceive veterinarians and the work they do. It revolves around what identity the profession displays to its various publics. It also encompasses the individuals attempts to differentially *appropriate*, *build upon* or *disavow* that image. When vets choose to appropriate fictions they simply acknowledge the existence of the widely held beliefs and capitalise on their spin-offs. The building upon strategy entails embracing fictions and potentiating them for maximum effect. Disavowal is consequential upon the fictioning being assessed as inappropriate. In such instances veterinarians distance themselves from the Establishment and redefine, in their own terms, what being a vet means. This type of behaviour is indicated by a vet's discussions on this subject "*I look at it another way, a vet doesn't have any particular status at all, he doesn't have to worry he can be himself.*" "*..when you're a vet you can plough your own furrow,*" but this is only possible under certain conditions.

The extent to which veterinarians utilise existing fictions or redefine them is influenced by veterinarians' potential for *sense-making*. *Sense-making* explains how vets interpret what they do. It defines how they see their contribution and determines what constitutes appropriate activity. The degree of *reflectivity* is a property of *sense-making*. Behaviour selection is couched in terms of *sense-making*. For the most part, those who tend towards disavowal do so as a consequence of having greater scope for reflectivity. This scope itself emerges as dependent upon structural conditions. For example, if one is a single-handed practitioner the freedom to *shape* one's existence as one sees fit is in-built. In these circumstances *sense-making* drives activity. Under other conditions, where a vet is an employee within a practice for example, reflectivity is still possible but crucially the freedom to act on it is curtailed. *Relative power* within the organisational hierarchy is an influential factor in either increasing or constraining the scope for determining one's own actions. *Autonomy* is a consequence of attaining a certain level of power.

*Awing* processes are emergent through *fictioning*. Two types of *awing* are *institutionalised awing* and *dynamic awing*.

*Institutionalised awing* is a collective process. It involves the creation and perpetuation of fictions on a grand scale. The purpose is to generate positive perceptions with which to inspire awe. Enhancement of stature is a consequence. So ingrained are the fictions that they become synonymous with the interactions themselves. Where reality gives way to fiction, and fiction to reality, becomes indistinguishable.

It is interesting to discover, through intense comparisons, that other forms of *institutional fictioning* exist. They too serve to keep people in line and influence behaviour. These types of fictioning are not directly relevant to this treatise however and are therefore bypassed.

A category of *institutionalised awing* is *myth making*. *Myth making* functions to establish and justify beliefs. Myths influence action. An emergent property is *recruitment*. Myths are identifiable wherever new recruits are required. In this context they have a role to play not only in the hooking of clients and personnel, but also in regulating the flow of students into the vet schools for training.

Unlike today, where candidates vie over restricted places, in years gone-by new recruits to the veterinary profession were in short supply. Consequently rigorous barriers to entry were unnecessary. A vet of longstanding explained, “*People who went there [the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons] were interested in the job and they obviously weren’t interested in a career move if you follow what I mean, there was no glamour not much glamour attached to it, so they were always glad to see someone roll up to sign on.*”

Properties of *myth making* include the repeated use of inspirational language and displays of super-human skills. The intention here is to influence beliefs and solidify them. The effect is to reinforce a favourable aura.

Another property is *popularising*. This involves glamourising and thereby proliferation. One way of achieving these aims is by exploiting the media as a vehicle for distribution of *myths*. An indicator of this is widespread recognition of the tales of the imaginary Yorkshire vet James Herriot, these being published worldwide. One practitioner pointed out, "*The unfortunate thing is they have possibly been misled by, it's passing now, but by James Herriot and people like that. It's for some reason quite a, it's the sort of thing you think that must be a nice job, you know, must be nice people that do it – it's really not like that in some strange way.*" Here a vet reveals how the reality is different from what the myth suggests. The consequence is *sanitising* in effect. Since undertaking this research there has been a resurgence of interest in veterinary life. This has been stimulated by extensive television publicity in the form of daily productions variously tracking the fortunes of recently qualified vets as they venture into the real world. Other programs pay regular visits to animal hospitals to see what challenges the veterinarians there must rise to. The effect is to perpetuate the 'rose-tinted' view of what it is to be a veterinarian. *Sanitising* is once again emergent. Real issues, where clients are presented with awesome bills for sophisticated treatment, and where unpleasant things happen, are ignored. Euphemisms are obligatory and the veterinarians are portrayed as all-knowing. Existing myths are perpetuated.

Myths that fail to reveal shards of reality risk being counterproductive. Recruits may rebel against what they see as intolerable deception. Under such conditions myths have *delayed action* properties and potentially serious repercussions. I conjecture as to the significance of this discovery in my final chapter that explores the implications of this theory.

Where *institutional awing* is concerned the *degree of desirability* associated with the specific status passage is significant. By imbuing *myth making* with elitist propaganda, potential recruits may be exponentially motivated. The belief that not everyone can enter the arena, in itself enhances the awe surrounding the proposition. *Shortlisting* for entry into the veterinary schools today excludes all but those students with the highest grades. A shortlist is a structural condition that limits access and has as a contingency, the effect of stimulating demand for attaining shortlisted status. The extent of this selectivity within the veterinary context is widely known. A property of *shortlisting* is *selectivity*. The stature of the profession is enhanced as a result. One insider, himself a veterinarian with minimal vested interests due to imminent retirement, indicates the existence of myths; “...because they had wangled their way through to the final year they must have learned something, the fact that they were extremely thick didn’t much matter because I’ve always said you don’t need any brains for this job anyway”.

Myths surround veterinarians with mystique. This reinforces the tendency towards compliance with the vet’s advice. Clients believe they must rely on veterinary expertise to guide them through what seems unknowable territory. When myths are deconstructed what remains is unrecognisable. The ordinariness of being a vet is an unfamiliar concept. The relatively mundane character of the standard veterinary practitioners’ daily encounters contrasts strikingly with the party line. Vaccinations, nail-clipping, spaying, de-fleaing, micro-chipping, emptying anal glands and PTSs (‘put to sleeps’ – the euphemism used for euthanasia) are the bread and butter work of the veterinarian. The fascination of working up a complex case or the challenge of intricate surgery are less common. A foreign vet now working in the UK told me; “Vets in this country have image. I don’t believe it should be that way, but it is. At the end of the day, they are just doing a job, earning a living, it’s not special.” Ask anyone and they are likely to tell you how intelligent vets must be to do what they do. Omniscience is the proper line;

experiential learning through trial and error is the reality. Admitting to such unscientific reality would be considered inappropriate. The need for covering, the other phase of the mystification process, is indicated.

Another condition of *institutional awing* is the *longevity* of the myth. Myths that are no longer attractive become redundant. Supplanting with more relevant fictions is likely to be stimulated in order to retain influence over others.

*Dynamic awing* explains a more fluid type of awing which individual veterinary surgeons use to influence their clients during their face-to-face encounters. Categories include *adopting imagery*, *ritual enacting* and *complexifying*.

*Adopting imagery* encompasses the veterinarians use of special language and professional trappings in order to inspire awe. Words are more than mere vocabulary they are laden with meaning. Professionals 'consult'. Veterinarians who have attained the status of partner have long referred to other fully qualified vets as 'assistants' – as distinct from colleagues. By using language in this way the power differential is highlighted. Tangibilizing serves a similar purpose. The stethoscope and the white coat have established medical associations. These trappings are imbued with meaning. Consequently vets may drape a stethoscope around their neck in order to signal membership of the pseudo-medical establishment. The use of such symbols is predominantly impressionistic as distinct from functional. This awing seeks to bypass the need for vets to prove themselves in action in favour of automatic respect. An indicator of this is (as an established partner observed), "*If you have the right manner for example, the right jacket – who knows...say the right things, probably relatively few clients who really know whether the vet is competent or not.*" An emergent property of *adopting imagery* is *imputed trust*. The veterinary experts expect deference. They do



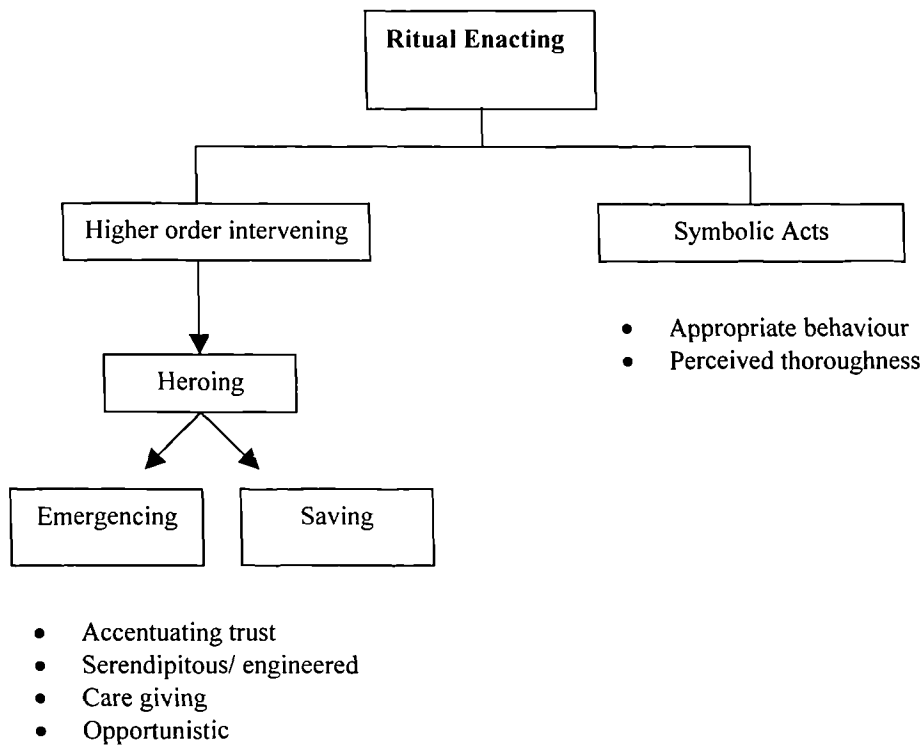
not wish this to be conditional on first demonstrating skill. Possessing credentials should in themselves be judged entirely sufficient.

Increasingly, traditional symbolism is being supplemented or in some cases superseded by contemporary artefacts which themselves instil awe. State of the art equipment for cutting edge diagnosis is becoming the benchmark against which clients might express their awe.

*Ritual enacting* explains how veterinarians routinely perform rituals in order to awe clients. These rituals combine necessary elements of vet work with purely symbolic behaviour. Care giving is one example. The degree of concern and compassion displayed is particularly influential in generating trust. Another example of *ritual enacting* is the examination process by which the vet assesses the condition of his animal patient. Rituals are intertwined with face-to-face interactions. Clients expect to bear witness to rituals, though they are unlikely to identify them in these terms. Rituals can take the form of established veterinary protocols. Alternatively they may be vet specific emerging in character with the veterinarian. They define the *shape* of the interaction. They provide stability through predictability. Under certain conditions *ritual enacting* accentuates the experts ability.

The following diagram illustrates the various components of this category of awing. It demonstrates how *ritual enacting* has its own categories with their respective properties.

Figure 3



*Higher order intervening* is an emergent process which develops positive imagery. Vets contrive impressive displays of apparent skill with which to awe clients. *Heroing* is a category. A property of *heroing* is *serendipity*. Should the opportunity to exhibit heroic behaviour arise the vet is likely to latch on. Witnessing the vet ‘saving’ an animal’s life when in imminent danger is awesome for the client. Lifelong reverence may ensue, the consequence of a single but memorable encounter. *Reverence* is another property. Alternatively, where lifesaving opportunities fail to materialise the knowledge chasm separating client and expert may facilitate an *calculative* type of *heroing*. The expert dramatises the severity of the case subsequent to ‘battling against the odds to save the patient’. The expert may then enjoy the credit for the seemingly heroic behaviour.

*Knowledge asymmetry* is a condition of the mystification process. This is indicated by the comments of a vet's brother who is aware of the inside line, "Doctors and vets have their jobs because of the ignorance of the people." The outcome of heroic intervention need not even be clinically favourable for the patient in order to be awe inspiring. The animal may die but provided the vet has apparently acted appropriately then the performance will have been worthwhile and the client will be none the wiser.

The *perceived thoroughness* with which vets act out rituals is significant property of *ritual enacting*. It is not sufficient merely to play out the roles in ritualised fashion. There should be some element of apparent commitment visible. Whilst clients are likely to be unaware of the nature of the rituals which they witness in the course of their interactions, they are likely to be impressed by the apparent rigour with which they are enacted.

*Complexifying*, a sub process of *dynamic awing*, entails making veterinary work appear more complicated than it routinely is. This gives veterinarians the latitude to function free from interference. Life in this domain is perceived as outwith the comprehension of mere mortals. *Medicalising* is an emergent category. *Medicalising* entails accentuating the symbolic links with the medical world. Procedures that previously were only undertaken in human medicine are now infiltrating the veterinary realm. Cataract operations, chemotherapy, blood transfusions, cosmetic surgery are part and parcel of the *medicalising* process. Organ transplantation is a further example of how complexity is on the increase. The scope for developing healthcare solutions is seemingly infinite. The opportunities for capitalising on the awe inspiring effects are correspondingly great. *Scope* is a property of *complexifying*.

Veterinarians through *medicalising* access the bestowed trust that characterises the doctor/patient interaction. This avoids the need to actively convince clients of one's abilities. A property of *medicalising* is *trust*. Analytic rules indicate *medicalising* links with other processes implicated in the commercialising of trust – these come temporally distant from initial efforts at building relationships.

*Complexifying* during interactions functions as a deterrent to self-help. Clients are stimulated into surrendering any notions of doing things themselves. Vets reinforce the perception of indispensability. This behaviour is indicated here by an observation of a sales rep who is used to witnessing vets in action on a daily basis. He explained, "*Vets like to, they like to be able to do something the client can't do themselves. Like IV [intravenous] for example – it's better than just giving a packet of pills.*"

*Jargoning* is the vet's tendency to indulge in double talk. This encompasses the use of overly technical language. This makes the vet seem more knowledgeable to clients. Terms like 'oedematous' swelling sound much more mysterious and complex than a straightforward 'fluid filled' swelling.

*Opportunism* is emergent where behaviour is selectively influenced by favourable opportunities as distinct from consistent principles. The scientific dimensions of veterinary work are more amenable to the task of keeping clients in line than the 'art' which is, in essence, intangible. 'Hard science' is a useful legitimating option. It provides opportunities for service augmentation. This is indicated by an experienced vet client. She explained to me, "*..it's much more of a science nowadays. They have all the charts on the walls – have you had your dog's blood chemistry checked recently?*"

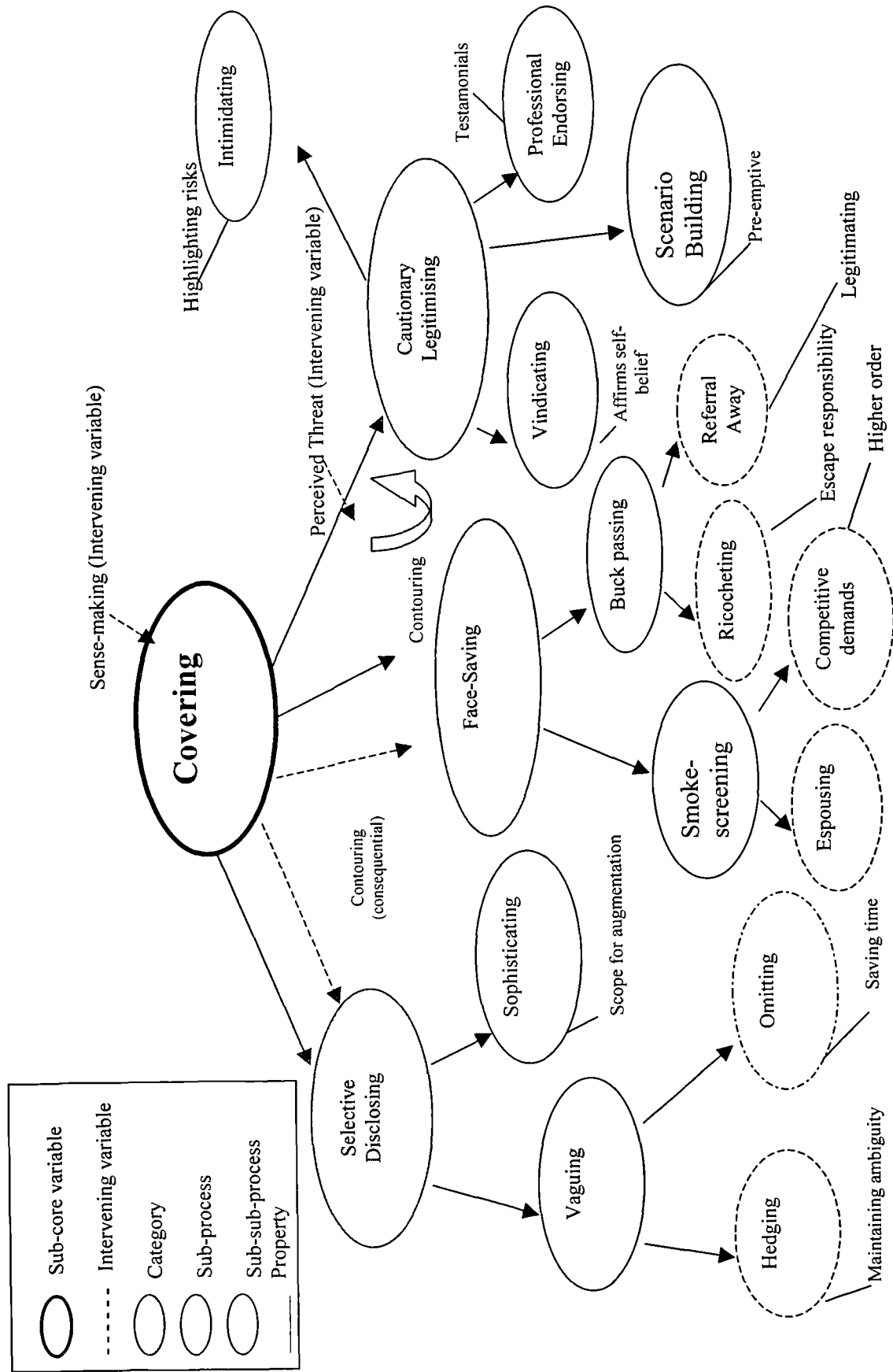
The rigorous adherence to scientific protocols is an easily accessible source of power over clients. An interesting dichotomy was emergent with respect to the role played by science. At an explicit level the science of veterinary medicine is portrayed as omnipotent. In reality, scientific knowledge has clear limitations that are often not acknowledged. There is an apparent fickleness in how vets variously latch-on to scientific logic when convenient and selectively disregard lack of scientific ‘proof’ at will. Blood testing procedures are pushed forcibly on account of their invaluable role in diagnosis. There appears to be little debate as to the accuracy of the results they provide. Similarly, independent analysis of the variously claimed clinical benefits associated with the large number of brands of special diets for disease management and prevention in cats and dogs is notable by its absence. This does not detract from the sales of such products.

### 3.3.2 Covering

The manipulation of client’s awareness is a significant dimension in how effectively veterinarians establish their right to act. Once established, the true nature of fictions must be protected from discovery. Insiders, vets and their agents – the practice staff, keep outsiders, clients, at bay. Accordingly insiders keep the base line hidden from view through the *covering* process.

*Covering* closely regulates the information available to outsiders. Veterinarians seek to perpetuate the power advantage they enjoy over their clients. In line with this aim insiders are cautious when interacting with outsiders. *Covering* protects the fictions that assure the vets’ survival. At every turn during this study vets appear to be preoccupied with some form of defensive behaviour. Mystifying involves complex oscillation between obscurity and contrived transparency. Vet’s agents *cover* instinctively. Nurses protect vets from the outsiders’ demands on a daily basis. This behaviour is so ingrained that they will *spontaneously cover*. When clients seek to intrude for whatever reason, practice staff deflect the threatened interference.

Figure 4 Covering its categories and properties



*Selective disclosing* is the process whereby information divulged to clients is censored, restricted and divulged cautiously. Veterinarians believe that to allow unrestricted access is too risky. Categories of *selective disclosing* include *vaguing*, and *face-saving*. The link between *selective disclosing* and its categories is emergent through *contouring*.

This process involves graduating the extent of the *selective disclosing* judged appropriate. *Contouring* varies in light of the audience and specific nature of individual interactions. When faced with strangers *contouring* causes an increase in the levels of *vaguing*. A property of *contouring* is the *degree of threat*, both perceived and actual. This is dependent on level of familiarity. Another property is *personal compatibility*. When the expert enjoys interacting with a client at a personal level accepted *contouring* behaviour may be overruled in favour of less defensive type of behaviour. Personal characteristics have *overruling* effects. These vary in their function. They either relax or accentuate normal *covering* processes.

My research reveals vets going out of their way to protect clients with whom they empathise. Here *overruling* is seen in action. This behaviour must be distinguished from the instrumental cultivating emergent via *pseudo-friending* which occurs when experts wish to visibly develop relationships for their own gain. This is differentiable because under *overruling* conditions the actions of the vet are often kept hidden from the client. In such cases the concealment is *benign*. This suggests the existence of two types of *covering*. The manipulation of client awareness through *mystification processes* is not exclusively *self-serving* of veterinary interests. The behaviour exhibits a *degree of reciprocity*. The extent to which *benign* behaviour prevails over *self-serving* or vice versa is fundamentally determined by the experts' *sense-making* with respect to his personal world as against the bigger scheme of things. For example the question of how the vet prioritises his patient, his

client and his own personal agenda would give an indication of the vets interactional inclinations.

Veterinary experts are seen to *cover* in order to protect their clients under certain circumstances. When this behaviour is emergent vets apparently subsume their own interests temporarily to help shape the client's passage. A spin off from this may be beneficial to the vet. In such cases this is not the motivating factor. The overall consequence is still to keep the client in line. The expert might decide to withhold information that would otherwise cause the client unnecessary concern.

*Vaguing* is an invaluable strategy that gives the expert the freedom to avoid detailing what action is being taken. A consequence of this is flexibility. The expert is protected from accusations of back tracking as far as diagnosis and consequent treatment are concerned. An indicator of the importance of *vaguing* emerged when a vet nurse was reprimanded for disclosing too much, too soon, to clients. Owners of a cat admitted for an x-ray were informed of the discovery of an artefact that was visible on the x-ray picture. Subsequently it turned out that the artefact was in fact a blemish on the x-ray film and of no diagnostic significance after all. Some back pedalling was called for, together with a great deal of time in order to reorient the clients as to the 'real' story. Had the vet nurse practised *vaguing* initially, managing the client would have been simpler. *Hedging* and *omitting* are categories of *vaguing*.

*Hedging* involves adopting an ambivalent stance. By mentioning briefly and swiftly some possible diagnoses in passing, the client is left unsure of quite what the expert has said. In such instances clients may be reluctant to pursue the matter. They believe it is them who is not attentive enough in following what has been said. The possibility that they are being kept in the dark for some reason is not contemplated. *Hedging* creates a window of opportunity



for experts to use a degree of trial and error in order to discover what works in an individual's case. Using appropriate language can *cover* the fact that the vet does not know what the problem is with a patient. An indicator of this behaviour is the following diagnosis (or non-diagnosis) by a vet during a consultation, "*We'll call it a non-specific pyrexia. I think in this case we'll use response treatment and that'll work in 99 cases out of a 100 and well if she's the 1 in 100, then we'll have to do some tests to pinpoint where the problem is*". Translating this into more straightforward terms means trying a broad brush approach because I don't know what is wrong and with a bit of luck that will work.

By keeping his options open the vet can experiment with alternatives quite freely. This type of clandestine behaviour guards against intrusion. *Hedging* emerges in response to the problematic nature of accurate diagnosis. As one vet put it, "*Doctors are thought to get sixty percent of initial diagnoses wrong. For vets the percentage is likely to be even higher given all the different makes of animal.*" A condition of *hedging* is uncertainty. A property is the *maintenance of ambiguity*.

*Omitting* to disclose information helps experts to retain the upper hand in relationships. Questioning by clients is subdued by saying as little as possible. *Omitting* is going on regularly in the veterinary context. The most frequent indicator of this behaviour emerges in relation to the prediction of the anticipated duration of recuperation. Experts deliberately remain vague on the question of time-scales. In this way they avoid being pinned down when the patient has not recovered according to the predicted path and time frame. *Omitting* has important links in covering untoward reflections that might have negative repercussions when the vet coaches his clients. From experience the vet knows that saying little is the best option where sufficient uncertainty exists.

For the vet who has too many clients to see and a shortage of time, ‘not telling’ is an invaluable tactic. It enables clients to be processed quickly. Vet’s staff are adept at *vaguing* and *omitting* on their behalf. A property is *saving time*. An indicator of a vet nurse’s *covering by omitting* is, “*I didn’t know whether the boss wanted me to say they’ll be having another go at it [wiring a cat’s jaw], so I just didn’t mention it. He [the vet] can phone them in the morning if he wants to*”.

*Face-saving* is designed to perpetuate vested interests. Any potential for the erosion of fictions threatens the vet’s way of life. Consequently interactions with outsiders are actively managed. The raw data is replete with examples that relate to vets’ properlining to *cover* reality. Emergent categories of *face-saving* are *smoke-screening* and *buck passing*.

*Smoke-screening* requires the vet’s use of diversionary tactics. The expert conceals undesirable dimensions of how he operates by deflecting attention elsewhere. The focal point need not be favourable in itself, although it may well be. If the veterinarian can capitalise on solving one problem whilst neglecting another which is not so easily ‘fixed’ then negative impressions will be inhibited.

An indicator of *smoke-screening* is evident when a vet who, to insiders, is notorious for arriving late for afternoon theatre, still had not got round to carrying out an operation on an Akita’s umbilical hernia by 10pm. Having been admitted for surgery first thing that morning the owners had telephoned a number of times to enquire how their pet was doing. On each occasion the vet nurse had *covered* for her boss as is expected in such cases. Clearly there is a limit to how long such *buying time* can be sustained. “*They’d phoned earlier and I’d had to say Mr P was still consulting. Eventually he said to tell them he’d phone before he started to do the op*”. Thoroughness, on this occasion is the disguise employed to smoke screen. “*I wanted to examine it*

*and think in peace – have no interruptions...,*” the vet in question explained. The owners would have been less than impressed had they discovered the truth. The belief that the expert has devoted time and care on their animal’s behalf is desirable. The knowledge that one’s pet has been left without food all day (pre-operation procedure) to suit the vet’s agenda is a different matter. *Smoke-screening* is a tactic for manipulating perceptions. It permits vets to act as they see convenient, with minimal interference, whilst appearing to outsiders to be whiter than white.

*Espousing* is a category of *smoke-screening*. It explains how experts vociferously advocate lofty ideals or exemplary practices for public consumption. Behind the scenes, what goes on may be entirely dissimilar. One particular fortuitous encounter with a pharmaceutical sales representative revealed an indicator which is the epitome of this type of *smoke-screening* behaviour . During our chat he refers to what criteria influence drug choice. *“Like they [veterinarians] say their prime concern is efficacy. They talk about efficacy. But at the end of the day, if the deals right they’re open to alternatives. They’ll change, try something new – they don’t know the efficacy.”* Here the smokescreen is the proper line, namely efficacy. This is designed to conceal the baseline – profit. Time and again efficacy or caring is the disguise proffered for less honourable activities.

Experts routinely conceal the nature of the various competing demands on their time. *Higher order demands*, a category of *smoke-screening*, are the predominant way in which vets *save-face*. The aura of awe is thus protected and enhanced. *Saving* and *emergencying* emerge frequently in this context. They are stock excuses which insiders use to keep outsiders at bay. Vet nurses routinely cover for vets’ lack of availability. The reality of exactly what the vet is doing is not disclosed. The reason for restricting disclosure is to prevent unwanted images from reaching clients. The fact that veterinarians are human beings who experience the normal mundane demands of life does

not coincide with the myths perpetuated. Being “*at the chippie*”, or “*at home watching Channel 4 News*” do not rank as higher order demands in the eyes of clients who are being kept waiting. Recently, in the course of this research, my intrusion was deflected by a veterinary receptionist. In similar fashion I was advised as follows, “*I wouldn’t even try to contact him [the veterinarian], he’s always out consulting*”.

*Smoke-screening* functions to cover a fundamental structural condition of veterinary life namely competitive demands on the vet’s time. These reveal themselves in numerous ways. The principal and commonly most disruptive manifestation being clients. When the *competitive demands* are too great the consequence is a subsequent increase in delays experienced by clients in accessing the expert’s advice. A property of *excessive competitive demands* is the volume of clients. Time management is a big issue in veterinary life. Often vets are seen spreading themselves too thinly with repercussions for service quality. Rushed jobs become necessary and patients suffer. *Competitive demands* give rise to *waiting properties*. Being at the mercy of the expert and consequently being kept waiting are synonymous with the client role. The impact of competitive demands varies according to the type of veterinary practice, seasonal fluctuations as well as more micro-factors such as the prevalence of unforeseen delays. A further structural condition is the scope for unpredictable *complications*. These are encountered during surgical procedures and usually must be dealt with urgently. They cannot be postponed.

One strategy for dealing with *competitive demands* is explained by the in-vivo term *putting-off*. This involves the vet in variously deflecting the client until it is convenient for the expert. Behaviour of this nature is prevalent in vet life. Even in practices where client numbers are manageable and time is not unduly under pressure *putting-off* clients occurs. Vets have their own agendas and these act competitively against client demands. Vets are adept at deflecting clients. Adverse effects are not normally problematic as clients do

not suspect vets of duplicity. Explanations invariably refer to some form of *higher order demand*. These serve to quash potential objections to delays. *Competitive demands* necessitate *smoke-screening* in order to intercept the potential for negative impressions and client discontent. Out of hours work is another situation where *putting-off* behaviour kicks in. Vet work demands twenty-four hour availability in case of emergencies. Rotas exist within practices to spread the time on-call. *Offering reassurance* to clients over the telephone is one delaying tactic. If possible vets attempt to defer call-outs until normal surgery hours. An alternative policy is to mention the very high charges made for out-of-hours service. This usually encourages clients to comply with the vet's agenda. Analytic rules link this behaviour to *coaching* through *coercion by inference*, whereby clients are indirectly forced into line. The fear of being exposed to high fees is sufficient to alter behaviour.

*Buck passing* is employed in order to perpetuate the myth of expert infallibility. In this way experts avoid blame should unfavourable outcomes emerge. The category of *referral away* represents one type of *buck passing*. Clients are referred elsewhere to 'expert' experts. This is equivalent to a GP sending a patient to seek specialist advice. The vet will usually delay referrals until a critical juncture is reached. The vet may lack competence in a specific area and quickly finds himself out of his depth. As a last resort, he will opt to pass the buck. Referring to higher authority and thereby concealing his shortcomings should prevent a loss of face with his client. Importantly there is however a dilemma in deciding precisely when, if at all, to refer a case. Potential loss of face with peers is at stake also. The best option may apparently be to indulge in a type of psychological *buck passing*. Circumvention of responsibility for an unfavourable clinical outcome is achieved by reassuring the client that whatever has happened was an unavoidable consequence. The ambiguity surrounding case treatment leaves scope for the expert to escape suspicion of any impropriety. The client remains unaware of the vet's *face saving* ploys.

A structural condition mitigating against referral is the investment in high tech equipment. If very significant finance has been used to acquire expensive technology, then there is likely pressure to keep work in-house. The desire to maximise income generation encourages this policy. In addition, legitimisation of the referral is jeopardised by being seen to have the specialist equipment to do the job. It is normal for vets to justify referral through the 'absence of the latest technology' and not through a lack of skill. Under such circumstances and where the vet really doesn't want to be left with blood on his hands referral may nevertheless be recommended. Recourse to such action is legitimised by explaining "*we just don't see enough of these.*" An indicator of this is when presented with a sickly Terrapin the vet in question admitted it for further investigation. In private he admitted it was about 12 years since he'd last had to deal with one of these creatures. Calling for a copy of an idiot's guide to exotic animals he looked at the options. He decided to x-ray it. Not knowing what the radiograph of a healthy Terrapin should look like the exercise proved rather futile. After further head scratching, I was asked if I didn't think its eyes looked puffy. Eventually after a few days of trial and error the creatures' life looked to be hanging in the balance. The decision was taken to refer it to a veterinary school specialist. The vet explains *face saving* to me, "*You don't need to know anything, as long as you do something, they're pleased.*" A property of *buck passing* is *legitimation*. The act of justifying one's actions as appropriate is a critical factor.

Another emergent category of *buck passing* is *ricocheting*. This involves the veterinarian in deflecting the ultimate responsibility for decision making back to another party whilst still managing to control the *shape* of the path ahead. When this is accomplished the vet is effectively pursuing his own agenda whilst at the same time she/he is ensuring that in the event of procedures not going according to plan culpability will fall elsewhere. This represents the ultimate in *buck passing* behaviour. A vet outlines this type of strategy. The

discussion revolves around a young cat with a fracture and whether the option to pin the bone should be taken or left as is. *“According to the principles of veterinary medicine it should be done – I would advise it – but obviously I cannot guarantee it. The screw could come loose and require more attention or whatever. Say that I explain that no it doesn’t have to be done but that it is advisable, but say that it is their decision. Yes I’d like to do it [the operation]. But at the end of the day it’s me they’ll blame if it’s not right – I’ll be the one they complain to – I don’t need that...So I make sure they understand it’s their choice.”*

Manipulating outsiders’ perceptions emerges as being all important in the vet’s daily life. *Selectively disclosing* what clients see and hear helps in the perpetuation of the desired fictions. This goes some way to maintaining clients’ compliance.

Another way in which experts indulge in the mystification of their worlds is by what I call *sophisticating*. This is where vets make things seem more complicated than they really are. This emerges as convenient camouflage for legitimising their right to act. *Sophisticating* encourages clients to rely on their vets counsel more frequently.

It makes vet work seem more highly skilled than ever before. No longer is it an annual visit to the vet that is indicated. Rather more frequent journeys to the surgery are encouraged. *Scientificing* and *jargoning* are properties of complexifying. The vet emphasises the scientific nature of effective veterinary protocols. Blood testing and chemical analysis are promoted as essential. An experienced practitioner suggests things may not be all they seem, *“There is much said about the advances in scientific knowledge – the boundaries of knowledge are relatively limited at any particular time and we should not be persuaded otherwise.”*

The vet seeks to exclude the client from what he regards as his territory. Ideally he would like to be left to take charge and act as he sees fit. Not understanding the terminology the client is excluded and must defer to the imposed superiority.

*Cautionary legitimising* behaviour is employed to diffuse situations that might otherwise be sources of discord during vet/client interactions. This is predominantly pre-emptive in nature. However, retrospective forms were also encountered. By practising *cautionary legitimising* the vet retains clients' trust and thereby the right to act.

