Eliciting Metaphor through Clean Language: an Innovation in Qualitative Research

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Abstract

This paper shows how an innovative method of questioning called ‘Clean Language’ can enhance the authenticity and rigour of interview-based qualitative research. The paper investigates the specific potential of Clean Language as a method for eliciting naturally occurring metaphors in order to provide in-depth understanding of a person’s symbolic world; despite substantial interest in metaphors in the field of organisational and management research there is a lack of explicit, systematic methods for eliciting naturally occurring metaphors. The paper also demonstrates how Clean Language can improve qualitative research more widely by addressing the propensity for researchers inadvertently to introduce extraneous metaphors into an interviewee’s account at both data collection and interpretation stages. Data are presented from a collaborative academic-practitioner project in which Clean Language was used as a method of interviewing to elicit the metaphors of six mid-career managers, relating to the way they experienced work-life balance. The first contribution of this paper is to demonstrate the potential of Clean Language for eliciting naturally occurring metaphors in order to provide in-depth understanding of a person’s symbolic world. The second contribution is to show how Clean Language can enhance the rigour and authenticity of interview-based qualitative research more widely.

Key words

Qualitative methods, metaphor, qualitative interviewing, questions, work-life balance.
**Introduction**

There has been considerable interest in metaphor in the organisation and management literature (for example, Cassell and Lee, 2012; Cornelissen, 2006; Cornelissen and Kafouros, 2008; Cornelissen *et al.*, 2008; Grant and Oswick, 1996; Hatch and Yanow, 2008; Marshak, 1993; Morgan, 1986; Oswick and Jones, 2006; Oswick *et al.*, 2002; Oswick and Montgomery, 1999). However, according to Cassell and Lee (2012, p.248), `most research focuses on the deductive application of metaphors, rather than on inductive explorations of metaphorical language-in-use'. Of those that do pursue inductive explorations, Cassell and Lee (2012, p.254) distinguish between those that use `already produced language’, and those that purposefully elicit metaphors. The former type often emphasises the function of metaphor as a rhetorical device (Amernic *et al.*, 2007; Pablo and Hardy, 2009; Tourish and Hargie, 2012); and, because it relies upon texts such as transcripts it cannot probe for further detail of a person’s metaphors. The latter type seeks to capture metaphors that are elicited by interventions by researchers.

There are few explicit methods for eliciting naturally occurring metaphors. Heracleous and Jacobs (2008) and Jacobs and Heracleous (2006), for example, design workshop activities involving construction materials in order to elicit embodied metaphors. Cassell and Lee (2012) employed interviews, which they subsequently analysed for metaphorical content.

The first contribution of this paper is to demonstrate the potential of Clean Language as a specific method for eliciting naturally occurring metaphors in order to provide in-depth understanding of a person’s symbolic world. To explore this potential, Clean Language was used as a method of interviewing in a collaborative academic-practitioner project to elicit the
metaphors of six mid-career managers, relating to the way they experienced work-life balance.

The second contribution is to demonstrate how Clean Language can enhance the trustworthiness and authenticity (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) of qualitative research more widely by addressing the propensity for researchers inadvertently to introduce extraneous metaphors into an interviewee’s account at both data collection and interpretation stages. The issue of quality in qualitative methods has been the subject of continuing debate in the field of organisational and management research (Amis and Silk, 2008; Bryman et al., 2008; Cassell and Symon, 2011; Easterby-Smith et al., 2008; Gephart, 2004; Johnson et al., 2006; Pratt, 2008, 2009; Sandberg, 2005; Symon and Cassell, 2012; Van Maanen, 1979) and has been the subject of a government report in the UK (Spencer et al., 2003). While most authors reject the idea that uniform criteria for quality can be devised, especially given the complexity and methodological pluralism that characterise qualitative research (Amis and Silk, 2008; Easterby-Smith et al., 2008), the potential for improved rigour and transparency in both the elicitation and interpretation of qualitative data is widely acknowledged. Hence Van Maanen (1979, p.523) noted not only ‘widespread skepticism surrounding the ability of conventional data collection techniques to produce data that do not distort, do violence to, or otherwise falsely portray the phenomena such methods seek to reveal’, but also that ‘interpretive frameworks which make such data meaningful have grown looser, more open-ended, fluid, and contingent’ (1979, p.522). Gephart (2004, p.458) suggests that submissions to the Academy of Management Journal that are based on qualitative research need to `show what was done in the research process and to articulate how research practices transformed observations into data, results, findings and insights’.
These concerns are relevant to interviewing, which is probably the most commonly used approach to data-gathering in qualitative research (King, 2004; Roulston, 2010), as indicated by the prevalence of studies involving qualitative interviews in BJM, for example Berg et al., (2012), Glaister et al., (2003), Li et al. (2012), Lindebaum and Cassell (2012), Linehan and Walsh (2000), Nentwich and Hoyer (2012), and Noon et al., (2012). As Roulston (2010) points out, diverse theorisations of qualitative interviewing exist. Our concern is with phenomenological interviews (Kvale, 1983), which aim to understand and represent interviewees’ worlds authentically. Although researchers who utilise this type of interview may believe that their interviews are free of prejudices and presuppositions, this paper demonstrates how the practice of Clean Language enables further refinement.

The article is structured as follows. We commence with an overview of Clean Language, its origins, and its relationship to the work of Lakoff and Johnson (1980, 1999) on metaphor and the philosophy of embodied mind. Next we demonstrate how researchers’ metaphors can be brought into data collection and interpretation inadvertently, with reference to two published studies. We then outline how Clean Language was used as a method of interviewing to elicit metaphors relating to work-life balance. After reviewing the findings from that project, we discuss implications for researchers and draw conclusions about the potential methodological contribution of Clean Language to metaphor elicitation specifically, and to enhancing the quality of interview-based qualitative research generally.
**Background on Clean Language**

Clean Language is an approach to questioning that facilitates exploration of a person’s inner world through their own, naturally occurring metaphors. Its origins lie in the work of counselling psychologist David Grove (1950 - 2008) in developing methods for resolving clients’ traumatic memories (Grove and Panzer, 1991; Lawley and Tompkins, 2000). Grove’s approach is broadly humanistic, in that it is person-centred and facilitative; it has also been described as phenomenological (Owen, 1989). Grove discovered, first, that focusing on a client’s metaphors provided a way into their inner symbolic world; and second that facilitating a client to become immersed in that inner world, exploring it for themselves, could enable effective resolution of their traumatic memories.