From experience, the expert is able to anticipate clients' reactions to various circumstances. This links to the *coaching* process via the category called *repertoiring*. In an attempt to mitigate possibly negative responses the expert intervenes. *Fore-warning* is a category of *cautionary legitimising*. It involves predicting the future course of events and recommending the appropriate course of action. Disclosure of the expense that will be involved in a specific course of treatment is designed to mitigate potentially negative impressions. *Pacing* allows the expert to regulate the rate of disclosure according to the clients in question. The early disclosure of the cost of anticipated treatment gives clients the chance to get acclimatised to the prospect of the financial outlay. The idea of being 'given it straight' is a form of *accentuated honesty*. This type of behaviour conveys the feeling that the veterinarian is being open with the client. The client believes he is being given the inside line where in fact he is being tactically kept at bay.

The expert laying his cards on the table might take the following format, 'In my opinion this is what needs to be done. It won't be cheap, it'll be £...s, you can think about it and let me know if you want me to go ahead.' This apparent freedom to refuse expensive treatment is a cover. Clients may feel that they must agree to the recommended action not least on account of the



experts candid disclosure. By pre-empting a client's surprise over what they are being charged the expert makes it more difficult for the client to challenge the fees subsequently. On suggesting to a client that their cat requires toothpaste to enhance its dental health the vet quickly interjects, "*it's quite expensive but it's effective and it's a big tube, it'll last you a long time.*" It then becomes awkward for the client to refuse the product on account of its price.

*Scenario building* is a form of cautionary legitimising. When vets diagnose cases there will often be a fairly conservative method for initial treatment. A broad spectrum antibiotic which would cover a range of infections may be a first option.

However simple a case may be, differential diagnoses exist. As one client observed "*It's ridiculous, I've seen three different vets and they all gave different diagnoses.*" *Differential diagnoses* is a structural condition of *cautionary legitimising*. As a consequence there is scope for precautionary investigations. The expert is careful to ensure that there is some form of legitimisation whatever course of action is chosen. An indicator is the vet's comment, "*We'll cover with an antibiotic. We'd want to avoid any urinary infection reaching the kidneys.*" Legitimising need only be minimally robust. It may remain latent, but it is never absent. If desired, the worst case can be highlighted and an extensive selection of protocols can then be suggested. The appropriateness or otherwise of such prescriptions are likely to remain unverifiable. The scope for exploitation of clients exists. The *probability of discovery* is a relevant condition influential in determining behaviour.

*Inducing fear* is an invaluable strategy employed to keep people in line. *Inducing fear* is a category of the higher level concept *intimidating*. *Intimidating* is emergent to a more pronounced degree within some *coaching* processes. The asymmetry in knowledge is a condition that facilitates the use

of fear. Language that engenders fear in subtle but influential ways is characteristic of reinforcing the culture of fear. Dependence is the consequence. "*Making surgery safer,*" is a powerful legitimating cover, for example. Slogans of this nature have far reaching impact. *Worst casing* motivates clients to fall in line with veterinary wisdom. The sociological attachment people feel for their pets is a critical condition underpinning the whole of companion animal practice. Consequently, veterinarians use *fear* to their advantage in keeping their clients in line. This links closely with the *coaching* process whereby experts manipulate their recruits by variously using implicit and explicit control strategies. Clients are unlikely to disregard the veterinarian when he issues warnings about the potentially fatal consequences associated with non-compliance. When faced with potent psychological levers of this nature clients feel powerless to object to whatever course of action their vet advises. A property of *cautionary legitimising* is *reverse psyching*. The veterinary experts gain control by feigning lack of control. They emphasise the *freedom* they give their clients to have the final say in what treatment option is selected. This process in itself serves to build trust. In subtle ways the freedom to reject the recommended treatment serves to enforce obligation.

*Professional endorsing* is used to legitimate action. When a client threatens to challenge a veterinary myth, the potential rebel is reminded that this is the way "we" do things. This tactic implies that the veterinary profession are as one in their beliefs. The individual is no match for such a show of strength. Accordingly the client must comply, or be ostracised. Analytic rules indicate this behaviour is also emergent elsewhere. It is more pronounced during the *coaching* phase under conditions where clients exhibit non-compliant tendencies. Another form of pre-emptive behaviour is emergent through *testimonials*. These normally have as a property *higher authority*. A vet may seek to authenticate his treatment regime by linking to a credentialed source. This type of legitimation is only necessary when the treatment is in some way

radical or clients are reluctant to comply. An indicator of this is the vets showing a written attestation, from an eminent professor, to a client verifying the unconventional use of a drug which ordinarily was not intended for the purpose. *Casual referencing* is the deliberate, but apparently unintentional, leaking of some form of expert association – otherwise known as name dropping. The other party is of illustrious credentials and therefore above scrutiny. To mention in passing that one was discussing a similar problem with the eminent Professor of cardiology at the vet school would have a legitimating effect.

A final form of *cautionary legitimising* is emergent through *vindicating behaviour*. Vets are careful to emphasise the unavoidable nature of the premature death of a patient. This practice appears to be self-defensive. It distances the vet from any perceived culpability on two levels. Firstly, the vet does not wish his reputation to be publicly tarnished by what he would consider unfair criticism. Failure to indulge in *vindicating* risks *undermining* the awe induced. Secondly, the *vindicating* allows the vet the opportunity to reaffirm self-belief. A property of this category is the *inevitability* of the outcome. This explains how the expert absolves himself of any guilt. In this way the vet denies the need for self-criticism and reflectivity. This type of behaviour simplifies their lives by reducing the need for critical thought.

### **3.4 Information gaining**

Information gaining processes intersperse vet/client interactions. They are fundamental to keeping clients in line. Experts have a monopoly over *information gaining*. Essentially *information gaining* emerged as comprising firstly a *detection* phase and subsequent *weighing up* stage. *Detecting* is designed to on the one hand to reveal the patient's clinical problem and also to determine a client's suitability. The emergent categories of *detecting* are sequential; *encouraging disclosure* is followed by *active listening*.

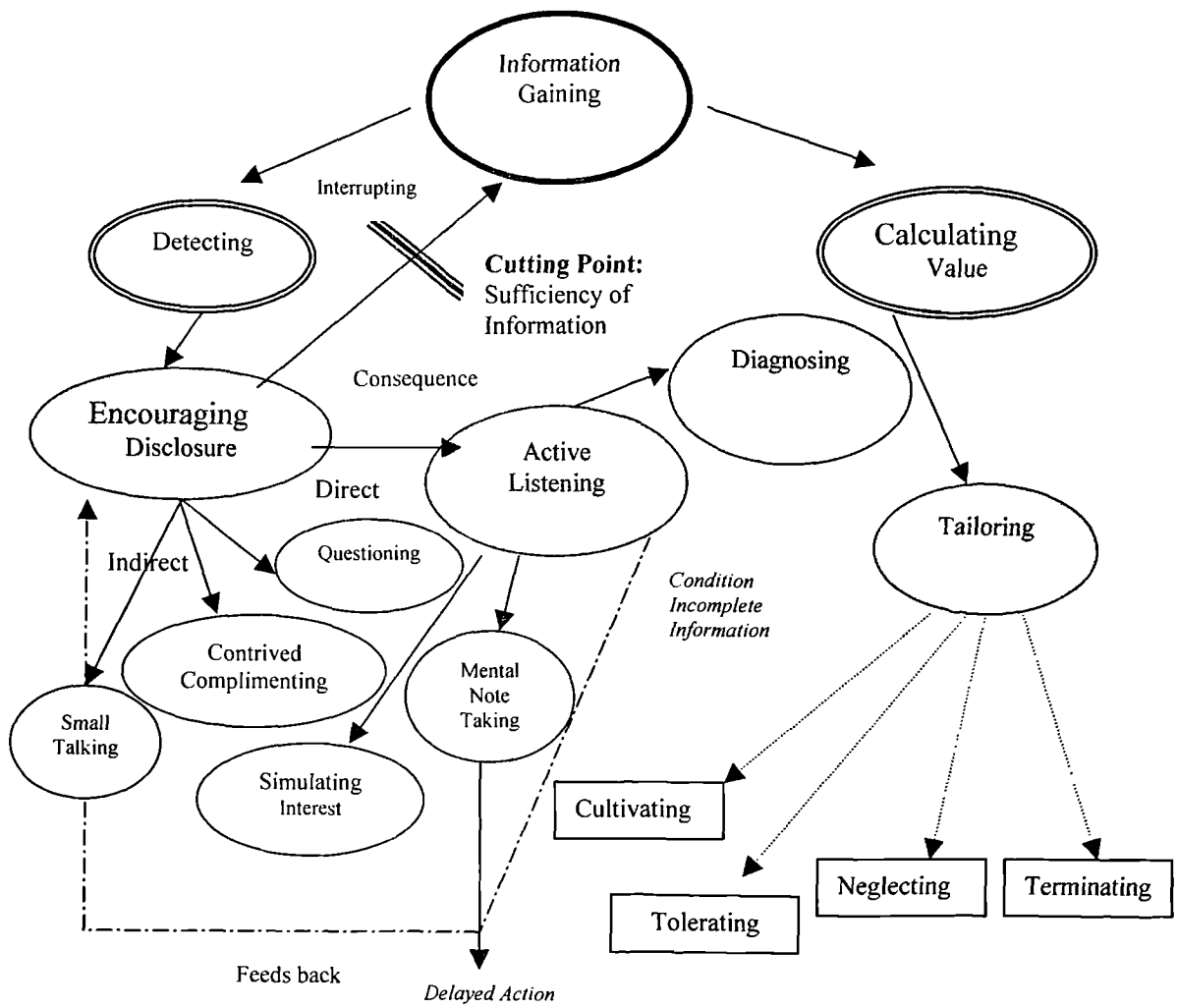


Figure 5 Information gaining and its differential consequences.

*Encouraging disclosure* has, in turn, the following categories;

1. small talking
2. contrived complimenting, and
3. questioning

These lead to the evaluative process of *calculating value*. During *calculating value* the expert compares the information gained to his experiential knowledge according to different dimensions. *Information gaining* enables the vet to benchmark for client desirability. Such information is vital in order for the veterinarian to assess whether a client is worth acquiring and retaining. The criteria against which this assessment is made vary. Clients and their pets are judged good or bad and numerous shades along this continuum, ‘pigeon-holing’. Depending on how the vet evaluates the combined package of patient and client, recourse to differing behaviour subsequently evolves.

Cutting points exist in light of *calculating value*. The expert will variously engage in *cultivating, tolerating, neglecting or, in extreme circumstances, terminating* relationships with clients. *Information gaining* processes are pervasive and have two key functions. Firstly, they are explicit in nature and are instrumental in arriving at patient diagnosis. In this endeavour, a variety of strategies are employed to manage the information divulged by clients. For example, tactics designed to deal with misinformation and prevent information overload are commonplace. The emphasis is on vet/client co-operation for patient wellbeing. Secondly, implicit *information gaining* is indicated by the experts’ desire to keep clients in line. The condition *incomplete information*, necessitates ongoing preoccupation with *information gaining*. The initial interaction episode fails to provide a complete picture of the new client. Over time the pieces of the jigsaw come together. Missing pieces which correspond to unknown elements are consciously sought out to give the expert a clearer view of his client. *Active listening* occurs when veterinarians tune in to ‘juicy’ shards of information. These may relate to pertinent indicators of a patient’s condition.

Alternatively they may have significance in how *tailoring* is operationalised. *Active listening* involves *mental note-taking* and its consequences have *delayed action* properties. In other words the snippets of information may be usefully recalled during future interactions. Demonstrating to clients that the veterinarian remembers information about them is a useful way of building trust. Reliving past encounters and successful outcomes is also emergent.

Eliciting information from clients is rarely difficult. Clients are notoriously keen to discuss their pets. What is problematic is generating relevant information. Teaching clients what is expected of them in this respect is an identifiable part of the vets' *coaching* into clienthood. Clients are usually eager to develop a rapport with veterinarians. The property of *social value* relates to clients desire to affiliate with those of higher perceived social value. They enjoy nothing more than chatting about their pet, or surrogate child. Often they do not know when to stop. When clients go into information free fall experts must intervene. Overly talkative clients delay progress. This has negative repercussions on ordinarily tight schedules. Under certain conditions talkative clients are not viewed negatively. This links to some vets' desire to commercialise interactions. A variety of tactics can be employed to keep wayward clients in line. Vets are adept at 'cutting clients short'. *Interrupting* processes are intrinsic to veterinary life.

When a critical juncture is reached a change in behaviour is observed. This is indicated by the expert obtaining a *sufficiency* of information to make a diagnosis. Another critical juncture is the *over-run*. This is caused by overly talkative clients. Clients may cause irritation to experts by explaining, at great length, their own theories as to what is wrong with their pet. Time-wasting of this nature is unwelcome. Schedules suffer and experts are pressurised. Time is a valuable commodity, appointments being normally rigorously scheduled. Diagnosis is the remit of the veterinarian and intrusions are deflected. Usually there is a need to process clients. *Interrupting* is used to bring these perceived deviant clients into line. Listening gives way to active tactics that are designed to silence clients. The expert

may variously intervene by apparently agreeing with the client's ideas subsequently to pursue his own agenda – instructing the client as to the role he must play. Alternatively the expert will intervene by changing the subject and begin discussing unrelated topics. This is designed to confuse the client who is not quite sure what to make of the vet's behaviour. Talking over a client is a final attempt to impose control. Veterinarians who have few clients and devote much time to *cultivating* them are less inclined to risk offence by *interrupting*. Time is not in such short supply and he is well rewarded for giving the impression that each client is precious. *Preciousness* is an emergent phenomenon confined to low throughput practices. Each client is special and contributes proportionally more to the bottom line than do individuals in higher throughput contexts. It would be unrealistic for veterinarians who have very many cases to see every day to hope to satisfy all their clients. This is understood and accounts for differences in behaviour. The value a vet places on his individual clients is conveyed to them differentially via the *coaching* process. Under conditions of high demand for veterinary attention within a geographical area and limited supply, clients are seen as eminently replaceable. In such cases cultivating is judged as unnecessary and clients can be processed at pace. If clients do not comply with how things work then they are seen as being more bother than they are worth and *ignored*.

Vets themselves must continually contend with being interrupted during their daily lives. The demands on their time and skill are many and varied. The existence and force of *interrupting* acts as a turning point in the vets behaviour. When the pressure from interruptions is too pronounced *self-defending* increases as a protection mechanism. Third parties, practice staff, may be enlisted to help deflect unwanted intrusion.

Clients too are involved in *information gaining* processes. Inequity is a characteristic of these processes. The expert is entitled to unlimited information, the client has no such entitlement. Unless errors are made and the 'baseline' is accidentally disclosed to clients little of consequence reaches the client's domain. Clients innately feel it is their task to supply experts with information. This is not reciprocal in nature. Information is divulged arbitrarily as individual experts see fit. Professional standing entitles the expert to behave in this way. As a consequence of the paucity of information clients can access judgements which relate to service quality are intrinsically problematic.

Extraction of information from clients can always be legitimised in the name of diagnosis. The discovery that a client has high disposable income and does not have a family would be of significance where *calculating value* is concerned. Consequently the expert moves to a *tailoring* phase. A treatment regime can therefore be customised accordingly. This may have more to do with the owners ability to pay than the morbidity of the disease itself. Vets are observed inflating prices as well as giving special deals to certain clients.

The *socio-psychological value* of companion animals is the crucial condition sustaining the existence of small animal medicine. The fact that pets have a value in excess of their monetary cost is fundamental. If pets were viewed dispassionately they would be replaced when faulty, not mended. The sick animal would be exterminated and a new version purchased. The perceived *substituability* is a cutting point in this analysis. Any veterinary intervention likely to exceed the replacement cost of a pet would not be sanctioned. When a pet is seen as irreplaceable by its owner then the scope for extensive investigation and intensive treatment regimes is considerable.

The *surety of the sale* is a property of *sophisticating*. Clients who exhibit pathological attachment to their pets are likely to be labelled troublesome because of their tendency to demand the most rigorous attention possible. Such behaviour is



seen as an affront to the professional's judgement. The negative impact of deviant behaviour of this sort is moderated by the beneficial financial implications associated with doing "anything it takes" to 'guarantee' the pet's recovery. When the veterinarian is satisfied that any particular client is both willing and able to pay then this has ramifications for the treatment options advised. *Sophisticating* is the process by which numerous extra procedures are recommended. It also incorporates a legitimating function. *Sophisticating* is emergent where certain conditions prevail. Under conditions of the *sure sell* the basic veterinary needs of a patient are frequently seen to *augment*. The *sure sell* acts as a magnet for experts' *sophisticating activities*.

Discovering that clients have pet insurance is similarly magnetic for those experts wishing to pursue all avenues of diagnosis and offer extensive treatment regimes. Experts' *sophisticating* of interactions is motivated according to clinical criteria or financial reward or combinations of the two.

The lower the *socio-psychological value* the more limited the scope for intervention. Low value is a limiting factor. For example, a dog who is part of the family, though only under sufferance, on account of keeping children happy is unlikely to warrant much more than basic treatment. A cat, on the other hand, who 'is' the family for a single person is candidate for deluxe medical attention. Clinical need is, in many cases, not the deciding factor. This insight provides a link explaining the veterinarian's concern for *information gaining* in the service of *calculating client value*.

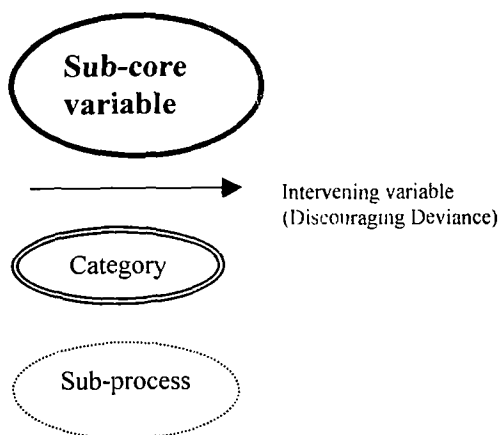
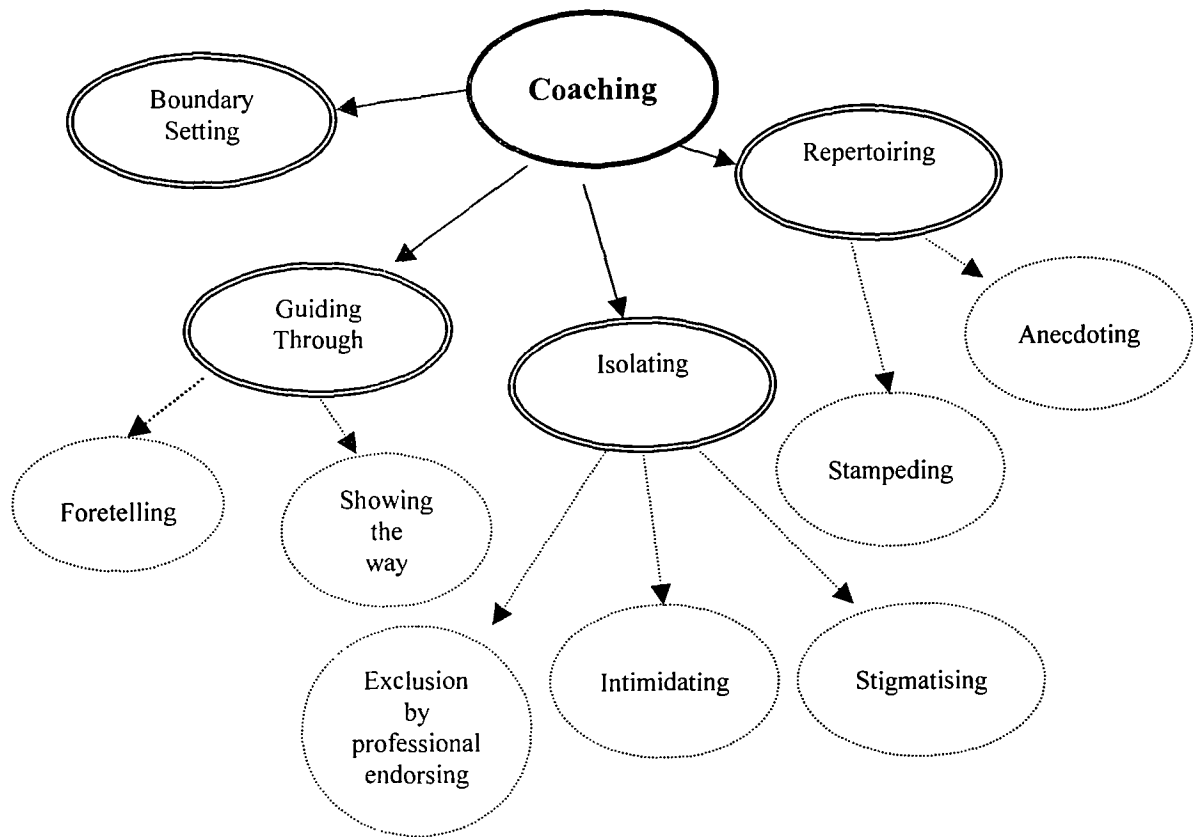
When *clinical need* is the driving force of an interaction *information gaining* is emergent through *encouraging disclosure*. *Questioning*, under this condition, is the predominant category. *Small talking* and *contrived complimenting* are viewed as unnecessary distractions from the task in hand. Acknowledged clinical specialists can largely disregard preoccupations with, what they regard as, banalities. Their proven skill is what sets them apart. They let results and referrals speak for themselves. Their clinical authority allows them to channel their energies into

technical areas. They *keep clients in line* by the possession of specialist credentials. Relationship building is neglected under the condition that *substitutability* is not possible. *Geographical constraints* are structural conditions which restrict *substitutability*. Even expert experts usually have substitutes. Accessibility however may be problematic. Territories exist. Time, distance and inconvenience collectively establish boundaries beyond which it is not feasible to venture.

### **3.5 Coaching**

The *coaching* concept explains how veterinarians variously socialise their clients. Vets wish to control client behaviour. One way this is achieved is by *coaching* their clients into *clienthood*. The idea is to train clients to suit the expert's preferred way of working. *Coaching* operates simultaneously on two dimensions. Overt instructions are distributed in the form of practice rules and explicit prescriptions for administering medication whilst more subtle psychological factors manipulate behaviour at a subconscious level. The aim is to smooth the clients' passage during their interactions with veterinary experts. This may be achieved by benign methods whereby the vet genuinely tries to act in the best interests of his patient and client. Alternatively the vet may employ more underhand strategies of control for self-serving motives.

Figure 6



New recruits (clients) are introduced to the practice ideology. The initial phase of the *coaching* process is *boundary setting*. This involves laying the foundations on which future interactions will be based. It can be viewed as serving an orientation function. Where the stakes are high, the business of *boundary setting* is *systematic*. New recruits are exposed to a special language. Much imagery is employed. The language and codes of behaviour may appear unintelligible. As in awing processes, the client is exposed to contrived displays of skill. The client must bear witness to rituals and make sense of them. The expert coach, in this context the veterinarian, is there to support the newcomer. The unfamiliar world is gradually uncovered. The expert apparently selflessly sacrifices his precious time in order to teach the new recruit how to behave. The coach provides the lens through which the newcomer is permitted to look. The lens is coloured and the aperture varied to suit the motives of the coach. It is the coach who decides the vantage point from where to view what is going on. The expert allows only fleeting glimpses around the periphery to begin with. With time the client becomes aware of the boundaries which govern behaviour. A deeper appreciation of what constitutes appropriate behaviour emerges. *Pacing* a property of *boundary setting*. *Spending time* with clients is a catalyst to relationship building. It develops indebtedness.

*Boundary setting* is the active influencing of outsiders. The expert leads the way safely in alien territory and is judged to be dependable. *Inducing trust* is a property. A critical dimension is the way in which the *boundary setting* is regulated or paced. Rushing exposure to alien encounters risks being counterproductive. The new recruit senses undue pressure and resists. The coach faces a dilemma. He must restrain his temptation to force the client down the routes he has mapped out for him. The coach must balance pressure with reward according to the situation. The initial face-to-face interaction provides the opportunity to cement a relationship with the new recruit.

Not all clients are naïve however. When clients become experienced they can become more challenging. They are less willing to accept whatever the vet decrees on trust alone. Experienced clients demand more sophisticated strategies of control.

Pushing the advantages, whilst selectively ignoring any disadvantages, associated with particular behaviour is one emergent tactic used by experts to keep clients in line. Another emergent strategy designed to induce compliance is *isolating*. This has potent effects. Clients, in general, want to belong to ‘something’ – granted access to the vet’s inner circle. Because vets have the freedom to define that ‘something’ through *mystification*, *coaching* and *pseudo-friending* they hold the keys to regulating entry. Threats of exclusion from membership are powerful in the extreme.

Different categories of *isolating* were emergent. These varied in their intensity. Most benign in nature is *exclusion by professional endorsement*. Covert forms of *isolating* through indirect *coercion* are influential in *keeping clients in line*. The most extreme type of *isolating* is *stigmatising*.

*Exclusion by professional endorsement* involves isolating the client by ostracising during the interaction. This behaviour is ingrained and it occurs almost innately to vets. By and large it is not malevolent in nature. When explaining to clients how the veterinarian is proceeding with the treatment of their pet the expert invokes support through *professional endorsement*. The assertion is that vets collectively act as one when diagnosing and treating. The implication is that the course the vet is following is entirely appropriate. It is therefore above question. The client is made to feel alone in the face of the collective might of professional wisdom. Experts frequently talk in terms of ‘we’ not ‘I’. This might seem a trivial observation. In reality it is significant. The experience of gaining professional credentials is implicated in creating a unit identity.

*Intimidating* is once again emergent, this time through the category labelled *indirect coercion*. It explains how clients are compelled to comply as a consequence of the imagery employed. The use of emotive language is the principal means of control. This is indicated by one veterinarian’s comments to me in relation to the promotion of flea treatments. He highlights the tactical use of fear to control behaviour saying, “*They [pharmaceutical companies and vets] get people all worried about fleas – it’s*

*big money, very commercial.*” The words used during interactions are encrusted with meaning. The messages relayed to clients are designed to apply pressure by covert means. When *coaching* inculcates a culture of preventative action, for example, the client becomes similarly oriented. Refusal to sanction treatment which reflects this ethos is viewed as breaking rank. It is judged a punishable offence. If clients do not comply with the unwritten rules of the practice they will be disciplined accordingly, with threats of isolation. In this way deviance is discouraged. Clients who are unwilling to stay in line are generally considered to be more trouble than they are worth accordingly they may be neglected and must seek alternative sources of veterinary care.

When client/vet relations are under strain more radical pressure is brought to bear. This involves *stigmatising*. Disputes occur in spite of veterinarians concern over *covering* potentially inflammatory information. Errors are from time to time inevitable. Mistakes made in the veterinary context may well have life threatening consequences for the patient. Vets cannot make amends for a lost life and risk alienating clients. In certain cases clients threaten veterinarians with litigation. Scope for highly charged interactions exists. Perceived overcharging by the expert is a common source of conflict. Warnings that clients will be stigmatised are designed to force clients back into line. Legitimate complainants and persistent non-payers alike may be threatened with *blacklisting*. *Isolation* through denial of attention is the lever.

Where the stakes are mundane in nature *boundary setting* is somewhat haphazard. Overall the *coaching* under these circumstances becomes *passive*. Clients may be left to discover how things work through experience as distinct from being actively coached.

*Coaching* emerges as an important dimension of what goes on when vets and their naïve clients interact. Clients need training in order to understand the rules that apply. This explains one way in which behaviour is regulated. Clients are

familiarised with the veterinary terminology. Strategies designed to accentuate the trust clients have of experts are commonplace. Contrived displays of skill are played out for the naïve audience. Where trust exists the vet, in his role as coach, can direct the course of future interactions to suit his own agenda. *Trust* is the condition which legitimises the experts' right to act.

A number of other processes emerge as relevant to the way experts manage the coaching relationship developed with clients.

*Guiding through* explains how experts deal with laymen. Dimensions of this process are *foretelling* and *showing the way*. By *foretelling* the expert is demonstrating his superior knowledge. The ability to predict what will happen instils awe. When things pan out in parallel with what was indicated beforehand, the inexperienced look to the expert to *take charge* in future. The expert indulges in *hand holding*. This mirrors the parent/child scenario where greater knowledge and experience look after the apparently helpless party. The client becomes accustomed to relying on the expert for guidance.

Many of the codes of behaviour which govern interaction within the vet/client relationship are implicit. The 'rules' regarding routine pet vaccination are so pervasive they are ingrained in the psyche of established clients. Clients aspire to be seen to be 'responsible pet owners'. Veterinarians have the scope to determine what they personally consider an appropriate definition of responsible ownership. This coincides with their own brand of veterinary practice. Traditionally this has meant an annual visit to the vet for vaccination. Now clients are encouraged to attend more frequently. There is a subtle change of emphasis evident. The language selected highlights the annual health check with the vaccination as a secondary. In addition, the services on offer have proliferated. Adopting a preventative health ideology legitimates the need for regular attendance and for extensive testing procedures.

*Informing* ensures clients are provided with essential information about what vaccination is essential, highly recommended and what is merely prudent. The range of other services available is highlighted. Clients receive cues which cumulatively convey the philosophy of the expert. *Coaching* has *incremental* properties.

Language is a powerful priming device in *coaching*. Because of a desire to affiliate with the expert, clients are normally open to falling in with the party line. Significantly the primacy of caring and protection through preventative health monitoring disguise any signs of self interest.

As a consequence of *informing* and the subtle forces which come into play *routining* occurs. The process of establishing and maintaining routines provides stability for the expert and the new recruit. *Routining* makes life predictable for the expert. Survival is assured through the existence of routines; prosperity is generated through their proliferation. Clients feel safe where *routining* takes place. It is seen as their duty to comply with the routine. Clients who, as a result of competitive demands on their time, have missed a routine check-up appear most uncomfortable about it. They worry their vet will view their non compliance as betrayal. Clients apologise to experts for their omissions.

*Betrayal* is a highly charged emotion and is only generated as a consequence of first experiencing intimacy. Perceptions of closeness are actively stimulated by experts through their *coaching* of clients. *Spending time* with clients makes clients feel valued. Showing empathy gives clients the impression that they are special. Clients feel privileged to hold the vets' undivided attention. They are unaware that they are just one of many clients and they do not have access to the vet's inner circle. Transgressing the boundaries the coach has delineated for the client seems intolerable. The psychological pressure to conform is intense.



*Excusing* tactics are employed by clients in an attempt to make amends for stepping out of line. At moments like these it is easy to forget that it is the client who commissions the expert and who pays the fees. The expert is engaged to serve the client. In such instances the client appears duty bound to the expert, the logical order is inverted. The characteristic of *coaching* relationships is the generation of *obligation*. A consequence of *coaching* processes is *inducing obligation*.

*Routining* enables the expert to govern the *intensity* of client interactions. The expert has the power to engineer routines to meet his own requirements. By establishing frequent client interaction, opportunities for enhancing relationships are presented. Consequently the potential for commercialising interactions is augmented. *Routining* encourages inertia. Routines in themselves smother radical change.

*Repertoiring* is the experts ability to call upon previous experience. It involves tapping into a memory store that retains explanations and stories that have proved effective in the past when actively managing clients. It is automatic in nature, *auto-piloting*. A property of *repertoiring* is *self-defence*. *Repertoiring* protects the expert from clients' accusations that the vet omitted to tell them vital information. The expert knows there is no uncertainty regarding what the client was told. An indicator of this strategy is, "It means I don't have to rack my brains to think what was it I told them. I know. I know because I always tell them all the same thing. I kind of go into automatic. Then there's no question." *Repertoiring* simplifies client encounters. It provides a means of controlling the *shape* of the interactions. Past experience is used proactively to predict and consequently influence future behaviour. This gives the *one-upping* edge to the expert. Similar experiences enable the vet to anticipate possible forms of client resistance and to know how best to counter them. Another type of *repertoiring* is *anecdoting*. This amounts to the vets reliance on tried and tested tales designed to amuse or educate clients. They serve to retain client attention.

As has been stated clients vary in their experience of clienthood. Over time clients themselves are capable of developing counter strategies with which to wrest a measure of control. *Repertoiring* is not the exclusive preserve of experts.

*Stampeding* is one technique that is the product of the experts' experience in dealing with clients. Speed is used to precipitate client compliance. The client is denied the opportunity of considering the options available for treatment by being pressured into decision making. "So we'll need to operate. I could do it tomorrow if you like. We could keep her in tonight or you could bring her back first thing which ever you prefer," is an indicator.

Counter strategies are emergent and represent clients' attempts to redress the imbalance in the power asymmetry. One emergent strategy employed by seasoned clients who are accustomed to facing expert domination is *surrogating*. It is consequent upon the experienced client identifying a likely conflict of interest between what he wants and what the vet will judge to be best for the patient. A third party is enlisted. The client evades the direct control of the expert by sending a stooge. The veterinarian has no alternative to deal with the stooge who acts as messenger for the pet owner. The individual, usually a friend or family member, explains the reason for their visit and that the owner is insistent on the instructions being carried out. Under such conditions the normal levers with which the expert would apply psychological pressure to influence client behaviour are ineffectual. The surrogate has not been granted negotiating powers. Veterinarians resent such ploys. They leave little or no room for manoeuvre. The expert must capitulate or cause stalemate. A condition of *surrogating* is client *insight*, the consequence of acquired experience. In other words the client realises in advance that the vet will not be willing to accommodate to the client's agenda. The client is not naïve in such cases. This explains how the less powerful party to an interaction seeks to evade the more powerful player's total control, first by predicting the experts' likely reaction and preempting it by employing avoidance tactics.

### 3.6 Pseudo-friending

Cultivating by *pseudo-friending* explains how veterinarians nurture seemingly friendly relations with clients for instrumental purposes. *Pseudo-friending* is operationalised firstly by *affiliating* and then by *obligating*. The vet may seek the client's co-operation in ensuring the animal receives the most appropriate clinical care; alternatively he may wish to commercialise the interaction as much as is possible. The inference that different priorities exist is indicated by a vet nurse's comments referring to her boss, "*Mr P always acts for the animal.*" The implication here is that other motives come into play. In parallel with the other emergent sub-core variables in this research *pseudo-friending* involves much behind the scenes activity. Client awareness is manipulated to the vet's agenda. Clandestine control is the consequence.

*Pseudo-friending* builds upon elements of the other processes associated with *keeping clients in line*. The positive associations developed through awing and coaching are the springboard from which this phantom friending emanates. Personal compatibility has an influence on the *pace* of *pseudo-friending*. *Information gaining* dictates the extent to which *pseudo-friending* develops. *Calculating value* of clients is a cutting point variously triggering and terminating cultivating behaviour. Conditions such as *trust* and *closed awareness* are necessary in order to guarantee the actualisation of the process. Accordingly the sub-processes of *affiliating* and *obligating* are emergent. The consequence of the cultivating activities is *obligating*. Subtle psychological pressure is brought to bear and vets effectively regulate client behaviour. The process explains how veterinarians 'sell' without appearing to sell. Clients notably are anaesthetised to the scope vets have for opportunistic behaviour.