Grove emphasised in particular the importance of using the client’s own metaphorical language. He called the resulting approach Clean Language (Grove and Panzer, 1991 p.1) because of its intention to maintain fidelity to a client’s inner world by keeping the practitioner’s language as ‘clean’, or as free from the practitioner’s own metaphors, as possible. In order to achieve this, Grove devised a set of questions that were as devoid as possible of metaphor (and hence which use a very specific and particular form of wording). A typical basic set of Clean Language questions is shown in Table 1. By confining their interventions to Clean Language questions, a practitioner can conduct a conversation in the terms of the client’s emerging metaphors. Similarly, keeping interviews free of the researcher’s metaphors is the focus of this paper.
ATTRIBUTES
· And what kind of X is that X?
· And is there anything else about X?

LOCATION
· And where/whereabouts is X?

REFLEXIVITY
· And how do you know X?

METAPHOR
· And that's X like what?

RELATIONSHIP
· And when X, what happens to Y?
· And is there a relationship between X and Y?
· And is X the same or different as Y?

AFTER
· And then what happens/what happens next?

SOURCE
· And where does/could X come from?

BEFORE
· And what happens just before X?

Where ‘X’ and ‘Y’ = the interviewee’s exact words.

Table 1: Basic Clean Language Questions
(adapted from Lawley and Tompkins, 2000 pp. 282-3)

In the 1990s, Grove’s distinctive approach was studied over some years by Lawley and Tompkins (2000), whose contribution is twofold. First, they made Clean Language accessible to practitioners; for example it is found in business practice (Sullivan and Rees, 2008), including organizational development (Doyle et al. 2010; van Helsdingen and Lawley, 2012), marketing, project management, sales, and in education (Nixon, 2013; Nixon and Walker,
2009a and b). It is important to emphasise that Clean Language is neither exclusively nor even predominantly used as a psychotherapeutic technique today. It is learnt through publicly available commercial training courses (as offered by practitioner partners in this project), which are explicitly not trainings in psychotherapy, delivered by trainers who, typically, have witnessed Grove’s practice and built on Lawley and Tompkins’ translation of Grove’s methods.

Lawley and Tompkins’ second contribution is to have conceptualised Grove’s methods by drawing on theories of metaphor and embodied cognition, for example, Lakoff and Johnson (1980, 1999). Defining the essence of metaphor as ‘understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another’ (1980, p.5: italics in original), Lakoff and Johnson put forward the philosophical view that our conceptions of the world are fundamentally metaphorical; thus ‘metaphorical thought is unavoidable, ubiquitous, and mostly unconscious’ (Lakoff and Johnson, 2003, p. 272). Other than when used to refer to the relative location of physical things, ‘up’ and ‘down’ are metaphors because they have their basis in the typically vertical (i.e. standing) orientation from which humans experience the physical world. Furthermore, the typical associations of ‘up’ and ‘down’ with ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ respectively are based on this embodied experience.

The perspective that metaphors are embodied, and therefore embedded within and foundational to individuals’ world views, is wholly and significantly different from viewing metaphor as something that a person chooses to use as an occasional way to embellish expression (Jacobs and Heracleous, 2006). One theoretical challenge to this perspective is that although the metaphorical contents of language are evident, this does not necessarily
mean that people think metaphorically. However, recent work in the field of psychological science (IJzerman and Semin, 2009; Jostmann et al., 2009; Thibodeau and Boroditsky, 2011; Willems et al., 2010) is considered to be addressing this criticism by providing empirical evidence.

Since the focus of the present paper is to evaluate the potential of the techniques of Clean Language for management research based on the evidence presented here, our findings do not rest on the psychotherapeutic efficacy of Grove’s method. Nevertheless it is relevant to note the contested and problematic nature of psychotherapies in general, and humanistic psychotherapies specifically (Cain, 2002; Rowan, 1998; Spinelli, 1994). Grove’s approach involved 25 years of experiential research through clinical practice, but formal programmes of research have yet to be established.

It is also important to note that, given Lakoff and Johnson’s (1980) views about the ubiquitous nature of metaphor, it is not realistic to be entirely ‘clean’; furthermore, ‘clean’ is itself a metaphor. In this paper we make intentional use of another metaphorical term that is in common usage in Clean Language practice, that of a ‘metaphor landscape’ (Lawley and Tompkins, 2000 p.17) to refer to a person’s inner world. This term denotes that inner worlds are typically experienced as dynamic three-dimensional spaces in which the locations of symbols are significant, which is compatible with the theory (Lakoff and Johnson, 1999) that sensory experience of spatial dimensions and movement gives rise to primary, universal metaphors. Nevertheless, it could be argued that it would be ‘cleaner’ to refer to inner worlds as a four dimensional space than as a ‘landscape’ per se.
How Researchers’ Metaphors are Imported into Qualitative Studies

As noted above, authors such as Van Maanen (1979) point to difficulties with both data collection and interpretation in qualitative research generally. Informed by Clean Language, we contend that the propensity for researchers to introduce their own metaphors unawarely into their research poses a significant threat to the authenticity of the findings from such work.

This is rarely acknowledged in the research literature. Research by Loftus (1975) has demonstrated how the wording of a question can influence an interviewee’s recall and response, and Gibson and Hanes (2003, p. 190) emphasise that ‘questioning in the interview is of utmost importance’. However, there is little evidence of literature on research interviewing that shows awareness of the potential influence of the researcher’s own naturally occurring metaphors. Apart from authors such as Knight (2012) and Tosey and Mathison (2010), concern with the wording of questions and its significance appears confined to discussions of how to standardise interviews for survey purposes (e.g. Dillman et al., 2009; Gobo, 2006; Kalton et al. 1978; Tanur, 1992). For example, a major text on interviewing offers only a rudimentary categorisation of questions (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009, pp. 134-8).

To illustrate that propensity we examine two studies. One illustrates how a researcher’s metaphors can be introduced through the questions they pose, the other shows how a researcher’s metaphors can be introduced when interpreting data.

First, a phenomenological study of the experience of ‘discovering and following one’s calling’ (Conklin, 2007, p. 275) is chosen because it has the rare merit of transparency about the
interview questions used (Conklin 2007, p. 286), which are reproduced in Table 2. We do not intend to imply that it is deficient; it provides a published example that enables us to examine the metaphorical content of the interviewer’s questions. By contrast for example, Berg et al. (2012) reveal nothing of their questions, stating only that they employed semi-structured interviews.

Table 2: Interview questions as used by Conklin (2007) with selected metaphors underlined

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<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>What <strong>compelled</strong> you to get involved in this work? Why do you do this?</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>What is the best thing about being involved in this work?</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>What are your hopes for this place, the world, the future?</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>What <strong>gives</strong> you hope?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>What do you imagine the future to be? What is the <strong>image</strong> you <strong>carry around</strong> that <strong>drives</strong> your actions today?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>What are your <strong>highest</strong> hopes for the work that you are doing?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Who else is involved?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>What is the nature of the relationships that you have with the others who are involved? Who are they and how did you happen to <strong>come into contact</strong> with them?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>How are you different from being involved in this work and with these other people?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Links to ecology, fundraising, relationships, politics. What <strong>roles</strong> have these topics <strong>played in</strong> your work? How do you manage these organizational realities and keep a <strong>keen eye on</strong> your mission or vision?</td>
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Conklin’s list has ten items, comprising 14 questions altogether. Seven of these questions introduce metaphors, represented by terms such as ‘compelled’, ‘carry around’, ‘drives’,
‘come in contact with’ and ‘played’. These apparently subtle metaphors are nevertheless significant because they will be processed by the interviewee for the questions to make sense, resulting in an increased likelihood of the interviewees answering within the frames presupposed by the interviewer’s metaphors rather than those which the interviewee might naturally use (Thibodeau and Boroditsky, 2011). Whether this occurred is impossible to determine from the article itself because the paper includes little verbatim data – approximately 300 words in total, some of which is repeated.

A more detailed example is the second question in Item 5, ‘What is the image you carry around that drives your actions today?’ First, this question presupposes that the interviewee has the experience defined by the question (i.e. that they carry around an image). Second, the suggestion that images are phenomena that the interviewee can carry around is clearly an embodied metaphor (Johnson, 1987). In order to understand this metaphor the interviewee will need to access their experience of carrying things around, which will engage related associations or entailments (Lakoff, 1987, p.384). Third, the idea that the carrying around of an image drives actions is a strong cause-effect metaphor, based on the fundamental conceptual metaphor of causes as forces, identified by Talmy (1988). It presupposes a mental model that may not be matched by the interviewee’s understanding of what motivates their actions.

The second way in which the researcher’s metaphors can be introduced is through interpretation of interviewees’ accounts. Here the intent of Clean Language closely resembles the practice of bracketing in phenomenology, defined as ‘an attempt to hold prior knowledge or belief about the phenomena under study in suspension’ (LeVasseur, 2003, p.
409). It is important to acknowledge that qualitative researchers do sometimes intentionally introduce their interpretations, and make this explicit (e.g. Marshall, 1995); our concern is with research that aims to produce authentic representations of participants’ subjective worlds.

A study by Berger (2004) probes the nature of personal transformations experienced by mature students. One of them, Kathleen, is `an articulate executive for whom stability has been the norm. A white woman in her mid-50’s, she is at the height of her career in the government. Then… with a change of administration she is unexpectedly asked to step down from the influential position she has had for many years.’ This study is chosen because it has the merit of including substantial interviewee data in the body of the article. The following excerpts are all from Berger (2004, p. 341).

The researcher asks Kathleen `whether she wishes she were in a different place in her life…’. In addition to the leading nature of this question, the metaphor of a place in her life would be an example of `non-clean’ practice in questioning, unless Kathleen had already introduced this term herself. Kathleen replies as follows (punctuation as in original):

No, I think this is the journey. And I could stay in this [uncertain space], I think, forever…. I don’t know what to say. It just feels like it will emerge. But no, where I am right now feels very much like – it doesn’t feel like a hiatus. It feels like it is the journey and that work will emerge from this place.
Kathleen’s metaphors include *journey* and *emerge*. Berger then comments as follows:

In this excerpt, it is clear that Kathleen is on the edge of her knowing. She stumbles, stammers, circles back… After admitting that she doesn’t know, Kathleen seems more comfortable… Perhaps she finds some footing within the slippery place of her own uncertainty.

The metaphors used here by Berger - *the edge of her knowing, stumbles, circles back, comfortable, footing, and slippery place* – are notable because they did not appear in Kathleen’s quoted extract. Indeed, their divergence from Kathleen’s words is striking. Both her inner landscape itself and the quality of movement within it are re-interpreted to such a degree by the researcher as to risk misrepresenting this interviewee’s subjective experience significantly.

Most significantly, the metaphor of an *edge* (of knowing) is mentioned no less than one hundred and four times in Berger’s article; yet not once does this metaphor appear in the interviewee data cited. This supports the desirability of distinguishing clearly between metaphors introduced by a researcher as an interpretive device, and those that originate in interviewees’ subjective worlds. Moreover, qualitative interview-based research is frequently less transparent than Berger’s study. Consequently the question of the extent to which metaphors originate in the researcher or the participants may be undetectable by a reader.
The Work-Life Balance Project

In order to explore the potential of Clean Language to address these problems the authors and colleagues designed a project in which Clean Language was used as a method of interviewing to elicit the naturally occurring metaphors of a small sample of managers relating to the way they experienced work-life balance.

Work-life balance (WLB) was chosen because it offers an issue of contemporary relevance in the field of management to employers and employees (Beauregard, 2011; Harrington and Ladge, 2004; Linehan and Walsh, 2000) and because previous research has questioned ideas and assumptions implicit in the construct ‘work-life balance’ (Caproni, 2004; Cohen et al., 2009; McMillan et al., 2011; Reece et al., 2009; Roberts, 2008). For example, the construct implies that people divide their experience into the two categories, ‘work’ and ‘life’, that these categories are related by an experience analogous to ‘balance’, and hence that ‘work’ and ‘life’ operate in some way to stabilise, compensate for, even out or offset each other. Although both Cohen et al. (2009) and Roberts (2008) pinpoint the metaphor of ‘balance’ embedded in the wider WLB concept, neither has taken as systematic an approach to the exploration of people’s naturally occurring metaphors as that offered by Clean Language. The project therefore aimed to question the extent to which these presuppositions are reflected in participants’ metaphor landscapes.

This choice of topic was considered carefully due to these overtly metaphoric properties. There was a case for choosing an (apparently) ‘cleaner’ topic, although from Lakoff and Johnsons’ perspective on metaphor one could argue that no entirely ‘clean’ topic exists. However, this enabled us to test the ability of Clean Language to elicit individuals’ naturally
occurring metaphors despite the existence of a conventional metaphor (Lakoff and Johnson, 1999), in this case ‘balance’. Undoubtedly care and skill would be needed to elicit interviewees’ self-perceptions, and the challenges of doing so are among the findings commented on below.