Having ascertained the potential value of clients by actively eliciting information the vet can tailor behaviour accordingly. Clients can be ranked with respect to their perceived desirability. Computer software installed in many practices takes account of vets' desire to quantify client value. A running sum which represents the clients'

transaction value to date is accessed at the touch of a button. Information of this nature enables the vets to target worthwhile prospects and neglect those of restricted means. Maximum effect can be made of the time available. During interactions vets can mention expensive solutions to appropriate candidates. The gradation of services offered is evident. The criteria against which individual veterinarians evaluate their clients depends upon their own agendas. This is a function of their *sense-making* and is determined by the vet's personal characteristics and training. Current status is also influential. The stake the vet has in relation to the present and any future interactions is also significant. Financial reward may be the dominant concern of a vet who is a practice principal. A chat with a pharmaceutical salesman of 26 years standing yielded the following indicator, "*..a lot of vets are making big bucks out of the business. They're in it to make money – no mistake.*" An assistant who has a fixed salary would have no such incentives to milk clients. The socio-psychological rewards generated through satisfying interactions might be sufficient motivation in themselves. On the other hand clinical challenges and unusual cases may be what counts for another veterinarian.

The type of veterinary practice has an impact on the degree and intensity of *pseudo-friending* emergent. Minimal indulgence in *pseudo-friending* is observed where the practice has high client throughput. There simply is not the time or the requirement to cultivate friendly relationships. Clients are eminently replaceable in such circumstances. Those who desert the practice will be substituted. In practices of this type the critical factor is that the patient is viewed as sovereign and the owner is an adjunct. The client must be kept in line in the service of correctly looking after the patient and not obstructing the vet in his task of processing the cases he must see. The primacy of the patient is a turning point in this analysis.

Vets indulge in wholesale *pseudo-friending* where commercial concerns predominate. In this case the experts are in business first and foremost, the fact that it happens to be of a veterinary nature is secondary. The power advantage enjoyed

and perpetuated by vets gives an influential springboard from which to direct client behaviour.

According to analytic rules *pseudo-friending* is also emergent during *mystification* where it is a category of *covering*. In cultivating apparently friendly relations vets can conceal the reality of what they really get up to without raising suspicion. The strategy also has protective properties evident in its ability to pre-empt problems. When clients view their vet as a friend they are compliant and more inclined to give the vet the benefit of the doubt when something untoward happens. Under these circumstances *pseudo-friending* acts as an insurance policy.

The predominant form of *pseudo-friending* explains how veterinary surgeons market their services effectively. By cultivating their clients veterinarians increase both the frequency and duration of interactions. In this way vets increase the scope for commercialising these encounters to their advantage. Time spent cultivating amicable relations is an investment. *Time* is a necessary condition for effective *pseudo-friending*. The pay out may have delayed action properties but it is unlikely not to generate a premium. An indicator of the vets' awareness of the profitability of allowing enough time for augmenting the offering is highlighted, "*They [the partners] say we are not selling enough. We should have longer appointments and speak to the clients more and sell more. They say they are making more per consultation than we are. If they give me 15 min appointments its not going to affect the time I spend with a client. I won't spend any longer with them. I mean some people don't want to speak anyway, so what do you do? [she goes out of the consulting room muttering about the question of doing longer consultations...] I mean what are you supposed to use the extra time talking about? The weather, their families...I mean there's a limit to what you can try to sell. Have you had your nails clipped, when did you last worm him..., what about flea treatment and ear cleaning and diet....It's bad enough having to be friendly to people for 10 minutes never mind 15...*" This emerged subsequent to an assistant vet having been given instructions to increase the length of her consultations from ten to fifteen minutes per client. This

indicator of *pseudo-friending* reveals a dichotomy in its properties. The assistant vet is being kept in line by her bosses who call the tune. Structural conditions such as the length of appointment scheduled, in accordance with company policy, for example force her into *enforced* cultivating. The partners who have explicit financial interests, on the other hand, view cultivating clientele differently. Vested interests act as a cutting point in shaping the direction of vet/client interactions. Other structural conditions such as veterinary training influence behaviour to a significant, though predominantly subconscious, degree.

### 3.6.1 Affiliating

The *affiliating* process involves the vet in active endeavours to get close to his clients. *Central to effectively affiliating is accessing relevant information* about the client. *Information gaining* processes kick in again here enabling the vet to align behaviour in light of what is discovered. The category I label *role tailoring* explains how the expert alters his behaviour in ways he perceives will suit the particular client. This is an example of customising behaviour. It occurs most frequently where the vet sees the client as a particularly tempting prospect. Where clients are judged desirable but not irresistible a more standardised approach to *affiliating* is evident. The process involves operating on the same wavelength as the clients. A structural condition is *common ground*. Identifying and capitalising on perceived areas of mutual interest is the aim. Personal affinity between individuals is a catalyst to *affiliating*. Where affinity is absent artificial stimuli must be employed to build the necessary bridges.

Essentially the process of *role tailoring* involves mirroring those beliefs that are detected as significant to clients. Engineering equivalence is complementary to relationship development. This is emergent on many different levels. *Speaking the same language* is one widespread type of *affiliating*. This entails variously choosing an appropriate tenor for discussions. Adjustments in the pitch being in either direction being determined by the specific characteristics of the clients. A vet nurse told me

how her boss always “*speaks to them [clients] on their level.*” Using understandable language is necessary. An indicator of this behaviour is emergent when I overheard a vet telephoning a client to explain the outcome of an exploratory operation on her cat. Here the vet tells it as it was. This client was simply an ordinary ‘punter’ and warranted no embellishments or pretentious talk, “*I opened her up and well I had a good old rummage around ...*” Another relevant example of *affiliating through speaking the same language* highlights the instrumental dimension of *pseudo-friending*. It also demonstrates the fact that the objective of *pseudo-friending* is not exclusively to commercialise encounters. In this case the clear aim is to control client behaviour for the patient’s welfare. The patient in question was an elderly Alsatian guard dog with arthritis who lived outside lying on concrete. The vet was clearly concerned that the dog should be removed from the cold concrete and given more suitable conditions. In this instance the dog had first and foremost a job to do and was not a ‘companion’. Realising that normal psychological coercion was likely to prove ineffective the vet tried to get on the same wavelength as the owner, trying *affiliating* tactics. “*Och aye, I know, I mean he [the dog] shouldn’t be out there but if you get him under cover and ..., och well I mean I don’t have to tell you...you’ll do the right thing...*”

One example of this tailoring of behaviour is suggested by the following observation made by a sales rep. “*It used to be very much white shirt and tie and very formal. Now it’s different you’ll go into practices and the vets are operating in jeans and wearing sweatshirts – they’re very casual – more relaxed in appearance.*” Other strategies involve *personalising*.

*Personalising* involves the expert's varying activities designed to make clients feel they are special. An emergent property is *preciousness*. *Personalising* incorporates ploys which go beyond what is obligatory. A culture of dependence is instigated from the outset. This involves greeting the client and personally guiding them through to the consulting room from the waiting area. I labelled this activity *FIPing* otherwise referred to as *fetching in person*. This creates a memorable first impression. Displaying *familiarity* is a subsequent tactic. *First naming*, where judged appropriate, is synonymous with *pseudo-friending*. Calling clients by their first names is a stage in the process of disguising the formal client/ vet relationship and supplanting it with a cultivated one between 'friends'. *Pandering* explains how vets appear to acquiesce with clients wishes when perceived to be beneficial. A property is *expediency*. This type of behaviour is a form of convenience. Vets take the path of least resistance. *Keeping clients in line* with respect to the bigger picture is the driving force governing action. Vets are therefore, under appropriate circumstances, prepared to give the semblance of ceding power. Clients are led to believe they have the upper hand, in fact this impression is illusory. *Quick-fixing* explains how vets take superficial action but neglect more fundamental dimensions where the treatment of patients is concerned.

*Complimenting* the client by way of their pet is a favoured tactic for catalysing *affiliating*. It is a powerful mechanism for cultivating clients. Clients simply love to talk about their pets and are suitably impressed when their vet shows an interest in them. It is an acknowledged recommendation that vets should call a patient by name on at least three separate occasions during a consultation on account of being well received by clients. Further indulging in *small talking* and in some cases *joking* go down well with clients. A property of *personalising* is *tactical advantage*. A consequence of the various *affiliating* strategies is the build up of *trust*.



The spurious nature of the emergent *affiliating* activities is striking. In spite of apparently blatant attempts to ‘suck up’ to clients the prospects remain seemingly oblivious to the contrived displays their vets enact. A property is the *degree of contrivance*. *Affiliating* takes time and is of ongoing character. A property is its *cumulative effect*. There are intrinsic reasons that perhaps partly explain clients’ characteristic gullibility. The property of relative *social value* is significant. Individuals are more inclined to reciprocate affiliative behaviour to others of equivalent or higher social rank. This, (conjecture only), may be influential in such cases. Additionally clients want to take their pet to someone they view as their friend. Even in practices where *pseudo-friending* is only minimally in evidence clients themselves may magnify normal courteous behaviour, interpreting it as more proactive friending than it is in reality.

The pervasiveness of *affiliating* behaviour and its purpose in developing relationships for instrumental reasons is emergent. Not only are vets observed indulging in such cultivating tactics, they too in turn are cultivated with intent. This is emergent through a rep explaining to me how he similarly tackles the task of *affiliating* with his clients, the vets. He indicated, “..if I don’t know, I find out where his [the vet] interests lie. You have to discover what turns him on what interests him, what he likes to talk about, discuss – you need to know where his interests lie – whatever.” The inter-linked behaviours demonstrate how at the same time individuals operate on different levels but awareness contexts vary according to mutually exclusive trajectories. In the bigger picture it is possible to see the existence of apparently robust patterning of behaviour. By this I mean there are parallels where humans seek to control the behaviour of others in many different contexts simultaneously. Whilst these others seek to subjugate yet more individuals in order to influence outcomes to their own advantage. Power struggles, it appears are symptomatic of life.

The fake friending which I reveal is significant in that vets are seen actively cultivating clients. The essential point is that this occurs with anticipated consequences very clearly in mind. Vets seek friendly associations for reasons other than friendship. On occasion vets and clients will become true friends. This however is rare. An indicator of the level at which vets visualise their clients is revealed by a vet nurse who tells how her boss many years ago explained relationships with clients. *“In this job you’ll meet a lot of people. Some of the people you won’t like. A lot of the people you will like. But if you think of them all as a £5 note, then that helps.”*

### **3.6.2 Obligating**

*Obligating* is the consequence of the vet’s successful attempts at artificial *affiliating*. *Obligating* also encompasses vet’s efforts, real and otherwise, to care for both clients and their animals. It is consequent upon employing appropriate imagery. When experts are successful in conveying the impression that they are acting in ways which extend above and beyond the call of duty clients feel privileged. Indebtedness ensues.

Vets are observed cultivating relationships which perpetuate the illusion of equivalence in terms of the parties to the interaction. In other words encounters are shaped by the same implicit rules which govern friendly associations. The apparent ties of friendship bind client to vet. They are not however reciprocal. Such associations are unilateral in nature. Activity of this type is an example of a socially structured fiction which is designed to influence behaviour. Inertia is encouraged. Two emergent categories of *obligating* are *creating taboos* and *guilt inducing*. They function on a covert level and are conceptually robust. Imperceptibly these social-psychological processes powerfully manipulate behaviour. *Creating taboos* and *guilt inducing* have properties of *tacit self-defending*.

Giving clients the impression that they are privy to the inside line whilst really keeping them at bay is an immensely potent force. Taboos exercise control at

a psychological level. They delineate what is and is not appropriate behaviour, thereby **keeping others in line**. Manipulating client awareness judiciously safeguards the fictions which sustain experts' existence.

The substantive theory explained, I now progress to the comparative literature review.

## **4 LITERATURE COMPARISON**

The comparative literature review that follows is designed to situate my emergent theory. To this end I examine the similarities and differences discovered in relation to existing works. The aim here is not complete coverage. Selectivity according to perceived areas of relevance is the guiding logic.

#### **4.1 The purpose of the literature comparison**

I begin the literature comparison within the substantive area. Firstly, I examine the field from whence my theory originated and, to which, in the final analysis, it is hoped to contribute. I gauge the levels of knowledge of business concerns within the veterinary domain and explore how my theory fits in this context.

Subsequently, as a result of the implications my theory has for marketing management, I explore the avenues relating to the marketing of services and professional services.

With the exception of the first stage, as will be revealed, the above framework undergoes a metamorphosis, this transformation, catalysed by perceived inadequacies in the extant literature.

My benchmark for inclusion in the comparison with the literature is perceived relevance. I do not attempt complete coverage. This is not feasible or, in my opinion, desirable. Omissions are inevitable. The authors whose work is cited are incorporated because they are judged by me to be relevant. Their research or writings may reflect directly or indirectly some key process implicated in my theory. Alternatively, I may detect shards of my theory in diverse contexts, these too are relevant, if not in substantive terms rather in their potential to direct future comparisons in the service of the development of formal theory.

The question of the validity of comparative material is not easily answered. Frequently, authors are reticent about explaining the origination of their ideas. Resolving this conundrum is not without problems. My response to dealing with this challenge is an uneasy compromise. I do not exclude those authors whose research methodologies are opaque. I highlight shortcomings and conjecture as to the possible reasons where I see fit.

Beyond the substantive context, I explore work which can be broadly categorised as being service marketing related or sociologically rooted. Finally, I compare different aspects of my theory with other grounded theory research. These examples earn their way into the comparison by dint of their relevance and dynamism. For good measure the occasional aberration will be encountered were judged to contribute to the overall picture. Additionally overlap sometimes occurs whereby the literature may bridge the aforementioned categories. Flexibility is legitimate on grounds of enhancing understanding. I also select texts from a number of sources for special attention; the benchmarks here being their utility in comparative analysis.

## **4.2 Overview**

As I made head-way with the comparisons I encountered various shortcomings with the current body of knowledge. These shortcomings are the wellspring of my divergent strategy.

The vast proportion of published material in the veterinary field focuses on clinical questions to the relative exclusion of business concerns. Various individuals call for more focus on the business dimension (Mather, 1995), (Becker,1994).

I encountered the wholesale importation of ‘neat-sounding’ models, a consequence of the lack of empirical research generated from the substantive area. (Barrett, 1998). Primarily these constructs appear to have been ‘lifted’ from mainstream marketing literature, and superficially repackaged for veterinary consumption.

It is my contention that such ‘neat sounding’ offerings should ordinarily be regarded with a healthy degree of scepticism. Where their origination is unclear additional suspicions as to their appropriateness arise.

In parallel with the importation of models of dubious relevance, the polar opposite problem is noted, perhaps prompted by the inadequacies I have indicated. Vets, who may not be best qualified for the task, conduct their own research. Jackson (1970: 11) noted a similar problem in his preface to *Professions and Professionalisation*. He voiced criticism thus, “The bulk of the literature on the legal profession and the practice of law has consisted of writing by lawyers about lawyers for lawyers”.

There is a notable absence of research by outsiders with appropriate skill. Sanders (1995) is an exception. The quality and insight of his contribution highlights what can emerge given experience and sensitivity. I explore his progressiveness in terms of substance and methodology in a following section.

It would appear that analysis of how veterinarians routinely deal with their daily realities has largely been neglected. In spite of a greater explicit interest in marketing where professional regulations have been relaxed, empirical research in the area has been scarce (Morgan, 1990). Consultants write about what veterinarians should do in business. This focus misses the point. Firstly it fails to examine how these experts manage what they do. If those who offer advice either do not understand or are unable to articulate how things work ordinarily, how then can they possibly proscribe what ought to be? Secondly, they offer advice upon what to do but bypass the essential question of how to engineer these processes. My emergent theory addresses these neglected, but critical questions.

Pfeffer and Sutton, (1999: 83) hint at a similar inadequacy in the title of their article “Knowing “What” to Do Is Not Enough” about turning knowledge into action. The authors pick up on the huge number of business books published each year which contain the same prescriptions just dressed up differently as did those of the previous year. New graphics and different language don’t disguise the fact that “many of the ideas proclaimed as new each year can be found in similar books decades earlier.” Whilst being aware of the “repackaging” phenomenon prevalent in the literature, the authors do not concern themselves however with the essence of what is being

perpetuated. They assert that because of the extent of activity in *knowledge brokering* (whether that be in the form of books, consultants or training programs) nothing of significance can remain secret. Their assumption is that the problem lies in implementing existing knowledge. In contrast my experience in carrying out this research project points to an intrinsic difficulty in articulating valid theory originating from peoples' daily lives. This is perhaps a more fundamental impediment to progress.

When generating theory from empirical data it becomes apparent that unravelling the interrelated processes and subsequently explaining them is challenging in the extreme. The existence of such intellectual hurdles may explain the failure to develop operationally valid theory.

Overall I see a pattern within the different segments of the literature. Each domain seems to insulate itself to the outside world. Veterinarians see their world revolving around veterinary science and many seem blinkered to what lies beyond. Similarly academics within their specialisms seek peer recognition to the neglect of wider communities and practitioners in particular. In contrast to these unsatisfactory characteristics, my theory is grounded in the messiness that is symptomatic of real life. It lays bare the patterns of interaction which are normally unseen. It enables those unfamiliar with the context to understand what goes on in a previously unknown world. For those who are part of the scene, the theory makes them aware of things which are so embedded that they would otherwise be neglected in thought or action.

This emergent grounded theory that explains how veterinary surgeons keep clients at bay fills a gap in the literature. It moves understanding of interaction to a more conceptual level. It is characterised by clarity and depth. The explanatory power contrasts markedly with an existing preoccupation with description.



By reading in diverse areas, as is encouraged when undertaking grounded theory research, the tendency to value only what falls within the narrow boundaries of one's field of study is avoided. Perhaps this is responsible for my divergence. Consequently the literature selected for the most meaningful comparisons is diverse in nature.

Some of the most valuable works I have encountered have been chanced upon out with the accepted marketing boundaries. A number of the sources might have been dismissed by conventional criteria as inappropriate. However, on closer inspection, their similarities and differences serve the purpose of positioning this emergent theory. There is an lack of interdisciplinary research. Sayer and Walker (1992) are one exception. Their work is a testament to its value.

The eclectic nature of sources used makes the comparisons intellectually demanding, but nevertheless worthwhile.

### **4.3 Substantive Comparison**

This section of my comparison with the literature begins with an overview of the current state of play within the substantive sphere. I follow up with a more detailed comparison. The task is complicated by the fragmented nature of the relevant veterinary literature. Little has been written about vets and the role they play in society, their psychology or business expertise (Mather, 1995).

Clinical research in veterinary medicine is and always has been sovereign over management research. The bias in favour of clinical concerns is overwhelming. Literature impinging on the business dimension of veterinary practice is limited. This is illustrated by Aubrey Wilson (1985:) when justifying the limited nature of references of veterinary origin cited in his book 'Practice Development for

Professional Firms'. He literally apologises for the sparseness of his bibliography as far as veterinary material is concerned. The tendency to import analyses for veterinary consumption continues to the present.

### **Differences**

My research is distinct because it is grounded in the reality of veterinary life. Consequently it is derived from the concerns of those directly involved. It is relevant because it truly reflects how things happen. Additionally, it explains why things happen the way they do. The inescapable reality that veterinary practices are businesses and necessarily must concern themselves with commercial issues remains implicit as far as the veterinary establishment goes. Powerful ethics, deep rooted traditions and restrictive codes of practice are implicated in the neglect of overt management dialogue. According to Murray (1997: 126), "It has long been the custom of the professional classes to take a snooty view of advertising and marketing, the implication being that these honourable activities are not far removed from huckstering."

The imagery associated with entering the veterinary profession is that of academic excellence. The emphasis is on acquiring technical skill, together with a motivation to work with animals. New recruits to the ranks of vet student are fully occupied with clinical studies. Undergraduates receive no formal training in the business of running a practice (The Vet Record, 1991). Traditionally aspiring vets have been expected to learn management skills through their work experience in vet practice (The Vet Record, 1995). The necessity of dealing with people on an ongoing basis receives little attention.

Veterinary clients think of the well being of their pets, often given family member status, when they visit their veterinary surgeon. Primarily they think of the vet in his role as professional, the expert. They do not think of their vet as businessman or woman. The idea that commercial considerations impinge on veterinary decisions is alien. The language of this domain is of caring, helping, curing, saving, and responsible pet ownership. Talk of turnover, profit margins, cost/benefit analyses and profit centres simply does not apply, or does it?

Professional organisations are already having to change the way they are managed to meet a more critical environment. Dawson (1994: 19) observes “the increasing preoccupation with issues and questions of ‘management’ which previously did not feature in the same way – if indeed they featured at all, on either the explicit or implicit agenda of things with which professional specialists are concerned.” An evolution of expectations is documented elsewhere. Editorial comment in *The Economist* suggests the old standards are changing. “The cult of the doctor is under attack. Patients want a bigger say in choosing the treatment they get” (*The Economist*, 1995:17). To deny the existence of a parallel progression within the veterinary service sector would be unwise.

The Society of Practising Veterinary Surgeons is aware of the shortfall in business skills and management training. Some research is carried out. Often this is conducted in-house by volunteer vets who may not be best qualified for the task. For the most part vets are wedded to the positivistic paradigm, the result of their education in ‘hard science’. Deductive hypothesis testing of this nature is characterised by large scale sampling to prove statistical generalisability. Alternatives to this approach involving inductive methods and the researcher’s sensitivity are alien to the veterinary paradigm. Value is likely to be attributed to those methods which are familiar in preference to research which is more authentic but strange (lacking in adherence to conventional wisdom). Qualitative research is likely to be met with scepticism and disregarded on account of being labelled ‘anecdotal’.

A relatively recent SPVS survey (1994) confirms the limitations in existing research, concluding that one in six recently graduated vets are dissatisfied with their chosen profession. The reasons why this should be the case remain unclear. In light of these failings in the quality and quantity of research there is an urgent need for more meaningful approaches.

The existing literature is insubstantial. Those with the ability to contribute meaningfully lack the incentive. Veterinarians turned consultants are among the principal contributors in terms of guiding the management of practices. These aim to impress. As a consequence emphasis tends towards management jargon, buzzwords and borrowed models. Practitioners treat these either with indifference or hostility, unable to distinguish their utility. They are too busy to fathom the management acronyms. For example what is and what use has an “ASK SOP diagram”? (Catanzaro, 1998: 170). Criticisms of this nature should not be seen as all encompassing however. Valuable insights can be found. Catanzaro explains “In healthcare promotions, we don’t “sell” things to the clients, we “allow them to buy” based on their perceived needs and desires. Some clients hate to buy but far more hate to be sold something. What we market in healthcare delivery is peace of mind. For instance:

We don’t sell preanesthetic labs – we sell patient safety.

We don’t sell dentistry – we sell less bad breath.

We don’t sell vaccines – we sell protection.

We don’t sell vaccines – we let clients buy protection, for their pet, for their families, freedom from anguish, peace of mind” (p 341).

The difficulty with work such as this which is descriptive is that it is not easy to winnow the wheat from the preponderance of chaff. In contrast grounded theory with its visible processes has immediate explanatory power. The foregoing quotation for

example equates to my explanation of *intimidating* behaviour which vets are accustomed to using to their advantage. The fundamental difference between the descriptive versus the conceptual is clear. Concepts capture and condense meaning. Concepts offer economy of words. Why say something in five sentences when it can be articulated in a single word?

Catanzaro (1998) a veterinarian, and consultant explains the dichotomy of the veterinary business. “Our professional goal is to put ourselves out of business. We try to keep our patients well, but our practices depend on animals becoming sick. In curative medicine, truthful words are seldom beautiful, but beautiful words are seldom truthful. In sciences, those who always know are not always learned, but those who are learned do not always know. This is the nature of our profession” (p 41).

Catanzaro (1998) gives an insiders view designed for consumption by insiders. He gives advice to fellow veterinarians on the subject of how innovation and creativity can be used when ‘Building the Successful Veterinary Practice’. He explains the important conditions which emerge from my research, although he does so in descriptive terms. For example he explains “Clients who bond to a practice are forgiving but not dumb... Current research suggests at least 75 percent of pet owners consider their pets members of the family and about a third of these give their companion animals people status” (p 42).

In contrast, my theory explains this concept by highlighting the basic structural condition underpinning the survival and prosperity of companion animal practice in two words – *social value*. If this taken-for-granted condition of seeking veterinary treatment was removed from the equation, then only a fraction of the work currently undertaken would be demanded. Pet owners would simply have their sickly animal destroyed and buy a replacement at a fraction of the cost of elaborate veterinary procedures. In this sense, *social value* is a cutting point in this analysis. Whether a veterinarian defines his client as the customer as distinct from his patient signals

additional cutting points around which differential behaviour is stimulated. By identifying cutting points in this way, it is easy to understand how interaction is influenced. This difference in conceptual level distinguishes my theory.

Catanzaro (1998) reveals the normally hidden side of vet life – that of commercial concerns. He uncovers the commercialising process. “When I first received my Nevada license, ...it was 10years later before we really discovered teeth as a potential profit centre” [underlined for emphasis], (p 57). In this instance there is no attempt to feign professional interest in the clinical advances relating to dental health. The impetus for bringing ‘teeth’ onto the agenda is less honourable, though technically justifiable. Clearly clients might think twice about bringing their pet for dental check-ups if they were privy to such insider talk. Behind the scenes the caring front gives way to talk of ‘profit’. The continued emergence of purposeful management of fact and fiction reflects my emphasis on mystification.

The most powerful stakeholders in the veterinary business arena are the pharmaceutical companies together with pet food manufacturers. Veterinary businesses are significant channels for the distribution of their products. These companies actively cultivate vets. They want to be the preferred choice when veterinarians minister to their clients. Vested interests assist in ensuring veterinarians commercialise client interactions to greatest effect. This is a mutual interest and perceived as an opportunity to one-up competitors. It is not uncommon therefore for drug companies to become involved in conducting research which relates to marketing and management in veterinary practice.

One such pharmaceutical interest Fort Dodge Animal Health, a division of American Home Products Corporation, has produced annually over the last 3 years ‘The Marketing Indices for Companion Animal Practitioners and Practice Managers’(FDI henceforth). This document makes heavy reading and is based on a sample of 127 veterinary practices volunteering to participate from all over the UK. Raw data accessed from each practice’s computer data bases are analysed and converted into a

format which enables comparisons to be made year on year together with a best practice benchmark. The report's author is anxious to highlight the use of 'hard' science in generating the comparative statistics, there is no space for unproven speculation (Cormack, 1999). Whilst the FDI highlights some interesting trends, it is unable to explain them due to the constraints of statistical analysis.

The role technology plays in the mystification of veterinary life is interesting. Veterinarians variously latch on to or disregard new technology. Gerrard and Little (1994) explore the impact of new technology on the nature of general veterinary practice in the UK. Out of an initial survey sample of 100 randomly selected practices, 88 responded. The researchers employed primarily closed-ended written questions. The authors give a clear overview of the range and distribution of technology. The survey covers diagnostic tools, therapeutic methods and computer devices. Interestingly prescription diets headed the table of therapeutic methods being utilised by 97% of practices surveyed - intravenous fluid therapy, second most popular, employed in 95%. The motivations for purchasing new technology were explored but not satisfactorily. Respondents were presented with a choice of 9 options and asked to rank them in order of significance. Where respondents did not identify their motivation listed they were requested to stipulate their alternatives. The motives primarily identified as significant were those related to clinical concerns. Less important were improvements in financial turnover, attractiveness to clients and improvements in case/client turnover. The problem inherent in this type of approach is that the researchers do not account for the existence of "proper line data". By this I mean they do not concern themselves with the potential for respondents to routinely give miss-information. Validity is jeopardised in such instances. Research which seeks to access the insider's view by infiltrating the ranks of those whom we hope to understand is important in contexts where hidden agendas may proliferate. Gibson (1997) is a case in point. He successfully employed participant observation as part of his strategy in studying the behaviour of dental surgeons at work. He noted a 'front' being adopted by the dentists during his initial visits. Gibson discovered that the dentists were gradually reverting to 'normal

practice' in his presence. Keeping up the pretence of adhering to the theoretical hygiene protocols was simply too much bother. Had Gibson chosen a more conventional research method, postal questionnaire for example, the perspective on dentists compliance with the rules is likely to have been at odds with the reality.

### **Similarities**

The FDI report talks in terms of *active clients* – those who have visited their practice at least once during the year, and *bonded clients* – those who keep their pets up-to-date with the vaccination protocols. Bonded clients are categorised as gold or platinum. Presumably these labels indicate their potential monetary value. The year 1999 was seen as a challenge on account of reduced numbers of clients. More practices were initiating pet healthcare schemes. These amount to the category I call *moment capturing*. Initiatives are designed to create needs and offer solutions at every stage in a pet's life. From puppy classes, vaccinations, 'adolescent', 'younger', and 'older' pet clinics to bereavement counselling, interspersed with additional special needs, weight reduction and behaviour clinics, the range is extensive. Perhaps this should simply be viewed as an extension of what vets have always done, manage client's status passage. They now seek to actively manage patient transition at every turn.

The frequency of client visits continued the upward trend of recent years. This fits in with my concept of *sophisticating*. The coaching of clients to believe more interventions are necessary in light of advances in healthcare options could explain the increases in sales of lifestyle diets, dental treatment and worming programs which the FDI identifies. More time is scheduled into appointments to 'educate' clients. Coaching not only informs clients about existing desires, it seeks to create new ones.

Scheduling of appointments with duration of in excess of ten minutes is interpreted as being beneficial on two counts. There are positive financial outcomes and the opportunity to reduce the stress associated with higher client throughput. Facilitating dealing with all pet healthcare requirements is the legitimisation for lengthening



consulting times. The fact that this strategy is only recommended for mid to higher income clients reveals a great deal about the commercial dimension of veterinary treatment. Should one impute from this recommendation that the pets of lower income owners are a healthier bunch than their higher earning compatriots?

Perhaps the single most revealing piece of information to emerge is that those clients who comply with vaccine protocols dictated by their veterinarian also visit their vet most frequently and have the highest client spend. My understanding of the thesis of preventative health care, including vaccination, is clearly incorrect. I associate preventative measures with infrequent veterinary attention and lower cost through disease avoidance, in this example the reverse is true.

Financially speaking, it does not pay clients to comply with vaccine protocols advocated by their veterinarians, according to the figures quoted in the Fort Dodge Index (1999: 13). Whether their pets are in better health throughout their lives than those whose owners do not buy into their vets proscriptions is a matter for conjecture. Veterinary experts who commercialise client interactions 'to the max' are safe in the knowledge that a great deal of work which falls into the category of potentially 'unnecessary' can be creatively legitimised. Suspicions of exploitation cannot be easily verified. The scope for manoeuvre is significant. Hence there is a visible link to the mystification processes of my research.

Some long established benchmarks of responsible pet ownership such as the requirements of wholesale annual vaccination compliance are not above suspicion. Previous research I have undertaken concerning vaccines, together with an understanding of the science underpinning their development, raises fundamental questions relating to the validity of extensive veterinary dependence on vaccination. By definition the most effective vaccine in technical terms destroys its own market and with it commercial viability (Guthrie, 1992). For example, a vaccine which requires one dose to confer lifelong immunity will, in theory, eradicate the disease itself given comprehensive coverage and reliability.

Given the extent of the technological advances of recent years, it could be argued that sufficient efforts in developing vaccines which confer life-long immunity have been lacking. Human vaccines such as tetanus are now effective over 10year vaccination intervals. Previously revaccination was necessary at three yearly intervals. Animals are revaccinated much more frequently. It is difficult to reconcile this anomaly scientifically. Adjuvants, whose purpose is to chemically stimulate and enhance immune response , are more tightly regulated in human medicine. In light of this fact it is more likely, technically speaking, for animal vaccines to be potent over longer timespans. The influence of and collusion between vested interests may figure in a plausible explanation of this dichotomy.

Indeed some veterinarians themselves, perhaps sensing that the ‘myth’ of annual vaccination is approaching its ‘sell-by’ date, are re-evaluating their options. The pages of “The Veterinary Record” have become a forum for the exploration of this subject of late. Some, ill prepared to reinvent their businesses, hanker after perpetuation of the status quo (The Veterinary Record 1998: 314). Others, exemplified by Fogle (1998), take a different view. The question in his mind is, “where is the evidence that *yearly* revaccinations are necessary? Why do we vaccinate dogs and cats so much more frequently than *we* get vaccinated?” (Fogle, 1998: 375). Indeed Fogle quotes experts in vaccine science who have discovered no evidence to support the annual rituals as they stand. Fogle has since modified his vaccination routines. A legitimate option would be the promotion of in-practice kits for monitoring the vaccine antibody status of cats and dogs rather than the recourse to indiscriminate vaccination.

Meyers and Brown (1998) discuss the question of “Will vaccine income drop?” They talk in terms of a paradigm shift and the need for vets to “polish their communication skills and educate clients about why we’re not doing things the old way (p33).”

The scope for experts indulging in *opportunistic* behaviour on an industry-wide scale should not be discounted. Wilson (1985: 20) expresses similar concerns. He observes, “there still hangs over all transactions a scarcely veiled suspicion that there is an attempt to obtain money from the unwary client or customer by trickery. This is as was pointed out by Professor Theodore Levitt many years ago because there is a natural and irremovable difference of interests between the vendor and the buyer based largely on the view that the former is more expert, better informed on the subject of the transaction than the buyer who is an amateur.” The concept of *mystification* and its category of *selective disclosing* are further reflected in Wilson’s words; “When a client or customer is dissatisfied he assumes that some facts that would have helped him make a wiser decision, partly in the case of professional services, have been withheld. Thus the client can hardly be criticised for exaggerating the extent of the duplicity by which he was misled or at worse cheated.”

Sanders (1994), like Gibson, mentioned (p112) gets close to his subjects to produce highly sensitive research, on this occasion from the veterinary practice context. He becomes a participant in practice as I did, doing the self same chores as I did, and similarly observing the behaviour of those around him over a considerable time span. By using ethnographic research techniques he reflects an intimate insight into the world that is veterinary practice.

Sanders observes the routine interactions of vets and their clients, and he explains the “typologizing activities of veterinarians” (1994: 159). ‘Typologizing’ is sociological jargon which essentially means the ways in which experts classify their clients. Clients are categorised according to criteria which are meaningful to the vets. This behaviour makes it easier for them to operationalize their interactions. By designing systems in which to deal with an otherwise chaotic mass of clients vets make their lives simpler.

Originally visiting the clinic in order to observe puppy kindergarten classes, Sanders soon diverts his attention to the clinical encounters themselves with the aim of

extending his focus on people interacting with their companion animals. Interestingly, he says he soon found “that the day-to-day occupational routine of the veterinarians was as interesting as were the owner-animal exchanges to which I was privy.” The ‘pull’ experienced by Sanders attracting him to home in on the vet/client interaction is significant in relation to my focus on these interactions. I had no inkling at the outset as to what I would explore within the veterinary context. Sanders independent migration to the same area appears to validate that vet/client interaction is where the action is. He is acutely aware of the challenges that vets face on a daily basis when dealing with clients. Another similarity to my work lies in Sanders’ assertion that some clients are “more trouble than they are worth” (p168). He describes the criteria against which vets label clients problematic. He too implicates their negative impact in terms of their ability to “impede the routine work flow of the clinic, require extensive education and stroking, affront the veterinarian’s moral sensibilities, affect the profitability of the enterprise.” Embedded in my theory is an intrinsic understanding of the variability of clients. Whether ‘problematic’ or otherwise, the client is simply regarded as yet another variable altering the conditions under which behaviour is shaped. I focus on how these conditions govern behaviour this is wherein the difference lies.