**Methodology**

The interview sample was limited to six participants. This sample size was appropriate for the purpose of testing the method, especially given the detailed scrutiny of interview transcripts – comparable, we suggest, with Tourish and Hargie’s (2012) study of the metaphors used by four banking CEOs. In order to provide a reasonably homogeneous (Saunders, 2012) set of participants, a sample of mid-career managers (aged 40-50, of both genders) in full time employment was drawn from existing contacts of the practitioners and recruited from three different UK companies.

The project was explained in writing and all participants were invited to ask questions in advance of the interview; none took up this option. None of the participants were trained in Clean Language, nor were they given preparatory work relating to metaphor, so that the interviews would provide data on how those with no prior experience responded to this form of interviewing.

Standard ethical principles (e.g. Saunders *et al.*, 2012, pp.231-2) and ethical issues particular to the use of in-depth interviews were considered, including for example (Allmark *et al.*, 2009) privacy; the possibility that interviews concerning sensitive issues can be emotionally
intense; the possibility that ‘the researcher may take on a dual role as scientist and therapist’ (Allmark et al., 2009 p.50) and so become over-involved; and power, especially in relation to vulnerable groups.

Voluntary, informed, written consent was obtained from all participants. Their identities and those of their employers have been anonymised. The participants were not considered vulnerable, nor was the topic of WLB likely to be sensitive compared to those identified by authors such as Lee (1993) and Dickson-Swift et al. (2007).

It is important to emphasise that Clean Language has been adapted for non-therapeutic application in a wide range of fields. It is also far from an isolated instance of a technique with psychotherapeutic origins being used in management research; other examples include projective techniques (Bagnoli, 2009), Gendlin’s ‘focusing’ (Todres and Galvin, 2008) and repertory grids (Jankowicz, 1987). Here, the contract was to elicit the interviewee’s ‘metaphor landscape’, and there was no remit for the interviewer to attempt to facilitate any change. This was a deliberate decision by the research team in order to differentiate this investigation of Clean Language as a technique for asking questions from its use as a developmental process (e.g. as in executive coaching), which addressed the potential risk of ‘difficulties in differentiating between research and therapy’ (Dickson-Swift et al. 2007, p. 336).

Participants were given (and retained after the interviews were completed) contact details of a member of the research team. In order to avoid any unanticipated potential for harm, the research team included two qualified psychotherapists who could refer participants to
suitable counselling support if needed. A follow-up interview was conducted with each participant after approximately two weeks at which they were invited to comment on the Clean Language interview and its impact. No participant expressed any concern either during the follow-up interviews or subsequently.

The design involved two individual interviews, both conducted by Meese, who has trained extensively in Clean Language. The first, face-to-face interview elicited the manager’s individual metaphor landscapes. In these interviews, which were carried out in participants’ workplaces and were audio-recorded, participants were invited to explore their experiences and metaphors of ‘WLB at its best’ and ‘WLB not at its best’. In outline, the interviewer listens for naturally-occurring metaphors; uses Clean Language questions (exclusively, and principally those shown in Table 1) to enable the interviewee to discover the attributes and whereabouts of symbols in their ‘landscape’; then develops an understanding of the functional and temporal relationships between its symbolic elements. In order to illustrate how the interviews proceeded, Appendix A shows an excerpt from one of the transcripts.

The follow-up interviews, which were carried out by phone or Skype, were an opportunity to gather more details about participants’ main metaphors if relevant, and to capture their reflections on the initial interview and the effects or otherwise of the process.

All interviews were transcribed, then marked-up by the interviewer such that the source of each metaphor (i.e. whether from a participant or the interviewer) could be identified. The interviewer carried out an initial analysis by highlighting key metaphors and themes and, in particular, distinctions between WLB at its best and not at its best. In a further step, Lawley (a
recognised expert in Clean Language) checked and validated the accuracy of the transcript analyses, ensuring that they were faithful to participants’ descriptions, and the overall integrity of the interview process. The results of the validation are discussed after the substantive data about participants’ metaphor landscapes.

**Participants’ Metaphor Landscapes**

The analysis yielded a unique metaphor landscape for each manager. Table 3 summaries the six participant’s metaphor landscapes. When presenting data, even where summarised, the interviewees’ own words appear in quotation marks.

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<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Core theme</th>
<th>Detail</th>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td><em>Two halves of a circle</em></td>
<td>The ‘ideal’ work/life balance is like ‘two halves of a circle’. A ‘full circle – almost joined but it's not’. It’s like there is an ‘invisible bond’ between. You can be ‘immersed in one or the other’ because ‘one doesn't affect the other’, you can ‘separate the two’. This creates a ‘circle of happiness’ in ‘complete harmony’, ‘a happy cycle’. ‘The join is very fragile’. It's ‘held together by that moment, that day’. It’s ‘not like you can superglue them together’. ‘The closeness of the [halves] seems to shift quite a lot’. If one affects the other ‘it breaks the join’, ‘cracks in the seam’ appear and you ‘start to worry’. ‘If you can't switch [work] off’ a negative ‘cycle starts’. This ‘forces it apart even more’ like a ‘wave is pushing the seams apart’. Then it becomes ‘not so much of a circle’, ‘more like two links in a chain’. There is ‘a point where it can't part any further’ then ‘I know I have to bring that circle together’.</td>
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| B | 'Riding on the crest of a wave' and 'Going up a mountain dodging boulders' | Being ‘in harmony’ with your work and ‘your outside life’ is like ‘doing a particularly good job at juggling balls’ and you ‘feel in control’. This is ‘not a prolonged high’. As ‘stress levels go up the balls feel heavier’ they become like ‘boulders rather than like tennis balls’ and ‘you have to throw them faster’. That becomes ‘like going up a mountain’ and ‘having to dodge boulders coming down’. The bigger the boulders are ‘the more stressed you are trying to dodge them’ and ‘ultimately you might not be able to’ and you’re ‘going to get crushed at the bottom’. Then you have to ‘take yourself away’ from the mountain to ‘a fresh environment’ where ‘you can relax and just switch off’. ‘The ultimate’ balance is like ‘riding on the crest of a wave […] on top of everything’. Yet, that is not when you've ‘got to the top’ of the mountain, it is when you ‘keep going up […] managing to dodge the boulders, and you're making good progress’.

| C | ‘Physical and mental separation’ | When WLB is at it’s best there is a ‘physical and mental separation between’ home and work, with ‘definite lines between the two’. ‘It's difficult mentally if you don't switch off’ and ‘detach the two’. ‘Stepping back a bit and looking at the bigger picture’ rather than ‘just fighting off the task of the day to day’ gives ‘a sense of feeling in control of both’ work and home. ‘You feel better about yourself’. WLB is at its worst when ‘the two interfere with each other’. At work you are ‘running from pillar to post’, ‘constantly rushing’, ‘losing a lot of time’, and the worries can ‘run away with you’. At home there’s a ‘nagging at the back of your mind’ that you are ‘missing things’. This means ‘feeling of out of control’ and ‘you're leaving things with a list of things to be done whether that's at work or at home’. It’s a ‘vicious circle’.

| D | ‘A split’ with ‘a Friday evening switch’ | Weekends are for family, weeks are for work […] that’s the sort of split I do’. When WLB is at its best ‘I just seem to compartmentalise them’. They are like ‘the Yin and Yang’ – ‘one of them allows me to do the other one’. The weekend ‘satisfies a whole basket of needs’, the week ‘the whole basket of other needs’. There is a ‘Friday evening switch’, which ‘comes back on […] with the alarm clock on Monday morning’. ‘The pace at which I do everything in the week is boom-boom-boom-boom-boom’. ‘I can't keep that pace going forever’. It’s like ‘batteries on your camera’. ‘I get energy from the week [but] it's not enough to completely fill it up’. ‘The weekend allows me to build up the charge’. But, when ‘the distinction between the week and weekend […] blurs into one’ they ‘interfere’ with each other. If there’s ‘no break in the intensity’ and ‘if I haven't recharged enough […] I’m just so knackered […] it just hits you […] you can get really run down […] the older I get I think it catches up with me quicker’. It ‘gets into a vicious cycle’.

Tosey, Lawley & Mees, preprint version, 16th Sept 2013 20
Table 3: Interviewees’ metaphors of work-life balance

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<td>E</td>
<td>‘It’s the work/commute/life balance that’s the issue’ - ‘commuting’ is ‘part of the equation’. It has to be ‘a deal’: ‘if I do do the extra, there is pay-back from time to time when I want it.’ The deal involves ‘being fairly treated’ and ‘a bit of flex and a bit of give and take […] on both sides’ then ‘I'll go that extra mile’. It is not a ‘master-servant type relationship [where] people feel exploited’ and ‘feel like canned fodder’. Work/life balance is best when you ‘compartmentalise’ and find a ‘sensible way of switching off from work.’ ‘You can spend more time for yourself so therefore you feel healthier.’ This means ‘you can push yourself to do a few more things’. ‘It's a virtuous circle.’ If WLB isn't right ‘task-type things’ can ‘play on your mind’, ‘pleasure pursuits’ are ‘encroached on’, you get ‘slightly under par’, ‘physically and mentally tired’ and that can become a ‘negative circle’.</td>
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<th></th>
<th>‘Juggling ’ and ‘like a spinning top’</th>
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<td>F</td>
<td>WLB at its best is like ‘juggling’. There’s ‘a real ease’ and ‘a sense of balance’, ‘feeling energised’. The balls are ‘falling back into your hands without you having to strain and struggle’. Whereas, when it’s not at its best the balls are ‘out of your reach’, ‘if you drop the ball […] it's gone’ and it ‘feels chaotic’. When it's working well ‘you feel centred […] like a spinning top that is balanced […] the colours start blending’. It can ‘take you into a whole world of discovery and creativity and imagination’. There’s ‘one centre point, and the work and the life is sort of all spinning around’. They’re not ‘compartmentalised’, there’s no ‘switch out of work mode’. ‘If I'm really am being true to who I am, there isn't a difference then between how I'm acting at home or at work’. If the top is not on its centre ‘it starts to sort of wobble […] it falls over and clatters’ and if there are several tops ‘it's no longer playful because you're having to run from one to the other to keep them spinning’.</td>
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For participant B, for example, WLB at its best is like ‘doing a particularly good job at juggling’, like ‘riding on the crest of a wave […] you’re on top of everything […] you’re on a high, I suppose […] a natural high.’ This is short lived and for the most part the relationship between work and life is like ‘going up a mountain’ while ‘having to dodge boulders’. When
WLB is not at its best, ‘stress levels go up the balls feel heavier’ they become like ‘boulders rather than like tennis balls’ and ‘you have to throw them faster’. The bigger the boulders are ‘the more stressed you are trying to dodge them’ and ‘ultimately you might not be able to’ and you’re ‘going to get crushed at the bottom’. This is clearly a non-conventional metaphor, illustrating the richness of description that can result from Clean Language questioning.

Although there was no explicit intention to identify how the interviewees assessed their WLB at the time of the interview, the majority of interviewees did comment on their current situation with most reporting that they were currently far from at their best (‘a million miles away’, said one in their follow-up interview).

**Patterns of Response**

Although from a Clean Language perspective one would be cautious about aggregating different individual metaphors, the study has identified some interesting commonalities.

A key finding from these interviews is that, despite the apparent popularity of the ‘work-life balance’ metaphor in common parlance, our interviewees’ main metaphors did not overtly involve ‘a balance’. Participants conveyed their sense of relationship between different domains of life in varying ways, although these domains were not necessarily categorised as ‘work’ and ‘life’, nor was the relationship between them necessarily a question of seeking to achieve ‘balance’. However a number of their metaphors did involve some form of balancing, for example when ‘juggling’ (Interviewees B and F), ‘surfing’ (Interviewee B), or in
‘equality’ (Interviewee E). The more the interviews progressed, the less the notion of balance was actively involved in participants’ descriptions unless re-introduced by the interviewer.

Metaphors of ‘separation’ and ‘switching’ were recurring themes. For example, all six managers made use of the metaphor ‘switch’ (eg ‘switch off’, ‘switch out of’, ‘switch back on’, ‘Friday evening switch’) and five used ‘separate’, ‘compartmentalise’ or ‘split’. For some, a separation was part of WLB at its best, whereas for one, it was the absence of a split that indicated WLB at its best. These findings are significant because they highlight the importance of understanding the relationship between work and life in individuals’ own terms.