To conclude this section, I consider the how further literature sources could be incorporated into my theory of keeping clients in line. The following are simply more data available for comparison.

Bradberry (1998) describes “How to be a cool cat” by owning a ‘designer accessory’. She then recounts, “*At one essential party, the excitement of two members of the flash-pack had to be seen to be believed as they discovered they shared the same vet. “Oh, has he put yours on the Hills’ Science Diet?” inquired one. Oh yes, and he’s also in a cancer trial...*” This is simply more data and reveals a further property of the *sophisticating* process. In this instance, it would appear that the individuals in question are eager to be kept in line by their vets for personal motives.

The US based journal 'Veterinary Economics' which writes for vets on business related subjects proves a fertile source of data. The sub-processes surrounding keeping clients in line are clearly emergent. The coaching of clients is a pre-eminent concern, for example. The link between *coaching* and *intimidating* is emergent once again. Stockpiling a museum of specimens is one of "10 ways to teach clients." Unpleasant, even shocking props are advised. Becker (1999: 70) sends the following message, "*Worms in a jar labeled with the potential zoonotic threat. Include fecal-sample collection items and a note: 'We recommend testing every six months for internal parasites and strategic deworming to protect your pets and family.'*" In the same article, the polar opposite behaviour, '*relationship selling*', is explained. This seems to have much in common with *pseudo-friending* emergent in my theory.

Elsewhere Myers and Brown (1998:37) explain that "*It's important to teach the client what's normal.*" This clearly reflects the process of *boundary setting* in establishing a frame of reference against which to direct behaviour. Further tactics include employing "*familiar anecdotes and examples*" – this parallels my explanation of vets *repertoiring* behaviour. Finally, the idea of *fictioning* is reflected indirectly. Myths appear to be under going deconstruction, for others to supplant them. According to Myers and Brown (1998: 38), "*Vaccines were easy money in the past, but it just isn't that way any more. Today's doctors must do a better job of working up cases because that's where the income lies.*"

My *information gaining* process is explained by Becker (1997: 56), "*Successful veterinary teams analyze their clients' conversations from the first contact.*" He also discusses "dialogue selling." He explains this, "*Selling is the art of persuasion – the ability to convince others to take your desired action. We all try to sell our ideas and beliefs every day – at work, home, and play...You sell by building trust. You build trust by building relationships...*"

Swift (1997: 55) describes the *pseudo-friending* process encouraging colleagues to befriend the families who bring their pets, saying, “*It may be the smartest thing you’ll ever do during your career.*”

Finally, the fact that not all clients are ‘suitable’ is emergent from Dooley (1998: 67). He explains strategies for dealing with awkward clients but in parallel with my theory, there comes a point where it is time to “*fire*” the client. Not all clients are right as marketing literature might lead us to believe. Not all relationships endure.

#### **4.4 Comparison with marketing literature**

It is interesting to note that the extant marketing literature is markedly different to my emergent theory. At the most simplistic level, the student of marketing is inculcated with the idea of customer sovereignty. The standard definitions concerning just ‘What marketing is?’ (Baker, 1985; Kotler,1988) are unsatisfactory in light of my emergent theory.

Empirically grounded research has a habit of challenging existing ways of thinking, as others have found. Emergent theory uncovers a truth that is often “stranger than fiction”, according to Glaser (1978). A discovery of this nature is evidenced in Lowe (1988). When carrying out inductive research into the survival mechanisms of small hotels unanticipated discoveries were revealed. Lowe (1988: 589), a marketing practitioner and academic entered the arena expecting to discover “comprehensive and sophisticated marketing activities” to explain the phenomenon. Instead he came across guests being “confronted by an elaborate series of codes of behaviour” (p607). Interestingly these codes emanated from the hotel owners’ agenda. They were not generated to fit in with the client. Lowe (1988: 607) notes; “According to marketing theory the successful business is customer oriented. But what actually happens is that the guest has to conform to the hoteliers’ standards.” Sayer & Walker (1992: 95)

also uncover “a face other than that of consumer service: one composed of producer sovereignty”. Contrary to the marketing thesis vets routinely set the rules to which their clients must adhere.

By drawing attention to this divergence, I do not wish to imply that vets and others do not practice marketing. Although, some would have us believe differently. There is a thesis to suggest that professionals use minimal marketing (Kotler & Connor, 1977). Indeed the closed awareness of clients to the marketing processes of professional experts is where the power lies. It seems to me that the marketing that goes on is not that defined by main stream wisdom. It is a more subtle form of marketing which others have as yet not recognised. In light of empirically grounded research, it may be that the *traditional definitions of marketing need to be reworked*.

Baker (1985: 15-16) asserts; “But the marketing concept goes beyond recognition of the fact that the parties to an exchange do so out of self-interest, in which each is seeking to maximise his personal satisfaction. **The marketing concept stresses that the desired satisfaction of one party should be the motivating force or catalyst behind an exchange, and this party is the consumer, *not* the supplier.** In fact, as I have noted elsewhere, we are positing a theory of choice founded on consumer sovereignty”. [Bold for emphasis].

Such beliefs, whilst popular, do not seem robust when analysed in relation to what people actually do to survive and prosper in their daily lives. My research reveals a different picture.

In reality, for various reasons, clients may be unaware of the specifics of their needs. In unfamiliar territory the inexperienced seek help but are unable to specify more. For example where laymen encounter experts, it is up to the experts to define those needs. In such situations the experts have the opportunity to ‘sell’ the layman what he sees fit. Consumer sovereignty is in no way the driving force. In similar vein Wittreich (1966: 129) discusses the question of identifying “The Real Problem?”. He

describes three scenarios; 1) Whereby a client senses he has a problem, but is uncertain of its particular nature; 2) A prospective client thinks he has one problem when in fact it is another; 3) Others frequently think they have a problem when in fact they do not have a problem at all. Wittreich (1966) defines the responsibility of the service provider to act appropriately. Clearly, in such situations notions of customer sovereignty do not fit. The expert may direct the client at his discretion.

The coaching process emergent in my theory is documented in the marketing literature but in a very limited way. Rosengren & Lefton (1970) (in Mills & Moberg, 1982) observed that little attention had been focused on designing client roles and their subsequent socialization. According to Zeithamal and Bitner (1996: 45 ), effective service organisations acknowledge the role of customer variability and develop strategies to “teach customers to perform their roles appropriately”. The observation that some form of coaching process is taking place is as far as it goes within the existing literature. Explanations as to how customers are coached do not feature in the marketing repertoire. One exception is evident. Lowe (1988) explains how he observed staff being reprimanded for allowing hotel guests to take control of a situation. The service providers discount the notion of trying to predict what clients will require and instead present offerings which are managed and defined according to their own agendas. This behaviour which Lowe (1988) uncovers seems to be a type of client coaching process – although not articulated as such. Instead, Lowe (1988) explains it in terms of ideology.

Elsewhere coaching processes are identified and articulated (Strauss, 1997). The need to transfer knowledge and consequently influence behaviour is very pervasive (Van Gennep, 1908). Glaser & Strauss (1972) in their book *Status Passage* explain that professionals see it as part of their duty to help shape their client’s passage. It is strange then that the marketing discipline should apparently neglect such a fundamental process.



The crucial difference, as I see it, revolves around 'perceptions'. Vets have been observed 'suing themselves'. By this I mean, they define what they feel appropriate to supply to clients. They do not try to discover what their clients want and in many cases it would not be appropriate to do so. Instead they provide services which accord with their own agendas.

Significantly, in seeking to keep their clients in line, experts bypass the client orientation which Baker and others regard as fundamental to marketing.

This grounded theory challenges conventional wisdom. Experts, whilst giving the impression of serving clients first and foremost, may well be covertly exploiting them (Larson, 1977).

As long as clients think they are getting what they want then all is well. When viewed in relation to this research the concept of consumer sovereignty looks naïve. Things are not as simple as they seem. If the illusioning which happens remains intact, it is easy to see where the documented win/win long term relationships so focused upon in the literature originate. It is the potency of being able to manipulate client awareness to one's own ends which seems to be what counts.

The problems of attributing causality pervade the literature. The dangers of latching on to popular wisdom abound. The literature of more recent times has promoted the need to examine services as distinct from products. Much writing on the special dimensions of services neglects their similarities. Latching-on to apparently fruitful domains and protecting one's territory is exemplified. The growth of services over recent times is much written about. New service industries, if we believe what we read, are being created apace. Closer inspection of the data however, whilst not denying an increase in services, points to more of a redefinition of what constitutes a service (Pahl,1994), (Sayer &Walker, 1992). For example aspects of automobile design which are the new service industries were once classified under the heading of manufacturing. Sayer &Walker (1992: 87) suggest "It would be more accurate to

speak of embellishment of the industrial division of labour than of transition to a service economy”.

The reason I cite this example is to underline the role of vested interests within the literature comparison. Those who position themselves in a particular area seek not only to legitimise their endeavours but also potentially to inflate their importance in others’ eyes. The inherent risk when reviewing the literature lies in attributing cause mistakenly. This can happen in error or for expedient reasons.

#### **4.4.1 Marketing of services**

Shostack (1977) in her article “Breaking Free from Product Marketing”, calls for more research into the marketing of services. Her observations are of interest as they come from a practitioner’s perspective. She notes the differential force of intangibility, the experiential nature of services and the intimacy of personal interaction. “Product marketing tends to give first emphasis to creating *abstract* associations. *Service* marketers, on the other hand, should be focused on enhancing and differentiating “realities” through manipulation of *tangible* clues”, according to Shostack (1977: 78). The media is implicated in making service entities more “**hazy**, instead of more **concrete**” and Shostack (1977: 80) urges marketers to work against this effect. The idea that tangible evidence should be managed in order to control image was similarly noted in my observations. However, this concept was very much subsumed in relation to the need for obscurity. In other words, I encountered a melange of ‘haziness’ interspersed with carefully orchestrated glimpses of the ‘concrete’ – a very different emphasis to that put forward by Shostack (1977). She warns of the dangers of abstraction, “diluting the “reality” that the marketer is trying to enhance”. Saying (p77), “Effective service representations appear to be turned 180 away from abstraction”.

On considering this apparent divergence I am struck that this may be explained by a difference of conceptual level. At a descriptive level vets do

tangibilize . When comparing behaviour systematically, however, this simply does not account for the integration of what is happening. The distinction here is that my theory is conceptual; hence the talk of mystification which involves the manipulation of perceptions in various ways, to differing degrees and for varying reasons.

The human element and the need to manage people is seen as significant. According to Shostack (1977: 79), “Some service industries, on the other hand, have long intuitively managed human evidence to larger ends”. There is discussion of image management, highlighting the human dimension, saying “the potential power of more deliberately controlling or structuring this element is clear”.

Some 23 years down the line, the concept of engineering “reality” to suit emerges and mirrors the ideas which pervade my work. Additionally, that there can be a collective movement to influence perceptions, in this case, on a profession wide scale reflects the way in which the veterinary establishment have long propagated rose tinted projections.

Maybe the concept of engineering “reality” to suit or perception management would be more meaningful explanations of how marketers operate. After all, this is familiar territory within sociology (Goffman, 1959). Recently, Haslam (1999) notes that impression management has taken on new importance on the marketing agenda. Morgan (1990) revealed the importance of intangible elements, reputation and image, in strategic marketing activities in his study of accountancy and law firms. He calls for research focused on the problems of communicating intangibles.

As I have indicated, I have encountered a failure in mainstream marketing literature to identify the processes my emergent theory elucidates. Much research within the field concerns hypo-deductive testing. The hypotheses in

question often originate from the existing literature and this may partly explain the relative exclusion of empirically generated theory. Additionally, mainstream research has a tendency to focus on structural aspects. The result is that static dimensions predominate and processes reflecting the dynamics of real life get sidelined.

Gronroos (1989: 507) is among a minority who indicate an understanding of the subtleties of service marketing, saying “expectations are influenced by traditional marketing activities such as advertising, field selling on industrial markets, PR activities, sales promotion and pricing, and moreover, by previous contacts with the service, previously perceived services, as well as by traditions, ideology and word of mouth” [Underlined by me for emphasis]. In contrast, he notes “...the perceived service is only marginally influenced by traditional marketing activities. The contact between the customer and the service firm and its contact personnel, physical/technical resources and its other customers during the buyer-seller interactions are much more important” (p 507). Gronroos (1989) is one of the few who conveys a sense of process in the marketing of services. He alludes to a sequential process which incorporates a customer life cycle concept. Gronroos sees both technical quality, the ‘what’, and functional quality, the ‘how,’ as significant in the management of clients’ perceptions.

My criticisms are echoed elsewhere. Lowe & Glaser (1995: 672) comment on this tendency to “focus on the organizational dimension of marketing rather than what people actually did.” The emphasis here is on dynamism and relevance. The research goes beyond this more commonplace preoccupation with structure and the hackneyed variables of class, culture and gender.

The processes of engineering ‘mystifications’, creating obligations through ‘coaching’ and ‘pseudo-friending’ with all their explanatory powers fill a gap in the existing marketing repertoire.

The fundamental nature of mystification as a process is variously evident. Sayer & Walker (1992: 5) capture the essence eloquently, “Even within small, seemingly knowable communities the division of labour works its magic on the consciousness of participants in differentiated societies: the mysteries of things unknown because done by others or misunderstood because known only by others. That powers of human labor can be turned to powers over other people, with the help of mystifications, denials, and exclusions, is evident enough in single households and villages, let alone nations.” Clark (1995: 101), implicates a number of “devices, mechanisms and tools” available to experts seeking to “create, manage and manipulate client impressions of their service”.

Larson (1979), in her Sociological study of the rise in Professionalism mentions the role played by mystification in obscuring real social structures and relations.

#### **4.4.2 Relationship marketing.**

Relationship marketing is fashionable. The idea fits with the accepted marketing thesis after all. Relationship Marketing (RM) is defined as “marketing seen as relationships, networks and interaction” (Gummesson, 1994: 5). Accordingly academics write of harmonious win/win relationships which reflect their logic. A tiny minority, whilst not denying the useful ‘relationship’ analogy, uncover other not so benign processes at work (Lowe, 1998). An underlying asymmetry in the balance of power within relationships is one key variable which has wide implications for the whole field of relationship marketing (Lowe & Glaser, 1995). In light of the existence of power struggles within relationships, be they either innocuous or sinister, fundamental questions must be asked as to the validity of the pervasive win/win interactions. From out-with the world of marketing, Edgell (1980) disputes the claim that middle-class marriages are genuinely symmetrical or equal. Ideology is identified as mystifying and disguising the basis of power

within intimate personal relationships. Perhaps it should be no surprise if this is a fundamental parallel.

Tyler (1997: 975) purports to using a grounded theory approach to her research within the high powered world of the international equity market. She outlines what she calls the basic social process of “foundationing”, and defines it thus, “all activities aimed at building enduring, stable, mutually beneficial and reciprocal relationships based on the greatest degree of mutual trust”. This she asserts is ongoing at all levels. Here is an example of the ideal text-book win/win relationship, and empirically grounded to boot. Concerns as to its validity exist. The author, by her own admission, used a huge data set (“3468 pages”) from which to generate her theory. This in itself is not necessarily problematic, given copious quantities of theoretical sensitivity. However, where there is no indication as to whether the author has employed sufficient theoretical sampling to justify the above definition, validity must be of concern. Two further grey areas appear. The author is affiliated to the Service Business Markets Research Centre. There may be a possibility of contamination through pre-understanding, whereby the researcher imposes existing interpretations on the work unconsciously. The author’s proclivity for ‘service speak’ indicates the likelihood of preconception. The final concern relates to my encountering a section of the researcher’s raw data during a methodology seminar. The data was copyrighted by the researcher but made available for teaching purposes. I observed interesting patterns emerging from this data which reflected the codes that were emergent from the veterinary context. I saw the mystification process at work and this suggests a differential interpretation to that published.

In contrast, long before the term ‘relationship marketing’ was coined, Simmons (1966) originated a theory of remarkable durability and relevance. The concepts demonstrate extraordinary explanatory power and were

generated from an apparently mundane, and largely irrelevant context – that of home milk delivery. This work is important in situating my emergent theory.

Simmons level of conceptualisation throws much of contemporary relationship marketing into sharp relief. It would be hard to imagine what possible relevance the predominantly descriptive contemporary offerings could have in years to come. Simmons work in contrast is timeless.

Gummesson (1999), a well published exponent of relationship marketing, for example, is not immune to becoming bogged down in low level description. According to the author, RM is the “new paradigm.” He places too much emphasis on descriptive “win-win” relationships, focusing on collaboration and more “equal parties.” There is also a failure in explanatory conceptualisation. In touching on the knowledge relationship and its embedded nature, he notes that difficulties in transferability have reportedly caused an “asymmetric relationship.” He does not explore this further. Instead, like others he chooses to concentrate on the ethical, but static, aspects which he sees as central to RM. In spite of indicating an appreciation of grounded theory and its “relentless demands on sensitivity, openness, and an absence of preconceived notions...”, he himself demonstrates a remarkable degree of preconception. For example, he concludes by highlighting the core category as Total Relationship Marketing which does not explain anything.

I am not alone in an awareness of the limitations to current relationship marketing literature. Others are similarly conscious that despite the growing literature, there are few attempts to conceptualise what marketing relationships are (Price & Arnould, 1999). This “absence of conceptual clarity”, according to Price & Arnould (1999: 38), is a barrier to the successful deployment of relationship marketing. They attempt to redress this imbalance with empirically based research (using both quantitative and

qualitative data). Their article “Commercial Friendships: Service Provider-Client Relationships in Context” appeared very recently in the Journal of Marketing. It is particularly interesting in that the authors explore one significant dimension of the theory emergent from my work.

Price & Arnould’s (1999) main contribution is to focus attention on a heretofore largely ignored process which has obvious implications for a wide spectrum of those involved in marketing be they products or services.

The authors use different data sets which are intended to sequentially inform subsequent stages of the research in order to “allow (but not force) themes to recur” (p41). However, the decision to use restrictive pre-conceived constructs as the starting point of the research design prevents this espoused freedom from emerging. Preconception of this nature is exemplified by their first survey which “focused on clients’ most recent encounter with a hairstylist and explored the nature of relationships formed with hairstylists, correlates of these relationships, and some marketing-related consequences” (p41). These ‘marketing-related consequences’ refer to literature derived variables such as “satisfaction, loyalty, and word of mouth.”

The limitations to understanding in the area of client/supplier relationships indicate the need for exploratory research. This accomplished, the resultant theories could undergo quantitative testing at a later date if desired. Instead, the authors’ approach tries to do too much too soon. The research bypasses the fundamentals. This consequence is symptomatic of predetermined research focus.

In contrast, grounded theory research dictates openness to the data whatever the setting. Only when patterns systematically emerge are the processes of significance revealed. Nothing is predetermined. Clearly, this kind of openness could be problematic for researchers who are too closely wedded to



their own particular specialism. The chances of studying something previously unimaginable are high. This may be inconvenient. At the outset, I had no idea I would be exploring a concept of *keeping clients in line* nor *pseudo-friending*, within the context of vet/client interactions.

The fact that I have discovered and conceptualised something which is only now (at the eleventh hour) emerging in the marketing literature is exciting.

The differences between the existing literature and my theory are marked. The former concentrates on static dimensions like trust; the latter focuses on the processes involved in real life, their interrelationships and their consequences.

Price & Arnould (1999: 51) state, “the complex orderings between variables we have shown in this multimethod research argues against the simpler orderings market research sometimes proposes”. However, the authors do not articulate the purported orderings. Instead the reader is confronted by a melee of variables. To add to the confusion, the authors inexplicably throw their ‘commercial friendship’ label into the domain of contractor/subcontractor relationships.

Snapshots of some raw data were published and these were interesting in relation to the question of overall validity. The behaviours that appeared to be patterning out seemed, on admittedly swift analysis [by myself], to indicate processes of information gaining and disclosure together with affiliating. The ‘commercial friendship’ label did not appear to fit.

A lack of rigour in design, analysis and synthesis is indicated. Do the researchers really believe that the hairstylists studied are as they portray them (p50)- “hunting for cues to guide them and sometimes remaining confused about what kind of relationships they have with particular clients?” Such

statements do not progress understanding of what really goes on. Uninformative description is the consequence as distinct from explanatory conceptualisation supported by dense categories and properties.

The descriptive bias is prevalent. Exploration of Allan (1989) and his literature review of the Sociology of Friendship reveals an absence of explicitly commercially motivated friendship. This is notable. There is reference to informal relations of a friendship type within organisations. Allan (1989: 67) suggests their role is to “help to oil the more formal channels of communication and command, thereby enabling individuals to achieve or counter the organisation’s goals as suits their interests”. This is as far as it goes however. The specifics of the processes implicated are not revealed.

Analysts have shown a tendency to home in on the internal characteristics of relationships between ‘best friends’ to an unwarranted degree. Personal traits are emphasised together with structural issues such as attraction. This has led to a neglect of how ‘friending’ processes are intertwined into the daily routines of social and economic life.

Boissevain (1974: 85) however is an exception. He explains the significance of the balance of power in personal networks. He notes “a person may consider that he has a relationship with a powerful person, though the latter may not recognise this”. This accords with the expert/layman relationships I was privy to. The property of non-reciprocity is instrumental in my generating the ‘Pseudo’ label in reference to the friending processes which I encountered in the veterinary context.

Experts are generally in the ascendancy where interactions with laymen are ongoing in spite of the fact that they are employed as agents contracted for fees. To discover experts actively cultivating relationships with clients through pseudo-friending is not something I had anticipated.

Traditional agency theory concerns brokers, possessing skills, competing for patronage from principals who have access to first order resources. The asymmetry that characterises the professional/ client interaction is not taken into account (Sharma, 1997) and reverses the mainstream view of principal being dominant. Previous work has subsumed self-serving interest. The ideology of duty to serve one's professional calling has predominated (Parsons, 1968). No longer does this thesis remain unchallenged. Empirical studies have revealed a different orientation (Larson, 1977). The threats of agent opportunism are noted in "such commonplace business interactions as those of attorney-client, builder-owner, and doctor-patient, where knowledgeable agents serve less informed principals", according to Sharma (1997: 762). Those who have taken the time, effort and trouble to observe interactions in situ are the ones who, time and again, explode accepted wisdom and reveal it as myth.

Whilst Sharma (1997) focuses on elements which are emergent in my theory, he does not convey the reality of the processes at play. He understands the essence of the clients' problems but from a more static perspective. The difficulties intrinsic in observing and monitoring agents are highlighted; "since professional agents' behaviour is opaque to non-professionals" (Sharma, 1997: 770).

There are obvious similarities therefore between my theory and Sharma's (1997) observations. The differences lie in that I explain how experts systematically conceal potentially undesirable dimensions of their work whilst judiciously revealing favourable perceptions. These are the ways in which the emergent mystification process is operationalised in accordance with the experts agenda. The opacity and ambiguity which Sharma (1997) notes have similarities but do not explain the fundamental processes. What Sharma (1997) elucidates equates to the structural *conditions* which bound my

theoretical constructs. Much of what professionals do goes on behind closed doors, in secret. Consequently there are problems in regulating what goes on. Scope for exploitation exists. Lack of effective regulation enables this. Maravall (1996) explores processes of concealment originating from a Spanish political context. Her working paper entitled *Accountability and Manipulation* makes an interesting comparison to my research and indicates the potential for the development of formal theory.

Maravall (1996: 1) examines the ways politicians “try to survive in office and increase their margin for manoeuvre.” As seen above, the scope for opportunism emerges as significant where the agendas of those involved in interaction do not coincide. The principal, (the citizen), cannot easily ascertain whether the agent, (the politician), is acting in self-interest. “Problems of information and monitoring arise when politicians manipulate information to which they have privileged access, and when vast areas of politics are opaque to voters,” according to Maravall (1996: 5). This active engineering of opacity has similarities to the mystification process whereby the veterinary experts manipulate perceptions according to their own agendas.

Maravall (1996: 17) explains how politicians employ *concealing policies* in order to prevent “critical dimensions of politics from emerging in the public realm.” Such behaviour mirrors the *obscuring tactics* which I reveal. Vets were observed *covering* up potentially undesirable images to prevent them from reaching their clients. These processes are not confined to the veterinary domain. Such manipulations are evident at both interpersonal and industry-wide levels. The politicians strategies attempt to “extend total opacity” (p17) over awkward issues. This behaviour impinges on actions and non-actions. Because politicians know that public opinion would force their hand in unwanted ways they try to exclude unpopular policies from the agenda. The author writes of *underground initiatives* and *the hidden faces of power*. In the event of the secret agendas surfacing the initial reaction is *denial* followed

by concerted efforts to discredit the sources of information. When denials become ineffectual, with the weight of evidence, the strategy shifts to *excuses* together with a *scapegoat strategy* (p19).

#### **4.5 Comparison with sociological literature**

Goffman's reference to the need for "social arrangements,...some form of social control...to keep people in line, to make them live up to their bargains and their obligation to perform favours and ceremonies for others" (p 299) is relevant.

Analysis of Goffman's (1959) work "The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life" reveals important similarities with my theory. Both focus on interaction and generate theory to account for what is going on. Significant parallels exist. These parallels are associated with the processes of impression management. Goffman (1959: 15) observes that, "Regardless of the particular objective which the individual has in mind and of his motive for having this objective, it will be in his interests to control the conduct of others, especially their responsive treatment of him." The concept of keeping others in line is evident. Goffman continues, "This control is achieved largely by influencing the definition of the situation which the others come to formulate, and he can influence this definition by expressing himself in such a way as to give them the kind of impression that will lead them to act voluntarily in accordance with his own plan" (p 15).

The mystification process emergent from the veterinary context is mirrored by Goffman. The melange of concealment and disclosure is striking. "I have suggested ways in which the performance of an individual accentuates certain matters and conceals others. If we see perception as a form of contact and communication, then control over what is perceived is control over contact that is made, and the limitation and regulation of what is shown is a limitation and regulation of contact", Goffman states (p 74).

Awing processes are generated and sustained by restricting availability to clients. Maintaining social distance is implicated by Goffman in perpetuating mystifications. The expert or in this instance, the performer, “senses that his chief secrets are petty ones. As countless folk tales and initiation rites show, often the real secret behind the mystery is that there really is no mystery: the real problem is to prevent the audience from learning this too” (p 76).

The distinction between insiders and outsiders is important. Clients are outsiders but they may feel they are being incorporated into the expert’s world. Engineering such perceptions is a consequence of both *coaching* and *pseudo-friending* processes. According to Goffman (1959: 168), “when the performers are backstage...plans may be worked out for ‘selling’ them [customers], or employing ‘angles’ against them, or pacifying them”. This observation echoes my criticisms of accepted marketing wisdom where the myth of customer sovereignty reigns. Goffman cites others who have encountered manipulating behaviour in various contexts. Seemingly innocuous remarks are wrongly interpreted by clients who are unaware of hidden agendas. Originating from the *Lingo of a Shoe Salesman* he gives the example whereby the salesman is unable to supply a customer seeking a particular shoe fitting (B width). It only remains for the customer to be persuaded that this is in fact what she is getting. Geller (in Goffman, 1959) explains how the salesman closes the sale to his advantage; “...the salesman will call to another salesman down the aisle and say, ‘Benny, what size is this shoe? By calling the salesman ‘Benny’ he implies that the answer should be that the width is B’. Manipulating perceptions in this way where tangible goods are concerned is surprising given the physical nature of the evidence. The scope for similar practices where intangibles are being traded must be even greater. The ambiguity augments the potential for slight of hand.

The thesis that experts mystify their clients for instrumental purposes is undeniably emergent. Goffman’s analysis of expert’s motivations accords with my own. He states “It is not assumed, of course, that all cynical performers are interested in

deluding their audiences for purposes of what is called 'self-interest' or private gain. A cynical individual may delude his audience for what he considers to be their own good..." (p 29).

The notion that "in service occupations practitioners who may otherwise be sincere are sometimes forced to delude their customers because their customers show heartfelt demand for it" (p 29), reflects my discoveries.

A category of the *concealment* process which I explain is *face-saving*. This category is an example of one type of behaviour which vets employ to guard against undesirable dimensions of their work being accessed by outsiders. *Face-saving* is a potent force in maintaining illusions and preventing any erosion of control, through 'expressive coherence' (p 141). Goffman (1959: 141) explains the self-same process, saying, "...there are usually facts which, if attention is drawn to them during the performance, would discredit, disrupt, or make useless the impression that the performance fosters...A basic problem for many performances, then, is that of information control; the audience must not acquire destructive information about the situation that is being defined for them. In other words, a team must be able to keep its secrets and have its secrets kept". He does not call this process *face-saving*. Instead it comes under the heading 'discrepant roles'. Goffman's label is ineffectual and fails to communicate on a conceptual level. He talks of 'dark secrets' and 'white lies' which are properties of *face-saving*. The 'dark secrets' are defined as elements which are "concealed because they are incompatible with the image of self" (p 141) being projected. 'White lies' on the other hand are benign in character and are designed to "save the feelings of the audience that is lied to...". The aim is to "protect others rather than to defend self" (p 141). This type of behaviour was emergent in the veterinary context and contingent on specific conditions prevailing.

Detail of how and why 'white lies' are told and under what circumstances is lacking in Goffman's analysis. Consequently the apparent conceptual validity lacks the provenance to be confident in its construct validity. Too much is left implicit.

Additionally, the analysis appears restrictive in its focus – concentrating on perpetuating interaction and avoiding disruption. Such limitations may be entirely justifiable in light of the data available. However, it behoves the researcher to be explicit about the constraints which prevail. Not knowing leaves uncertainty and the reader is impelled to ‘fill-in’ the gaps for himself.

Despite conceptual similarities with my theory, Goffman’s work seems to fit repeated interactions that lack developmental focus. This characteristic makes for inflexibility in dealing with the unfolding and evolutionary nature of much interaction.

How one’s own identity impinges on self is neglected. Goffman is concerned with the presentation of self to others. Schon (1996) provides an interesting divergence from this tendency.

Schon (1996) distinguishes the *reflective practitioner* from the traditional omniscient professional. He acknowledges artistry as something fundamental to professional practice. Artistry in professional life is not something familiar to the literature. Whilst many would instinctively understand the notion of artistry, few talk of it openly. As a concept it is difficult to handle. It does not fit neatly into the confines of conventional boundaries. Consequently it is swept under the carpet by those who, “..are disturbed because they have no satisfactory way of describing or accounting for the artful competence which practitioners sometimes reveal in what they do” (1996: 19).

Schon (1996) distinguishes the challenge of discovering the nature of the problem to be solved as distinct from coming up with a solution being fundamental to professional practice. He recognises the process of ‘problem setting’ (p 19). *Reframing* the problem is contingent on the *information gaining* process I elucidate. There is interplay between *selecting* and *disregarding* the information that clients offer regarding their perception of their problem. According to Schon, “.the effective use of specialized knowledge depends on a prior restructuring of situations that are



complex and uncertain” (p 19).

The properline peddled in professional circles revolves around an omnipotent model of competence. It dictates the application of predetermined techniques. There is no room for *trial and error*. To admit to such practice would jeopardise the rigour expected of experts. Schon identifies polarities. At one pole lie those who rely on research based theory, at the other, those who must live by their wits with creativity and flexibility.

The problem, as Schon perceives it, is that those challenges of greatest technical interest are often relatively insignificant to clients. The crucially important concerns are characteristically messy and are variously tackled through “experience, trial and error, intuition, and muddling through” (p 42-3). The language of trial and error tends to convey an acknowledgement of the potential for fallibility which contrasts with the dogma of the specialist. Indeed, “To admit uncertainty, to make it apparent that one needs to conduct experiments, may look and feel like a loss of control when the basic theme of professional-client interaction is a game of control and evasion”. Technical experts are open to delusions and closed to reflective practice. For them uncertainty is synonymous with weakness. According to Schon (1996: 69), “They have become too skilful at techniques of selective inattention, junk categories, and situational control, techniques which they use to preserve the constancy of their knowledge-in-practice”.

The *repertoiring* concept, which I explain as stockpiling experience over time and drawing on it as necessary, is evident in Schon’s work. He proposes that the practitioner builds up “a repertoire of examples, images, understandings and actions” (p 138). Additionally he implicates “each new experience of reflection-in-action” as enriching this repertoire. The feedback mechanism conveys a cumulative and developmental character to the repertoiring process. Highlighting the progressive nature of interaction sets Schon apart from most existing conceptualisation.

Schon (1996: 288) refers to the demystification of professional knowledge. Total

debunking of professional knowledge is one option, but not the one to which Schon concurs. The obvious underlying assumption here is that there is some form of mystification associated with how experts work. He explains the process as “making knowledge-in-practice appear to be more complex, private, ineffable, and above all more once-and-for-all, more closed to inquiry, than it needs to be” (p 288).

Schon (1996: 299) suggests experts should relax their façade, revealing uncertainties where they exist and openly reflect on the limitations of knowledge and to “make himself confrontable by his clients”. He points to sacrificing “unquestioned authority, the freedom to practice without challenge to his competence, the comfort of relative invulnerability, the gratifications of deference” (p 299).

A failure to acknowledge errors, to deny their possibility and a consequent absence of reflectivity are visible in the veterinary context. Schon (1996: 299) explains how experts and clients interact. “The professional may extend his claim to know beyond the limits of his expertise, or he may claim to know beyond the limits of his expertise, or he may use the mystery of his expert knowledge so as to enhance his control over the client”. Strategies to either enhance expert control or counter activities designed to circumvent that control are explained. These correspond to the data one encounters in veterinary life. Some examples include the use of threat by the expert to engender compliance. The counter balance employed by the client is a feigning of compliance and acting according to his own agenda when out-with the expert’s jurisdiction. Schon (1996: 299) also implicates “vagueness” as both “a vehicle for the exercise of control” and “for the evasion of control”.

Reflective behaviour is also emergent from my study, though to a lesser degree. The rewards for becoming reflective are associated with ‘discovery’. “Win/lose games of control” give way to a growing awareness of how actions impinge on self and others. Schon (1996: 295) notes an “obligation to make his understandings accessible to his client, which means he needs often to reflect anew on what he knows”.

Schon's work is important because it intimately reflects many of the dimensions emergent from my work and that are absent from many other conceptualisations of interaction. As a consequence of Schon's tenor of abstraction, micro-level understanding is largely sacrificed. This is the key difference between his theoretical construction and mine. The density of the categories, properties and their integration gives my theory predictive capacity. The utility of the theory is a function of its predictive ability. Herein lies its significance for practitioners.

Schon's focus on reflectivity has implications for influencing the socialization of new recruits to professional schools. Whilst my research indicates existing reflectivity in veterinary life it is the exception not the norm. To swing the pendulum in favour of openness and self questioning would take a radical transformation of existing ideology.

Zola (1977) in contrast to Schon perceives a medicalizing of life and a consequent extension of power asymmetry in favour of the expert.