In order to illustrate the capacity of Clean Language to give insight into how a person’s metaphor landscape works as a whole, an example of a metaphoric system derived from our interview data (for Interviewee B) is shown in Figure 1. Thus Clean Language questions are typically used strategically by practitioners for the purpose of ‘modelling’ (Lawley and Tompkins 2000), enabling both the interviewee and the interviewer to construct a model of the interviewee’s metaphor landscape as coherent system of relationships between its components, in particular sequential, causal and contingent relationships. The resulting model is then available for understanding an individual’s behavior and decisions.
Figure 1. Model of how interviewee B’s metaphor of their work–life balance operates over time (all words are those of the interviewee)
Discussion

How does the output from this Clean Language study compare with that from previous studies that explored individuals’ accounts of WLB? Of those cited above, Caproni (2004) and Roberts (2008) provide interesting examples of unexplored metaphors in their data. Caproni (2004) draws on feminist and critical perspectives to address the discourse of work/life balance, applied to her personal account of attempting to find balance. This includes metaphors such as ‘keeping people… at bay’, ‘spill over to other parts of my life’, and references to the idea of centrality (Caproni, 2004 p.210). Roberts (2008), who focuses on the dimension of time (only one dimension of a metaphor landscape), presents data that include examples such as ‘always catching up with myself’, and ‘work was stealing my time’. Although Roberts is concerned primarily with participants’ patterns of temporal working rather than with portraying their inner worlds, her study is another example of one in which the methodology is far from transparent (it comprises only passing reference to the use of unstructured interviews). The findings refer to ‘livingscapes’ and ‘weave’, which appear to be the researcher’s metaphors.

Cohen et al. (2009) also emphasized a dynamic, processual view of WLB in their autoethnographic study, which involved ‘an interactive process of co-authoring our stories’ (Cohen et al. 2009, p.234). They produce a metaphorical framework that includes some abstract concepts that are derived directly from literature (e.g. ‘segmenting’, ‘integrating’). Again, the quoted material in the text includes many metaphors (e.g. ‘that other side of my life’, ‘shield’, ‘surge [of worry]’, ‘sense of separation’) that a Clean Language study would aim to explore and develop.
The way we have used Clean Language in our project offers three enhancements to the understanding of WLB produced by these studies. First, it has enabled a more detailed exploration of the participants’ metaphor landscapes prior to sense-making. Second, it has differentiated more systematically between participants’ naturally-occurring metaphors and other terms. Third, it has offered a more systematic and transparent account of how the findings were derived from raw data. While the thrust of findings of those prior studies appear broadly congruent with those from our study – for example, in that the range of relationships between life and work domains cannot be reduced to the single metaphor of ‘balance’ - Clean Language pursues naturally-occurring metaphors systematically and in greater detail, as illustrated above, that provide more authentic and rigourous accounts of the way individuals experience WLB.

Our study was designed to test Clean Language as a method; due to the small sample we are not claiming to offer substantive findings to the literature on WLB. Nevertheless, several themes for future research into personal metaphors of WLB may be indicated. First, the metaphor of ‘switch’ suggests that it may be especially interesting to attend to how individuals switch or separate. Second, most interviewees indicated that their behaviour changed when they were approaching or had crossed a threshold from WLB being good enough to unacceptable, or vice versa. Third is the question of how participants scaled their sense of WLB; in other words, by what means were they able to decide that it was getting better or worse, both day-by-day and over longer time periods.
**Reviewing the Clean Language Interviews**

For the purposes of this study it was important to establish that the interviews were authentic examples of the Clean Language questioning technique. In the judgment of the expert analyst, the face-to-face interviews constituted an authentic application both at a micro level (through appropriate use of Clean Language questions) and as a process of modelling. Analysis of the six initial interviews revealed that 242 questions were asked in total, ranging from 31 to 53 questions per interview, with an average of 40. Of these, 99% met the criteria of being 'clean'. The eleven basic Clean Language questions given in Table 1 accounted for 85% of all questions during the interview proper. Indeed the interviewer was considered to have set a benchmark that any future research using this method could seek to emulate.

It was interesting to note how some interviewees responded to the overt metaphor contained in the research question. For example, in response to the opening question, ‘When your work-life balance is at its best, that’s like what?’6, some commented directly, or by implication, that they were construing the world differently:

> It's [an] interesting concept isn't it and I think for me it's a statement that came out - I first became aware of [it] a few years ago, I never used to see my life as a kind of a balance between work or life personally… I just didn't see it as an either-or.

(Interviewee E)

Interviewee A’s response was to translate the opening research question into their own words:

> So in work-life balance I - presume you're - when I'm happiest at work and happiest at home, is that what you're saying?
When exploring participants’ perceptions, sometimes the interviewer required patience in order for an overt metaphor to emerge. For example, it was not until two-thirds of the way through the interview that Interviewee A produced their ‘completed or joined circle’ metaphor. On the other hand, F came up with ‘juggling’ at the very beginning of the interview. Such variation is common. Interviewees who tend to give specific examples or abstract descriptions may take a while before they connect with a metaphor, but once they do it can become an important source of self-knowledge.

The transcripts do show some variation in the way that both the face-to-face and follow-up interviews were opened up for discussion. This resulted in the occasional unintended introduction of metaphors. For example, by saying ‘we will spend a little bit of time focusing on work/life balance’ the interviewer unnecessarily introduced the metaphors of ‘spend’ and ‘focusing’.

As noted earlier, it is not considered possible to be entirely ‘clean’. The researcher intentionally invites an interviewee to attend to various aspects of their metaphor landscape through the selection of questions and through the selection of content. While there is a case for suggesting that during the interview the interviewee is in part creating as well as describing their experience, that is not considered problematic since it is assumed that the way they create new understanding will be consistent with their existing mental models, providing that the interviewer’s metaphors and assumptions are not superimposed.
The follow-up interviews fulfilled their purpose of gathering two kinds of information: reflection on the interview process, and further investigation of an individual’s metaphors. All of the interviewees had remembered their main metaphors and readily accepted them as the frame for the second interview. Also, the majority of participants stated that they had enjoyed the interviews and gained valuable insights into their personal metaphors relating to WLB:

You had to think about it quite deeply […] [It was] quite thought-provoking. […] it definitely felt different from how you can normally be interviewed. (Interviewee C)

Interviewees reported that they had had no significant difficulty with the Clean Language approach, invariably finding it easier to answer the questions as the interview progressed.