Zola's (1977: 487) essay explains how "medicine is becoming a major institution of social control." The control is synonymous with the "medicalizing" of much of daily life. Technological complexity is the source (p 487). The consequence of this movement is a "reluctant reliance on the expert."

The medicalizing process is very similar to what I label "sophisticating." For Zola (1977: 492), it is an "attaching" process. He categorizes the process thus: "first, through the expansion of what in life is deemed relevant to the good practice of medicine; secondly, through the retention of absolute control over certain technical procedures; thirdly, through the retention of near absolute access to certain "taboo" areas; and finally, through the expansion of what in medicine is deemed relevant to the good practice of life" (pp 492-3). This extension of core activities is equivalent to the sophisticating I explain in the veterinary context.

Interest in preventative medicine legitimates extension of control beyond traditional boundaries. Veterinarians are no longer confined to annual vaccinations of pets and routine surgical procedures. Today they offer dietary advice together with varied nutritional solutions; wellness is the name of the game, legitimizing frequent health checks where blood analysis can indicate where vitamins are lacking. Dental hygiene figures like never before – whereby veterinarians recall their patients for check-ups.

Both the implicit and explicit definitions of the meaning of responsible pet ownership is undergoing transformation in ways already charted in medical context.

Zola (1977: 495) identifies the physician's exclusive right to prescribe drugs as a source of "awesome" power. He points to huge increases in drug usage over recent times and explains this upsurge by noting a trend for treating psycho-social states as distinct from disease. "Thus we have drugs for nearly every mood: to help us sleep or keep us awake, to enhance our appetite or decrease it, to tone down our energy level or to increase it, to relieve our depression or simulate our interest", says Zola (1977: 495). Pets too are prescribed Prozac like their owners.

Zola (1977: 496) finds the "use of medical rhetoric and evidence in the arguments to advance any cause" as "the most powerful of all the 'medicalizing of society' processes." The limitless scope for further expansion of medical activities has obvious similarities to the 'sophisticating' process emergent from the veterinary context.

Intrigued by the title, I discovered *Mirrors and Masks*, written by Strauss (1997), one of the co-originators of Grounded Theory research methodology. The focus is placed on understanding interaction. The author criticises research into social order which concentrates on the rules and regulations to the exclusion of "how they are promulgated, maintained, manipulated, escaped, altered, and even totally destroyed and superseded". The author sees people shaping their worlds whilst being constrained by structural barriers. This appears to reflect the essence of my research.

The quality of insight may be attributed to Strauss' commitment to theoretical issues and his belief in experiencing life as it is lived whatever the context. Strauss emphasises the "perpetual indeterminacy" of identities in constantly changing social situations. Such ways of thinking dovetail with my own approach and may partially explain some uncanny similarities to elements of my research.

Strauss talks of the complex nature and fluidity of interaction. These are the challenges which I encountered when struggling to generate my emergent theory.

The significance of the symbolism associated with group membership corresponds to the vets preoccupation with mystification. Strauss discusses the role *special languages* play in defining those elements which influence action. This relates to imagery that Glaser (1978) also highlights. The necessity, also evident in my emergent theory, for experts to concern themselves with gaining information about their clients and to categorise them in order to deal with them more efficiently is explained. The universality of these activities is alluded to; neither criminals nor ministers are immune to such behaviour. Strauss connects classification to subsequent direction of action.

Strauss (1997) homes in on the variability intrinsic to face to face interaction. This mirrors the fundamentally dynamic processes in which vets and their clients engage, and which I elucidate. Strauss articulates interaction thus, "Sometimes they fence, sometimes they move in rhythmic psychological ballet, but always they move through successive phases of position." In addition he notes the players reading the other's identity and acting accordingly. He also indicates the existence of a "ground-base of unwitting interplay and often witting by-play", evident to those with insight. There are cumulative and developmental dimensions to even transient interactions.

There is also the question of whether transitions are anticipated or unforeseen. These observations relate to interaction in the veterinary context. I explained how experts

employ *boundary setting* strategies in order to lay down the specific ground rules which clients must internalise. Strauss discusses how passages may be “governed – even “engineered” – according to conventional understandings and rules, explicit or implicit, of the interactional game.” This is exactly what I encountered during my research. The process, I reveal, whereby experts socialize their clients into clienthood appears to equate to what Strauss refers to as “Status-Forcing”. Other examples of such interaction are discernible in my theory. Forcing status ‘up and down’ occurs. Clients may be made to feel stupid in contrast to the expert’s apparent knowledge. The experts may inflate their own skill by voluntarily adopting hero status. Another dimension put forward by Strauss is “forcing the person “in and out” of the group: to exile, excommunicate, hold incommunicado; and all the various steps of approach to the heart or inner sanctum...” This concept is relevant because of the powerful effect such actions have. The mystification, coaching and ultimately pseudo-friending processes I encountered are linked by their obligating effects. The experts concern themselves with inflating their knowledge and discounting the idea of ‘self-help.’ Through coaching and pseudo-friending they give clients the impression that they are admitting them into their sacred world. In reality, they are careful to keep clients at bay however. By indicating their acceptance into ‘valued client’ status, ‘responsible pet owner status’, or ‘friend status’ clients feel bound to their expert. As a result they experience potent forces guiding their behaviour. For example, to shop around for the best deal on price would seem like betrayal. Questioning of the expert’s judgement is taboo. Hence the explanation of the powerful processes which are contingent on coaching and pseudo-friending.

Experts feel entitled to dictate clients status. It is appropriate to define and regulate their behaviour. Experts do not concur with the thesis that clients are capable of managing the way forward for themselves. It is legitimate therefore for experts to intervene.

Perhaps the most striking parallel arises in relation to our mutual identification and explanation of the coaching process. Control over behaviour is mediated by guiding

the new recruit/inexperienced party. Strauss implicates *predicting* in establishing legitimacy to the right to act. The demonstration of *foretelling* accurately what course future events will take is an effective way of awing others. The more specific, complex and unfamiliar, the stronger the effect. Strauss notes, “The more subtle aspects of preparation include forewarning you that certain things will soon happen, that you will experience certain experiences, and feel certain feelings...”

Like Strauss, I found the process of routining to be emergent. Establishing regularised action is clearly outlined; “In a host of ways, you are prepared for what is to come, are made aware of the immediacy of the next transition, are reminded that you have just know now made a passage. Thus attainment of status may require that you have certain standards of conduct and performance; these, myth and story, example and direct instruction, are indispensable.” There is much in common with my theory. The difference being Strauss explains how interactions affect transformations in identity on formal level – in other words, one removed from specific context but applicable to many; I focus on a substantive level. The obvious similarities demonstrate the workability of Strauss’ conceptualisation and indicate the potential for elevating my theory to a more abstract level.

Strauss mentions the process of keeping an overeager person in line “by all kinds of controlling devices.” This would be relevant in light of my substantive theory of keeping clients in line. However, Strauss does not elaborate on the nature of these means of control.

“A coaching relationship exists if someone seeks to move someone else along a series of steps, when those steps are not entirely institutionalised and invariant, and when the learner is not entirely clear about their sequences (although the coach is)”, according to Strauss. The confidence trickster is portrayed manipulating his victim through the steps of some underhand plot. Other examples of coaching relationships are given, each with different characters. The common theme being the requirement of one individual to surrender to another, either knowingly or not. The teacher then

guides the other along unfamiliar paths according to specific guidelines. There is therefore a need to predict and explain the sequence of steps because of the obscurity. The coach employs both fear and pleasure in retaining control.

Some of the most significant parallels revolve around Strauss' statement that "in almost all coaching there appears to be a strong element of inducement, temptation and behind-the-scenes action." This meshes with my discoveries. Strauss' abstract assertion that "the coach not only works on current desires to get action directed along given paths, but seeks to create new desires and aims", fits my theory. The development of a new identity for a client by way of a "variety of canny maneuvers" explains how experts operate. The interplay between coercive strategies and apparent freedom is characteristic of how experts impose control. The establishment of routines function as mandates for action.

Strauss implicates "challenges" as being intimately linked to coaching processes. He explains how people are asked to surrender previous ways of comprehending and acting – "in large measure ceding an unknown destiny to a mentor who presumably knows where he is taking you." This fits with whole concept of keeping clients in line. The danger the client faces is failing to be aware of the coaches agenda. Even where the coach displays unusual knowledge, the client must judge how his own interests are being met.

An interesting consideration for the coaching process is whether the client has been socialised into clienthood previously. This question is emergent in my theory of keeping people in line. It is also documented in *Mirrors and Masks*. Whether one must impart a totally new ideology to uncontaminated material, or whether it will be necessary to deconstruct existing preconceptions, is clearly of relevance.

Strauss draws attention to frequently held misconceptions regarding conversion. The process does not simply revolve around "building loyalty toward something"; there is a necessary element of "loosening or abandoning of allegiances". Additionally, when



a partial conversion is reversed the individual does not just revert to his original identity. Brainwashing is the example used. A whole new language learned for perceiving and acting cannot be erased as if it had no meaning.

Another property of the coaching process emergent from my theory, *scheduling* is an important feature in Strauss work. The existence of moments in time where certain “acts are supposed to be performed” contrast with others where they are “tabooed” directly affects how interactions pan out. The creation of such schedules and vets’ abilities to manipulate them according to their own agendas patterns out strongly in my data. For example, the vet who has too many clients to see encourages schedules which involve consulting him only when absolutely necessary. Others however, may prefer to see less clients and spend longer with them. In such cases frequent interactions are scheduled. The expert develops a vocabulary which corresponds to his/her favoured scheduling. Clients understand what is expected of them and act accordingly. If for example, they are too busy to comply with whatever the expert articulates they may go elsewhere, either willingly or forcibly.

By legitimising one’s right to act, as in expert/client interactions, the expert has the power to license others whilst imposing obligations, sanctions and taboos.

Strauss’ (1997) discussion of the coaching process is general. He calls for further “meticulous and thoughtful research” to explain the details in relation to different structures and contexts. This is the purpose of my emergent theory.

Whilst Strauss (1997) explains many of the concepts revealed by my research his obscurity with respect to the question of origination is cause for concern. In light of this fundamental flaw, it may be more appropriate to regard my contribution and its similarities as partial validation of Strauss’ apparently conjectural abstractions, not the reverse.

## 4.6 Grounded theory comparison

This section of my review concentrates on how my theory relates to other Grounded Theory. In making numerous references to Grounded Theory I do not wish to imply a dogmatic preoccupation with the research methodology. Not all Grounded Theory is worthy of note. Some is inferior and taints others who pursue its rigours systematically. Those who say they do Grounded Theory but bypass the hard graft in search of the quick fix exist.

The Grounded Theories that follow have been selected because they are judged to have validity and relevance. Validity here has three dimensions: content, construct and predictive validity.

In articulating the processes central to veterinary experts' daily lives, and defining the *causes, consequences, cutting points and contingencies* at play, others can see clearly how things work. This is what sets apart my contribution from other more descriptive writing. When one can see the concepts and how they interrelate understanding is possible. Where minutiae are described comprehension can be difficult. My emergent theory distils, description clouds.

Maxwell (1993) explains similar concepts in her study of *Modeling Life: The Dynamic Relationship Between Elder Modelers and Their Proteges*. The emphasis differs since the concerns revolve around the transfer of social control through selection of suitable candidates for subsequent socialisation. Nevertheless there are interesting parallels.

Maxwell explains the sub-processes of fences; teaching the model; awing/okaying processes; expressing awe and fading out. The fences which are described parallel my boundary setting process. They function in a structural sense by "contributing to social rigidity." Three categories of fences are detailed; *protective custody barriers* whereby the group's model is entrusted to a select few; *presencing barriers* which

restrict access; and *identity displays* which distinguish groups one from another and insulate members. The concept of protecting membership rites and minimising contamination from outsiders mimics the vets mystification process. They variously concealed and revealed information about their world in carefully managed ways.

*Teaching the model* is similar to my coaching process. It involves communicating “skills and model values”. She explains the importance of consistency in such interactions. This function is accomplished by repetition in *showing and telling*. Undesirable characteristics were hidden from view to a significant degree in my research, this is not evident however in Maxwell’s (1993) experience. Pacing strategies are mentioned as means of control and parallel the scheduling mentioned previously.

Maxwell’s (1993) experts are also seen to indulge in *awing* tactics through displaying their expertise. These dramatise their talents. Two of the categories of awing correspond to those emergent in the veterinary context. *Sanctifying processes* seem to be equivalent to my *heroing*. A property of this is protection. The other category of awing which is relevant is called *magical mystery tours* this involves the expert guiding the inexperienced through fearful situations. This suggests some similarity to the process of ‘handholding’ during ‘guiding through’ usually encountered in the early phases of coaching interactions – the consequence being the generation of awe.

Segments of Maxwell’s (1993) concepts fit my theory and make useful comparative material. She is not explicit in her integration of the processes she outlines. As a consequence a more thorough comparison is not possible.

An other grounded theory, of *Infra Controlling*, explains the processes at work within an experimental community for alternative treatment of Schizophrenia. One of the sub-processes the author reveals is *Limiting Intrusion*. Skodal-Wilson (1993) explains how this process insulates against external interference. It is conceptualised by *minimizing approachability; deflecting; and disengaging*. Restricting access and

regulating disclosure of information variously obstruct interaction with outsiders. In spite of the rather bizarre origin, the idea of *limiting disclosure* has echoes of the category I label *selective disclosure*. This strategy was employed regularly by experts for the purpose of keeping outsiders (vet clients) at bay. Likewise, *deflecting* happens time and again in the veterinary setting. Vets regularly evade outsiders by invoking emergencies. Clients are powerless to check up on the validity of the claims. The act of questioning such 'high order pre-empting' is taboo. Others have made similar observations in medical contexts. Davies (1977: 557) observed this phenomenon in the case of hospital consultants whereby designating "ambiguous events as emergencies" enabled the "suspension of ordinary procedures".

The interaction between experts and laymen is the focus for Glaser (1972). His theory explains the processes involved when there is an imbalance in power in relationships. The title of Glaser's book *Experts versus Laymen* indicates the interactions studied are not of the benign win/win type characterised by relationship marketing literature. Ordinarily where experts and laymen converge it is the expert who defines the path ahead. In Glaser's (1972: 124) example the patsy (layman) seeks to alter the balance of power and to manage the subcontractor (expert) in the context of building a home. The layman "must inspect, evaluate and administer the work of an expert – which experts do not enjoy from someone less knowledgeable. The expert wants to please the patsy on his (the expert's terms, not on the patsy's, since he is the expert – and should be judged by one!".

Initially when a project is planned the patsy must choose whom he wishes to carry out the work. This phase is "competitive bidding". A number of prospective contractors are shortlisted and invited to quote for the job. This is designed to increase the likelihood of employing the most suitable person in terms of value. Bids that are grossly inflated will be exposed and a degree of protection is the consequence of bidding competitively. This practice was conspicuous by its absence within the veterinary context. Overt discussions about fees are discouraged implicitly. Experts prefer laymen not to shop around. The unwritten code is that

experts do not wish to talk of such unsavoury matters. They are professionals and have loftier concerns. The purity of their motivation should not be accepted *carte blanche*, however. If all is in order there should be no such qualms when it comes to 'pricing a job'. The absence of competitive bidding gives scope for exploitation. Clients who have had a particularly bad experience of a vet may go elsewhere as a result. By experiencing alternatives they encounter differences which enable them to judge the options in ways they would not previously have imagined. In short, restricted bidding of an informal type does take place in my study, but this is usually contingent on some significant landmark appearing.

The *information gaining processes* discovered in my study, whereby the vets extract information from their clients one-sidedly, are significant in terms of this comparison. The non-reciprocal nature of the entitlement to information perpetuates the asymmetrical basis of the interaction. By restricting the availability to this source of power, the veterinary experts keep their clients in line. Glaser (1972: 162) states, "Information is a kind of evidence that demonstrates competence, and professional experts want this competence assumed without requiring demonstration of knowledge". This explains experts reluctance to involve themselves in quoting for jobs. The aura of secrecy which surrounds professional worlds is eroded along with the "trust in the magic of the expert" (p162). When perceived reality is exposed as myth, as can happen when clients discover too much information, the balance of power undergoes a realignment. This fits with my explanations of *selective disclosing* of information as a *mystification* strategy. Glaser (1972:162) identifies information as dictating the course of interaction as it "gives him [the layman] several offsetting powers". This demystification reveals much of the professional's work as straightforward. As a consequence the layman can do things for himself, and "dispense with the professional."

Glaser (1972: 77) implicates what he calls "the friendly approach" in persuading the client to award the contract. He reveals the existence of sweet talking and the consequent "development of obligation in the patsy". The debt is then repaid by the

gift of the contract. The calculative interaction fits closely with the cultivating I articulate. The pseudo-friending emergent from my research was evident from the outset but increased in intensity during the later stages of expert/client interactions principally in the service of maximising the sale. The *hooking strategies* explained by Glaser (1972: 77) predominate at the inception. They recur were delays take place and are designed to placate the patsy.

I identify *awing processes* as being employed by experts in order to impress clients. Glaser (1972) explains similar behaviour as arising as a consequence of the difficulties in demonstrating professional skills given their complexity.

The main body of Glaser's substantive theory is devoted to what he labels *generalling the job*. This, as I understand it, involves the layman taking on an alien role, in this case becoming 'master of works' and regulating the job in its entirety. Here the normal course of expert-layman interaction is disrupted. In spite of this reflecting the flip side of my vet-client interaction some interesting comparisons are noticeable. The patsy encounters the strategies employed by experts which ordinarily keep clients in line. The challenge for the patsy is to reveal their subtleties and counter them.

In seeking to dictate the temporal orderings of the job he must act cannily to keep the sub (contractor) from deserting. The normally secret nature of competing demands on his time from other sources, is explained as elsewhereism and variously undermines control. Dealing with delays and their cumulative effects may mean adjusting schedules.

At face value these concerns do not appear to be relevant to my theory. However, the problems of waiting are very real. To be kept waiting is intrinsic to being dependent on experts. It is in many ways symbolic of the relationship itself. I explain *waiting properties* at some length as they are part and parcel of keeping clients at bay. I also indicated that experts understand how far they can stretch this dimension of

elsewhereism before clients will stand it no longer. I do not use the integrative explanatory variable Glaser (1972) labels as elsewhereism. The essence of the concept is however visible. The consequences of the competitive demands on experts are pervasive. Delays and their compounding effects impinge negatively on clients, in general. Although in the case where the expert legitimises his absence on account of ministering at an emergency, positive perceptions may ensue. Glaser (1972: 166) explains the impact of elsewhereism succinctly; “Stories are legion among laymen about delays from waiting for or missing their busy expert – and how fateful that is for them”.

The customary practice of closely guarding what information is disclosed to clients means they are more often than not left in the dark as to the source of the delays they experience. When such conditions prevail it becomes even more difficult for clients to redress the inequality.

Obscuring the real nature of delays increases the expert’s room for manoeuvre. I uncovered experts categorising their clients according to their own agendas to simplify processing them. The condition *differential value* of clients indicates the process of *prioritising* and the consequent impact of delays on those who do not rate favourably against the expert’s criteria.

Experts who, through accident or choice, do not find themselves inundated by conflicting demands on their time may artificially induce *waiting properties*. The aim is to create the impression that the expert is busier than he really is. For others, who are much in demand, the pressures from divergent sources of elsewhereism are synonymous with daily life. For them the demands on their scarce resources of time fluctuate over time. In concert with these momentary, daily, weekly, or seasonal oscillations their ways of coping modulate. Glaser (1972: 169) observes, “Some professional experts are so used to such delays that their clients are never informed but simply left to understand on their own... Experts then vary according to the mechanisms that they set up to inform laymen of elsewhereism demands which

formally excuse delays”. The accuracy of these insights is significant and best demonstrated by direct comparison to specific indicators from my data.

My first example is taken from a high throughput, urban practice where the emphasis is on getting through a heavy case load whilst providing affordable general treatment. Consulting hours are on an open surgery basis and are characteristically busy. Evening surgeries being notorious for their overrunning tendencies. Clients regularly spend hours waiting to see the vet. Clients over time understand this is normal practice and wait their turn. Others, who know how things work, will arrive as late as is allowable with the hope of minimising their wait. New clients who do not know what to expect and are unfamiliar with how things work first try to discover the cause of the delay. Glaser (1972: 168) articulates this well saying “the large number of wanting clients are always interrupting and demanding”. As time passes and still the vet has not arrived to begin surgery their frustration escalates often becoming angry. Here clients must either accept things as they are or go elsewhere. The decision to go elsewhere is, in itself relatively complex. The degree of *substitutability* is a condition. If no perceived alternatives exist then the layman must get used to delays and in time perhaps develop mitigating strategies. The extent to which the vet and client intertwine will influence whether the client goes elsewhere. If in the midst of a treatment regime the option to leave may seem inappropriate in spite of the inconvenience of enduring excessive delays. The experts know they are operating in what Glaser (1972: 170) refers to as “a zone of tolerance”. The expert understands the limits that exist and takes measures to try to stay within them. Acknowledged ‘expert’ experts are an exception. Their skills are in demand and they can repeatedly transgress without repercussions. The normal boundaries are meaningless. Their extreme expert status is a cutting point and delineates where a significant difference in behaviour is evident. Those of lesser perceived accomplishment know the consequences of going beyond their specific tolerance zones. If, for example upon his late arrival the vet senses overt hostility from the waiting pack, he will endeavour to deal particularly swiftly with the first few cases. This strategy attempts to pacify the waiting ‘mob’ by appearing to make amends through compensatory efficiency.



My second example originates from a provincial practice where caseloads are not excessive and vets enjoy spending time with clients and can consequently explore different aspects of the patient's health in an unhurried atmosphere. Appointments are scheduled and last about twenty minutes. Here, the impact of elsewhereism is functionally minimal. Clients however may judiciously be kept waiting. This is part and parcel of *mystification*. Fictitious delays reinforce the perception of professional importance. *Higher order pre-empting* is the stock excuse proffered. Images of vets being detained, selflessly saving life, in emergency situations do no harm. The existence of other agendas – usually of a personal nature are kept concealed by employing diversionary tactics.

As a consequence of the intrinsic nature of demands on finite resources of time, experts necessarily become adept at *passing off* delays and deviation from the anticipated schedule. This is the first recognisable allusion to the process of *repertoiring* (although Glaser does not label it thus). Glaser notes that “behind the explanations and temporal strategies is a composed manner. Virtually every sub has some contrived manner, which he has developed through time because of trouble with many people”.

Other similarities noted revolve around what I refer to as *vaguing*. Again Glaser (1972) does not explicitly label this process. Nevertheless, his explanation matches mine, in spite of arising from divergent contexts. For example, Glaser (1972: 101) notes how subs are careful “to never give a time for starting or continuing work so it is hard for the patsy to establish occurrence of the delay”. Vets, when they are unsure of a diagnosis, start *vaguing*. This is part of *face saving processes*. Experts do not want to leave themselves open to criticism. Clients will be unable to make accusations of incompetence if there is no explicit diagnosis to challenge.

Where experts wish to retain the balance of power they will use “double or imprecise talk which is impossible to fathom”, according to Glaser (1972: 101). In similar

ways, and for similar ends, veterinary experts indulge in *complexifying*.

The issue of quality control requires close watching. This reflects the purpose of *mystification*. Clients cannot monitor the quality of vet work satisfactorily. Surgical procedures for example take place behind closed doors. Additionally vets engineering of restricted perceptions mitigates against surveillance on the client's behalf. Glaser (1972: 163) highlights the role "imagery" has in manipulating perceptions. This is where the emergent process of *mystification* fits in. Conflicting imagery is prevented from reaching the experts' clients and consequently damaging their power monopoly. Even complete "non-disclosure" may occur according to Glaser (1972: 163), hence "minimizing their loss of control".

Imagery is of further significance in terms of cementing and promoting long-term interactions. Glaser (1972) explains the strategies the layman may adopt to seize a measure of control from the expert. The emphasis in my theory is the reverse. Focus is aimed at the processes which experts actively employ to differentially keep their clients in line. Counter strategies do emerge but these are subsumed by expert dominance.

*Gouging* is the label Glaser gives to experts who seek to charge inflated prices. He does not document this to be prevalent in his context. I implicate *the surety of the sale* as the turning point for *exploiting the opportunity* for generating excess profits. This type of *opportunising* is emergent from the veterinary context.

The "lack of legitimised inspection of quality" is problematic "in professional cases of low clarity", according to Glaser (1972: 171). My emergent theory reflects how veterinary experts routinely keep their clients in line, by manipulating their perceptions and variously obligating them through *mystification*, *coaching* and *pseudo-friending processes*. As highlighted above my substantive theory has much in common with Glaser's (1972) study of expert/layman interactions. He reflects on how his grounded theory contributes to the knowledge of expert-layman interactions

and deepens existing understanding in specific dimensions. Glaser's (1972: 309) conceptualisation leapfrogs popular "conceptions of control, autonomy and helping".

For the purpose of locating my substantive theory, it is particularly important to compare the specific processes listed to those emergent from my data. According to Glaser (1972: 309), knowledge is extended to encompass processes of "bidding, gaining information, redesigning, inspecting, administering, evaluating, detailing work to temporal pacing, winning trust, obtaining and judging quality and closure, articulating, elsewhereism and generalling". My theory explains processes of "mystification, information gaining, selective disclosing, vaguing, hedging, omitting, coaching, *guiding through, waiting, sophisticating and pseudo-friending*" together with consequences such as "obligating and tabooing". On close inspection the processes are paired opposites. They reflect the diametrically opposite behaviour. This is explained through perspective. Glaser's (1972) theory is emergent from the analysis of the layman dealing with an expert subcontractor; my theory originates from observations of experts dealing with lay clients, with a bias towards understanding how the experts manage their interactions to suit their own agendas. The veterinary experts are seen obscuring things; the patsy is depicted trying to see clearly how things are progressing. The vet closely guards what is disclosed to outsiders, the patsy is involved in detailing.

The most obvious similarities revolve around the emphasis on the fluidity of the processes involved. Both theories have predictive ability and prove valid in use.

The *coaching process* emergent in my substantive theory does not feature to any significant degree in Glaser's (1972) work. The expert's use of what I term *sophisticating* is not seen in Glaser (1972).

Glaser & Strauss (1971) raise substantive theory to a formal level in *Status Passage*. The fundamental social requirement for people to be recruited by agents and being processed involves ongoing transition to and from different positions. The authors

reveal the role of ritual in signifying such transitions. They focus attention on the conditions that prevail when status change occurs and their associated consequences.

Glaser & Strauss (1971: 9) note that “Every paper about status passage need not, of course, include a complete analysis. If it is to have richness and integration, several properties must be analysed and integrated during the course of the investigation.”

Veterinarians are not a homogeneous entity by dint of their professional affiliation. Traditional conceptualisation of professional membership denies the existence of differentiation within such groups. Bucher & Strauss (1961) contradict the accepted wisdom in a useful way. Statuses vary throughout an individual’s career. An individual’s agenda at any moment in time is relevant in its differential affect on behaviour. One’s stake in the action impinges on the course of the interaction. Similarly, the stakes of those other parties involved have implications.

Glaser & Strauss (1971) identify the management of awareness contexts as being central to recruiting individuals for participation. In such instances, according to Glaser & Strauss (1971: 19) “The passagee is kept from all information that may interfere with or negate the desirability of the bait...” The processes described correspond to the “mystification” emergent from my research. In addition, the authors explain how a passagee is then “coached along slowly to where he cannot give up the passage, because of loss of pleasure or fear of pain from physical and social reprisal sources...” (p19). This explains the potent forces of “obligating” and how they perpetuate the status quo. Clients feel guilty about questioning their expert whether in relation to quality of work, fee levels or timekeeping.

My research reveals one counter balance to the power asymmetry – namely the cumulative build up of knowledge through the process of experientialising, otherwise termed learning through experience. Glaser & Strauss (1971: 29) reveal a parallel discovery. In concert with increasing experience there is an awakening of consciousness. The nature of the resources at the client’s disposal become clear. The

opportunity of influencing the path ahead in directions of his choosing exists. Glaser & Strauss (1971: 131) note “The more experienced the passagee, the more he may be able to take advantage of what he has learned from this ‘system’ or ones like it.” The development of predictive ability is a consequence of experientialising.

The challenge of regaining some measure of control retrospectively is considerable. Characteristically, new or novice clients, lack knowledge of the levers with which to influence their fate at the outset. Glaser & Strauss (1971: 69) state that “some clients who have enough information, or have been exploited, or have had an unsuccessful experience with previous experts learn that they actually have more control than they had realised.” My theory explains the experts’ strategies for consolidating their supremacy by suppressing client awareness of latent control. The turning points I identify as the signals to the client to counter the asymmetry in their interactions with experts are related to attaining a sufficient degree of consciousness as to how things work. Adequate access to information or previous unsatisfactory interactions may variously act as a new pivot point in the balancing of power. The difficulties associated with altering the course of interactions that are already in progress are significant, however.

The principle problem, according to Glaser & Strauss (1971: 57), with respect to shaping a transition, is “in its control – i.e. who is in control and who is vying for control”. Professionals are numbered among those who see it as one of their tasks to manage client’s passages. “They wish to be recruited only on trust and given carte blanche to guide clients’ passages according to their best judgements and with no comparisons made that might subvert their control”, Glaser & Strauss (1971: 60) observe. It falls within their remit to pace progress appropriately. This process is termed “temporal articulation” by Glaser & Strauss (1971: 52). When transitions do not progress as planned there is scope for tolerance. The authors (Glaser & Strauss, 1971: 52) define tolerance as being based on “lack of certainty of temporal expectations, so unfulfilled ones are less disappointing and lack of clear signs of malpacing makes awareness of it harder and therefore easier to conceal”. In the

veterinary context this scope exists as a consequence of mystification processes. Disarticulation is witnessed when the limits of tolerance zones are breached and the many and varied demands on the expert's time become overwhelming.

The authors highlight the diverse ways experts manage their clients. Experts are variously occupied indoctrinating and training passagees. These concepts are not alien. They are 'right on' in their accuracy as far as the emergent theory of keeping clients in line is concerned. Vets (experts) coach clients (passagees) into clienthood (status change). Agents (experts) and passagees (clients) are revealed negotiating how the passage will take shape. The perceived desirability of influence the map of the interactions which lie ahead. This property dictates whether cooperative negotiations proliferate or whether interactions take on a more coercive form.

Significantly, Glaser & Strauss (1971: 62) state that "They juggle other's awareness of the passage through revelation and concealment as a means of insuring that shape evolves in accordance with their own desires." This explains exactly the mystification process that is grounded in the data I have generated from the veterinary context. The parity of the processes explained is an important milestone in the overall process of situating my work.

Being capable of establishing the fundamental mechanisms of control is a prerequisite of discovering theoretically relevant answers relating to the balance of control in governing the status changes. Glaser & Strauss (1971: 62) illustrate this point as follows, "Where control is in the hands of one agent who uses an authoritarian control system problems associated with legitimation and negotiation and with closed awareness contexts will arise easily." The authors highlight interactions between experts and laymen as being characterised by a "contest for control" (p67). My theory is not conceptualised in these terms. It reflects the experts conscious efforts to anticipate and avoid challenges. Experts protect their world from intrusion by outsiders. Secretly they insulate themselves. The principle action is perception management.

Experts may be selective in the clients they acquire. The information gaining processes I explain help experts to discriminate in accordance with their preferences. This allows experts to type clients as far as certain characteristics are concerned. In turn they contour their behaviour. Glaser & Strauss (1971: 112) demonstrate their awareness of selectivity, saying; “The agent must be convinced with some surety that the passage can go somewhere, make the grade or be able to pay well...”

In order to accomplish the aims of interaction there is recourse to a repertoire of strategies ranging from persuasion, convincing, negotiating to coercing, as Glaser & Strauss (1971) indicate. These processes are explained in the emergent theory. The terminology may differ but the underlying meanings are the same.

A further comparison in this section is made to Bradshaw-Camball’s [henceforth referred to as B-C] (1989) ‘Grounded Theory.’ This research earns its way into the comparison. Striking parallels are clear. The author analyses polar perspectives of power interactions. On the one hand she explores the interpretive perspective on power where the emphasis is on the political process and power with its tendencies to assist those holding the reigns in self-serving ways. Control over socially charged elements, including language, myth, and symbol, together define situations and create illusions. The functionalist perspective, on the other hand, is concerned with the structural aspects of power, its sources and distribution.

B-C (1995: 640) implicates the over-reliance on the functionalist viewpoint in the neglect of “the socially constructed nature of organisational life.” Consequently, the author aims to “understand the dynamics of power involved” in her chosen context (a community based hospital working under financial constraints) (p641) from an interpretive perspective. B-C (1995: 645) reveals “the dynamic of creating illusions as being part of the political process whereby the hospital administration distorted communications so as to gain a tactical advantage and increase power.” The concept of defining reality for others is emergent in my research.

B-C (1995) suggests that the illusion making process is potentially widespread. The detail of the process remains to be articulated together with how its components are integrated. The lack of density evident in B -C's (1995) work seems to be attributable to an apparent 'shortcircuiting' of the constant comparative process and neglect of developmental memoing. Whilst the author incorporates verbatim indicators of an illusioning process more rigour is required to more fully develop an interesting concept. B-C (1995: 647) notes that "Current conceptualisations of socially constructed reality and culture, however, tend not to consider situations involving personal gain or organisational advantage." The need for theory generation is evident. My research explains in conceptual terms how experts manipulate perceptions for instrumental purposes. Mystification, coaching and pseudo-friending each have a role to play, be it large or small, ongoing or sporadic, in creating, maintaining and extending illusions with the aim of keeping clients in line.

I conclude this section by comparing my emergent theory with Stern's (1995) grounded theory of *Integrative Discipline in Stepfather Families*. The research centres around the problem of an outsider taking on a management role within a new environment, ie., the stepfather wresting some power from the mother and interacting with and managing children. The significant elements emergent from Stern's work are the three sub-processes explained; rule making and enforcing, friending, and integrative undermining. The father cultivates friendly relations with the step child in order to gain the child's confidence. He then aligns himself with the child in a dispute thereby taking the edge off the mother's power advantage. The cultivating of friendly relations for an instrumental purpose equates to my pseudo-friending. The undermining process is one strategy which is emergent in my theory, though it is not labelled in these terms. Stern's undermining is designed to neutralize a power differential. She does not discuss whether this is a 'once and for all' process never to be repeated. Vet clients are seen taking steps to redress the balance of power. This type of undermining is consequent on the client becoming aware that the expert is acting according to his own agenda. The client realises he must look after his own



interests.

The concepts emergent here are interesting in their own right, but authenticating their grounding is problematic. Stern is long on explanation of the intricacies of using orthodox 'grounded theory.' She does not however demonstrate the necessary transparency in the detail of how the concepts are grounded. Stern merely lists " 'liking', 'leveling', 'identifying' and 'modeling' " as examples of substantive codes. No attempt is made to demonstrate how the concept of *integrative discipline* emerged in terms of its synthesis. Failure to be explicit in how her theory is generated raises questions about its construct validity. A noticeable lack of detail in terms of conditions, cutting points, dimensions, etc. results in the reader conjecturing as to where the sub-processes cut-in and transform interaction. Omissions of this type do a disservice to potentially useful theory.

Finally, I conclude the comparative analysis with brief reference to the concept of *facework* emergent from the nursing context. Spiers (1998) using a grounded theory approach, deals with the face-to-face interactions which characterise nursing practice.

Spiers' (1998: 26) analysis is worth examining. She sees the overall process of facework as depending on an "ability to communicate" and to "adapt to different communication styles". This amounts to fairly low level description. If the reader looks beyond this however to the codes listed, both substantive and theoretical, it is possible to see components which parallel some of those I encounter. The interaction begins with a process of "involving". The categories of involving include initiating, negotiating, maintaining a relationship, and probing. Subsequently negotiating levels of distance together with self-disclosure and information exchange are identified within a context of power differences where there is a need for help and establishing the right to act. Amongst this interaction Spiers (p 28) discovers "institutional talk, caregiver talk", and "controlling talk." The categories revealed seem relevant when compared to some of my codes. Spiers' synthesis aspect of theory generation is naïve. The keen minded reader can impute what connections may link the categories.

## **4.7 Discussion**

Keeping clients in line is a potent concept and is widely recognisable particularly within the field of sociology as the literature comparison demonstrates. Other components of my emergent theory are contained in disparate sources. None articulates the process of keeping clients in line in its entirety. Elemental similarities point to the potential for developing more formal theory. This is explored in the final chapter that follows.

## 5 IMPLICATIONS

This, the final chapter of my thesis considers the value of my research endeavour. It is both reflective and forward looking in nature.

Firstly, I discuss the issue of validity. I outline the criteria against which grounded theory is most usefully gauged. I then evaluate how well my theory measures up to these criteria.

Secondly, I question how the theory itself may demonstrate its relevance in action. In other words, are those in the substantive field likely to see any tangible value in my theory. I then indicate the areas I consider to be ripe for further exploration, in light of my work. Subsequently, I conjecture as to the potential for the development of formal theory. I speculate about how the theory might best be elevated.

Finally, I outline the ways in which experiencing the research process has influenced me at a personal level. I do not concern myself with retrospective justification. Instead, I document a straightforward assessment of my perceived contribution. For this reason this chapter is compact and focused. I do not indulge the reader by unnecessary reiteration of my theoretical discoveries.

## 5.1 Addressing the question of validity

The nature of the empirical research dictates a compatible gauge of validity be employed. Conventional concerns such as sample size and whether it is representative are inappropriate to research of this nature. In order to judge the authenticity of the theory different, more meaningful, benchmarks are required. These will be set out and explored in turn. Whilst I am explicit in this instance about how to judge validity, I am of the opinion that with experience of encountering many examples of grounded theory it becomes possible to judge them instinctively.

As far as the generation of this emergent theory goes and its overall validity, there are a number of pertinent issues that are worthy of consideration. I had no special stake in selecting the veterinary context for exploration. Personal interest was the source of my motivation. Consequently, I had no vested interest in ‘buying’ the party line, nor did I seek to explode existing fictions. I had no idea what would emerge from the analysis, nor did I have any personal concern to impose on the research. This allowed the main concern of the participants to surface unhindered. My underpinning openness to emergence is instrumental in determining the ultimate quality of the theory. The aim throughout has been to learn from the experience of doing grounded theory and enjoy the research process. The guiding logic being that under such circumstances the potential for uncovering authentic theory would be maximised. The fact that the project is entirely privately funded eliminates the scope for any commercially driven doctoring of the contents. Should any discoveries reflect unfavourably upon sponsors there is always the temptation for mitigating behaviour. Contamination of the nature is inhibited. This emergent theory simply reflects my best attempt to honestly capture the theoretical essence of behaviour which happens to originate from the veterinary practice context. If desired it would be possible to test the hypothesis quantitatively. However, it is my belief that this procedure is, under most circumstances, not justified. Theories such as this are validated in action, not through artificial verification.

Limitations in the emergent theory reflect an equivalent incomplete development of my own theoretical sensitivity which is necessary element for generating accomplished grounded theory. The capability of the researcher is fundamental to the emergent theory with this type of research. The researcher's credentials are in this sense intrinsic. The ability to generate theory from data is what it is all about. Creativity, humbleness and reflectivity are contributory characteristics of the accomplished grounded theorist. The discipline to adhere rigorously to the systematic procedures which are part and parcel of doing grounded theory are no less important. Staying power is essential if the researcher is to make it through. The trials associated with confusion and regression are, at times, seemingly overwhelming. Possessing durability should not be underestimated.

Grounded theory is, I have discovered, highly experiential in nature. By reflecting on the generative process itself it is possible to identify weaknesses in the emergent theory. For example, I became aware of significant shortcomings in my precursory grounded theory. This insight was influential in relation to the main project. It can be employed constructively for the enhancement of future endeavours. These shortcomings can be attributed to two sources. Firstly the analysis and synthesis were retrospective in nature. This meant that theoretical sampling was not employed as it would be under normal circumstances. Consequently the theory on infiltrating unfamiliar settings from the perspective of a participant observer was not theoretically complete. Whilst the concepts and their corresponding categories and properties were rich, the overall process was notably lacking in terms of its integration. This second source of inadequacy was a consequence of limitations in my understanding of what constituted theoretical completeness. I did not understand the need to actively link the concepts theoretically. I had revealed the components of the theory but had not discovered the theoretical coding families integrating the theory.

In light of the aforementioned shortcomings I actively tried to stimulate my theoretical awareness. This was accomplished through studying some French literature and cultivating an appreciation of theory construction. I tried to understand the components and mechanisms necessary for development of theoretical craftsmanship. I have since experienced a maturing in my approach to theory construction. My theoretical explanation of how veterinarians variously keep their clients in line exposes the causes, consequences, conditions and cutting points influential in operationalising life in the substantive area. These elements were conspicuous by their absence in my precursory grounded theory. As Glaser (1994: 14) explains a theory of sufficient accomplishment is capable of being “used to explicate, understand and shed light on professional interests.”

In spite of my perceived progression with respect to my theoretical sensitivity I still feel comparatively naïve with respect to the current extent of my theoretical repertoire. This thesis and its explanation of how veterinarians process their main concern of keeping clients in line is, from a personal viewpoint, a stepping stone to becoming a theoretically sensitive researcher. In that sense it is a launch pad, not a culmination.

## **5.2 Judging validity**

I now explain the specific criteria against which my theory should be measured. The theoretical family of codes which is so influential in the generation of theory is, according to Glaser (1978: 78), “especially important in critiquing and judging the theory one reads and uses.” This is the benchmark against which my grounded theory should be judged. Glaser (1978:78) articulates the theoretical family as follows: “Parsimony, scope, integration, density, conceptual level, relationship to data, relationship to other theory, clarity, fit, relevance, modifiability, utility, condensibility, inductive-deductive balance and interfeeding, degree of, multivariate structure, use of theoretical codes, interpretative, explanatory and predictive power, and so forth.”

Parsimony refers to the theory's ability to account for the problematic behaviour under study with the fewest possible concepts. Scope relates to the capacity for much theoretical coverage. I now explain the four principal criteria most frequently employed to evaluate the validity of grounded theory. These are fit, work, relevance and modifiability.

**5.2.1 Fit** is a well known concept. It originates from those methodologies which rely on received concepts. It relates to the commonplace practice of forcing concepts which are logically deduced but are not relevant. Fit revolves around the question of whether the concept adequately reflects the data which it purports to express. Scrutiny of the raw data reveals whether a miss-matching process is at work. Fit can be ascertained by comparing the excerpts of raw data incorporated in my explanation of the pathway through the data to the emergent theory. The process of constantly coding incidents continues unrelenting until such time as the incorporation of more incidents reveals no new categories.

**5.2.2 Workability** relates to the ability of the a concept to justify its inclusion in the theoretical framework by dint of its explanatory power. Clearly **workability** has relevance on a number of different levels.

During the course of the research I discovered the meaning of work in a peculiar way. When the process of *pseudo-friending* emerged it had such grab that I initially thought this could be the core variable pivotal to my research. I considered 'going with it' in the hope of rescue from the trauma of confusion and feelings of 'not knowing' which were all-consuming at that time. However, in spite of its apparent explanatory power *pseudo-friending* simply didn't account for all the variation in behaviour I was encountering. *Pseudo-friending* in other words did not **work**. The systematic memoing and comparative process was protracted until I eventually felt the concepts

appeared to account for how the main concern is resolved. The question of whether all the variables I have explained begin to help veterinarians keep their clients in line is a useful gauge of workability.

**5.2.3 Relevance** explains that the theory is of importance first and foremost to the people in the substantive area. Relevance is a gauge for the detection of forcing. If a researcher has imported some predetermined spurious concepts instead of systematically grounding them from data the theory will be exposed as irrelevant and bogus. Relevance is undeniable in the case of veterinarians' concern with keeping their clients in line. The theory was not forced, nor was it preconceived. Sensitive participant observation followed up by detailed exploration are instrumental in promoting the emergence of authentic data and hence encouraging the development of relevance.

**5.2.4 Modifiability** is the final criteria against which I will measure the validity of my emergent theory. It encompasses the capacity for the theory to accommodate new dimensions as and when they are revealed. New data simply alters the theory, by way of further constant comparisons, it does not invalidate it.

### **5.3 Implications for future researchers**

My thesis and the work which has gone into producing it sheds some light on areas of interest for other researchers. I now delineate possible avenues for future research.

There is obvious scope for the development of formal theory. Accordingly I discuss the way forward in section 5.8 (p177). Additionally, many of the processes and categories emergent in the substantive theory are ripe for further exploration in diverse contexts.



As previously mentioned, I am drawn to the Infiltrating process and the opportunities to develop this. It has intrinsic appeal. The role of intimidating through the use of the 'fear appeal' is another interesting theme. The concept of opportunising through 'working-up' cases or carrying out unnecessary work looks equally promising. This behaviour is instantly recognisable where servicing activities go on behind closed doors. The area of vehicle servicing is one example. According to research recently carried out at University College, London, dentists too indulge in similar activities, "...boosting their incomes by inflicting £200 million of unnecessary treatment on patients each year" (The Week, 2000: 13).

Finally, I would encourage the exploration of the use of diagramming in grounded theory. There appear to be intrinsic dilemmas as to whether to diagram or not. There are limitations to enhancing the written word when there is complex interplay between variables.

The above represents a few possible lines for enquiry. There are many others.

#### **5.4 Doing grounded theory**

Where the aim of research is to discover theory from data I would not hesitate to recommend grounded theory research methodology. I would caution others to expect the process to be highly demanding. At the outset I believed that doing grounded theory would be challenging. I underestimated the extent of that challenge, however. In spite of reading and re-reading texts explaining the details of becoming a theoretically sensitive researcher, the essence of doing grounded theory is emergent only from experiencing hands-on 'doing'. Apparent simplicity disguises significant complexity. Surviving the demands of doing grounded theory for the first time is, in itself, rewarding. The empowering capacity is an added by-product. In light of experiencing the complexity of doing grounded theory I feel well placed to manage future projects and to provide advice to others.

## 5.5 Researcher as participant observer

The process of becoming a participant observer in my chosen field of study was an important dimension in the generation of authentic data for analysis. I am convinced that had I selected more conventional and less time consuming methods of data collection the emergent theory would have amounted to a properline theory. Remoteness from the research subjects gives them scope for the discretionary perpetuation of fictions. Proximity can temporarily inhibit conceptualisation. Over involvement with the data may blind the researcher to how concepts interrelate. The systematic nature of grounded theory methodology provides the perfect foil to the risk of becoming enmeshed in description. The use of participant observation to generate data on which to systematically ground theory reveals the complementary nature of this interplay. As a consequence of my intimacy with those in the thick of the action the emergent theory reflects a conceptualisation of the reality of life as it is lived.

Proportionally few researchers adopt the role of participant observer in the pursuit of authentic data. This research has convinced me of its utility. It is a particularly valid approach where hidden agendas predominate. Where subjects have many and varied competitive demands on their time and are consequently reluctant to add to that burden by making themselves available for 'official' interviews - participant observation is indicated. Depth of insight should elevate participant observation to the research agenda. The time requirement for effective infiltration of the research setting should not be underestimated however. At a personal level, I found the interaction with those in the field a stimulating component of the research process. It compensates for the isolation associated with the other facets of doing research.

## 5.6 Significance for marketing

My research demonstrates the utility of employing a grounded theory approach where incremental understanding is required. It subsumes the extant literature giving scope for relevance to set the agenda. It counters the tendency towards regurgitation and proliferation of stale, out-moded, dubiously relevant, accepted wisdom. For example this emergent theory which explains how veterinarians variously keep their clients in line reveals the existence of power struggles within interactions. It directly challenges the prevalent belief which relationship marketing peddles, namely that interactions are focused on the supremacy of client satisfaction and consequent win/win scenarios. My discoveries indicate that whilst the perception may be of client satisfaction the reality is quite different. Lowe (1998) has also demonstrated the existence of alternatives to the idealised benign nature of relationships within business contexts using a grounded theory approach.

The emergent core variable of keeping clients in line is of relevance to marketing in general and to marketing innovators specifically. Understanding how best to manipulate consumer behaviour to meet your own agenda is a powerful tool when transferred to the commercial context. This would involve stimulating a need, want or fear in instances where nothing new or special is being offered. The creation of fictions to surround existing, reformulated or totally new products or services is significant. This is visible in the context of the installed base. Existing power enables those in power to set the rules to which others must comply. The large petroleum companies are cases in point. They offload a basic commodity from a centralised depot, then to dress up the product to suit, giving it eco-friendliness or other special characteristics which differentiate it from BP or Shell for example. There is no difference in what the customer is buying except perhaps in their mind. Lannon (1994:35) talks in similar terms when she graphically explains branding in terms of “mosaics of meaning” which serve to create and sustain “consumption myths and consumption rituals involving products and services endowed with symbolic meanings.”

Further examples of the process of keeping people in line are evident in the context of the main supermarkets and the power they bring to bear over their suppliers. Their access to the mass market is the condition which sustains their dominant power base. The current exposure of the motor manufacturer within the UK holding their dealers to ransom in maintaining artificially high car prices in relation to the rest of Europe is yet another example of keeping people in line for instrumental purposes.

The emergent concept of *pseudo-friending* has much imagery and explains an important dimension in how interactions are managed for, amongst other things, commercial gain. It seems likely that this concept has much wider implications, especially for the marketing community, practitioners and academics alike. Indeed subsequent to the first public airing of my ideas on the subject, one marketer, Stephen Brown, commented, “..well isn’t that what everybody does anyway?” His apparent criticism is in fact the reverse. *Pseudo-friending* permeates the fabric of everyday life (as does the process of keeping others in line). Pause for a moment and reflect on how regularly we cultivate others for instrumental purposes. Consider too how frequently we are the target of similar activities by others. The concept is so pervasive it is apparently taken for granted. Understanding such processes at a theoretical level gives the potential for control over interaction in a multitude of contexts.

*Pseudo-friending* allows selling to take place without clients sensing they are being targeted. It is relevant in many different contexts. It is not exclusive to professional life, nor to the realm of services as distinct from products. It is identifiable where individuals interact face-to-face and must necessarily cooperate .

Such is the potential impact of *pseudo-friending* that it could, in itself, form the basis for an entire research project. The emergent sub-process of *sophisticating* is interesting in its capacity to augment the scope for commercialisation, whilst simultaneously legitimising it. Making life seem more complicated indicates existing products and services are inadequate.

Gradually grounded theory studies are being acknowledged for their rightful contribution to understanding of the subtleties of the processes at play within commercial organisations. Their powerful ability to transcend both time and place gives them potential for applicability in diverse contexts. Their predictive ability makes them influential in managing strategy even within unfamiliar territory. Grounded theories should be of particular interest to those who seek to understand and direct the processes of change.

## **5.7 Utility within the substantive field**

My emergent theory is likely to be viewed as threatening by veterinarians. It exposes vested fictions and signals concomitant disruption to the accepted order. The perpetuation of existing fictions is perceived as fundamental to survival and prosperity. When discoveries do not concur with espoused theory there is potential for conflict.

Merton (1967: 21) quotes William James on the subject of ‘the classic stages of a theory’s career.’ Saying it is first, “attacked as absurd; then it is admitted to be true, but obvious and insignificant, finally it is seen to be so important that its adversaries claim that they themselves discovered it.”!

The veterinary audience may discount this research by labelling it unscientific, possibly even anecdotal. Being predominantly influenced by scientific logic themselves, veterinarians tend towards inherent scepticism of anything perceived to lie out with their direct experience. Any lack of recognition should not therefore invalidate my theory. Perversely it may signify its authenticity.

Potential veterinary students would benefit from access to my theory. It would sensitise them to the mundane side of vet life and thereby present a more realistic reflection of what life as a veterinarian really involves.

I recommend further investigation into the mystification process. Whether the images created and perpetuated industry wide project unrealistically high expectations of life as a vet is one avenue for exploration. Research would involve discovery of the motivations influencing the selection of a veterinary a career. Subsequently it would probe the extent to which expectations are fulfilled. I conjecture that there may be some link between the myths surrounding the recruitment of vet students and an emergent high incidence of suicide within the profession. The vets I have spoken to without exception all knew of at least one, sometimes several, colleagues who had taken their own lives. The reasons why this should be the case are unclear.

There are obvious difficulties associated with carrying out explorations into the reasons for suicide. These, it seems to me, should not preclude research. Work which has the potential to save life has high impact.

#### **5.7.1 Training**

My research suggests that there is room for improvement in the training of veterinary surgeons. Their formal training is almost exclusively directed towards clinical learning. No formal business skills are developed. Some role-playing does take place in preparation for dealing with clients. This is insufficient given the proportion of a vet's time actually devoted to interacting with clients.

The interface between vet and client is where the action is. Communication is fundamental not only to the vet's financial survival but also to patient well-being. Keeping clients in line is paramount, preferably through genuine forthright methods.

Perhaps as a consequence of the sheer volume of knowledge veterinary surgeons are required to absorb, the learning process appears to be a case of unquestioningly absorbing what lecturers disseminate to their students. This approach fosters uncritical behaviour. Healthy doses of scepticism are

virtually non-existent. This ingrained tendency may, I conjecture, increase the vet's gullibility. Consequently vets may uncritically accept what the pharmaceutical companies tell them about the new drugs. The stake animal feed companies have in managing vets according to their own agendas is not something to neglect. Vets are in turn kept in line by others with vested interests. Perhaps by decontextualising my theory it might be useful in sensitising vets to their own vulnerability to other experts agendas.

### **5.7.2 The commercialisation issue**

The boundary between professionalism and commercialism has in the past not appeared on the agenda. Professionals were professionals and above commercial pressures, or so it seemed. There was a calling to higher ideals. Profit did not figure amongst their principal concerns – at least not visibly. Things are changing. The boundaries, once clear cut, are now blurring. *Sophisticating* of veterinary life is one attempt to legitimise and simultaneously disguise unsavoury commercial activities. Such is the extent of the commercialising pressure, I conjecture that, over time, the nature of vet life will radically alter. The bestowed trust which veterinarians still enjoy will give way to a scepticism never before seen in this context. The pressures to purchase will generate an incentive for clients to shop around. Price will be a legitimate tool for clients to employ to their own advantage. The current taboos inhibiting 'shopping around' will be invalidated. Already there are some cut price vaccination clinics appearing. Experiences in other areas of life will influence how choices are made. For example, no longer do clients seek out their own optician's expertise. They trust the corporate operators to provide a satisfactory standard of expertise and a competitive price. Similar trends will occur within veterinary practice. Clients will expect competitive deals and will shift allegiance appropriately. In parallel with this shift I anticipate a move toward specialisation. The current thesis which holds that veterinarians must be capable of dealing with diverse species of animals will not prevail. More mobility of clients between veterinarians will result. This will induce feelings of instability within the profession. It will give clients

the unfamiliar freedom to switch vets and concomitant control.

### **5.7.3 Will my emergent theory be used?**

Vet clients stand to benefit the most from the contents of my theory. It holds the keys to understanding heretofore denied them. It offers the power to wrest a measure of control in a traditionally asymmetrical relationship. Access to my theory would enable clients to protect their own agendas. Use is however dependent upon accessibility. Perhaps the production of a consumer's guide would be one approach. Designing and producing a web site to guide pet owners during their interactions with vets is another alternative. From a personal viewpoint, I am now better placed firstly to select an appropriate veterinarian for a given task. Additionally I am aware of the potential for conflicting agendas and consequently sensitised to judging individual veterinarians. I know the tactics I can employ to be perceived as a valuable client and use these appropriately. I am well placed to redress the power asymmetry in my encounters with veterinarians.

## **5.8 Developing formal theory**

I see the greatest scope for my substantive theory in its potential for elevation to more formal theory. By extending the relevance beyond the limits of those in the veterinary context, I would increase the potential for use. This is important to me. I like the idea of endeavour being applied in useful ways.

Development of formal theory is dependent on carrying out extensive further comparisons with emergent theories generated from diverse contexts. Apparent non comparability should not preclude the comparative process. Indeed such comparisons are likely to yield highly robust theory on account of their transcending influence.



The deductive dimension of doing grounded theory directs initial decisions as to where best to seek out theory for comparison. This then allows induction to reassert its role in the service of theory generation.

In order to begin formal theory generation I would seek out situations where individuals or groups take control over others. This might involve activities for fun, profit or exploitation, 'one-off' incidents or more entrenched behaviour. It could involve the analysis and synthesis of data from organisations which are designed for the high volume processing of large numbers of people in short spaces of time. For example, perhaps examining how passenger handling at airports functions to keep people in line.

An interesting comparison would involve participant observation within the funeral undertaking business. I conjecture there are likely to be similarities to my experiences whereby psychological levers are employed under special conditions to keep people in line. Observing a single incident whereby a parent seeks to bring a wayward child in line, for example, might equally generate valuable comparative data. Further, exploring the ways in which religions and cults inculcate their recruits with varying degrees of control would be another potentially worthwhile avenue for further discovery.

The scope for contributing to formal theory development is emergent in that I can see the transferability of some of the concepts in seemingly bizarre contexts. One such striking example is the parallel between the tactics of a Californian horse whisperer whom I have seen demonstrating his strategies for taming wild horses without recourse to more overtly harsh methods. The technique involves isolating the animal by banishing it from human company, driving it away repeatedly and employing aggressive body language. When a cutting point occurs, the horse is seen to lick and chew, the trainer knows the horse is now amenable to joining up with the human. He alters his behaviour, *affiliating* in order to cultivate trust. This achieved he can now work with a previously intractable creature. The subtle interplay between isolating,

coercion and freedom is interesting and not dissimilar to the ways in which vets keep their clients in line.

Subsequent to extensive comparisons, the density of my substantive theory is likely to necessarily undergo modification. In other words, substantively specific variables such as *medicalising* would be supplanted by more general concepts arising from the underlying patterns. According to Glaser (1978;153), “Formal theory is extensive compared to the intensiveness of substantive theory.”

Comparisons between seeming non-comparables, at high levels of abstraction, have impact on the integrative framework grounded in the substantive context. The consequence may be to invalidate it. The emergent formal theory would then require its own integration. Given the highly abstract character of formal theory its integration appears to be necessarily arbitrary. Ultimate saturation is signalled by personal factors such as exhaustion or lack of funds, not by establishing saturation of categories. This task would, by its very nature, be inexhaustible. Completeness is continually unattainable when operating on this scale.

## **5.9 Applications**

During the process of this research I have learnt a great deal, not only about the subtleties of doing grounded theory and how veterinary life operates, but about people and how they interact with one another for instrumental purposes. As a consequence of this experience I have identified a commercial opportunity to use this knowledge in developing a business. It involves sidelining the so called professionals who perpetuate their own fictions in the business of estate agency and providing guidance for individuals in shaping their own home sales. It is based on thesis that estate agents do not do anything out of the ordinary when it comes to selling property. They demand fees far in excess of what they warrant. Fundamentally they are unnecessary and, if individuals can manage to sell their cars

for themselves there is no reason why they should not do the same when it comes to selling their own homes. With some basic advice 'DIYing' should be within everyone's scope.

Additionally I hope to use grounded theory research methodology in freelance commercially based research work. Such is the power of grounded theory to reveal the truth as distinct from fiction in diverse contexts, I see great potential for wider application. I do not underestimate the challenges in establishing myself in this endeavour. However the opportunities this would give to enable the fulfilment of my own life goals is motivation enough to pursue this pathway with determination.

This thesis and the activities upon which it is founded have challenged me both intellectually and personally. The trials have taught me much. Easier options might have been more expedient but, in the final analysis, I would do it all again!

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## **APPENDIX I**

This section is designed to provide up-to-date background information concerning the current nature of veterinary practice within the United Kingdom.

Firstly, with reference to a recent RCVS Manpower Survey I outline the current numbers of practising veterinary surgeons together with additional relevant information.

Secondly, I provide some figures that estimate the size of the pet population. I mention some perceptible trends with respect to the levels of pet ownership.

Finally, for the avoidance of doubt, I highlight some terminology which might otherwise prove confusing.

This research is based around 'small animal' veterinary practice. In other words those practices that treat predominantly cats and dogs. One of the practices I studied undertook a small amount of large animal work (15%) but the bias is in favour of small animal work. My research should be of interest to the greater proportion of practitioners. According to data from the RCVS Manpower Survey (1998: p2), "66% of the total working time of veterinary surgeons\* in general practice was spent on small animals. 14% was spent on cattle, 11% horses, 4% on sheep and 5% on other animals or other types of work". Further 43% of veterinary surgeons in general practice in the UK spent 100% of their time on small animals.

### **Numbers of veterinary surgeons**

There is estimated to be approximately 9,500 veterinary surgeons working in General Practice within the UK. There are thought to be 2,800 practices. 28% of these were single-handed. 83% had less than 6 veterinary surgeons employed. There were only 2% of practices with more than 10 veterinary surgeons.

### **Ownership of general practice**

It is stated that, "A half of veterinary surgeons in general practice owned a stake in their practice: 34% as partners and 16% as sole principals. 34% were full-time assistants, 10% were part-time assistants and 6% worked s locums. (RCVS,1998:4)."

### **Recent Trends**

"Since 1992, the total number of veterinary surgeons has increased by 17% to 18,000 and the number in general practice in the UK has grown by 21% (RCVS, 1998: 4)."

"The general improvements that have come about in animal health through the transfer of more medical techniques and technology from human medical care will mean that most pets live longer," (Mintel, 1997:40). These tendencies indicate there is scope for increasing levels of commercialisation within the veterinary services industry. This links to the fast growth identified in the pet insurance market. Premiums have risen in the face of higher spending on "sophisticated treatments ensuring an increased lifespan for pets" (Mintel, 1997: 17).

The importance of vets to the pharmaceutical companies as channels to the marketplace is highlighted. Seeing the potential for commercialisation, Ciba Animal Health's Program (flea treatment), has increased its spend on advertising greatly. Consumers are urged to "ask their vet for the product" (Mintel, 1997:28). Their product is offered exclusively through veterinary surgeries and reflects the potential for further commercialisation.

**Table 3**

**CURRENT ESTIMATES OF UK PET POPULATION**

<b>Goldfish:</b>	<b>16.8 million</b>
<b>Tropical Fish:</b>	<b>9.1 million</b>
<b>Marine fish:</b>	<b>0.7 million</b>
<b>Cats:</b>	<b>7.7 million</b>
<b>Dogs:</b>	<b>6.7 million</b>
<b>Rabbits:</b>	<b>1.5 million</b>
<b>Hamsters :</b>	<b>1.0 million</b>
<b>Guinea Pigs :</b>	<b>800,000</b>
<b>Budgerigars :</b>	<b>1.0 million</b>
<b>Canaries :</b>	<b>300,000</b>
<b>Other birds :</b>	<b>1.0 million</b>

Source: PMFA (in Price, C., 2000)

**Attention is drawn to some terms :**

In the UK Veterinarians, are primarily referred to as Veterinary Surgeons – this does not mean they are specialist surgeons. In the US Vets are often referred to as doctors.

Small animal veterinarians focus on pets, otherwise known as companion animals, predominantly cats and dogs (see Table 3, above for breakdown of figures).

## **APPENDIX II**

### **Infiltrating; A Theoretical Explanation of Gaining Access and Maintaining A Presence in Unfamiliar Settings.**

The aim of this section is to develop a theoretical explanation of how a novice researcher goes about becoming a participant observer in unfamiliar territory.

Infiltrating is a substantive grounded theory that emerged retrospectively subsequent to having established myself in the research context. The problems associated with moving from a state of ignorance to becoming sufficiently knowledgeable are an example of a status passage transformation. The novice researcher is not alone in having to deal with unfamiliar challenges. Infants, foreigners, new recruits, amongst others, face similar dilemmas in varied settings. They must all somehow discover whatever is required to progress in their particular situation from the standpoint of an outsider.

By focusing on this transitional passage, I am endeavouring to:

- Carry out a precursory grounded theory to familiarise myself with the research methodology which is to be used for the development of the principal theory;
- increase my awareness and understanding of the processes I have been experiencing;
- demonstrate that it is legitimate for a 'novice' to contribute to existing theory; and,
- enable novice researchers to process their transitions more effectively.

As I write this paper I am approaching the end of my first year of a full time PhD program. Data obtained through my own recent experiences as a virgin Grounded Theory researcher have been used in exploring this universally relevant problem. The impetus for this paper springs from the standpoint of being a participant observer interested in discovering the main issues of concern in veterinary practice. The

framework which emerges is therefore truly grounded. By this I mean that any constructs are generated from the reality of my own experiences. They are not contrived or contaminated by loyalty to 'accepted wisdom' or the 'oughts' idolised by theoretical capitalists.

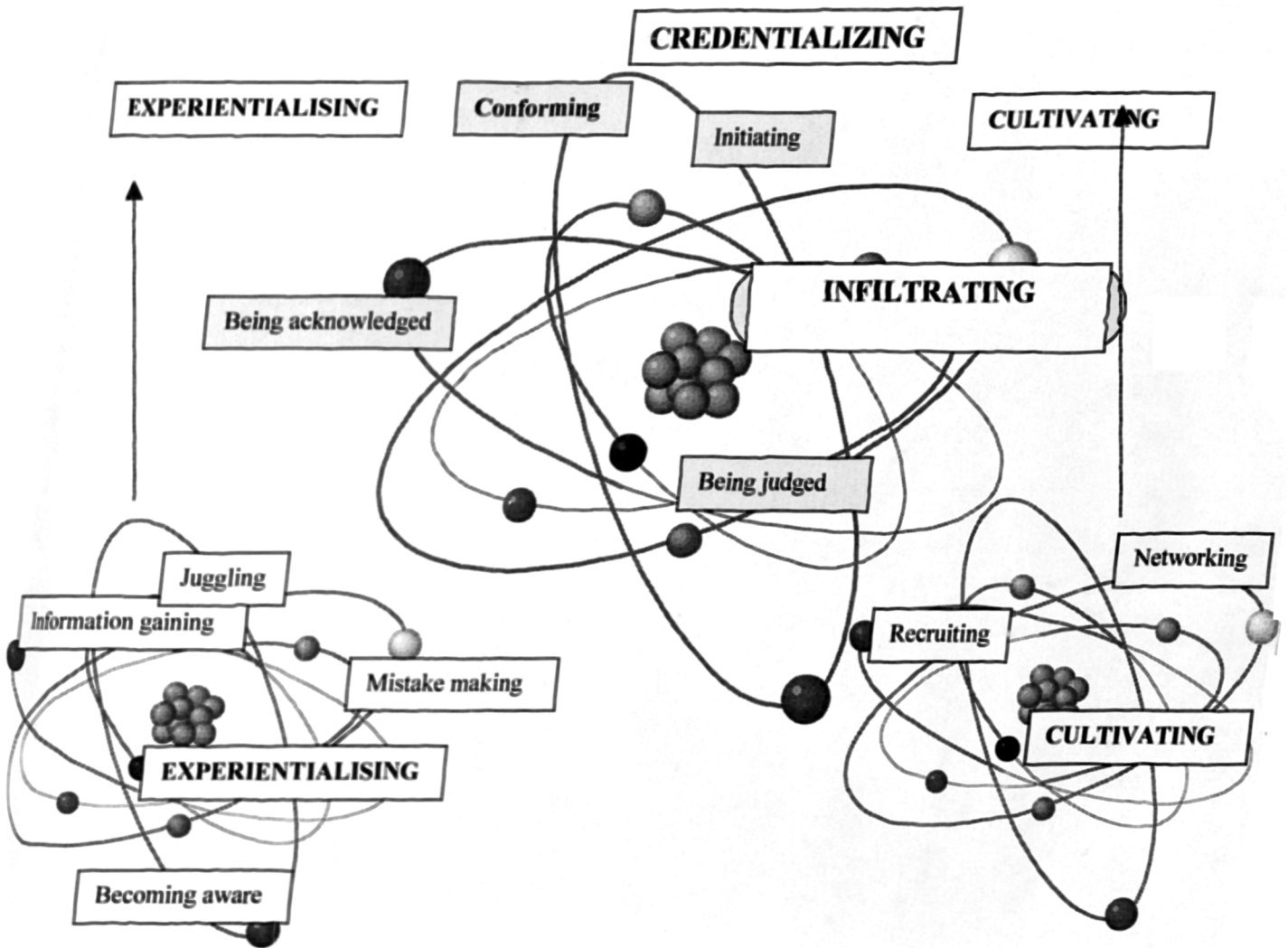
Any fliminess in the texture of the theory put forward is merely a reflection of my continued location in novice status; density on the other hand would suggest movement towards an enhanced understanding of how to use grounded theory.

The emergent theory which I will now reveal is both simple and complex. Its simplicity lies in the discovery of three basic social processes (sub-core variables):

- Credentialising
- Cultivating
- Experientialising

The interrelationships between these processes are complex. They revolve around one another like some planetary system, in multi-dimensions, with credentializing at the core. It is not possible to conveniently pinpoint where cultivating gives way to experientialising and so on. The processes are not linear, they intertwine. Figure Appendix 1 is designed to illustrate both the interconnectedness and motion which are fundamental to the credentialising I have experienced. Removal of the core leads to conceptual disintegration – the theory fails to 'account for change' in relation to dispossessing one's novice status.





**Figure Appendix 1 The Infiltrating Process**

### **The Basic Social Process of Credentialising.**

Credentialising has emerged as the core variable of this study. It has been systematically generated from the data through the use of orthodox Grounded Theory methodology (1978). Credentialising explains how a novice researcher endeavours to disavow the beginners status in favour of developing competence. Credentials are gauges of fundamental significance. Credentialising establishes the legitimacy associated with gaining a 'licence to practice'. Self-confidence is a by-product of credentialising. Similarly, credentialising generates confidence in others as to the individual's abilities. The overall effect is of stabilisation through integration.

The process of credentialising is supported by two sub-core variables. These are 'cultivating' and 'experientialising'. As a novice it is necessary to cultivate relationships in order to manoeuvre into a favourable position to discover, through experience (trial and error) what skills are required in order to be judged competent.

The categories of credentialising which have emerged in this instance are : 'conforming', 'being judged', 'initiating' and 'being recognised as competent'.