Personal change for the participants was not pursued intentionally within this research study. However, two participants reported that they had already made changes in their life to redress their current WLB as a result of the initial interview.

[…] the few weekends […] since then have been really good […] I have the conversation with my wife […] about the fact that you know, Friday night is my switch and it's quite useful […] by getting the difference between the weekends and the weeks, not just means that I enjoy my weekends more, it also means that I'm in a better state to - keep going all through the week. (Interviewee D)

Another two participants had decided to make changes, although the follow-up interview was too soon for them to have implemented those decisions. This provides evidence to suggest
that this method offers a co-learning process that can be empowering for participants. These
detailed metaphors enable people to know (for example) whether they are ‘in’ or ‘out’ of
balance. With the experience of seeing their own ‘model’, individuals could identify choice
points and figure out how to become more ‘in balance’. Many of the metaphors included
specific indicators about when a person was approaching a threshold and this could be
helpful in preventing burnout and breakdowns. Also, these metaphors could be used to
monitor and track changes in the person’s degree of WLB. The metaphors would give a
manager or coach an individually-tailored language with which to talk to the person about
how they are managing their WLB and (where relevant) what needs to happen to improve
their situation.

**Implications for Management Researchers**

Clean Language is most suitable for the elicitation of naturally-occurring metaphors
specifically, and for phenomenological interviews where the intent is to explore subjective
erience and produce authentic understanding of interviewee’s world. The adoption of
Clean Language is likely to be aspirational, in that the aim is to remain as ‘clean’ as possible,
whilst acknowledging that this is never fully achievable.

There are alternative conceptions of the interview (Learmonth, 2006; Roulston, 2010).
Numerous authors, among them Alvesson (2003), Kvale (2006), Rapley (2001), Silverman
(2000), and Wang and Roulston (2007) criticise the potential for data-gathering interviews to
elicit self-justifying claims by interviewees. From our collective experience we would
speculate that a metaphor chosen tactically for the purpose of self-justification is unlikely to
yield a detailed metaphor landscape through the sustained exploration that Clean Language entails. However, we acknowledge that we have not tested this point.

The key difference between Clean Language and previous methods of metaphor elicitation, such as Cassell and Lee (2012), is that it adds significantly to the ability of the interviewer to elicit and probe metaphors in real time whilst also remaining authentic to the interviewee’s own metaphors. Referring to Lakoff and Johnson’s (1980) distinction between conventional and new metaphors, Cassell and Lee (2012, p.266) comment on `the lack of new metaphors’ in their data set, Whether this is a function of the people interviewed or of the interview method could be addressed in future research using an interview approach that is based on Clean Language. We would expect that such interviews would elicit metaphors that are new in the sense that they are particular to each individual participant.

Instances where Clean Language is unlikely to be a suitable choice of method are where interviewer and interviewee are aiming to co-create meaning (similar to Cohen et al. 2009), and where the researcher aims explicitly to use interview data to develop their own interpretation of a phenomenon or issue.

Earlier we addressed potential ethical concerns arising from use of a technique that had its origins in psychotherapy, and in the following section we recommend relevant training and research arrangements (Table 4). We would also argue that Clean Language actively enhances the ethical nature of research. First, by militating against the possibility that findings misrepresent participants it contributes to the principle of `responsibility in the analysis of data and reporting of findings’ (Saunders et al., 2012, p. 232). Management researchers may
be justified in being concerned about studies that do not safeguard against unwittingly distorting participants’ world views. Second, it minimizes the potential for harm because it acknowledges the interviewee’s way of experiencing the world. Clean Language can build rapport quickly and may be helpful when researching sensitive topics due to the fact that the emphasis is firmly on the interviewee’s perspective, hence participants have no need to defend, argue or justify their descriptions. Moreover, the evidence from our study that the method was empowering for participants may offset concerns about alienation (Rowan, 1998) and democratisation (Nind et al. 2012).

In order to synthesise these points, we suggest that Clean Language can be used in research in at least three distinct ways, shown in order of increasing complexity in Table 4. This includes indicative recommendations for training and other research arrangements.

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<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Recommended training and research arrangements</th>
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<td>1. A questioning technique</td>
<td>CL questions incorporated into any qualitative interview in order to enhance the quality (authenticity) of interview data by minimizing the introduction of the researcher’s metaphors and constructs. Comparable to conversational use of CL in everyday settings (e.g. in education, business).</td>
<td>Basic knowledge of CL. Some practice at asking CL questions is desirable. Standard ethical considerations for research interviews apply.</td>
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<td>2. A method of eliciting interviewee-generated metaphors</td>
<td>The central purpose of the interview is metaphor elicitation. CL questions are used tactically in order to elicit metaphors and metaphoric material. Comparable to exploration of an interviewee’s mental models, e.g. through repertory grid.</td>
<td>Intermediate knowledge of CL including principles and the full basic set of CL questions. Supervised practice (e.g. equivalent of 5 days’ introductory training). Supervision and inter-rater check (e.g. from a research team member, peer or supervisor, who has advanced knowledge of CL). Standard ethical considerations for in-depth research interviews apply (including e.g. facility for referral to a trained counselor in the case of sensitive topics).</td>
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<td>3. A coherent research strategy based on ‘clean’ principles.</td>
<td>The purpose of the interview is to elicit and model the interviewee’s ‘metaphor landscape’, highlighting connections and relationships between metaphors as well as the metaphors themselves. CL principles guide the entire research process including formulating the research question and eliciting interviewees’ detailed metaphor landscapes (i.e. ‘modelling’) as an explicit purpose of the study. Comparable to facilitated reflection, e.g. as in executive coaching, but without pursuing intentional change.</td>
<td>Advanced knowledge of CL including principles and the extended set of CL questions. Advanced skills in CL (e.g. the equivalent of 15 days’ training and accreditation). Supervision and inter-rater check (e.g. from a research team member, peer or supervisor, who has advanced knowledge of CL). Standard ethical considerations for in-depth research interviews apply (including e.g. facility for referral to a trained counselor in the case of sensitive topics). Advisable that at least one research team member has knowledge and experience of using of CL in a developmental, person-centred process (e.g. coaching).</td>
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**Table 4:** Progressive levels of Clean Language (CL) in interview-based research
At the most basic level a researcher could employ Clean Language questions within a qualitative interview approach, without any intent to elicit metaphors. This can make an important contribution to quality by enabling the interviewer to monitor the appearance of metaphors in their questions. Clean Language principles may also be used to design questions for inclusion in structured interviews and surveys.