**Conforming.** This encompasses the novices' attempts to gain acceptability to the group or position aspired to. Credentialising depends upon appropriate positioning on a number of dimensions. These dimensions vary according to the specific situation and the subtleties of the codes of behaviour which apply. A property of conforming is *copying* . In light of prior discovery, having lived the experience, the 'novice' understands the rules of the game. An in depth knowledge of how behaviour will require to be modified makes it possible to align actions accordingly. Matching the expectations of the legitimating authority is paramount. Endeavouring to attain acceptable orientation prepares the novice for being judged.

**Being judged.** A property of this category is *monitoring* . The judgement procedure may involve simple observation of the candidate. Equally, complex scrutinisation and proving rituals may be in operation. Paper qualifications may be insufficient to guarantee recognition. Technically making the grade is only one dimension, further

attributes may be sought. The newcomer may well be expected to undergo an apprenticeship. After dues have been paid by being subjugated to menial tasks, superiors may permit an increase in privileges as deemed appropriate. *Judging* and *initiating* are manifestations of control strategies designed to protect the status quo. Another property of judging is *pacing*. This too serves to protect existing group members from dilution or contamination from unfit novices. It would be unusual for full membership rites to be granted swiftly, without a probationary period. As a newcomer to the veterinary practice setting I was gradually granted full membership rites to the vet team. Initially I was introduced to the veterinary vernacular over coffee and chat. I then became privy to gossip and 'in-jokes' (usually concerning quirky clients). Latterly, I was trusted to answer the phone and deal directly with clients. The realisation that a transformation had occurred was something which I only became aware of retrospectively. It would be unusual for full membership rites to be granted swiftly, without a probationary period.

**Initiating.** When visiting a veterinary hospital for the first time I was conscious of being placed under surveillance. I was scrutinised intensely on first attending the operating theatre. I subsequently identified this as an initiation ceremony. It is explained through the concept of 'bleeding', an idea borrowed from the context of blood sports and war. Existing group members bear witness to some sort of trial, which they themselves previously experienced. The process has several stages. The candidate is prepared for the ritual to come, the spilling of blood, followed by assessment of suitability and the actual smearing process whereby the novice is judged worthy of membership.

**Being acknowledged.** Gaining one's credentials or being accepted symbolises that one is no longer seen as an outsider. In living through this credentialising process, and experiencing *confidencing*, a property of being recognised, the novice begins to supplant the learner's status. Credentialising is therefore not an end result, it is, in many ways, a beginning.

### **The Basic Social Process of Cultivating.**

The cultivation of people constitutes the novice's initial concern. How should support be established in order to facilitate the discovery of the required skills needed to become competent? Most commonly, it involves strategizing with the aim of generating an anticipated result. It seems to be innate to some degree. I engaged in different forms of cultivating in the early stages of my research without any apparent calculated intent or explicit awareness.

**Networking** is a sub-process of cultivating. It involves establishing, maintaining and developing a web of relationships. Four categories of networking have been discovered. *Speculative* networking – means an instinctive type of networking and would be considered by onlookers as completely irrational as there appears no logical reason to select individuals randomly on the off-chance that there will be some unforeseen benefit. *Exploitative* networking entails the fostering of contacts with whom one intends to leave at a distinct disadvantage. *Enduring* networking is that based on mutual benefit for all those involved. *Retrospective* networking may be practised where initially one failed to realise the benefits of nurturing certain contacts. Networks may also be *local* or *cosmopolitan*. For example, I have contacts with fellow grounded theory researchers, 'close up', within my department at university, whilst I also network with others, 'distant' in terms of location and specialism.

The appropriate development of networks has a very tangible effect throughout the process of transition. In the early stages they have an especially supportive role. Equally they may well have a delayed action effect i.e. developing contacts with experts in one's substantive area may only yield their rewards much further down the path. For example I have been building contacts with an individual who I know to be skilled in orchestrating focus groups ( an area which I have minimal knowledge of ) it is possible that towards the final stages of my research I will want to run a focus group.

**Recruiting.** Another sub-process of relevance in the cultivating context is recruiting. Primarily recruiting takes place in initial stages and sporadically thereafter, as required. In my case, it was necessary for me to recruit what I term 'useful others' at the outset. I saw the need for a supervisor to act as a mentor and a sponsor to assist with financing. The requirement for cultivating is apparent here. I first had to identify potential 'recruits', make contact, interact and demonstrate my suitability by way of past achievements, current activities and emphasis on future potential.

The recruitment process involves *wooing*. It may involve *beautifying*, a property of *soliciting*, adorning of the individual in a bid to tempt. This may necessitate the use of artificial means – by this I mean, that one party may feel there is legitimate cause or the stakes are of sufficient magnitude to warrant some form of benign deceit. The overall offering must be judged sufficiently attractive for the recruitment to go ahead. Negotiations as to the remuneration package may be protracted.

In cultivating processes the balance of power is not evenly distributed and this has significance for the evolution of strategies which are primarily designed to compensate for the asymmetry. This does not preclude the dominant force from seeking out an association with the novice. Recruitment processes are here shown to be reversible. The expert may indeed engage in allurements tactics if a particular association is judged to be particularly desirable. An already highly regarded supervisor may choose a particularly gifted student to collaborate with, craving a share in the rising star's adulation by way of association. The more powerful player may inspire awe in the eyes of the inexperienced. This *awing* may serve as the initial bait to ensnare the innocent, similarly it may be used as a method of control.

**Affiliating.** The final process which became subsumed under the BSP (Basic Social Process) of cultivating is entitled affiliating. This involves strategies designed to enable an outsider to begin the often difficult task of being accepted. Affiliating removes the threat to those in any social situation. It has the potential to open up a previously unseen world. What would normally be blurred and out-with the reach of the lens comes into focus. The process of affiliation paves the way for the researcher

to experientialise the reality of the social world to be studied. Without engaging in affiliative behaviour in the context of becoming a competent Grounded Theorist, I am of the opinion that the researcher may simply witness a mirage. The researcher is in danger of being duped by potentially clandestine agendas of vested interests. In which case the resultant theory would be invalid. Affiliating is fundamental in its ability to reveal the truth as distinct from fiction. Affiliation essentially means getting 'close to' a subject. This was achieved at a substantive level, in my experience, by adopting the role of participant observer in the veterinary practice setting. However affiliation should not be judged as being successful on account of merely being present in a setting. Only once the subtleties of the social setting begin to reveal themselves would it be safe to say that cultivation via affiliating was reaping its reward. The researcher recognises when this begins to occur. It becomes possible to predict with confidence and reliability what will happen next.

The tactics I employed whilst in the field, which I termed affiliative were aimed at developing and demonstrating trust. At first I concentrated on *fitting in*. This means making myself appear as if I belonged in the setting. I engaged in *helping*. This involved making a special effort to convey my eagerness to make myself useful. This was not difficult in the frenetic atmosphere of the veterinary surgery. I ensured that I participated fully, working until late at night if that was going on. I was especially careful to willingly attend to the less pleasant aspects of vet work. In doing this I gained the respect of the vet nurses. Winning their confidence was essential for me, because, as I was to discover, gossiping with the nurses over coffee proved to be an excellent source of data. In addition I made sure that if the opportunity arose to *do favours* i.e. run errands, transport animals in my car etc., I made every effort to volunteer my assistance. Another category of the affiliating process of significance was *friending* - I cultivated friendly associations with all those in the vet practice setting without discriminating by rank. I was cautious during this phase not to force the pace, so I was subconsciously engaging in *pacing* in order not to appear too pushy and risk alienation as opposed to incorporation.

Affiliating is therefore fundamental in positioning the novice in order that knowledge and skills necessary to make the transition can be acquired. In essence the novice must cultivate people in order to cultivate skills. It appears that the cultivation process outlined serves to admit the novice to a springboard from which the process of experientialising can begin.

### **The Basic Social Process of Experientialising.**

This process involves learning the ropes by actually experiencing life as a novice. It means discovering the subtleties of the social situation of interest by trial and error. By actually experiencing the process one gradually gives it meaning. Only by living the reality of becoming a Grounded Theory researcher am I able to know it. Gradually by reflecting on the experience I discover I can now articulate what it really means. Having developed the necessary skills, I now understand the subtleties that only going through the process could engender.

**Information gaining** is a category of experientialising. By seeking out information at first hand by watching, listening, recording, then comparing, the researcher discovers the specific language and values sacred to the setting under study. With this expanding understanding of the rules and values underpinning the social world being studied is a growing awareness of the appropriate strategy for discovering what may still remain hidden.

For example in the early stages of the research process, I judged it appropriate to adopt the role of 'know-nothing' novice. This was for a specific purpose – namely so that I would not appear threatening in any way and also to ensure that any preconceived notions of mine should not be imposed on the research. By acting completely uninformed I encouraged the respondents to unburden what was really on their minds. This enabled agenda-setting to be governed by the prime concerns of those of interest. At a later stage however it may no longer be appropriate to continue in the role of blissful ignorance. The partially deceitful tactic of appearing informed

but requiring correction may be indicated. *Role-tailoring* is a property of information gaining.

A highly significant property of information gaining is *revealing rituals*. This involves intimate contact and knowledge of the social setting of significance. By observing, documenting and ultimately being capable of explaining what to outsiders would appear as a mysterious ritual could be judged a good indicator of the transition toward competency in developing the sensitivity required of an effective Grounded Theorist.

**Mistake making** is important to the experientialising process for the novice. This links to the awareness category. By learning through doing, mistakes are inevitable. By making errors, the researcher is sensitised to the consequences. If they are sufficiently serious it is likely they will be avoided in future. For example in the early stages I avoided engaging in memoing procedures which are fundamental to the Grounded Theory methodology. Becoming aware of mistake making and taking appropriate action to reorient increases through experientialising.

*Avoiding* is a coping strategy which emerged through examining the concept of mistake making. I realised that when one is in the rank of novice, unfamiliar problems can appear insurmountable. As a way of dealing with this I recognised that I was ignoring the difficulty instead of confronting it. For example I found myself accumulating lots of interesting data and failing to force myself to code and compare as is necessary in Grounded Theory research.

**Becoming aware.** The category denoted 'becoming aware' relates intimately to the experientialising process and overall in trying to account for change in the novice. This category would hold less weight if it was being related to a structurally robust status passage. For example those couples preparing to marry would have a relatively clear understanding of the approximate form and timing of a wedding ceremony. However, in this context, where the phases one must pass through in the service of



becoming a Grounded Theory researcher are variable and unclear, awareness is significant.

Becoming aware is a function of the experientialising process. It enables the competent researcher to engage in the practice I call *leap-frogging*. The researcher simply bypasses unnecessary stages in the process, electing not to be derailed from what will now be a visible path. In contrast, the naïve beginner risks being deflected from the transitional passage through lack of awareness and consequently minimal control.

Awareness not only of the nature of the transitions, but also of the existence of other interrelated status passages is another property emergent from learning by doing. Conflicting passages may hijack the transition to competent researcher. Complimentary passages may enhance the process.

**Juggling** is the final category of the experientialising process. Learning *juggling* is an ability to ‘work’ several things concurrently. It is another coping skill and one approach to dealing with variable demands on time and energy.

Having explained the emergent theory of Credentialising, I now provide a brief justification for my work and then compare it to relevant literature. To conclude, I detail what I consider to be the main contributions of this research.

#### **Justification for the research.**

Fagerhaugh (1986), states that “The ultimate goal of analysing qualitative data for process is to account for change over time”. He continues, “Process analysis is also the most difficult level of analysis for the novice researcher handling qualitative data because it involves ordering and linking the hundreds of bits of loosely formulated categories into a logical whole”. These observations encapsulate the challenge of this paper.

Early work concerning the rites of passage, attributable to van Gennep (1908), focuses predominantly on age and sex linked passages. He focuses, in fascinating detail, on the movement from birth to childhood, through adolescence, marriage to motherhood, to death and possible rebirth. Whilst professing a desire to discover not just the forms of rites of passage but their meanings, he concentrates exclusively on the former. There is a marked neglect of raising the analysis beyond description to a more conceptual level. Van Gennep's main contribution is in highlighting the pervasiveness of status change. However, the impression given is that status passages are prescriptive in nature and linear in outline. His emphasis on 'rectilinear' diagramming suggests an overly simplistic view. My experiences in contrast emphasise the dynamism and multi-dimensional character of becoming a more competent researcher. The process of 'passing' indicates an arrival and in so doing implies there will be a departure. However it would appear there is nothing preordained or clearly defined about the transition from novice. Bearing this in mind there is a real need for exploration in conceptual terms.

### **Comparing this substantive theory to Glaser and Strauss' (1971) work on Status Passage.**

#### **Similarities and Differences**

A significant similarity is the concept of the existence of multiple status passages. The historic belief that status passages are purely scheduled and regularised is contested. The notion that as a novice one makes a smooth transition towards competency with time is appealing. The reality however, as was demonstrated in both Glaser and Strauss' and my own case, is more complex. For example, I have discovered that progression along the desired route is by no means inevitable. Regression can and does occur. What I refer to as 'road-blocking', (for example due to acute illness, or shortage of money) may temporarily obstruct forward momentum. Alternatively a new and exciting relationship might energise other transitions. More seriously, complete regression may mean progress is terminally blocked forcing abandonment of the specific passage. Glaser and Strauss (1971) explain the problems

associated with the phenomenon of conflicting passages. They acknowledge the need to *juggle* with time and energy.

Glaser and Strauss (1971) outline and explore at least a dozen aspects, which they label properties, of status passage. Among these are *desirability, inevitability, reversibility, repeatability, collectivity, awareness, degree of control, legitimation and clarity*. Credentialising is not explicitly documented. It is therefore not possible to explore this comparison to any significant degree. Legitimising, which appears to correspond to credentialising, is alluded to in a minor way. This difference may simply reflect the specific sources of data from which the theory springs combined with a divergent use of terminology, not substance. There is an exploration of the fundamental problem of control, namely who is in control and who is vying for control over the passage. Glaser and Strauss' example of 'studentsmanship' seems to reflect the overall process explained by my substantive theory of credentialising. The student is faced with the problem of 'getting through' school. The challenge is not only to 'become' a professional, but to convince the faculty (representing the legitimating authority) that this was being accomplished. The converse example of a failure to credentialise is the student who feels comfortable maintaining student status and wishes to postpone the symbolic act of graduating (*being recognised*). A further indirect reference to the process of credentialising emerges through the education and training of a candidate towards self-sufficiency. This concept links to the category of being acknowledged and so to the properties of *confidencing* and *becoming independent* which I encountered.

*Reversibility*, the extent to which the direction of a passage may be controlled, would not be relevant in the case of a highly scheduled age linked passage. In the case of the novice dealing with the uncertainty of an unknown passage, the issue of how to influence progression is significant. The transition from novice toward competence is not assured. The question of how to balance the forces of progression versus regression are real. The development, by way of experientialising, of *awareness* and subsequent control are mechanisms to deal with the uncertainty ahead. Progression is not automatic. Glaser and Strauss employ the term *reversibility* giving an example

from within organisations where people not only move upward, they may also be demoted. The label *directional control* over status passage might prove more meaningful.

The most notable difference between the formal theory and my emergent theory discussed in this paper is that the basic social process of cultivating is not explored by Glaser and Strauss. The process I label 'recruiting' is developed however, so too is its subordinate property of *hooking*. The concept of 'networking' is raised briefly, although not using the term. The example quoted involves the corporate executive trying to build an 'informal collegial system' to support himself. Instead of seeing this as a conscious act of cultivation, the authors view it as a means of guarding against their idea of *reversibility* of status passage. Significantly there is no reference to 'affiliating' which figured prominently in my substantive theory.

Other differences are reflected in the numerically fewer categories emergent from my theory. This can be explained simply as a natural variation between formal and substantive theory generation.

Finally, another important similarity is evident. This relates closely to the process which I call experientialising. This partially emerges in the guise of what Glaser and Strauss call 'discovering a status passage'. They note that "there are many status passages of whose existence passagees are unaware...It is only revealed to the passagee as he goes along". Information or knowledge of the passage is identified with control and equates to my category called 'information gaining'.

### **Related literature on the processes revealed by this research**

**Credentialising.** Simmons (1972) in his study exploring the processes involved in becoming a milkman explains the concept of credentialising, although he does not use the term. The *novice* milkman tries to over-perform in attempting to gain new business. By networking and using cultivating techniques he seeks to earn *credit* from his route supervisor who represents his legitimating authority. Maxwell (1993)

in her paper on “fencing processes” focuses to a significant degree on a category which I label *being judged*. In this example ‘model keepers’ (the legitimators) place trainees under surveillance. They regulate or pace their progression strictly. This parallels the *initiating* category which I use in explaining credentialising. Maxwell also reflects another aspect of my work. *Copying* is implicated as a necessary component of all ‘group identity displays’. This corresponds to my experiences in the veterinary practice setting whereby I initially conformed to codes of dress, adopted the ‘veterinary vernacular’ and as it was revealed to me, their code of behaviour.

**Experientialising** was also noted in the above mentioned works. The authors both identify *information gaining* as highly significant in this context. Simmons points to information gaining in order to detect potential new and worthwhile clients. He highlights the importance of ‘trial and error’ in the process of learning how to become a milkman. Maxwell emphasises *information gaining* in discovering the subtleties of social situations and in understanding the identity displays, isolating strategies and hiding activities which may be relevant.

**Cultivating** of relationships is the core process of Simmons’ work. He parallels what I call *networking*, explaining the essence of this as discovering ‘good leads’ via friends, neighbours and existing customers. The procedures for recruiting are outlined. Finally he explains my process of affiliating (though fails to adopt the term) – mirroring my strategies in the veterinary context. Trust inducing tactics including ‘nurturing pseudo-friendship’ and ‘effecting obligation’ are detailed. The cultivation of friendly relations is also documented in Glaser and Strauss (1973), *Experts Versus Laymen*. Their property of ‘sweet talking’ matches my property of *friending*. In this example. The subcontractor fosters amicable relations with the ‘patsy’ in order to gain trust and hopefully the contract to carry out the building work. This is another example of affiliative behaviour aimed at cultivating a beneficial outcome.

## **Conclusion**

The insights revealed, I believe, help to increase the understanding of status passage; specifically there are three issues to which this paper contributes.

Firstly, the method I have used to diagram the interrelated variables of the infiltrating process allows these essentially abstract ideas to become more understandable to a wider audience.

Secondly, my emergent substantive theory demonstrates the workability and modifiability of the original formal theory discovered by Glaser and Strauss.

Finally, my grounded theory not only has direct relevance for my future progress but also for its usefulness in sensitising other novice researchers before entering the field.

## **APPENDIX III**

### **Pathway through the data**

#### **Overview**

The following chapter is devoted to explaining how the emergent theory is grounded. It attempts to pre-empt criticism from sceptics who doubt grounded theory's ability to reveal theory from data. In documenting snap-shots of the generative process, the systematic nature of doing grounded theory is laid bare (warts and all!). It is not possible or necessary to articulate the process in its entirety. The sheer volume of data involved and the consequent coding, comparing, and memo writing preclude this operation. Sufficient detail is incorporated to demonstrate the authenticity of the emergent theory beyond doubt.

This degree of transparency of procedure is, under normal circumstances, uncalled for. Authenticity is undeniable. When one reads a quality substantive theory its validity speaks for itself – Glaser's "Experts versus Laymen" (1972) and Simmon's (1993) work on cultivating relationships are cases in point. In such instances there is no need to examine how the researchers coded, compared and memoed. The emergent theories are in themselves justification enough.

As a researcher it is a demanding endeavour to articulate the essence of the theory satisfactorily. The necessity to reveal one's intimate ideation in the form of theoretical memos is uncomfortable in the extreme.

The complex interplay that has gone into theory generation cannot fully be revealed. When insight strikes spontaneously there can be no explanation. What follows is therefore my best attempt to communicate how I grounded my theory. There are obvious gaps where the difficulties in translating the intricacies of comparisons meaningfully prove overly challenging. Much still remains implicit to date. Some things are amenable to explanation, others are not. The fact that this is the case

should not invalidate the procedures. Artists the world over would doubtless understand this dilemma.

I begin by demonstrating how coding was operationalised. I do not dwell on this aspect of the analysis, to do so would be unhelpful. Once the basic function and application of coding is understood the task is not overly taxing, although the time involved is considerable. I then reveal how the constant comparative process took shape. The emergence of categories becomes clear. The developmental character of grounded theory is evident with the discovery of properties of the categories.

The most noteworthy element of the process analysis is the role memoing plays. It is pivotal to the whole ideational interplay. As my theoretical sensitivity increased over the piece so too did the sophistication and utility of my memos. The primitive nature of the memos from the early days has been subsumed by more mature versions. The ongoing challenge is to integrate the categories themselves and subsequently develop linkages amongst them. As is visible from this chapter which explains the mechanics of analysis and synthesis, the pathway taken is far from linear. I found myself going down blind alleys and being forced to retrace my steps. Behaviour of this type was consequent upon my relative inexperience coupled to my desire to avoid forcing. I kept too many avenues open for exploration for too long. Had I selected the core variable sooner the process may have been less tortuous. By remaining open however, I am well placed to indicate potentially fruitful areas for further study. I encountered numerous concepts that have necessarily been omitted for the purpose of this grounded theory because they are only spuriously connected to the emergent theory. Relevance delimits grounded theory.

During my analysis I encountered the need to re-examine certain pieces of data with respect to newly emergent categories. Further data was required in order to approach saturation and to limit missing relevant properties on certain dimensions.

Principally this chapter presents memos in varying stages of development. The titles of these memos are highlighted in bold, their contents are in normal typeface, with



significant features in bold where they refer to categories or properties. Conditions, causes, consequences, turning points and other important dimensions are underlined for clarity. Indicators are italicised to distinguish them. I include some diagrams that were helpful in discovering the integrative relationships (the theoretical codes).

### **Data analysis**

As I have already mentioned, one of the first mistakes I am aware of having made during the course of the research was to become captivated by the experience of generating fascinating data. This was in spite of being aware of the danger. On reflection this tendency to accumulate data and consequently delaying analysis is explained on two counts. Firstly, the data has intrinsic pull. This magnetism can therefore be held partially responsible for my entrapment. The second reason for my seemingly inexplicable behaviour has retrospectively occurred to me. This is explained by a subliminal fear of the unknown and subsequent recourse to avoidance tactics. In order to appreciate my infatuation with the data, I reveal some tranches of raw data. These are intended to convey the diversity of perspectives feeding into my analysis and synthesis. The inclusion of this raw data allows the more sensitive researchers to identify possible 'overlooks'. It also gives those less familiar with grounded theory the opportunity to see how rich descriptive data can be transformed into conceptual theory with explanatory capacity.

### **Coding the raw data**

This section of the pathway through the data focuses on the initial phase of analysis, the fragmentation of the congealed mass of indicators. It is essential to deconstruct the seemingly impenetrable, in order to distinguish the components and subsequently, by way of comparisons, to discover their interrelationships.

The raw data varies in its richness and this impacts on the intensity of coding. This characteristic is reflected in the following sample. The excerpt emanates from early in the research process. In addition to demonstrating open coding in action it highlights the variety of issues emergent from a single post-surgery dialogue.

Extrapolating from this gives some insight into the scale of undertaking a project spanning many months and hundreds of hours spent in the field.

The shape of the discussion below is directed by the vet and this is significant when ultimately considering the question of validity. I consciously endeavoured to allow those in the thick of the action to set the agendas and dictate the orientation of dialogues. The underpinning logic is to ensure relevance.

Interspersed with the data that follows are sections incorporating the emergent open codes and their substantive derivations.

*Thursday, 13 Feb 1997 (pm)*

*Discussion about grey-haired gentleman, from Crow Road, the West End. He'd knocked on the consulting room door at 8.10pm, demanding to know where the vet was and at what time the surgery was going to start (most annoyed about being kept waiting). N said the vet had been delayed at his Paisley surgery, but was on his way at this very moment. He arrived soon after. So H's [the vet] comments relate to this man and his wife; "Yes you see I have more problems with the upper class." I told H about the above and he responded, "the answer should be 'how the so-and-so do I know you stupid git.'" N interjects "I'm sorry unfortunately he's been detained at Paisley and should be here any moment now." W(me) "What you forgot to say was he's tucking into his fish supper at this very moment." N, "Yes, as we speak, or watching Channel 4 News!" W, "oops! I wasn't supposed to say that." H, "The best one was George Lesley [vet and politician] who was late for a visit and the bloke [client] was worried about his dog and he was sort of looking out of the window for George's car between pacing up and down in his room and generally checking his watch. And he switched on the television and they said, 'and here's Mr Leslie to give you the SNP's position on this question', and this was George. (laughter) That was true and it wasn't recorded it was a live broadcast!! W, "What was his excuse?" H "That's what I'd have liked to have heard."*

The subsequent open codes were generated from the foregoing paragraph. They are unsophisticated in nature and are the stepping stones which lead to more refined ideation. In their basic form the **open codes** include 'demanding', 'making excuses', 'apologising on behalf of', 'different types of client', 'explaining', 'trouble with clients', 'being annoyed', 'late arriving', 'keeping clients waiting', 'face-to-face', 'being held up', 'detaining' and 'life outside practice.' Rigorous comparisons gave rise to **substantive codes**, for example, 'covering behaviour'. This is dependent on the perceived degree of intrusion by outsiders. 'Covering' therefore is graduated in light of external factors. This gave rise to the substantive code 'contouring'. It has a regulatory action influencing the extent to which. Properties include direct or delegated. A category is 'selective disclosing'. The vet or his/her agent regulates what information is released to clients. 'Competitive demands' equate to invisible claims on the vet's time. Their public projections are given 'higher order characteristics' in order to make them legitimate. Privately they often are much more mundane in nature. Contingent upon the existent and extent of the 'competitive demands' are 'waiting properties'. These substantive codes conceptualise the essence of the empirical data, their properties give dimensions.

*N interrupts, saying what annoys her is that the clients will give her hassle, about where is Mr P...and then when he appears it's, "Oh hello Mr P, may I kiss your feet?!" H "Well you know I, these were nice people and as I said goodbye to them I said to myself it's quite probable I won't see you again. You know, the wife was nice and neither of them had it in for me, but they would prefer to be charged three times the price and go to an appointment." W, "Why is that?" H, "Because they can afford it and they don't like hanging about, if you see what I mean, it's a self limiting thing." N "I don't know I'd rather pay nine pounds and sit for hours.." W "Would they be like the lady who takes her poodle for a trim and while she's having her hair cut her car's being serviced? H " Well the example I would use is Ricki Fulton [well known comedian], because he was very fond of his dogs and someone had recommended me, and his last vet had fallen out, but he wasn't any use to me and I*

*wasn't any use to him. Because the kind of vet he needed was a not too busy vet who would charge him a lot of money and give him good attention and be always available and the only time I could get over to him was a Friday afternoon which I always grudged, so actually he wasn't doing me any favours by being a client and I wasn't the right guy for him." W "You could have upped your fee appropriately." H "I could have upped my fee appropriately but I'd have been no more AVAILABLE. If he'd phoned on a Wednesday like yesterday, I'd have had to say look I can't make it, come over. But he's not the type of guy to come over. Ricki's very strong, determined, difficult, not nasty but difficult. His wife has, I think got a hard job with him but is very very good for him I think she keeps him in order, you know kind of soothes him down, very highly strung man, very nervous. W " Did he have a few dogs then?" H "He had two horrible Westies that were the most difficult dogs which he doted on (laugh). W "That must be the worst!" H "They were awkward, and they had chronic skin problems which is about the worst thing you could wish for so you never quite got them right. I did as well as anybody, and they were quite happy, but it never came to an end, so eventually we drifted apart."*

The data above gave rise to the following codes. **Open codes** included; 'trouble making', 'revering', 'treating differently', 'waiting', 'preferring', 'self-limiting', 'appointments', 'higher charging', 'ability to pay', 'recommending', 'word of mouth', 'falling out', 'bi-lateral unsuitability', 'type of vet', 'time to spare', 'availability', 'existence of alternatives', 'choosing', 'enforced calling off', 'type of client', 'pet is family', 'emotional bond', 'difficult patient', 'awkward', 'chronic case', 'degrees of desirability', 'ongoing treatment', 'no cure', 'satisfying clients', and 'drift'. **Substantive codes** such as 'demonstrating awe', 'price variability', 'social value' (of pet), 'relationship terminating', 'definitive terminating', 'blurring', 'existence of cutting points', 'vet/client compatibility', 'competitive demands on time', and 'endorsing', developed..

*W “I was interested in what you were saying about that chap and how he would be happy to be charged three times the price and have an appointment. Because that’s the system they use elsewhere”. H “And be ushered in, och yes.” W “I was quite surprised how quiet they were, compared to you, they only had about five operations in the morning and they have five vets.” H “They’d have to charge a heck of a lot.” W “ I would imagine that you’d be forced to try to sell as much, in that situation to try to cover your costs.” H “I would think that Marketing Opportunities in Small practice might be handy on the shelf you know, well, I think I told you about this letter about the guide dogs, paying for this pre-operation health check, now that’s an example...” W “Yes, they do offer that service.”*

**Open codes:** ‘fetching in person’ (FIPing), ‘comparative quietness’, ‘inflating prices’, ‘charging a lot’, ‘selling’, ‘pre-op health checking’.

**Substantive codes;** ‘cultivating behaviour’, ‘compensating’, ‘commercialising’, ‘precautioning’, ‘medicalising’ and ‘augmenting’.

*H “You know the standard thing about the optician who said ‘now that will be twenty five pounds’ and you pause, and you of course if he doesn’t look too perturbed you say, for the frames, you see (laughter). Because if he looks horrified that ends the matter – ‘Good God twenty-five pounds!’ But if he doesn’t react you say for the frames and then you say and that will be twenty pounds for the lenses and, if he still doesn’t look horrified, you say, after a suitable pause, and there will be fifteen pounds for the test you see and if he still doesn’t look horrified you say and there will be a five pound recording fee for our book work, etc and this is how you do it.” W “So what’s the equivalent in veterinary practice then?” H “Well I read somewhere about the lady over in America whose dog needed worming. The vet admits it for the day, the client gets it back beautifully bathed and groomed and the vet comes out in a white coat, smoking his cigar and he lays his cigar down on the edge of the table and says that’ll be two hundred and fifty bucks.”*

**Open codes;** ‘normal practice’, ‘testing the water’, ‘level of discomfort’, ‘reacting’, ‘price hiking’, ‘vet as businessman’, and ‘taking the opportunity’. **Substantive codes;** ‘routining’, ‘monitoring’, ‘tailoring behaviour’, ‘pacing’, ‘price flexibility’, ‘capitalising’, ‘imagery’ and ‘opportunising’.

*W “None of them at the other practice wear white coats during consultations. They wear trousers and jumpers with the practice logo on it.” The receptionist there, who’d been a vet nurse for twenty years explained to me she thought they had more problems with the...H (interrupted) “dogs.” W “The dogs, yes.” H “Yes, yes”. W “..and I wondered if that was the reason?” H “Well I’m so old, I have a reason for not wearing a white coat that no one else alive has, which was that the PDSA [Peoples Dispensary for Sick Animals - charity] guys used to, see there used to be qualified practitioners in the PDSA. I don’t know if you know they used to be called technical officers, this was a standing bone of contention between the vets and the PDSA in these days and they all wore white coats and one of my mentors said, the white coat is the sign of the quack, nobody would say that now. There’s a rule that says you can’t take away a man’s livelihood by an act of parliament, now they were making veterinary surgery exclusive to veterinary surgeons and there were these guys from the PDSA, called technical officers and in order to get this exclusivity they brought them into what was known as the supplementary veterinary register and called them veterinary practitioners, if they were of good character, if they were over 28, and had been fully engaged in treating animals say for 5 years. They were allowed to continue so doing and they were put on the supplementary veterinary register and had all the privileges of vets and even in these far off days I knew what would happen would be a change of climate, at first some reactionary vets were absolutely opposed, adamantly opposed to this. If they were going to get their exclusivity, the argument being the animal can’t speak for itself, when the door’s shut it can’t go out and say this happened, so you need a higher.., so people can complain, and they frequently do. I mean you can treat people providing you don’t claim to be qualified. You can’t just treat dogs – and that’s the reason, the dog cannot say what happened to it. So anyway these guys were put on the*

*supplementary register and as they became fewer as the years rolled on instead of being hated the old vets died off and now you are hearing about the grand old man of ninety, is the last of a dwindling band of you know.., they were no longer seen as a threat... ”*

**Open codes;** ‘consulting’, ‘dressing down’, ‘uniforms’, ‘identifying’, ‘earning a living’, ‘privileges of vets’, ‘exclusivity’, ‘animal no voice’, ‘behind closed doors’, and ‘mechanism for dealing with complaints’. The **substantive codes** are ‘changes’, ‘casualising’, ‘displaying unity’, ‘unit identity’, ‘vet status’, ‘owner as advocate’, ‘regulatory’, ‘scope for malpractice’ and ‘reactionary’.

*“Back in those days it was a very very hard job and it was not well paid, it was a very rough badly paid job”. W “So was it a labour of love then?” H “People who went there were interested in the job and they obviously weren’t interested in a career move if you follow what I mean, there was no glamour, not much glamour attached to it so they were always glad to see someone roll up to sign on. ... Received with open arms. But nowadays it’s not like that at all. A lot of the fun’s gone out of it, definitely has. W “So do you think people that go into it think of it as a good way to earn a comfortable living?” H “ The unfortunate thing is, they have possibly been mislead by, its passing now but by James Herriot and people like that. It’s for some reason quite a , it’s the sort of thing where you think that must be a nice job, you know, must be nice people that do it – it’s not really like that in some strange way. You’ve got this business. When you’re running a business do you run a small turnover practice, charge an awful lot for it or do you get through the work and not charge so much. And speaking from a business point of view I would say I want to have a high turnover and straightforward jobs that don’t hassle you and you want probably to charge a lot for the jobs that wear you out like a double perennial hernia and castration – it’s such a tedious job, so you should charge plenty for that and keep you other prices down. And I think a classic one is identi-chipping because it only takes a very short time – the hardest work surely N, is all the writing you have*

*to do and the form filing. I mean if you had twenty dogs to identi-chip you'd finish your work by 10.15am and away home in your Jaguar (laughter). But on the other hand, that's a group practice, if I was single-handed, I'd be forced to defend myself by charging a lot, because if you didn't and you were popular and you didn't have someone helping you..."*

**Open codes;** 'hard job', 'poor paying', 'unglamorous', 'non-selective', 'fun has gone', 'anyone could be vet', 'recruitment problematic', 'job focus', 'mistaken beliefs', 'the Herriot effect', 'business decisions', 'high turnover', 'simplicity', 'easy jobs', 'getting through the work'. **Substantive codes** are; 'degree of desirability', 'vocation', 'career motivation', 'existence of myths', 'defending self', 'demand manipulation' and 'differential agendas.'

This concludes section revealing how coding is operationalised. These disparate components then formed the basis for constant comparisons and memoing. My initial reluctance to utilise my data resulted in feelings of being overwhelmed by the scale of the analytic task. This had a negative impact on momentum. At that time progress seemed slow. However, I forced myself to focus on the systematic processes I had previously avoided. Gradually overcoming the feelings of being swamped by data overload, I soon realised that the procedures were developmental in character. I began to experience the transcending effect of constant comparisons. This had an energising influence on my progress. Memos came thick and fast, capturing my growing insight into the essence of what was going on.

The final section of this appendix is devoted to revealing the synthesis of the theory. Accordingly it centres around the building blocks of theory. The memos included are designed to reflect the evolution of ideation.



## Synthesis

### Love objects

Clients form great attachments to their pets. They love them like a family member. Perhaps this is how they see them. If they are lonely they're always there for them. Pets have social meaning and psychological functions. For some they are their 'baby'. This is especially true for couples with no children or whose kids have left the nest. A pet fills a void, in that sense it is a surrogate. Observing owner's interactions with their pets is entertaining. Often they want to show-off their pet's special characteristics and for the audience to be appreciative – 'proud parent behaviour'. On other occasions owners will be apologetic when their 'naughty child' misbehaves. Sometimes the animals people choose to own appear to have symbolic meaning. They act like a badge communicating with other parties. They function as an extension of self. They also give a signal to others that I am a member of a particular group. How people view their pets impinges on how they are looked after. The **intensity** of the bond will define the potential for veterinary intervention. I think it is important for vets to ascertain how clients view their pets. Why? This needs more exploration. Maybe the names people give their pets may prove revealing in this context – (conjecture). This links to **information gaining**.

**Caring** is judged desirable because pets hold deep meaning for people they want to look after them and want their vet to do likewise. There are also others who come across as being ambivalent about the pet they have brought to the vet. In most of these cases the pet is there at the insistence of another family member. The pet is given its status in the family only under sufferance. Perhaps my '**love object**' label could be improved, I used it because it provides a direct link to the data – it's an in vivo code emergent from a discussion with an experienced pet owner. I'll keep the label for now, until something better emerges – I'm not precious about it. **Social role** might be closer to the mark, it reflects the variability of peoples differing attachment to their pets. *Indicators: "Relationships can be harder with people – dogs don't answer back...You can take your dog out for a walk, throw a stick and he'll bring it back – no questions. In England people are cooler and have more pets.*

*As living standards increase, people become harder, colder, they have more pets. I've seen it happen in Spain.*” This represents one Spanish vet’s hypothesis as to ‘why people have pets?’. Overhearing our conversation, his boss agreed with the analysis. Interestingly, this patterning is also evident from a totally unconnected client source. This indicator is striking in its similarity. When I asked this same question she replied; *“As ‘love objects’, I’m sure of it...I mean, when I go out Oppy [her dog] comes with me in the car, he’s my little friend. I can’t imagine not having him with me. In many ways we are quite inhibited in this country – we don’t touch each other much at all. If my Mexican friends were here, we’d be touching, hugging all the time – going across the road we’d take each others arms. I mean, if I was to suddenly throw my arms round you, you’d think it was a bit bizarre. So pets are a kind of substitute for this...”* Emergent properties are **unconditional** and **surrogate**. The concept of **social value** appears to be pivotal to the survival of the small animal veterinarian. It could function as a cutting point in this analysis.

### **Bread and buttering**

This is an in vivo term. It refers to the mainstay of veterinarians existence For the general practitioner this represents vaccinating and spaying/neutering dogs and cats. Interaction during such mundane activities represents an opportunity for the vet to influence the shape of future encounters. This means the direction, pace and frequency. It links to **coaching**. Interwoven in these activities is much symbolism. This is designed to influence behaviour and is explained by the concept of **imagery**. I think the label **bread and buttering** should be supplanted. I think **routine work** would be a more suitable alternative. Establishing routines and enforcing them is a survival mechanism for veterinarians. Routine controls clients.

### **Story talking**

Clients like to talk. They talk at length and take up time. A consequence is delays. Story talking has implications for time availability. A frequently encountered property of this is **duration**, normally this is excessive.. More inconveniently the information contained within the stories is minimal, relevance is not usually a characteristic. Vets must attempt to curtail these forays into irrelevancy. **Interrupting** strategies are called for. These explain how vets take control of the interaction. *Indicator: "At this point it is usually necessary to cut in and tell them to..."*

### **Communicating**

The face-to-face interactions between vet and client are dependent upon effective dialogue. Communicating takes place on a number of different levels. Imperceptibly professional trappings convey coded messages about the rightness of situations. Links to **imagery**. The ability to explain to clients what is happening is fundamental to being a vet. *Indicator: "Well it's more important to be able to communicate effectively than to have clinical competence. I mean you could be the best clinician but if you don't have the right manner, and there are plenty who don't, then it's a waste of time."* Knowing not only how to communicate, but what information it is sensible to impart to clients is critical. Experience informs this decision.

**Following up** is a category of **communicating**. Here vets proactively contact their clients by phone subsequent to the conclusion of treatment. This keeps open the channels of communication. Clients may have additional concerns that can be addressed. *Indicator: "...at the very least it shows we care."* This is part of client **cultivating**. **Communicating** can be positive as in the previous example or negative.

*Indicator: "In this business there can be communication problems. We usually inform the owner beforehand – to pre-empt problems. It doesn't always happen though with change of shift etc...someone doesn't get a message..."*

## **Difficult clients**

Repeatedly reference is made to problematic clients. Their behaviour is seen as incompatible with effective veterinary operations. Most frequently they are identified as being overly **demanding** of the vets time and patience. *“it may be fussy and the owners paranoid.”* Such clients are perceived as threatening in some form or other. They are awkward to deal with and impede the flow of work in the practice. They stimulate protective behaviour. I am now of the opinion that difficult clients are a structural condition. It is one of the factors influencing the need for vets to **keep their clients in line**. The concept that as a vet it is necessary to outsmart clients is emergent. *Indicator: “..they[some clients] seem to be trying to trip you up.”* Another vet indicated the similar idea, saying, *“I’ve never eaten so many chocolate biscuits since I’ve been here. And Mr P he’s always having a biscuit. You need the sugar/ carbohydrate for energy to feed the brain. Your brain has to work fast in this job to stay ahead of the clients. Not to say the wrong thing. It’s stressful. But you have to be in control. Mr P never raises his voice but how, does he get his point across.”*

Difficult clients induce avoidance strategies. *“Some such hated clients, when spotted approaching the surgery, will even incur a sudden desertion of the reception area!”*, one vet explained.

Some clients are simply too much trouble and are dealt with appropriately. They are either neglected or actively fired. Subsequent to one encounter with a particularly difficult client the vet suggested to the nurse, *“Just make sure we forget to send her a reminder about next years vaccination...”*

## **Imagery**

The interplay of appropriate images and vocabulary. This incorporates the use of special language. Vets ‘consult’ and have ‘clients’. The language employed is imbued with meaning. Ordinary people don’t consult. This is the preserve of the expert. The word client as distinct from customer implies a more meaningful dimension to the interaction. The language of the vet practice influences beliefs and

subsequently behaviour. 'Recovery packs', 'pre-operative health checks' and 'responsible pet ownership' are examples of symbolism which is designed to infiltrate the client's psyche.

### **Credentials**

There is a link between qualifications and money making. *"Vets are a license to print money."* Also E refers to *"comments made recently in the vet record stating vets are there to treat animals, not to exploit their positions. Many vets make a great deal."*

### **Showing and telling**

Vets do these things all the time. This is how they educate clients to behave in certain ways. By demonstrating how to administer medication the clients are better able to understand what it is they must do. This makes things more memorable. *"He [the vet] took the 'lump of steak' he'd removed the previous night from the dogs back with the suspicious warts and strange skin to show the owners, he's clearly concerned its skin cancer. He wanted to discuss the benefits or lack of them in sending the skin to be analysed. May cost £40 and so, is it going to make the treatment any different.* This is part of the **coaching** process.

### **Fictioning**

This seems like it is a significant component of what's going on. It keeps on reappearing. It stems from one vets repeated discussions about his definition of veterinary reality. I think it is associated with how people define what makes sense to them and what doesn't. Some fictions function on a personal level. They may conceal an uncomfortable reality which individuals feel unable to face. In such cases they operate at a subliminal level. Where truth meets fiction is imperceptible. The other role **fictioning** plays is in the control of others. *Indicator: "...it's hard work but rewarding. You might work somewhere else – more modern equipment – expensive x-ray machines, (fully trained) nurses, but it's not REAL. This is real. This is reality."* [me, asking for clarification], "how do you mean?" "Other places will

*charge a lot for vaccination or whatever and it's not fair – they are cheating, greedy.”*

The extent to which fictioning occurs appears to be mediated by the need for social structure. Individuals' **sense making** desires dictate the existence of governing fictions, to a greater or lesser degree. **Fictioning** articulates the rightness of certain arrangements and regulates behaviour. Properties are establishing **order** and subsequent **stability**.

There is a connection between fictioning and legitimising behaviour. **Myth making** influences perceptions. Perhaps this is the missing link. It needs more comparisons on different dimensions. *Indicator: “She [a client] was recounting a tale about her sister-in-law, who'd been quoted £31 for a cat spay and been told it would be an extra £7 for a Siamese.. ‘They are smaller inside and it's more difficult’” [the vet had alleged]. Ed smiled.* This indicator also supports the concept of **scope** whereby experts can invoke specialist knowledge. There is consequently **scope** for much behind the scenes activity. Is professional life in general reliant upon the creation and perpetuation of fictions? Clearly this is a matter of degree. There is a fundamental need for skilled vets to treat sick animals. It is the extent of the legitimate need that is open to question.

### **Time**

Time availability is significant in the context of this research. Jobs seem to variously expand or contract to fit the time available. It was particularly interesting in the extent to which **jobs are rushed, clients processed expeditiously, or time spent**. Client perceptions are significant in relation to believing sufficient time has been dedicated to them.

### **Vested interests**

The potential for **over treatment** of pets by veterinarians should not be discounted. Many instances of this activity are emergent - both directly, by way of observations and through second-hand sources where during interactions with clients other cases

of apparently excessive interventions are uncovered. Pharmaceutical companies are influential in consolidating client's perceptions of the need to depend on vaccinations to safeguard their pets well being. They routinely access vets' client databases to mail out reminders to attend for annual health check and vaccination. In this way the ritual is perpetuated. By linking vaccination compliance with 'responsible pet ownership' rhetoric, psychological pressures are brought to bear. **This keeps clients in line.**

### **Acting for the animal**

Veterinarians face an interesting dilemma. Ultimately who do they define as their client? Their fiduciary duty, as symbolised in the Hippocratic Oath, is to the animal as patient. However, other influences may dictate differently. Clients are part of the equation. **Acting for the animal** infers the existence of other agendas. *Indicator: "Mr P always acts for the animal."* This is a very descriptive label. I need to convey the existence of a critical dichotomy. This concept may be pivotal, determining where differential behaviour occurs.

### **Pleasing the client**

There is scope to act in expedient ways whilst concealing this reality. In this sense perceptions are everything. As one vet explained, *"if you stop the diarrhoea you're brill [brilliant]...doesn't matter how... Additionally, "Take the example of Roland ulcers of cats, which are difficult to cure – but steroids do so effectively though may have adverse effects on the animal (possibly reducing its life span by a year). Owners won't know any different and will be happy the ulcers are cured..."*

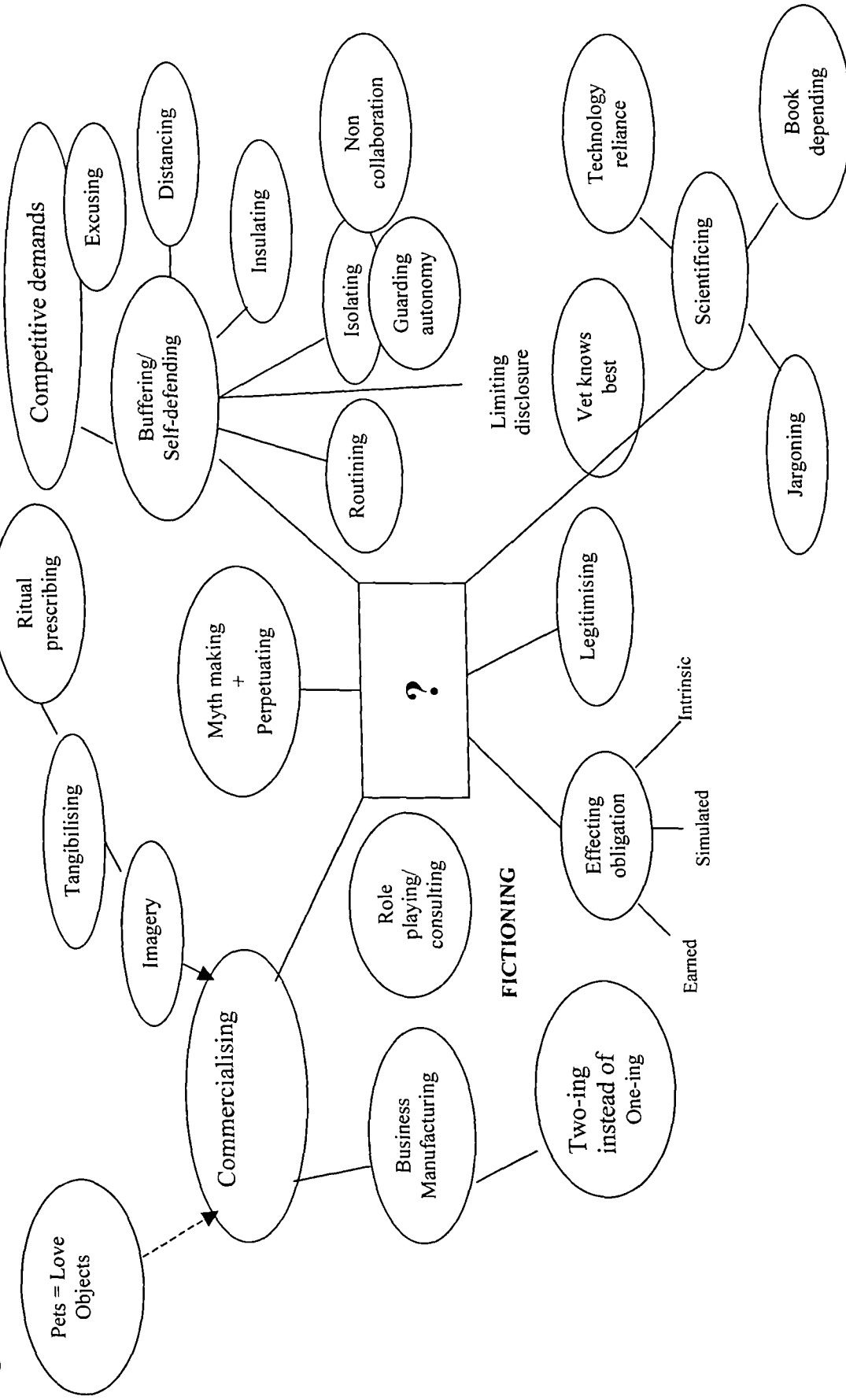
The preceding memos form part of the basis for theory generation. As the process of constant comparison progresses they undergo re-engineering. Patterning of codes develops greater conceptual coverage as they coalesce. There is a noticeable transition to more dynamic processes. Fewer concepts begin to be capable of accounting for the variability encountered. Insight into the relevant properties of the categories matures. Ultimately, the integrative linkages revealed in the chapter explaining the emergent theory become apparent.

I also memo on methodological challenges. Amongst these, I document my decisions with respect to how to progress theoretical sampling at various junctures. Similarly I capture my frustration when progress faltered. The process of **pseudo-friending** emerged during the spring of 1997 and had much conceptual grab. The extent of its captivating potential was such that I was of the opinion that it could be the core variable in its own right. On deeper reflection I realised that was not feasible in the context of this study. It simply did not explain sufficiently what I was observing. I therefore resolved to continue with the data generation, coding, and comparisons until the core emerged beyond doubt. At that time I felt that I was 'getting nowhere', seeing nothing of overriding consequence. I couldn't believe how stupid I must have been – that after such a time lapse I was still unable to articulate exactly what my study was about. I was experiencing regression. This is a common phenomenon amongst qualitative researchers. Operating out with the security of pre-constructed hypotheses is fraught with uncertainty. The enormity of the task associated with making sense of the concepts, their categories and properties appeared overwhelming. Confusion is not infrequent. I took some time out, regrouped and this helped extricate me from the impasse.

The diagram which follows, over the page, is intended to reflect the difficulties I was experiencing whilst trying to integrate the varied elements emerging from the comparisons.



**Figure Appendix 2 Searching for the core variable.**



## **Pseudo-friending**

Veterinary surgeons engage in **pseudo-friending** in order to meet their own agendas. By giving the illusion of friendship the expert may, if desired, commercialise this trust. **Trust** is a property of pseudo-friending. From this basis the vet may sell without the appearance of selling. It becomes evident that the boundaries between professionalism and commercialism are becoming more blurred in the context of veterinary practice.

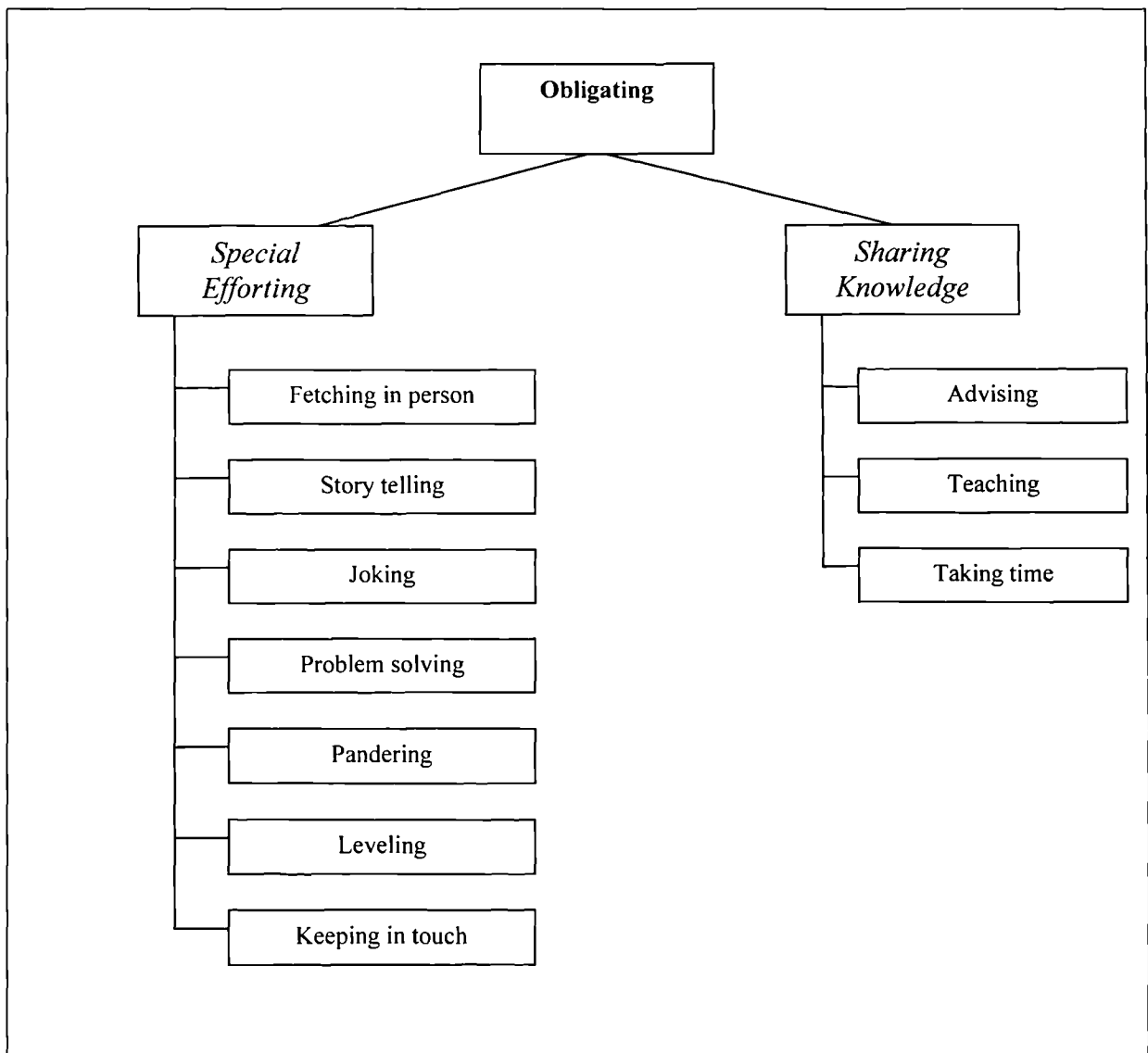
It encompasses the vet's efforts, real and illusory, to care for both clients and their animals. The process of effecting obligation is operationalised by the categories of 'looking after' and 'sharing knowledge.' "*...it makes sense. If, if you really love your animal, which vet are you going to take your animal to – the one who's good or the one whose your friend – treats you well and is nice to you? It stands to reason – if you've the choice you choose the one who's your friend.*"

Looking after may include genuine care giving but it also implies an element of 'tactical contrivance'. This involves the vet in 'fetching in person', 'story telling', 'joking', 'problem solving', 'pandering', 'levelling', 'special efforting' and 'keeping in touch'. An indicator of 'story telling' is revealed by a client telling me, "*We normally go to vet x at y. He's a character. He's got great stories, he's always telling some interesting tale*". This points to the **social role** vets play. In the consultation context the vet is likely to use one of the following opening gambits, "*Now what's worrying you about this fellow?*" or "*What can we do for you?*". These introductions may appear innocuous enough but the clear inference is that the vet is in a position help and should accordingly be shown appreciation. Sharing knowledge symbolises for the client somehow being given a privilege. They feel indebted to the professional for being generous to them. Properties of this category are 'advising', 'teaching' and 'taking time'. "*I hope the vet's still my friend.*"

The following diagram represents *obligating*, a sub-process and consequence of **pseudo-friending**. Comparing this to the emergent theory demonstrates how

ongoing comparisons modify initial conceptualisation and generate a more sophisticated explanation. The linear format and lack of interrelationships reflect the unrefined nature of my theoretical level at that point in time. I discovered that the properties highlighted failed to define the character of the categories adequately. They were simply open codes reflecting the data at a descriptive level. I discovered that the properties highlighted failed to define the character of the categories adequately. They were simply open codes reflecting the data at a descriptive level.

**Figure Appendix 3**



## **Buffering**

Buffering of different types is used. Buffering is pervasive in the daily lives of vets. Clients too experience the consequences of their veterinary surgeons' indulgence in buffering. Essentially buffering is designed to shield and protect vets in their work lives. Buffering seems necessary because of the nature of vet work. Much of the work involves long hours, is often quite stressful and physically demanding. As a result vets develop mechanisms to protect themselves from these demands.

Strategies which help vets deal with the stresses associated with their daily lives are visible. The categories of buffering identified are; **Insulating, Isolating, Distancing, and Routining.**

## **Insulating**

This occurs when the vet seeks to surround himself with a 'comforter' of some description. The insulating material serves to protect. The vet makes sure he is surrounded by trusted staff. They form a circle to protect the core from harm. Only those most trusted have access to the inner most secrets of the vets. This insulating material blocks outsiders. The vet is thereby shielded from clients who, if not kept at arms length might deflect the vet from the more pressing business. Being in familiar territory is another characteristic of insulating. *Indicator: "I'm comfortable here. I don't like being there[the satellite practice]. I'm used to it here. I know my clients here and ok I get new clients here that I don't know, but this is my patch and I'm at home here."*

Another form of insulating is **scientificing**. This is where the vet relies on the 'technology comforter'. The vet seeks refuge from potentially threatening lay clients by complexifying his work. By hiding behind the scientific mask he feels safer. He will hold and retain the balance of power when working in this realm he feels. If threatened the vet can play the scientific card and thereby evade the intrusion. Properties of Scientificing are technology reliance, book depending, and jargoning.

Technology reliance – is the tendency of vets to look to blood testing and detailed chemical analyses in the standard treatment of cases. This means vets will routinely look elsewhere for scientific backup. They will not rely on their own skills. Vets apparently feel more confident when they have a list of biochemical constituents to refer to and validate their diagnosis.

Book dependence – is a perceived tendency for vets to look at the written word as gospel. This is a particular trait with the current generation of vets. There is a noticeable lack of scepticism as to the reliability of textbooks. As a consequence received wisdoms are perpetuated not invalidated through practice. It is easier to rely on what is in black and white than to question it – which could be dangerous.

Jargoning – is the employment of technical language unnecessarily. When jargoning the vet gives the impression of ‘knowing’; the lay client is excluded and made to feel inferior through not knowing. The balance of power is more heavily weighted in the professionals favour when he indulges in jargoning because the client may be inhibited from demanding to know in understandable terms just what it is that the vet is saying.

### **Isolating**

This is a category of buffering. This is the practice of keeping apart from others. Properties are limiting disclosure, non-collaboration and guarding autonomy. There appears to be a marked distrust among vet practices and an avoidance of working together for mutual benefit. Rivalry is common.

**Limiting disclosure** – this relates to restricting availability of information. The vet practice and its secrets are safe when kept within the boundaries of the practice. Unlimited disclosure of information is seen as threatening. Information flows need to be controlled. It is undesirable to the vets interests to freely disclose all information regarding the treatment and wellbeing of clients’ animals. The vet nurses understand this and automatically ration the information disseminated to clients. Disclosing everything to clients is acknowledged as dangerous as imprudent disclosures can then

potentially be recycled to the vet's disadvantage at a later date. Restricting the information flows to varying degrees is normal practice.

### **Restricting availability**

Here the vet restricts his availability to others, predominantly to clients but also to practice staff, salesmen etc., by being 'elsewhere'. This need not necessarily mean physically distant, it may just mean not available for ordinary communication. The vet is out-of-commission so to speak. In this way the vet to satisfy his own agenda. While being unavailable, the vet is free from interruptions and demands upon his patience. This practice frequently inconveniences others. However there is little anyone can do to prevent this. The vet is aware of the limits to which his behaviour will be tolerated by others and usually operates within the boundaries. From time to time he will try to renegotiate these boundaries further in his favour however there is little room for manoeuvre.

Restrictions seems to be more noticeable when things are particularly busy and the demands on the vet the greatest. They function as an escape mechanism by which the vet seeks to let off steam and gain respite from what might otherwise prove an overly demanding work schedule. It appears to be a strategy developed by vets in order to allow themselves to catch their breath and recharge. In this way they manage to deal with the problem of durability and avoid complete exhaustion. Restricting availability is a defensive strategy aimed at buffering the vet.

The indicators of this I have encountered are the frequent late arrival of the vet for scheduled surgery hours. Clients wait excessive time. Alternatively the vet may arrive late for theatre – thereby inconveniencing the nurses and increasing their annoyance levels exponentially at the prospect of very late night finishing. It is also employed in response to unwelcome inquiries from concerned pet owners.

Being unavailable implies the vet is detained elsewhere and strangely this enhances the control the vet has over the client by underlining what good work vets are doing – being preoccupied with *emergencying and saving*.

### **Routinising**

This occurs in an attempt to make the vet's life easier. The usual work is scheduled as much as possible in order to provide as much stability and predictability as possible. This too adds to the comfort factor for vets and enables work to be operationalised. In the bigger picture of veterinary work routine is further encouraged. Clients are trained to bring their pets to their vet annually for vaccination. In this way vets can feel confident that they will have a fairly predictable income. There is not much discussion regarding the clinical desirability of such annual vaccination regimes. Such wholesale 'blind faith' is interesting and clearly in the interests of both vets and vaccine manufacturers. There are indications of increasing attempts by the vet profession to encourage further routinisation with visits for blood analysis, flea treatments, etc... Annual health check is a phrase that has become widespread.

### **Self-defending**

This is a category of buffering. It is an in vivo code. The code emerged from the vet's reference to 'self-defending'. This is the practice whereby vets protect themselves from too much business by charging a lot. This makes their lives easier by limiting the demand for their service whilst still making plenty of money.

Life easing is an issue in vet practice. It was initially indicated before visiting my first practice. Arranging when I would first visit by phone the vet told me Friday was not the best day to go because it was not so busy. *"We don't operate on Fridays unless it is absolutely necessary – so we avoid complications over the weekend..."*

### **Tangibilising**

This is the strategy of adding something of substance to an otherwise intangible offering. It appears to be significant in the vet practice context, perhaps increasingly so. This includes such things as 'white coating' and 'stethoscoiping'. In these instances the vet makes visible the trappings of his professional status. He may hardly ever use the stethoscope in question but still persists in doggedly draping it

round his neck. Tangibilising includes the practice surroundings – the building and high tech equipment, etc.

Commonly tangibilising is evidenced in the consulting room – when the vet gives the client the expected or anticipated treatment, pills, potions etc. It could be questioned how often these accoutrements are in fact beneficial. It is likely they are almost ritually distributed. The reason for this may be another form of buffering. The vet seeks to protect himself from accusations of not having provided any medication. Alternatively the ritual may assist in the vet's justification for charging for the consultation. For example it is easier for the vet to ask for his fee when the client has something tangible as opposed to just some advice or chat. Tangibilising links to commercialising and may be evidenced by way not only of routine distribution of antibiotics, but more frequently these days in bags of special diet foods, flea treatments, etc...

### **Work Augmentation**

The unequal balance of power within the vet/client encounter is one condition that gives scope for unorthodox practices. The unseen nature of some veterinary procedures gives further scope. Monitoring is problematic. Opportunities for varying degrees of work fabrication therefore arise. *“In this line of work – if you haven't enough business – you manufacture it – you see what I mean.”* This has been observed both directly and indirectly. For example I overheard two colleagues discussing the merits of a locum colleague. *“Are they busy at that practice?” H “Och well, not really – well I mean they, they make themselves busy if you know what I mean?” E “Yes, yes I know what you mean.”*

Clients expect the veterinary surgeon to act in the best interests of their pet and in this respect place their trust in the professional's hands. They do not consider the possibility that the vet may also seek to do what's best for himself. This could mean that the animal benefits entirely from the course of treatment the vet decides upon. It may however mean that the benefit to the animal is marginal, neutral or quite possibly, detrimental. *“He was treating my dog, she had a lump. So he gave her a*



*general anaesthetic to do the biopsy and it was benign, but then he said he'd have to remove the tumour anyway – so she had to have another general anaesthetic – which she need not have had. So he had done two ops, where one would have done, and charged for two.”*

Whatever diagnosis the vet makes and corresponding treatment advised – they are always capable of justification on the part of the vet. This means he will take care to ensure most of what he undertakes stands up to scrutiny – at least to his lay-clients' abilities. Although more experienced clients are better placed to pick up on inadequate **covering** strategies, as is indicated in the following case. *“The cat had been admitted for fluids and was in for 3 days. I got her home and there was a bill for an x-ray (£80) and it came to £200. But I didn't know she was having an x-ray, no one had told me and there was nothing on the bill for an anaesthetic. I don't think she had an x-ray because she'd have had to have had an anaesthetic.”*

Provided the vet uses “precautionary” reasons for legitimising the indulgence in costly procedures he advocates, then he may convince others of his pure motives. At the very least the image of the vet acting predominantly in his patients' interests is reinforced. Who would be brave enough to challenge the expert when faced with such convincing propaganda?

Indicator: *Pre-anaesthetic health checks are an example of work augmenting. The vet explains to the client the chance of complications during any surgical procedure and that the tests which they can undertake are designed to minimise these risks. However, the vet is careful to emphasise that the decision is entirely the clients. Here it takes a brave client to refuse the test “Designed to make surgery safer”. After all refusal might risk appearing an uncaring owner.*

In reality, I understand that the chances of tests detecting significant problems are relatively uncommon. The motivation for such precautionary procedures seems not to be inspired purely by genuine medical appropriateness – although, clearly the

veterinary profession is careful to keep dubious legitimating on hand should there be any challenge.

Even the routine annual vaccination of dogs, cats, horses, etc. may emerge as fundamental examples of this work augmenting behaviour exhibited by veterinary surgeons. Without the bread and butter of such procedures combined with other standard tasks such as cat and dog neutering, veterinary surgeons would be a far less common breed.

This concludes my section revealing some of the memos that were instrumental in the theory generation. The memos convey an absence of interrelationships. My reluctance to delimit the study is to blame for the lack of cohesion. The memos serve to illustrate how seemingly disparate elements can, upon comparison, integrate to develop theory. I continued open coding for too long. Hence my feelings of being 'splattered'. Had I complied more closely to the coding, comparing, memoing schema from the outset I am of the opinion that the research would have been more contained and less traumatising. The core variable is likely to have emerged sooner and I would have avoided the enduring properties of regression. Instead, at the eleventh hour, I 'reversed' in to the core variable of **keeping clients in line**.

To conclude I outline how I operationalised theoretical sampling. As I have indicated my initial choice of where to access the field was arbitrary. Perceived suitability of the location did not influence the decision. Practical concerns relating to accessibility predominated. Infiltrating the veterinary practice scene in this way worked out well. The setting proved eminently conducive to discovering the fundamental processes at play. I witnessed clients being processed during vet/client encounters. The emphasis was on getting through large numbers of cases. The vets appeared to enjoy the work for its intrinsic character, treating animals and interacting with clients, not financial rewards. They were vets first and foremost who happened to be in business. The focus of the study fell on the vet/client interaction because this was where the action lay. Once I began feeling I was not seeing anything new emerging I sought out a comparative veterinary practice. The new location was contrasting in almost every respect. It was very high tech and commercially

oriented. The similarities and differences between the two generated robust categories and associated properties.

I then interviewed the dean of a major veterinary school in order to discover more about the mystification processes of veterinary medicine. I also wanted to explore the training of veterinary students and the supply and demand for veterinary surgeons. This did not reveal any significant new lines of enquiry and largely amounted to 'proper line' data. I did discover that the process of keeping people in line appeared to be applicable on a number of levels, however. This was significant. Veterinary students are themselves **kept in line** by an extreme type of coaching akin to indoctrination during their intensive training. The veterinary school and its referral practice, dealing with more complex cases, relies on local practitioners to feed them sufficient referrals. The incentive for this is implicit, but never the less intimidating. The threat that if sufficient referrals are not forthcoming the vet school would simply open its doors directly to the general public is an further example of **keeping others in line**.

In order to discover more dimensions of the **coaching** process I contacted, at random, twenty practices by telephone to request information about their practices from the standpoint of a potential new client. The information I received informed the development of the categories of *boundary setting* and *guiding through* specifically.

At various junctures I opportunistically probed clients for further insights into certain dimensions of their interactions with vets. Frequently, I asked pet owning friends about their experiences with vets. Such lines of inquiry proved rich sources since these people enjoy pet related talk.

Lastly, when the theoretical framework had been established I allowed myself to reflect on my personal experiences of interactions with vets stemming back many years. The use of 'experiential incidents' of this nature was a rich source of insight into the client perspective.

Throughout the research process I had focused on cultivating friendly relations with the members of the veterinary practices I frequented. Accordingly it was not difficult to check out my developing ideas at intervals. Finally, and significantly, I had good access to veterinary ‘insiders’, and their intimate perspectives. My sister-in-law is a vet and her husband deals daily with veterinarians solving their computer problems.