At the other extreme, an entire research strategy could be devised using `clean’ principles and be envisaged as a process of modelling, starting with the formulation of the research question itself. In the middle ground, Clean Language offers a process for the elicitation of naturally-occurring metaphor that aims to remain authentic to the interviewee’s own metaphors.

As indicated in Table 4, we would recommend a level of knowledge and competence commensurate with the extent of use of Clean Language. Eliciting a person’s way of assessing a concept such as WLB required a high degree of skill, and the quality of information obtained in this study is directly related to the competence of the interviewer and the process of analysis. Familiarity with asking Clean Language questions is advisable so that they are not experienced by interviewees as abrupt and unnatural. It can be challenging for the interviewer to stay ‘clean’, especially if the interviewee appears to need help to answer some questions. Although interviewees may find the process unfamiliar at first, the evidence from our interviews is that they became comfortable with the approach as the interview progressed.
Conclusion

In conclusion, the first contribution of this paper is to have demonstrated the potential of Clean Language as a specific, systematic method for eliciting naturally occurring metaphors in order to provide in-depth understanding of a person’s inner symbolic world. As evidenced by our study, the method elicited unique, dynamic and highly individual metaphors. It enables the researcher to elicit more detail about interviewees’ metaphors in real time, and to develop a detailed understanding of a participant’s metaphor landscape. This can extend existing understandings of the phenomenon under study.

The second contribution is to have shown how Clean Language can enhance the rigour and authenticity of interview-based qualitative research more widely by addressing concerns about data collection and interpretation. It offsets the propensity for researchers inadvertently to introduce extraneous metaphors into an interviewee’s account at both data collection and interpretation stages, thereby improving authenticity. Not only can researchers distinguish between metaphors introduced by an interviewer and those that originated in interviewees’ subjective worlds, but also the principles and techniques of Clean Language can be shared and discussed by researchers, thereby increasing transparency and rigour. This can enhance confidence in the validity of the findings of qualitative research and promote ethical research practice by reducing the risk of misrepresenting participants.

Finally, Clean Language can be applied in research at a variety of levels, with concomitant recommendations for training and research arrangements. Therefore researchers can utilise Clean Language on a spectrum from incorporating Clean Language questions in interviews in
order to enhance authenticity and rigour, to employing Clean Language principles in both the design and implementation of research.
Appendix A: Transcript Excerpt

(Initial interview with participant F, excerpt begins after introductory comments)

then we'll start, we'll start with- with when your work/life balance is at its best it's like what?

Um, I think when- when- when my work/life balance is at its best, um, I- I think I- I'd be feeling really energised and that um, and that things are sort of under my belt that I can- I'm sort of juggling things and it- I don't think it's necessarily based on how busy I am but it's that sort of feeling that- that there is a sort of sense of balance and –

OK, so energised and things are under your belt, juggling, and a sense of balance –

mm-hmm –

and what kind- what kind of juggling is that when it's like that?

Um, you- I mean if you'd maybe feel that your holding quite a few things at the same time but they're still within your reach, you're not- they're not sort of- I suppose the image of juggling is that you're […] throw balls into the air but you're also catching them –

yes –

and, yes, so it's a- and also that sort of sense that there's an ease which .. I mean if you see a really competent juggler, there's a real ease in what they're doing, they- that looks- I mean it may be very, very difficult but it looks really easy.

Mmm, when is that sense that does ease where- whereabouts is that sense?

Um, sorry I don't understand what [...] 'whereabouts' –

well how- how do you know what kind of ease is that- that ease?

Um, I mean I think it goes back to the feeling of- of being energised that um, you know, I've- I would feel motivated and maybe really interested and engaged and excited and um, you know, with- with what I'm doing and um, yes- and I am- yes, I mean I'm engaged in what I'm doing.

Mmm, so .. interested and engaged and excited and energised, that's like what- you're like what?
Um, I .. I sort of, I feel that I'm- I am reaching my potential in the sort of different areas and that I- I- it probably doesn't feel like hard work, I may be sort of working really hard but it doesn't feel like that.

Mmm, when it doesn't feel like that, is there anything else about that- what does it feel like?

Um, I suppose you- um, sort of navigating the tasks and sort of going in- in and out of tasks with a sort of- with an ease um, sense- a sort of sense that things are being done well and that I'm able to sort of complete things and that I- I'm sort of man- I am managing it but I'm- I'm sort of setting the deadlines and working out how- how long something will take to do and then I'm sort of- I'm actually sort of reaching the stuff- targets that I'm setting –

mm, you're reaching the targets and-

mmm –

like reaching the- being able to reach the balls- when juggling ….?

Um, yes I suppose- going back to the image of juggling, it sort of- you're tossing the balls up into the air and then they- they're kind of almost falling back into your hands without you sort of having to strain and struggle to kind of catch them again –

mm, when they're falling into your hands – is there anything else about that … ?

Um, well I was just sort of going on with the image of juggling, it sort of- it has a sort of playful feel about it, um, and –

when it's a playful feel and- is there anything else about that?

Um, the s- I suppose it's- it- I mean I- you think of a juggler as an entertainer but um, I sort of think of – I mean .. the playfulness is .. there's kind of an enjoyment in what you're doing and um, there's kind of a pleasure in- in just being skilful and being able- and actually doing something that's quite hard but doing it with ease.
References


Rapley, T. J. (2001). 'The art(fulness) of open-ended interviewing: some considerations on analysing interviews', Qualitative Research, 1, pp. 303-323


¹ See [http://www.cleanchange.co.uk/cleanlanguage/](http://www.cleanchange.co.uk/cleanlanguage/), accessed 22nd April 2013.
The online version includes some 3,600 words.

The full research team consisted of two academic researchers, from different institutions, and four practitioners from, or affiliated to, a commercial ‘Clean Language’ training organisation. The project was funded by a small pump-priming grant from Tosey’s institution, with matched contributions in kind from the training organisation.

I.e. registered with the United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy.

Lawley and Tompkins (2000) refer to that process as ‘Symbolic Modelling’, defined as ‘a method of facilitating individuals to become more familiar with the organization of their metaphors so that they can discover new ways of perceiving themselves and their world’ (Lawley & Tompkins, 2000. p.xiv).

The question ‘When X is at its best, that’s like what?’ (and variations on this question) is commonly used by Clean Language modellers to elicit the metaphor for a person’s ideal state or situation (Nixon and Walker, 2009b).